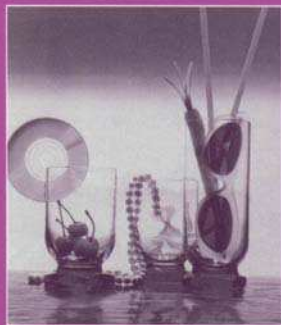


MULTILINGUAL MATTERS

Language

and society in a changing Italy



Arturo Tosi

MULTILINGUAL
MATTERS

Language and Society in a Changing Italy

MULTILINGUAL MATTERS SERIES

Series Editor:

Professor John Edwards, *St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada*

Other Books in the Series

Beyond Bilingualism: Multilingualism and Multilingual Education

Jasone Cenoz and Fred Genesee (eds)

Can Threatened Languages be Saved?

Joshua Fishman (ed.)

Community and Communication

Sue Wright

Identity, Insecurity and Image: France and Language

Dennis Ager

Language Attitudes in Sub-Saharan Africa

Efurosibina Adegbija

Language, Ethnicity and Education

Peter Broeder and Guus Extra

Language Planning in Malawi, Mozambique and the Philippines

Robert B. Kaplan and Richard B. Baldauf, Jr. (eds)

Language Planning in Nepal, Taiwan and Sweden

Richard B. Baldauf, Jr. and Robert B. Kaplan (eds)

Language Planning: From Practice to Theory

Robert B. Kaplan and Richard B. Baldauf, Jr. (eds)

Language Reclamation

Hubisi Nwemely

Linguistic Minorities in Central and Eastern Europe

Christina Bratt Paulston and Donald Peckham (eds)

Multilingualism in Spain

M. Teresa Turell (ed.)

Quebec's Aboriginal Languages

Jacques Maurais (ed.)

The Step-Tongue: Children's English in Singapore

Anthea Fraser Gupta

A Three Generations - Two Languages - One Family

Li Wei

Other Books of Interest

Encyclopedia of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism

Colin Baker and Sylvia Prys Jones

Language, Culture and Communication in Contemporary Europe

Charlotte Hoffman (ed.)

Please contact us for the latest book information:

Multilingual Matters, Frankfurt Lodge, Clevedon Hall,

Victoria Road, Clevedon, BS21 7HH, England

<http://www.multilingual-matters.com>

MULTILINGUAL MATTERS 117

Series Editor: John Edwards

Language and Society in a Changing Italy

Arturo Tosi

MULTILINGUAL MATTERS LTD

Clevedon • Buffalo • Toronto • Sydney

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Tosi, Arturo

Language and Society in a Changing Italy / Arturo Tosi

Multilingual Matters: 117

Includes bibliographical references and index

1. Italian language--Social aspects. 2. Sociolinguistics--Italy. 3. Italian language--dialectology. 4. Languages in contact--Italy.

I. Title. II. Multilingual Matters (Series): 117

PC1073.75.T67 2000

306.44'0945--dc21

00-041151

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1-85359-501-2 (hbk)

ISBN 1-85359-500-4 (pbk)

Multilingual Matters Ltd

UK: Frankfurt Lodge, Clevedon Hall, Victoria Road, Clevedon BS21 7HH.

USA: UTP, 2250 Military Road, Tonawanda, NY 14150, USA.

Canada: UTP, 5201 Dufferin Street, North York, Ontario M3H 5T8, Canada.

Australia: P.O. Box 586, Artarmon, NSW, Australia.

Copyright © 2001 Arturo Tosi.

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the publisher.

Typeset by Archetype-IT Ltd (<http://www.archetype-it.com>).

Printed and bound in Great Britain by the Cromwell Press Ltd.

Contents

Introduction	viii
Acknowledgements	xii

Part 1 Everyday Language: Evolution and Variation

1 Language Planning and Language Change	
Before and after Unification.	1
Spread, Competence, Attitudes.	3
The Fascist Language Policy	7
Changes during Democracy	11
1968 as a Turning Point	14
New Trends and New Challenges	17
2. Linguistic Diversity	
Italian and Dialects Compartmentalised	21
Italian and Dialects in Contact	23
Repertoires and Social Divisions	26
Historic Minorities and Domestic Minorities	31
New Ethnolinguistic Minorities.	35
3 Standard and Non-Standard Variations	
Standard Italian	40
Regional Italian	43
‘Substandard’ Italian or <i>Italiano Popolare</i>	48
Colloquial Italian or <i>Italiano Parlato</i>	52
Neostandard Italian or <i>Italiano dell’Uso Medio</i>	58
4 Language in Education	
Diversity under Fascism	63
From Literary Training to Education for All.	65
Teachers’ Attitudes and Innovative Schools.	67
Models or Lack of Models?	70
Teaching Non-Native Speakers	72

5	New Conventions	
	Linguistic Etiquette	75
	Language and Gender	79
	Political Correctness	82
	Racism, Vulgarism and Snobbery	84
	Conformism, 'Newspeak' and New Words	86
Part 2 Special Languages: Tradition and Innovations		
6	The Language of Bureaucracy	
	Italian <i>Officialese</i>	91
	Mechanisms and Functions	94
	Factors of Prestige	97
	A Famous Argument	98
	A Common Sense Reform	100
7	The Language of Politicians	
	Old and New Rhetoric	106
	The Charm of Baroque Eloquence	107
	From Elegant Rhetoric to Crude Pragmatism	109
	For Clarity and Competition	114
	Linguistic Demagoguery for Virtual Reality	123
8	The Language of Newspapers	
	Melting Pot of Innovations	130
	Ideological Influences	136
	Evolution of Style	142
	The Impact of the Television	147
	Interpretation of Headlines	152
9	The Language of Advertising	
	A Language for All Tastes	160
	From Information to Persuasion	163
	International Slogans and National Contexts	166
	Linguistic Anomalies and Figures of Speech	169
	From Innovations to Stereotypes	179
	Bad Taste and Good Causes	183
10	The Language of Young People	
	Variety, Slang or Antilanguage?	188
	Evolution, Trends and Life Span	190
	Interaction with Dialects and the Standard	193
	Sources and Repertoires Today	196
	Sex, Drugs and Rock n'Roll	199

Part 3 Language Contacts: Origin and Status

11 Italian and English in Italy
 Old and New Channels of Contact 205
 From British English to American English 208
 Anglophones, Anglomaniacs and Anglophobes. 210
 Meaning Transfers and Word Formation. 214
 Computers, Electronic Music and the Internet 219

12 Italian in English-Speaking Countries
 Origin and First Interpretations 224
 Mechanisms and Factors of Variations 228
 Repertoires, Attitudes and Generations. 231
 The Notion of ‘Community Language’ 238
 Educational Issues and School Policies 240

13 Italian in Multilingual Europe
 The EU Language Policy and Translation Service 244
 Italian for European Affairs 248
 European Discourse Analysis and Reception 254
 Towards Standardisation or Destandardisation? 257

Conclusions 263
 References 269
 Index 281

Introduction

This book examines the interrelation between language and society in contemporary Italy, and aims to provide an up to date account of linguistic diversity, social variation, special codes and language varieties within Italian society, and in situations of language contact both within and without Italy.

The book has been designed for students of Italian abroad who have little or no previous knowledge of linguistics. It should appeal also to students and researchers in linguistics, who have little or no knowledge of Italian, as it provides a broad and dynamic picture of Italian language in action today. The book is further expected to be of interest to students and scholars of European multilingualism and to those who wish to look at how language operates within the Italian communities in English-speaking countries.

The notion of 'changing' in a book about language and society in Italy may sound somewhat redundant. Societies are always changing, every country is a laboratory of new social relations, and at any time a national community can provide an observatory of meaningful linguistic changes and variations. In what sense then can the national situation described in this book deserve the special distinction of a 'changing' Italy?

In the past fifty years Italy has shared with other European countries social and cultural trends, from increased mobility and exchanges to growing globalisation of the economy and communications. These trends have made a massive impact on all European languages, but in the Italian situation their effects have been rather special, in that the new trends have overlapped with two older processes of language change that are still underway. One process is the spread of the national language that has overcome historical diversity and finally imposed itself as the common language within the national community. Another process is the gradual standardisation of the national language, which is now increasingly based on the linguistic habits of modern life, rather than on the older models of the literary tradition.

Thus in Italy today we may find that the formal and impersonal language of official administration still provides a prestigious and influential model for many people when they are writing, or even speaking, in situations when they cannot use the local dialect. Similarly, we find that the majority of the adult population are still comfortable with their bilingualism, switching from the national language to the local dialect as a matter of routine in their everyday life. Where though the local vernaculars have disappeared, leaving only the repertoire of the national language, then a whole new mechanism of linguistic manipulation has been introduced by the new generations who feel that this medium is not productive or creative enough to convey their particular in-group sensitivity and sense of humour. Moreover Italy is a country where a great passion for eccentric neologisms and radical manifestations of political correctness cohabits with a widespread tolerance for linguistic sexism and racist connotations in the language of the media. Last but not least, Italian linguistic nationalism manifests itself, as elsewhere, with campaigns aimed to protect the purity of the national language, while English is becoming more and more attractive at all levels. Whenever Italian is spoken with an American-English accent on TV and radio programmes it draws large audiences; at the same time, English-only medium education in 'international schools' is in great demand for the children of the new economic élites.

This book examines the last fifty years as a crucial period of 'a changing Italy' as those years have witnessed new forms of interaction, solidarity and conflicts between the diverse groups of society. The main intention was to explain some apparent contradictions, that can only be accounted for, if we understand what important social and cultural changes helped to overcome old differences and to form new models of prestige. There have been two significant turning points in this evolution. One was the 1960s, and the late 1960s in particular, with what became famous as the 1968 student revolts. The other was between the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the peak in what is known as the transition from the First Republic to the Second Republic (an event which was marked by the change from a proportional to the semi-majority electoral system). Within the three phases (from post-war until 1968, from 1968 until the early 1990s and from then onwards) the changes undergone by the Italian language were always the result of important social or political transformations, sometimes establishing the premise for a development in formality and conventions, sometimes making official communications and political discussions more transparent in terms of political correctness and/or political expediency.

During these social and linguistic changes, and at a pace that increased in the last two decades, scholars and teachers began to realise that their debates were not paying sufficient attention to language variations and

special languages that were coming to be very significant in terms of personal identity, social interaction or financial success. The new special varieties that developed from the national standard appeared to be markedly different from ordinary everyday language, especially in those fields where its competent use was felt to be no longer relevant or sufficient for a convincing performance. Besides the fast diversification of communication habits within new professions and special domains within the national community, new exchanges and increased international relations were in the process of modifying the status and functions of all other languages of Europe. They could no longer exist in isolation: linguistic contacts and cultural interpenetration were fast growing everywhere as the speakers of different languages needed to resort to English as the international *lingua franca*.

Of course Italian and English have for years occupied a special place in the new wave of languages and cultures in contact. As Italians made up one of the largest minority communities in the English-speaking countries, and English was the principal medium of international communication in many fields, a widespread phenomenon of English-Italian bilingualism had developed affecting, interestingly enough, some of the 'highest' and some of the 'lowest' social echelons of users: immigrant communities abroad, new economic élites in Italy and the translators of Italian for European affairs operating in the multilingual environment of the European Union.

The identification of these three major dimensions of Italian sociolinguistics – ordinary language, special languages and contact varieties – provided a natural division for the various issues covered in the book. Part One covers the evolution and variations of ordinary language. Part Two analyses the traditions and innovations in a significant selection of special languages. Part Three examines the origin, status and mechanisms of language contacts between Italian and English in three diverse but equally significant domains. Each chapter has been structured to include (a) a critical assessment of recent research in Italy and abroad, (b) a brief historical description of the evolution of specific linguistic variations covering the last fifty years, and often extending into the pre-war and Fascist periods, and (c) the analysis of a short selection of significant texts showing some of the typical features of the variety under examination in the chapter.

As the book has been designed to be accessible to students and researchers who have little or no knowledge of Italian, all the examples and short texts have been provided with English translations. This caused no small problem of choice between different approaches to translation, and the chosen criteria need to be made explicit.

The main aim has always been to render the idea and the form of the Italian. Non-standard or slang terms are sometimes explained rather than translated (eg *bona* : a good-looking girl). At other times an equivalent in standard English is provided, translating the meaning rather than attempting a similar register. On occasion a term (generally marked by inverted commas) has been compounded to give the idea of a neologism (e.g. *la più litiosa*: 'the lithiest' i.e. with the most lithium oxide). The Italian form may be mirrored where correct English would change the style (eg *O così o pomì*: 'Or this or Pomì' i.e. 'Either like this or Pomì'). In the lists of translations of Italian terms, it has not necessarily been marked whether the English word is a verb or a noun. In lists of separate words, and even in short sentences where the context is not self-evident, for polysemic words one translation has generally been provided, though this may well be inappropriate in many situations.

As Goethe put it, translation is both essential and impossible, and I think this book may help to demonstrate the truth of that statement, both in terms of its content and its language.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to many people who have helped me to improve my interpretation of the various issues related to language and society in Italy that are presented in this book. Many of them are students from England and Italy, others are fellow academics with whom I have worked sometimes only for short periods of time – on joint research projects, academic committees, conferences and in programmes of teacher training. I feel particularly indebted to Giovanni Carsaniga, Marcel Danesi, Laura Lepschy, Vincenzo Lo Cascio, Ivano Paccagnella, Lorenzo Renzi, Renzo Titone and Daniela Zorzi. In addition I am most grateful to Francesco Sabatini and Giulio Lepschy, whose advice and suggestions have helped me integrate the Italian debate within an international sociolinguistic perspective. I am particularly indebted to Giulio Lepschy who patiently read an earlier draft of the manuscript, providing detailed comments and suggestions, many of which I was able to incorporate in the final text. The inadequacies that remain are of my own making.

I owe very warm thanks to Denise Redfern who made an exceptional contribution through her excellent editing of the manuscript. I also thank Maggie Meade, Paola Piana and Vanessa Billings who typed various sections of the manuscript. Finally I would like to record my gratitude to the Bormioli Rocco Glass Co. from Parma for permission to use the photograph on the cover, and the Italian publishers Carrocci and Laterza for allowing me to reproduce Tables 1 and 2 in Chapter 1, and the language map in Chapter 3.

Chapter 1

Language Planning and Language Change

Before and After Unification

In the 15th century, Italy came very close to changing from a 'geographical expression' to a united kingdom. But the Peninsula was coveted by foreign powers and the Church had no intention of giving up her secular possessions. Once again internal political events prevented unification, the Peninsula remained fragmented for four more centuries and Florence lost her cultural and political supremacy. Florentine, the basis of literary Italian, failed to achieve the status of national language but remained the linguistic focus for Italian élites who shared a cultural tradition but not a national community. The spoken language of Florence gradually evolved, and changed, as did the spoken languages of other Italian cities. But at the same time, the literary tradition continued to be modelled on the prose and the poetry of the three great Tuscan writers: Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio.

The contrast between the models inspired by literary works and everyday language was at the root of the long debate on the *questione della lingua* setting supporters of the literary models against those of modern usage. The debate about the different norms of the Italian language continued for many centuries, and tended to involve philologists and writers more than educators and teachers. Unsurprisingly, until unification, the debate on language in the Italian Peninsula was dominated by literary rather than educational considerations. In addition, the fact that the Italian 'geographical expression' (as it was described by the Austrian politician Prince von Metternich, quoted by Vincent, 1981) did not evolve into a national community until the 19th century, slowed down the spread of cultural and linguistic homogenisation. The earlier unification achieved by most European countries laid the foundations for the spread and standardisation of their national languages, whereas the survival of Italy's internal linguistic diversity provided a unique case of multilingualism within a modern

national state. This condition soon proved to be a source of a new controversy, when the first government needed to establish a national language and to devise a policy to promote its use across the national community. Then the choice between the written models of a puristic tradition and the spoken language of everyday use could no longer be treated as a problem of literary conformism. It now involved policy decisions on planning and education required by the new nation, whose great cultural traditions could not compensate for a relative lack of experience as a state.

The first time the debate on the *questione della lingua* explicitly discussed issues of language planning and language change was during the years of the unification. The two protagonists were the popular novelist Alessandro Manzoni and the distinguished scholar Graziadio Isaia Ascoli. Manzoni was an enthusiastic supporter of spoken Florentine as a national language, and author of *I Promessi Sposi* ('The Betrothed'), of which he wrote two versions modelled on the literary tradition before finally being satisfied with a third version based on the everyday language of well educated Florentine middle-class people. Ascoli was a linguist in modern terms, and also less passionate about the policies and politics of language planning. He simply pointed out the limitations of Manzoni's ideas, and the impracticality of attempting to use the school system to teach a language that was alien to the vast majority of Italians. Ascoli's reply to Manzoni – in the first issue of his journal *L'Archivio Glottologico Italiano* (Ascoli, 1870) – was critical of the view that contemporary Florentine usage should be adopted by all Italians, and that one main vehicle for its diffusion should be the compilation of a dictionary.

Italian linguists today tend to stress the merits of the two positions (Lepschy and Lepschy 1977, Gensini 1993). Manzoni's literary experience was untypically that of a writer interested in language as a social phenomenon and his proposal that the Italian education authorities should enforce the adoption of spoken Florentine was not determined by puristic choices. He subscribed to the liberal philosophy that it was better and more practical to teach a language that was actually spoken somewhere in the national community, rather than the lifeless models of the dead language of a literary tradition. If he chose to write his novel in Florentine rather than in the pan-Italian literary language prescribed by the academics, it was not because he wished to impose a dead language on schools, but rather because he wanted to adopt the best forms used in everyday language. Ascoli argues against Manzoni's choice because some forms of the pan-Italian literary tradition had already spread nationally and contrasted in everyday use with the Florentine alternatives (that had developed only locally). He also believed that in any case Manzoni's recommendations could not facilitate the promotion of Florentine, as the natural spread of a

national language takes place through social interaction within a national community, and could not be imposed by trying to enforce its adoption in schools, or by other similar measures.

Language changes within Italian society were later to endorse Manzoni's view that it is the everyday language that provides good models for literature and not vice versa. But Ascoli's prediction was also to be confirmed, in that Florentine (once the dialect of the cultural capital of Italy) could not be promoted to the status of national language only by operations of formal education and status planning. It was shown that a capital's dialect can become a national language only where centuries of official use have gone hand in hand with natural daily interaction, as was the case in Paris and London. In Italy, there was a wide range of different spoken languages, and this actually counteracted the literary purism of a tradition which despite its linguistic excellence was confined to the cultural élites.

Multilingualism in Italy before and after unification is rooted in the most unusual historical background of this European country. Had Italy been unified under the Medici family in the 15th century, Florentine would probably have become the national language at about the same time as the political and linguistic stabilisation of other European nations. Instead, the linguistic differences that we find in Italian society today are evidence of the heritage of many centuries of political division and cultural diversity, which could not be erased by the official recognition of Florentine as Italy's national language. Interaction between different sectors of the national community, over the last 150 years, has therefore involved a far more complex process of language change in Italy than in most other European countries.

Spread, Competence, Attitudes

Francesco D'Ovidio, historian and linguist, is often said to combine desire to promote a *lingua viva* and Ascoli's realistic assessment of the process of language planning, rather than idealistic, patriotic or puristic expectations. Writing towards the end of the 19th century, this scholar predicted many factors in the spread of a national language, for example: the focus provided by a common capital; the intellectual and political activities of the new élites; the general participation in the life of the national community.

Tullio De Mauro in his seminal study on the spread of Italian in the national community (1970) reviewed the positions and predictions of different linguists. He finds that the role of Rome as the new capital – for centuries it was a centre of cosmopolitan clergy speaking Italian as a *lingua*

franca – was not comparable to that of Paris, London or Madrid, because the polycentric structure of Italy before unification survived for so long. Indeed regional capitals are still cultural foci today and they are more influential locally in matters of politics, economics or intellectual debate than is the national capital. In contrast to this marked decentralisation the first national governments imposed a highly centralised political and administrative structure. The national service in the unified army prescribed the sole use of the national language, and servicemen were posted to a different area, so as to encourage the development of a sense of national, rather than local, identity and so that Italy would have a supraregional army in times of social unrest or war. Another area that experienced the sudden imposition of the national language was the bureaucratic state. The adoption of common procedures and the appointment of administrators of different regional origin (though predominantly from the South) aimed to promote the national language, and to make employees loyal to the administration, and to the national state. The predominant southern presence led to the spread of habits and words typical of the Neapolitan administration imported by the Bourbons which included such terms as *disguidi* (hitches), *incartamenti* (files) and *cavilli* (quibbles).

There was a gradual standardisation of language in all state controlled activities, but as far as everyday language was concerned, the fact that models could not be monitored by official authorities introduced a situation of polymorphism, as diverse lexical alternatives were used in the Italian classics and survived in the literary tradition. De Mauro talked of a ‘synonymic hyperthropy’ accounting for the existence of two, sometimes three equivalent forms in Italian for some of the commonest lexical items, while other European languages have a single word.

<i>fo, faccio</i> :	(I do)
<i>vo, vado</i> :	(I go)
<i>alma, anima</i> :	(soul)
<i>augello, uccello</i> :	(bird)
<i>alloro, lauro</i> :	(laurel)
<i>visto, veduto</i> :	(seen)
<i>devo, debbo, deggio</i> :	(I must)
<i>dette, diede, dié</i> :	(he gave)
<i>ruscello, rivo, rio</i> :	(brook)
<i>sponda, riva, ripa</i> :	(bank)

This phenomenon persists in Italian today. De Mauro exemplifies it by the range of variants to say something fairly straightforward like ‘I must have seen your father’, which may be expressed in many different ways:

devo/debbo
aver[e] visto/veduto
[il] tuo padre/papà/babbo

These variants can produce a high number of combinations, such as *devo aver visto tuo papà, debbo aver[e] veduto il tuo babbo* or *devo aver[e] veduto tuo padre*, with a slight change of register, no change in meaning and almost no change across regions.

Schools were of course another major factor in the spread of the national language. The commitment shown by the school authorities to impose the 'good' models of the literary language led to such radical stigmatisation of the local dialects (called 'weeds'), that for the first 100 years the mastery of the national language in schools was simply used as an instrument of social selection. De Mauro (1970) cites the first Census of 1861, indicating that only 22% of the population were literate, and he finds this consistent with the estimate that 80% of speakers in Italy had had no previous contact with the spoken models of the national language. He suggests that the total number of Italian speakers at the time of unification (some 600,000, including 400,000 Tuscans and 70,000 Romans) amounted to 2.5% of the total population, while for 97.5% Italian was a foreign language. This estimate has been modified by Castellani (1982) who claims that there must have been a large sector of population (10%) for whom Italian was neither a mother tongue nor a foreign language, and who were consequently able to understand it with little or no instruction, and that these speakers were able to use it as a second or additional language.

People for whom Italian was a true foreign language were confined to rural communities, where the dialect was the sole medium of communication, and where this language had survived through the centuries often uncontaminated by external contacts. After unification the isolation of rural communities and their linguistic conservatism were challenged by what became the most influential factor in the spread of the national language: internal migration. With the abolition of internal frontiers and customs duties the unified market found it more profitable to concentrate capital and manpower in a few urban agglomerations. New industrial belts developed fast around a number of cities, and rural and agricultural occupations were abandoned in favour of factory jobs. There were two major patterns of mobility, accounting for the major linguistic changes within the Peninsula. One direction of migration was across regions, mainly from the rural south to the industrialised north; the other was the urbanisation that took place in all regions, involving the general move from rural areas to small towns or large cities. In the course of the first 100 years a great number of people abandoned the country in favour of factory work in cities,

though in 1961 the majority of Italians (60%) were still employed in agriculture and only 40% in industry or in service industries.

In 1861 only 3.5 million (23.6% of the population) out of 26 million people were working in industry (mainly as craftsmen) while the remaining three-quarters of the population were employed in rural and agricultural occupations. This picture of a country predominantly inhabited by people living in rural communities is confirmed by the distribution of the population. In 1861 there were only 52 towns with a population of over 20,000 (none of which was in Venezia Tridentina, Umbria, Abruzzi and Basilicata). By 1961, 325 towns had over 20,000 inhabitants (46% of the total population). In 1861 there were 20 towns with a population of at least 50,000 inhabitants (Torino, Alessandria, Milano, Padova, Venezia, Verona, Trieste, Genova, Bologna, Ferrara, Ravenna, Modena, Firenze, Livorno, Lucca, Roma, Napoli, Palermo, Messina and Catania). Of these 12 were in northern Italy, four in the centre and four in the south. Fifty years later (1911) the number of large towns in Italy had more than doubled, and by 1961 there were almost 100 with 17 million people (34% of the population) out of a total of 48 million.

For De Mauro Italian towns, whatever their size, were the driving force for the spread of the national language. They created opportunities for the circulation of new professional terms. They modified the village vernaculars and evolved the local dialects into more regional forms. They provided the melting pots for contact between dialects which were not mutually accessible, especially when their speakers moved to different regions and from the south to the north. If the intraregional mobility brought a challenge to the linguistic isolation of many dialect-speaking communities, inter-regional migration provided the major impulse for the promotion of the national language with the function of a true lingua franca to overcome the problems of the country's rich linguistic diversity. The vernaculars spoken in the abandoned rural areas faded away losing entire communities of speakers, and the old dialects spoken in regional capitals rapidly lost vitality and currency once these were transformed into major inter-regional agglomerations.

The adoption of Italian and the abandonment of the local language were welcomed by the literary and educated circles – predominantly of middle class extraction – as a transition from *parlare sporco* (talking wrongly) to *parlare pulito* (talking right) (D'Ovidio, 1895). Yet in the eyes of ordinary people and sometimes of the upper classes – especially where the local dialect was strongly supported by historical traditions – the affected attempt to Italianise everyday spoken language was seen as an expression of ostentation. De Mauro recalls ironic comments common throughout Italy ridiculing the new linguistic habits of the recently urbanised bourgeoisie.

Milanese: *parla come te manget* ('speak as you eat')

Salentine: *kunta komu t'á fattu màmma-ta* ('talk as your mother made you')

Sicilian: *parrari cu la lingua di fora* ('talk with your tongue out')

Roman: *come parleggiate scicche!* ('how chic you talk')

Neapolitan: *parla comma t'ha fatto mamma-te* ('speak as your mother made you')

In Piedmont today one can still hear: *l'italicano, o parlarlo binno, o parlarlo gnanca!* (Italian, speak it well or not at all!). Strongly supported by a patriotic bourgeoisie believing in the unificatory impact of the national language but stigmatised by other social groups (who felt estranged from the political manoeuvres of the new state) the national language found another major source of impulse in the First World War. The need to replace local dialects with a common language became urgent: the war highlighted the difficulty of commanding a national army which did not share a national language, and also the dramatic disorientation of soldiers who were not supported by competent and understanding military authorities. With the rhetoric and patriotism inherited from a long war and a bloody victory, Italy entered the most unfortunate phase of language deprivation and linguistic nationalism under Fascism.

The Fascist Language Policy

Nationalistic tendencies predated the 20-odd years (1922–1943) of the Fascist regime (Raffaelli 1984). Mengaldo (1994) points out that, despite the explicit and noisy Fascist campaign, there was, in reality, widespread tolerance either because measures were seen as controversial or because their implementation was inefficient. There were three main objectives in the nationalistic campaign: (1) repression of the dialects; (2) opposition to the linguistic minorities; (3) purification of the national language through the exclusion of foreign words, and the prescription of selected forms considered to be more 'Italian' (the allocution *voi* instead of *lei*).

The Fascist school policies date from 1923 and the first initiative was to suppress a reform (*Dal dialetto alla lingua*: 'From dialect to language') designed to introduce dialects and folk literature texts into schools as a basis for better teaching. In the first ten years the regime censored the use of dialects and from 1933 their very existence was ignored. The suppression of a newspaper in Genovese vernacular, *Il Successo*, explicitly showed not only Fascist intolerance of regional cultures, but also the weakness of a regime that feared any popular initiative which might emerge outside its control (Coveri, 1984). Even stronger measures were applied to eradicate minority languages, which gradually lost their status as media of instruction in those