

anglistica^{aion}

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL



UniorPress

Anglistica AION an interdisciplinary journal

A peer-reviewed journal, published twice a year by Università degli studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”

Editor

Jane Wilkinson

Editorial committee

Silvana Carotenuto

Iain Chambers

Anna Maria Cimitile

Rossella Ciocca

Lidia Curti (honorary member, founder of *Anglistica* – New Series)

Donatella Izzo

Jocelyne Vincent

Editorial assistant

Serena Guarracino

International Advisory Board

Philip Armstrong, *University of Canterbury, NZ*

Bill Ashcroft, *University of New South Wales, Australia*

Rey Chow, *Brown University, USA*

David Crystal, *University of Wales, Bangor, UK*

Richard Dyer, *King’s College, University of London, UK*

Susan Stanford Friedman, *University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA*

Simon Gikandi, *Princeton University, USA*

Paul Gilroy, *London School of Economics, UK*

Stuart Hall, *The Open University, UK*

Isaac Julien, *London, UK*

Yamuna Kachru, *University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA*

Angela McRobbie, *Goldsmiths, University of London, UK*

Penny Siopis, *University of the Witwatersrand, SA*

Sidonie Smith, *University of Michigan, USA*

Trinh T. Minh-ha, *University of California, Berkeley, USA*

Marina Warner, *University of Essex, UK*

Zoë Wicomb, *University of Strathclyde, UK*

Robyn Wiegman, *Duke University, USA*

Donald Winford, *Ohio State University, USA*

© Università degli studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”

ISSN: 2035-8504

Table of Contents

Introduction

Giuseppe Balirano, Julia Bamford and Jocelyne Vincent

Editors' Introduction 1

Essays

Jocelyne Vincent

Varieties of Variation, and the Variation of Varieties: An Introductory Essay 9

Giuseppe Balirano and Bronwen Hughes

Identity-building and Language Variation in AVT 27

Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli

Variation in Persuasive Financial Discourse: Face-to-Face vs. Teleconference Earnings Presentations 41

Emilia Di Martino

When the Same Book Speaks Two Different Languages. Identity and Social Relationships across Cultures in the Italian Translation of *The Uncommon Reader* 57

Siria Guzzò

A Contact Variety of English: The Case of the Bedford Italian Community 85

Maria Cristina Nisco

Language and Identity in the United States: The case of Gullah 101

Suzanne Romaine

“It snuck in so smooth and slippery we didn’t even hear it”: How *snuck* snuck up on *sneaked* 127

Francesca Vigo

Pragmatic Strategies in Casual Multiparty ELF Conversations 147

Reviews

Maria Cristina Aiezza

Giuliana Garzone, Maurizio Gotti eds., *Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise. Genres and Trends* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011) 165

Eleonora Esposito

Edgar Schneider, *English around the World: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 171

Books Received 173

The introduction to this issue of *Anglistica* on variation and varieties in English is divided into two parts, the first our joint presentation of the papers in the issue and the second a monographical essay dealing a little further with some of the theoretical and definitional, taxonomic and terminological issues involved in variation studies. This gives us an opportunity not only to present the single contributions, but also to begin to explore and extrapolate issues arising from them, in order also to put them into the wider picture of studies on language variation. Some important issues emerge from the papers, some separately and some common to all. We shall inevitably only be able to mention a few of these, leaving other points to be made by the authors' own voices.

Fluidity of distinctive categories

One of the first things to strike us when trying to categorise these papers and wondering whether and how to divide the issue into sections, was that just as variation in language/s and among speakers is not neat, characterised by interconnection, fluidity and complexity, so will the discussion of any one aspect inevitably also involve others. We believe that our not dividing the papers into neatly categorised sections, and our reasons for this, constitute our (albeit small) contribution, to the field, or at least to the debate. In fact, we believe that the field of language variation and varieties needs some clearer thinking regarding its complexity, its organisational or categorial parameters, as well as its terminology. The arbitrary alphabetical ordering of the papers we have chosen is less ideological than forcing them into polarised categories and reflects this need for further clarification.

The papers differently and variously deal with variation on what have been called, for example, the 'user', as against the 'use' dimensions, and could be seen to variously illustrate aspects of what others have called 'diatopical', 'diastratic', 'diaphasic' and 'diamesic' variation, or again intra- or inter-speaker, or intra- or inter-language variation. They also deal with different types of authentic or 'mediated' fictional representations, written, oral or multi-modal data, mono-lingual, multilingual and interlingual texts, and all these aspects within or between languages in translation. The approaches also display and use a variety of methodological approaches. None of the papers would have been satisfactorily confined in one of a single contrastive set among those above without thus neglecting other important intertwined aspects or characteristics.

Let us take, for example, the widely recognised and seemingly simple and all-encompassing distinction between the macro-parameters of variation according to 'user' and 'use' which might at first glance have allowed us to see some of the papers as entering into two neatly distinct sections.

The paper by Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli, dealing as it does with ESP, or more specifically new sub-genres of English for Professional Purposes, would alone perhaps enter apparently non-problematically into the realm of ‘use’ varieties, or the ‘diaphasic’ ‘diatype’, ‘register’, ‘genre’ or ‘discourse types’, rather than into the ‘dialectal’, ‘diatopical’, ‘diastratic’, ‘user’ type (the variety of terms and subdivisions just mentioned hint at the somewhat problematic terminological question, addressed in the essay by Jocelyne Vincent which follows). Crawford Camiciottoli examines some persuasive strategies in two corpora of financial presentations that represent some of the most common interactional settings in today’s global financial community: face-to-face and teleconference presentations of financial results. However, the speakers and listeners in these contexts of ‘use’ are also invested with professional roles, identity issues and personal expertise which play an important part in manipulating the appropriate register/type; thus ‘user’ characteristics, are also relevant. Moreover, the speakers from the various large corporations in the two corpora have a dual purpose when presenting their financial data; that of informing their listeners and that of promoting their company thus leading to a hybridisation of two discourse colonies:¹ the reporting and the promotional. Using Aristotle’s persuasive categories, pathos, logos and ethos, Crawford Camiciottoli focuses on two persuasive devices, logical connectors and hyperbole. She also provides a very useful extrapolated rhetorical macrostructure of the presentations in the two modalities, also highlighting the multiple goals and rhetorical strategies present in this hybrid business English genre. Indeed, her findings indicate that logical connectives and hyperbole are characterizing features of the genre itself which transcend the medium of interaction be it face-to-face or only through teleconferencing in which the participants were not co-present. Both are used to present financial results in the most positive way possible within the regulatory constraints governing financial disclosures. Her speakers are also, incidentally, using English as an international lingua franca (seen by some as a user type of variety), and, at any rate in situations where the audience and users whether non-natives or native are all experts in the specialist field of discourse involved. So, even with Crawford Camiciottoli’s data there are multiple issues involved.

At first glance, Emilia Di Martino’s paper seems to deal mainly with variation according to ‘user’ characteristics (those pertaining to royalty and gay speakers, for example) and on how variables are perceived and represented as indexing their special, or ‘uncommon’, social status and/or their gender identities, in other words their ‘alterity’. However it also explicitly deals with ‘style’ and in particular ‘tenor’ (terms traditionally connected to the ‘use’ category of variation),² in that attention is paid to the interlocutor in the context of situation, the interpersonal relationship with one’s interlocutor, the effects one wants to have on him/her. Affective attitude guiding language or stylistic choice can be discerned as a key underlying issue. She appeals to literary sociolinguistics and translation studies to discuss how these represented stylistic characteristics travel across languages, under the guidance of a specific mediator or translator who is herself a user with a gender and ideology

¹ Vijay Bhatia, “The Power and Politics of Genre”, *World Englishes*, 16.3 (1997), 359-371.

² The terminological instability of these terms, such as ‘style’ which seems to have now crossed over to include personal styling of identity, as in, for example, Nikolas Coupland, *Style: Language Variation and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), is discussed, among other ‘unstable’ terms, in the next introductory essay in this volume by Jocelyne Vincent.

which one can perhaps extrapolate from her translation choices in Italian. Di Martino's essay too thus is also dealing with interlocking issues.

Francesca Vigo's paper could also be seen to be relevant to either or both of the user and use types of variation. Vigo presents data in mixed intercultural settings where English is being used as a lingua franca. Whether English as a Lingua Franca is to be thought of, however, as a variety of English as such she hints at as problematic. She stretches the definition of ELF, since, in both exchanges she analyses (from a wider corpus collected in the field) there is a native speaker participating; whichever language is being used for intercultural interaction purposes, who is using it (whether native or non-native speakers)³ and who is co-present, the speakers will vary the use of those resources across instances of use and interlocutors. She focuses however, ultimately, on the relationship between intelligibility and successful communication rather than on the variation issue, on how even limited linguistic resources may still be successfully deployed by speakers, using various pragmatic strategies presumably based, as she hints at, on some universal intercultural pragmatic competence and goodwill.

Variation according to user would indeed be more traditionally exemplified by Siria Guzzo's focus on the English used by the young 3rd generation Italian community in Bedford, U.K. Here we have an example of the use of canonical variationist methodology tracing the frequency of certain distinguishing phonological variables as markers of ethnic identity. Indices of an ethnolect in the first-wave manner of sociolinguistics.

Another immediately recognisable exemplar of a user variety would be Gullah, the focus of Cristina Nisco's paper which engages with the status and function of this English-based creole which evolved along the coastline of the Southern United States. Gullah, is of course, also a typical contact variety and is concerned with speakers' identity stakes through language choice. It is currently classed as an endangered minority language, although this is also controversial,⁴ for the moment, at least on the basis of evidence from the web, and from the outside looking in, we can certainly say that it is at least "mythically alive",⁵ that it has enormous affective importance for those who identify with the Gullah or Geechee culture which also helps to demonstrate how much symbolic value a variety or language can have. The interest of the paper also revolves around the enabling function of the web in the maintenance, and indeed, empowerment and revival of endangered minority varieties or languages.⁶ The web may even eventually add the written or diamesic dimension of functions to Gullah, we suspect.

'Identity' is indeed a key concept in five out of the seven contributions in our issue, but none more so perhaps than in the papers by Cristina Nisco and Siria Guzzo. Guzzo, as we saw, investigates the language of the Italian community of Bedford, a multiethnic town in the south-east of England where the current language situation is especially interesting because the community today consists mostly of L1 English speakers of the 2nd and 3rd generation of Italians. Her findings lead her to posit the hypothesis that some phonological features of Italian might have

³ See also the debate on the viability of this distinction; it is not an irrelevant distinction since it involves power asymmetry.

⁴ See, for example, Salikoko S. Mufwene, "The Ecology of Gullah's Survival", *American Speech*, 72.1 (1997), 69-83.

⁵ Seamus Heaney told us in 1986 that Irish Gaelic was "mythically alive"; see "The Loaded Weapon", episode 8 on the Irish Question of the BBC's *The Story of English* video series (by Robert McNeil et al).

⁶ We happily remind readers of the point as already made by Geoff Nunberg's 1996 Fresh Air broadcast talk on this, "The Whole World Wired", which we published in print in an earlier *Anglistica* issue: *English and the Other*, 3.1, (1999), 229-231.

been maintained and transmitted across the generations and used as ways for her informants to show their ethnic identity thus signalling membership of the Italian community. These 2nd and 3rd generations were indeed found to perceive themselves as having a strong Italian identity although their actual Italian language competence varied widely and in some cases was very rudimentary.

Suzanne Romaine's paper concerns, among other important diachronic issues, inter-speaker or user variation (diatopical and diastratic), but also tackles intra-speaker variation, in that the lexical variable (the past tense form of the verb 'sneak': 'sneaked' vs. 'snuck') whose frequency of occurrence she tracks, varies not only between different American and British speakers (as documented in the various types of corpora), but also on different diaphasic or register dimensions of the use type, e.g. for formality and for different purposes (jocularly, among them). Moreover, this demonstrates that a user can also assume or play with other users' lects, or fragments of them, for different purposes (or uses); as is also argued in Vincent's introductory essay, no one is necessarily restricted always to one single identity or role, just as they are not restricted to one single register.

Balirano and Hughes' paper on the audio-visual translation of the film *Eat Pray Love* (in particular, on the 'Eat' part set in Rome) concerns rather more the rendering not of intra-language variation but of multilingual usage (i.e. inter-language variation between and among languages, enacted both by a speaker and by the work to be translated). Thus it also deals with issues of language contact and intercultural interaction, with Anglos as non-native speakers living (eating, praying, loving, indeed) in other countries and the speech of native speakers of other languages represented – among them Italian (with its sociolinguistic differences) embedded in the original mainly English-medium film.

In Balirano and Hughes' paper we can also see, for example, affective loading and social stereotyping of particular diatopical/diastratic varieties at work as these are re-routed by the Italian adaptors for the Italian audience. They mutate an original Roman landlady into a stereotypical though incongruous Sicilian one – with a decidedly low diastratic variety representation of a southern diatopic variety of Italian, presumably to dip into and evoke the negative stereotypes they, controversially, believe are more appropriate to the contextual identity of the landlady. There is also a further controversial choice made by the adaptors when they 'mutate' the American visitor in search of her own personal identities, but in Rome mainly merely looking to learn the language and enjoy the food, into a competent near-native speaker of Italian looking to nourish herself rather with high Italian culture, as if this higher role/identity for an Italian setting were more acceptable to an Italian audience.

Perhaps only the two reviews we are pleased to also host, the first by Maria Cristina Aiezza of *Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise, Genres and Trends* (ed. by Giuliana Garzone and Maurizio Gotti) and the second by Eleonora Esposito of *English around the world* (by Edgar Schneider), could unequivocally and more neatly have stood in for concern with the use and user variety types, respectively.

Methods and types of data

What all the papers do have in common, as hinted at above, is undoubtedly their empirical approach, their concern with collecting and analysing authentic data and presenting it for discussion rather than engaging in unsupported theoretical speculation. This constitutes perhaps the issue's main merit. Some of the papers deal with naturally occurring usage data collected in the field; spontaneous oral (Guzzo, Vigo), carefully prepared spoken (Crawford Camiciottoli), written (Romaine, Di Martino), multimodal and/or multimedia data (Balirano and Hughes). The web and social media are present as context of use (Nisco), as archive and/or as data corpus (Nisco, Romaine). Some papers examine metalinguistic data, rather than only usage, although also collected in the field (Nisco, Romaine). While some papers use quantitative methods (Crawford, Romaine, Guzzo) analysing both small specialised and larger general corpora, they also use a qualitative and ethnographic approach. Some of the data analysed in Di Martino and Balirano/Hughes is from single sets of parallel 'texts', in the case of the literary works they examine (written and filmic respectively) where the given, published Italian versions are compared in detail to the original.

Guzzo and Vigo record and transcribe naturally occurring oral interactions, for their different analytical level foci (phonological and pragmatic, respectively). Crawford also analyses mainly oral textual data (collected personally and transcribed by her, supplemented by transcriptions made available to her) as well as further oral data from personal interviews. Her data consists of partially scripted, meticulously prepared, oral texts, but with many 'interactional' asides in the co-presence situations. She tantalisingly hints at multimodal aspects such as accompanying gesture and 'powerpoint' texts but limits her attention here to the strictly verbal, textual aspects of the two diamesic types of financial reports constituting her two corpora.

Romaine analyses an impressive amount of written usage and metalinguistic data of various sorts from a wide array of corpora and written resources, on the look-out for occurrences and frequencies of 'sneaked' and 'snuck'. She marshals a wide variety of corpora ranging from the diachronic to the synchronic, mono-genre to multi-genre, in addition to the vast resources of Google Books which provide an opportunistic corpus to compare variation and observe change over time. These are used to check existing data from dictionaries and language blogs and they provide us both with an example of how to use multiple resources and how language can vary in unexpected ways. We must add that it also communicates a contagious enthusiasm for the search, which drives one to not give up until one gets a clue or an answer to some query, to not trust labelling or dating, but to also manually check. It is a lesson in methodology, on how to weed out false hits and interpret different types of data. A fascinating example of the 'treasure hunt' that Sali Tagliamonte mentions.⁷ Romaine's 'hunt' also, incidentally, reminds us that the wider than ever availability of texts (thanks to digital archiving) can show up the need to update even the most authoritative of sources, the Oxford English

⁷ Sali Tagliamonte, *Variationist Sociolinguistics: Change, Observation, Interpretation* (London: Wiley, 2012), 349.

Dictionary (for example, on the first attestations of ‘sneak’). Her discussion and attentive use of data raise and unearth indeed many fundamental issues pertaining to language variation and change. Issues implicated, for example, are the role of language attitudes to standard and sub-standard varieties and/or variables, the pathway from colloquial and comedic to generally unmarked usage, the direction of influence from below as widening usage bubbles upwards to be found in that of prestigious writers which in turn influences further upwards the acceptance even by usage panels. Careful documentation reveals, furthermore, the fact that under these conditions, the direction of change may be from regular to irregular forms rather than the more usual movement towards regularisation.

Nisco deals with mainly written metalinguistic data, in that what she finds on the web is mainly talk *about* Gullah rather than talk *in* Gullah, also collected with a definite touch of the treasure hunt from dedicated sites and blogs for evidence of the use of and attitudes to Gullah.

Vigo’s data, in which she looks for pragmatic or discourse strategies, consists of two multiparty exchanges selected from a larger corpus of intercultural exchanges collected in the field and in similar circumstances to Meierkord’s,⁸ in student digs and university common rooms and offices in Britain with a multicultural mix of interactants. Recordings (even only audio recordings such as hers) of authentic, naturally occurring spontaneous ‘mundane’ interaction, and doubly so, of intercultural interaction, are difficult to come by, ethically (and without observer paradox complications), and the exchanges she presents are thus also useful documentary contributions.

Siria Guzzo’s paper, as mentioned above, represents for us the archetypal variationist sociolinguistic attention to the collection of data. Using both participant observation methods and the more conventional sociolinguistic investigative techniques such as questionnaires, she recorded a number of young speakers of Italian origin and their Anglo equivalents, focussing in particular on single phonological variables, the so-called FACE diphthong and the (de)aspiration of voiceless stops /p, t, k/ discernible in the speech of two informants, English L1 speakers of 3rd generation Italian origin, one male and one female. She also describes the slow process of getting to know the informants and gradually winning their confidence in order to be able to record their conversations and interview them without incurring the problem of the observer’s paradox. We leave it, as we said, to the authors’ own voices to naturally present their data and their more detailed discussion of points, and to the following essay by Vincent to lay out a few more general and relevant methodological issues, and especially to attempt to issue some important terminological caveats.

We would like to close here by stressing, as does the next essay, that recognising varieties of variation and variation in varieties (in other words in all our language activity), gives us an insight into something fundamental about human nature, culture and society: that we are all individually multiple, fluid, capable of changing, negotiating, manipulating, constructing or creating our social reality and identities

⁸ Cristiane Meierkord, “Interpreting Successful Lingua Franca Interaction. An Analysis of Non-native-/Non-native Small Talk Conversations in English”, <http://www.linguistik-online.com/1_00/MEIERKOR.HTM>, 19 November 2012.

and that of others through our use of language. By this we alter our perceptions and the perceptions of our interlocutors and thus participate in the small changes in culture and society which these papers help to bring to light. Recognising this reminds us that we can be agents and not necessarily only entrapped receivers of social order, at the mercy of others' meanings and evaluations, as long as we are linguistically rich, i.e. aware of and in charge of our linguistic resources, of our linguistic repertoires, and that these should be as wide and rich in varieties and variables as we can make them.

Varieties of Variation, and the Variation of Varieties: an Introductory Essay

¹ One need only mention *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, [1966] 2006); *The Study of Nonstandard English* (Washington, DC: National Council of Teachers of English, 1969); *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1972).

² See <<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayJournal?jid=lv>>.

³ See <<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayMoreInfo?jid=L SY&type=eb&sessionId=788318F0DBA6687C32483EEC570A07A4.journals>>.

⁴ The interested reader might see, however, e.g., Richard Hudson, “Sociolinguistics and the Theory of Grammar”, *Linguistics*, 24 (1986), 1073-1078; Leonie Cornips and Karen P. Corrigan, eds., *Syntax and Variation: Reconciling the Biological and the Social* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005).

⁵ See, for example, the discussion in Penelope Eckert, “Three Waves of Variation Study: The Emergence of Meaning in the Study of Variation”, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41 (2012), 87-100 (accessed pre-publication from <<http://www.stanford.edu/~eckert/thirdwave.html>> 16 August 2012: see also the useful short summary there).

⁶ Penelope Eckert, “Variation and the Indexical Order”, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 12.4 (2008), 453.

There is hardly any need to justify a focus on variation and variability in (a) language, or indeed, English, today. “Variability is inherent in human behaviour” said Suzanne Romaine in her introduction to her 1992 introductory book on sociolinguistics. It was manifestly not a new insight. A half century has indeed passed fruitfully since the pioneering studies by William Labov in the 1960s,¹ and the journal *Language Variation and Change* which he founded in 1989 and is still the chief editor of with its three issues a year,² as well as other even earlier established specialist journals, such as *Language in Society*, founded in 1972, with its five issues a year,³ all testify to the wide sociolinguistics enterprise’s rootedness, rigour and vigour. No full-blown discussion or overview of ways in which language variation is approached, is nor could be, attempted here given the wide range of issues it has come to concern and the disciplines interested in and variously illuminating it (from sociolinguistics, ethnographical and linguistic anthropology to critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, stylistics and syntactic theory, to name but a few). My aim is merely to touch on some of the aspects which might seem most relevant to this issue. I shall simply attempt to point to, if not clarify, a few of these (while leaving untouched many albeit important and currently elsewhere salient ones, for example the status of variability or variable rules in grammatical theory).⁴

I have chosen rather to address, for example, the different categories or varieties of variation and the varieties of mixing of varieties, and especially the potential confusion that could arise from the as yet wide and diverse range of taxonomic terms still found in the various fields and approaches of sociolinguistics, after having first attempted to point to something of the variation in variation studies, if only to provide a hint of some of the bumps and (albeit shallow) potholes in the terrain.

Variations in variation studies/varieties of variationism

The field of variation studies has recently witnessed what might seem internal critiques to previous approaches or ‘waves’ of study.⁵ These include, for instance, that of traditional sociolinguistics or variationist sociolinguistics as being thwart with mistaken supposedly linguistics-centric ideas of staticity, rigidity, correlationism, and of fixed social categories and immobility. I shall purposely not engage with the debates, but shall assume that insights can usefully be had from all sides.

The view that earlier sociolinguistics should be criticised because of its “viewing the social as a fixed and external structure that is only reflected in linguistic variability”,⁶ as Eckert says – while not denying the usefulness of work done in the earlier traditions she herself was trained in under its founding father, William Labov – would not necessarily, in my opinion, make the findings of any single

research on the diffusion of single variables incompatible with the work and insights coming from research findings in linguistic anthropology, or other fields which more explicitly see language as situated social practice and believe that what should be explicitly foregrounded is the construction of social meaning through linguistic practice.

Quantitative generalizations of the sort made in survey studies are important, but exploring the meaning of variation requires that we examine what lies beneath those generalizations. The very fact that the same variables may stratify regularly with multiple categories – e.g. gender, ethnicity, and class – indicates that their meanings are not directly related to these categories but to something that is related to all of them. In other words, variables index demographic categories not directly but indirectly (Silverstein 1985), through their association with qualities and stances that enter into the construction of categories.⁷

⁷ Ibid., 455.

We can all agree that there might have been a danger in isolating social categories and not see them as often mixing. All we need do, however, is remember that language is at the service of social beings, and it is by looking at the different ways we speak – among them even latching on to single variables – that we can *get at* the social categories and how we see them, our ideological work.⁸

These single variables *will* also bunch together, as discourse styles. We should also want to look at them not only in isolation – but that is what we do when looking at a speech style or a specific speech style. Something catches our attention because it seems to be characteristic of a particular group. As Nikolas Coupland says, “the world is full of social styles. Part of our social competence is being able to understand these indexical links – how a style marks out or indexes a social difference – and to read their meanings.... Reading the meaning of a style is inherently a contrastive exercise”.⁹

⁸ As we shall also suggest, fragments of registers, single ‘marked’ variables, can indeed function singly as acts of identity or alterity, when embedded, in quoting or crossing or hosting or mimicking or mixing (as, perhaps, when a 3rd generation Italian in Bedford pronounces a phoneme in a particular way, for example).

Penelope Eckert’s approach to the study of social meaning in variation is to build upon linguistic-anthropological theories of indexicality, in particular Michael Silverstein’s notion of indexical order.¹⁰ She argues that:

⁹ Nikolas Coupland, *Style: Language Variation and Identity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

the meanings of variables are not precise or fixed but rather constitute a field of potential meanings – an *indexical field*, or constellation of ideologically related meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable. The field is fluid, and each new activation has the potential to change the field by building on ideological connections. Thus variation constitutes an indexical system that embeds ideology in language and that is in turn part and parcel of the construction of ideology. This concept leaves us with a new (that is, an additional) enterprise of studying variation as an indexical system, taking meaning as a point of departure rather than the sound changes or structural issues....¹¹

¹⁰ Eckert refers us to Michael Silverstein, “Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life”, *Language and Communication*, 23 (2003), 193-229.

It is indeed advisable to work with insights and findings accumulated from different approaches; top down or bottom up, the chicken or the egg. At any rate, surely no one in linguistics today would quibble with her view that “ultimately the variation (and the entire linguistic) enterprise must be integrated into a more comprehensive understanding of language as social practice”.¹²

¹¹ Eckert, “Indexical Field”, 454.

¹² Ibid., 453.

With no stakes in any one school, except in that of common sense and guided intuition – as privileged multilingual, trans-culturalists with a vast repertoire of our own fragments from many registers, and of an age to remember how revolutionary and corrective insights from early sociolinguistics once were – we, the editors, favour eclecticism and taking what can be gleaned from (rigorous) research from any approach.

Critiques of synchrony are also slightly misplaced. Looking at moments in time of the way variables and their social meanings correlate does not exclude believing that things can change under whatever pressures or agency. It *is* just a ‘snapshot’, a convenient fiction in order to stop the flow for a second so as to be able to describe the ‘enregistered’ or indexical order at any one time. Change or mobility (in time or place) implies that there is something that changes from one state to another; a state does not entail being actually static, for all time. We do not feel that this was ever believed even by the strong correlationists described by Eckert in her account of the first waves of sociolinguistics, nor indeed by Nikolas Coupland. William Labov himself offers as far as I can find no counter-arguments, and presumably has no feeling he must.¹³ Is this the point? We cannot say everything all at once, right from the start, or is it because the world has changed so the descriptive paradigm must change, simply, that this new view is only an evolution the genes were there all the time?

¹³ His review of a fairly recent work of hers could hardly be more enthusiastic: see William Labov, review of Penelope Eckert, *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice, Language in Society*, 31 (2002), 277-284.

At any rate, constructionism and ‘indexing’ also assume (commonsensically) that there is something (socially constructed perhaps – but there anyway) to be pointed at and which others see as correlated to bits of identity; the constructionist ‘discourse’, while also speaking of ‘indexing’ seems – in apparent contradiction – to exclude it. It seems to exclude correlationism or correspondence, that something stands for or points to something else, or even that there is a system (a critique of Saussurean structuralism as well as of synchrony). Again, however, we see no real problem. If you construct something, together with others – social meaning is a joint construction – that something then exists, for it to be an index of something, until it shifts to become something else through further redefining by social practice.

Whether you look at the practice – call it ‘style’, contextualised use of a register, dialect or single item quoting – rather than only at *who* is doing it, but also at *what* it means, what *role* it is playing for what *purpose*, for which *identity*, how the speaker is *styling* him/herself or the context, then we all know how to interpret it, if we are competent speakers/hearers of a language (the specific bundle of varieties and variables that bunch together, in a structured way, however momentarily, to constitute that agglomerate entity given a specific language name). There can be no meaning without some sort of system of structured difference. In the introduction to his book, while also giving us a useful overview of different sociolinguistic perspectives, Coupland points to the complexity of language variation in urban settings and how the “linguistic and human density invites an analysis in terms of ‘structured difference’”.¹⁴ He continues:

¹⁴ Coupland, *Style*, 2.

Cities challenge the view that one discrete social style (e.g. a dialect) is associated with one place, which was the basic assumption in the analysis of rural dialects. It has become the norm to consider cities as sociolinguistic systems that organise linguistic variation in complex ways. But understanding the social structuring of styles, even in the sophisticated manner of urban sociolinguistics, is not enough in itself. We need to understand how people use or enact or perform social styles for a range of symbolic purposes. Social styles (including dialect styles) are a resource for people to make many different sorts of personal and interpersonal meaning.¹⁵

¹⁵ Ibid.

According to Coupland, variationist sociolinguistics – where the term ‘style’ was actually first used in sociolinguistics – should “move on from the documenting of social styles or dialects themselves”, from the sociolinguistics of dialects, i.e. of users in their places, to analyse rather the “creative, design-oriented processes through which social styles are activated in talk and, in that process, remade or reshaped. This means focusing on particular moments and contexts of speaking where people use social styles as resources for meaning-making. It means adding a more active and verbal dimension (‘styling social meaning’) to sociolinguistic accounts of dialect (‘describing social styles’).¹⁶

¹⁶ Ibid.

While the sociolinguistic enterprise, we could say, did tend to look more at what might be called ‘user’ categories, it is fair to say that the ‘use’ dimension was innovatively actually first focused on in the 1970s by the British functionalists who showed the way to looking at contextual and social meaning, and significantly at their construction. In his retrospective appreciation of Michael Halliday’s work, Alan Jones, says:

... our language on the one hand shapes the way we perceive the world we live in and, in particular, our social world; but, at the same time, through its rich potential for creating new meanings, it allows us to act upon and shape that world. Investigating language as a socially situated phenomenon, Halliday has revealed the invisible infrastructure of daily life, and of human relationships and identities. His functional linguistics, in detailing the nanomechanics of everyday talk and texts, has shown us how social actors both construct meaning and are embedded in constructed meaning. The meaning potential of language, made accessible in this way, is what gives us our ability to invent and innovate.¹⁷

¹⁷ Alan Jones, “An Appreciation of Halliday and his *Language as Social Semiotic*” (1978), in *International House Journal*, 28 (2010).

Registers and genres can indeed also be said to index users’ chosen (and constructed) role identities, as well as other aspects of the context of use. The Gumperzes’ interpretive interactional sociolinguistics had also opened our eyes to the social construction of meaning and the non-given-ness of the “parameters and boundaries within which we create our social identities” such as gender, ethnicity, class, and that “[t]he study of language as interactional discourse demonstrates that these parameters are not constants that can be taken for granted but are communicatively produced”.¹⁸ The social constructivist notions have been around for some time.

¹⁸ John J. Gumperz and Jenny Cook-Gumperz, “Introduction: Language and the Communication of Social Identity”, in John J. Gumperz, ed., *Language and Social Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

Apart from different perspectives, which are ultimately reconcilable or anyway combinable, other perhaps more serious problems do arise, the potholes appear, when reading different authors from different traditions and even different

continents, in the variety of metalinguistic terms used in the field, and the variety of meanings given to some of the terms (*register* and *style*, chief among them). One can see no value, however, in pitting approaches against each other; it is more useful to blend insights and look for compatibilities; to look for the underlying reality unearthed by different approaches, and behind the sometimes disconcerting variety of terms for types of variation.

Varieties of variation and variable terms

As if the uncertainties and the vagaries of instability, mobility and variability in our social lives and identities and language resources in this late-modern, globalised world of ours were not enough,¹⁹ the student (and scholar) and would-be analyst, also has to face the subtleties of the range of scholarly approaches but more seriously the extreme variability of terminology in the field. A little terminological and conceptual overview and caveat might thus help, if only to signal things a ‘terminological vice-squad’ ought to perhaps take care of, but also to try to further set the scene as an introduction for the papers in our issue, and not least to try to help ourselves and our students with some signposting.

To start over again very simply, variation in a language (English in this case), i.e. *intra*-lingual variation, can be visualised along different sets of parameters or dimensions. The most basic, classically recognised type of variation, perhaps, is that across time, *diachronic* variation. As even non-linguists know, all languages change over time. What was perhaps less well generally appreciated, although it has been affirmed by sociolinguists for the last sixty years or so, as we have seen and will further see, is that variation also occurs on the *synchronic* dimension. At no one time, is any language homogeneous, “the normal condition of the speech community is a heterogeneous one. Moreover, heterogeneity is an integral part of the linguistic economy of the community, necessary to satisfy the linguistic demands of everyday life”.²⁰ At any single time, one can take a snapshot of a language, as it were, and see that “no language is as monolithic as our descriptive grammars sometimes suggest; wherever sufficient data are available, we find diversity within languages on all levels – phonological, grammatical, and lexical. Such diversity can be studied along three synchronic dimensions – geographical, social, and stylistic”.²¹ David Britain also reminds us that their “sociolinguistic variationist enterprise begins on the premise that dialect variation is far from free or haphazard, but is governed by what Weinreich, Labov and Herzog called ‘orderly heterogeneity’ – structured variation”.²² And just to close the circle, let us also just mention here that it has been long generally agreed that “[n]ot all variability and heterogeneity in language structure involves change; but all change involves variability and heterogeneity”.²³

It is on the macro-dimension of synchronic variation that disparate terminological and conceptual distinctions are rife, even after all these years, and which might thus bear a little attention. One of the simplest and easiest distinctions to visualise and therefore most immediately insight-bearing and best to mention or recall first,

¹⁹ So effectively described in Jan Blommaert, *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization. Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), and hinted at in Coupland cited earlier.

²⁰ Uriel Weinreich, William Labov and Marvin Herzog, “Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change”, in William Lehmann & Yakov Malkiel, eds., *Directions for Historical Linguistics* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 17; cit. in Sali Tagliamonte *Analysing Sociolinguistic Variation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

²¹ William Bright and Attipat K. Ramanujan, “Sociolinguistic Variation and Linguistic Change”, *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists*, Cambridge, Mass. 1964; reprinted in John B. Pride and Janet Holmes, eds., *Sociolinguistics - Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 157.

²² David Britain, “Sociolinguistic Variation”, <<http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/1054#ref11>>, 15 August 2012.

²³ Weinreich et al., “Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change”, 188.

is probably the British functionalist M.A.K. Halliday's still very useful macro-distinction of variation according to 'user' or 'use'²⁴ – which we did indeed help ourselves with in our joint editors' introduction above – which very roughly corresponds to the pair of methodological terms, respectively, 'dialect' and 'register' (or, for the latter, also notably and increasingly, 'style', or 'diatype', to use Gregory's 1967, curiously under-used, term).²⁵

The first term of the pair, 'dialect', or '-lect', refers to a variety of language defined largely by, or supposedly indexing, its user's regional or socioeconomic origins or status or gender – as Ruquaiya Hasan reminds us more specifically “different users, or more precisely, users belonging to different social groups or user types have different norms”. The second, 'register' or 'diatype', is a variety of language issuing from the social situation or context of use, where “different uses, different contextual configurations which activate the use of language – give rise over time to different varieties”.²⁶

Penelope Eckert has, like others, recently argued indeed, as we saw, for “a focus on the social meaning of variation, based in a study of stylistic practice”,²⁷ (reminiscent of the Halliday/Hasan approach too); she continues, in her article's abstract:

It is common in the study of variation to interpret variables as reflections of speakers' membership in social categories. Others have argued more recently that variables are associated not with the categories themselves but with stances and characteristics that constitute these categories. The paper reviews some variation studies that show that variables do not have static meanings, but rather general meanings that become more specific in the context of styles.²⁸

The term 'style', which I have been trying to mark along the way, as we can see has now entered the picture again as a technical term; unfortunately, and confusingly, however, it seems to range historically, and in the field today, between indicating either or both of the types of variation. However, it also seems now to be most associated with the 'third-wave' social identity and meaning or 'styling' approach, as we saw earlier centrally in Nikolas Coupland's work: “[i]t means adding a more active and verbal dimension ('styling social meaning') to sociolinguistic accounts of dialect ('describing social styles')”.²⁹ Penelope Eckert uses 'style', as we have seen, in a similar way, and with similar critical focus and intent. Asif Agha, in his important works uses 'register', however, to talk about what looks very much like what Coupland and Eckert refer to as 'style' in not only mentioning social practices which seem to concern the 'use' dimension, such as contextual types, such as “law, medicine ... the observance of respect and etiquette...”, but also 'user' “social status”.³⁰

We cannot naturally go into this further in what can, as an introduction, have no higher ambition than to merely hint at issues, except perhaps to put up warning signs, to point to the potential for confusion, and at least to the danger of identifying terminological labels unequivocally with single meanings, ironically in this field.

At any rate, '(a) variety' is the general sociolinguistic term unequivocally used since the 1980s at least to refer to instances of either or both 'user' and 'use' types

²⁴ Coined by Michael A. K. Halliday, in his groundbreaking “The Users and Uses of Language”, in M.A.K. Halliday, Angus McIntosh, and Peter Strevens, eds., *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* (London: Longman, 1964), 75-110.

²⁵ Michael Gregory, “Aspects of Varieties Differentiation”, *Journal of Linguistics*, 3 (1967), 177-197. 'Diatype' is, significantly and systematically used, when describing the Hallidayan parameters of variation, by Ruquaiya Hasan in her “Analysing Discursive Variation”, in Lynne Young and Claire Harrison, eds., *Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Continuum, 2004), 20-34.

²⁶ Hasan, “Discursive Variation”, 19.

²⁷ Eckert, “Indexical Field”, 453.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Coupland, *Style*, 2.

³⁰ Asif Agha, “Registers of Language”, in Alessandro Duranti, ed., *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology* (New York: Blackwell, 2004), 216; see also “Voicing, Footing, Enregisterment”, *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 15.1 (2005), 38-59.

of variation, not least for politically correct reasons of avoidance of the negative connotations accruing to ‘dialect’ outside sociolinguistics.

The nature, also, of the correspondence, or correlation, relationship between varieties and their users or uses, and the process of its development or production and interpretation by users was already in the forefront in the systemic functionalist school, and is a salient issue debated today. In the foreground are to be found the theoretical speculation, for example, of the type carried out by Coupland on ‘styling’, or by Agha concerning ‘en-register-ment’, and on ‘voicing’ and ‘footing’,³¹ or that specifically by linguist anthropologist Michael Silverstein culminating in his (more paradigmatic than syntagmatic) notion of ‘indexical order’ and developed in Eckert with the concept of ‘indexical field’. We cannot engage (adequately) nor need to here with the complexities involved in either of the Halliday/Hasan or Silverstein/Eckert approaches, except perhaps to suggest that they seem compatible.³² We can also usefully catch the notion from Silverstein that there are levels or ‘orders’ of correlation between, if one can put it that way, signifiers (or variables) and their social meanings (from first order ‘indicators’ through 2nd order ‘markers’ finally to 3rd order ‘stereotypes’ – to connect up also with Labov’s original ordering of dialectal variables: “[i]n Labov’s terms, *indicators* are dialectal variables that distinguish social or geographical categories but have attracted no notice and do not figure in variation across the formality continuum. *Markers* and *stereotypes* are variables that have attracted sufficient attention to emerge within those categories in stylistic variation”).³³ We can get a little further taste of *their* theoretical discourse style and terminology from Eckert’s account of how Silverstein’s treatment is different from the variationist view because of the:

ideological embedding of the process by which the link between form and meaning is made and remade. Participation in discourse involves a continual interpretation of forms in context, an in-the-moment assigning of indexical values to linguistic form. A form with an indexical value, what Silverstein calls an *n*th value usage, is always available for reinterpretation – for the acquisition of an *n*+1st value. Once established the new value is available for further construal, and so on.... Reconstruals are ‘always already immanent’ (2003: 194) precisely because they take place within a fluid and ever-changing ideological field. The emergence of an *n* + 1st indexical value is the result of an ideological move, a sidestepping within an ideological field. In order to understand the meaning of variation in practice, we need to begin with this ideological field, as the continual reconstrual of the indexical value of a variable creates, in the end, an *indexical field* An indexical field is a constellation of meanings that are ideologically linked. As such, it is inseparable from the ideological field and can be seen as an embodiment of ideology in linguistic form. I emphasize here that this field is not a static structure, but at every moment a representation of a continuous process of reinterpretation. The traditional view of a variable as having a fixed meaning is based in a static, non-dialectical, view of language. In this view, a variable is taken to ‘mean’ the same regardless of the context in which it is used, and while we know, for example, that variables may change their meanings over time, the mechanism for this process is not well understood.³⁴

In her description of the production process of style, we can also appreciate the question of the place of single variables being interesting not in themselves

³¹ Asif Agha, “Register”, 216-219; and “Voice, Footing, Enregisterment”, 38–59.

³² See Hasan’s account of the production of variation, in “Discursive Variation”, 36-46.

³³ Eckert, “Indexical Field”, 463.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 463-464.

but as component features of styles, separated out for notice, and significance, by ‘stylistic agents’:

By *stylistic practice*, I mean both the interpretation and the production of styles, for the two take place constantly and iteratively. Stylistic practice is a process of bricolage (Hebdige 1984), in which individual resources (in this case, variables) can be interpreted and combined with other resources to construct a more complex meaningful entity. This process begins when the stylistic agent perceives an individual or group style – perhaps the style will bring his or her attention to those who use it; perhaps the users will call attention to the style. But the noticing of the style and the noticing of the group or individual that uses it are mutually reinforcing, and the meaning of the style and its users are reciprocal. The style itself will be noticed in the form of features that the stylistic agent separates out for notice. Susan Gal and Judith Irvine (Irvine and Gal 2000; Irvine 2001) have provided an account of the semiotic processes by which categories of speakers and their linguistic varieties come to be perceived as distinct, as an ideological link is constructed between the linguistic and the social. These processes apply equally well to the construction of meaning for styles (Irvine 2001) and for individual variables. This process of selection is made against a background of previous experience of styles and features; a stylistic agent may be more attuned to particular kinds of differences as a function of past stylistic experience. ... Once the agent isolates and attributes significance to a feature, that feature becomes a resource that he or she can incorporate or not into his or her own style. The occurrence of that resource in a new style will change the meaning both of the resource and of the original style, hence changing the semiotic landscape.³⁵

³⁵ Ibid.

To continue, more simply now, and conveniently, with our looking at the ‘user’ dimension (from which we had not strayed very far, however, despite the change in terminology and focus on production or construction and indexing): the way we speak can thus be seen of course to vary, moreover, across speakers (i.e. there is inter-speaker variation), since it ‘indexes’ or conveys to our fellows to some degree (consciously and unconsciously) who we are (socially, culturally, ideologically, generationally, etc.), or choose to be, or wish to project to others as being, or ‘style ourselves’ as being, at any one time, where we come from and/or have lived most, our age or generation, our gender, our social or educational background, etc. This is because as speakers we know we can also usually be identified to some degree by others by our way (or ‘style’) of speaking, for example, English – from roughly to finely identifiable varieties or ‘dialects’, e.g. British as opposed to American or Irish or Indian English, Brighton modified RP as opposed to Rochdale modified RP, Cockney as opposed to Geordie, Philadelphia hip-hop or ‘Essex boy’ Estuary, or whatever, along intertwined geographical and social and generational and other ‘stylistic’ dimensions. The term ‘style’ comes to mind continuously, almost asking to be used, showing that it is still perhaps an indeterminate term, which like ‘variety’, or ‘way of speaking’ can indeed, cover for either or both types of variation – ‘user’, certainly, but also, since it is often used as a synonym of ‘register’ or in the context of rhetorical or discourse types, the ‘use’ dimension.

Agha refers to “cultural models of speech – a metapragmatic classification of discourse types – linking speech repertoires [of linguistic elements] to typifications of actor, relationship, and conduct”,³⁶ he too referring, in other words, to both

³⁶ Asif Agha, “Registers of Language”, 23.

‘user’ and ‘use’ aspects. And if this were not enough, Eckert says referring to her terminology:

This kind of style (what one might call *persona style*) is orthogonal to the formality continuum that is associated with style in traditional variation studies (e.g. Labov 1972). The focus on formality in these studies keeps the study of variation in the cognitive realm (see Eckert 2004) as it determines the amount of attention paid to speech, limiting stylistic agency to the manipulation of status in the socio-economic hierarchy. Styles associated with types in the social landscape bear an important relation to class, but not a direct one. They are the product of *enregisterment* (Agha 2003) and **I might call them registers were it not for the common use of the term in sociolinguistics to refer to a static collocation of features associated with a specific setting or fixed social category**. Asif Agha’s account (2005) of *enregistered voices* is quite precisely what I am talking about here, locating register in a continual process of production and reproduction. Sociolinguists generally think of styles as different ways of saying the same thing. In every field that studies style seriously, however, this is not so – style is not a surface manifestation, but originates in content. The view of style I present here precludes the separation of form from content, for the social is eminently about the content of people’s lives. Different ways of saying things are intended to signal different ways of being, which includes different potential things to say.³⁷

³⁷ Eckert, “Indexical Field”, 456; highlighting mine.

³⁸ Sali Tagliamonte confirms too, but less intolerantly, that ‘register’ and ‘style’ are often, unhelpfully, used interchangeably: *Analysing Sociolinguistic Variation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 34. What is worse is their crossing between macro-categories.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Coupland, *Style*; Eckert, “Three Waves” and “Indexical Field”.

⁴¹ Blommaert, *Globalisation*.

⁴² David DeCamp developed the concept of creole continuum specifically for the description of the linguistic situation in Jamaica: David De Camp, “Toward a Generative Analysis of a Post-Creole Speech Continuum”, in Dell Hymes, ed., *Pidginisation and Creolisation of Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 249-270.

This unfolding variation in the referential meanings of central terms (‘style’ and ‘register’, in this case) is rather unsettling.³⁸

Relevantly to another plane of interest mentioned earlier, Agha also says that “speakers of any language can automatically assign speech differences to a space of classifications of the above kind, and correspondingly, can respond to others’ speech in ways sensitive to such distinctions. Competence in such models is an indispensable resource in social interaction”.³⁹

To ignore the overlapping reference to the user and use dimensions for a moment, and to make an important proviso increasingly foregrounded today, as we have begun to see: these models, identities or personal user characteristics, are not fully, fixedly or uniquely determined or conditioned by our backgrounds (as the critiques we have seen of early variationist sociolinguistics seem to have assumed that it was assumed),⁴⁰ not irrevocably indexing, reflecting and limiting one’s status, once and for all. People more and more, in our complex, globalised, urbanised, late-modern world – but even before this – can have multiple identities, for a start, and are exposed to others’ more or less systematically.⁴¹ Identity projection can also be a matter of choice. People may have a range of social and geographical identities or be able to assume them along a continuum – as is familiar from creole studies where speakers are described as being able to range between ‘basolect’, ‘mesolect’ and ‘acrolect’ (on a more or less wide span of the creole continuum), according to their communicative goals and interlocutors.⁴²

One can thus also have *intra-speaker* (or *intra-user*) variation on the *user* dimension when a speaker chooses, among his/her repertoire of ‘-lects’ or of single variables which are iconic (in that community, at that moment), how to linguistically represent or display his or her identity, or chooses one for playful or humorous

or whatever purposes (as we will see in Suzanne Romaine's paper in this issue, or in those by Emilia Di Martino or Balirano and Hughes, for example). A speaker's using one or other of his or her own 'lectal' varieties is, it is worth stressing again, thus also a question of choice; any speaker, of whatever status or age, gender, etc., will also have a 'repertoire' (of varying width and richness) of 'dialects' (or '-lects') and languages, as well as 'styles' and 'registers' (whatever they are) to be able to consciously choose from and switch between for various purposes. Chief among these purposes, perhaps, would be stance-taking of identity (social, personal, cultural), of accommodation/convergence to, or distancing/divergence from that of one's interlocutors or a specific community, etc. Some types of this have been called 'styling' as we saw, and the vast earlier literature on 'code-switching' testifies to its ubiquity (not only in multilingual or heteroglossic or diglossic contexts) and to its long history as a recognised practice.

Intra-speaker variation also most obviously occurs, however, on the *use* dimension – and this was indeed the first and only type of intra-speaker variation to be recognized for a long time – when an individual chooses, i.e., among variables/styles according to the context of use or of situation (by choosing what is appropriate or not to that situation, his/her role, the subject matter, topic or field, the relationship with the interlocutor, etc.) for the desired effect on the interlocutor etc. The current work on style and register does seem to mainly still refer to this.⁴³ For example, as we can see perhaps with Asif Agha below when he is discussing power asymmetries (among what we are calling *register repertoires*, in his terms, *register range*) :

an individual's register range, the variety of registers with which he or she is acquainted – equips a person with personal emblems of identity, sometimes permitting distinctive modes of access to particular zones of social life.... Differences of register competence are thus often linked to asymmetries of power, socioeconomic class, position within hierarchies, and the like.⁴⁴

I am suggesting here, therefore, that any given speaker thus has two linguistic 'repertoire sets of varieties':⁴⁵ his or her repertoire of dialects, languages, or -lects or linguistically displayed social or cultural identities, as well as a repertoire of situational and functional 'diatypes' (or 'registers' or 'styles'...) for the enacting of his or her different functional roles or identities (e.g. doctor, friend). Some speakers will be linguistically richer than others by having at their disposal more or fewer -lects as well as registers to choose from.

To add in now further distinctions made: the 'use' (or diatype) dimension – the one referred to by some as 'register', by others as 'style' (though not exclusively, as we *have* seen above) – is usually further distinguished, in the British tradition, following Halliday and Hasan's classical (1976) and widely known treatment, of course, into 'field', 'tenor' and 'mode'. For them, 'field' is "the total event, in which the text is functioning, together with the purposive activity of the speaker or writer; [it] includes subject-matter as one of the elements". "Tenor" refers to "the type of role interaction, the set of relevant social relations, permanent and temporary,

⁴³ As Sali Tagliamonte confirms while saying they are often used interchangeably too: see *Analyzing Sociolinguistic Variation*, 34.

⁴⁴ Asif Agha, "Registers of Language", 24.

⁴⁵ A further caveat: Agha (*ibid.*) uses the term repertoire too but to refer to the linguistic repertoire of forms or items *within* a variety.

⁴⁶ Michael A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (London: Longman, 1976).

⁴⁷ Coseriu worked most of his life in Italy, Uruguay and Germany. His terminological system is consequently well-known among sociolinguists working there.

⁴⁸ Later published in Eugenio Coseriu, “Los conceptos de ‘dialecto’, ‘nivel’ y ‘estilo’ de lengua, y el sentido propio de la dialectología”, *Linguística Española Actual III* (1981), 1-32. See also the Coseriu archives <www.coseriu.de> (in particular Sprachliche Varietäten).

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Leonhard Lipka, “Variety is the Spice of Life – Language Variation and Sociolinguistics”, in *Energie und Ergon, Sprachliche Variation – Sprachgeschichte – Sprachtypologie- Studia in honorem Eugenio Coseriu. Band II – Das Sprachtheroetische Denken Eugenio Coserius in der Diskussion*, ed. by H. Thun (Tubingen: Gunter Narr, 1988), 317-325; Viggo Bank Jensen, “Eugenio Coseriu, Scandavian Linguists and Variational Linguistics”, *Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Languages, E-Learning and Romanian Studies*, June 2011, <nile.lub.lu.se/ojs/index.php/elears/index>, 18 August 2012.

⁵¹ Alberto Mioni, “Italiano tendenziale: osservazioni su alcuni aspetti della standardizzazione”, in P. Benincà et al., eds., *Scritti linguistici in onore di Giovan Battista Pellegrini*, vol. 1

among the participants involved”; ‘mode’ is the “function of the text in the event, including both the channel taken by language – spoken or written, extempore or prepared – and its genre, rhetorical mode, as narrative, didactic persuasive, ‘phatic communion’”, etc.⁴⁶

There is, however, also another important, useful and insightful taxonomic and terminological tradition concerning variety and variation in language – though intriguingly generally neglected outside of continental Europe or Latin America – which adopted, and ran even further with, the ‘dia-’ paradigm than did Gregory with his use of ‘diatype’ modelled on ‘dialect’. We have used it more or less surreptitiously in our editors’ introduction above, but it deserves to be addressed full on; it is also used by several of our authors. This is the continental tradition identified with the Romanian linguist Eugenio Coseriu⁴⁷ who distinguished terminologically already in 1958 (by analogy with ‘dialect’ and ‘diachrony’, itself in alternation with ‘synchrony’, of course) between ‘diatopic’, ‘diastratic’ and ‘diaphatic’ (later: ‘diaphasic’) types of language variation.⁴⁸ The first two terms ‘diatopic’ and ‘diastratic’ (which Coseriu attributed to the Scandinavian linguist Leiv Flydal from 1951) neatly and usefully distinguish terminologically between spatial/regional/geographical and social stratum types of user characteristics which are still (not very helpfully) lumped together under ‘user’ variation, or, confusingly, both under ‘dialect’ in the other tradition – though, of course ‘sociolect’ is now being used for the second type in another tradition which is running with the ‘-lect’ suffix rather than with the ‘dia-’ prefix, to indicate varieties; ‘genderlect’ has also been coyly coined; and see also Hasan’s slightly dismissive mention of ‘geolect’ and ‘sociolect’;⁴⁹ ‘idiolect’, an older familiar coinage, does not of course quite fit as a social type label.

Leonhard Lipka, and Viggo Bank Jensen separately give us useful historical introductions to Coseriu’s sociolinguistics and taxonomy (which also includes a corresponding ‘syn-’ series), its relationship to other scholars, sociolinguistic models, traditions and terminologies.⁵⁰

The ‘diaphasic’ dimension which Coseriu added to Flydal’s two, refers to stylistic variation, i.e. all by itself, to all the ‘use’ or register and genre or discourse types of variation, which was innovative at the time of course, before even the Hallidayan enterprise – also in tune with the earlier British Firthian school. The Italian sociolinguist Alberto Mioni in 1983 proposed adding a further parameter to Coseriu’s ‘dia-’ ‘architecture’, the ‘diamesic’, to refer to variation according to the medium, (e.g. along the written to spoken continuum, and in different genres) which can be seen to correspond basically to that of ‘mode’ in the ‘use’ type of variation dimension above.⁵¹ Italian as well as Hispano-phone sociolinguistics, can thus indeed be seen to regularly distinguish terminologically and thus taxonomically ‘diatopic, diastratic, diaphasic’ and ‘diamesic’ variation, alongside diachronic variation, in what looks like a very useful and satisfying taxonomic series.

It is not, however, unproblematic itself. Although the dialect or use categories are better covered, the diaphasic dimension in particular, as will have been obvious by now, is still too vague and all-encompassing, just as are ‘style’ and/or ‘register’,

since it, like them, still has to cover for many types of variation which would need to be distinguished, as they are in the wide field of sociolinguistics together with discourse analysis, rhetoric, genre analysis, etc. though not neatly nor unambiguously in any of them. Miguel Casas Gomez provides a useful discussion of this,⁵² as does indeed Massimo Cerruti.⁵³

The terms ‘diaphasic’ (and diaphatic) are also rather non-transparent. Moreover, there is some uncertainty (and curiosity) regarding the origin/meaning of the ‘phasic’, ‘phatic’ parts. It/they would seem to have two possible etymologies: *phanein*, Grk ‘to appear, to show oneself’, but also possibly (according to Gaetano Berruto) *phemí*, ‘say’, *phat (os)*, ‘spoken’, *phasis*, ‘voice’, used to keep the communication channel open (as in the original meaning of Malinoswski’s ‘phatic’ in ‘phatic communion’). Neither of these etymologies is fully clarifying or satisfying however with regard to its acquired wide (but also vague) range of uses to indicate register, genre, ‘use’ variation.

In Italian sociolinguistics, ‘*diafasico*’ includes ‘*registro*’ which is connected to the existing relationship between interlocutors, and ranges between, on the one hand, formality and informality and, on the other, ‘*sottocodici*’ or ‘*lingue settoriali*’ (LSPs) which depend on discourse topic. As Gaetano Berruto writes, “[l]a variazione diafasica si manifesta attraverso le diverse situazioni comunicative e consiste nei differenti modi in cui vengono realizzati i messaggi linguistici in relazione ai caratteri dello specifico contesto presente nella situazione; viene quindi anche detta *variazione situazionale*”.⁵⁴

He does also then appeal to the Hallidayian categories of ‘field, tenor’ and ‘mode’ to further articulate the ‘*dimensione diafasica*’. His mentioning an alternative cover term, *situazionale*, is perhaps a clue to the sort of discomfort caused by the semantic non-transparency of the label. Miguel Casas Gomez, as mentioned earlier, usefully discusses and criticises, among other aspects, the indeterminacy or vagueness or too encompassing nature of the diaphasic dimension itself,⁵⁵ while Jakob Wüest criticises it for the opposite reason: that the diametic distinction was unnecessarily separated out from within it.⁵⁶

The ‘dia-’ series seen so far, anyway, does thus still not fully cover with single terms the various single types of variation. There is, however, an even more detailed set of distinctions also to be found (using the ‘dia’- model), which has perhaps also ‘stretched it’ a bit too far; this is the set of ‘Usage Labels’ used by the lexicographers of the *Dictionary of Lexicography*.⁵⁷ These do not seem to have caught on more widely, however, despite the fact that they are at least semantically transparent and (a little) ‘plainer’ as labels and that they might perhaps have helped to more usefully distinguish the types of variation further for other fields too. Perhaps not. At any rate, Hartmann and James’ metalinguistic series is made up of: ‘diachronic’, ‘diaevaluative’, ‘diafrequential’, ‘diaintegrative’, ‘diamedial’, ‘dianormative’, ‘diaphasic’, ‘diastratic’, ‘diatechnical’, ‘diatextual’ and ‘diatopic’.⁵⁸ We can see that the original Coseriu labels are mainly kept, apparently; however, in the new wider set where they are supplemented by other distinctions they acquire narrower meanings. ‘Diaphasic’ in particular, becomes (or, actually, re-becomes)

(Pisa: Pacini, 1983), 508-510 (according to the 2011 edition of the Treccani Enciclopedia Italiana on ‘variazione diamesica’, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/variazione-diamesica_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/>, 18 August 2012).

⁵² Miguel Casas Gomez, “Consideraciones sobre la dimension diafasica”, *Pragmalingüística*, 1 (1993), 99-123.

⁵³ Massimo Cerruti, “Premesse per uno studio della variazione di registro in italiano”, *Rivista Italiana di Dialettologia*, 33 (2009), 267-282.

⁵⁴ See in Gaetano Berruto, “Variazione diafasica”, *Enciclopedia dell’Italiano* (2011), Treccani.it; and “Varietà diamesiche, diastratiche, diafasiche”, in Alberto Sobrero, ed., *Introduzione all’italiano contemporaneo. La variazione e gli usi*, (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1999, 4th ed.), 37-92.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Jakob Wüest, “La notion de diamésie est-elle nécessaire?”, *Travaux de linguistique*, 59.2 (2009).

⁵⁷ Reinhard R. K Hartman and Gregory James, eds., *Dictionary of Lexicography* (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁵⁸ The ‘dimension of usage’ they are each paired with – given in a table along with examples of scales and popular terms for ‘marked’ vocabulary – on the *Dictionary*’s page 151, are, respectively, “currency (period), emotionality

(attitude), frequency of occurrence, assimilation (contact), mediality (channel), normativity (standard), formality (register), style (social status), technicality (subject), textuality (genre), regionality (dialect)".

⁵⁹ Anita Rosberg, "Text Typology: Register, Genre and Text Type", in A. Trosberg, ed., *Text Typology and Translation*, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), 3-23.

⁶⁰ Norbert Dittmar, "Areal Variation and Discourse", in Peter Auer and Jürgen Erich Schmidt, eds., *Language and Space. An International Handbook of Language Variation. Theories and Methods* (Berlin: De Gruyter-Mouton, 2010), 865-878.

simply a reference to the formality (register) dimension of usage (as if it only meant tenor, its original reference), and the reference of 'register' is thus narrowed too. The reference of 'diastratic' they connect to social status, but call this 'style'. This set is perhaps after all not therefore as helpful as it may have seemed at first sight – the terminology has been further jumbled, at least in relation to usage elsewhere.

In the meantime, at any rate, the investigation of the dimension of 'use' and the construction of social meaning in context has now been mostly taken up by the discourse analysis and genre analysis disciplines, rather than by sociolinguistics, though it had started there. We need only think of 'genre' and 'text type' to round out the concept of register to remind us of how it has tightened up in more recent times. Anita Trosberg, and John Swales are useful guides to this. The so-called 'use' or 'diaphasic' type of variation dimension and even the term 'register' itself, used from its beginnings for only indicating the 'tenor' or 'formality/informality' dimension, is still not unambiguous.⁵⁹

There is again a whole other area, or level of talk, which we have hardly mentioned, and which varies across users (individuals but probably much more so on the wider general diatopic or areal, and diastratic variety dimensions, and of course across language-cultures): that which would be studied on the level of contrastive or cross-cultural pragmatics, i.e. 'discourse variation'. This is discussed, for example, by Norbert Dittmar in his 2010 essay "Areal Variation and Discourse", where he speaks of research on complex urban dialects and the findings concerning the Berlin Urban Vernacular variety style of talk, its interest lying especially in its characteristic *Berliner Schnauze* or wit/gob rhetorical style, such as brash impudence, quick repartee and humour, verbal incisiveness, "loud-mouth bluster", rather than on the usually studied phonological, morphological or lexical levels.⁶⁰

Before we continue a little further with our examination of taxonomic distinctions that could be made of the types of variation and varieties, and start on other themes, let us just get these very simple macro-ones straight. *Intra*-linguistic variation can be both, or either, *inter*-speaker variation (user/diatopic, diastratic) and *intra*-speaker variation ('use, diaphasic, diamesic'); they can intersect too, and naturally undergo diachronic variation.

Inter-linguistic variation could then be seen as that between and across languages, for example, in code mixing and code-switching among ('syntopic, synstratic') varieties and/or full-blown languages; not to forget what happens in translation when, in the passage from one language to another, the contents, as well as the connotations, the discourse and rhetorical styles, indeed, and the other various dia-typical features may have to vary, change, mutate.

Varieties of mixing and mixed varieties

All types of varieties (-lects and -types, or registers) can mix in any speaker's intra-linguistic or inter-linguistic practice; there can be switching between and among them and hybridization in situ (or they can develop into more or less stable

contact varieties), and there can be ‘crossing’.

Let us also not forget that the intuitively neat enough distinction between the ‘user’ and ‘use’ dimensions we have implicitly been using as a guide, is also again not so neat. For example, ‘user’ ‘diatopical’ varieties or ‘geolects’ can have ‘use’ or ‘diaphasic’ meanings, as when the use of a dialectal or regional variety is construed socially not only on the ‘diastratic’ dimension as lower-class, for example, but also on the so-called ‘diaphasic’ dimensions where it can be seen as expressing informality or intimacy. The terminology may be unstable/variable, but the insights and their validity are clear enough.

To turn now from more narrowly and specifically terminological issues, once again to more general methodological issues, though these too with their share of terminological interest, there is no need, in our opinion, to enter the purported deterministic/constructivist, static/dynamic debate between variationist sociolinguistics (of one-to-one correspondence between variables or styles and social or regional categories) and late-modernist approaches to styling as social meaning construction, as delineated by Nikolas Coupland, for example, or by Penelope Eckert, or Asif Agha, to recall three of the most lucid and insightful more recent discussions from within what has been called the 3rd wave of sociolinguistics, as we saw. I believe there is no contradiction between studies which seek to look at where and when and for whom variation (of the various types) occurs and those which ask why it does, and through which process; they are complementary. As Eckert states, indeed, her proposal is not one “to replace, but to refine and supplement”.⁶¹

That is essentially the issue, I believe. If speakers are seen as the active users of the linguistic resources at their disposal in their repertoires – with their current social meanings and connotations acquired and recognised in or across their various communities, or languages, rather than simply as unaware enactors entrapped in static language styles – then their choices of specific varieties, styles or even single variables, are simply to be seen as their styling themselves, displaying and embodying their ‘emblems of identity’ (to use Agha’s 2004 term again). The fact that variationism also always saw diachronic variation as possible because of the synchronic variation (as we saw), would belie the view that it views indexing of a speaker’s characteristics as fixed, invariable and unchanging, as if those variables or styles were not arbitrarily assigned, or constructed, and therefore changeable.

The fluidity of late-modern and globalised urban social life and of the consequent necessity for variation, variability and adaptability in language, also enables a new liberating vision of what it is to know a language “in the world of globalized communication, where people often communicate with bits and pieces of genres and registers”.⁶² ‘Fragments’, ‘truncated varieties’, ‘bits and pieces’, ‘bricolage’, ‘heteroglossia’, ‘code-mixing’, ‘code-switching’ and ‘shifting’, ‘crossing’, ‘mixing’, ‘remix’, etc.⁶³ – these are current buzz words, but not without reason. They are some of the practices which allow us to thrive in the heterogeneous contact zones of our late-modern cities and in the globalised world, for example, and not only in intercultural communication. We normally need and have varying levels and

⁶¹ Eckert, “Indexical Field”, 2.

⁶² Jan Blommaert, *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization. Cambridge Approaches to Language Contact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 210.

⁶³ For example, for the notions of ‘heteroglossia’, see notably Mikhail Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel”, in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 261-62; and for that of ‘crossing’, see Ben Rampton, *Crossing: Language and Ethnicity among Adolescents* (London & New York: Longman, 1995).

⁶⁴ The Common European Framework for Languages based on notional-functional principles, for the accomplishing or doing things in communicative contexts, contemplates language users' different profiles of language skills for different purposes: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp>, 19 September 2012.

⁶⁵ Though one is at a loss to select from *their* vast repertoire of work, see, e.g. Braj Kachru, "The bilingual's linguistic repertoire" (1982), in the updated version "English in the Bilingual's Code" he includes in his *The Alchemy of English* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1986), 57-80; Yamuna Kachru, "Code-mixing, Style Repertoire and Language Variation: English in Hindi Poetic Creativity", *World Englishes*, 8.3, 1989, Special Issue on Code-mixing: English across Languages, ed. by Tej K. Bhatia and William C. Ritchie, 311-319.

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Georges Lüdi, "Multilingual Repertoires and the Consequences for Linguistic Theory", in Kristin Bührig and Jan D. ten Thije, eds., *Beyond Misunderstanding. Linguistic Analyses of Intercultural Communication* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006) 11-42.

⁶⁷ Blommaert, *Sociolinguistics of Globalization*, 210.

⁶⁸ The well-known term and notion as coined by Robert B. Le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller in *Acts of Identity: Creole-Based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), in creole continuum contexts.

repertoires of competences for accomplishing different purposes in different contexts. This is not unfamiliar a principle to anyone dealing with language learners, and the CEFR, for example, of course,⁶⁴ but it has also long been recognised among scholars normally living in and aware of multilingual, culturally heterogeneous 'worlds' – with the added world presence of English. One need only remember the work of Braj and Yamuna Kachru for example,⁶⁵ or more recently that of Georges Lüdi.⁶⁶ Jan Blommaert, specifically focusing recently on the sociolinguistic effects of globalization, invokes another of the late-modern *topoi*, that of mobility:

a sociolinguistics of globalization needs to be a sociolinguistics of mobile resources, not one of immobile languages. Our focus of analysis should be the actual linguistic, communicative, semiotic resources that people have, not abstracted and idealized (or ideologized) representations of such resources. Our focus should, therefore, be on repertoires, on the complexes of resources people actually possess and deploy. I already mentioned the 'truncated' nature of multilingual repertoires in super-diverse contexts such as those of the contemporary 'global' city. Multilingualism, I argued, should not be seen as a collection of 'languages' that a speaker controls, but rather as a complex of specific semiotic resources, some of which belong to a conventionally defined 'language', while 'others' belong to another 'language'. The resources are concrete accents, language varieties, registers, genres, modalities such as writing – ways of using language in particular communicative settings and spheres of life, including the ideas that people have about ways of using, their language ideologies. What matters in the way of language for real language users, are these concrete forms of language....⁶⁷

Our perception of what it is to 'know' a language has thus shifted, or must do. Even perhaps our definition of what a language and a variety is (without more than a quick nod at the whole question of the standardisation, purist views of monolithic, correct, language use).

The intercultural interaction moment, and the status of a language (as a 'variety') being used in and for intercultural interaction (say as a lingua franca), as well as more general and connected questions of linguistic mobility, contact and mixing, deserves just a little more attention here, embedded at this point in the flow of topics.

We need in the meantime to keep the distinction between multilingual and interlingual in mind, and to refer first to a final, fundamental and relevant sets of notions for us here, those of how language use may or may not index or constitute acts of identity or ethnicity.⁶⁸ Wack refers us, for example, in her useful discussion, to Eckert's concept of 'persona':

... ethnographic studies have brought us a clearer view of how ways of speaking are imbued with local meaning (Eckert 2005: 5). By combining ethnography with language variation and social meaning, she explains that ethnography, however, does not mean that somebody speaks a particular language or variety because he or she is born in a particular type of community or belongs to a particular ethnic group. With the focus on social meaning, she is much more concerned about the question what it means that a person makes use of a particular language or style and what function it serves for him and also for his speech community In other words, people do not talk in a particular way because of who they are or because of which speech community they belong to, but

they make up their own identity – something Eckert calls the construction of personae (cf. Eckert 2005: 23) – because of the way they talk.⁶⁹

The construction of identity perspective, in particular, and thus that of the mobility or non-fixedness of identity and ethnicity is also paramount in Rampton's fundamental and just as well known concept of 'crossing'.⁷⁰ As Wack continues,

[he] argues for a redefinition of ethnicity, as for him it is not fixed but negotiable. He regards ethnicity not necessarily as a stable part of identity that is given by birth and cannot change through life, but rather as something produced: it is produced in so far that it is constructed. Consequently, if something is constructed and not inherited, it is changeable. It can easily be deconstructed again. Therefore, Rampton proposes to consider the option of adopting somebody else's ethnicity and constructing one's own new ethnicity.⁷¹

A review of Rampton's influential *Crossing* book, by Rymes, is also worth citing extensively:

Language 'crossing', the term coined by Rampton to describe codeswitching by linguistic outsiders, is itself not a new phenomenon. It is part of the experience of the immigrant, the tourist, the exchange student, and increasingly, any participant in a large urban community. Recently such crossing has attracted broad interest, and the depth of the experience – the "motions and flavors of ... vastly different subjectivities" that are possible through language crossing (Hoffman 1989:210) – has been explored in several memoirs devoted to such experience (Hoffman 1989, Davidson 1993, Kaplan 1994, Torgovnick 1994). Like these literary explorers, some scholars of language have begun to notice the poetic potential of language crossing, as well as the often undervalued insight of the "non-native speaker" (Kramsch 1997). Amid this increasing recognition of language diversity, and reflection on the human complexity of multilingual interactions and communities, Rampton's book brings sociolinguistic and anthropological insight to the analysis of crossing.⁷²

We must thus also avoid the dangers of seeing fixity in ethnicity too, as if variables were correlating with fixed or stable or unique individual or group characteristics; ethnicity too is negotiable. Furthermore, we all "know that it is impossible to talk about identities except by explicit reference to alterity, and yet it is remarkable how often we talk of identity as if it were absolute and not relational".⁷³ The twin notions of identity and alterity are indexed together, we might say, in crossing and in other intercultural or heteroglossic practices which multilinguals of various sorts (including those whose repertoires contain only fragments of others' languages or styles) can engage in.

If we fully adopt the concept of repertoire, not only of 'use' varieties but also of 'user' varieties, and recognise the social and linguistic world as one of fluidity rather than fixity, and that speakers can have multiple identities or personae, as well as have differing and different communicative goals and purposes, roles, etc., we can then also envisage not only that we will express them in our linguistic choices, but can also envisage intra-personal and inter-personal contact and mixing and

⁶⁹ Daniela Wack, *Sociolinguistics of Literature: Nonstandard English in Zadie Smith's White Teeth* (Munich, GRIN Publishing GmbH, 2005), <<http://www.grin.com/en/e-book/60365/sociolinguistics-of-literature-nonstandard-english-in-zadie-smith-s-white>>, 19 September 2012.

⁷⁰ Rampton, *Crossing*.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷² Betsy Rymes, review of Rampton, *Crossing*, in *Language in Society*, 27.4 (1998), 552-555.

⁷³ Adi Hastings and Paul Manning, "Introduction: Acts of Alterity", *Language & Communication*, 24.4 (2004), 291-311.

hybridity, and shifting and change. We will have styles of speaking which emerge only situationally and are not properly varieties but functions (as I suggest we see ELF, for example), or code-mixing instances which do not represent varieties but again situational instances of mixing, each one different from another.

Hybrid varieties may stabilise (as is said of some of the new Englishes around the world or of creole languages in their formation), and form new hybrid, more or less recognisable, ‘varieties’. These will still shift or vary situationally, however (imagine again also DeCamp’s creole continuum concept for which Robert Le Page and Andrée Tabouret-Keller originally coined their notion of *acts of identity* by speakers choosing how and when to place their talk and themselves along the continuum). We can mix and switch not only between full-blown languages which we may have in our more or less rich individual linguistic repertoires, but also mix and switch between them or dialects or registers or styles or whatever, and, more to the point, between bits of linguistic ‘things’ we only have fragments of. This we might see happening, for example – to allude to three of our papers, by Nisco, Guzzo and Vigo, respectively – when a Gullah word is inserted by a non-fully Gullah competent speaker into wider colloquial AAVE, or AE, or when fragments of Italian or even of Italian phonology are used by 3rd generation immigrants in the UK who only speak English, or when in intercultural communication we borrow or quote a word from one of the other languages of the other speakers.

Moreover, quoting or mimicking or borrowing or code-mixing, or ‘crossing’ – to remind us again of some of the terms for using fragments of other/s’ languages, can also be used not only as an act of identity but also as one of alterity – whether for comedic effect, for playful or aggressive teasing, or for distancing and for negative stereotyping, etc. In Emilia Di Martino’s discussion, for example, we catch glimpses of what Hastings and Manning have called ‘acts of alterity’ when she quotes playful or ironic mimicry of royalese by the media. We can also see it at work, and then even driving language change in the standard, behind the ‘sneaking up’ of the once sub-standard ‘snuck’. Indeed, jocular, ironic quoting and/or coining can also drive change. Suzanne Romaine’s paper shows this, among many other things, but we can also remember familiar cases from elsewhere and other disciplinary discussions – we need only think of how techy jocular (metaphorical) jargon (like ‘twitter’ and ‘tweet’, or the older ‘chat’, or indeed, ‘mouse’ or a myriad other terms in netspeak or computer terminology have become simply technical terminology),⁷⁴ or how connotations change across time (e.g. the changing values of ‘nigger’, ‘black’, of ‘queer’, ‘queen’, ‘gay’, to name only a few) and how communities adopt and re-appropriate others’ negative terms for them, in acts of resistance and identity.

Before finally leaving the reader to the individual papers, hopefully with enhanced curiosity, I wish to return once more to the variation *vs.* variety question implicitly announced in our title, to the necessity indeed to not confuse the notion of situational or contextual variation with the situational or contextual use of a variety, using the controversial status question of English (or any language) as a Lingua Franca touched on by Vigo as a focus. This also necessitates recourse to

⁷⁴ For a discussion see, for example, my ‘Twixt twitalk and tweespeak (not to mention trouble) on Twitter: a flutter with affectivity’, in *Anglistica*, 10.1-2 (2006), 169-191.

the notions of repertoire, of fragments and of contact, of code-switching, set out above, as well as intercultural and pragmatic awareness and competence. I suggest that ELF can best be seen as an instance of what Juliane House calls 'language for communication' (rather than a 'language for identification'); as such of course (if it were a variety) it would fall within the 'use' varieties of a language.⁷⁵ It is worth noting on this that House is careful to call it English "in its role as lingua franca"; as such it would not pose a threat to other languages, either.⁷⁶ In my view too, if I may interpose it, using English as a Lingua Franca, does not pose a threat to one's own native language, since it simply adds another wider 'circle' of possibilities – a wider network of contacts (a loose, low context one) – hardly one which threatens the intimate inner-circle of high context communication and community identity. Being able to use it in this way, in a context of use, however minimal one's level of competence in English as such, is simply part of one's communicative repertoire, part of one's 'multi-competence' for performing different acts of different sorts or pursuing different purposes in different contexts. House's distinction, indeed, puts one in mind also of the earlier distinction, made by Randolph Quirk in 1981 when he talks of the individual's right not only to have a "community identity through repose in his most local variety" of language but also of the same individual's linguistic "needs in a wider role – ultimately as 'citizen of the world'",⁷⁷ and of Henry Widdowson's distinction made in 1982 between the 'homing' and 'questing' instincts in his discussion concerning English for cross-cultural communication (as mentioned too in my own 1990 discussion of the two centripetal and centrifugal uses of a language, in ever widening and less intimate circles of identity functions).⁷⁸

Apart from treading warily and aware-ly with the terminology referring to types of variation varieties, i.e. to be aware of the possible shifting nature of such as 'variety', 'style', 'register', etc, and of others like 'identity', 'crossing', 'mixing', 'hybridity'⁷⁹, (not gone into here or we would never have finished), we might also, finally, I suggest, do well to be attentive to such terms as 'indexing'. This does seem suspiciously correlationist itself as if there were a strict 'pointing' correspondence between sign and signified. That this correspondence is now seen as fluid, non-fixed, negotiated, constructed each time in context, makes it no less correlationist. Furthermore, one need not see the early variationists as necessarily excluding it as being immobile or static or not in a strict one-to-one correspondence with fixed social categories; so I will not enter the needless debate (in that there is no need for a debate). Useful insights come from the synergy of different approaches and types of data, both despite terminological variation and because of the fluidity of ideas.

At any rate, an interdisciplinary or better, a *trans*-disciplinary approach, with cultural studies, the various branches of sociolinguistics and ethnography of speaking, linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis and pragmatics, together bringing their insights and perspectives, is after all, in the declared spirit of our journal.

⁷⁵ Rather than being a 'variety' proper, it would be best to see it as a fleeting instantiation of a selection of bits from one's repertoire. This would bear more discussion than we can give it here, however.

⁷⁶ Juliane House, "English as a Lingua Franca: a Threat to Multilingualism?", *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7.3 (2003), 556-578.

⁷⁷ Randolph Quirk, "Cross-Cultural Communication and the Concept of Nuclear English", in Larry E. Smith, ed., *English for Cross-Cultural Communication*, (London: Macmillan, 1981), 151-165; see also in Charles Brumfit, ed., *English for International Communication*, (Oxford: Pergamon 1982), 15.

⁷⁸ Henry Widdowson, "English as an International Language II: What Do We Mean by International Language?", in Charles Brumfit, ed., *English for International Communication*, (Oxford: Pergamon 1982), 9-13; Jocelyne Vincent Marrelli, "English for Crosstalk: Pidgin for Pentecost?", in Jean Aitchison et al., eds., *English Past and Present*, (Fasano-Bari: Schena, 1990), 197-227.

⁷⁹ The vagueness or indeterminacy (and contradictions in use) of this notion, so facilely bandied about as a buzz word today, has been a favourite target of mine in several oral presentations, and would I suggest need to be critically, systematically addressed.

Identity-building and Language Variation in AVT

* The authors discussed and conceived the article together.

In particular, Giuseppe Balirano is responsible for the Introduction, Section 1 and the Concluding remarks; Bronwen Hughes is responsible for Sections 2 and 3.

¹ See Deborah Cameron, *Good to Talk? Living and Working in a Communication Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2000); J. Byrd Clark, *Multilingualism, Citizenship, and Identity: Voices of Youth and Symbolic Investments in an Urban, Globalized World* (London: Continuum, 2009).

² Tope Omoniyi and Goodith White, eds., *Sociolinguistics of Identity* (London: Continuum, 2006), 6.

It is common knowledge that translators in general and audiovisual translators in particular need to be not only bi-lingual but also bi-cultural as they are mediating between two linguistic and cultural systems which are rarely, if ever, interchangeable. This is also due to the connotative scaffolding which stems from the mere denotative meaning in the two languages, source and target. Texts, in the widest sense of the term, are neither isolated nor hermetic and are always enmeshed in a web of social, ideological and cultural references which strike a chord in the target audience to which they are destined. Texts also embody acts of identity since discursive contexts are always moderated by social, cultural and of course linguistic factors, which are expressed through language.

Identity can never be considered a static, monolithic given. It is always fluid, fragmented and unstable and varies according to the social or communicative contexts within which the speaker finds him/herself;¹ moreover, according to Omoniyi and White, it “informs social relationships and therefore also informs the communicative exchanges that characterize them”.² When audiovisual texts are translated – whether dubbed or subtitled – although a number of component semiotic modalities necessarily remain unaltered, the linguistic exchanges, and therefore the social relationships they contribute to build, inevitably mutate. Such mutations can, in turn, bring about changes in the identity makeup of the characters, often leading to ‘gain’ for the target viewers who, apart from the clearly acquired textual comprehension, are also able to observe, through the agency of the communicative exchanges, a number of behavioural or identity traits which concur with and fit into the target setting. Such translated communicative exchanges can, however, modify or mask the original traits which mark the character in the source version of the audio-visual production, thus bringing about a ‘loss’ in terms of original character identity-building. In particular, when dealing with multilingual films, where one of the languages corresponds to the language of the target text, the process of dubbing/adaptation becomes even thornier, as Delia Chiaro aptly states:

Products containing characters speaking in a language other than the main film language present another translational quandary when the film is dubbed. In the case of multilingual films, the strategy in dubbing countries tends to be to adopt a mixture of dubbing and subtitling although, if one of the foreign languages in question happens to be the one into which the film is being translated, this will create additional difficulties.³

³ Delia Chiaro, “Issues in Audiovisual Translation”, in Jeremy Munday, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*, revised edition (London: Routledge, 2009), 159.

This paper investigates the manner in which some of the characters present in the American film *Eat Pray Love* (2010) where this very situation arises, undergo mutation of the linguistic and cultural identity they are perceived to possess, or are given in the original English source version, and thereby come to have instead a

number of linguistic and extra-linguistic cultural traits which allow them to take on a different, more indigenous, identities when ‘crossing over’ into the dubbed Italian target version.

Though there are instances of language variation in the ‘Pray’ (India) and ‘Love’ (Bali) chapters of the film, we have concentrated on the first part of the film ‘Eat’ which takes place in Italy and offers plenty of scope for our linguistic investigation on variation and identity-building.

Corpus and methodology

Eat Pray Love, based on Elizabeth Gilbert’s best-selling novel of the same title, is a dramatic film directed by Ryan Murphy, starring Julia Roberts as Elizabeth Gilbert. It was first shown on August 13, 2010 in the U.S., and then on September 13, 2010 in Italy in its dubbed version by CDC-SEFIT GROUP. The Italian dialogues were written by Elettra Caporello. Despite worldwide success, the film was strongly criticized for its stereotyped views on women, place and culture.

Elizabeth Gilbert, a successful New York writer, would appear to have been blessed with everything life can provide: a consolidated career, a comfortable apartment she has spent time and money renovating, a loving circle of close friends and colleagues, and a doting husband. She leaves for Bali to write an article about a renowned ‘medicine man’ and after hearing his prophecy, the confusion, bewilderment and uncertainty she has been attempting to smother for a considerable length of time begin to surface. Newly divorced and caught up in a sentimental relationship which appears to be as unsatisfactory as the preceding marriage, she decides to set off on a quest for self-discovery. Her travels will take her to Italy, to seek out the true pleasure of gastronomic nourishment, to India, to discover the power of prayer and spiritual nourishment to Bali to find inner peace and equilibrium. It is only after crossing a number of geographical, physical and emotional boundaries that Elizabeth’s soul-searching journey will come to an end.

Our linguistic analysis was carried out on the conveniently available computer-readable files of the two film-scripts, the original source text and Italian adaptation. We looked specifically for linguistic features to identify the changes and similarities which emerged in the translational process from English into Italian. Although the many markers of identity discourse, such as personal pronouns, culture-bound words, specialized lexis, code-mixing, code-switching, phonetic variation, special functions, and use of gestures are present throughout the entire film, we decided to concentrate our investigation on a few particularly striking choices to be found in the first part of the film, ‘Eat’, as mentioned earlier. As mentioned earlier, this ‘chapter’ takes place in Italy and introduces a whole community of Italian-speakers with whom the American protagonist has to interact linguistically in order to reach her ultimate goal: that of being able to order Italian food, a first step towards her construction of identity. The chapter, as we shall see, presents a series of interesting linguistic instances of how linguistic variation of various sorts

is treated in audiovisual translation.

Cultural ‘re-routing’ as a strategy in AVT

The lead character of *Eat Pray Love* Elizabeth Gilbert (Julia Roberts), a beautiful, successful, 30-something New York journalist and playwright is depicted, in the original, as a woman in search of identity. She has spent her entire life living up to other people’s expectations and moving from one unhappy relationship to the next, as she says: “Since I was fifteen, I’ve either been with a guy or breaking up with a guy, I have not given myself two weeks of a breather to just deal with, you know, myself!” Her decision to go to Italy, and then on to India and Bali, is prompted not so much by the idea of seeing the world, as a travel journalist she has travelled widely, but by the need to find herself. The ‘external’ journey, from country to country, and continent to continent will run parallel with an ‘internal’ journey of self-discovery.

When selecting Italy as the first country to visit, Elizabeth says to her personal assistant and confidant Delia (Viola Davis): “I could write a book about a woman who goes to Italy to learn Italian – I could call it Carbohydrates and Conjugations”. In the Italian dubbed version, our object of investigation, this surprisingly comes across as: “potrei scrivere di una donna che va in Italia ad imparare a mangiare – lo potrei chiamare carboidrati e Colosseo” (tr.: I could write about a woman who goes to Italy to learn to eat – I could call it carbohydrates and Colosseum). The Italian translation thus gives rise to a *skopos* shift from the original ideational function of the source text. Indeed, Elizabeth’s identity-building in the source text begins with her intention to become a *connoisseur* of Italian food and of the language. Through an act of ideological ‘re-routing’ in the target text, however, the adaptor brings Italian national culture and identity to the fore rather than the language by moulding Elizabeth into a proficient NS fascinated by Italian history and culture.

Later on in the film, as the idea of leaving for Italy becomes more of a certainty, Liz reiterates that she needs to go somewhere where she can marvel at something: “Language, gelato, spaghetti, something!” This is re-routed into Italian as “Linguine, Leonardo, Limoncello, qualcosa!” (Linguine, Leonardo, Limoncello – a typical southern Italian lemon-based alcoholic drink – something!).⁴ In the second example, although assonance is a stylistic gain in the target text through alliteration of the liquid sound ‘l’, the main variation between source version and target version lies in the terms selected to portray Italy, or rather to portray what Liz is looking for in Italy. Hence, in the original English source version, Elizabeth is going to Italy to eat good food and learn the language, in the Italian target version, her trip remains a gastronomic adventure, but also becomes a journey into its historical culture and heritage (the Colosseum, Leonardo). The two short excerpts quoted above are the first hints at the different way in which the Italian adaptor, through a process of ideological re-routing, has brought about a *skopos* shift which seems to betray the

⁴ Clearly in both the above excerpts the technical aspect of lip synchronization must be taken into consideration. It must be said that the Italian ‘coniugazione’ is, in terms of lip synch, closer to the original ‘conjugations’ than the selected term ‘Colosseo’.

original narrative structure.

In the next two excerpts we will look at how the dubbing choices opted for in the Italian version radically change the way Liz is portrayed to the viewers in the target country and therefore inform the identity she acquires by means of her communicative exchanges. She acquires practically NS status, fully aware of Italian national culture and history, though she clearly maintains her status as a foreigner. This is at odds with the original.

Upon arriving in Rome, in the English source version, Elizabeth speaks virtually no Italian and the setting in the first scene is that of a typical language learning situation. In the Italian dubbed version, due, presumably, to the traditional AVT industry's reliance on the canonical suspension of disbelief and the need for target audience comprehension and enhanced enjoyment, Elizabeth speaks fluent, accentless Italian. The scene is set in a typical Roman pavement 'trattoria', in the early evening, where Giovanni (Luca Argentero) and Liz are having dinner. Giovanni was introduced to Liz on her first day in Rome by Sofi, a Swedish acquaintance, who vouched for Giovanni's skill as a language teacher.

In order to display our linguistic investigation on the two small sub-corpora, composed of the English and the Italian dubbed versions, we have organized our multimodal tables as follows: in the first column on the left [F] we report the number of selected frames; the second column from left [Characters, Setting, Camera] serves to describe the physical setting, the non verbal soundtrack and the movements of the characters; the third and fourth columns, respectively, reproduce the original English version and the text of the dubbed Italian version with a literal English translation. As regards transcription conventions, in square brackets we signal overlapping speech, in parentheses we indicate the camera movements, in double parentheses we refer to gestures and speakers' gaze, and in italics and parentheses we provide the translation of the Italian script. Three dots indicate that that part of the dialogue in either version has not been rendered in the other text.

F	Characters Setting Camera	Source Text	Target Text
1	Liz [Diegetic, Italian music as camera approaches table] ((out of frame))	...	I monumenti di Roma sono pieni di frasi latine... mi aiuti a capire qualcosa? <i>(The monuments in Rome are full of Latin phrases... can you help me to understand something about them)</i>
2	Giovanni (camera now on G. at the same point as 'You can say...' in the original version)	You can say 'egli attraversò'	Come no, partiamo dalla prima in classifica SPQR <i>(Of course, let's start with the most well-known one SPQR)</i>
3	Liz	'Egli attra[versò]'	Non significa... Senatus.. qualcosa <i>(doesn't it mean... Senatus... something)</i>
4	Giovanni	[attraversò] it's a past ... ((uses past gesture over shoulder)) noi attraversammo	Populus Romanus...sai come lo traduciamo anche a Roma? <i>(Populus Romanus... do you know how else we translate it in Rome?)</i>
5	Liz	Noi attraversammo	No... come lo traduciamo a Roma? <i>(No... how do we translate it in Rome?)</i>
6	Giovanni	Voi attraversaste...essi attraversarono	Mmh...Sono porci questi romani, quale preferisce dei due? <i>(Mmh... These Romans are pigs, which do you prefer of the two?)</i>
7	Liz	Too fast...but ok	La versione originale...vai avanti <i>(The original version... carry on)</i>
8	Giovanni ((close up of mouth))	You can say attraversiamo	Ok.. Amor vincit omnia
9	Liz	Attraversiamo	Che cosa romantic... <i>(How romantic...)</i>
10	Giovanni ((close up of mouth))	Yeah	Sì <i>(yes)</i>
11	Liz ((close up of mouth))	Attraversiamo	Tutto attraverso l'amore <i>(Everything through love)</i>
12	Giovanni	Attraversiamo?	E Carpe Diem? <i>(And Carpe Diem?)</i>
13	Liz	Attraversiamo?	Cattura il momento? <i>(Capture the moment?)</i>
14	Giovanni	((nods))	Mmh hmm ((nods))
15	Liz	((enunciating clearly)) Attraversiamo, oh, what a beautiful word	Ho indovinato.. sto imparando... sono quasi bilingue <i>(I guessed... I'm learning... I'm almost bilingual)</i>
16	Giovanni	Come on it's... ((sweeping/crossing hand gesture)) 'let's cross over' it's so ordinary	In fondo... ((sweeping/crossing gesture)) il latino è il preludio dell'italiano <i>(After all... Latin is the prelude to Italian)</i>
17	Liz	No it's a... perfect combination of Italian sounds.. it's the wistful 'a', the rolling trill, the soothing 's', mmh...	Ma certo... due musiche diverse con la stessa sonorità... le malinconiche 'a', le rotolante 'r', le ondeggianti 's' <i>(Of course... two different tunes with the same sounds... the melancholic 'a', the rolling 'r', the undulating 's')</i>
18	Giovanni	It's true	Est verus
19	Liz	((not in frame)) I love it ((in frame)) Alright... Let me teach you a word	((not in frame)) L'adoro ((In frame)) Bene... ora t'insegno io una parola <i>(I love it... right... now I'll teach you a word)</i>

20	Giovanni	((no speech, just looks expectant))	Dai! <i>(go on then)</i>
21	Liz ((picks up carafe and holds it up))	Mmm... therapist	Hmm... terapistus
22	Giovanni	laughs	laughs
23	Liz ((points at carafe))	Therapist!... That's good... you gotta learn humour	in vino veritas... mozzarella vincit Omnia... Cin cin
24	Giovanni ((clinking glasses – out of frame))	[It's not!]	Brava
25	Liz	[Come on. Cheers]	...

Table 1. Liz and Giovanni – The dinner scene

In Table 1, in the source text column, there would appear to be a typical teacher/student situation. Giovanni enunciates a linguistic structure, in this case the Italian simple past of the verb ‘attraversare’ and Liz diligently repeats it attempting to mimic the correct pronunciation and intonation. One may wonder why Giovanni is initially teaching Liz a verb form that is seldom used in everyday conversational exchanges, however, the main focus of the exchange lies with the 1st person plural imperative/exhortative ‘attraversiamo’, which appears to contain all that Liz most admires about the Italian sound system, and which is a key word in the identity construction of the protagonist and in the general narrative development of the film. An investigation of the missing narrative loop is presently being developed elsewhere. Giovanni’s apparently superior epistemic stance as the teacher is then confuted by the role-switch, in which Liz jokingly teaches him the term ‘therapist’ indicating the carafe of wine which, she claims, can provide good therapeutic support.

In the dubbed Italian version, with the target audience reception and ease of viewing in mind, as is, indeed, common in dubbed films in which a foreigner speaks the language of the target country’s viewing community, Elizabeth speaks fluent Italian throughout the exchange. It could therefore be argued that teaching Italian terms or verb forms would be in complete contrast with the character-building which has taken place in the previous scenes where she was made to speak perfect Italian. So, the interlocutors move into a third dimension, neither English nor Italian but Latin, in which the learning process, the teaching exchange can indeed still take place. Giovanni not only imparts knowledge about the most well-known (and perhaps rather trite) Latin phrases, but also gives them some local, Roman, colour by providing the local ‘interpretation’ of the classical *SPQR* acronym. It is interesting to note in [F5], that Liz repeats “Come lo traduciamo a Roma?” (*How do we translate it in Rome?*), therefore demonstrating that she belongs to the Italian language community and is indeed operating within the ‘third dimension’ mentioned above. In [F15] she exclaims: “Ho indovinato... sto imparando... sono quasi bilingue” (*I guessed... I’m learning... I’m almost bilingual*), but in this case the

two languages over which she would appear to have almost total command are Italian and Latin.

The language variation which occurs in the crossing from source text to target text, and which is exemplified by the linguistic and conceptual remodeling of the conversational exchanges, brings Elizabeth and Giovanni to acquire completely different linguistic and cultural identities. In the original English version, Liz is merely an enthusiastic foreign language learner who enjoys the sounds and morphology of the Italian language and Giovanni is a diligent teacher taking his student through her paces. In the dubbed Italian version, Liz becomes an *aficionado* of ancient culture and history, which gives her far greater cultural stance, and Giovanni is the erudite custodian of all things Latin which also leads to an enhancement of his epistemic stance.

We wish to posit that there may be a further reason for the Italian adaptor to have selected this excursus into Latin, rather than, for example, having Giovanni teach Elizabeth, now a fluent Italian speaker, idiomatic Roman sayings or Roman slang. Any form of interlingual translation, be it dubbing or subtitling, is necessarily going to have societal and language-political implications, as Lefevere states, though he is clearly dealing with the field of literary translation: “I simply want to make the point that, contrary to traditional opinion, translation is not primarily ‘about’ language. Rather, language as the expression (and repository) of a culture is one element in the cultural transfer known as translation”.⁵ The above dinner-scene excerpt focuses on the way the adaptor chooses to project a very specific self-image. Italy is to appear in the eyes of both national and foreign viewers (viewing the film in the Italian version with subtitles, perhaps) as the country of history and high culture and not merely of food, language or language learning as is emphasized in the original English language version.

⁵ André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992), 54.

The theme which remains constant across the two versions, original and dubbed, is certainly however that of food, constantly underlined throughout the ‘Roman’ part of the film by close ups of extraordinarily appetizing Italian dishes. Returning to our excerpt above, in the Italian dubbed version Liz brings together her love of Italian food and her newly acquired knowledge of Latin and ancient Italian culture by exclaiming: “Mozzarella vincit omnia” (*Mozzarella conquers all*). Since the beginning of the ‘dinner scene’, Giovanni and Liz have been seen to be eating a Southern Italian dish known as ‘Mozzarella in carrozza’, hence the enthusiastic exclamation in [F23]. This culinary detail would probably be lost on a non-Italian audience, thus in the dubbed version the strategy adopted of using Latin as a ‘third dimension’ in this case also serves to grant greater credence to the visual images.

In Table 2, the setting is a Roman ‘trattoria’, rather more elegant than the one in the previous scene, at lunchtime. Although we will only be focusing on Elizabeth’s ‘ordering monologue’, she is in fact sitting at the table with Giovanni, his Swedish girlfriend Sofi and a group of Roman friends. As the monologue (in both languages) is made up of a relatively well-known selection of Roman and/or Southern Italian dishes, we did not feel it was necessary to translate the full text. We have merely

emphasized the additional items which appear in the Italian version by highlighting them in bold type. These additional items have also been translated.

This second excerpt illustrates Elizabeth's prowess when ordering a meal in the Roman trattoria.

F	Characters	Source Text	Target Text
1	LIZ	((in strongly accented Italian)) Scusa... ((to waiter)) vieni qua ((head gesture 'over here')) per la tavola un piatto di carciofi alla Giudia, prosciutto e melone e melanzane e ricotta affumicata, poi spaghetti alla carbonara e pappardelle con ragù di coniglio e linguine con vongole, poi trippa alla Romana e saltimbocca, e altri due litri di vino sfuso di Genzano, grazie.	((with Roman dialectal inflexion)) Scusami... ((to waiter with accompanying head gesture 'over here')) Vieni un po' qua (<i>come over here sharpish</i>) ... per cominciare un bel piatto (<i>to start off with, a really nice dish</i>) di carciofi alla Giudia, prosciutto e melone e parmigiana di melanzane con ricotta affumicata, poi spaghetti alla matriciana, pappardelle con sugo di cinghiale , e linguine con le vongole, trippa alla Romana anche se non è sabato (<i>even if it's not Saturday</i>) e.. saltimbocca, e altri due litri di vino vostro (<i>of your wine</i>), quello di Genzano (<i>the one from Genzano</i>), bello, fresco mi raccomando (<i>lovely and cool, make sure of that</i>), grazie.

Table 2. Elizabeth's ordering monologue

Again, the variation which appears when crossing from original to dubbed version succeeds in granting Liz a different identity in the two languages. When ordering the meal in Italian, in the English version of the film, Elizabeth wows the other guests by showing that, as a language learner, she has now acquired a certain degree of fluency in Italian. Her newfound confidence is made evident by the typically Italian head gesture she uses to beckon the waiter over to her side of the table and by the way she rolls out the order, dish after dish. It must however be said that this is done in a very strong foreign (Anglo-American) accent and that she very often misplaces the word stress in the terms she employs. Moreover, the dishes she orders are, for the most part, those which foreign (non-Italian) viewers are familiar with ("spaghetti alla carbonara", "melanzane", etc.) Her identity is thus that of a foreigner in Italy who now possesses a reasonably good degree of linguistic fluency and accuracy and deserves congratulations from the other native speakers present at the table. In the target version, Elizabeth is re-routed as a fully integrated Italian speaker, indeed, the Roman inflection she attributes to certain terms is an instantiation of the fact that if one were to listen to her speaking, without the visual image of Julia Roberts, she would come across as a NS from Rome. Her identity is thus no longer that of a foreigner and language learner but of a person fully immersed in Roman language and culture.

Certain 'additions' in the Italian version such as the "un po'" in [F1] which is added to the "vieni qua" (*come here*) in the source text, and the "mi raccomando"

(*I'm trusting you to do this/make sure you do this*) which is used as a tag at the end of the order in the target text, serve not only to illustrate Elizabeth's fluency in the language, but also her locutionary authority; she is absolutely on a par with NSs and therefore is entitled to behave as a demanding and choosy customer. Liz's identity as a NS is further compounded by her in-depth knowledge of Italian dishes: the 'melanzane' in the source version become 'parmigiana di melanzane' in the dubbed version, the rather bland international 'spaghetti alla carbonara' becomes the Roman 'spaghetti alla amatriciana' spoken with a Roman inflection. Her cultural knowledge is indeed so extensive that when ordering tripe she specifies 'even if it's not Saturday' (traditionally tripe was a poor but filling dish eaten in Rome on Saturday by those who could not afford better).

From being a good language learner who is making rapid progress in the original source version, Elizabeth has become an expert on Italian culture and culinary traditions in the dubbed version.

Identity building through language variation

Investigation of the two excerpts above has allowed us to illustrate the manner in which Elizabeth Gilbert's linguistic and cultural identity varies and undergoes significant changes when crossing over from source text to target text in the version under scrutiny. Such changes are clearly not attributable to mere equivalence in language transfer, but call into play a considerable number of extra-linguistic, socio-cultural variables inherent to the image a country or a society wishes to project of itself and of those who represent it or in some way interact with it. Before attempting to understand whether such identity changes constitute a 'loss' or a 'gain', and if so, to whom, we will briefly look at the way in which two other minor characters undergo identity changes when moving from the English to the dubbed Italian version.

When Elizabeth Gilbert arrives in Rome she rents a flat in the historical center of the city. Though the building and the flat therein were once lavishly decorated and most probably inhabited by members of the Roman nobility, they are now dirty, decrepit and dilapidated. There is no hot running water and the ceiling in the vast *salone* is held up by scaffolding.

Upon arriving in the flat, Elizabeth is greeted by her landlady, an old, rather dirty, bad-tempered woman. In the original English version, the landlady speaks heavily accented English or occasionally standard Italian tinged with a touch of Roman dialect, in the Italian dubbed version the landlady speaks with a broad Sicilian accent and peppers her outbursts with words and full sentences in a pastiche Southern Italian dialect.⁶

⁶ For example, she uses the word 'stagnino' (copper welder), and the verb 'incugnare' (to put, pour or push) which are found in Southern Italian dialect.

F	Characters	Source Text	Target Text
1	Landlady ((out of frame – while water pours into bath))	...	E' una simana che aspetto 'o stagnino <i>(I've been waiting for the welder/plumber for a week)</i>
2	Landlady ((pouring water into bath))	((in very heavily accented English)) You heat the water on the stove	Ti devi scaldare l'acqua sopra la stufa <i>(you have to heat the water on the stove)</i>
3	Liz	So.. if I want to bathe...	((accentless Italian)) E io... come lo faccio il bagno? <i>(and how should I go about having a bath?)</i>
4	Landlady	You put the water <u>in the tub</u> ((vigorous pointing gesture towards tub))	C'incugni l'acqua rint'a bagnarola ((gesture towards tub)) <i>(you pour the water into the tub)</i>

Table 3: The Sicilian Landlady

Sicily and Sicilians have a long history in the dubbing of Anglo-American films. The Sicilian accent or dialect is often used when there is a need to portray or index gangsters, mobsters or generally people with a low cultural/educational level. It is interesting to note, however, that in this case the decision to cast the landlady as a Sicilian was taken by the Italian adaptor or the casting agents or production team.

The decision to change the language variety adopted, where no such change appeared to be necessary, would seem to stem once more from recurrent cultural identity-building motifs. On the one hand it is difficult to imagine, for an Italian, that such a prestigious though run down flat in the historical centre of the city would still be in the hands of an ignorant, elderly Roman woman: she would presumably be well aware of its immense value on the property market and would long since have sold up and moved to the suburbs. On the other hand, it can also be posited that many Italians themselves consider Sicilians, or Southerners in general, to be the embodiment of ignorance, dirt and low culture. Once again, by means of a re-routing strategy which in this case modifies the language variety used by the character, the adaptor performs some changes on the landlady's speech on the diastratic and diatopic dimensions with the intent of re-stereotyping the source text which could be seen as an unrealistic characterization of an Italian landlady to the target audience. The lewd words and gesture (reported in Table 4 below) would appear to bolster this hypothesis and further explain why it was felt that the linguistic and geographical identity of the landlady needed to be changed.

F	Characters	Source Text	Target Text
1	Landlady ((gesture for 'here' pointing at floor)) ((shakes finger in front of face))	Io ho una regola... ogni uomo che viene qui non si ferma a dormire la notte! ...voi ragazze americane quando venite in Italia volete solo... pasta ((moves into heavily accented English – lewd winding gesture)) and sausage!	Io ho una regola... ogni uomo che viene qui... (<i>I have a rule.. every man who comes here...</i>) non si ferma (<i>doesn't stay</i>) a dormire la notte!... (<i>overnight!</i>) voi ragazze americane quando venite in Italia... (<i>you American girls when you come to Italy</i>) cercate solo pasta e ((lewd, winding gesture)) e sauszizza! (<i>just look for pasta and sausage!</i>)

Table 4: The lewd gesture

Sofi is the first friend Elizabeth Gilbert makes upon arriving in Rome. Though a very minor character in the film, she too undergoes an interesting, and perhaps inexplicable identity change when crossing from the original English version into the dubbed Italian one.

Sofi is a beautiful Swedish tourist who arrives in Rome six weeks before Elizabeth. She spots Elizabeth attempting to order a *cappuccino* in a very crowded bar in the center of Rome and presumably out of a sense of solidarity for a fellow-foreigner, proceeds to place the order herself.

F	Characters	Source Text	Target Text
1	Sofi ((close up of Sofi, very determined expression, two fingers up to indicate two cappuccinos.	((Good, though grammatically incorrect Italian, foreign accent)) Due cappuccino per favore, latte tiepido stavolta... perché ieri... troppo caldo mi sono scottata la lingua! (<i>two cappuccino please, warm milk this time because yesterday... too hot I burnt my tongue!</i>)	((no foreign accent, very clear Italian)) Allora, due begli espressi al volo Enzo... macchiati, al vetro, bollenti, chiaro? amari, senza schiuma e con una spruzzata di cacao! (<i>Right then, two nice espressos double quick Enzo... with a drop of milk, in a glass, piping hot, got that? No sugar, no froth and with a sprinkling of cocoa powder!</i>)
2	Barista ((out of frame))	mi dispiace cara!	...
3	Sofi	Do you like Napoleons?	Ti piacciono i diplomatici? (<i>do you like diplomatici?</i>)
4	Liz	Of course!	Proviamo! (let's try them!)
5	Sofi ((to bartender))	E due Napoleoni per favore! (<i>and two Napoleons please!</i>)	E due diplomatici super! (<i>and two extra special diplomatici!</i>)
6	Barista	((out of frame)) Benissimo... tutto quello che vuoi cara!	...

Table 5. Sofi and the art of ordering coffee

Blonde, Swedish and blue-eyed, Sofi is undoubtedly the epitome of the beautiful foreign tourist in Rome. In the original English version, though her Italian is very good, the fact that it is slightly grammatically and syntactically incorrect and spoken with a lilting foreign accent makes her all the more endearing. Her identity as the beautiful foreigner is in fact confirmed by the fact that the barista⁷ (despite the chaos and noise in the crowded bar) regularly intervenes in a friendly and sympathetic manner although his asides [F2, F6] must be totally incomprehensible to the English viewers.

In the dubbed Italian version, Sofi loses her foreign accent and acquires a perfect knowledge of grammatically and syntactically correct Italian. In the target text she is re-routed as someone who is perfectly at ease with those small gestures and daily routines, which allow a person to be entirely integrated in a given culture. From being a NNS foreigner, albeit with good language skills, she ‘goes native’. Her familiarity with everyday Italian routines is not only clearly demonstrable on a linguistic level: the complex technicalities of ordering coffee, the move from the canonical ‘cappuccino’ in the source version to the more indigenous ‘espresso’ in the target version, but also on a ‘behavioural’ level: she is a regular in the bar, she calls the barista by name and expresses herself in a fairly peremptory tone: ‘al volo! (*double quick*) Chiaro? (*got that?*)’. Language variation and the character’s move from NNS to NS status contribute to flatten the original identitary portrayal and enhance the standing of the target setting in order, as we see it, to empower the target audience.

Concluding Remarks

The modulation of language variation in AVT products, far from being neutral, can be employed in several different ways to manipulate meaning and exercise a strong pressure on society by introducing and/or resisting biased cultural values. It may play an exclusive role in developing national identities by de-stereotyping a somewhat biased image of the target context as seen in non-national representations. However, according to Baker and Hoche, “the transmission of cultural values in screen translation has received very little attention in the literature and remains one of the most pressing areas of research in translation studies”.⁸

The present paper has attempted to make some observations on audiovisual translation and language variation in cinematic products. In this respect, the analysis of some excerpts from the film *Eat Pray Love* has shown that choice of language and the characteristics of the speakers’ use of language are necessary markers of the characters’ identity construction. In terms of identity, were Italian viewers to focus on the original English version of the film (and even its Italian subtitled version), the image they would get of Elizabeth would be completely different than that perceived through the dubbed version, no longer that of a self-confident American expat, but that of a fragile foreigner in search of her identity. Therefore, although the target text adaptation is of a very high level indeed, we feel that due to what we

⁷ The Italian word *barista* is used in English to refer to a male or female bartender, who typically works behind a counter, serving both hot drinks (such as *espresso*), and cold alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. The plural in English is marked with a regular plural –s therefore *baristas*.

⁸ Mona Baker and Braño Hochel, “Dubbing” in Mona Baker, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 76.

⁹ Due to time and space constraints in the present paper, we are only briefly referring to re-routing as a possible AVT strategy which we are fully developing elsewhere.

have only tentatively termed a re-routing strategy,⁹ employed when an AVT product presents culture-bound and multilingual constraints, the Italian version still fails to fully convey the true *skopos* of *Eat Pray Love*. In the dubbed text the whole narrative structure of the film, based on linguistic and identity crossings, has in fact not been fully rendered. The transmission of cultural values in the ‘Italian chapter’ of *Eat Pray Love* is skewed exclusively in favour of target text viewers through identity switches which occur by means of language variation and serve to counteract the cultural stereotypes present in the source text.

Variation in Persuasive Financial Discourse: Face-to-face vs. Teleconference Earnings Presentations

¹ John M. Swales and Priscilla S. Rogers, "Discourse and the Projection of Corporate Culture: The Mission Statement", *Discourse & Society*, 6.2 (1995), 223-442; Ken Hyland, "Exploring Corporate Rhetoric: Metadiscourse in the CEO's Letter", *Journal of Business Communication*, 35.2 (1998), 224-245.

² Catherine Nickerson and Elizabeth De Groot, "Dear Shareholder, Dear Stockholder, Dear Stakeholder: The Business Letter Genre in the Annual General Report", in Paul Gillaerts and Maurizio Gotti, eds., *Genre Variation in Business Letters* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 325-346.

³ Hyland, "Corporate Rhetoric", 230.

⁴ Priscilla S. Rogers, "CEO Presentations in Conjunction with Earnings Announcements: Extending the Construct of Organizational Genre", *Management Communication Quarterly*, 13.3 (2000), 426-485.

⁵ Ken Hyland, *Metadiscourse. Exploring Interaction in Writing* (London: Continuum, 2005).

Financial disclosure, or the periodic reporting of company's financial results, is of paramount importance in the corporate world. It serves not only to fulfill legal obligations, but also to maintain visibility and consolidate a positive corporate image with key stakeholders, among which are investors, employees, management, the media, and the general public. In the wake of recent financial scandals (e.g. Enron, Parmalat, WorldCom), company executives have become increasingly concerned with promoting transparency and goodwill, in addition to persuading potential investors of the present soundness and future worth of their companies.

Recognizing the key contribution of language in achieving these goals, a number of studies have investigated how various linguistic devices are used rhetorically in corporate settings. However, in communications originating from the upper levels of executive management is where we find some of the most salient rhetorical strategies. Previous studies have shown how company executives use interpersonal metadiscourse (e.g. inclusive pronouns, hedges and emphatics) to persuade readers and listeners.¹ In addition, it has been determined that evaluative language plays an important role in projecting a positive corporate image,² while metadiscursive appeals such as frame markers and logical connectives help to enhance the argumentative effectiveness of business texts.³ However, top managers may also adopt a more subtle rhetorical style approach. For example, CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) who reported poor earnings to investment analysts preferred an informational and relational approach, rather than engaging in blatant positive rhetoric. In this way, the CEOs sought to explicitly address their audiences' informational needs and, at the same time, consolidate the business relationship by promoting an atmosphere of trust and sincerity.⁴

Persuasion

While the above-mentioned studies do not look at persuasion explicitly, the linguistic and rhetorical features analysed all contribute to the general persuasive imprint of the discourse. Focusing more specifically on the rhetoric of persuasion in CEOs' letters to shareholders, Hyland takes up Aristotle's rhetorical constructs of *ethos* (appeals to credibility), *pathos* (appeals to affect) and *logos* (appeals to rationality).⁵ By using logos (or reason) as a persuasive strategy, the speaker brings the listener to accept an argument. This is carried out by defining problems, supporting claims, giving evidence, and stating conclusions. Just as important is the way the argument is structured and connections are made between the elements of the discourse. In addition to the Aristotelian framework, argumentation theory can also provide insights in the nature of persuasion, e.g., Toulmin's claim-data-warrant model, where

warrant logically links data to a claim.⁶ However, the analysis of rhetorical features in this study will be limited to the notion of *logos* as described above.

Example (1) below illustrates the close argumentation and complex rhetorical organization employed in financial presentations. Note that the examples throughout the paper are derived from the two corpora under investigation and have been coded as follows: FTFP = face-to-face earnings presentations and TCP = teleconference earnings presentations. The numbers after the slash refer to firms as numbered in Tables 1 and 2.⁷ For purposes of anonymity, company and product names have been replaced with 'X'. This example contains repetition ("result", "choices", "made", "making" - underlined) connectives ("not just", "or", "indeed" - bold), and hyperbole ("exciting", "first-class" - italics), with the whole resulting in a crescendo of persuasive effect.

(1) The post-merger X is **not just the result** of complex integration, **or the result** of *exciting* growth over a number of years, **or indeed** what I see as my colleagues' *first-class* execution of the strategy. It is the result of some very clear **choices: choices** that we have made and are making. (FTFP/2)

On a linguistic level, *logos* often involves the use of logical connectives, typically in the form of linking adverbials and prepositional phrases. When discussing Aristotle's notion of persuasive proof, Hyland observes that "people are not persuaded until they are convinced that something is true, and the rhetoric involves demonstrating how something is true and how it can be shown to be true".⁸ Logical connectives that elaborate an argument by means of comparing, adding, sequencing or explaining contribute to accomplishing this goal, and are thus "critical to a text's overall persuasive force".⁹ In oral business contexts, logical connectives may be exploited by speakers to steer listeners towards a desired interpretation, which becomes difficult to refute and thus highly persuasive.

Ethos is also a significant component of persuasion in financial discourse because it serves to give the speaker credibility and legitimacy (an important feature of modern capitalism). The perceived integrity and authority of the speaker are all important in a situation where honesty and candour are regarded as key elements of effective communication. Obviously, in financial communications, the credibility of a speaker is also closely linked to the audience's perception of company success (incidentally 'success' is a frequent lemma in the presentations investigated in this study). Therefore, credibility is established and indeed negotiated during interaction both for the speakers as individuals and as representatives of a company. This credibility may then be leveraged to present the company in the most positive way possible. Positive evaluations of company performance can be expressed and strengthened with very emphatic lexis, often taking the form of hyperbole, i.e. overstatement or exaggeration of the truth. This contributes to conveying a confident, decisive and commanding image which instils trust in investors, thus fostering an impression of assurance and conviction, i.e. a strong and positive ethos.

⁶ Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

⁷ See *infra*, pp. 45 and 46.

⁸ Hyland, *Metadiscourse*, 64.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁰ Michael McCarthy and Ronald Carter, “‘There’s Millions of Them’: Hyperbole in Everyday Conversation”, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36 (2004), 149-184; Laura Cano Mora and Antonia Sanchez Macarro, “Going to Extremes: The Pragmatic Functions of Hyperbole in Discourse”, in JoDee Anderson, J. M. Oro and Jesus Varela Zapata, eds., *Linguistic Perspectives in the Classroom. Language Teaching in a Multicultural Europe* (Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2004), 309-321.

¹¹ Vijay K. Bhatia, *Worlds of Written Discourse. A Genre-based View* (London: Continuum, 2004).

¹² *Ibid.*, 60-61.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 59 and 81.

¹⁴ Erving Goffman, “The Neglected Situation”, *American Anthropologist*, 66.6 (1964), 133-136.

¹⁵ Aimee Drolet and Michael W. Morris, “Rapport in Conflict Resolution: Accounting for How Face-to-face Contact Fosters Mutual Cooperation in Mixed-motive Conflicts”, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 36 (2000), 26-50.

¹⁶ Amitai Etzioni and Oren Etzioni, “Face-to-face and Computer-mediated Communities, A Comparative Analysis”, *The Information Society*, 15.4 (1999), 241-248.

¹⁷ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).

In this way, hyperbole carries out a persuasive function similar to that found in everyday conversation.¹⁰

Aristotle, of course, defined the three components of persuasive rhetoric with political discourse in mind. However, they can all be used to good effect in financial discourse. Although not the focus of this paper, pathos, or appeals to the emotions, as realized by declarations of belief through personal testimony and by attempts to involve the listener through the use of questions and direct second person pronoun address, are also important persuasive techniques used by corporate speakers.

Financial presentations

Both face-to-face presentations and teleconference presentations arguably belong to the same genre and are also part of the burgeoning category of what have been called hybrid, embedded or mixed genres.¹¹ In the present day competitive business environment and globalized market, the role of discourse in business has come to take on an increasingly salient role, with promotion, marketing and advertising activities becoming almost more important than the end product. Advertising, according to Bhatia, stands out as the dominant influence over other genres and the arena where this is particularly prominent is in corporate presentations.¹² Such presentations constitute a hybridisation of two discourse colonies (to borrow Bhatia’s terminology): the reporting and the promotional.¹³ They ostensibly report the financial performance of the company over a certain time period to an audience of largely professional investors. Yet given the nature of the publicly quoted company and the volatility of stock markets, their purpose is not only to inform, but also to promote the firm and persuade the audience that the company merits the trust of the investor. Thus, the promotional and the informational coexist in the form of two merging discourse colonies.

Financial presentations may be delivered through different media. Goffman first discussed the influence of the medium of communication on the characteristics of the interaction.¹⁴ Since then a number of studies in various disciplines have emphasized the advantages of face-to-face interaction over telephone talk and videoconferencing for conflict resolution and establishing trust. The social psychologists Drolet and Morris, for example, claim that business negotiators travel across the world enduring jet lag and many other hardships to have even a brief conversation with their interlocutors rather than making a telephone call, because this is more effective.¹⁵ However, Etzioni and Etzioni are more cautious and claim that in fact hybrid communications (both face-to-face and technology-mediated) can be the most effective way of creating communities.¹⁶ Yet generally speaking, there is an agreement that the medium influences the message¹⁷ and that face-to-face communication, being the first and most important form of human communication, has several advantages over telephone or computer-mediated interactions, particularly when dealing with issues of a complex or delicate nature.

Despite this awareness, in recent years the increasing pressures of global competition have pushed businesses to take advantage of new technologies which allow them to interact with their stakeholders ‘virtually’. In fact, one of the most widely used forms of communication in the business world today is teleconferencing. To disclose financial information, companies now make extensive use of corporate earnings calls, i.e. meetings between company executives and investment analysts via telephone which are organized through a teleconferencing service. During these multi-party calls, the executives first give a presentation of their financial results. Then, participating analysts have the opportunity to interact directly with the speakers in lengthy question and answer sessions moderated by the teleconference operator. While such audio-only interaction may deprive interlocutors of some benefits of face-to-face meetings, it is undoubtedly more cost-effective, flexible and far-reaching, and is thus highly attractive to business organizations.¹⁸

In this paper, I examine some persuasive strategies in two corpora of financial presentations that represent two of the most common interactional settings of today’s global financial community: face-to-face and teleconference. It will focus on two rhetorical devices often used by speakers to persuade listeners through recourse to Aristotelian constructs of *logos* and *ethos*. Firstly, ‘logical connectives’ used to elaborate an argument will be analysed across the two corpora to demonstrate the role of *logos* in persuasiveness. I will then look at ‘hyperbole’ to show how it is used to establish and reinforce credibility, and hence promote *ethos*. In this way, the study aims to shed more light on the role of these key persuasive features in financial discourse.

Methodology: the corpora

This study is based on two highly specialized corpora of roughly the same size (approximately 111,000 words), both dealing with the disclosure of financial results: face-to-face presentations (hereinafter FTFP) and teleconference presentations (hereinafter TCP). The two corpora were compiled to be similar in word count to allow for simple and straightforward comparisons of numerical data.

Regardless of the medium, financial presentations have the communicative purpose of providing important financial information and, at the same time, promoting a positive image of the company, as one CEO very explicitly says:

- (2) ... so that we can concentrate on what we are really here for. To tell you why X should get your investment pound, dollar or euro ahead of the next guy. (FTFP/2)

Financial presentations are thus a type of goal-directed or transactional discourse.¹⁹ The speakers are usually company officials at the top of the management hierarchy, with the CEO often a frequent speaker. Although the authorship of the presentations is not explicitly acknowledged, informants tell us that they typically go through various drafts and may have several authors, due to their vital role in

¹⁸ Bertha Du-Babcock, “An Analysis of a Video-conferencing Project: Intercultural Communication, Administration and Student Reactions”, paper presented at the 6th Association for Business Communication European Convention (Milan, 2004).

¹⁹ Michael McCarthy, *Spoken Language and Applied Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

corporate financial disclosure. Generally speaking, the linguistic characteristics associated with presentations include the use of the non-inclusive ‘we’ pronoun, through which speakers refer to themselves and the firm as one entity. ‘We’ is also used to promote the idea of a close knit ‘team’ in a work environment where top management change jobs and allegiances with great frequency. This is reinforced by the use of first names for example, to indicate the next speaker, as in example 3.

(3) With that, I’ll turn the call over to Tom. (TCP/2)

For the FTFP corpus, some of the transcripts were downloaded directly from company web sites, others were transcribed from the video available online with the help of the power point slides (also available online), still others were recorded live and transcribed. The face-to-face earnings presentations corpus is part of a larger corpus which also includes other typologies of presentation. The presentations were given in a variety of settings, often at events organized by merchant banks for the benefit of potential investors. The companies varied from banking to retailing, services, software and included companies from a wide range of national origins, even if most of the companies were multinationals operating worldwide. The audience was not always visible and therefore it was necessary to glean information both from informants and the questions and answer sessions that followed the presentations, where members of the audience sometimes gave their name and affiliation before asking the question. We can surmise that it consisted mostly of experts in the field, such as institutional investors, merchant bankers and representatives of other financial institutions. Table 1 gives an overview of the FTFP corpus.

Table 1. The FTFP corpus

Firm	Sector	Location	Words
1	Consumer credit	US	7005
2	Banking	UK	17004
3	Building society	UK	14344
4	Banking/insurance	UK	25513
5	Software	US	7270
6	Software	US	12085
7	Food and drink	UK	6685
8	Computers	US	3798
9	Merchant Bank	UK	2810
10	Media	Global	2619
11	Aviation	Brazil	2418
12	Oil	Global	2977
13	Chemicals	UK	7042
			111570

The TCP corpus consists of the transcripts of presentations given by company executives via teleconferencing (audio only). The presentations were drawn from a larger corpus of complete corporate earnings calls which also include extensive question and answer sessions between the presenters and investment analysts

participating in the teleconference. The transcripts were collected from an Internet-based firm specializing in information services for the international corporate community and for the investment community. These services are normally available to carefully screened financial professionals and by payment only. However, after contacting the firm and explaining the purpose of this research, complimentary access to the site was granted for a period of thirty days, during which time the complete transcripts of a series of teleconference calls were downloaded. The financial results were jointly presented by members of the executive management of the company, typically including the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Chief Financial Officer, along with other key figures such as Chief Operating Officers, Executive or Senior Vice Presidents and Directors of Investor Relations. The number of speakers ranged from one to six (average of three). The presentations represent a wide range of business sectors and most refer to quarterly financial periods at the end of 2003 or the beginning of 2004. The corpus is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. The TCP corpus.

Firm	Business sector	Location	Words
1	Information technology	US	6801
2	Internet retail	US	2411
3	Consumer finance	US	3452
4	Computers	US	1404
5	Banking	US	4446
6	Hotels and restaurants	US	2839
7	Food products	US	5645
8	Chemicals	US	4812
9	Internet retail	US	3658
10	Media	US	1812
11	Pharmaceuticals	US	3852
12	Textiles and apparel	Germany	2101
13	Telecommunications	France	4933
14	Biotechnology	US	7158
15	Energy	US	6237
16	Semiconductors	US	3133
17	Aviation	Holland	3143
18	Hotels and restaurants	US	4302
19	Clothes retailing	UK	694
20	Banking	US	3109
21	Chemicals	US	4089
22	Electronic equipment	Finland	3076
23	Food & staple products	US	3345
24	Oil and gas	UK/Holland	2642
25	Electronic equipment	Korea	3961
26	Telecommunications	Italy	1426
27	Electronic equipment	US	2309
28	Media	US	5618
29	Electronic equipment	US	3109
30	Internet services	US	6292
			111809

In both corpora, an effort was made to include as many international firms as possible, thus seeking to offer a more realistic picture of business transactions which are increasingly conducted among speakers of diverse language backgrounds using English as a *lingua franca*.²⁰

By comparing the word counts of the presentations listed in the two tables, an interesting trend emerges. On average, those in the FTFP corpus were longer than those in the TCP corpus which therefore required more than twice as many presentations (30 vs. 13) to reach a comparable word count. It would seem that the face-to-face medium encourages more lengthy presentations.

Methodology: analytical approach

The analysis of the two corpora combines qualitative, quantitative, and ethnographically-inspired techniques. As a preliminary step, both corpora were read carefully in order to get a ‘feel’ for the data and to identify linguistic features which contributed to the persuasive force of the discourse. During this process, it was possible to detect a strong presence of both logical connectives (e.g. ‘however’, ‘therefore’, ‘in addition’, ‘similarly’) and hyperbole (e.g. ‘phenomenal’, ‘huge’, ‘staggering’).

The two features were then processed with the concordancer of *Wordsmith Tools* to obtain frequency data and to identify interesting trends for follow-up qualitative analysis to better interpret the data.²¹ Logical connectives were searched across both corpora according to a pre-established list, based first of all on the close reading of the corpus and secondly on Hyland’s taxonomy articulated into three categories of items: contrastive, additive and resultative.²² A different approach was instead necessary for hyperbolic expressions which represent an essentially open-ended class. A list of potential search candidates was also compiled from reading the two corpora. This was integrated with indications from previous studies which had identified intensifying/extreme adjectives/adverbs and nouns of numerical exaggeration (e.g. ‘thousands’, ‘tons’, ‘gazillions’) as key forms of hyperbole.²³ While such a procedure cannot produce the exhaustive results of detailed textual analysis (only feasible with relatively small text samples), given the characteristics of this study, it seems to represent a reasonable methodological compromise.²⁴

Finally, taking inspiration from ethnographic research, interviews were conducted with informants in the professional business world, representing two different communicative perspectives.²⁵ On the delivery end for the FTFP corpus, the informant who agreed to be interviewed is one of the top managers of a multinational energy company based in Italy. He corroborated the findings of the empirical research of Drolet and Morris mentioned above, that being physically present at face-to-face presentations was considered very important by investors.²⁶ This is because presentations, although well prepared, can be interpreted not only relying on content or lexico-grammatical choice, but also using intonation, body language and facial expressions to ‘read between the lines’. This need to

²⁰ Leena Louhiala-Salminen, “The Business Communication Classroom vs. Reality. What Should We Teach Today?”, *English for Specific Purposes*, 15.1 (1996), 37-51.

²¹ Mike Scott, *Wordsmith Tools* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²² Ken Hyland, *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing* (Edinburgh: Pearson, 2000).

²³ McCarthy and Carter, “‘There’s Millions of Them’”, 171; Neal R. Norrick, “Hyperbole, Extreme Case Formulation”, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36 (2004), 1727-1739.

²⁴ McCarthy and Carter, “‘There’s Millions of Them’”, 167 (for more on the challenges of open-class item analysis).

²⁵ John M. Swales, *Genre Analysis. English in Academic and Research Settings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); see also Norman Fairclough, “Intertextuality in Critical Discourse Analysis”, *Linguistics and Education*, 3.4 (1992), 269-293, for more on the importance of insights that go beyond textual analysis.

²⁶ Drolet and Morris, “Rapport in Conflict Resolution”, 27.

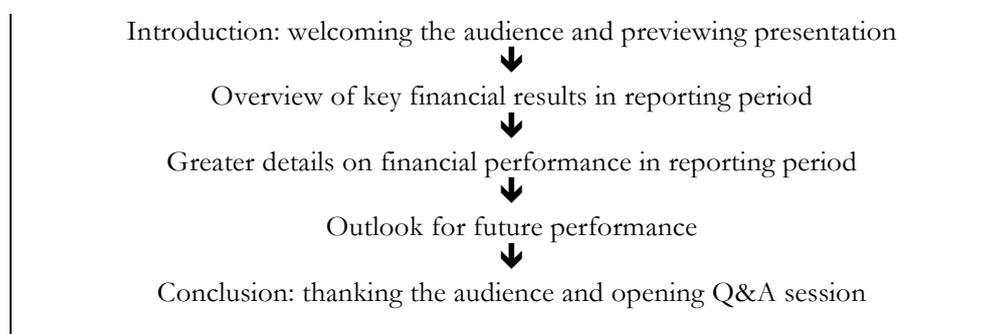
closely interpret every possible communicative channel in financial reporting is so important that investors attend courses in interpreting non-verbal signals in order to gather as much as possible of what remains unspoken because of its potentially damaging impact on stock market quotations. The informant spoke of the case when his company's stock price fell several points and indeed had to be suspended due to the CEO's unguarded use of language during a presentation question and answer session.

On the receiving end, for the TCP corpus, the informant is an investment analyst and portfolio manager for a leading mutual funds institution who participates in approximately 200 corporate earnings calls per year. He regularly uses the information services of the Internet firm that provided the data for this corpus and frequently consults the transcripts of corporate earnings calls. He also pointed out that one of the advantages of teleconferences is the tendency to stay more focused without 'going off on tangents' as often happens during face-to-face meetings, and thus participants perhaps succeed in accomplishing more business in the long run. On an anecdotal note, when asked why he took the time to read through lengthy transcripts rather than simply scanning over a series of concise published statistics that are readily available to the public at large, he replied: "The transcripts contain subtle nuances and colours that are not available through the public filings", once again confirming the crucial role of language in the business world.

Results and discussion: macrostructure of the presentations

Because financial presentations, as a spoken genre, have received relatively little attention in the literature, it seems useful to provide readers with some information about their content and structure. From the preliminary overview of the two corpora, it was possible to identify a general macrostructure that was broadly similar across both (Figure 1), even if the FTFP corpus, having several much lengthier presentations, showed a bit more variation.

Figure 1. Macrostructure of financial earnings presentations.



Generally speaking, the presentations of both corpora appear to be polished and smoothly flowing performances. The tone is largely informal and relaxed (e.g. first names, contracted forms, colloquial expressions). In the FTFP corpus, there are also some jokes and digressions from the business at hand. In one case, a CEO took time to present one member of the audience who apparently had a birthday with a cake. However, the TCP corpus contains no such asides and the presentations very much ‘stick to business’, likely due to the lack of physical proximity and visual contact as suggested by the TCP informant. In fact, only two calls have any reference to non-business matters: a welcome to those calling in from “warm and sunny Honolulu” and wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year to all on the part of an Asian CEO.

Judging from what informants said and even from the speakers themselves who at time referred to their own ‘prepared remarks’, financial presentations tend to be carefully planned and undergo extensive drafting. However, because we do not find the kind of hitches, repeats and break-downs that are typical of much extemporaneous speech, it would appear that speakers have even planned the coordinative aspects of the joint presentation, probably in an effort to make the best impression possible on listeners and to exploit the time available with maximum efficiency.

Results and discussion: logical connectives

Table 3 illustrates the quantitative analysis of selected logical connectives across the two corpora, grouped into the three broad semantic categories of Hyland’s taxonomy.²⁷ Common coordinating conjunctions (i.e. ‘and’, ‘but’, ‘so’, ‘also’, ‘because’, and ‘since’) were excluded from this analysis as their frequencies were too high to permit the manual inspection of concordance output necessary to distinguish simple syntactical coordination from the more rhetorical uses of interest to this study. The analysis, therefore, focuses on logical connectives which tend to be more overtly rhetorical, usually in the form of linking adverbials or prepositional phrases.

²⁷ Hyland, *Disciplinary Discourses*, 111

The quantitative output of the connectives ‘while’ and ‘yet’ required extensive editing in order to eliminate unwanted temporal meanings. ‘While’ was somewhat more problematic since it often functioned as a conjunction of direct contrast without any particular rhetorical force. These instances usually involved the reporting of facts (e.g. numerical data, geographical regions, business units) as shown in example 4. I opted to exclude such usage and to consider only instances where ‘while’ was being used more rhetorically (example 5).

- (4) European segment revenues were up 48% year over year **while** Japan was up 13% and Asia Pacific up 55%. (TCP/4)
- (5) **While** our cost performance has been very strong, we do need to continue to invest for the future. (FTFP/3)

Table 3. Logical connectives in FTFP vs. TCP

Logical connective	FTFP corpus	TCP corpus
<u>Contrastive</u>		
However	49	68
Although/even though/though	48	47
Despite/in spite of	16	30
While	20	38
Yet	6	7
On the other hand	-	3
Notwithstanding	9	2
Nevertheless	6	1
In contrast	2	1
Whereas	7	1
Besides	6	-
Instead	5	1
Even so	4	1
Subtotal	178	200
<u>Additive</u>		
In addition/additionally	22	82
Again	12	10
Similarly	3	4
Likewise	4	2
Moreover	1	1
Furthermore	5	1
Equally	3	-
Subtotal	50	100
<u>Resultative</u>		
As a result	32	40
Therefore/thereby (1)	17	24
Consequently/as a consequence	33	7
Thus	6	7
Hence	5	3
Accordingly	4	1
Subtotal	97	82
Grand total	325	382

As can be seen from the table, the overall usage of connectives was broadly similar across both corpora (325 in FTFP vs. 382 in TCP). Among the categories, in both corpora contrastive connectives were by far the most frequent compared to additive and resultative connectives. Much of the difference between the two corpora could be traced to additive connectives (50 in FTFP vs. 100 in TCP), and especially to the item ‘in addition/additionally’. While the FTFPs were slightly more interactive and conversational and used additives such as ‘and’ frequently, other types of ‘written-like’ connectives were used equally in both corpora. Thus, the reason for this difference is not clear. Although beyond the purview of this study, a possible explanation could be linked to cultural preferences. More specifically, in the TCP there were many speakers of American English who may tend to privilege certain lexical items such as ‘in addition/additionally’, compared to their British counterparts in the FTFP.

Within each category, a rather wide range of items was found, even if some distinct preferences were evident. Perhaps this is due to individual proclivities

which must not be ruled out in small corpora studies. It could also be that certain connectives tend to be preferred in financial presentations where speakers are very keen on persuading their listeners. Overall, the speakers made more frequent use of ‘however’, ‘despite/in spite of’, ‘in addition’, ‘as a result’, ‘consequently’ and ‘therefore’ compared to other possible alternatives. According to Biber *et al.*, in comparison with conversation, fiction and news, linking adverbials are more frequent in written academic prose, with particularly high frequencies of overt links, such as ‘however’ and ‘therefore’, used by writers to present and support their argument.²⁸ The fact that we find a considerable number of very explicit logical connectives in these spoken presentations underlines their persuasive function. Their presence is also further evidence of advance planning on the part of the speakers as discussed in the previous section, as they are relatively infrequent in extemporaneous speech.²⁹

²⁸ Douglas Biber et al., *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Essex: Longman, 1999).

²⁹ Ibid.

Follow-up qualitative analysis revealed that contrastive connectives were often used by speakers in negative contexts, either to immediately counter with a positive comment (examples 6 and 7), or to foreground the positive in relation to the negative (examples 8 and 9). Much less frequent were contrastive connectives used to mitigate the positive in order to present a ‘realistic’ picture, similar to Rogers’ findings (example 10).³⁰

³⁰ Rogers, “CEOs Presentations”, 451.

- (6) X prices have peaked during Q4 and started to decline at the end of the quarter. **On the other hand** XX prices were strong throughout the quarter. (TCP/25)
- (7) We took a more cautious stance in certain markets – for example, in mortgages and some areas in personal lending. **Even so**, we achieved good volume growth in Personal Banking products. (FTFP/2)
- (8) This is a business that has delivered – and continues to deliver substantial returns to its shareholders **despite** less than benign conditions in a number of markets and aggressive competitive pricing over the holiday season. (FTFP/7)
- (9) After cost of ownership, our operating income was 0.5% better than last year, **although** in absolute terms clearly still \$10m below last year. (TCP/17)
- (10) [...] or in the life and pensions sector where the effective scale of consolidation has been substantial, but where **even though** the balance sheets have improved, it’s more a case of ‘sleeping at night’ than a solid platform for competing away shareholder value. (FTFP/4)

Given their prominence throughout the two corpora, contrastive connectives can be seen as a powerful strategy exploited by the corporate speakers to draw listeners’ attention away from the negative and towards the positive in an attempt to persuade them of the overall soundness of their companies despite admitted set-backs.

Both additive and resultative connectives tended to appear where speakers systematically build up and consolidate positive results. The additive connective ‘furthermore’ in example 12 is used to link two consecutive positive comments, thereby reinforcing both, while ‘similarly’ in example 13 is used to wind up a series of positive statements, thus leaving listeners with an even stronger impression of

success. In examples 14 and 15 resultative connectives highlight the logically positive consequences of successful initiatives.

(11) In terms of financial strength, being part of X provides confidence to our customers and distributors. **Furthermore**, Standard & Poors have reconfirmed X's credit rating at AA, consistent with the Groups rating overall. (FTFP/4)

(12) In just a year, we have moved a system of 30,000 restaurants to serve our customers better. Our momentum is a direct result of focusing on our customers and making improvements in our restaurants. **Similarly**, we are stronger as a system today because we are poised to execute this strategy. (TCP/6)

(13) Profitability, gross margin went up by 5% mostly due to higher ASP and cost cutting. SG&A went up by about 2% because of the increased marketing expense and **thus** we end up with operating profit margin going up by 2 percentage points to 20%. (TCP/25)

(14) Our income growth was up 11%; our cost growth fundamentally flat; and, **as a result**, everything flows straight through to shareholder returns with positive jaws of plus 10.6%. (FTFP/10)

Results and discussion: hyperbole

The distribution of hyperbolic expressions in the form of intensifying or extreme adjective and adverbs across the two corpora is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Hyperbole in face-to-face vs. teleconference earnings presentations

Hyperbolic expressions	FTFP corpus	TCP corpus
Great	77	65
Dramatic/dramatically	31	8
Fantastic	16	1
Phenomenal	15	2
Exciting	14	10
Huge	12	12
Tremendous/tremendously	11	12
Excellent	8	17
Exceptional/exceptionally	6	11
Enormous	8	3
Outstanding	8	10
Massive	5	1
Amazing	5	3
Magnificent	2	-
Terrific	1	10
Spectacular	1	2
Unparalleled	1	1
Staggering	1	-
Remarkable	1	4
Extraordinary	-	4
Unlimited	-	2
Blowout	-	1

Perhaps the most immediately striking result is that in both corpora hyperbole is uniformly positive. Since hyperbole serves to upscale reality, it is particularly suited to financial presentations which have to convey a favourable image of the company. Therefore, not surprisingly, there are no instances of items such as ‘awful’, ‘terrible’ or ‘catastrophic’. Moreover, negative results tend to be expressed with mitigated choices. For instance, there was only one instance of ‘bad’, but several of ‘flat’ and ‘disappointing’. On this point, the TCP informant confirmed that he has never heard company executives use negative hyperbolic expressions to describe performance, and added that even milder adjectives as ‘disappointing’ sometimes needed to be interpreted more realistically.

Although initially the investigation of hyperbolic numerical expressions which are common in conversation was the focus, none of these were found in either of the corpora. All occurrences of ‘hundreds’, ‘thousands’ and ‘million’ could be interpreted literally and not as exaggerations.³¹ Apparently, in financial presentations, numerical overstatement is not an option, possibly due to the mandatory requirement for maximum accuracy and transparency. However, in the FTFP corpus some occurrences of the hyperbolic fixed collocations or pre-patterned expressions discussed by McCarthy and Carter were found, as shown in the following example:

³¹ McCarthy and Carter, “‘There’s Millions of Them’”, 169.

(15) In general insurance it is clear that the reinsurance sector is **miles** away from being strong enough to support price competition amongst insurers. (FTFP/4)

Among the extreme adjectives/adverbs, there seem to be some preferred forms of hyperbole. ‘Great’ was by far the most frequent item across both corpora, probably representing the exaggerated version of the less impressive ‘good’. Although the other items in the table were not present in particularly high quantities, they do suggest an interesting trend. The speakers preferred some strong lexical items (examples 18-21), while dispreferring others, such as ‘wonderful’ or ‘marvellous’, perhaps considered too common to achieve the desired rhetorical effect. We even find the creative adjective ‘blowout’ (example 22), as well as the noun phrase ‘global rollout’ (example 23), suggesting that speakers need constantly new and more dramatic ways to emphasize good results if they want to impress and persuade their listeners. In fact, there may be a generalized escalation of positive evaluation in business settings. On this question, the TCP informant commented that highly positive evaluation is fairly standard in these presentations and therefore does not have a particularly strong effect on listeners. However, he also added that the use of such expressions is not necessarily unwarranted. For example, an ‘amazing quarter’ usually means that the company did in fact perform very well. But most analysts can gauge true meaning on the basis of the performance data in their hands, in addition to their personal experience with the company executives in question; some simply have a more upbeat speaking style and wider range of vocabulary, while others have a more sober approach. He also mentioned that sometimes it is the tone of voice that indicates that the company is in trouble regardless of what is said. This

corroborates the importance attributed to the non-verbal features of these events already pointed out by the informant of the FTFP corpus. Also interesting in these examples is the great variety of hyperbolic adjectives/adverbs which suggests that linguistic innovation is an important strategy to keep rhetorical force at a high level and to prevent them from getting worn out from overuse.

- (16) The gains in gross margin dollars was **spectacular**. (TCP/16)
(17) I emphasize again that X has had a very **huge** impact on growth. (TCP/10)
(18) This gives **tremendous** mix leverage. (FTFP/2)
(19) [...] how have we motivated, rewarded and incentivized colleagues to deliver this **staggering** volume growth. (FTFP/2)
(20) We had a **blowout** quarter. (TCP/4)
(21) That's a remarkable start – our **fastest global rollout** ever. (FTFP/11)

Although initially only adjectives and adverbs were taken into consideration, it became apparent that hyperbole in some instances stretched across whole sequences with persuasive lexical items reinforcing each other reciprocally. In example 24, the credibility of the speaker is established by the combination of lexical items (i.e. 'genuinely', 'blessed', 'strongest') that together constitute the persuasive force of the utterance. In example 32, the hyperbolic adjectives 'unlimited' and 'huge' are further strengthened by 'powerhouse', 'success', and the boosted comparative adjectives 'ever bigger/faster' to convince listeners of the brilliant future prospects for the company.

- (22) We **genuinely** believe we are **blessed** with the UK's **strongest** set of financial services brands. (FTFP/4)
(23) The X market place is a **powerhouse**. We continue to enjoy **ever bigger, ever faster** cycles of **success**, fuelled by **unlimited** opportunity of our **huge** addressable market. (TCP/9)

This synergic effect can also be seen in examples 26 and 27 where there is a series of adjectives/adverbs ('excellent', 'top tier', 'important', 'strong and great', 'terrific', 'outstanding', 'tremendously') whose cumulative effect creates a hyperbolic qualification of the firms' performance. Another factor that could be involved here is desire on the part of speakers to pre-empt challenges from listeners. According to Pomerantz, 'extreme case formulations' are commonly found in contexts where speakers have a strong interest in legitimizing their claims and discouraging others from contradicting them.³² Earnings presentations would seem to be an ideal setting to enact this strategy. In fact, it would be difficult for listeners to challenge these hyperbolic 'clusters'.

- (24) I can sum up the year with one word: **excellent**. We achieved **top-tier** financial performance, made a number of **important** strategic changes to our company, and delivered **strong** returns. (FTFP/2)

³² Anita Pomerantz, "Extreme Case Formulations: A Way of Legitimizing Claim", *Human Studies*, 9 (1986), 219-229.

(25) X had another **great** quarter and a **great** year. Revenue up 7 and op profit up 14. Just a **terrific** fall season [...] Our consumer finance business had an **outstanding** quarter, **great** revenue growth [...] Our international mortgage business in growing **tremendously** well. (TCP/15)

In the TCP corpus this particular strategy seems to have been successful. In a previous study that investigated the question and answer sessions of the calls, it was found that analysts do not make any especially challenging comments even after hearing negative results.³³ When asked about this, the TCP informant said, “Analysts tend not to be too harsh on companies in its public forum. They may also show restraint in public if they hold a large position in the company’s stock and don’t want to fuel negative sentiment”.

Concluding remarks

Using a three-pronged methodological approach (quantitative, qualitative and ethnographic), the findings of this study suggest that persuasive strategies are indeed a prominent feature of both the face-to-face and the teleconference presentations. The corporate speakers skilfully constructed their arguments with logical connectives, using logos to appeal to the rationality of their listeners and, most importantly, to guide them towards an interpretation that emphasizes success and downplays failure. They also exploited various forms of hyperbole to emphasize the positive, and thus through ethos sought to establish and consolidate the favourable image and credibility of both the firm and the speakers. There was a wide variety of intensifying adjectives/adverbs, often taking on quite creative forms. A number of insights from both informants served to confirm the importance of well-structured and carefully planned presentations with a strongly positive orientation which had emerged from the linguistic analyses. Although the size of the two corpora precludes any broad generalizations, the findings nonetheless indicate that logical connectives and hyperbole are characterizing features of the genre itself which transcend the medium of interaction.

During the analysis of the two corpora, some differences emerged which seemed to be influenced by face-to-face vs. telephone-only mode. Further research in these areas would be useful to have a better understanding of the role of the medium of interaction in financial presentations. For example, it would be interesting to investigate the underlying reasons for the much lengthier presentations in the face-to-face medium compared to teleconferencing as discussed previously, which could be linked to the lack of jokes and digressions noted in the teleconference presentations. Other variables that would merit more study are the use of forms of address, personal pronouns and engagement strategies to involve both other members of the ‘team’ and the audience, all of which appeared to be more prominent in the face-to-face presentations. The prosodic features of financial presentations would be another worthwhile topic to develop. Prosodic analysis of relatively large

³³ Belinda Crawford Camiciottoli, “Rhetorical Strategies of Company Executives and Investment Analysts: Textual Metadiscourse in Corporate Earnings Calls”, in Vijay K. Bhatia and Maurizio Gotti, eds., *Explorations in Specialized Genres* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 115-133.

samples of language typically requires a different methodological approach using highly specialized software to analyse paralinguistic features of speech. It is thus clearly beyond the purview of the present study which intended to focus exclusively on linguistic features. Moreover, for reasons of privacy, the corresponding audio files/tapes of the two corpora investigated in this study were not made available. However, some companies have recently begun to post audio files of financial presentations on their websites. If this trend continues, prosodic analysis of corpora of financial discourse could be more feasible in the future.

Cultural influences on choice of persuasive lexis would be another interesting topic to pursue. In addition to possible differences in the use of logical connectives between speakers of British vs. American English as mentioned earlier, certain hyperbolic expressions may also show cultural alignments. For example, in the FTFP corpus (British English) items such as ‘dramatic’, ‘phenomenal’ and ‘fantastic’ were found to be somewhat more prominent. On the other hand, in the TCP corpus (American English), the items ‘terrific’ and ‘excellent’ were more frequent. To shed more light on this aspect, it would be necessary to conduct a targeted investigation based on specially collected data.

In conclusion, the findings of this study are useful not only for a better understanding of the characteristics of persuasive discourse in business settings, but they can also be applied towards the development of more finely-tuned training courses for finance professionals who currently give presentations and more effective teaching methodologies and materials for finance students who are learning to do so.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Prof. Janet Bowker (University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’) and Prof. Julia Bamford (University of Naples ‘L’Orientale’) for kindly providing access to the face-to-face presentations corpus and interpretive input.

When the Same Book Speaks Two Different Languages. Identity and Social Relationships across Cultures in the Italian Translation of *The Uncommon Reader*

The common reader, as Dr. Johnson implies, differs from the critic and the scholar. He is worse educated, and nature has not gifted him so generously. He reads for his own pleasure rather than to impart knowledge or correct the opinions of others.

Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader*

Introduction

Building on previous work on the same topic, this paper aims to explore how Monica Pavani, a translator and poet from Ferrara, has dealt with the translation of style in *The Uncommon Reader* by Alan Bennett.¹ It provides wider background information as well as further evidence and stronger arguments in support of the translation analysis and criticism previously made available. Moreover, the analysis is presented in its completeness and in relation to the general architecture of both the source and the target text.

The paper starts with an introduction aimed at identifying the theoretical framework in which the analysis is set: the approach is translator-centred and also stretches to tentatively explore the specific issues of both feminist intervention and literary sociolinguistics. Pavani has revealed, on different occasions, her habit of reflecting on the mental processes underlying both writing and translating, which makes her a particularly interesting subject for those who would like to delve into the intertwined issues of translation as a form of creative writing and the translator's voice. Furthermore, not unlike many feminist and postmodern translators, when reflecting on her work Pavani also seems to look at translation as a form of *écriture* which extends and develops the source text. It was this aspect emerging from some of Pavani's accounts of her translation work that elicited the need for an exploration of the issue of feminist intervention as well. However, despite the boldness of some choices linked to the sketching of possibly the three main characters in Bennett's story (the Queen; Norman Seakins, the kitchen boy turned page; and Queenie, the British writer and journalist J.R. Ackerley's dog), Pavani does not seem to take the re-writing aspect of translation to an extreme in this translation. She does not go so far as to attempt linguistic creation: the Queen's use of both 'one' and 'we' and 'I' in the source text is reduced to an alternation between the simple majestic plural and the first person singular in the target text, which removes from the story the added comic effect of 'royalese', among other things; nor does she seem to have a hidden political agenda. On the other hand, she does not seem to refuse recourse to standardization, either: a normalization procedure seems at work in the most subversive area of Bennett's writing, probably in an attempt to make a prototext

¹ Emilia Di Martino, "La sovrana lettrice e *The Uncommon Reader*: un approccio critico al testo tradotto", in Flora De Giovanni, Bruna Di Sabato, eds., *Tradurre in pratica* (Napoli: ESI, 2010), 113-140; "Da TUR a Lsl: voci in transito", in Oriana Palusci, ed., *Female Voices across Languages* (Trento: Tangram, 2011), 289-300.

– which may have otherwise sounded too crammed with gay references – more ‘palatable’ for the Italian reader.² All this goes (paradoxically) side by side with other assertions from Pavani which seem to betray, instead, a ‘passive’, receptive disposition to translation. The translator is probably just using here, as most expert translators do, a mixture of procedures and strategies. The result is a text that seems to lie in a moderate sphere of ‘creativity’³ in terms of feminist intervention but in a bolder attempt at recreation in sociolinguistic terms.

Theoretical framework

Traditional conceptions of gender roles have characterised the discussion on translation up until the 1970s, viewing it as a passive, essentially reproductive (and therefore feminine) practice. Deconstructionism and post-structuralism, instead, particularly through Barthes’ reader empowerment⁴ and Derrida’s idea of *différance*,⁵ have brought about the erosion of authority and theorised a textual relativism which has seen the author disappear along with the subject, thus granting the translator more freedom of action within the text, and even the power of creation when following the project of questioning master-narratives and challenging status quo truths.

In its attempt to explore and contribute to the issue of translation practice and the translator’s own perception of this practice, this paper sets itself amongst those contemporary theoretical approaches which are usually referred to as translator-centred due to their being focused on the translator’s subjective response to the source text and which are, most importantly, based on the assumption that translation is a form of creative writing.⁶ It does so by addressing the issue of style across languages which, set against a background of literary sociolinguistics, specifically means here (1) analyzing variation within a specific character’s language use; (2) examining the issue of language choice in terms of community-belonging.

Furthermore, this paper also touches on the issue of feminist intervention or, to paraphrase von Flotow’s words, the feminist belief that the translation of a line like “Ce soir j’entre dans l’histoire sans relever ma jupe”⁷ as “this evening I’m entering history without opening my legs” (rather than “this evening I’m entering history without pulling up my skirt”) is not only “acceptable”, but even “desirable”.⁸ Commenting on her ‘womanhandled’⁹ translation of Lise Gauvin’s *Lettres d’une autre*, Lotbinière-Harwood confesses, for example:

[m]y translation practice is a political activity aimed at making language speak for women. So my signature on a translation means: this translation has used every possible translation strategy to make the feminine visible in language. Because making the feminine visible in language means making women seen and heard in the real world. Which is what feminism is all about.¹⁰

² The recent fierce criticism of *The Sims* by some Italian politicians due to the videogame featuring gay families (Marco Pasqua, “Attacco al videogioco con le famiglie gay ‘Minaccia l’educazione dei bambini’”, *La Repubblica*, 14 May 2011) is but the latest evidence of at least part of the country’s attitude to sexual diversity.

³ The term is bracketed because, despite the translator’s creative attitude to her work, her intervention is not one of creation from scratch.

⁴ Roland Barthes, *Image Music Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977).

⁵ Jacques Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel”, trans. by J. F. Graham, in John Biguenet, Rainer Schulte, eds., *Theories of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 218-227.

⁶ Susan Petrilli, “Traduzione e semiosi: considerazioni introduttive”, *Albanor*, 10.2 (1999-2000), 9-21; Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush, *The Translator as Writer* (London: Continuum, 2006); Manuela Pertenghella and Eugenia Loffredo, eds., *Translation and Creativity* (London: Continuum, 2006).

⁷ Nicole Brossard, France Théoret et al., *La Nef des sorcières* (Montréal: Quinze, 1976).

⁸ Luise von Flotow, “Feminist Translation: Contexts, Practices and Theories”, *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Redaction*, 4.2 (1991), 69-84.

⁹ Barbara Godard, “Theorizing Feminist Discourse/ Translation”, in Susan Bassnett

and André Lefevere, eds., *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990), 87-96.

¹⁰ Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, preface to Lise Gauvin's *Letters from An Other* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1990), 9.

¹¹ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

¹² In addition to writing papers, she has given talks on translation and writing on several occasions (meet-the-author public interviews, book festivals, conferences, etc.).

¹³ Monica Pavani, talk presented on the occasion of the seminar "Esperienze di traduzione letteraria", organised by AARDT (Associazione degli Archivi Riuniti delle Donne Ticino) in Melano on 9 April 2008, featuring Monica Cerutti, Tina D'Agostini and Monica Pavani, <http://www.archividonneticino.ch/studi/05esperienze_traduzione_pavani.pdf>, 30 June 2012.

By making the feminine 'seen and heard' in her translation, Lotbinière-Harwood contravenes the translator's traditional practice of invisibility,¹¹ she appropriates the source text and 'hijacks' it in order to make it serve her political intentions. From writing in its own right, translation here further stretches into re-writing aimed at bending the source text to pursue specific political ends. However, this paper will argue that feminist intervention may sometimes be a form of overt 'hijacking' as compared to the more subtle forms of re-appropriation and re-purposing that the translation critic may detect using the tools of literary sociolinguistics.

The translator

Monica Pavani is a translator and poet from Ferrara. Born in 1968, she has mostly translated feminine voices but also some male authors, in particular novels, short stories and poetry from English and French. She has published books of poems – amongst them *Fugaincanti*, dedicated to Camille Claudel, which has been described as "un inno alla potenza del genio femminile" – and regularly writes book reviews and essays for *Tratti* and *Leggere Donna*, in addition to being the author of some pieces of literary criticism.

Pavani has revealed, on different occasions, a habit of reflecting on the mental processes underlying both writing and translating, which invites looking at both the translation strategies used and the choices made in her works as deliberate and well thought out, rather than just the result of good language competence and, sometimes, chance.¹² Pavani confesses to being fanatical about the music and rhythm of a text (which, she says, would not even exist for her without those): "... quando traduco dall'inglese devo assolutamente disfare il discorso, rifarlo cinquanta volte prima che suoni vagamente in italiano, ... per me un libro deve scorrere o comunque deve avere un ritmo molto riconoscibile. Arrivo a rasentare livelli di maniacalità, nel senso che, finché non c'è il ritmo giusto, per me quel testo *non esiste*".¹³ Moreover, not unlike many feminist and postmodern translators, Pavani also seems to look at translation as a form of *écriture* which extends and develops the source text:

[m]i capita spessissimo che, ricercando una parola diversa perché la prima che mi è venuta in mente non mi 'suona', ecco che si innestano degli incroci strani di parole che sgorgano tutte insieme e cominciano a funzionare, producendo significati leggermente diversi e magari più interessanti. Sono i momenti in cui si amplia l'orizzonte della pagina e dell'universo – qualunque esso sia – che la pagina tenta disperatamente di riprodurre, e si cominciano a vedere più paesaggi.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid.

However, this 'confession of infidelity' must result from a need to 'come clean' and start afresh rather than from one to 'untie the knot', as it is counterbalanced by the use of two metaphors that the translator often uses to refer to the act of translation, which fit into a picture of respect for the source text instead: listening and letting the author's voices/words/images/landscapes get at and into you.

Translators, she says, feel the need to step out of their heads, or in her own words, “accantonare la propria pelle” (put their own skin to one side), which – she clarifies – does not mean entering someone else’s, but rather letting, as written above, the author’s voices/words/images/landscapes enter you. This is a very feminine metaphor, which Pavani further describes as a condition of total, absolute focus on the other’s voice, a condition which translating shares with the writing of poetry, in Pavani’s opinion. Stepping outside of the self and letting the other in does not mean appropriating the author you are translating, nor does it equal self-denial or personal annihilation.¹⁵

The following paragraphs will try to show how this process of openly confessed *écriture* works in practical terms, counterbalanced as it is by an equally admitted ‘passive’ predisposition to translation, in the context of *La sovrana lettrice/The Uncommon Reader*. In particular, focus will be on the boldness of some choices linked to the sketching of the three main characters in the story as well as on the normalisation of Bennett’s writing in some points and on the loss of its intertextuality, in the attempt to offer a general account of the overall architecture of the target text.

The Uncommon Reader

One day the Queen bumps into a ginger-haired kitchen boy, Norman Seakins, at the City of Westminster travelling library which happens to be parked outside the kitchen at Buckingham Palace. The young man was taking out a book by Cecil Beaton, while Her Majesty was just chasing after her dogs – a pack of corgis who were refusing to come in and were barking sharply at the large van – and had only entered the bookmobile to apologise for the noise, but felt obliged to borrow a book once in. She selects a novel, a random volume of Ivy Compton-Burnett’s, intending to return it the following week. She finds the book quite a hard read, but returning it the following week, she feels obliged to take out another book. *The Pursuit of Love* by Nancy Mitford proves to be extremely inspiring, infecting the Queen with an inexplicable urge to read and read, to make up for time lost. Palace life changes. The more the Queen expands her reading under the direction of Norman, whom she has discovered is a far more accomplished reader than she is and has therefore turned into her literary advisor and companion, the more she appears distracted while on her public duties. She even insists on introducing literature into inappropriate contexts, such as her Christmas broadcast. Her behaviour gets so odd that the palace staff begin to wonder if she is suffering from Alzheimer’s disease (“Thus it was that the dawn of sensibility was mistaken for the onset of senility”¹⁶), and her Private Secretary and the Prime Minister decide that they must put an end to this unacceptable state of affairs. Norman is sent to university, and a pile of books he had chosen to enliven her time during a visit to Canada mysteriously disappear. An elderly family confidante who is persuaded to get her to quit her new habit talks her into writing, instead. Thus begins her writing stage, which absorbs her even more than the reading.

¹⁵ The result is a type of writing which is “né azzerata né egocentrica, ma *decentrata*, capace di ascoltare voci diverse” (Ibid., 9).

¹⁶ Alan Bennett, *The Uncommon Reader* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 81; further references in the text.

In the end, the Queen discovers that Sir Kevin, her Private Secretary, was behind the crusade to stop her from reading and writing, and she appoints him the High Commissioner to New Zealand to get rid of him. On her eightieth birthday, when all the ministers gather to wish her well and drink champagne, the Queen announces her idea of writing a book and asks those who have read Marcel Proust to raise their hands. Just a few hands go up. Like Marcel in Proust's masterpiece, she says, she feels that her life "needs redeeming by analysis and reflection." (115) The Ministers are alarmed by the news. When the Queen rebukes the Prime Minister – who has said that Her Majesty is in a unique position and that a monarch has never published a book – she provides a few examples of ancestors who have done so, mentioning among them her uncle the Duke of Windsor. The Prime Minister makes the objection that he could do so because he had abdicated. At which point, the Queen seems on the point of making an important announcement ("Oh, did I not say that?" said the Queen. "But...why do you think you're all here?"), 121), and this is where the book ends.

With its 121 pages, *The Uncommon Reader* is longer than a short story, but too brief to be listed as a novel. A novella, then, with quite a lot packed into such a small space. Bennett's clever prose and his humour, resulting from the fine line he creates between reality and absurdity, makes it a little jewel. The fast witty narrative functions as a cultural *Bildungsroman* (the Queen of England turns from a duty-bound reader¹⁷ into a voracious reader-for-pleasure¹⁸ and later a writer). It also fosters reflection on both the humanising power of literature and the potentially subversive nature of reading.

¹⁷ "She'd never taken much interest in reading. She read, of course, as one did, but liking books was something she left to other people. It was a hobby and it was in the nature of her job that she didn't have hobbies" (6).

¹⁸ "What she was finding also was that one book led to another, doors kept opening wherever she turned and the days weren't long enough for the reading she wanted to do" (21).

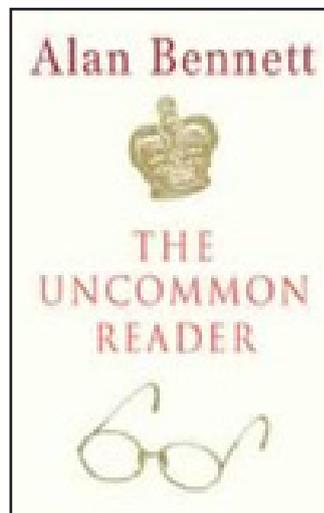


Fig. 1: Original cover of *The Uncommon Reader*, Alan Bennett, 2006.



Fig. 2: Italian cover of *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice*, 2007.

La sovrana lettrice

La sovrana lettrice came out with Adelphi in 2007, immediately standing out from the English version for its title and the picture on the front cover (see Fig. 1 and 2). Whereas *The Uncommon Reader* reveals its interdiscursive relation with Woolf's *The Common Reader* in the very title, and the fact that the uncommon reader is Her Majesty the Queen of England is only hinted at – not stated – by the picture of a crown on top of the title, *La sovrana lettrice* seems if anything to keep the lid on the former and overstate the latter. In Woolf's book the common reader could be any of us; it is Woolf herself, who reads English literature defying the conditionings which literary critics are often slave to. In Bennett's book the uncommon reader is none other than the Queen. However, like Woolf's common reader, she goes from one book to another following her instinct and personal taste, without any particular order or regard for what should be read.¹⁹

As already hinted at above, the choice of *La sovrana lettrice* as the Italian title is quite a bold one as – the Italian version of Woolf's book being *Il lettore comune* – one would have expected Pavani's choice to fall on *Il lettore non comune* or, just to satisfy her stated need for musicality, *Il lettore inconsueto*. *La sovrana lettrice* drops the interdiscursive relation with Woolf in the title, which – we know – strongly affects the reader's approach to any text, and attributes a sex to the 'uncommon reader' whilst the picture clearly identifies the latter with Elizabeth II. At first sight, this seems to convey another possible play on the phrase 'common reader'. Indeed, it may be tempting to say that 'uncommon' is also a play on the word 'commoner' – the Queen is not a 'commoner' like her subjects. However, on reading the book one seems to gather that the Queen is 'uncommon' not in as much as she is a monarch, but rather because she is – or better, becomes – a reader, unlike most of the people by whom she is surrounded or with whom she comes in contact.

Once the link with Woolf had been dropped, the title could have been changed into *La sovrana lettura*, which would have well reflected the book's content, the real protagonist being reading rather than the Queen herself, whilst at the same time also keeping the further meaning of 'common reader' as the set text that a group (usually of students) are expected to read to build up a common background. Keeping the link both to the person reading and the act of reading simply would not have been possible in Italian, unless the translator opted for a degree of linguistic creativity, producing something like *La sovrana letto/ura*, which would keep together the *nomen agentis* and the *nomen actionis*, whilst at the same time foregrounding the female agent. Vowel alternation being another way of marking the gender of nouns, the term *lettora* does sound possible. Even more so if we think that nouns ending in *-tore* preceded by a consonant different from 't' do have a feminine form in *-tora* (for example, *pastora*, *tintora*, *impostora*). However, the suffix *-ice* not having a negative connotation in Italian (unlike *-essa*, for example) and the term *lector* having no feminine in Latin (unlike *minister*, which features the feminine *ministra/ae*, thus allowing for the use of the term *ministra* in Italian) – which is itself, of course, an

¹⁹ "... to her all books were the same and, as with her subjects, she felt a duty to approach them without prejudice" (48).

²⁰ However, in Carlo Alianello's *L'eredità della priora* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1963), the character 'Madre Lettora' shows the word has actually been used in this form. A 'Madre Lettora' is the nun who is weekly entrusted the duty of reading passages from the Bible or the Rule during meals in a convent.

²¹ "For 50 years and more, Elizabeth Windsor has maintained her dignity, her sense of duty and her hairstyle. If it wasn't for her, I most certainly wouldn't be here – ladies and gentlemen, I give you the Queen"; BBCNews, "Mirren 'Too Busy' to Meet Queen", 10 May 2007, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/6643793.stm>>, 30 June 2012.

²² Ibid.

²³ In an interview Pavani admitted to watching the film to this very end: "Ovviamente me lo sono riguardato attentamente non appena mi è stata proposta la traduzione di questo libro"; Luca Balduzzi, "Intervista via e-mail a Monica Pavani", 4 November 2007, <<http://www.imolaoggi.it/civetta/index.cfm?wnews=105>>, 30 June 2012.

²⁴ Katie Wales, "Royalese: the Rise and Fall of 'The Queen's English'", *English Today*, 10 (1994), 39.

example of how language is deeply gendered – many would probably disapprove of the term *lettora*.²⁰ Moreover, supplementing, i.e. *foregrounding* the compensation strategies used to convey the multiple layers of a text – which is, in itself, a legitimate process – may be looked at as annoying exhibitionism and overstatement which repels rather than attracts potential readers when used in the very title.

As already hinted at above, it is not immediately clear why Pavani drops the interdiscursive relation with Woolf in the title. However, if one also focuses on the different pictures used on the two front covers, the choice starts making sense. In 2006 – which is also the year when *The Uncommon Reader* was first published in the *London Review of Books* before being published in hardback the following year – a film about the British monarchy in the aftermath of Diana's death by director Stephen Frears (starring Helen Mirren in the role of Her Majesty and Michael Sheen in that of Tony Blair) came out in the cinemas around the world. The film was acclaimed by both critics and the public, particularly thanks to Mirren's and Sheen's excellent acting. Mirren, who won the Oscar for Best Actress for her performance, publicly praised the Queen in her acceptance speech,²¹ and was invited to dinner at Buckingham Palace in May 2007 (but had to decline due to work commitments).²² As is clear, Frears's film had a huge coverage in the media all over the world, and Adelphi could clearly not miss the opportunity.²³ The decision of severing the interdiscursive relation with Woolf's *The Common Reader* to set up a new one with Frears's film, which is clearly confirmed by the front cover of the Italian version, was perhaps a purely commercial choice: the relation with *The Common Reader* would have probably not been immediately obvious for the Italian common reader, while the film was surely in most people's memories. Pavani also confesses to deliberately drawing inspiration from the film to sort out some tricky language issues posed by the translation: she may, as well, have tried to create a link, albeit tenuous and debatable, between the source text and the target readership.

As for the book's content, what one notices at first sight is a lack of meta-textual materials – footnotes, preface or other immediately visible signs of intervention on the translator's part, i.e. a lack of all those strategies that feminist translators usually employ as a strategy of visibility. Since Pavani is a translator who is used to reflecting on her work, this choice may be deliberate, but is probably due to the publisher's own policy, as usual in these cases. However, some bold linguistic choices stand out, and it is exactly on those that the following paragraphs will focus, as they are linked to the sketching of the three main characters in the story, the Queen, the queen and Queenie.

The Queen

One of the most delicate issues in the translation of *The Uncommon Reader* is quite obviously the Queen's language. One can surely still agree with Wales that "[i]t is in grammar, in pronoun usage in particular, that royalese is most strikingly illustrated apart from pronunciation",²⁴ where 'royalese' could be described as "a group of

linguistic features widely associated in Britain with the speech of members of the Royal Family, as well as certain other high status groups”,²⁵ or better as the language of the older members of the Royal Family which reflects their ideological as well as social distance, i.e. what we could call the linguistic manifestation of “the distance between royalty and commonalty”.²⁶

The two pronouns which characterise the language of the Royal Family and of the Queen in particular as ‘royalese’ are ‘royal we’ and ‘royal one’. The ‘royal we’, or majestic plural, is a marker of the speech of Shakespearian rulers, although Queen Victoria was allegedly the first monarch to be reported as using it in real life, with the famous remark, “We are not amused”.²⁷ Others have suggested that the quotation is not an example of the ‘royal we’, since Victoria was probably speaking on behalf of all the ladies present at court. Princess Alice denied Queen Victoria ever uttered the comment in a 1978 interview; she said she had asked her grandmother about the expression, “but she never said it”, Queen Victoria being “a very cheerful person”.²⁸

It has not always been of exclusively royal use though, as ‘We have become a grandmother’ was Margaret Thatcher’s statement to the press on the birth of her first grandchild in 1989, a statement which caused much controversy and hilarity.²⁹ At present, the pronoun is “[v]irtually obsolete ... in the mouth of the current monarch, but ... very much alive in the ‘royalese’ of satirical journalism, parody and caricature, a crude symbol of royalty, like the orb and scepter”; according to Wales, “the present queen is more likely to use the properly exclusive ‘royal firm *we*’, speaking on behalf of the royal family present and past; or the ‘royal tour *we*’, equivalent to *my husband and I*”,³⁰ the latter having become a real catch-phrase.

Unlike ‘royal we’, ‘royal one’ meaning ‘I’ is still “undoubtedly used frequently by royalty, in real life as in stereotype”,³¹ but also by people only even remotely connected with the Royal Family. It is as much an object of caricature and mockery as ‘royal we’: in a famous episode of *Dead Ringers*, a television comedy show broadcast on BBC Two, the character impersonating Her Majesty, taking over Helen Mirren’s role in *Prime Suspect* in revenge for the actress playing her role in Frears’s film, closes the episode saying “One’s telling you one’s nicked, you slag!”. Other examples of ‘royal one’ being “a marked and widely recognised stereotype”³² are easily found in the tabloid press: “One is not amused by Prince Harry’s smokebomb prank”,³³ “One is NOT amused! Or how the Queen can’t help revealing her royal displeasure”³⁴ are just two of the many. More recently, when publicity agency Saatchi & Saatchi conceived the idea of marrying T-Mobile’s ‘Life’s for Sharing’ slogan with the April 2011 royal wedding, they rephrased it into ‘One’s Life’s for Sharing’.³⁵ Margaret Thatcher also used ‘royal one’, which probably confirmed people in their disdain of her pretentious manners, in addition to producing popular linguistic jokes.³⁶

In addition to ‘royal we’ and ‘royal one’, Her Majesty must also use – probably much more often than ‘royal we’ or ‘one’ – in the right contexts, the pronoun ‘I’, although in public she only seems to use it in the famous and much laughed about phrase mentioned above, ‘my husband and I’.³⁷

²⁵ Sharon Goodman, “One and the Pun: How Newspapers keep the Monarchy in its Place”, *Language and Literature*, 6.3 (1997), 197.

²⁶ Wales, “Royalese”, 5.

²⁷ Caroline Holland, *Notebooks of a Spinster Lady* (London: Gaskell and Company, 1919), 269, <http://www.archive.org/stream/notebooksofspins00spinoft/notebooksofspins00spinoft_djvu.txt>, 30 June 2012; also found in Elizabeth Knowles, “we”, *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O214-we.html>>, 30 June 2012.

²⁸ Here is the context provided by Caroline Holland: “There is a tale of the unfortunate equerry who ventured during dinner at Windsor to tell a story with a spice of scandal or impropriety in it. ‘We are not amused’, said the Queen when he had finished” (268-269).

²⁹ “Lately [Margaret Thatcher] has seemed to take almost a regal view of her position, using the royal we. On a television program after the birth of her first grandchild she said, ‘We have become a grandmother’”; Anthony Lewis, “Is It Thatcher’s Britain?”, *The New York Times*, 23 March 1989.

³⁰ Wales, “Royalese”, 64.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

³² Sharon Goodman, “One and the Pun”, 198.

³³ Lucy Ballinger, “One is not Amused by Prince Harry’s Smokebomb Prank”,

The Daily Mail, 2006, <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-406731/One-amused-Prince-Harrys-smokebomb-prank.htm>>, 30 June 2012.

³⁴ Mailonline, “One is NOT Amused! Or how the Queen Can’t Help Revealing her Royal Displeasure”, 2008, <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1079864/One-NOT-amused-Or-Queen-help-revealing-royal-displeasure.html>>, 30 June 2012.

³⁵ The spoof video, featuring royal lookalikes dancing down the aisle “has been viewed more than 8m times since it was launched on YouTube on April 15”; Clare Dowdy, “The Public Image: T-Mobile Viral Video”, *The Financial Times*, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/51b5ce42-6f64-11e0-952c-00144feabdc0,dwp_uuid=0c3d2eca-300c-11da-ba9f-00000e2511c8,print=yes.html>, 30 June 2012.

³⁶ As the UK abandoned the pound bank note in favour of the coin whilst Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, one of the Tories was rumoured to invite scornful laughter: “Why is Margaret Thatcher like a pound coin?” “Because she is thick, brassy and thinks she’s a sovereign.”

³⁷ Think of the popular YouTube spoof video of the comedy sketch from BBC impression show *Dead Ringers* where ‘the Queen’ announces the release of a DVD of her Christmas speech outtakes <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXrbw4y9BYc>>, 30 June 2012.

The following paragraphs will draw on Wales’s categories of ‘royalese’, trying to show how they relate to personal and social meaning, i.e. how they influence the creation of identities and social relationships in Bennett’s book. Style and social context can indeed be said to inter-relate in fiction as in real life: in both, linguistic behaviours can be seen to be iconic representations insofar as they depict the social relations and community groupings that they ‘index’. In ordinary life, people construct their identities through language use: linguistic variation is always meaningful. In literary texts, authors make their characters the carriers of specific language ideologies through their style. As real individuals project different social identities and create various representations of themselves in relation to others through their language choices, so characters are made to use the resources of language to construct themselves and make meaning in social encounters.

What follows sets out to analyse the specific style of Bennett’s Queen focusing on the verbal ‘actions’ in which she is made to engage and addressing the semantics of pronoun address, in particular. The aim is twofold: on the one hand, it intends to show how the Queen positions herself in relation to others by using specific linguistic forms that convey social information but also relate to power and solidarity dimensions (different language choices characterise relationships with different categories of people and hint at different levels of symmetry/asymmetry); on the other hand, it also aims to draw attention to how the social information and the meaning of power issues that style implies completely change when a literary text journeys across languages/cultures. To this end, pronouns will be looked at as indexes of subtle levels of closeness/inclusiveness and/or distance/exclusiveness.

In *The Uncommon Reader* Her Majesty uses the full range of pronouns, apparently saving ‘I’ for exchanges which she wants to mark as more personal, less formal. The first exchange presented in the book provides a first glimpse:

‘Now that I have you to myself,’ said the Queen, smiling to left and right as they glided through the glittering throng, ‘I’ve been longing to ask you about the writer Jean Genet.’ ‘Ah,’ said the president. ‘Oui.’

The ‘Marseillaise’ and the national anthem made for a pause in the proceedings, but when they had taken their seats Her Majesty turned to the president and resumed.

‘Homosexual and jailbird, was he nevertheless as bad as he was painted? Or, more to the point,’ and she took up her soup spoon, ‘was he as good?’ (3)

Here the Queen is clearly trying to get better acquainted with the president of France, in order to hear from him something she is really eager to know – what French people really think of Jean Genet – rather than getting from him the sort of pre-packaged, pre-conceived opinion one would expect on such an official occasion.

An example of how Bennett uses ‘I’ in Her Majesty’s speech to mark her attempt to decrease social distance and get closer to ordinary people is the switch from ‘one’ to ‘I’ in the next two extracts, which describe the Queen’s first and second encounter with her future literary aide Norman Seakins and the librarian of the City of Westminster travelling library:

'One has never seen you here before, Mr...'
 'Hutchings, Your Majesty. Every Wednesday, ma'am.'
 'Really? I never knew that. Have you come far?'
 'Only from Westminster, ma'am.'
 'And you are...?'
 'Norman, ma'am. Seakins.'
 'And where do you work?'
 'In the kitchen, ma'am.'
 'Oh. Do you have much time for reading?'
 'Not really, ma'am.'
 'I'm the same. Though now that one is here I suppose one ought to borrow a book.'
 ...
 'Is one allowed to borrow a book? One doesn't have a ticket?'
 'No problem,' said Mr Hutchings.
 'One is a pensioner', said the Queen, not that she was sure that made any difference. (6-7)

'How did you find it, ma'am?' asked Mr Hutchings.
 'Dame Ivy? A little dry. And everyone talks the same way, did you notice that?'
 'To tell you the truth, ma'am, I never got through more than a few pages. How far did your Majesty get?'
 'Oh, to the end. Once I start a book I finish it. That was the way one was brought up. Books, bread and butter, mashed potato – one finishes what's on one's plate. That's always been my philosophy.'
 'There was actually no need to have brought the book back, ma'am. We're downsizing and all the books on that shelf are free.'
 'You mean I can have it?' She clutched the book to her. 'I'm glad I came. Good afternoon, Mr Seakins. More Cecil Beaton?' (11)

As is evident, a certain form of complicity is created among the three characters by the chance encounter as well as surely by the fact that the Queen is not used to meeting ordinary people outside official occasions and, above all, without the presence of a mediator. Also, through her occasional slip into the use of 'I', Bennett probably wanted to convey the Queen's personal curiosity and enthusiasm for a world she does not know particularly well.

Bennett has the Queen using 'we', instead, to express the other (upper) extreme of the formality spectrum. The pronoun is only used on a few occasions in the book, which confirms Wales' idea of it not being very much in use today ("I doubt if the present Queen ever uses it",³⁸). The first context where 'we' is used is a conversation with Sir Kevin about a royal visit to Wales where the Queen's literary aide, Norman, is called to intervene:

'Norman.'
 Sir Kevin heard a chair scrape as Norman got up.
 'We're going to Wales in a few weeks' time.'
 'Bad luck, ma'am.'
 The Queen smiled back at the unsmiling Sir Kevin.
 'Norman is so cheeky. Now we've read Dylan Thomas, haven't we, and some John Cowper Powys. And Jan Morris we've read. But who else is there?'
 'You could try Kilvert, ma'am,' said Norman.
 'Who's he?'
 'A vicar, ma'am. Nineteenth century. Lived on the Welsh borders and wrote a diary. Fond of little girls.'

³⁸ Wales, "Royalese", 8.

'Oh,' said the Queen, 'like Lewis Carroll.'
'Worse, ma'am.'
'Dear me. Can you get me the diaries?'
'I'll add them to our list, ma'am.' (37)

The first 'we' is clearly used as 'royal tour *we*', i.e. as an equivalent of 'my husband and I', whereas the second can be said to correspond to 'you and I', a sort of 'inclusive we' (for Norman's benefit) which is at very same time an 'exclusive' one (for Sir Kevin's detriment). It is also a linguistic manifestation of the humanising power of reading, which is bringing the Queen closer to common people than to her usual entourage of ministers, councillors, etc. This seems to be confirmed in the following exchange, where the Queen finishes off a conversation with the Prime Minister which she does not find particularly pleasant turning to a very formal 'we':

The Queen sighed and pressed the bell. 'We will think about it.'
The prime minister knew that the audience was over as Norman opened the door and waited. 'So this' thought the prime minister, 'is the famous Norman.'
'Oh, Norman,' said the Queen, 'the prime minister doesn't seem to have read Hardy. Perhaps you could find him one of our old paperbacks on his way out.' (58)

The Queen is cross because the Prime Minister would not agree with her idea of her sitting on a sofa and reading Hardy for her Christmas broadcast, so she probably wants to stress her distance from the Prime Minister, while at the very same time teasing him with the possible hint of a special complicity existing between her and Norman: indeed, 'one of our old paperbacks' could also mean 'yours and mine'.

Pavani has confessed that translating the Queen's speech into Italian was not an easy task:

il testo in lingua originale presentava una difficoltà pressoché insormontabile: quando parla Sua Maestà, Bennett quasi sempre le fa usare l'impersonale che caratterizza ossessivamente la sua parlata, ossia l'"one" che ancora una volta è l'indizio linguistico della quasi assenza di individualità che contraddistingue la Sovrana. Così lei, soprattutto quando prende la parola in veste ufficiale, fa discorsi del tipo: "One is a pensioner", "One doesn't read" ecc... Ovviamente in italiano la traduzione letterale con il "si", o ancora peggio "uno non legge", sarebbe stata terribile, quindi – lavorando di squadra con la redazione Adelphi – abbiamo optato per un'alternanza di soggetti, usando il "noi" quando non creava ambiguità e non diventava troppo artificioso. Soluzione – tra l'altro – abbastanza in consonanza con il bel film di Frears, *The Queen*.³⁹

³⁹ Luca Balduzzi, "Intervista".

Differently from what Pavani says, in the book Bennett seems to mark – both linguistically and narratively – the Queen as an individual with personal ideas and beliefs, often in contrast with those of her entourage. And Pavani's translation does seem to show this, although probably more as a result of the influence of Frears's film than of a deliberate attempt to respect the source text. However, what the text certainly loses in the movement across the two languages is the linguistic manifestation of how reading brings the Queen closer to common people who share her love for reading than to ministers (and family) who do not. Indeed, Pavani seems to use 'noi' without exception when the Queen talks to her 'friends of reading'. The extracts presented earlier, and brought together below side by side with their translation, can help exemplify this:

<p>‘One has never seen you here before, Mr...’ ‘Hutchings, Your Majesty. Every Wednesday, ma’am.’ ‘Really? I never knew that. Have you come far?’ ‘Only from Westminster, ma’am.’ ‘And you are...?’ ‘Norman, ma’am. Seakins.’ ‘And where do you work?’ ‘In the kitchen, ma’am.’ ‘Oh. Do you have much time for reading?’ ‘Not really, ma’am.’ ‘I’m the same. Though now that one is here I suppose one ought to borrow a book.’</p> <p>...</p> <p>‘Is one allowed to borrow a book? One doesn’t have a ticket?’ ‘No problem,’ said Mr Hutchings. ‘One is a pensioner,’ said the Queen, not that she was sure that made any difference. (6-7)</p> <p>‘How did you find it, ma’am,’ asked Mr Hutchings. ‘Dame Ivy? A little dry. And everyone talks the same way, did you notice that?’ ‘To tell you the truth, ma’am, I never got through more than a few pages. How far did your Majesty get?’ ‘Oh, to the end, Once I start a book I finish it. That was the way one was brought up. Books, bread and butter, mashed potato – one finishes what’s on one’s plate. That’s always been my philosophy.’ ‘There was actually no need to have brought the book back, ma’am. We’re downsizing and all the books on that shelf are free.’ ‘You mean I can have it?’ She clutched the book to her. ‘I’m glad I came. Good afternoon, Mr Seakins. More Cecil Beaton?’ (11)</p>	<p>«Non l’abbiamo mai vista da queste parti, signor...». «Hutchings, Maestà. Tutti i mercoledì, signora». «Davvero? Ne eravamo all’oscuro. Viene da lontano?». «Solo da Westminster, Maestà». «E lei...?» domandò rivolta al ragazzo. «Norman, Maestà. Seakins». «E dove lavora?». «Nelle cucine, Maestà». «Oh. Lei ha molto tempo per leggere?». «Non proprio, Maestà». «Nemmeno noi, sa. Anche se adesso che siamo qui, immaginiamo sia il caso di prendere in prestito un libro».</p> <p>...</p> <p>«Occorre una tessera per prendere libri in prestito?». «Non c’è problema» disse il signor Hutchings. «Noi siamo in pensione» dichiarò la regina, non sapendo bene se faceva la differenza. (12)</p> <p>«Come l’ha trovata, Maestà?» chiese il signor Hutchings. «Dama Ivy? Un po’ noiosa. E parlano tutti nello stesso modo, ci ha fatto caso?». «A esser sincero, non ho mai superato le prime pagine. Lei dov’è arrivata, Maestà?». «Oh, fino in fondo. Quando cominciamo un libro lo finiamo. Ci hanno educate così. Libri, purè, pane e burro: bisogna finire quello che c’è nel piatto. È la nostra filosofia da sempre». «Non occorre restituire il libro, Maestà. Siamo in fase di ridimensionamento e tutti i libri su quello scaffale si possono prendere gratis». «Intende dire che possiamo tenerlo?» La regina si strinse il volume al petto. «Abbiamo fatto proprio bene a venire. Buongiorno, signor Seakins. Sempre Cecil Beaton?» (15)</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Fig. 3: extract 1 and 2 from *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice*

Although using ‘noi’ throughout the first extract, Pavani opts for an impersonal in one case («Occorre una tessera per prendere libri in prestito?»), and the result is that the comic effect produced by the mixing of registers – the use of ‘ticket’ in connection with ‘royal one’ - is lost. As for the second extract, Pavani uses ‘noi’ consistently despite the use of ‘I’ in the source text, which prevents her from marking linguistically the Queen’s attempt to get close to Mr Hutchings and Norman, but at the very same time makes it possible for the text to keep its comic flavour.

The lines “‘You mean I can have it?’ She clutched the book to her. ‘I’m glad I came. Good afternoon, Mr Seakins. More Cecil Beaton?’” clearly suggest more to the English reader than they do to an Italian one, as royals are commonly described in the tabloid press as ‘scroungers’.⁴⁰ Italian readers may not immediately share this association of ideas, but the Queen’s use of high-sounding ‘noi’ in Italian, in

⁴⁰ Sharon Goodman, “One’ and the Pun”, 203.

connection with her clutching the book and stating she is glad she went to the mobile library, manages to achieve the same effect. In short, the complicity implicit in the pronoun switch may be lost, but the comic effect is saved for that very reason.

The exclusive use of 'I' being one end and the use of 'we' being the other (rare) end of the formality/distance spectrum, the unmarked use of pronouns in the Queen's speech in *The Uncommon Reader* seems to be an alternation of 'one'/'I', as in the following extract, where Her Majesty and Sir Kevin are discussing the Queen's new habit of reading, a habit Sir Kevin does not particularly appreciate:

'It's important,' said Sir Kevin, 'that Your Majesty stay focused.'
'When you say "stay focused", Sir Kevin, I suppose you mean one should keep one's eye on the ball. Well, I've had my eye on the ball for more than fifty years, so I think these days one is allowed the occasional glance to the boundary.' (29)

The Queen is clearly unhappy with Sir Kevin's comment, but her position requires her to outwardly react with aplomb, and Bennett brilliantly manages to convey that.

A similar alternation of 'one'/'I' is evident in this other extract, where the Queen and the Prime Minister appear to have different ideas about Her Majesty's Christmas broadcast:

'I thought this year one might do something different.'
'Different, ma'am?'
'Yes. If one were to be sitting on a sofa reading or, even more informally, be discovered by the camera curled up with a book, the camera could creep in – is that the expression? – until I'm in mid-shot, when I could look up and say, "I've been reading this book about such and such," and then go on from there.'
'And what would the book be, ma'am?' The prime minister looked unhappy.
'That one would have to think about.' (56)

Unlike Bennett's use of an alternation between 'one' and 'I' in the Queen's speech even in confrontational situations, Peter Morgan's script of Frears's film presents a consistent use of 'I' on such occasions.⁴¹ Indeed, whereas 'we' and 'one' are used in an interchangeable way throughout the film as the royal unmarked pronoun, the switch to 'I' outside the family context seem to be the linguistic manifestation of the Queen's disagreement and dissent, or simply a way of making her point clear. Distant as she may look from ordinary people and their thoughts and feelings, Her Majesty's language seems to tell a whole different story. If anything, she can lose her temper just as much as anybody else. The following exchange with Tony Blair seems to be good evidence of this:

TONY

Your Majesty, the country has spoken...and I come now to ask your permission.

ELIZABETH

(interjecting)

No, no, no. It's usual for ME to ask the questions.

TONY winces. Wishes the ground would swallow him up.

ELIZABETH

Mr Blair, the people have elected you to be their leader. And so the duty falls on me, as your Sovereign, to ask you to become Prime Minister, and form a government in my name.

⁴¹ Peter Morgan, *The Queen*, script, IMSDb (The Internet Movie Script Database), 2007, <<http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Queen,-The.html>>, 30 June 2012.

Morgan's use of 'I/me' as an outward manifestation of the Queen's will to clearly state her point and express her disagreement is probably even more evident when comparing/contrasting the two extracts that follow.

Here Her Majesty is simply informing Blair of her decision for Diana's funeral to be a private one, which makes the use of 'royal we' the most suitable option:

ELIZABETH

We've spoken to the Spencer family, and it's their wish... (a beat)...their express wish, that it should be a private funeral. With a memorial service to follow in a month, or so.

...

ELIZABETH

Given that Diana was no longer a member of the Royal Family we have no choice but to respect their wishes.

When Blair insists Diana should have a state funeral, instead, the Queen switches to 'I', as she clearly wants to make her point clear: she is obviously irritated, as is revealed in her language:

ELIZABETH

As I said. That's the Spencers' wish.

...

ELIZABETH

It's a family funeral, Mr. Blair. Not a fairground attraction. (a beat) I think the Princess has already paid a high enough price for exposure to the press, don't you?

PRINCE PHILIP enters, dressed and ready for church. He indicates his watch.

ELIZABETH

Now, if there is nothing else I must get on. The children have to be looked after.

This is another example of how Morgan uses 'I' in Queen's speech when he wants her to sound direct, straightforward, and determined to make her point clear with no misunderstanding whatsoever:

ELIZABETH

If you're suggesting that I drop everything and come down to London before I attend to two boys that have just lost their mother... you're mistaken.

PRINCE PHILIP

Absurd..

ELIZABETH

I doubt there are many who know the British more than I do, Mr. Blair, nor who has greater faith in their wisdom and judgement. And it is my belief that they will soon reject this 'mood' which has been stirred up by the press...in favour of a period of restrained grief, and sober, private mourning. (a beat) That's the way we do things in this country. Quietly. With dignity. (a beat) It's what the rest of the world has always admired us for.

As hinted at above, Pavani has openly recognised that the translation choices she made about the Queen's speech are in tune with Frears's film.⁴² This is evident in her version of the exchange between the Queen and Sir Kevin which was analysed above and is brought to the reader's attention again in Fig. 4, side by side with the translation:

⁴² Luca Balduzzi, "Intervista".

<p>‘It’s important,’ said Sir Kevin, ‘that Your Majesty stay focused. ‘When you say “stay focused”, Sir Kevin, I suppose you mean one should keep one’s eye on the ball. Well, I’ve had my eye on the ball for more than fifty years, so I think these days one is allowed the occasional glance to the boundary.’ (29)</p>	<p>«È importante» disse Sir Kevin «che sua Maestà non perda di vista gli obiettivi». «Quando dice “non perdere di vista gli obiettivi”, Sir Kevin, immagino intenda stare sulla palla. Be’, dopo esserci stata per sessant’anni, penso di potermi guardare un po’ intorno». (28)</p>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Fig. 4: extract 3 from *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice*

Indeed, Pavani opts for a very straightforward ‘I’ which ends up sketching the Queen’s character in the Italian text in quite a different way from Bennett’s. The same seems to happen in the Italian version of the other extract presented above, where Pavani’s Queen shows a much more decisive personality and determined character than Bennett’s. Both the extract and Pavani’s translation of it are presented in Fig. 5:

<p>‘I thought this year one might do something different.’ ‘Different, ma’am?’ ‘Yes. If one were to be sitting on a sofa reading or, even more informally, be discovered by the camera curled up with a book, the camera could creep in – is that the expression? – until I’m in mid-shot, when I could look up and say, “I’ve been reading this book about such and such,” and then go on from there.’ ‘And what would the book be, ma’am?’ The prime minister looked unhappy. ‘That one would have to think about.’ (56)</p>	<p>«Pensavo che quest’anno potremmo fare qualcosa di diverso». «Di diverso, Maestà?» «Sì. Per esempio potrei stare allo scrittorio a leggere o, in modo ancora più informale, seduta comodamente sul divano con un libro in mano; la telecamera potrebbe avvicinarsi finché non sono in piano medio – è così che si dice? –, dopodiché potrei alzare gli occhi e dire: “Sto leggendo un libro che parla di questo e di quest’altro”. E proseguire da lì». «E che libro sarebbe, Maestà?». Il primo ministro aveva l’aria afflitta. «Dovrei pensarci». (48)</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Fig. 5: extract 4 from *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice*

The Queen’s use of ‘one’, ‘we’ and ‘I’ in *The Uncommon Reader* thus becomes an alternation between the simple majestic plural and the more direct ‘I’ which removes from the target text the linguistic signs of complicity/non-approval the Queen seems to use in her interactions and the messages of distance/closeness she appears to convey through them. In particular, as argued above, Pavani’s choice removes from the text the linguistic signs of a Queen who is more willing to get close to those common people who share her love for reading than to the members of her usual entourage (or family) who do not, while focusing on and overstressing, instead, the Queen’s wish to make her point clear and have her way. Though present in the source text, this wish is not re-enforced linguistically, thus producing the image of a Queen who is not only faithful to the British ideal of self-control and understatement, but also perfectly aware of her minor role in the ruling of her country.

Indeed, although both Bennett and Frears can be said to have contributed to putting a human face on an institution – the British monarchy – characterised by aloofness and respect of protocol, they have done so in a very different way. They have both offered a sympathetic and affectionate portrayal of Her Majesty, but each has carried it out in their own distinctive ways. Bennett’s Queen is maybe somewhat limited in the breadth of her education but clever and thoughtful and sensitive, and as much eager to learn as to share her acquired knowledge and understanding with ordinary people, some of whom being allowed to get closer to her than the closest member of her entourage (or family). Decisions have always been made for her, even by her dogs (see the mobile library episode); she now feels the time has come for her to try to change this, although she seems to be aware, at all times, that this is only partly possible, due to the limits imposed by the so-called Royal Prerogative, i.e. by the political tradition according to which the British monarch reigns but does not rule. Frears’s Queen, instead, is a woman who seems to be used to having her every desire satisfied and command obeyed, even by her dogs, although deep down she is probably a shy person thrown into a life she did not ask for. She seems to be an affectionate grandmother, torn between tradition and public expectations. She finally has to recognise the world has changed and the monarchy – which, she now clearly understands, only represents the country – has to ‘modernise’.

These different characterisations are carried out as much through narration as through language. Pavani’s choice to dress Bennett’s story with a language which is closer to that chosen by the film’s scriptwriter probably responds to the need of meeting the expectations of the target public. Despite not having a specific interest in the British monarchy – or being particularly keen on reading – Italians have come to develop a certain curiosity in the Royal Family’s private affairs after Squidgygate, Camillagate and Diana’s death thanks to the media coverage of these events as well as to films like Frears’s. Moreover, they already have a model for the Queen’s language (and therefore personality) in mind. Publishers are not charities and they do not produce books for the sake of culture (or at least not just for that). Books are marketed like any other product. To put it less cynically, Pavani may be attempting here to build a network of connections for Bennett’s book to find a suitable place in the Italian reader’s culture – and memory; she is probably trying to recreate a link, albeit debatable, between source text and target readership or, if one prefers to look at the question from the point of view of the target text, she is trying to ‘anchor’ it, just like the source text was ‘anchored’ in its turn. Clearly, this also results in producing a completely different ideal reader from Bennett’s book.

Pavani’s use of pronouns in the Queen’s speech does not just affect characterisation; it also has an effect on narration at a different level. Indeed, the fusion of ‘royal we’ and ‘royal one’ into a ‘noi’ which has no other connotation in Italian than that of being used either as majestic plural by people of high rank or as a modesty plural by orators and writers, deprives the text of the added comic effect of ‘royalese’.⁴³ Brits are accustomed to hearing/seeing ‘royal we’ used over

⁴³ The specific entry in DeMauro’s dictionary reads: “usato in luogo del singolare come plurale maiestatico da persone d’alta autorità: *n. impartiamo la benedizione apostolica*; come plurale di modestia da oratori e scrittori: *i testi da n. citati*”.

⁴⁴ Sharon Goodman, “‘One’ and the pun”.

and over again in transgressive ways. It is used with a lack of deference which brings the Queen down to their level whilst appropriating her language, in a carnivalesque sort of way. On the one hand, this presumably helps to relieve class tensions by acknowledging people’s concerns, but actually it is probably used to defend the *status quo*.⁴⁴ Italian ‘exclusive we’, instead, does not seem to have the extra connotation of sounding comic, as it is not often used to parody heads of state – or popes – who tend (despite a few exceptions: see next footnote) to use the singular in their speeches, instead, and are thus not figured as using such a pronoun in other contexts.

The Queen’s voice in *La sovrana lettrice* is, as argued above, probably more Pavani’s than Bennett’s, and it surely characterises Her Majesty as a stronger, more self-respecting and self-assured woman than the one sketched in *The Uncommon Reader*. However, Pavani does not seem to intend to take the re-writing aspect of translation too far, after all, considering that she could have probably thought of an original way of dealing with the issues which have only just been touched upon (the comic flavour of ‘royal one’). Maybe building up a further interdiscursive relation for the Italian reader, or even attempting some form of linguistic creativity, might have resulted in a more exciting text. This would have had the added benefit of saving the text its comic force.⁴⁵

The queen

This paragraph and the paragraphs that follow aim to show how in fiction, as in real life, speech patterns are also tools that speakers/characters manipulate in order to place themselves and to categorise others. In doing so, they automatically create and/or identify themselves as part of particular speech/cultural communities. The specific reference will here be to purported gay speech, or better to a specific set of language choices which may be a crucial element in Bennett’s text. The paragraph will also show how the social/cultural groupings implicit in the source text can only be inferred by a handful (if any) of readers of the target text due to linguistic choices that may stem from the translator’s (or editorial staff’s) deliberate attempt to affect the text’s reach.

We first read about Norman Seakins in *The Uncommon Reader* when he is taking out a book by Cecil Beaton from the City of Westminster travelling library parked outside Buckingham Palace. His reading choice provides a good insight into his personality straightaway. Cecil Beaton was the foremost fashion and portrait photographer of his day. He worked as a photographer for *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue*, in addition to photographing celebrities in Hollywood as well as the Royal Family themselves for official publication. In 1972, he was knighted. He was rumoured to have had a relationship with Greta Garbo but the real love of his life was art collector Peter Watson, a striking figure himself, loved by women but obsessed with American male prostitute and socialite Denham Fouts. Beaton and Watson never became lovers, and the photographer supposedly had relationships with other men. He even claimed to have had an affair with Gary Cooper. Going back

⁴⁵ Think of Berlusconi’s habit of speaking in the third person: “Gli italiani hanno chiaro che Silvio Berlusconi difende la sicurezza di tutti”; “... sanno che ... non ruba e che non utilizza il potere a suo vantaggio personale”; Presidente del Consiglio, Interviste e interventi, 2009, <http://www.governo.it/Presidente/Interventi/testo_int.asp?d=50067>, 30 June 2012.

to Norman Seakins, this character's primary interest in life seems to be in gay books and photography. Thanks to his chance encounter with the Queen, the unattractive young man is lifted out of his humble role as kitchen hand and promoted to page, with special responsibility for the recommendation of books. Seakins advises Her Majesty as to what to read; he even introduces her to several works of fiction by gay writers and becomes her sole support in her attempt to quench her thirst for reading. As Her Majesty suggests, he is turned into her amanuensis, "[o]ne who writes from dictation, copies manuscripts. A literary assistant" (24). It is when the Queen finally finds the right word to describe Norman's occupation that Pavani surprises us with quite a bold choice, as she substitutes the word *amanuensis* with *factotum*. The Oxford English Dictionary provides this definition of the latter word: "In mod. sense: A man of all-work; also, a servant who has the entire management of his master's affairs".⁴⁶ It does not seem to describe Norman's role at Buckingham Palace quite clearly, as he is surely not a general servant and he does not have "the entire management of his master's affairs" but a precise and specific responsibility: guiding the Queen in her new adventures in reading. He is, as suggested, a literary advisor and aide, his duty being, in detail, to advise, look up information and fetch Her Majesty's books. He "had a chair in the corridor, handy for the Queen's office, on which, when he was not on call or running errands, he would spend his time reading" (24). The OED defines an *amanuensis* solely as "[o]ne who copies or writes from dictation of another";⁴⁷ Norman Seakins was most probably looking up the term in this very dictionary, but adding the further fictional definition of "literary assistant". By contrast, the online Merriam-Webster dictionary entry for the term, "slave with secretarial duties", seems to be well in tune with the character's duties, were it not for the by now politically incorrect 'slave' (which solidly anchors the term to its Latin origin, however).

⁴⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Pavani may have preferred the word *factotum* in order to keep in Italian the use of Latin in the Queen's speech, clearly identifying it as belonging to a high register. Whereas *amanuensis* does sound like a Latin word to the English reader, to the Italian reader it has in fact lost all trace of Latin origin; by contrast, he/she would immediately recognise *factotum* as a Latin word due to its ending. However, this choice has an awkward effect on the narration as the term *factotum*, despite being of Latin origin, belongs to the ordinary Italian person's vocabulary much more than 'amanuense' does; this makes Norman's search in the dictionary seem somewhat odd for someone who is certainly not an intellectual but still quite well read.

The *amanuensis*-to-*factotum* choice is not the only surprising one. In the first few pages of the book we are informed that the view of Norman reading outside the Queen's office "did him no good at all with the other pages, who thought he was on a cushy number and not comely enough to deserve it" (24). The young man's plainness is the object of mockery on two clear occasions: when the Queen describes him to the duke as very intelligent, the latter observes that "[h]e'll have to be' (...)' Looking like that" (17); later on, when sir Kevin wonders how come "a young

man of some intelligence” was employed in the kitchen, an equerry comments that he is “[n]ot dolly enough” (...) “Thin, ginger-haired. Have a heart” (15).

The word ‘dolly’ – which does not immediately resonate as ‘pretty’ or ‘beautiful’ to the ordinary person (Pavani translates “Brutto com’è” - literally: “as ugly as he is”) – has a strong gay connotation in this context. Indeed, the OED informs that, as an adjective, it is ‘usually applied to a girl: attractive; fashionable. *colloq.*’.⁴⁸ Moreover, ‘dolly’ is also short for ‘dolly bird’, which the online Merriam-Webster dictionary⁴⁹ defines as a British expression used to refer to a pretty young woman, and the online Gay Slang Dictionary⁵⁰ lists the expression ‘Dial-A-Dolly-Service’ meaning:

1. *colloq.* Male prostitute that gets his business by phone. Source: [80’s]
2. A 900 phone sex line. Source: [90’s]

As is clear, the Italian ‘Brutto com’è’ omits the extra hint to the kitchen hand-turned-page’s sexual preference contained in the word “dolly”, a hint which seems to be crucial for the characterization of Norman in the English text. As hinted at above, the word ‘dolly’ does not immediately mean ‘pretty’ or ‘beautiful’ to the ordinary person today; it is in Polari,⁵¹ i.e. in gay slang that ‘dolly’ means ‘pretty, nice, pleasant’.⁵² The equerry who uses the word may himself be gay, considering that, as Ackerley suggests in *My Dog Tulip*,⁵³ to the Queen’s surprise “the guards seemed to be as readily available as the book made out and at such a reasonable tariff. She would have liked to have known more about this; but though she had equeries who were in the Guards she hardly felt able to ask” (20).

Because the equerry uses the term when talking to the personal secretary, the latter may be implicitly included in the community, and indeed he is the one who seems to most clearly identify Norman as a ‘queen’ for the benefit of the ordinary reader. When the special advisor asks him if Norman is a ‘nancy’, we learn that “Sir Kevin didn’t know for certain but thought it was possible” (65). It is probably only at this point in the text that the Italian ordinary reader, who has very thin chances of spotting the allusions contained in Norman’s favourite reads, clearly understands his sexual orientation, as Pavani well translates the word ‘nancy’ as ‘checca’.

Had Pavani dared to translate dolly as ‘sbarbato’, the allusion to Norman’s sexual orientation would have probably been made clear earlier on in the text, although only to a limited number of readers: the term both means ‘with no stubble’ – thereby implying the young man is effeminate or defective in some physical way (too little facial hair to look handsome in a masculine way) and therefore needs to compensate this by proving to be of above average intelligence – and points to his sexual orientation in a subtle way. The word ‘sbarbato’ may in fact ring a bell for readers of Riccardo Bacchelli, whose 1935 novel *Mal d’Africa* reads “Cheri spiegò in due parole al capitano che quei due mozzi erano del bel numero degli sbarbati, genere fiorentissimo in quelle contrade e rivali in amore delle donne”.⁵⁴

However, the terms ‘dolly’ and ‘sbarbato’ do not share the characteristic of being part of a private slang, besides which they are chronologically distant. Polari may date back to the 16th century⁵⁵ and was most popular in the 1950s and 60s thanks

⁴⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁴⁹ *Merriam-Webster On-line Dictionary* (2009), <[http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dolly bird](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dolly%20bird)>, 30 June 2012.

⁵⁰ *Gay Slang Dictionary*, <<http://www.odps.org/glossword/index.php?a=term&d=8&t=3747>>, 30 June 2012.

⁵¹ Polari, <<http://dizionario.reverso.net/inglese-definizioni/polari>>, 30 June 2012.

⁵² Paul Baker, *Polari. The Lost Language of Gay Men* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁵³ Joe Randolph Ackerley, *My Dog Tulip* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 1965).

⁵⁴ Riccardo Bacchelli, *Mal d’Africa* (Milano: Mondadori, 1962 [1935]), 41.

⁵⁵ The on-line Collins Dictionary (also in *Collins English Dictionary*, London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000) defines Polari as “an English slang that is derived from the Lingua Franca of Mediterranean ports; brought to England by sailors from the 16th century onwards. A few words survive, esp. in male homosexual slang”.

to its use by Julian and Sandy, the homosexual characters of BBC radio shows *Beyond our Ken* and *Round the Horne*, which were packed with double meanings and sexual innuendo. The term ‘mignone’, which identifies the gay individual whilst also pointing to physical appearance due to its origin from French ‘mignon’, for ‘cute, lovely’,⁵⁶ would have probably presented the same problem.

Unfortunately, the connotation of the term ‘dolly’ as characteristic of gay speech seems doomed to be completely lost in Italian. This may be why Pavani chooses to let drop the sexual connotation of the term ‘dolly’ altogether, opting for the clearly domesticating ‘brutto’, which simply directly makes explicit that he is ‘ugly’ but helps to attain her highly-sought-after aim of music, rhythm and fluency. ‘Dolly’ was not worth the effort.

This is actually not the only culturally gay-related connotation to be dropped altogether; a further web of inter-textual references ‘naturally’ builds up for the British reader around the word ‘queen’, as Bennett most definitely makes subtle reference to the Queen Mother’s famous remark:

Whilst waiting to be served her Gin & Tonic, the Queen Mum could hear two openly gay members of her staff arguing in the hallway outside her sitting room. Impatient at being kept waiting so long the Queen Mother eventually called out “When you two old Queens have finished arguing, this Old Queen wants her Gin”.⁵⁷

Moreover, the reference to Cecil Beaton in the source text may well be said to ‘encapsulate’ the fictitious character of Norman for the British reader: Cecil Beaton, who was gay and the Queen Mother’s friend,⁵⁸ is indeed still celebrated for his loving portraits of the Royals and especially of Queen Elizabeth II.⁵⁹

Queenie

Norman Seakins, on his first commission for Her Majesty (“the Queen gave Norman her Nancy Mitford to return, telling him that there was apparently a sequel and she wanted to read that too, plus anything else besides he thought she might fancy”, 16), hearing from the librarian that dogs may be a subject of interest, picks *My Dog Tulip* as the Queen’s next read. The 1956 novel by J.R. Ackerley tells the story of a man’s relationship with his dog, most probably echoing the author’s discovery, in middle age, of his ideal companion, an Alsatian bitch whom he named Queenie.

Despite only being mentioned once in the book and never actually reaching Her Majesty’s ears – “It’s supposed to be fiction, ma’am, only the author did have a dog in life, an Alsatian.’ (He didn’t tell her its name was Queenie.) ‘So it’s really disguised autobiography.’ (17) – Queenie is a crucial character in the story for a series of reasons. Besides the Queen’s love for horses and dogs being one of the few things everybody knows about Her Majesty, Queenie is, together with her fictional counterpart Tulip, the only dog to be clearly identified in the book. Dogs are the physical trigger in initiating the Queen’s new course of life in *The*

⁵⁶ The *Vocabolario gay, lesbico, bisex e trans* drawn up by Rai – Segretariato sociale lists the term *mignone* as meaning “Ragazzo omosessuale passivo. Dal francese *mignon*, grazioso, gentile”.

⁵⁷ <<http://bytesdaily.blogspot.it/2012/06/funny-friday.html>>, 30 June 2012; the present Queen’s mother was known as the Queen Mother.

⁵⁸ Alex Needham, “Cecil Beaton: photographer to the young Queen Elizabeth II”, *The Guardian*, 6 February 2012.

⁵⁹ Mark Brown, “Unseen Cecil Beaton pictures of Queen to go on show at V&A.”, *The Guardian*, 9 June 2011.

Uncommon Reader. Had it not been for her corgis, Her Majesty would have never seen the mobile library, met Norman or developed a love for reading:

It was the dogs' fault. They were snobs and ordinarily, having been in the garden, would have gone up the front steps, where a footman generally opened them the door. Today, though, for some reason they careered along the terrace, barking their heads off, and scampered down the steps again and round the end along the side of the house, where she could hear them yapping at something in one of the yards. (4)

Moreover, *My Dog Tulip* marks the Queen's first encounter with diversity in the book, a path along which she herself for a moment becomes a potential queen:

E.M. Forster figured in the book, with whom she remembered spending an awkward half-hour when she invested him with the CH. Mouse-like and shy, he had said little and in such a small voice she had found him almost impossible to communicate with. Still, he was a bit of a dark horse. Sitting there with his hands pressed together like something out of *Alice in Wonderland*, he gave no hint of what he was thinking, and so she was pleasantly surprised to find on reading his biography that he had said afterwards that had she been a boy he would have fallen in love with her. (20-21)

⁶⁰ Jane Goldman, "Ce chien est à moi: Virginia Woolf and the Signifying Dog", *Woolf Studies Annual*, 13 (2007), 100-107.

⁶¹ James Basker, "Dancing Dogs, Women Preachers, and the Myth of Johnson's Misogyny", *The Age of Johnson* 3 (1990), 63-90; Bonnie Hain and Carole McAllister, "James Boswell's Ms. Perceptions and Samuel Johnson's Ms. Placed Friends", *South Central Review* 9.4 (1992), 59-70.

⁶² Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, eds., *The Letters Of Virginia Woolf: Vol. 5 (1932-1935)* (New York: Harcourt, 1979), 232.

⁶³ Marjorie Stone, "Elizabeth Barrett Browning", *Victorian Poetry*, 46.3 (2008), 310-327.

⁶⁴ Maureen Adams, *Shaggy Muses: The Dogs Who Inspired Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Edith Wharton, and Emily Brontë* (New York: Ballantine, 2007).

Even more crucial, due to the interdiscursive relation of *The Uncommon Reader* with *The Common Reader*, Queenie may be seen as the comic counterpart of both Woolf's dog Pinka (a present from Vita Sackville-West, a black cocker spaniel who became a very important part in Virginia and Leonard Woolf's life together) and her fictional double Flush (Elisabeth Barrett's golden cocker spaniel who enlightened the poet's sad life in Wimpole Street and accompanied her through her happier times in Italy. Virginia Woolf wrote a novel about their special relationship, *Flush*, and it has even been suggested that Flush's trauma after being dognapped for ransom, mirrors Woolf's child molestation by stepbrothers George and Gerald). At the very least, that is the mental association some reader (possibly a more alert reader than the ordinary one) may have made when reading this portion of the text.

Woolf's canine metaphors in her writing,⁶⁰ though inspired by a probably erroneous reading of Johnson as a misogynist and actually strongly contributing to the re-enforcement of such a myth,⁶¹ are well known, and so is her habit of animalising (in a letter to David Garnett she signed herself 'Yours affectionate old English springer spaniel Virginia'⁶²). Elizabeth Barrett's parallel between lapdogs and women as mentioned in Stone⁶³ and detailed here by Adams⁶⁴ seems to be relatively well known:

As Elizabeth gazed into the mirror at herself and Flush, she suddenly recognised, as Emily Brontë would also do, the unsettling similarity between lapdogs and women in Victorian England. Both were powerless, and both were dependent for their very existence on pleasing others. With something like the self-acceptance she attributed to Flush, Elizabeth bluntly stated, "Why, what *is* Flush, but a lapdog? And what am I, but a woman? I assure you we never take ourselves for anything greater." (22)

Being a sophisticated reader herself, Pavani may have been aware of this possible network of cross-references when translating *The Uncommon Reader*, and she may have tried to accommodate them in some way.

Though being an Alsatian, which is very similar to a German shepherd (but not exactly ‘un pastore tedesco’, as Pavani translates) – that is, a big, aggressive dog that one tends to identify as male – Ackerley’s dog is not only female, but is called Queenie. Queenie was probably called this by her owner to state how important she was for him (think of the expression ‘the queen of my heart’), and Queenie is also the pet form for the affectionate name Queen, as we learn from the OED (1), Dictionary.com⁶⁵ (2) and Dictionary of First Names⁶⁶ (3):

(1) **Queen·ie:** A queen: used esp. with reference to Queen Elizabeth II (often as an informal name or form of address).

(2) **Queen·ie**

–*noun*

a female given name.

(3) **Queenie:** Pet form from the affectionate nickname *Queen*, with the addition of the diminutive suffix *-ie*. In the Victorian era it was sometimes used as an allusive pet form for Victoria.

Alternatively, Queenie – which the OED also defines as ‘[a]n effeminate male, a homosexual (used esp. as a form of address)’⁶⁷ – could be a gay-related analogy to the fact that the name Rex (King) is a commonly given name to male Alsatisans/German shepherds in England.

However, Ackerley’s dog’s name was changed to Tulip because the publisher “thought Queenie would encourage jokes about Ackerley’s sexuality”.⁶⁸ Indeed, the name has quite a strong gay connotation, as already hinted at (OED), and there is consistent evidence confirming this. Whereas the Online Slang Dictionary⁶⁹ defines ‘queenie’ as “a spoiled or selfish female” only, the on-line Dictionary of Sexual Terms⁷⁰ offers two entries for ‘queenie’ or ‘Queenie’:

1. queen, a male homosexual; may be disparaging or affectionate depending on context.
2. Queenie, gay nickname for a pet lover or a pet poodle, one who will chew on a bone for hours and love it.

Even more explicit is the Urban dictionary,⁷¹ which lists as entry number 2:

2. Queenie

gay or effeminate male; male person with a bitchy, narcissistic attitude; a man who projects the very worst characteristics of femininity.

According to many,⁷² proper names should not be the object of translation, and Pavani does seem to follow this piece of advice in the Italian translation of *The Uncommon Reader* in most cases: Queenie stands out as the only exception (Reginetta) (see Fig. 6), which clearly raises a whole set of questions:

⁶⁵ Dictionary.com, 2009, <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/queenie>>

⁶⁶ Patrick Hanks, Kate Hardcastle, Flavia Hodges, *A Dictionary of First Names*, 2006, accessed from Encyclopedia.com, <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O41-Queenie.html>>, 30 June 2012.

⁶⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁶⁸ Dylan Skolnick, “My Dog Tulip”. *Pulse - Long Island Magazine*, 31/08/2010.

⁶⁹ Waler Rader, *The Online Slang Dictionary*, 1996-2009, <<http://onlineslangdictionary.com/definition+of/queenie>>, 30 June 2012.

⁷⁰ Dictionary of sexual terms, Farlex (2004), <<http://www.sex-lexis.com/Sex-Dictionary/queenie>>, 30 June 2012.

⁷¹ *Urban Dictionary*, 1999-2009, <<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Queenie>>, 30 June 2012.

⁷² See, for example, Peter Newmark, *Approaches to Translation* (London: Prentice Hall, 1988).

<p>[...] it reminded Norman of something he had read that could fit the bill, J. R. Ackerley's novel <i>My Dog Tulip</i>.</p> <p>...</p> <p>'Tulip,' said the Queen to Norman later. 'Funny name for a dog.'</p> <p>'It's supposed to be fiction, ma'am, only the author did have a dog in life, an Alsatian.' (He didn't tell her its name was Queenie). 'So it's really disguised auto-biography.' (16-17)</p>	<p>A Norman venne in mente un libro che aveva letto e poteva fare al caso suo: <i>La mia cagna Tulip</i> di J.R. Ackerley.</p> <p>...</p> <p>«Tulip,» disse più tardi la regina a Norman. «Che strano nome per una cagna».</p> <p>«La storia è romanzata, Maestà, ma l'autore una cagna ce l'aveva veramente, un pastore tedesco». (Non le disse che si chiamava Reginetta). «Quindi fuor di finzione è un libro autobiografico». (19)</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Fig. 6: extract 5 from *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice*

⁷³ Tullio De Mauro, *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell'Uso* (Torino: UTET, 1999), vol. V, 454.

De Mauro's *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell'Uso*⁷³ provides four different entries for Reginetta:

- 1 dim. ⇒ regina
- 2 BU giovane regina
- 3 CO estens., ragazza vincitrice di un concorso di bellezza | ragazza che primeggia tra le altre per bellezza ed eleganza: *la r. della festa*
- 4 CO al pl., reginella

De Mauro's online dictionary of synonyms and antonyms also stresses the link of the word Reginetta with the domain of beauty contests:

• CO (*di un concorso di bellezza*)

Sinonimi

ES *ingl.* miss



(*di una festa e sim.*)

Sinonimi

FO regina; CO prima donna

• 2

CO *al pl.*

Sinonimi

CO reginelle

The word chosen by Pavani as an equivalent of Queenie seems void of any specifically sexual connotation, thus representing a loss for the Italian reader, a loss which does not justify the substitution of the name, which would have probably sounded more suggestive of the gay world, if anything else because it reminds most people of the rock band Queen, whose vocalist Freddie Mercury was widely known to be gay. Why Reginetta, then? As hinted at above, Pavani could have left the name Queenie in English, as usually happens in today's translations, to anchor the text

to the source culture, and as she herself usually does in most of the book. The fact that she does not, makes one want to consider this choice as particularly meaningful.

Queenie's fictional counterpart is called Tulip, as stated above, and this, although not as clearly connoted as Queenie, is still a very 'gay' name for a dog.⁷⁴ *My Dog Tulip* was recently translated into Italian by Giona Tuccini, who decided to leave the proper name unchanged and opted for the more neutral option 'cane' when it came to translating the word 'dog', at least in the title. The book was published by Voland in 2007. Although we know Tulip is a female dog, a bitch, to use the precise scientific term, the English title does not specifically characterise the dog as feminine. Nor does the Italian translation by Tuccini. Indeed, the dog's sex is irrelevant in the Bennett text. So why does Pavani use the feminine 'cagna' – as we can see in the extract in Fig. 6 above – which seems to have the same negative connotation in Italian as the English equivalent 'bitch'?

The OED lists the following entries for the word 'bitch':

1. a. The female of the dog.
- b. The female of the fox, wolf, and occasionally of other beasts; usually in combination with the name of the species. (Also as in sense 2.)
2. a. Applied opprobriously to a woman; strictly, a lewd or sensual woman. Not now in decent use; but formerly common in literature. In mod. use, *esp.* a malicious or treacherous woman; of things: something outstandingly difficult or unpleasant. (See also SON OF A BITCH n.)
- b. Applied to a man (less opprobrious, and somewhat whimsical, having the modern sense of 'dog'). Not now in decent use.
- c. A primitive form of lamp used in Alaska and Canada. (OED)

Grose identified bitch as "the most offensive appellation that can be given to an English woman, even more provoking than that of whore" back in 1811, in his *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*.⁷⁵ However, in more recent usage in the context of feminism, the term has been reappropriated and stretched to connote a *strong female*. Nowadays, it is actually rather used as a compliment than as an offense, probably under the influence of *The Bitch Manifesto*.⁷⁶

1) Personality. Bitches are aggressive, assertive, domineering, overbearing, strong-minded, spiteful, hostile, direct, blunt, candid, obnoxious, thick-skinned, hard-headed, vicious, dogmatic, competent, competitive, pushy, loud-mouthed, independent, stubborn, demanding, manipulative, egoistic, driven, achieving, overwhelming, threatening, scary, ambitious, tough, brassy, masculine, boisterous, and turbulent. Among other things. A Bitch occupies a lot of psychological space. You always know she is around. A Bitch takes shit from no one. You may not like her, but you cannot ignore her.

The French equivalent of 'bitch', 'chienne' has been chosen by Florence Montreynaud to name a French feminist movement, *Chiennes de Garde*, which

⁷⁴ The dog could not have possibly been called Pansy, which is a disparaging term for a man/boy who is considered effeminate. Despite the range of floral names the dog owner might have picked, Tulip would not resonate with an Italian reader, except for possible associations with the Tulip chair.

⁷⁵ Francis Grose, *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (1811), hosted at Project Gutenberg; quot. in Mark Steven Morton, *The Lover's Tongue: A Merry Romp through the Language of Love and Sex* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2003), 60.

⁷⁶ Joreen, "The Bitch Manifesto", in Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone, eds., *Radical Feminism* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), 50-51.

⁷⁷ See 1932 *Les Chiens de garde* by Paul Nizan and *Les Nouveaux Chiens de garde* by Serge Halimi.

⁷⁸ Riot grrrl culture and third wave feminism both developed in the early nineties. Riot grrrl culture is often looked at as a third wave feminism cultural movement, but it is also sometimes seen as its starting point.

⁷⁹ Think of Busted's 'Big assed biatch'.

⁸⁰ Tullio De Mauro, *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell'Uso*, vol. I, 828.

probably ironically refers in turn to watchdogs, protectors of established order.⁷⁷ Also, the term 'bitch' is widely used by Riot grrrls (Kathleen Hanna, Kathi Wilcox, Tobi Vai) and in Riot grrrl culture, which is often associated with third wave feminism.⁷⁸ Indeed, Riot grrrls bands (Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, etc.) have reappropriated such terms as 'cunt', 'bitch' and 'slut' (which men traditionally used as offensive, derogatory names for women), sometimes even writing them proudly on their bodies. Recently, even a culturally unengaged Lindsay Lohan has sponsored the use of the word, which many women now use as another term for 'hun' and 'babe', i.e. a way to address a friend, together with the less harsh and connoted 'biatch' (just the result of alternate spelling/pronunciation, which can, however, still be used in an offensive way⁷⁹) and 'bish'. The term 'biatch' also echoes both AAVE and the African American community's reclaim of the word 'nigger' at the same time.

Although the word has lost much of its negative connotation in English, to the extent that it might even be used as a compliment, this does not seem to have happened in Italian as yet. These are the entries the *Grande Dizionario Italiano dell'Uso* lists under the heading 'cagna':⁸⁰

- 1 cane femmina: *la c. ha avuto cinque cuccioli*
- 2a fig., spreg., donna di facili costumi, donnaccia
- 2b BU fig., donna malvagia, rabbiosa
- 2c BU fig., cantante o attrice da strapazzo
- 3 BU gerg., cambiale
- 4 RE sett., bugia, frottola

⁸¹ Tullio De Mauro, *Il dizionario dei sinonimi e dei contrari* (Torino: Paravia/Pearson, 2002-2009), <<http://demauroparavia.it/6619/cagna>>, 30 June 2012.

De Mauro sinonimi e contrari lists, as a synonym:⁸¹

- CO *spreg. (donna)*
- Sinonimi**
- AU puttana *volg.* CO donnaccia

However, there are traces of the word being used recently in a positive way when it is a translation of the English term in contexts such as the ones identified above. For example, Anne Sexton's *Ms Dog* was translated as *Madonna Cagna* by Florentine translator Rosaria Lo Russo for publisher Le lettere in 2003 (*Poesie su Dio*). In light of this, Pavani's use of 'cagna' in her translation of the title *My Dog Tulip* (*La mia cagna Tulip*) seems an invitation to look at her choices in a different light: while bringing about a tinge of feminism in the text and probably being itself a sort of appropriation of the perceived derogatory use of the term, a bold choice and – maybe – a potential act of feminine dissidence which might have opened up a whole alternative reading path (the dissonance created in the text by a word so pregnant with meaning signalling to the reader such a possibility) if Pavani had stretched the text a little further. The use of the word 'cagna' also seems to place

La sovrana lettrice at the heart of a tightly woven, complex network of references (it recreates the past references to Barrett and Woolf and builds up more recent, new ones with contemporary feminist artists), and thus to restore in the target text the density hidden within the apparently light texture of Bennett's book. Indeed, Pavani's new intertextual marker seems to function very effectively in the 'architecture' of the target text.

As already hinted at above, Bennet's translator, Pavani, does not seem to make unfaithfulness a political choice, though, for she could have gone much further both in terms of content and form and in terms of intertextuality. Just as an example of how much further she could have stretched the text in terms of intertextual 'architecture', one may briefly point out that she might have renamed Queenie Virginia, which, in addition to regaining the text the interdiscursive relationship with *The Common Reader* by also recalling its author's name, would have also kept the link with a Queen's nickname, magnified the power issues which are latent in the text – let us not forget that 2007, the year Pavani's translation was published, celebrated America's 400th anniversary and Her Majesty's visit to the first successful English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia – and created a further interdiscursive relationship within the target culture, although with a writer whose conduct could not be more distant from Ackerley's.⁸²

Conclusion

Despite openly looking at translation as a form of *écriture* which extends and develops the source text and actually putting this into practice in a few bold translation choices in *La sovrana lettrice*, Pavani does not seem to use unfaithfulness as a political strategy. Her personal touch may well be visible in some portions of the text and even a tinge of feminist intervention may pop up now and then, but these are only detectable for the alert reader travelling across source and target texts and intentionally looking for possible clues. Moreover, they come across, by and large, just as traces that are never actually woven into an agenda. Indeed, although confessing on a few occasions to usually extending authors' intentions, Pavani does not seem to take the re-writing aspect of translation to an extreme in *La sovrana lettrice*, nor does she appear to want to turn her intervention (both in terms of content and form and in terms of intertextuality) into a real political act. A few bold choices cannot be classified as 'hijacking', or as evidence of an attempt to pursue a consistent personal political agenda of any kind. To use Pavani's own words, she is probably just opening up new 'landscapes' in *La sovrana lettrice*, while pointing to the possible doors leading to them for the benefit of those readers who are most used to daring.

And yet, on taking a closer look at the rationales behind the characters' linguistic choices, i.e. to the social identities and relationships that each character in *The Uncommon Reader/La sovrana lettrice* inevitably projects through the specific style he/she is assigned, one cannot help but be tempted to say that the two texts tell two

⁸² Italian 18th-century poet Parini's 'vergine cuccia' (*Il giorno*) was loved by her owner and hated by all others as the Queen's dogs ("None of his friends liked the dog, ma'am." 'One knows that feeling very well,' said the Queen, and Norman nodded solemnly, the royal dogs being generally unpopular", 17).

⁸³ Barbara Johnson, “Taking Fidelity Philosophically”, in Joseph Graham, ed., *Difference in Translation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 146.

⁸⁴ Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation. Cultural identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996), 16.

⁸⁵ Rosemary Arrojo, “Fidelity and The Gendered Translation”, *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 7.2 (1994), 160.

completely different stories. Unfaithfulness is the inevitable effect of translation for, as Johnson puts it, “the original text is always already an impossible translation”.⁸³ Some (mostly feminist) translators bring this common fate to an extreme by openly and explicitly manipulating the source text to suit their ends. Others, and Pavani may well be included among these, place their work in the more moderate sphere of those refusing to endow both male and female translators with the right to abuse the source text, thus implicitly sharing Simon’s belief that “[f]eminist translation implies extending and developing the intention of the original text, not deforming it”⁸⁴ and Arrojo’s statement that feminist translators “open, ‘subversive’ interference in the texts they translate serves goals that are quite similar to the ones they so vehemently attack in what they call male, colonialist modes of translating”.⁸⁵ Pavani’s attempt at attaining a voice which is “né azzerata né egocentrica, ma decentrata, capace di ascoltare voci diverse” is probably what accounts for the mixture of procedures and strategies used in *La sovrana lettrice*, procedures and strategies which, taken individually, would certainly seem to push the text into different directions but, looking at the larger picture, actually generate a consistent, convincing target text, instead. However, still a text that in (literary) sociolinguistic terms seems to be completely different (independent, to use a less judgmental descriptor) from the source, thus conveying a whole new message and more subtle forms of text re-appropriation and re-purposing.

A Contact Variety of English: the Case of the Bedford Italian Community

Language Contact: Italian immigration to Bedford (UK)

The last decades have seen a wide range of studies and research projects on language contact based on the most well-established sociolinguistic methodologies. Multilingualism is a well-researched domain¹ and linguistic minority languages represent an area of great interest where important projects are currently underway.² However, in spite of the state of ferment over linguistic minorities in the United Kingdom, there has still been little monitoring of the linguistic competence and language ability of specific communities, such as the Italian one, whose mother tongue is not English.

The town of Bedford in the British East Midlands has a large Italian diaspora community that began to arrive in the early 1950s to seek employment in the local brick works. Ethnically Bedford is one of the most highly mixed communities in Britain and is home to over a hundred immigrant languages, including Italian together with Punjabi, Turkish, Polish, Portuguese, Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese. With one language – English – per thousand residents, the town has twenty-five times as many languages as London in proportion to population size. According to the 2001 census, 2 in 7 of Bedford's population are of Italian origin, which means that the 28% of today's Bedfordians belong to the Bedford Italian Community (henceforth BIC) overall numbering 42,261 *Italians*. Significantly, Bedford is the only non-capital city in the world to have had its own Italian vice-consulate which was opened in town in 1954 to look after the needs of the Italian settlers, and closed in 2008.

Given the monolingual and uni-cultural tradition of Britain, speaking ethnic minority languages alongside English has become an 'act of identity'³ for individuals, and an important signal as a whole for British society. After all, today's Britain is generally a multi-cultural society, displaying a rich variety of family forms, traditions, and close and continuing links with extensive kinship networks originating in, or extending to, a number of other European countries, Africa, South and East Asia, and the Caribbean. Such diversity has invariably been part and parcel of the social and cultural changes occurring in contemporary Britain, within a globalising world. With regard to speaking minority languages, at the conflicting and contradictory time of globalisation where multiculturalism is so hotly debated, it is urgently necessary to have a closer understanding of the dynamics of what – socially, culturally and linguistically – is taking place among ethnic minority groups within and across national boundaries.

Historically speaking, the main reasons for Italian migration can be traced, on the one hand, to the London brick industry's hard-pressed need of labour, and

¹ Michael Clyne, "Multilingualism", in Florian Coulmas, ed., *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); Ben Rampton, *Crossing: Language & Ethnicity Among Adolescents* (New York: Longman, 1995); Safder Alladina and Viv Edwards, *Multilingualism in the British Isles* (London and New York: Longman, 1991).

² David Britain and Sue Fox, "Vernacular Universality, Allomorphic Simplifications, and Language Contacts: the Regularisation of Hiatus Avoidance Strategies in English Non-standard Accents", paper presented at *World Englishes: Vernacular Universals vs. Contact-Induced Change: An International Symposium*, University of Joensuu Research Station, Mekrijärvi (Finland), 1-3 September, 2006.

³ Li Wei, *Three Generations, Two Languages, One Family* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 1994).

on the other, to the Italians' desperate need to seize every opportunity to work and earn money to support their families. In those years, the world's largest brick factory, Marston Valley Bricks Co., suffered from a desperate shortage of English labourers. Today, over 60% of all Italians in Great Britain live in the South East, and the Italian community numbers at least 250-300,000 people.

As argued in previous research, either exhaustively or superficially, in the late 1940s and early 1950s a second and very important phase of Italian immigration to Great Britain began. Unlike the immigration of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the flow of the 1950s was mainly based on volunteer workers recruited in bulk.⁴ After World War II, Great Britain set out to rebuild its economy, and many sectors were in desperate need of new labour. An important inter-governmental initiative led to an agreement between the British Ministry of Labour and the Italian Government and the setting up of a bulk recruitment scheme offering jobs to Italian men and women in various industries where shortages had arisen.

During this second wave, the most significant flow began in the summer of 1951 and was directed to the Bedfordshire brick factories; throughout the 1950s and early 1960s entire villages moved from southern Italy to Bedfordshire, where one of the largest Italian communities was established in the town of Bedford, with related communities in Peterborough, Bletchley, Loughborough, and Nottingham. The migrants came from many villages throughout Italy, but predominantly from the poorer regions of Campania, Apulia, Calabria and Sicily. The steady flow and ongoing transferral of workers continued over the years, and although many of them did reasonably well and were able to return home after a few decades, today the southern Italian community in Bedford is striking in its size, tradition, way of life, and governmental institutions.⁵

Aims of the study

Earlier studies of the linguistic characteristics of Bedford Italians have shown English is the first language of the vast majority of the 2nd and 3rd generation speakers, though most proved to have a good passive competence in Italian, at least, and their ethnic identity as Italian, rather than British or English is *extremely* strong.⁶

In the course of time, over the past sixty years their immigrant language has been seriously endangered. Most of the past two generations have not learned Italian as their L1. Most of them only take Italian classes at school or do after-school activities in Italian, and although they speak Italian to their grandparents and go regularly to Italy to spend summer holidays, most Bedford Italians are functionally L1 Anglophones.⁷

In these circumstances, the transferral of Italian language features onto their English could possibly occur. Therefore, one of the purposes of this study has been to work on the hypothesis that some features of Italian might have been maintained and transmitted across the generations, thus affecting Bedford Italian L1 speakers of English. Moreover, given the speakers' perception of their ethnic

⁴ Arturo Tosi, *L'italiano d'oltremare. La lingua delle comunità italiane nei paesi anglofoni* (Firenze: Giunti, 1991).

⁵ Terri Colpi, *Italians Forward* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishers, 1991).

⁶ Siria Guzzo, "Multilingualism and Language Variation in the British Isles: the Case of the Bedford Italian Community", in Norman Fairclough et al., eds., *Discourse Analysis and Contemporary Social Change* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007).

⁷ Siria Guzzo, *Language Shift: the case of the Bedford Italian Community*, unpublished MA dissertation (Colchester: University of Essex, 2005).

identity and heritage as Italian more than English, their dominant feeling might have enhanced – consciously or unconsciously – the infiltration of Italian features into their English as markers of ethnic differences. It seems plausible that current speakers could focus on certain features of Italian and transfer those into English.

Based on the account of what my earlier studies have discussed, in this paper I shall focus on the phonology of just two speakers – one female BI adolescent and a demographically matched, male speaker. The micro approach enables investigation at a level of detail I have not previously attempted.

Methods

The present study is part of a wider project whose focus is language behaviour and identity within the BIC – whether speakers of Italian origins still use Italian and if so, to what extent, how well, and to whom, according to which social requirements, and how they use English to manifest their ethnic identity.⁸ Particular attention has been paid to the relationship between social structures and the interactional behaviour of the individual which contributes to the formation and transformation of these structures, also using the notion of social network.⁹

Considering the well documented lack of naturalness that can characterize a formal interview through written questionnaires or pre-organised forms,¹⁰ I opted for a combination of methodological procedures – participant observation, ethnographic questionnaire and informal ethnographic interviews – that seemed more promising in terms of naturalness.

In most cases, a researcher is not part of the community under analysis, which raises the issue of how to gain access to the life of the community the researcher wants to study. As Agar suggests “the only way to access those activities is to establish relationships with people, participate with them in what they do, and observe what is going on”,¹¹ which involves the processes of entering the community, being part of it, observing its activities, and studying its everyday life and language. Bearing in mind the principle of the naturalness of the talk, and wishing to be a good participant observer, for the first stage of the research I spent four months in the BIC engaging in everyday tasks: eating, talking, and living with the people I aimed at investigating. Nonetheless, a fieldworker will always be looked on as a stranger and will have to face the “observer’s paradox” of investigating how people speak when they are not observed.¹² Making use of participant observation as one of the methods to collect data can help minimise the observer’s paradox. Becoming part of the researched community helps understand the internal rules of the community itself; the initial outsider becomes an ‘internal eye’, almost a member of the group the fieldworker is studying.¹³

A complementary method used for the whole study consisted of informal interviews. As in casual conversations, no schemes were set out in advance, at least consciously, no opening statements were formulated, no effort to control the conversation was made on my part as a researcher; free and random speech was the

⁸ Siria Guzzo, David Britain and Sue Fox, “From L2 to Ethnic Dialect: Hiatus Resolution Strategies across the Generations in Bedford Italian English” (forthcoming).

⁹ Lesley Milroy, *Language and Social Networks* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); see also Penelope Eckert, *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) and “Age as a Sociolinguistic Variable”, in Florian Coulmas, ed., *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

¹⁰ Lesley Milroy and Matthew Gordon, *Sociolinguistics: Method and Interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

¹¹ Michael H. Agar, *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1996).

¹² William Labov, “Field Methods of the Project on Linguistic Change and Variation”, in John Baugh and Joel Sherzer, eds., *Language in Use* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

¹³ Lesley Milroy and Matthew Gordon, *Sociolinguistics: Method and Interpretation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

most common result of the interaction. I decided to allow the researcher and the researched to engage in everyday conversation among friends, aiming at obtaining more spontaneous speech data.

Ethical issues have been widely discussed in the literature¹⁴ and I opted for an ‘overt method’¹⁵ thus straightforwardly explaining the purpose of my research. Being informed made my interlocutors feel in charge of part of the job and willing to provide as much information as possible about their community. Generally, people from the 2nd generation complained of too little interest in their Italian community and this made them even keener to be involved in my study.

Data

The data for this study consisted of two samples of informants differing according to the methods. An overall number of 63 ethnographic questionnaires were filled in by BIC members of 2nd and 3rd generation, whereas 7 BI teenagers were asked to be recorded during informal interviews and compared to the recordings of 7 ‘Anglo’ peers.

	2 nd generation BIs		3 rd generation BIs	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Questionnaire Survey	24	13	9	17
Informal Interview	–	–	4	3

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaires and interviews among BI cohorts.

As reported in my earlier studies, the questionnaire was distributed ethnographically making use of informal network links among friends, acquaintances and church members. The overall aim was:

- (a) to monitor the BIC members’ competence in the two languages English and Italian. It is certain that many features of original L1 Italian will have been lost and are no longer present in their contemporary Italian, although we can still find them in the speech of older and fluent 1st generation BIs who have never learned the host language properly.
- (b) to verify the BIs’ level of ethnic identity perception, and
- (c) to outline their choices of language(s) according to different interlocutors and situations.

Based on the answers to the questionnaires consisting of a set of 14 questions, some general assumptions have been made.

The methods used for the ethnographic interviews involved face-to-face interaction between investigator and informant, and the interviews were usually conducted at an Italian-style kiosk located in the town centre of Bedford, “La

¹⁴ Kazuko Matsumoto, *Language Contact and Change in Micronesia: Evidence from the Multilingual Republic of Palau*, PhD Dissertation (Colchester: University of Essex, 2002).

¹⁵ Danny J. Jorgenson, *Participant Observation. Methodology for Human Studies* (London: Sage, 1989).

Piazza” which was the favourite meeting point for most members of the community or in a quiet indoor area where noise did not affect the recording. Informants were selected according to the social variables of age, gender and ethnicity and the ‘friend of a friend’ informal network technique based on the work of Milroy and Eckert was used. All were in their mid and late teens, male and female Bedford Italians of two generations vs Anglo Bedfordians. All interviews were of the same length and were as totally informal and spontaneous as casual conversations. As for the linguistic variables, my analysis focused on the FACE diphthong and the (de)aspiration of voiceless stops /p, t, k/. Thus, one vowel and one consonant variables were quantitatively analysed (see Figure 1).

The case study reported in this paper examines two of the seven BI informants – a male adolescent, whom we shall call ‘Amedeo’, and a female teenage, ‘Samantha’.

The FACE Variable	[eɪ] => [eɪ]
De-aspiration	[p ^h , t ^h , k ^h] => [p, t, k]

Figure 1. The two linguistic variables investigated.

The immigrants’ language ability and today’s BI situation

Several studies on language maintenance and shift among minority communities have analysed the level of linguistic competence displayed by immigrants. Language change and cultural assimilation within the same ethnic group and across the host community has been the focus of many investigations.¹⁶ Clearly, a high degree of mutual intelligibility between immigrants and the society they live in is not easy to achieve, partly because many immigrants typically do not even speak the standard language of their country, but rather the dialect of their hometown and partly because acquiring an acceptable competence in a foreign language requires time, devotion and personal inclination. Thus, communication across communities is even more complicated.

At the time of the Italian migration to Bedford, immigrants spoke village dialects as their mother tongue. Once in Britain, they had to acquire English as a foreign language in the host country. The vast majority of these immigrants had little schooling and spoke poor standard Italian; those who had had the chance of completing primary education were mostly males, while most females had never completed primary school. The vast majority were, therefore, almost illiterate, and their poor ability in reading was only slightly better than their writing skills.¹⁷ In their home village there had been no need to develop their language skills further – their oral communication was good, everyone was able to fully understand a speaker of standard Italian and that was considered enough. Once those people moved to Britain in the 1950s their contact with the national language decreased dramatically and they had to learn the new language, English. There are several reasons why

¹⁶ Alan Bell, “Maori and Pakeha English: A Case Study”, in Alan Bell and Koenraad Kuiper, eds., *New Zealand English* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984).

¹⁷ Arturo Tosi, *Immigration and Bilingual Education* (Oxford: Pergamon Institute of English, 1984).

immigrants never learned the host language properly and one was represented by the fact their learning activity was based on exposure to the language rather than formal education. Since they spent time both working and living only with their fellow villagers, hoping merely to save enough money to go back home to Italy, most of them ended up by never learning English.

Today's Italian language competence of the BIC members I investigated turned out to be still quite widespread. Their social network is strong and close, and even today they tend to spend much more time with people from their community than with English people. For this reason, they keep using a sort of dialect-based Italian and maintain a reasonably good overall linguistic ability.

Some remarkable insights come from the responses concerning the speakers' Italian and English language competence. The questionnaire intended to produce evidence of the level of awareness and self-perception the speakers had with regard to their speaking, reading, writing and understanding abilities in both languages. Since Bedford Italians are L1 speakers of English nowadays, all appeared confident and competent as far as their English was concerned. Findings regarding Italian, on the other hand, showed 2nd generation informants to have an overall good Italian competence and good skills – at least passive – while the adult female speakers felt the most competent in the language. Moreover, 3rd generation Bedford Italians also claimed to feel as good at Italian as their older counterparts, although conversely, the young female speakers seem to be the least competent or to perceive themselves to be so.

As far as heritage is concerned, although the 3rd generation are completely integrated into multicultural England and although they were born speaking English as their mother tongue, sometimes having mixed parents (mostly Italian and English but also other 'mixtures'), the questionnaire survey revealed 'Englishness' to be very weak among them, with both 2nd and 3rd generation informants showing similar results. They claim to feel themselves to be not very English at heart, but *strongly* Italian. Interestingly, again female speakers seem to represent the two end of the spectrum, with adults feeling an Italian identity the most and young informants the least.

Finally, the last section of the survey concerns the speakers' choices of language(s) according to different interlocutors and situations (see appendix for question 14). Remarkably, although English proved to be more widely spoken than Italian, mainly at work, at school, in formal administrative settings and among acquaintances, a dialect-based Italian is claimed to be still used, most of the time at home and with members of the same ethnic group. The speakers, generally, keep the two languages separate, using one at a time according to the social requirements. They do, however, code-switch, mainly if their interlocutor does so.

Analysis

Earlier analyses of the phonological characteristics of the 3rd generation adolescents show realisations, especially among the males, which are highly atypical for this area

of Southern England, including significant amounts of de-aspiration of voiceless stops and relatively close, relatively monophthongal realisations of the FACE diphthong. Although the frequency and distribution of the two variables examined vary strikingly from one speaker to another, it is legitimate to suggest that the young males may be identified by some features while the girls are characterised by a different trend.

The case study reported here examines two of the seven BI informants of 3rd generation who led me to make these observations – a male adolescent, whom we shall refer to as ‘Amedeo’, and a female teenager, ‘Samantha’. Informant ‘Amedeo’ is a leader for his friends. He is part of the Italian community; besides, he seemed to be a point of reference for his group of friends: he handles his mates’ telephone calls, suggests what to do and where to spend the weekends, and sometimes takes decisions for himself as well as for the rest of the group. I approached him while he was chilling out at the kiosk “La Piazza” on a Saturday morning, and asked him to fill in my questionnaire about his life as a member of this extensive Italian community in the UK. He seemed quite reluctant at the beginning, not very interested in sharing his experiences with me, so after he finished filling in the questionnaire, I avoided personal questions about his life in Bedford, and started casual conversation. Accidentally, we met several other times at the kiosk, and finally became good acquaintances who enjoyed a conversation while sipping a good cup of coffee. When I had the chance of recording some of his friends, I drew him in and recorded all of them while having some chips and a soda at the cafeteria near the Italian kiosk. As for Amedeo’s knowledge of Italian, it revealed itself to be poor: he understands a little but hardly speaks the language at all. He goes to Italy with his family almost every year on vacation, but feels uncomfortable because of his poor knowledge of Italian.

As for my female informant ‘Samantha’, her father is English, but the rest of her family and relatives in town are Italian. She was brought up by her Italian grandparents and learned the language from her grandmother – *nonna*. Like most of her BI fellow citizens, she can speak her family’s hometown dialect much better than Standard Italian. Nevertheless, she speaks Italian quite fluently, reads, writes and understands the language.

Samantha and I first met at the end of a Sunday service at the Italian Catholic Church San Francesca Cabrini. During my stay, I used to go to Mass quite frequently, and there I met most of the BIC members and their families. I was introduced to many people there at the church, I met mostly first generation Italians and they introduced me to their children and grandchildren. Among them, I met Samantha, and asked her to fill in my questionnaire. After that we met again thus beginning a nice friendship. She was very interested in my job, and helped me a great deal providing me with various types of information about the community and her life in town, as well as looking for other friends of hers I could talk to. Thanks to Samantha, I had the chance of meeting many ‘Anglo’ female informants too, and this was a great help, it gave the proper balance to my research when it came to

compare the speech of the BI teenagers I had taped with their ‘Anglo’ peers.

I recorded Samantha and another female informant at the lounge of the hotel where I was staying. Samantha was very embarrassed at the beginning: she laughed a lot, her heart jumped every time I turned to her to say something. She displayed her agitation by playing with her hair or any other object within her grasp. She eventually relaxed when I decided to turn the focus of the conversation to myself telling them some funny stories about my life, and so the conversation (re)engaged in a more natural way. I recorded Samantha a second time some weeks afterwards.

Results

Though in the research literature there is not much reference to the phonology of Italians in the UK, the FACE diphthong and the aspiration of plosives have been increasingly considered significant variables to study with regard to minority languages.¹⁸ A generally conservative approach to coding variants was used and the two phonological features under study were coded impressionistically, with doubtful tokens categorized so as to minimize rather than maximise variation. Despite being on a very small scale, the present analysis supports the suggestion that FACE variants and unaspirated stops are very much more likely to occur in the speech of Bedford Italians. It will be worthwhile, then, to further examine their distribution in the speech of a larger matched sample of speakers.

Overall, Bedford being part of the South East of England, either the diphthong [ɛɪ] or [æɪ] of the FACE vowel were expected to be found in the speech of my informants. On the contrary, my analysis revealed a clear tendency towards the realisation of a mid-close front position [eɪ].

According to my data, the boys’ show a strong preference for [eɪ] or [e] in any linguistic environment where the diphthong variation is possible. The frequency of the variation from the standard form [ɛɪ], or the South Eastern variant [æɪ], in favour of [eɪ] or [e] is higher than 50% in all the four male informant recordings, whereas the female speakers never exceed 50%. Although the variation is widespread in both male and female speech, the latter are more likely to retain the standard form [ɛɪ]. This might suggest that BIC female speakers are more integrated in the local British society than the male informants.

¹⁸ Janet Holmes, “Maori and Pakeha English: Some New Zealand Social Dialect Data”, *Language in Society*, 26 (1997), 65-102.

The FACE Variable	Amedeo	%
ɛɪ eɪ		
Total number of tokens	63	
[ɛɪ]	7	11.1%
[eɪ/e]	56	88.8%

Table 2. Amedeo’s overall score with regard to the FACE variants

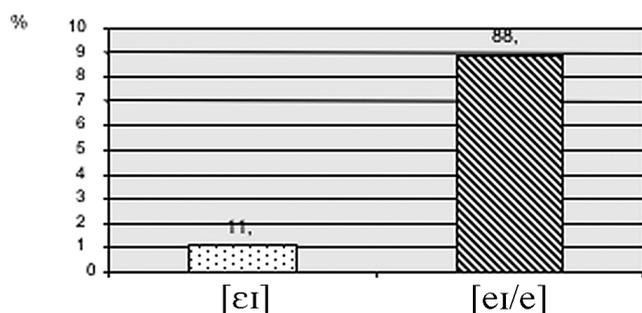


Figure 2. The FACE Variable $eɪ \sim eɪ$ with regard to Amedeo

Table 2 and Figure 2 provide information on the relative frequency of FACE variants from the interviewee Amedeo. Of all tokens, 89% show the speaker's preference for the diphthong variation $eɪ \Rightarrow eɪ$. For instance, Amedeo realises *play* [eɪ], *staying in* [eɪ], and *the match today* [eɪ]. Despite the standard acknowledged position is a front half open [ɛ] or a more south eastern half open/open [ɛ], the variant uttered by Amedeo revealed to tend toward an half close position. In this case, the FACE vowel glides towards a mid-close front position [eɪ].

The FACE Variable $eɪ \ eɪ$	Samantha	%
Total number of tokens	65	
[eɪ]	45	69.2%
[eɪ/e]	17	26.1%

Table 3. Samantha's overall score with regard to the FACE variants

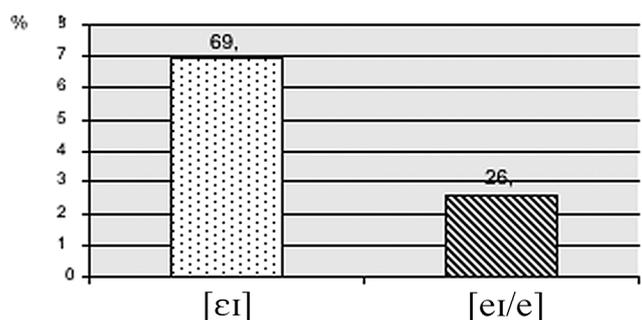


Figure 3. Variants of FACE diphthong in Samantha

On the other hand, for Samantha Table 3 and Figure 3 display a variation of only 26% of all tokens. Although the fronting of the glide represents less than the half of the tokens analysed, its level of variation is still very significant. Samantha gives clear examples of the mid close [eɪ] uttering *few days* [eɪ], and *all right, okay* [eɪ], for instance. Her realisation of the FACE vowel displays she is undergoing a process of variation even though she is not as consistent as Amedeo.

As for the consonant variable, recent work in sociolinguistics has shown that, what at first sight seems to be free variation in the plosives, may actually be a consequence of other factors.¹⁹ The variation in the aspiration of the voiceless plosive may be determined by stylistic factors or social circumstances. Moreover, both the selected variables can be evidence of linguistic variation in BIC English. Arguably, this variation may be the reflection of the Italian heritage in the language of the informants.

As for the de-aspiration of the voiceless stops /p, t, k/ in preceding stressed vowel environments, it is certainly quite widespread in both the male and female speech recorded, the level of variation never exceeding a remarkable 30%. BIC informants show a preference for using de-aspirated forms of plosives in both linguistic environments of preceding stressed and unstressed vowels.

¹⁹ John C. Wells, *Accents of English*, vols. 1 and 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

(de)aspiration of /p, t, k/	Amedeo	%
Total number of tokens	75	
[p ^h] [t ^h] [k ^h]	36	48%
[p] [t] [k]	39	52%

Table 4. Amedeo's overall score with regard to the (de)aspiration of voiceless stops /p, t, k/

It is quite clear from Table 4, and particularly from its visual representation in Figure 4, that Amedeo reveals a significant level of variation. Of all tokens, 52% shows the marked de-aspiration of the fortis voiceless stops /p, t, k/. Amedeo utters *a pack* [p] several times in the course of the interview and his bilabial plosive /p/ always proved de-aspirated in spite of the linguistic environment of a following stressed vowel. Moreover, Amedeo repeatedly says *Tuesday* [t], and each time he realises the voiceless plosive with no aspiration as happened in the previous example. The unaspirated variants indeed represent a clear feature of BI language. Amedeo did display a significant trend towards variation and can be considered as undergoing the process of plosive de-aspiration.

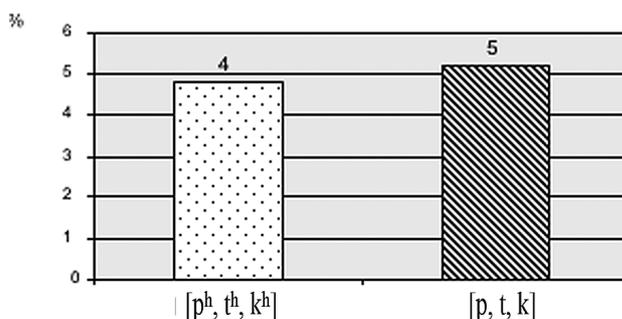


Figure 4. Variants of /p/, /t/, /k/ in Amedeo

(de)aspiration of /p, t, k/	Samantha	%
Total number of tokens	80	
[p ^h] [t ^h] [k ^h]	68	85%
[p] [t] [k]	12	15%

Table 5. Samantha's overall score with regard to the (de)aspiration of voiceless plosives /p, t, k/

Conversely, Samantha's voiceless stops /p, t, k/ seem not to be on a cline towards a non-standard form of English. On the overall score of potential de-aspiration, 15% of tokens display variation. Her level of de-aspiration is not very consistent, as shown in Table 5 and Figure 5. Nonetheless, it still denotes change is occurring in her speech. In the recordings Samantha releases interesting examples of de-aspiration, *just take it* [t], *Italian people* [p], and *is Piazza* [p], for instance. Although the linguistic environment suggests aspirating, some voiceless plosives are not aspirated.

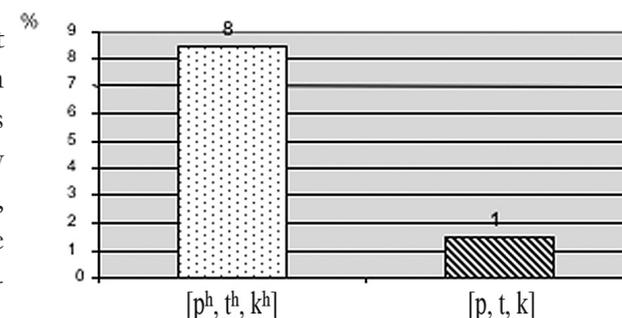


Figure 5. Variants of /p/, /t/, /k/ in Samantha

Discussion

It appears clear from the present quantitative and qualitative analysis that young BIC members, represented here by the case studies of 'Amedeo' and 'Samantha',

use a fair amount of non-standard features of English. Overall, the young males, as 'Amedeo' shows, are more willing to adopt non-standard features of English than the girls. Generally speaking, it seems that the boys tend to use more non-standard influenced vowels and de-aspirated voiceless plosives, while the young females pronounce the vowels and aspirate the stops in a more southern British English manner.

Arguably, the spread of these variants may serve as markers of ethnic identity. They might be an indicator to signal membership of a minority group, whether that means being Italian or simply other than 'Anglo'. In this respect, as for the source of these features, they might reflect the influence of Italian. Both the standard FACE variant and aspirated stops are not typical features of the Italian language. In this respect, the variants BIC teenagers produce are likely to be more familiar to Italian than English. Moreover, as discussed above, most BIs have contact with the Italian language, often through the interaction with older family members. Many use Italian at home or with relatives, both in Italy and in England. On the basis of their own assessments, many claim to be fluent users of the language, and this could possibly serve as explanation to the Italian influence.

Overall, although the numbers are so small that any suggestions must be very tentative, BIC speakers from the same ethnicity, social background, age and gender appear to share to a greater or lesser extent features of an *Italian*-influenced English as their common accent.

Conclusions

Features of Italian can be identified in the English of BIC teenagers. Similar situations have been found in many other speech communities where English, for various reasons, has gradually displaced an original language, and the variety of English that arises is characterized by identifiable features belonging to the replaced language.

The present study has focused on the language behaviour of the Italians resident in Bedford since 1950, with the purpose of throwing light on the socio-linguistic situation of the community, in order to verify the reflection of their local cultural diversity and identity on the English they speak. Based on a sample of teenage speakers this article has centred on two phonological features which have been suggested as potential features of BI English. The evidence here demonstrated that these features are currently undergoing some variation compared to the standard variants. The analysis thus provides a starting point for further research in this respect.

The two phonological features characterized the speech of BI adolescents and occur sufficiently frequently in my quantitative analysis to suggest that it may represent two salient features of BIE. The analysis of the FACE vowel revealed the informants' tendency towards the mid-close front position [eɪ]; the speakers' glide begins from slightly above the mid-open front position [ɛɪ], and moves towards the mid-close front [eɪ]. As for the variation in the *aspiration* of the voiceless plosives,

this turned out to be determined by stylistic factors and/or social circumstances. The *de-aspiration* of the plosives present in the speech of the informants seems to indicate that the process of de-aspiration is the result of Italian influence on the English language. Arguably, these features may serve as markers of BI ethnic identity. It is clear, however, that we are dealing with a continuum, and that the features described occur in different frequencies in the speech of different BIs according to a number of social factors.

In conclusion, this article makes a contribution to support the suggestions that some linguistic features which occur in the speech of BIs can be traced to the influence of the Italian language, and serve to signal their ethnic Italian identity.

APPENDIX – THE QUESTIONNAIRE (sections 6-9 and 12-13)

Please answer each question by ticking the most appropriate answer(s)

1 – Are your grandfathers Italian, English, Anglo-Italian, or other?

Italian	English	Anglo-Italian	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 – Are your grandmothers Italian, English, Anglo-Italian, or other?

Italian	English	Anglo-Italian	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 – If your father Italian, English, Anglo-Italian, or other?

Italian	English	Anglo-Italian	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4 – If your mother Italian, English, Anglo-Italian, or other?

Italian	English	Anglo-Italian	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5 – If your wife/husband Italian, English, Anglo-Italian, or other?

Italian	English	Anglo-Italian	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate answer(s).

6 – Can you **SPEAK** the following languages?

Italian:

Not at all	Very little	Quite good	Good	Perfectly
<input type="checkbox"/>				

English:

Not at all	Very little	Quite good	Good	Perfectly
<input type="checkbox"/>				

7 – Can you **READ** the following languages?

Italian:

Not at all	Very little	Quite good	Good	Perfectly
<input type="checkbox"/>				

English:

Not at all	Very little	Quite good	Good	Perfectly
<input type="checkbox"/>				

8 – Can you **WRITE** the following languages?

Italian:

Not at all	Very little	Quite good	Good	Perfectly
<input type="checkbox"/>				

English:

Not at all	Very little	Quite good	Good	Perfectly
<input type="checkbox"/>				

9 – Can you **UNDERSTAND** the following languages?

Italian:

Not at all	Very little	Quite good	Good	Perfectly
<input type="checkbox"/>				

English:

Not at all	Very little	Quite good	Good	Perfectly
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate answer(s).

10 – Do you watch the Italian television programmes? Yes No
if yes, how often?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
<input type="checkbox"/>				

11 – Do you watch the English television programmes? Yes No
if yes, how often?

Very often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
<input type="checkbox"/>				

Please answer each question by ticking the appropriate answer(s).

12 – Do you feel you are Italian? Yes No
if yes, how strongly?

Extremely	Very	Quite	Very Little	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>				

13 – Do you feel you are English? Yes No
if yes, how strongly?

Extremely	Very	Quite	Very Little	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/>				

14 – What language(s) do/did you use in each situation?

AT	With	With						
HOME	GPs	Ps	Pr	Ch	GrCh	Ns	friends	strangers
Italian								
English								
Both								

GPs=Grandparents; Ps=Parents; Ch=Children; N=Neighbours

AT WORK	With colleagues	With customers	With the boss
Italian			
English			
Both			

AT SCHOOL	With teachers	With classmates	Taking personal notes
Italian			
English			
Both			

Language and Identity in the United States: the Case of Gullah

¹ See Sharon Goodman and David Graddol, *Redesigning English: New Texts, New Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996); see also David Crystal, *Language and the Internet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

² See Geoffrey Nunberg, "The Whole World Wired", *Anglistica*, 3.1 (1999), 229-31; originally published in 1996, as "The Whole World Wired. Commentary Broadcast on 'Fresh Air'", *National Public Radio*. See also David Crystal, *The Language Revolution* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), and David Graddol, *English Next: Why Global English May Mean the End of English as a Foreign Language* (London: British Council, 2006).

³ Nunberg, "The Whole World Wired", 230-31.

⁴ See UNESCO, ed., *Language Vitality and Endangerment* (2003), <<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/projects/>>, February 2011; unless otherwise specified all websites were accessed in February 2011.

⁵ Harvey Russell Bernard, "Language Preservation and Publishing", in Nancy H. Hornberger, ed., *Indigenous Literacies in the Americas: Language Planning from the Bottom up* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), 139-156.

One can't wander far in this coastal community that calls itself America's oldest seaside resort town without hearing people speaking a mysterious, rapid-fire language that somehow echoes the West Indies and Africa. The speakers aren't tourists, but members of the Gullah-Geechee culture. There is a rich, uniquely American quilt: so wide it stretches from the saltwater creek that has fed generations here all the way to the White House and the nation's first African-American first lady.

(*USA Today*, 22 April 2011)

Although English is the most widespread language on the Internet, leading many to provocatively predict the advent of a monolingual (English) Net with its apocalyptic threats for linguistic and cultural diversity, the Internet has also proved to be the ideal medium to preserve minority languages.¹ Anyone interested in protecting and supporting an endangered language can use the Web to draw attention to it and to share local information. As several studies conducted in the last two decades have shown, a remarkable number of languages – apart from English – survive and proliferate thanks to and through the Internet.² In Nunberg's words: "[w]hat makes the Net different from most of the communication technologies that preceded it, is how much it does to preserve linguistic distinctions. The telegraph, the telephone, the radio all made the world smaller. Now finally we have a technology that helps to keep the world big and polyglot".³

A series of initiatives have been proposed with an increasing emphasis on the necessity to sustain the linguistic diversity of humanity and to give support to the expression and dissemination of the greatest possible number of languages in meaningful contemporary domains including everyday life, commerce, education, writing, the arts and the media. However, according to a report elaborated for UNESCO by the Expert Group on Endangered Languages – an international group of linguists that was asked to develop a framework for determining language vitality in 2002 and 2003 – even languages with many thousands of speakers are no longer being acquired by children; they estimated that about 90% of all languages may be replaced by dominant languages by the end of the 21st century.⁴ Language heterogeneity then seems to be at great risk considering that about 97% of the world's people speak about 4% of the world's languages and, conversely, about 96% of the world's languages are spoken by about 3% of the world's people.⁵

With slightly fewer than 200 endangered languages and about 250 living languages, the United States provides an interesting case in terms of linguistic heterogeneity, not only because of this great diversity in itself, but also because the country is home to one of the more widespread and influential varieties of English, Standard American English (SAE), to which the development of the Internet has

always been connected. The focus of this essay will be on one of the minority languages that, once in danger of disappearing, is now said to thrive in the 21st century, among the many (more or less vulnerable or endangered) languages of the US that ‘exploit’ the beneficial effects of the Net: Gullah.

Gullah, which evolved along the coastline of the Southern United States (mainly in the Sea Islands, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, with small clusters in New York City and Detroit), is an English based creole language that was not classified as such until recent times.⁶ It represents an emblematic case, one of the most significant hidden pockets, setting it apart from Standard American English because it is often described as unintelligible to SAE speakers.⁷ In the 1970s, representatives of the Summer Institute of Linguistics conducted a survey to determine how many people still spoke the Gullah language and, to their amazement, they found that out of over 100,000 speakers, 10,000 were monolingual, namely they exclusively spoke Gullah (and a survey among Gullah speaking high school students revealed that most of them spoke English only as a second language).⁸ Coming to more recent times, despite the fact that the Summer Institute of Linguistics counted a Gullah population of 250,000 people in 2000, with a number of monolinguals ranging from 7,000 to 10,000,⁹ the section ‘Language Use’ of the US Census Bureau provides discordant detailed data on the topic. The Table dealing with the languages spoken at home and the ability to speak English of the population (5 years and over) for the years 2006-2008 shows that 225,488,799 people speak only English at home, while 55,076,078 people speak a language other than English at home; within this group, there are 352 speakers of Gullah, and among them 18 seem to speak English less than ‘very well’.¹⁰

Assuming that a language exists insofar as there are speakers willing and able to use it – and this willingness and ability of people to use the language are a measure of that language’s vitality and evolution – the essay will attempt a discussion of the current status of Gullah based mainly on metalinguistic data regarding people’s attitudes towards Gullah, and on the vitality of the language in particular as used in modern forms of online communication, especially in websites promoting the Gullah language and culture, blogs, forums and social networks focused on the subject. The Internet can be plausibly considered as an authentic social environment ‘inhabited’ by users/members who are drawn together by shared interests and common goals. They form what can be termed as ‘communities of practice’, namely communities gathering people engaged in a collective process in a shared domain of human endeavour (it could be a tribe learning to survive, a clique of pupils defining their identity at school, and so forth).¹¹ In pursuing their interest, the members of a community adopt specific communicative and linguistic strategies. Further on this point, as Crystal has noted, in informal settings on the Internet (for example in discussion groups), people tend to use distinctive features (like accent or dialect) to mark their own nationality and identity: “on the world stage, if you wish to tell everyone which

⁶ Mufwene classifies Gullah as a creole, assuming that a creole is the output of a restructuring process in which the contact of the different metropolitan varieties brought over by the European colonists with the other languages of speakers of both the immigrant and preceding populations produced a ‘feature pool’. The variety from which the creole inherits most of its vocabulary is called ‘lexifier’, and English is the lexifier of Gullah. See Salikoko S. Mufwene, *The Ecology of Language Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3-7.

⁷ *Sea Island Creole English*, <http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=gul>.

⁸ Joseph A. Opala, “The Gullah Today”, <<http://www.yale.edu/glc/gullah/08.htm>>.

⁹ *Sea Island Creole English*, <http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=gul>.

¹⁰ *Language Use Report*, <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/language/>>. The report was released in April 2010. The reports relating to the same data released in 2007 and 2004 do not even mention Gullah individually.

¹¹ See Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and “Communities of Practice: a Brief Introduction” (2006), <<http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>>.

¹² David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 144-45.

¹³ Braj B. Kachru, “Standards, Codification and Sociolinguistic Realism: the English Language in the Outer Circle”, in Randolph Quirk and Henry G. Widdowson, eds., *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 20.

country you belong to, an immediate and direct way of doing it is to speak in a distinctive way. ... International varieties thus express national identities”¹² – or, in the case of Gullah, a community identity. While a language is moulded by the local people, it becomes able to carry their meaningful experience. It is exactly this function of English as the language of cultural identity for speakers all around the world that encourages the development of local and creole forms.¹³

Forms of communication involving Web technologies, today not surprisingly, seem to play an important role in keeping both language and culture alive. Therefore, while giving an account of the widespread and significant efforts in preserving and celebrating the Gullah language and culture on and through the Web, this essay will first offer an overview of the main reported features of the language, drawing on the extensive work by the most authoritative scholars who have researched on Gullah and on its connections to the historical events from which it originated, namely colonialism and slavery.

The Gullah language – the socio-historical background and its main features

Slovenly and careless of speech, these Gullahs seized upon the peasant English used by some of the early settlers and by the white servants of the wealthier colonists, wrapped their clumsy tongues about it as well as they could, and, enriched with certain expressive African words, it issued through their flat noses and thick lips as so workable a form of speech that it was gradually adopted by the other slaves and became in time the accepted Negro speech of the lower districts of South Carolina and Georgia.

(A.E. Gonzales, *The Black Border: Gullah Stories of the Carolina Coast*, 1922)

Gullah or Geechee is thought to be a creole derived from Elizabethan English and West African languages. Thousands of enslaved Africans, mostly from Angola and Sierra Leone, survived the Middle Passage and reached the coastal South of the US. The name ‘Gullah’ has uncertain origins: it may derive from Angola or from Gola, an ethnic group living on the Sierra Leone-Liberia border area in West Africa where the Mende and Vai territories came together, or from Galo, the Mende word for Vai people. Some scholars have also suggested that the name has Native American origins: the Spanish called the region of South Carolina and Georgia after a Native American tribe, Guale. Geechee is another term that is often used together with Gullah: according to the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th ed.), it is meant to be a disparaging term for a person who speaks a nonstandard local dialect, as in Savannah (Georgia) or Charleston (South Carolina), probably coming from the Ogeechee River (Georgia) along which distinctive forms of Black English were spoken.¹⁴

¹⁴ *Geechee*, <<http://www.wordnik.com/words/Geechee>>.

The language developed in the rice plantations in South Carolina and Georgia (which served as some of the main ports for European slave traders’ ships –

Charleston being the ‘slave capital of the American South’) where 85-90% of African slaves lived and worked in the coastal plantations owned by 5% of the European colonial population. Although the climate of the region was excellent for the cultivation of rice, it proved equally suitable for the spread of tropical diseases (some of them, like yellow fever and malaria, were unintentionally brought by the slaves). While the slaves had some resistance to such diseases, their masters were extremely vulnerable, which determined the low number of white people and a condition of enduring isolation for slaves and (later) Gullahs. Over the centuries, this isolation within the US has been probably vital to the survival of the community, which speaks a language – also known as ‘Slave English’ – that, according to many accounts, has remained unchanged for nearly three centuries.¹⁵

For years, scholars regarded Gullah as broken English or as a dialect of English, but then, in the 1930s, linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner (who was researching African languages) noted a high number of similarities between Gullah and West African languages, regarding the use of nouns, pronouns, verbs and tenses. Despite the many assumptions tracing the peculiarities of Gullah almost entirely to the British dialects of the 17th and 18th centuries and to a form of baby-talk adopted to facilitate oral communication between masters and slaves, Turner revealed the considerable influence of several West African languages upon Gullah, and described it as the living evidence of the survival of African people away from home. His extensive knowledge of West African languages and his scientific and comprehensive analysis of Gullah led him to define it as a creolized form of English – rather than a very ‘bad’ English – featuring striking similarities with African languages especially as regards vocabulary, but also in sounds, syntax, morphology and intonation.¹⁶

After nearly thirty-five years, Turner’s pioneering work was re-examined by linguists such as Rickford, Mufwene and Nichols searching for a better understanding of creole and trying to explain the emergence of creole languages in North America as a result of contact and variation in the sociohistorical ecologies of language evolution.¹⁷ In particular, by applying the concept of ecology (mainly borrowed from biology) in linguistics, Mufwene claims that language evolution is driven primarily by the interplay of local ecological factors that are mostly socio-economic. He thus treats the development of creoles as a consequence of normal interactions in specific ecological conditions of linguistic contacts. The ‘environment’ in which a language finds itself (with factors such as time of arrival, demographic strength of the speakers, economic power, population structure, etc.) affect – if not completely determine – the way it has evolved locally.¹⁸

The significant contributions of Todd, Romaine, Chaudenson, Singler, and Mufwene – among others – have further highlighted the relevance of population movements and contacts in linguistics, emphasizing the sociohistorical environments in which these languages emerged.¹⁹ Language evolution in the colonies is strictly related to their geographic ecologies since these played a pivotal role in favouring the particular economic systems that the colonists would develop. So, for instance,

¹⁵ Robert McCrum, William Cran and Robert MacNeil, *The Story of English* (London and Boston: BBC Books, Faber and Faber, 1992 [1986]), 209-28.

¹⁶ Lorenzo Dow Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), v.

¹⁷ See John R. Rickford, “Ethnicity as a Sociolinguistic Boundary”, *American Speech*, 60 (1985), 99-125, and “Social Contact and Linguistic Diffusion”, *Language*, 62 (1986), 245-90; Salikoko S. Mufwene, “Number Delimitation in Gullah”, *American Speech*, 61 (1986), 33-60, “Restrictive Relativization in Gullah”, *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, 1 (1986), 1-31, and “Why Study Pidgins and Creoles”, *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, 3 (1988), 265-76; and Johanna Nichols, *Linguistic Diversity in Space and Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹⁸ Mufwene, *Ecology*, 75.

¹⁹ See Loreto Todd, *Modern Englishes: Pidgins and Creoles* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984); Suzanne Romaine, *Pidgin and Creole Languages* (London: Longman, 1988); Robert Chaudenson, *Des îles, des hommes, des langues: essais sur la créolisation linguistique et culturelle* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1992); John Victor Singler, “The African Influence upon Afro-American Varieties”, in Salikoko S. Mufwene, ed., *Africanisms in Afro-American Language Varieties* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 235-253; and Salikoko S. Mufwene, *Language Evolution: Contact, Competition and Change* (London: Continuum, 2008).

²⁰ The case of trade colonies is also worth mentioning since most of best-known pidgins developed in the European trade colonies in Africa and the Pacific. Contacts between European traders and their non-European counterparts were occasional mercantile encounters and employed structurally reduced linguistic systems that served basic and limited communicative functions.

²¹ Mufwene, *Ecology*, 89.

²² Turner also lists the corresponding languages spoken in the above-mentioned areas: Wolof, Malinke, Mandinka, Bambara, Fula, Mende, Vai, Twi, Fante, Gã, Ewe, Fon, Yoruba, Bini, Hausa, Ibo, Ibibio, Efik, Kongo, Umbundu, Kimbundu, and a few others. Turner, *Africanisms*, 2.

²³ G.P. Krapp, "The English of the Negro", *American Mercury*, 2 (1924), 191.

²⁴ Ambrose E. Gonzales, *The Black Border: Gullah Stories of the Carolina Coast* (Columbia SC: The State Company, 1922), 18.

²⁵ P.E.H. Hair, "Sierra Leone Items in the Gullah Dialect of American English", *Sierra Leone Language Review*, 4 (1965), 79-84.

²⁶ Salikoko S. Mufwene and Charles Gilman, "How African is Gullah, and Why?", *American Speech*, 62.2 (1987), 120-39; Mufwene, *Africanisms*, 183, and *Ecology*, 45; Patricia Ann Jones-Jackson, *The Status of Gullah: an Investigation of Convergent Processes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1978) (dissertation).

²⁷ Ian F. Hancock, "A Provisional Comparison of the English-based Atlantic

the distinction between exploitation and settlement colonies is useful to determine the kinds of interactions between Europeans and non-Europeans. In exploitation colonies, Europeans were not interested in developing local roots (they merely hoped to make some money and return home for retirement), so they mostly kept their language for themselves, helped in communication by a local elite to whom they taught it. Settlement colonies, instead, were intended as new and permanent homes (replacing Europe), where Europeans were more committed to seeing their language prevail, not only as a lingua franca.²⁰ Focusing on the dynamics of the local ethno-linguistic and ethnographic ecology of language (and the colonial circumstances in which it developed), Mufwene has defined Gullah as a "special rice field phenomenon, which developed in conditions similar to sugar cane plantations, which required large slave labor and produced the most drastic disproportions between Europeans and Africans".²¹

Therefore the massive presence of slaves and their descendants in the United States accounts for the origin and nature of Gullah. During the one hundred years prior to 1808, at least 100,000 slaves were 'imported' from Africa (mostly from areas such as Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Gold Coast, Togo, Dahomey, Nigeria, and Angola) to South Carolina and Georgia, something which continued even after January 1, 1808, when the Slave Trade Act became operative and the African slave trade became illegal.²² Scholars have initially underestimated the extent of the African influence on Gullah and deemed it unnecessary to study any of the languages spoken by slaves in the New World. In fact, according to an old and rather unanimous opinion, "not a single detail of Negro pronunciation or Negro syntax can be proved to have any other than an English origin";²³ furthermore, "[t]he words are, of course, not African, for the African brought over or retained only a few words of his jungle-tongue, and even these few are by no means authenticated as part of the original scant baggage of the Negro slaves".²⁴ On the contrary, according to historian P.E.H. Hair, Sierra Leonean languages seem to have made a major contribution to the development of Gullah, in particular Mende (spoken almost entirely in Sierra Leone) and Vai (found on the borders with Liberia and Guinea).²⁵ Having quantitatively identified such contributions, Hair concluded that South Carolina and Georgia were the only places in the Americas where Sierra Leonean languages had exerted anything like that degree of influence.

There are two main views about the origins of Gullah, that are not necessarily mutually exclusive. According to some scholars, Gullah arose and developed independently on the coastal rice fields of South Carolina and Georgia early in the 18th century, soon after the British colonists and their African slaves settled in Charleston from Barbados.²⁶ Following the other view, Gullah would be the ancestral language that gave rise to modern English-based creoles in West Africa as well as in the Americas (where it possibly influenced Jamaican Creole and Guyana Creole too).²⁷ So it is deemed that some of the slaves who survived the Middle Passage and were brought to South Carolina and Georgia already knew the

Guinea Coast Creole English before they left Africa. All the later creole languages would therefore derive from it, and they would fall into a broad family group that Ian Hancock has called “English-based Atlantic Creoles” – on the basis of their similarities in opposition to Standard English (SE).²⁸ Among the features that Gullah shares with English-based Atlantic Creoles we find: use of preverbal free morpheme rather than verbal inflections for tense and aspect (*bin* for past, *go/ga* [gə] for future, *dub* [də] for progressive and *done* for perfect); partial gender and case distinction in the pronominal systems (*bim* used for all three genders and both as subject and object); use of an invariant relativizer *neb* derived from ‘what’ – or perhaps from ‘where’. However, further positions have recently emerged: Mufwene, for instance, admits that one could also argue that Gullah is structurally between African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Caribbean English creoles since there is no clear structural boundary between Gullah and AAVE – although, interestingly enough, AAVE is closer to white nonstandard varieties of English in North America than Gullah is.²⁹

According to the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), Gullah is somehow related to the Bahamas Creole English and Afro-Seminole Creole (there seems to be 90% of lexical similarity with the latter that is an English-based creole spoken by Black Seminoles – namely descendants of free blacks or runaway slaves – in scattered communities in Oklahoma, Texas and Northern Mexico).³⁰ It is, furthermore, defined as barely mutually intelligible with SE to the extent that, in the 1960s, the US Government also launched a bilingual education project for children who were considered to be at risk of failing to learn the necessary language skills because of their linguistic and cultural diversity.³¹

Gullah has remained undocumented for a long time for a number of reasons, among them the fact that it was not identified as a distinct language until the mid-18th century, until after rice plantations increased in size and number, thus fostering Gullah’s divergence away from SAE. The earliest written source in Gullah is probably William Gilmore Simms’ *The Book of My Lady* (1833), together with a few reports in 18th-century newspapers of some runaway slaves speaking ‘broken’ English.³² Turner’s aforementioned 1949 study based on field research in isolated rural communities was the first scientific report on the language: he interviewed Gullah people, made recordings and detailed notes, and proved that Gullah was strongly influenced by African languages in its vocabulary and grammar (syntax and morphology), as I will briefly discuss below.

Gullah vocabulary primarily derives from English (which is the principal lexifier), but it also features more than four thousand words of African origins and a great number of personal names. Turner discovered that the Gullah territory was the only area of the United States where African naming practices had been maintained: “in some families on the Sea Islands, the names of all the children are African. Many have no English names, though in most cases the African words in use are nicknames”.³³ Sometimes these African nicknames – also known as pet names or basket names – were given in addition to English names for

Creoles”, *African Language Review*, 8 (1969), 7-72, and Hancock, “West Africa and the Atlantic Creoles”, in John Spencer, ed., *The English Language in West Africa* (Longman: London, 1971), 113-22.

²⁸ Hancock, “A Provisional Comparison”, 7-12.

²⁹ Mufwene, *Ecology*, 165; see also Mufwene, “Gullah: Morphology and Syntax”, in Edgar Schneider et al., eds., *A Handbook of Varieties of English: a Multimedia Reference Tool*, vol. 2 (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 358-59.

³⁰ SIL International, <<http://www.sil.org/>> The information is available in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, a resource that is constantly updated and accessible on the Internet at <<http://www.ethnologue.com/>>

³¹ M. Paul Lewis, ed., *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth edition (Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2009). Online version: <<http://www.ethnologue.com/>> and <<http://www.csbsju.edu/education/knowledge-base/kb-iii.htm>>.

³² Mufwene, “Gullah: Morphology and Syntax”, 357.

³³ Turner, *Africanisms*, 40.

official use. Nicknames were used almost exclusively in everyday life, to the point that Gullah people could hardly remember their English names. When choosing them, they adopted the same methods their African ancestors employed to name their children: names describing the child's physical condition and appearance or character and temperament, names describing the manner in which the child was born, describing conditions of weather, names drawn from African mythology and folklore, from the animal world or relating to magic and religious festivals.

As for common words, Turner identified Mende, Vai and Fula words and phrases in Gullah songs and stories, and he also noted that a number of texts in Sierra Leonean languages were preserved by Gullah. His study collected all the African words heard in daily conversations, words that have remained almost unchanged in meaning and pronunciation since the slaves were brought to the US. Some Gullah loanwords from Sierra Leonean languages include: *joso* ('witchcraft') from the Mende word *njoso* ('forest spirit'), *gafa* ('evil spirit') also from the Mende word *ngafa* ('masked devil'), *wanga* ('charm') from the Temne word *an-wanka* ('swear'), *do* ('child') also from the Mende word *ndo* ('child').³⁴

³⁴ Ibid., 40-43.

Concentrating on grammar, especially on syntax, some of the most striking similarities between Gullah and various West African languages are:

(1) the absence of any distinction of voice, namely of passive constructions – while English has two voices, active and passive, Gullah expresses the passive voice in a construction that would indicate active voice in English. So instead of saying *A crow can be eaten* (it is edible), a Gullah speaker would say *A crow kin eat*. Or, instead of *He was beaten*, a Gullah speaker would say *dɛm bit əm*, namely *They beat him*. Many West African languages, such as Ewe, Yoruba, Twi, Fante, Gã, include this feature;

(2) the comparison of adjectives – Gullah sometimes uses the verb *pas* (meaning 'to surpass') to indicate the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives (e.g. *i tɔl pas mi* 'He is taller than me', lit. 'He is tall, surpasses me'), although *mo na* 'more than' is used more frequently for comparatives and *di moris* 'the most' for superlatives. Similarly, in many West African languages such as Ibo, Fante, Ewe, Twi, a verb meaning 'to surpass' is used with the adjective to express the comparative and superlative degrees;

(3) the frequent repetition (reduplication) of words and phrases – which is very common both among Gullahs and West Africans especially in narrative.³⁵

³⁵ Ibid., 202-22.

As for morphology, Turner analyzes similarities in form between the nouns, pronouns, and Gullah verbs and those in West African languages under the categories of (1) number, (2) tense, (3) case, and (4) gender.

(1) Number – in Gullah there is no plural marking on nouns, that is to say that they all have the same form in the singular and the plural (the only possible distinction involves preposing *dɛm* to the invariant noun or the use of a numeral quantifier, e.g. *dɛm bɛi* 'the/those boys', *fɛw dɛg* 'five dogs'); verb forms also remain unchanged throughout the singular and plural, so both forms are uninflected (e.g. *mi go, unɔ go, i go, wi go, unɔ go, dɛm go*). There is a precedent for these practices in many West African languages, among them Ibo, Ewe, Yoruba, Efik, Fante.

(2) Tense – little importance seems to be attached to the actual time when an event takes place (Gullah speakers tend to focus rather on the manner of the action – mood – or on its character – aspect), therefore the form of the verb used to refer to present time

is often the same as that used to refer to the past. There is usually no change in form even when the future is intended. Preverbal morphemes mark both tense and aspect. The preverbal *bin* denotes anteriority, while *ga* or *gvine* express the future; as for aspect, the marker is a free pre-verbal morpheme, namely *dub* [dɒ] followed by a verb stem or by a present participle for the progressive (*bow you dub do?/ bow you dub doin?* for ‘how are you doing?’), and *done* for the perfect combined with the verb stem (*Ub done eat dat one?* for ‘I ate/have eaten that one already’).

(3) Case – the nominative forms of the personal pronoun (e.g. *mi* ‘I’) are the same as the accusative forms (e.g. *mi* ‘me’) and the forms of the possessive (e.g. *mi* ‘my’) – as in Ibo, Gã, Yoruba, and Ewe also. Nouns feature the same form in all cases, they are uninflected.

(4) Gender – a very common method to indicate the gender of a noun is by prefixing to the noun the word *woman* or *man* (e.g. *umə cail* ‘woman child’, that is ‘girl’).³⁶

³⁶ Ibid., 223-31.

The Gullah sound system also features the strong influence of African languages. Several sources concerning Gullah phonology are available. Turner’s phonetic transcriptions published in his *Africanisms* are certainly the best known; some of his original field notes including phonetic transcriptions and phonological comments (archived at the Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago, with duplicates at the Avery Research Center of the College of Charleston) are a notable resource since they comprise eighteen hours of audio recordings with over two hundred individual tracks. Another important set of phonetically transcribed texts dating from the mid to the late 1970s is found in Patricia Jones-Jackson’s work.³⁷ Among the main sound patterns identified are apheresis and nasal velarization. Apheresis is the omission of word-initial stressless syllables and it is a very common process to be observed in many varieties of English – with varying frequency. Turner’s transcriptions of apheresis display the following instances: ‘*nough* for *enough*, ‘*bacco* for *tobacco*, ‘*thout* for *without*, ‘*pen* for *depend*, ‘*zamin* for *examine*, ‘*pose* for *suppose*, and so forth (some apheretic items such as ‘*nough* or ‘*cause* are frequent throughout the varieties of English, others like ‘*bacco* or ‘*pen* are rarer). Nasal velarization is the production of an alveolar nasal as a velar nasal in syllable-final position (a feature that seems to be shared by Gullah, Sierra Leonean Krio and Caribbean English creoles). Some instances from Turner and Jones-Jackson’s works are: *dow*[ŋ] for *down*, *drow*[ŋ] for *drown*, ‘*rou*[ŋ] for *around*.³⁸

³⁷ Jones-Jackson, *The Status of Gullah: an Investigation*, and Jones-Jackson, “When Roots Die: Endangered Traditions on the Sea Islands”, *National Geographic* (December 1987), 132-46.

³⁸ Turner, *Africanisms*, 42, and Jones-Jackson, *The Status of Gullah*, 57-58.

³⁹ UNESCO *Interactive Atlas*, <<http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap>> On the issue of endangered languages see also Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley, *Endangered Languages. Current Issues and Future Prospects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), and Suzanne Romaine and Daniel Nettle, *Vanishing Voices: the Extinction of the World’s Languages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Gullah, language vitality and public policy in the US

The official data provided by the US Census Bureau seem to suggest that the Gullah language is rather endangered, if not on a path toward extinction, with its 352 reported speakers. However, the Gullah/Geechee language is not among the 191 languages identified in UNESCO’s Interactive Atlas of the world’s languages in danger (with varying degrees of vitality ranging from vulnerable, definitely endangered, severely endangered to critically endangered, extinct, or revitalized).³⁹ In order to assess a language’s vitality, the team of experts and linguists working for UNESCO has identified nine factors that are deemed extremely useful for

characterising a language's sociolinguistic situation. They have been schematised in the following diagram.

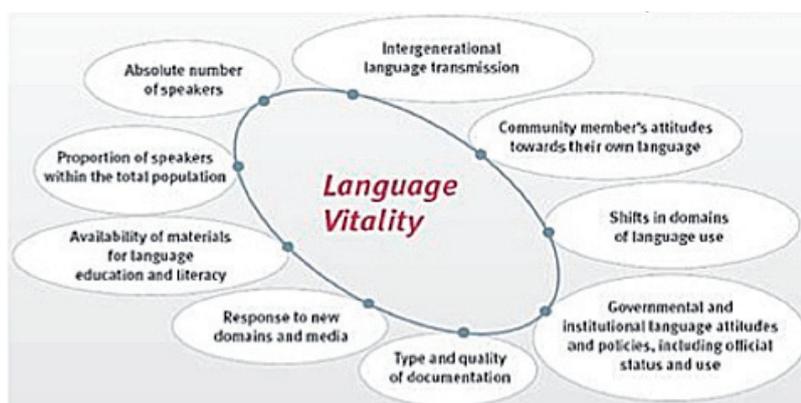


Fig. 1. UNESCO's factors of language vitality and endangerment

These factors are proposed as general guidelines to be applied to the different local contexts. Some of the major ones among them – such as ‘governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies’, ‘availability of materials for language education and literacy’, ‘shifts in domains of language use’, ‘response to new domains and media’, and ‘community members’ attitudes towards their own language’ – are particularly significant in the case of Gullah, and will therefore be employed in this article to investigate the status of the Gullah language today.

As for the first two factors mentioned above, governments and institutions may have explicit policies and/or implicit attitudes toward dominant and non-dominant languages: they can protect non-dominant languages, they can encourage ethnolinguistic groups to maintain and use them or, on the contrary, to abandon them by providing education exclusively in the dominant language. Indeed, it is generally agreed that education in a language is essential for its vitality, literacy being a source of pride. So whether or not the language is employed for educational or literacy purposes appears relevant to evaluate its vitality. Some communities tend to strongly maintain their oral traditions or to develop a variety of written materials, ranging from grammars, dictionaries, texts, children's books, to some kind of practical orthography or no orthography at all.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ UNESCO, *Language Vitality and Endangerment*, 12-15.

In the case of Gullah, despite the body of narratives and studies existing for it, there has been little recognition of it within public policy, which has deeply affected its status in education and literacy programs in the US. Back in the 1950s, after decades of segregated schools, in an attempt at integration that provided public schools for all black children in the state of South Carolina, many Gullah-speaking children were given the opportunity to receive education for the first time. With a slowly-growing public awareness, in 1975, the Charleston County School Board set up a program to instruct teachers in Gullah, although lack of intelligibility between Gullah and English speakers still remained throughout the school system. In fact, instructional material was only in English, which

required some of the (black) teachers who understood the creole to help children in the transition from Gullah to AE.⁴¹ Since such help was unsupported by the educational system, in the case of teachers who were not familiar with the creole, Gullah-speaking children had to resort to the use of other children as interpreters to understand instructions.

Another project funded by the US Department of Labor is also worth mentioning: in 1976, the Sea Island Language Project was launched to teach English as a second language to Gullah-speaking adults in order to enhance their job opportunities. Despite the efforts, the situation continued to be critical in the areas where Gullah was spoken: “The high levels of illiteracy in the region are regularly bemoaned in education circles and an extensive adult education program has been underway in South Carolina since the mid-1960s, but there is little official recognition of the basic language differences which might be the source of widespread reading problems among the black population”.⁴² Students speaking creole languages have often been perceived as having language problems, and then placed in ESL or speech therapy classes. Instead, as Lise Winer has stressed, creole languages are important resources in the classroom, as long as teachers do have some knowledge of their students’ linguistic and cultural background:

[a]ny approach to the teaching of students whose first language is English Creole, recognized or not, must include knowledge about and acceptance of the language and its culture varieties. Without an awareness, on the part of teachers, administrators, and others, of the validity of creoles and an understanding of their relationship with English, the students’ progress will be continually short-circuited.⁴³

Referring back to UNESCO’s factors to assess Gullah’s vitality, we can say that in this case language and literacy acquisition seems to mostly depend on the community, Gullah being neither protected nor adequately supported by the education system and the government. Despite the existence of a Gullah orthography and some little written instructional material (as the previously-mentioned studies demonstrate), the language does not seem to be, or to have been, part of the school curriculum in the US.

Although many South Carolinians today might claim that Gullah has disappeared, a relatively recent and comprehensive survey on language variation in the US, based on field research, can offer central insights on the viability of the language: “[Gullah] can still be heard in rural areas where Gullah-speaking communities have had a long history. ... Today it is most often heard among the very old and the very young because it is learned as a language of the home”.⁴⁴ While some people never leave their community of birth, thus continuing to speak creole and, in addition, one or more varieties of English if they have public jobs, those who move to urban centres leave their young children with older members of the community “for long periods of time as a solution to child-care problems”.⁴⁵ This seems to be pivotal with regard to language transmission and vitality. Indeed, ‘intergenerational language transmission’ is one of the assessment factors of

⁴¹ Patricia Nichols, “Creoles of the USA”, in Charles A. Ferguson and Shirley Brice Heath, eds., *Language in the USA* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 76.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Lise Winer, “Teaching Speakers of Caribbean English Creoles in North-American Classrooms”, in Arthur Wayne Glowka and Donald M. Lance, eds., *Language Variation in North-American English: Research and Teaching* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1993), 195.

⁴⁴ Edward Finegan and John R. Rickford, eds., *Language in the USA. Themes for the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 139.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Despite the fact that several Gullahs migrated to New York at the beginning of the 20th century (especially to Harlem, Brooklyn and Queens), parents typically send their children back to the rural communities of South Carolina and Georgia during the summer holidays to keep a contact with Gullah traditions thanks to grandparents, uncles and aunts who have remained in the regions. See “Gullah”, <<http://blackhistory.com/content/63995/gullah>>.

language vitality identified by UNESCO: the most commonly used factor in evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next.⁴⁶ There are different degrees of endangerment concerning intergenerational transmission, ranging from safe (when the language is spoken by all generations), stable yet threatened (when the language is spoken in most contexts by all generations with uninterrupted intergenerational transmission), unsafe (when most but not all children and families speak the language as their first language, but it may be restricted to specific social domains like the home), to definitely endangered (the language is no longer being learned as a mother tongue by children; parents can still speak it to their children, but they do not usually respond in it), severely endangered (when the language is spoken only by grandparents and older generations), critically endangered (if older people only remember part of the language but do not use it since there may not be anyone to speak with), and extinct (there is nobody who can speak or remember the language).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Joshua Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1991).

⁴⁷ UNESCO, *Language Vitality and Endangerment*, 7-8.

⁴⁸ Ibid. As is well known, creoles change over time, usually moving closer to the dominant language: this is decreolization. However, they can also move in the opposite direction, or recreolize.

⁴⁹ Ronald Wardhaugh, *Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Chichester and Oxford: Blackwell, 2011 [2010]).

⁵⁰ Emory Campbell, *Gullah Cultural Legacies: a Synopsis of Gullah Traditions, Customary Beliefs, Art Forms and Speech in Hilton Head Island and Vicinal Sea Islands in South Carolina and Georgia* (Hilton Head Island, US: BookSurge Publishing, 2008).

⁵¹ *Gullah/Geechee*, <<http://www.nps.gov/guge/index.htm>>

⁵² Africa News, <<http://allafrica.com/stories/201106060276.html>> (published on 6 June 2011)

With a specific focus on Gullah, the previously-mentioned survey on language variation also highlights that an interesting linguistic process seems to occur. It seems that many speakers learn and use the language as children, but once they move away from their territories for education and jobs, they start using African American English or Standard American English, then, surprisingly, when they return to their communities in retirement, they ‘re-creolize’ their speech – which consequently makes it quite difficult to estimate the number of Gullah speakers with a high degree of accuracy.⁴⁸ Quite often re-creolization can be viewed as a means to (more or less deliberately) mark and assert a specific ethnic and cultural identity, which is something that people returning to live in their territories of origin might feel free to do, when no longer obliged to use the dominant language for socialization or professional purposes.⁴⁹

Gullah is still, however, felt to be the language of a community whose members are known for preserving more of their cultural and linguistic heritage than any other African American community in the United States.⁵⁰ Their strength and cohesiveness in maintaining their common legacy has led to the designation of the so-called Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (announced in 2006) to preserve “America’s most unique culture, a tradition first shaped by captive Africans brought to the southern United States from West Africa and continued in later generations by their descendants”.⁵¹

No later than June 2011, a team of educators and educational consultants from the State of South Carolina launched a project to study the strong connections between the United States, particularly South Carolina and Georgia, and the Sierra Leonean cultural and linguistic heritage. According to the project director, “[t]he project is critical not only to education in South Carolina but to schooling across the US because of direct links between Sierra Leone and the Gullah culture and language of South Carolina as well as the larger African American community across the United States”.⁵² Their aim was to give future generations a different

awareness of the African American identity and legacy. Overall, such initiatives, programs and projects are meant to encourage African Americans to research their linguistic and cultural roots, highlighting the importance of continuing the studies on Gullah.

Gullah and its current status on the Internet: the online Bible

Perhaps the greatest material linguistic achievement in the Gullah language to date is represented by the completion of the translation of the New Testament (*De Nyew Testament*), whose launch was one of the most noted events of the 2005 Heritage Days celebrated on St Helena Island. A number of different people and organizations were involved in the project that dates back to 1979; then, after 26 years of translating, editing, and checking, the text was finally released to the public. The Gullah translation of the New Testament is also provided online in the attempt to make it widely accessible through the web and easily searchable in its digital format by navigating around the Bible on the website. The reader can click on a chapter number and scroll to any verse. Below is a sample from John 13: 34-35:⁵³

⁵³ *The Gullah Nyew Testament*, <www.gullahbible.com>, January 2011.

<p><i>Gullah Nyew Testament</i></p> <p><i>An now A da gii oona a nyew chaage. Oona fa lob one noda. Same fashion A done lob oona, same fashion oona fa lob one noda. Ef oona da lob one noda, ebrybody gwine know dat oona me ciple dem.</i></p>	<p>New International Version 2010 in SE</p> <p>A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Table 1. Extract from the Gullah Bible

Apart from the religious aims of the project, the publication of the Gullah version of the Bible online was also a means to focus on the language and on its importance throughout the community. In 2011, a five-CD set of readings from the Gullah Bible, “Healin fa de Soul” (“Healing for the Soul”), was also released to let everyone hear the words spoken in creole. It is the largest and most accessible collection of Gullah recordings made available to the public to date, and constitutes a better opportunity to study the language (allowing younger generations to follow the passages in print as they hear the audio) as well as to make it known to non-Gullah speakers. As some newspapers reported – *The Gullah Sentinel* among them – since the publication of the Gullah Bible and its accompanying CDs, there has been tremendous interest from non-Gullah speakers trying to read the language, but not knowing if they were doing it correctly. “[E]veryone can now hear those words in the creole language spoken by slaves and their descendants along the Sea Islands of the nation’s Southeast coast. People can buy [the CDs] and personally own them, [...] they have a much better opportunity to study the language” said

⁵⁴ Campbell is an activist who has worked incessantly to preserve the traditional Gullah communities of the Sea Islands. He is a former director of the Penn Centre, that was founded in 1862 as one of the nation's first freedmen's schools after the Civil War. During the 1960s, the Centre was chosen by Martin Luther King Jr and the members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference as a training site and for strategic planning.

⁵⁵ Bruce Smith, "Gullah-language Bible Now on Audio CDs", <<http://news.yahoo.com/gullah-language-bible-now-audio-cds-163456799.html>> published Nov. 25, 2011.

⁵⁶ UNESCO, *Language Vitality and Endangerment*, 9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁸ Crystal, *Language and the Internet*, 1-2.

Emory Campbell⁵⁴ as reported in the article "Gullah-language Bible now on audio CDs" published on *Yahoo! News*.⁵⁵ He further added that "the recordings show an important step in the acceptance of Gullah, which native speakers tried to abandon for decades because they were taught to be ashamed of their heritage".

In several cultural and ethnic contexts, religion appears as a significant domain where the use of a language may be encouraged and strengthened, the translation and completion of the Gullah Bible constituting an important achievement for the language that potentially gains a more 'recognized' status. Indeed, one of the other factors identified by UNESCO's team of experts in the study of language vitality regards the 'shifts in domains of language use': "where, with whom, and the range of topics for which a language is used directly affects whether or not it will be transmitted to the next generation".⁵⁶ It can be actively used in all discourse domains for all purposes – thus being the language of interaction, identity, creativity and entertainment – or it can be used in limited or highly limited domains, such as festivals and ceremonial occasions where members of the community meet, sometimes using the language for communicative exchange, sometimes understanding the language but not being able to speak it.

Apart from the religious domain to which the Gullah language has already shifted in its written form, another domain (involved in such a shift), or, rather, another medium, and its range of domains, remains emblematic with regard to linguistic vitality: the Web. As a matter of fact, 'response to new domains and media' can be said to be a major factor, since "[n]ew areas for language use may emerge as community living conditions change. While some language communities do succeed in expanding their own language into new domains, most do not".⁵⁷ New media, including the Internet and broadcast media, encourage communities to meet the challenges of modernity, which will be the specific focus of the following part of the article.

Gullah and its current status on the Internet: learning the language

The emergence of new communication technologies, like the Internet, as mentioned at the outset, has often been accompanied by fears concerning the risks that an English-dominated Web could spell the end of other tongues. Minority languages and varieties were deemed in danger of ending up as "Internet casualties"⁵⁸ once confronted with the uniformity imposed by globalization. However, despite initial fears of the Internet being a homogenous linguistic medium, the Web has proved to be surprisingly heterogenous in that it has gathered a large number of languages and varieties reflecting the many backgrounds, needs, purposes and attitudes of its users. In this respect, the different types of presence of Gullah online represent an interesting (and ambivalent) case.

The Internet also seems to host several experiments that deal with Gullah with overtly didactic purposes. The website *Gullah Net*, for instance, is presented as a tool for the teaching of the language. As stated in its overview, it was designed

to introduce Gullah culture and language on the Web to “children” – although people of all ages can actually enjoy the site – and to reveal the complex links existing between language, culture and history.⁵⁹

The website features a series of sections dealing with Gullah history, people and traditions, as well as with tales, music, cooking and events. By surfing the site, potential learners can be involved in a series of activities ranging from reading about different subjects to listening to folktales narrated both in English and Gullah by Aunt Pearl Sue (a storyteller created by Anita Singleton-Prather, a native of the Sea Islands, who tries to carry on the African tradition of storytelling on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean). They can listen to some Gullah songs after being taken on a musical journey through the blues, the meaning of African drums and songs used to communicate on plantations, and they can even write their own songs by interacting with the website. Moreover, in order to promote literacy and communication skills, there is also a computer-based activity called *The Creative Literacy Project* that is available online to public and private school teachers and educators.

The section ‘Gullah in the classroom’ offers some classroom activities and lesson plans for different curricula and levels, and it suggests a number of trips to museums, institutions and festivals to improve knowledge of Gullah culture and traditions. Learners are provided with a glossary, a bibliography and a list of resources subdivided into categories: children’s books (music), children’s books (folktales), CDs, websites, videos, with links to further materials. Some of the most interesting video resources on Gullah – among them ‘Gullah Translations’ (1994, 26:40 min.), ‘From Barbados to Carolina: the Colony of a Colony’ (1999, 60 min.) – are available at ETV (Educational Television), which is one of the nation’s leading educational broadcasting systems and a very active centre for the many projects it launches: in 1958 South Carolina began an experiment in teaching by television at a local high school, which was a great success, and in 1960 the General Assembly created the South Carolina Educational Television Commission that, since then, has provided programs for public television and radio.

ETV’s educational web portal, the website *Knowitall*, features moreover a series of ‘Gullah’ links and websites for students (from elementary to high school), parents and teachers, with a collection of resources designed for classroom use. Users can easily access interactive sites, activities, simulations, virtual field trips, and streaming videos. Following different grade levels, students have the chance to explore a wide range of subjects connected to the history and culture of the geographical area where Gullah is spoken.⁶⁰

The website *Gullah Tours* is also worthy of note as far as language is concerned. Besides proposing tours with a guide to explore the Gullah geographical area, in particular the Charleston area, and to visit historical sites such as the Old Slave Mart (the market where slaves were auctioned after being inspected), the urban slave quarters, the Underground Railroad (where run-away slaves hid until they

⁵⁹ *Gullah Net Overview*, <<http://www.knowitall.org/gullahnet/main/overview.html>>, January 2011. Since the website is written in Standard English, it does not presumably address Gullah children or adults exclusively but anyone who is interested in the Gullah language.

⁶⁰ <<http://www.knowitall.org/index.cfm>>

⁶¹ <<http://gullahtours.com/>>; Alfonso Brown, who translated the texts published on the website, is a licensed tour guide and a lecturer on the Gullah language and Black History of Charleston.

reached the North), the site also shows some sections that specifically deal with language.⁶¹

The Lord's Prayer
Translated to Gullah by Alphonso Brown

[Listen to the Lord's Prayer in Gullah](#)

Our Fadduh awt'n Hebb'n, all-duh-weh be dy holy 'n uh rightschus name. Dy kingdom com.' Oh lawd leh yo' holy 'n rightschus woud be done, on dis ert' as-'e tis dun een yo' grayt Hebb'n. 'N ghee we oh Lawd dis day our day-ly bread. 'N f'gib we oh Lawd our trus-passes, as we also f'gib doohs who com' sin 'n trusspass uhghens us. 'N need-us-snot oh konkuhrin' King een tuh no moh ting like uh sin 'n eeb'l. Fuh dyne oh dyne is duh kingdom, 'n duh kingdom prommus fuh be we ebbuh las'n glory. Amen.

The Twenty Third Psalm
Translated to Gullah by Alphonso Brown

[Listen to the 23rd Psalm in Gullah](#)

De Lawd, 'E duh my sheppud. Uh een gwoi' want. 'E meck me fuh lay down een dem green passuh, 'E Khah me deh side dah stagnant wahtuh. 'E sto' muh soul; 'E lead me een de pat' ob right-juss-niss fuh 'E name sake. Aae doh Ie wark shru' de whalley ob dem grayb yaad Ie een gwoi' skayed uh dem dead people, fuh Ie know de Lawd, 'E duh deh wid me; 'E stick wha' 'E khah een 'E han' 'n de staff een de udduh han' gwoi' cumpit me' 'E fix up uh table fuh me fuh grease muh mout' 'n muh enemies een gwoi' git none. 'E 'noint muh head wid uhl. Muh cup obbuh flo.' Sho' nuff all 'E goodnes; 'n 'E muhcy gwoi' be wid me all de day ob muh life 'n Ie gwoi' lib deh een de house ob de Lawd fuh ebbuh 'n ebbuh. Amen

Fig. 2. Gullah translations of a prayer and a psalm from the section 'Hear and Read Gullah' of the website *Gullah Tours*

Net-users interested in the connections between the Gullah heritage and American history can also view a Gullah translation of Martin Luther King's speech "I have a dream" (1963), seen as suggesting Gullah culture and traditions as a symbol of cultural pride for all African Americans across the US.

"I Have A Dream," by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Translated to Gullah by Alphonso Brown

Ie say tuh unnuh today, mye frien', eeb'n dough we duh face dees haad time yuh ob today 'n temorrhuh, Ie still hab uh dream. 'E uh dream wuh staat way down een America dream.

Ie hab disshuh dream dat one day dis America gwi' come up 'n be tru' mout' ob de law wah call de Creed: "We hol' dees trut' fuh be sef-ebbuhdent, dat all man duh mek equal."

Ie hab uh dream dat one day on de red hill ob Georguh dat chill'lun ob one tym slayb 'n chill'lun ob one tym slayb ownuh gwi be able tuh gedduh down at de welcom' table ob brudduhhood.

Ie hab uh dream dat one day eeb'n de state uh Mississippi, a place haad-hadded wid de fire ob wrong, haad-hadded wid de fire ob push'n we down, gwi' be mek obbuh like uh hebb'n ob freedom 'n jussis.

Ie hab uh dream dat my fo' leetle chill'n gwi one uh dees day lib een America weh deh een gwi' be judge by de culluh ob deh skin but by dey weh dey khaah 'e sef. Ie hab uh dream today!

Ie hab uh dream dat one uh dees ol' day, way down een Allybameh...yeh, right down een Allybameh, dat leet'l black by's 'n leet'l black gals gwi' be able fuh j'n up han' wid leet'l white by's 'n gals 'n wark tegettuh like sistuh 'n brudduh. Ie hab uh dream!

Fig. 3. Gullah translation of Martin Luther King's speech "I have a dream"

By employing a variety of semiotic resources combining verbal and visual meanings, the World Wide Web provides extremely eclectic and stimulating ways to learn languages in general, and Gullah is no exception. Indeed, a few minutes' Web browsing will bring to light large quantities of multimodal and hypertexted pages that can be read as non-linear texts, namely without a fixed sequence but rather in a manner that is dictated by the reader's interests, clicking on relevant

'hot spots' while following the different paths allowed by the website. At the same time, the users' experience of the Gullah world can be said to be constructed by the very websites they surf, with their detailed and inviting descriptions of places, events, cultural and linguistic phenomena. The creole is employed as a symbolic code to represent the reality they are trying to narrate and promote, while eliciting the users' participation and engagement in a cultural and didactic 'exchange'. With interactivity becoming a key term in the design and structure of websites to achieve information processing and communication, the Web appears as a virtual classroom where language learners can share their experiences with other learners all over the world, concentrating on individual and collaborative work. They can be put in contact with up-to-date information about a language in the form of online dictionaries, usage guides, articles, quizzes, exercises, self-assessment tasks and other language learning activities and resources.

While attempting at improving the knowledge of Gullah to both Gullahs and non-Gullahs, such websites invariably stress the importance of origins, implicitly trying to restore some dignity to traditions and legacies that had long been covered with shame, to convey the awareness of and pride in being African American by uncovering a common heritage that is significant not only to the African American community but to the United States as a whole nation. The fact that Gullah culture and traditions have reached all the way to the White House – the first African American First Lady, Michelle Obama, being of Gullah origins – has certainly contributed to its re-discovery and appreciation.⁶²

Gullah and its current status on the Internet: blogs, forums and social networks

The Web offers a home to all languages and cultures as long as their communities have access to a functioning computer technology.⁶³ According to Crystal, this is the most notable change since it began; despite being initially a totally English medium, the Internet's globalisation has resulted in a steady growth of the presence of other languages.

Due to such a linguistic richness, the Web also hosts an unprecedented array of opportunities for linguistic and metalinguistic analysis. In Crystal's words: "whatever complaints there may have been in the past, over the lack of availability of 'authentic materials', there must now be a general satisfaction that so much genuine written data is readily available".⁶⁴

Therefore, an investigation of the "authentic materials" available online has been attempted here, in search of "genuine" data allowing a more accurate picture of the current status of the Gullah language, its vitality and actual use as far as this is reflected or realized on the Web. An investigation of its presence on the Internet has been first carried out in blogs and forums since they have become an important interaction place in cyberspace for self-expression (where users/members who are drawn together by shared interests, common goals and identities, are thought

⁶² <<http://www.america.gov/st/peopleplace-english/2010/February/20100217163730GLnesnoM0.1222498.html>> See also <<http://www.gtowntimes.com/story/quilt-michelle-obama-s-family2008-12-26t07-10-00>> that features an exhibition called "Quilts for Obama": following the theme 'From a Gullah Slave Cabin to the White House', it displays a quilt with ten squares of scenes from Michelle Obama's family history.

⁶³ Crystal, *Language and the Internet*, 216.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁶⁵ See Lesley Milroy, *Language and Social Networks* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 14, and Mikaela Cordisco, “‘Blogspeak’: ‘Blogal’ English in the ‘Global’ Village”, *Anglistica A.I.O.N.*, 10.1-2 (2006), 61.

⁶⁶ Cordisco, “‘Blogspeak’”, 69-75.

⁶⁷ See Crystal, *Language and the Internet*, and Rebecca Blood, *The Weblog Handbook* (Cambridge: Perseus Publishing, 2002).

⁶⁸ <<http://whotalking.com/>>
The research was carried out by searching for the discussion groups and web pages relating to the keywords ‘Gullah/Geechee’, and data publication dates ranged from a few hours to four years before the search.

to exploit all the linguistic resources at their disposal, possibly including – in our case – their knowledge of Gullah). Blogs and forums are some of the most commonly used electronic media today; they often form tight social networks consisting of varying degrees of community to which people consciously feel they belong.⁶⁵ Linguistically, the cohesiveness and the communicative strategies and dynamics of the community appear to be an interesting field for investigation not only because the traditional distinction between written and spoken language is blurred⁶⁶ (indeed, the blending of speech and writing probably helps when focusing on a creole language that is mainly characterized by the oral dimension), but also because they are a socially interactive and conversational genre, featuring reciprocal comments and responses of a dialogic nature that are regularly updated with entries and pictures.⁶⁷ Moreover, the archiving function of blogs and forums allows access to what could be defined an online database of natural language.

In order to manage the huge number of potential sources available on the Net, the search was conducted firstly by employing the search engine *Whotalking* (through which one can check out real time results of who is talking on social media sites like blogs, forums, *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Yahoo answers*, by typing the topic in any language),⁶⁸ and secondly by directly surfing the emerging most relevant websites concerning the Gullah community.

The first point to stress is that most of the results found from blogs and forums were, however, *about* Gullah but written *in* English. On the level of contents, the texts retrieved partly commemorate people having largely contributed to the cultural life of the community, they partly advertise festivals, performances, conferences, and newly-opened museums with collections and exhibitions on the culture of slave descendants, they sometimes deal with heritage tourism promoting the exploration of the Sea Islands and they express their joy and appreciation for the online publication of the Bible ‘in the beautiful and musical Gullah language’. The following are typical examples selected among the many available. Some of them specifically tackle the question of language, whether it be African-American Vernacular English or Gullah, and its recognition.

Re: Serena Fans "Talk About Any Damned Thing" Thread - #13 - I Do Everything Better
Quote: Originally Posted by Novichok What's this for? "I kinda wish AAVE (Ebonics) would've turned into a creole language instead of another dialect of English. I was hoping you were loud and not timid. And that would have been awesome, if AAVE was like **Gullah-Geechee**? Then it would be recognized as a legit language and we could talk shit about people in plain view without them knowing it.
22 days ago - Via www.tennisforum.com - Powered by BoardReader.com - [View](#) -

What do you know about Gullah? | John F. Blair, Publisher
What language do the **Gullah** still speak today? The **Gullah** language is a Creole blend of Elizabethan English and native tongues with its own grammar and vocabulary that originated on the coast of Africa and came across ...
4 months ago - By <http://blairpub.wordpress.com/> - [View](#) -

Fig. 4. Screenshots featuring samples of texts retrieved in forums and blogs with the words ‘Gullah’/‘Geechee’, Whotalking.com

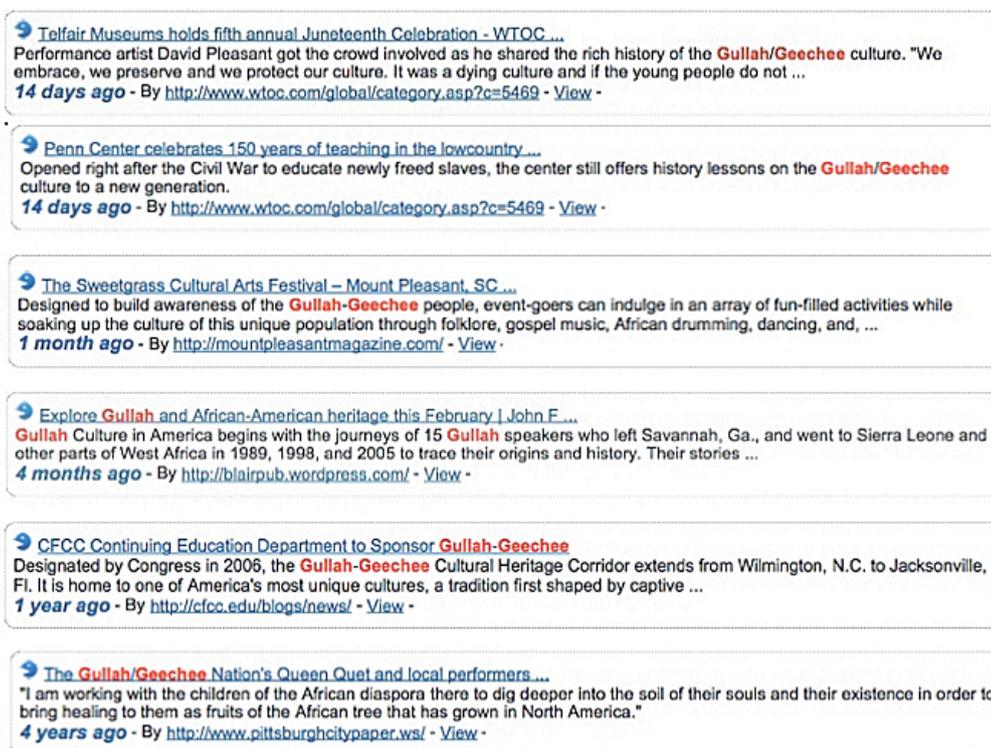


Fig. 5. Screenshots featuring samples of texts retrieved in forums and blogs with the words 'Gullah'/'Geechee', Whotalking.com

Some of them emphasize the rich historical and cultural heritage of the Gullah/Geechee people, highlighting the importance that young generations embrace and protect it, while being as involved as possible in lessons, exhibitions and events that are meant to build or increase their awareness and to heal the existence of “the African tree that has grown in North America” (to quote the words displayed in the last message reported below).

While the messages previously reported only represent a selection (on the basis of their relevance) of the many dozens of messages published online in the last four years on blogs and forums, the only messages found that are even partially written in Gullah are blogged on the Gullah/Geechee Nation blog – apparently the ‘official’ blog of the community – that mainly presents the various activities and celebrations taking place both within the United States and all over the world, keeping the community updated on the relevant initiatives and achievements of Queen Quet (the selected and elected head-of-state and spokesperson of the Gullah/Geechee Nation).⁶⁹ The following are some of these rarer actual uses of the Gullah language, where it appears to be self-consciously employed with purposes that are linked to its promotion both on the Gullah/Geechee Nation blog and on the Gullah/Geechee Riddim Radio blog.

⁶⁹ *Gullah/Geechee Nation Blog* <<http://gullahgeeechenation.wordpress.com/>>. The Gullah/Geechee Nation also has another blog, <<http://www.myspace.com/gullahgeeechenation/blog>>, featuring a lower number of followers, but still regularly updated. Queen Quet – whose real name is Marquette L. Goodwine – is a native of St. Helena Island (South Carolina), she’s author, performance artist and founder of the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition. She also runs her own website <<http://www.queenquet.com/>>.



Fig. 6. Screenshots from the *Gullah/Geechee Nation Blog* and the *Gullah/Geechee Riddim Radio Blog*

Queen Quet, indeed, appears as a pivotal figure in keeping the Gullah culture and language alive. In 1999 she spoke at the United Nations' 55th Session of the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva on behalf of the Gullah people, as its representative: she told the delegates the story of how her ancestors were kidnapped from West Africa and forced to work in another continent and she did it using her language, Gullah, in an international arena. "They were stunned and captured when [she] started speaking in Gullah" since the electronic devices they were using to translate languages, would not work for Gullah.⁷⁰ Then, in 2008, she was also invited to participate in the United Nations Forum on Minority Rights.

From a linguistic point of view, what emerges from the online data concerning her incessant work for her people, both in the form of the messages she posts on the Internet and in the form of the videos uploaded on *YouTube*,⁷¹ Queen Quet seems to make great use of code-mixing: she mixes Gullah and English within the same utterance, speech, or written text, which is central in relation to language use and the individual, the social and cultural values attached to it, the communicative strategies, language attitudes and functions within particular contexts. Despite being located within the US, the community (here represented by Queen Quet) tries to signal its parallel recognition of roots that are located outside the US, in West Africa, by using a language that is not Standard American English. Whereas, through code-mixing, it is usually the case that "English has been used to *neutralize* identities one is reluctant to express by the use of native languages or dialects",⁷² the use of Gullah in an utterance is a linguistic strategy that works against this neutralization: instead of 'unloading' the linguistic code from its cultural and emotional connotations (English has been long – and mistakenly – regarded as providing a code with no cultural overtones, as able to neutralize discourses in terms of identity),⁷³ an extremely 'loaded' code, such as Gullah, is intentionally chosen to foreground a specific cultural identity. The deliberate choice to mix two codes, English and Gullah, therefore, entails the aim to explicitly claim or mark one's belonging to the community. Speaking Gullah on public occasions, in national and international contexts, is a means to highlight a strong binding force among Gullah people, and to express group solidarity and cohesion. The choice of linguistic code – which is often connected to the emotions, values and attitudes that are to be implicitly or explicitly conveyed –

⁷⁰ *UN Session Hears Gullah Language* <<http://www.islandpacket.com/man/gullah/un.html>>.

⁷¹ Further references to videos on *YouTube* will be given later on in the article.

⁷² Braj B. Kachru, *The Alchemy of English. The Spread, Functions and Models of Non-Native Englishes* (Oxford, New York: Pergamon Press, 1986), 9.

⁷³ Kachru, *Alchemy of English*, 9-10.

bears significance not only for the individual but also, and more importantly, for the society or the community which the individual (in this case, Queen Quet)

is addressing. Her code-mixing behaviour thus appears as a highly symbolic act showing the role that language choice plays in maintaining certain kinds of bonds and boundaries within society.

The Gullah/Geechee Nation blog also features a Fan Page providing the link to its Facebook page hosting some discussion where members actively share their ideas, support actions and proposals, advertise festivals, official meetings and informal parties, suggest viewing interesting videos on *YouTube*, publish pictures of their ancestors, and so forth. In some of the most recent posts (displayed below) people largely share their experience in tracing their roots and family origins, proud of their heritage; however, these posts also show how little Gullah itself is actually used.

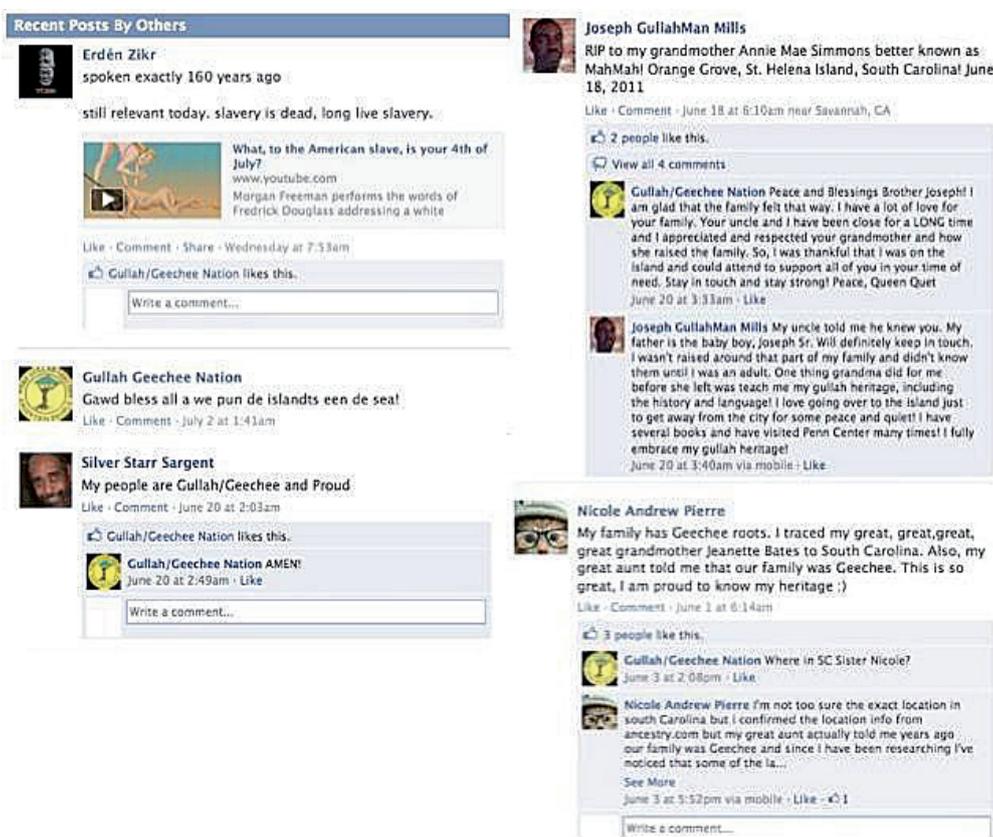


Fig. 7. Screenshots from Facebook pages on Gullah language and culture, Facebook.com

There is a widespread and remarkable insistence on discourses emphasizing Gullah cultural and linguistic legacies, as the most recurring words in the online texts – “African American(s)”, “heritage”, “preservation”, “community” – show. The semantic network that these words create seems to bear an emotional weight that aims at giving a feeling of pride in being Gullah or of Gullah origins,

rediscovering the long forgotten trails of the Africans' forced migration to the so-called 'New World'. Rather than giving information, such texts almost invariably express and communicate the addressers' emotions and attitudes about the language and their Gullah roots. In this view, it might be helpful to refer again to UNESCO's factors, in particular to the one concerning 'community members' attitudes towards their own language' which, according to the team of experts, would be an essential element to evaluate language vitality. Indeed, members of a community are not usually neutral towards their own language: they may see it as essential to their community and identity and promote it, or they may be ashamed of it and, consequently, not promote it. More specifically,

[w]hen members' attitudes towards their language are very positive, the language may be seen as a key symbol of group identity. ... [M]embers of the community may see their language as a cultural core value, vital to their community and ethnic identity. If [they] view their language as a hindrance to economic mobility and integration into mainstream society, they may develop negative attitudes towards their language.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ UNESCO, *Language Vitality and Endangerment*, 14.

In this case, despite the rarity of the online messages actually written *in* Gullah (the fact that many Gullah speakers may be unfamiliar with Gullah spelling conventions possibly hindering the written use of the language), members of the community and Net-users seem to have very positive attitudes towards the language and culture. Even though they learn and use Standard American English or other varieties of English when they move out of the territories of birth for education and jobs, they still think of their Gullah heritage and language as a central part of their identity (therefore contributing to maintaining it alive).

Additional texts retrieved by *Whotalking* in both social networks *Facebook* and *Twitter*, show several attempts at encouraging people/users/members to join the interests of the community, giving a chance to be increasingly involved in the community's life and its achievements. The examples below seem to be a call to action by promoting cooperation and interaction, while they directly engage the addressees in the reading of the latest edition of the Gullah/Geechee Nation's ezine (which is, however, written in English), while they exhort their readers to follow the Gullah/Geechee Nation website and blog on *Facebook* and *Twitter*, or to watch TV Nyashun Nyews (a program broadcast by GGTV, Gullah Geechee TV, that is the official TV station of the Gullah/Geechee Nation).

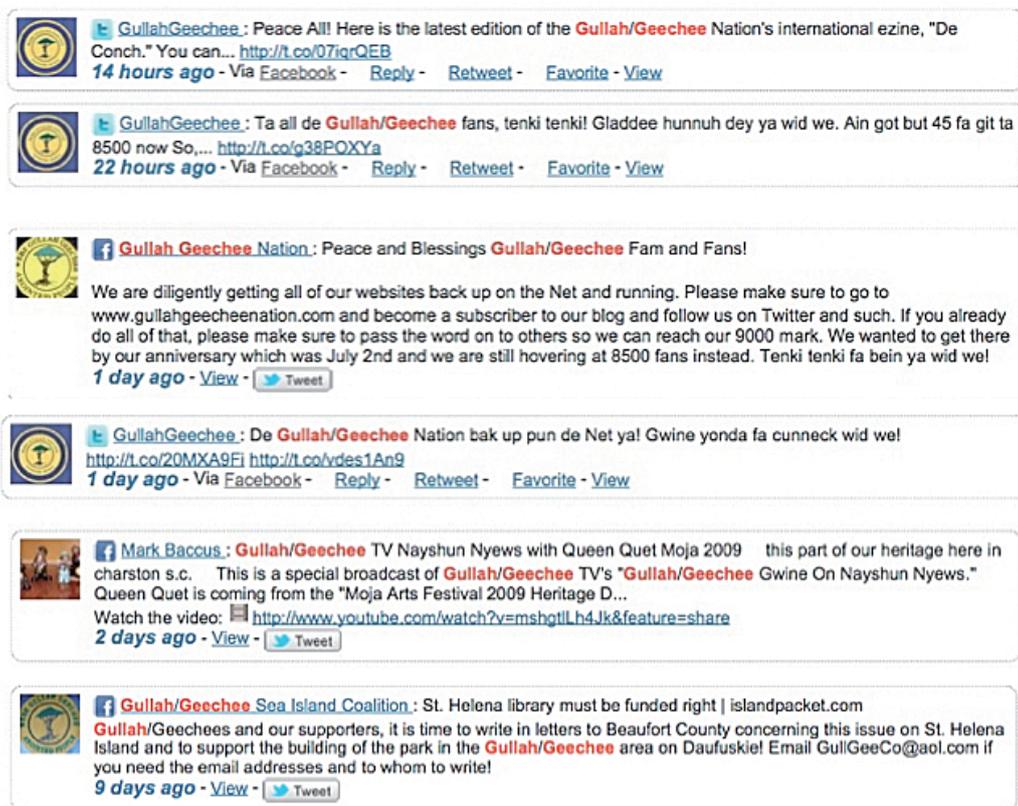


Fig. 8. Screenshots from Facebook and Twitter pages, Whotalking.com

Once again, the great majority of these messages (sometimes stretches of short online conversations, others isolated posts and tweets) is written in English, with just a few of them in Gullah.

Gullah and its current status on the Internet: YouTube and the web-radios

Apart from the written evidence of the numerous attempts at keeping the Gullah language and culture alive by giving it a higher visibility through the Web there is also some oral evidence that seems worthy of note since the Gullah language has been mainly characterized by orality – creole languages being often tied to the oral tradition.⁷⁵ Searching for the terms ‘Gullah/Geechee’ through the search engine *Whotalking* as far as *YouTube* is concerned, a relevant number of results was retrieved. Most of them were again in English, generally dealing with the preservation and protection of the Gullah culture, so the choice of the language is probably linked to the fact that they aim at reaching a wide audience of people, to spread the information regarding Gullah as much as possible. This is the case of the videos *Gullah Doc Trailer*,⁷⁶ *Gullah/Geechee People*,⁷⁷ and many others.⁷⁶ However, some videos do give a hint at what the Gullah language might be today (or might have been) and at whether or not it is used self-consciously. The videos *Gullah Culture Presentation*⁷⁸ and *Gullah 101*,⁷⁹ for instance, are both recorded on Boone Hall Plantation (in Charleston, South

⁷⁵ Raymond Hickey, ed., *Legacies of Colonial English. Studies in Transported Dialects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁷⁶ *Gullah Doc Trailer* <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCYBf-1yHmI>>.

⁷⁷ *Gullah/Geechee People* <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lBzkFjdJrQ>>.

⁷⁸ *Gullah Culture Presentation* <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDlB8SGQd3s>>.

⁷⁹ *Gullah 101* <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGcWNI6TyXg>>.

Carolina), one of America's oldest working and living plantations, where guided tours are organized to let visitors experience what plantation life was like: they both feature live presentations with 'performers' seemingly speaking in Gullah, to the extent that some of the comments to one of the videos in particular express the viewers' (partial or total) inability to understand what the performer is saying.

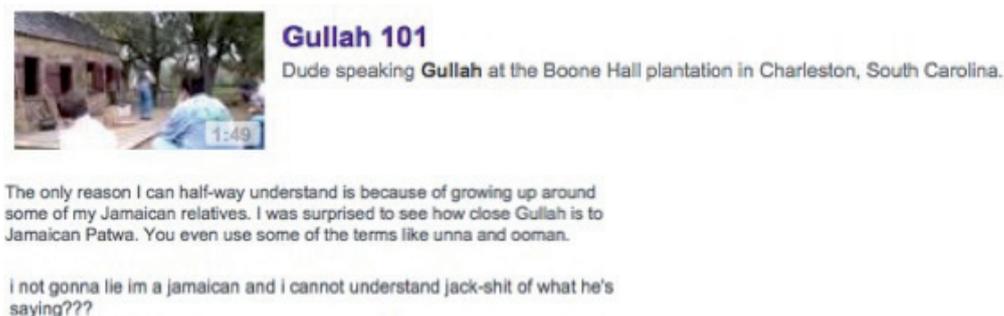


Fig. 9. Screenshot from a YouTube video

Other relevant videos on *YouTube* are *The Skin Quilt Project* (focused on the Africanisms in the Gullah/Geechee and African-American culture, and providing some examples of the differences between Gullah and English),⁸⁰ *Gullah/Geechee TV Naysbun Nyews with Queen Quet* (where Queen Quet interviews the co-founder of the Gullah/Geechee Nation International Music&Movement Festival switching from Gullah to English),⁸¹ *A lesson in speaking Geechee* (which features a public meeting held during Sapelo Island Cultural Festival in 2011),⁸² and the more recent *Speaking the Gullah and Geechee* (where Sista' Gal talks about the language while the viewer can read English subtitles on the screen).⁸³

Monologues, performances and the interviews realised by Queen Quet seem to be the only videos (multimodally) recording some Gullah language on *YouTube*. However, in the attempt to find some oral evidence of the language, another research was carried out in search of conversations in Gullah as possibly emerging from the websites and archives of web-radios, their programmes and phone-in sessions. The Gullah Geechee Radio Network (GGRN "the voice of the Gullah/Geechee people") – offering live music and talk from the Sea Island culture of South Carolina – seems to use only English in its frequent promotional messages concerning a programme that is on air on Sunday afternoon discussing the problems faced by the black community in the US (messages that usually precede the last played music tracks).⁸⁴ Another important web-radio for the Gullah community is the Gullah/Geechee Riddim Radio⁸⁵ where Queen Quet discusses several initiatives to be launched to continue to promote the heritage of the community, to protect human rights, or to provide details on celebrations going on in the area. In the one-hour programme she hosts, she usually starts speaking in Gullah and later switches to English for those who do not understand Gullah but want to share information about the Gullah-Geechee Nation (her choice of code depending on the effects she tries to achieve and the functions

⁸⁰ *The Skin Quilt Project*
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spN8piH-wDA>>.

⁸¹ *Gullah/Geechee TV Naysbun Nyews with Queen Quet*
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpIGUO_6RWk> .

⁸² *A Lesson in Speaking Geechee*
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9p8-o7_j69M>.

⁸³ *Speaking the Gullah and Geechee*
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQLHrHqxy6g>>.

⁸⁴ *Gullah/Geechee Radio Network* <<http://www.gullah-radio-network.com/>>. The information about the language used in the promotional messages is limited to the occasions in which the web-radio was followed for the purposes of this article.

⁸⁵ *Gullah/Geechee Riddim Radio*
<<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/gullahgeechee>>.

she tries to perform). In both cases, no phone-in sessions could actually be found.

Unfortunately, what emerges from the research carried out for this study is that conversations in Gullah currently seem to be lacking online; something which does not imply, of course, that the language is not employed in everyday face to face interactions, nor indeed, that there does not exist a web-radio where live phone-ins in Gullah do occur. However, the fact that a concerted search has not found any for the moment is itself still an important indicator of both Gullah's diffusion and the modes in which it is to be found, in different online contexts. Notwithstanding the lack of evidence of spontaneous, everyday use of Gullah on the web, those who are interested in hearing the language can still 'experience' it to some degree on the Web.

Conclusion

Although the predominant use of English in most of the online communicative interactions concerning Gullah in websites, blogs, forums, and social networks, raises some doubts regarding the true viability⁸⁶ of the Gullah language and the degree or type of procedural or declarative knowledge of the language – be it active or passive – that the community members and internet users have, Gullah certainly has a social, political and affective significance (connected to the fact that it is the carrier of a community's cultural identity) but, most of all, it appears to have a symbolic importance. The Internet seems to allow members of the Gullah community to project and manage their own identity, by creating a (new) self in the virtual reality (through blogs, forums, and social networks), by offering infinite possibilities of self-representation to its members (apart from the language they choose to use, be it English, Gullah or a 'Gullah-flavoured' English).⁸⁷

Whether the language is 'alive', 'endangered', or 'dying', the term is perhaps only partially applicable to Gullah, insofar as it is probably, at least, "mythically alive"⁸⁸ – as shown by its cultural vitality that appears at present to be superior to its linguistic vitality on the Web.

Far from having exclusively informational and referential purposes, the texts *about* the Gullah community, culture and language (even if not *in* Gullah) express strong affective and emotional meanings. Such texts can be regarded as 'acts of identity' (using Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's words), inscribing an extremely powerful sense of identity and belonging, and uncovering the community's social and ethnic solidarity and cooperation through their use of language: "Linguistic behaviour [can be seen] as a series of acts of identity in which people reveal both their personal identity and their search for social roles".⁸⁹ A language variety can thus be said to play a complex role in establishing the relationships within social and regional communities, since it becomes a marker of group identity. Within the Gullah community, this kind of identity marker is probably stronger among older generations that possibly do speak the full language in their homesteads or when they speak with other members of the community who have always lived in the

⁸⁶ In order to be able to investigate the viability of the language, some local fieldwork would be necessary, which is, however, beyond the scope of this study that exclusively focuses on the presence of the Gullah language on the Web.

⁸⁷ Thanks to Jocelyne Vincent for suggesting the metaphor of a 'Gullah-flavoured' language and, most of all, for her invaluable support, guidance and patience while editing this article.

⁸⁸ Poet and Nobel Prize winner Seamus Heaney suggests that Irish Gaelic is only mythically alive, but it can still serve the purpose of promoting political and cultural nationalism (Heaney cit. in McCrum, Cran and MacNeil, *The Story of English*, 177).

⁸⁹ Robert Le Page and Andr e Tabouret-Keller, *Acts of Identity: Creole-Based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 14.

Gullah areas. The fact that, since the 1960s, tourist and resort development on the Sea Islands has threatened to push Gullahs off the family lands they have owned since they gained freedom, has also caused a sense of nostalgia in the elderly and the displaced who have left the area to find a job in the urban centres. Gullah is the language that was spoken at the time of slavery and after its abolition and it is what they have spoken all their lives too; perceiving it as being partly American and partly African, older generations feel they pay homage to their African roots when speaking it. As Janey Hunter, a native speaker of Gullah living on the Sea Islands, said while being interviewed for the video series *The Story of English*: “I ain’t ashamed of myself. ... I can speak different language all right but I still speak Gullah language. ... Of course it’s not all American, part is African. Because I believe that was our home, Africa. That’s where all this language come from”.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ See the episode 6, “Black on White” in *The Story of English* (the nine-part television series produced by the BBC in 1986, and released after the book written by MacNeil, McCrum, and Cran), in particular from 9:35 to 10:40.

In the struggle to preserve and promote the Gullah identity through language and culture, the community has undergone a process of change that has gradually extended its boundaries towards also becoming a cyber community, a Web community whose population of Net-users creates a significant network for communicative practices. The concept of practice appears fundamental in relation to the idea of ‘community of practice’ applied in linguistic contexts: while pursuing their interest, engaging in a collective process in a shared domain of human endeavour, the members of a community of practice develop a repertoire of resources and practices based on their common commitment. In the case of Gullah, indeed, the Net offers evidence of countless efforts to bring some interest back and to get the people active, using modern forms of communication, something which is certainly remarkable and worth noting. New communication technologies such as those provided by the Internet, on the Web in particular, have extended the reach of interactions beyond the geographical limitations of traditional communities, and the increasing flow of information has expanded the possibilities to form a community, and has also called for new kinds of communities based on shared practices.⁹¹ The Gullah community seems to be experimenting novel ways to survive and thrive in the 21st century, pursuing linguistic and cultural preservation whatever channel it may take. Newer generations are tentatively searching new ways to get a sense of their identity as it develops over time, to shape and re-vitalize a fluid ‘Gullah self’ that is in a constant process of (online and offline) formation and reformation, and the Gullah language seems to be instrumental in this process of re-vitalization. Whether or not the language itself will be able to (re-)gain viability across domains and functions, and be re-vitalized beyond symbolic or mythical vitality is another open question.

⁹¹ See Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, and <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>.

“It snuck in so smooth and slippery we didn’t even hear it”:¹
How *snuck* snuck up on *sneaked*

Introduction

The source of my title quote actually refers to a mudslide, but it seems an apt way of describing the recent trajectory of *snuck* in modern English. The origins of the verb *sneak* and its irregular past tense form *snuck* are “shrouded in mystery” according to Robert Burchfield (1998), who wrote:

First recorded in the 16C., [*sneak*] seems to have emerged from some uncharted dialectal area and made its way swiftly into the language of playwrights . . . Just as mysteriously, in a little more than a century, a new past tense form, *snuck*, has crept and then rushed out of dialectal use in America, first into the areas of use that lexicographers label jocular or uneducated, and, more recently, has reached the point where it is a virtual rival of *sneaked* in many parts of the English-speaking world. But not in Britain, where it is unmistakably taken to be a jocular or non-standard form. . . . What the future holds for *snuck* is unpredictable.²

As can be seen from the timeline I have assembled below for first attestations of main variant forms of *sneak* recorded by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), the earliest example of the stem is the adverbial form *sneakishly*, first attested in 1560. It was soon followed by the first attestation of the adjectival form *sneaking* in 1582.³ The first attestation for the intransitive verb *sneak* is attributed to Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part I* (1598), which also provides another first attestation for the variant *sneakup*, a noun indicating a ‘mean, servile, or cringing person’, i.e. a sneak. The adverbial form *sneakingly* also dates from the same year. The *OED*’s first entry for the regular past tense form *sneaked* is 1631 but the transitive form of the verb is not recorded until 1684. As for *snuck*, the *OED* says it originated in the US and is chiefly used there. The first attestation appears in 1887 in the *Lantern*, a New Orleans newspaper.

Timeline for first attestations of main variant forms of *sneak* recorded by *OED*

1560 *sneakishly* adverb⁴

All men . . . cried out vpon Duke Maurice, whiche serued him so sknekyshely, whome he oughte to haue honoured as his father. J. Daus tr. J. Sleidane Commentaries f. cclxx.

1582 *sneaking* adjective⁵

But Scylla in cabbans with sneaking treacherye lurcketh. R. Stanyhurst tr. Virgil *First Foure Bookes Æneis* III. 57.

1598 *sneak* verb (intransitive)⁶; *sneaker* noun⁷; *sneak-up* noun⁸; *sneakingly* adverb⁹

A poore vnminded outlaw sneaking home. Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, Pt. 1iv. iii. 60.

The prince is a iacke, a sneakeup. Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, Pt. 1iii. iii. 85.

Gatto gatto, groping, creeping, sneakingly as a cat. J. Florio, *World of Wordes*.

¹ *Time magazine* (January 18, 1982) from The Time Magazine Corpus, <<http://corpus.byu.edu/time/>>, 18 February 2012.

² Robert W Burchfield, *The New Fowler’s Modern English Usage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3rd edition.

³ An adjectival variant *sneakish* meaning ‘farcial’ or ‘ludicrous’ first attested in 1570 is obsolete. *Oxford English Dictionary online version* December 2011, *Sneakish*, adj., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183118>>; this entry and the following all accessed 18 February 2012.

⁴ Ibid. *Sneakishly*, adv., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183119>>.

⁵ Ibid. *Sneaking*, adj., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183115>>.

⁶ Ibid. *Sneak*, v., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183107>>.

⁷ Ibid. *Sneaker*, n., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183112>>.

⁸ Ibid. *Sneak-up*, n., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183125>>.

⁹ Ibid. *Sneakingly*, adv., <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183116>>.

1631 *sneaked* regular past tense¹⁰

Where's Madrigall? Is he sneek'd hence. B. Jonson, *Staple of Newes* II. iv. 124 in Wks. II.

1684 *sneak* verb (transitive)¹¹

Sneak what Ready-money thou hast into my Hand. T. Otway, *Atheist* III. 22.

1887 *snuck* verb¹²

He grubbed ten dollars from de bums an den snuck home. *Lantern* (New Orleans) 17 Dec. 3/3.

The *OED* entry for the verb *sneak* says it is of doubtful origin because the form does not agree with that of early Middle English *sniken*, or Old English *snican* 'to creep, crawl'; (compare cognates Old Norse *snikja*, Norwegian *snikja*, Danish *snige*, with senses similar to English *sneak*). More precisely, the problem with this route of transmission is that for *snican* to become *sneak*, it should have passed through the unattested stage *sneek*. Alternatively, if English had borrowed the form from Scandinavian sources, it should have developed into *snike* or *snick*.¹³ However, linguistic history is full of unpredictable exceptions and irregular sound changes that make reconstruction difficult.

Nevertheless, as my title indicates, I focus here on the evolution of the irregular past tense variant *snuck* rather than the uncertain etymology of *sneak*. The emergence and subsequent apparently rapid spread of *snuck* is especially intriguing because irregular verbs in modern English constitute a closed class numbering only about 150-180, to which there have been no recent additions.¹⁴ The general drift of change is for strong verbs to regularize in the direction of weak preterites. Here too, however, there are exceptional developments to reckon with. High frequency irregular verbs like *find* generally hold their own and resist analogically created competing forms like **finded*, but less frequent ones like *strive* and *chide* have over time lost ground to their respective regular forms *strived* and *chided*, eventually supplanting the strong forms *strove* and *chode*. Although a few instances of change have proceeded in the opposite direction from weak to strong (as in the case of *dive*, which historically was a weak verb, but now has a variant strong past form *dove*), *snuck* is still perplexing because no other verb in this phonological class creates a strong past with the low back unrounded vowel /ʌ/; compare, for instance, *creak*, *freak*, *leak*, *peak*, *peek*, *reek*, *seek*, *sneak*, *streak*, *wreak*, and *shriek*. Richard Hogg speculates that the vowel /ʌ/ came to be perceived as an "ideophonic marker of past forms regardless of the vowel of the present tense", as in *dig* (*dug*), *strike* (*struck*).¹⁵

Regardless of its precise origin, the newly formed irregular *snuck* appears to be sneaking up on *sneaked*, and has made decisive and swift inroads into American English over the past hundred years, especially in spoken varieties. Indeed, *The American Heritage Dictionary* contends that although *snuck* appears to have originated as a non-standard regional variant of *sneaked*, and there is still some lingering prejudice against it, "[C]learly it is no longer possible to apply the label *Nonstandard* to *snuck*".¹⁶ The dictionary's rejection of this label is significant in view of the fact that both the first (1969) and second editions (1982) had judged *snuck* as

¹⁰ Ibid. *Sneak*, v.

¹¹ Ibid. *Sneak*, v.

¹² Ibid. *Sneak*, v.

¹³ Anatoly Liberman, "Sneak, Snack, Snuck", *Oxford Etymologist* (November 14, 2007), <<http://blog.oup.com/2007/11/snuck/>>, 18 February 2012.

¹⁴ Steven Pinker, *Words and Rules: The Ingredients of Language* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), 16.

¹⁵ Richard M. Hogg, "Snuck: The Development of Irregular Preterite Forms", in Graham Nixon and John Honey, eds., *Studies in English Linguistics in Memory of Barbara Strang* (London: Routledge, 1988), 31-40.

¹⁶ *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2006), xxvii.

"It snuck in so smooth and slippery we didn't even hear it":* How *snuck* snuck up on *sneaked*

nonstandard. Moreover, 67% of the dictionary's Usage Panel still disapproved of *snuck* in 1988, at a time when the use of *sneaked* was still three times more frequent than *snuck* in edited prose in the dictionary's citation files. The acceptance of *snuck* as standard was based on the increasing frequency of *snuck* in 'reputable writing' in publications such as *The New Republic* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and in the works of authors like Anne Tyler and Garrison Keillor. Noting that the language practices of the educated middle class generally determine what counts as Standard English, the dictionary was swayed by evidence that *snuck* appeared to be 20% more common than in 1985 and was spreading with each generation so that it is now used by educated speakers in all regions of the United States. Even the Usage Panel's disapproval of *snuck* lessened slightly in 2001, with 61% preferring *sneaked*. Based on frequency of use, the dictionary's style and usage guide opined that "the tide is turning and that broad acceptance of *snuck* is inevitable".¹⁷

By 2008, the tide had indeed shifted dramatically even in the Usage Panel, 75% of whom approved of *snuck*, completely reversing the position taken in favor of *sneaked* only two decades previously.¹⁸ The dictionary's review of 10,000 citations in 1990 revealed that *sneaked* was still preferred by a factor of 7 to 2. In 2004 a search of newspaper databases showed *sneaked* occurring more frequently than *snuck* by a factor of 8 to 5, while a search of the internet in general in 2004 showed that *snuck* was used 28% more frequently than *sneaked*. By way of comparison, my own search of the internet in March 2012 revealed that *snuck* was used 40% more frequently than *sneaked*. I will report further results from newspaper databases later and my conclusion will return to the status of *snuck* as standard or non-standard in contemporary varieties of English.

Is *snuck* really sneaking up on *sneaked*?

Although these observations and informal reports are interesting, the competition between *sneaked* and *snuck* cries out for more sophisticated quantitative investigation with corpora and other data resources to answer more precisely the question posed some time ago by Thomas Murray, who asked whether *snuck* has really been gaining in popularity, or only apparently so?¹⁹ My own interest in *snuck* was initially sparked by publication of a study by Jean-Baptiste Michel et al. exploring the use of Google Books for quantitative research on language and culture change.²⁰ In 2004 Google began scanning millions of books as part of an ambitious project to make every page of every book ever published available and searchable on the internet. Now comprising more than two trillion words from fifteen million books published between 1473 and 2000 (ca. 11% of all the books ever published) scanned from sources in over forty university libraries, Google Books is the largest megacorpora and a potentially rich resource for linguists.²¹ Roughly two-thirds of the books are in English (accounting for 361 billion words and expanding), but books from 478 languages (including French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, and Hebrew) are also included. There are actually five English language collections available for search

¹⁷ *The American Heritage Guide to Contemporary Usage and Style* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 435-436.

¹⁸ *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 1657. This shift of opinion may have been affected by the varying composition over this time period of the Usage Panel, which has been generally dominated by writers who are conservative in matters concerning usage.

¹⁹ Thomas E. Murray, "More on *Drug/Drugged* and *Snuck/Sneaked*: Evidence from the American Midwest", *Journal of English Linguistics*, 26 (1998), 218.

²⁰ Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books", *Science*, 331 (2011), 176-182.

²¹ It is difficult to know the exact number of books published because records are incomplete and fragmentary. The definition of book is itself ambiguous. See Jean-Baptiste Michel et al., "Supporting Online Material for Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books", <www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/science.1199644/DC1>, 18 February 2012, 19.

in Google Books: English, American English, British English, English Fiction, and English One Million. This makes Google Books a valuable site for comparing change and variation in the two major varieties of English, British and American.

Using a subset of 500 billion words from five million English books published between 1800 and 2000 (about 4% of all books published in English), one of the topics Michel et al. investigated was the rate at which irregular English verbs became regular over the past two centuries by charting n-gram trajectories showing the relative frequency of words or n-grams (up to five). An n-gram is a sequence of 1-grams, i.e. a string of characters uninterrupted by a space, e.g. *sneaked*. Phrases like *snuck off* are a 2-gram, *sneaked up on*, a 3-gram, etc. They found that although most irregulars have been stable for the past 200 years, 16% showed a slow drift toward regularity. The fastest moving verb *chide*, for instance, took 200 years for the regular past tense variant *chided* to increase from 10% to 90%. Interestingly, the trajectory for each verb was sui generis and had no characteristic shape. A few verbs like *spill* regularized at a constant speed, but others, like *thrive* and *dig* transitioned from irregular to regular past forms in fits and starts. This finding is reminiscent of the dictum offered by Jacob Grimm, who argued that “jedes Wort hat seine Geschichte und lebt sein eignes Leben” (“each word has its history and lives its own life”).²²

Although Grimm was referring to sound change and reacting against the Neogrammarian notion of absolute sound laws, his dictum has since been invoked in other cases of change. Michel et al. also looked at the opposite trend, whereby regular verbs become irregular. Examining *light/lit* and *wake/woke*, for example, they found that these verbs have been going back and forth for nearly 500 years. Both were irregular in Middle English, but were mostly regular by 1800, and subsequently reversed course to become irregular again today. Notably, however, they found at least one instance of rapid progress by an irregular form: namely, *snuck*, whose regularity has decreased from 100% to 50% over the past fifty years. They conclude that “Presently, 1% of the English-speaking population switches from “sneaked” to “snuck” every year. Someone will have snuck off while you read this sentence” (178).²³ The trend toward *snuck* is much more prominent in American English, but has been sneaking across the Atlantic. Indeed, they concluded that the United States is the world’s leading exporter of both regular and irregular verbs.

These findings added yet more data to a lively discussion dating back at least to 2009 on various language and usage blogs (most notably on *Language Log* in a series of postings by Mark Liberman).²⁴ As Liberman and others pointed out, the frequency of both *sneaked* and *snuck* has increased over time. This trend is clearly evident for the language as a whole as well as for both British and American English in Figure 1a, b, and c showing the results obtained from Google Books Ngram Viewer, where users can search words or n-grams (to 5) and see the resulting graph.²⁵ The overall trajectory for *snuck* in Figure 1a, based on the entire corpus of English books, reveals the hallmarks of the classic so-called S-curve for linguistic change in progress. That is, the onset of change is slow in the so-called lag phase, as the new form *snuck* is introduced. The innovation makes little progress between 1920

²² Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Grammatik*, Erster Teil (Göttingen: Dieterichsche Buchhandlung, 1819), xiv.

²³ See Michel et al., “Supporting Online Material”, 26.

²⁴ See Mark Liberman, *Language Log* <<http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu>> for various blogs about ‘snuck’. See also Stan Carey, “‘Snuck’ sneaked in”, *Sentence First. An Irishman’s blog about the English language* (June 18, 2010), <<http://stancarey.wordpress.com/2010/06/18/snuck-sneaked-in/>>, 18 February 2012.

²⁵ The graphs are based on results from the entire corpus produced by Google Books Ngram Viewer, <<http://books.google.com/ngrams>>, 18 February 2012.

and 1960, after which there is a steep and steady rise (the so-called log phase) as change reaches a tipping point, takes off and spreads rapidly after 1960. The rise in *snuck* is, however, much more pronounced in American English as shown in Figure 1c based on the sub-corpus of American English books than in British English (Figure 1b), where *sneaked* is still by far the most common variant despite a clear increase in *snuck* since around 1980. In the United States the frequency of *snuck* rises sharply after 1960 until it actually overtakes *sneaked* just after 2000. Although not all innovations proceed as far as *snuck* has, it is by no means clear that *snuck* will ever completely oust the competing variant *sneaked* in American or other varieties of English. Change may be interrupted mid-course or even completely reversed. Although language change may involve multiple mechanisms and some changes may proceed with no apparent social weighting, the social evaluation of variants often plays a role in determining the fate of a change in progress as speakers make choices between rival forms based on their perceived associations with the groups using them (e.g. social class, age, gender, etc.) or the contexts (e.g. style, text types, etc.) in which they occur. To illuminate the sociolinguistic dimensions of change in progress, however, we need more evidence from different kinds of source material.

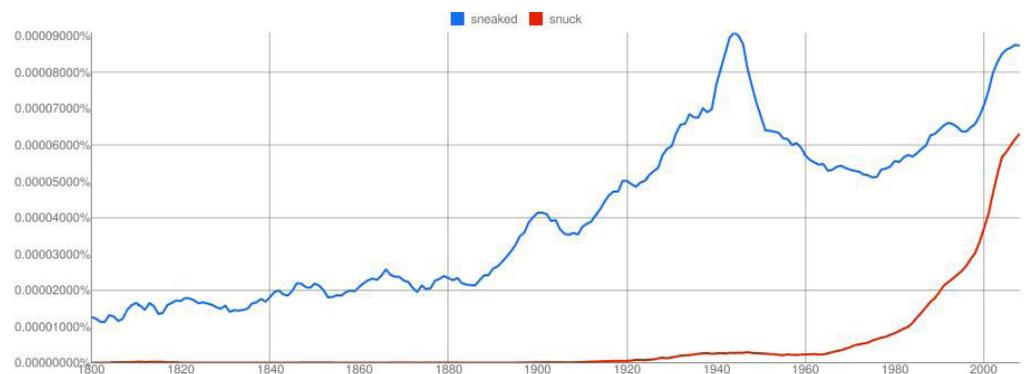


Figure 1a *sneaked* vs. *snuck* from Google Books Ngram Viewer



Figure 1b *sneaked* vs. *snuck* in British English from Google Books Ngram Viewer

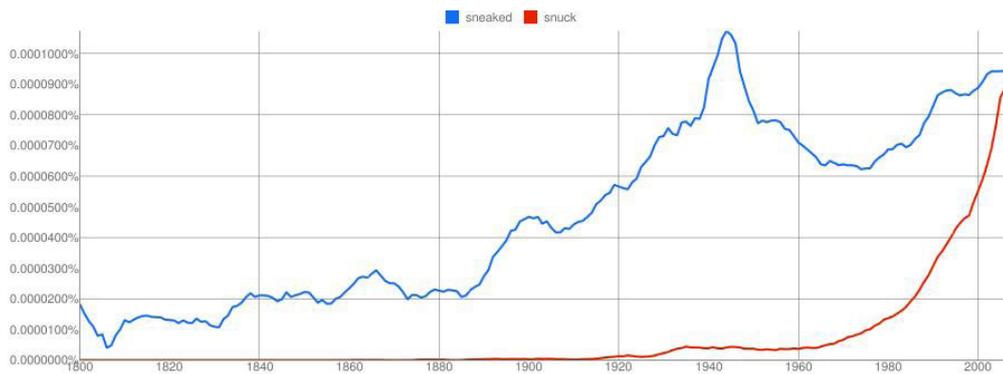


Figure 1c *sneaked* vs. *snuck* in American English from Google Books Ngram Viewer

Although Google Books is an incredibly powerful resource for exploring hypotheses about language change, it currently has many limitations by comparison with the kinds of corpora most linguists rely on. Most importantly, it does not meet commonly accepted criteria concerning sampling and representativeness. Corpora aim to be representative of some specified population of texts. W. Nelson Francis, for instance, defined a corpus as a collection of texts assumed to be representative of a given language, dialect, or other subset of language.²⁶ One of the most frequently used types of corpora until recently is the so-called multigenre corpus, following the design of the Brown Corpus of American English (1961), the first electronic corpus, containing one million words of text comprised of 500 word samples from fifteen written genres. By comparison, Google Books is really better described as a text bank or archive because it is opportunistic, including whatever is available and convenient. Google decided which books to scan out of those made available by participating libraries and publishers. Some attempt was made to adjust for bias in subject matter of the books included in the subcorpus used by Michel et al. to make the English One Million corpus more closely resemble a traditional balanced corpus.²⁷ For copyright reasons, the corpus cannot be downloaded, so users must rely on Google's search engine and interface to manipulate the data relying on the n-gram database, which reveals only the five-word neighborhood around any given term. Hence, some of tools corpus linguists most frequently rely on are not available. For example, one cannot generate word frequency lists or concordances, compute collocations, or sort books by genre or topic.²⁸ The genre distribution is not balanced and varies over time, making it impossible to investigate the dimension of style, genre or text type as a vector for language change. The metadata for Google Books is also not reliable and automatic genre tagging is still problematic.²⁹ Problems such as these have led linguists like Geoffrey Nunberg to dismiss most of the analyses in the study by Michel et al. as "almost embarrassingly crude".³⁰

Although a number of synchronic and diachronic multi- and single-genre corpora have become available over the last decades, most of them are far too small to reveal much of interest about the history of *snuck* and *sneaked*. My searches resulted in very few hits in the so-called 'Brown family' of four equivalent one-million word corpora of British and American written English from 1961 and 1991, an ideal time period for examining the take-off of *snuck*. The Brown Corpus of American English (1961)

²⁶ W. Nelson Francis, "Problems of assembling and computerizing large corpora", in Stig Johansson, ed., *Computer Corpora in English Language Research* (Bergen: Norwegian Computing Centre for the Humanities, 1982), 7, Suzanne Romaine, "Corpus Linguistics and Sociolinguistics", in Anke Lüdeling and Merja Kytö, eds., *Corpus Linguistics. An International Handbook* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 96-111.

²⁷ See Michel et al., "Supporting Online Material", 13.

²⁸ The interface developed by Mark Davies overcomes some of these problems for a portion of the English content of Google Books: 155 billion words from more than 1.3 million books of American English from 1810 to 2007 are available for search at <<http://googlebooks.byu.edu/>>.

²⁹ Some of these problems are discussed in Michel et al., "Supporting Online Material."

³⁰ John Bohannon, "Google Opens Books to New Cultural Studies", *Science*, 330 (2010), 1600.

contained six examples of *sneaked* and one of *snuck*, while FROWN (Freiburg-Brown 1991) contained two of *sneaked* and none of *snuck*. Parallel corpora for British English, LOB (London/Oslo/Bergen, 1961) and FLOB (Freiburg- London/Oslo/Bergen, 1991), each contained one instance of *sneaked* and none of *snuck*. Parallel corpora for Australian and New Zealand English also revealed very few examples: ACE (Australian Corpus of English, 1986) contained one example of *sneaked* and none of *snuck*, while WC (Wellington Corpus of Written New Zealand English, 1986) contained four examples of *sneaked* and two of *snuck*. Searches in several corpora of spoken English produced no examples of either *sneaked* or *snuck*, including LLC (London-Lund Corpus), a million words from adult educated speakers of British English, and the WSC (Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English, 1988 to 1994), one million words of spoken New Zealand English. COLT (Corpus of London Teenage Language, 1993), half a million words of spontaneous British English teenage conversations, contained only two examples of *sneaked* and none of *snuck*.³¹

³¹ For full details and manuals for these corpora see <<http://icame.uib.no/newcd.htm>>, 26 March 2012.

These negative results led me to search two diachronic megacorpora compiled by Mark Davies for American English: COHA (Corpus of Historical American English) and Time Magazine Corpus. Although COHA covers roughly the same time span as Google Books, it includes texts from four genres balanced across the decades from 1810 to 2009: fiction, non-fiction, magazines and newspapers. According to Davies, it is the largest structured corpus of historical English, containing ca. 400 million words of American English taken from 107,000 individual texts between 1810 and 2009. The smaller Time Magazine Corpus contains 100 million words from issues published between 1923 and 2006.³² Figure 2 plotting the incidence of *sneaked* vs. *snuck* per million words in COHA supports the general trend observed in Google Books. The frequency of *sneaked* takes off toward the end of the 19th century, while *snuck* starts its take-off around the mid-20th century, and rises sharply from the 1960s onwards. Figure 3 based on data from the Time Magazine Corpus shows an increase in frequency of *snuck* only after the 1980s. The difference between the two corpora probably reflects the fact that the Time Magazine Corpus is much smaller than COHA and covers a much shorter time period. The former contained only seventeen instances of *snuck* compared to 248 in COHA.

³² Access to both corpora is via web interface; the individual texts are not downloadable due to copyright and licensing restrictions. See COHA (Corpus of Historical American English), <<http://corpus.byu.edu/coha/>>, and The Time Magazine Corpus, <<http://corpus.byu.edu/time/>>, 18 February 2012.

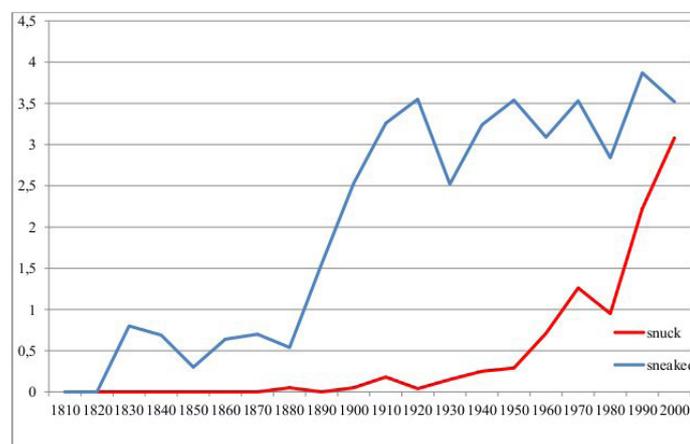


Figure 2 Incidence of *sneaked* vs. *snuck* per million words in COHA (Corpus of Historical American English)

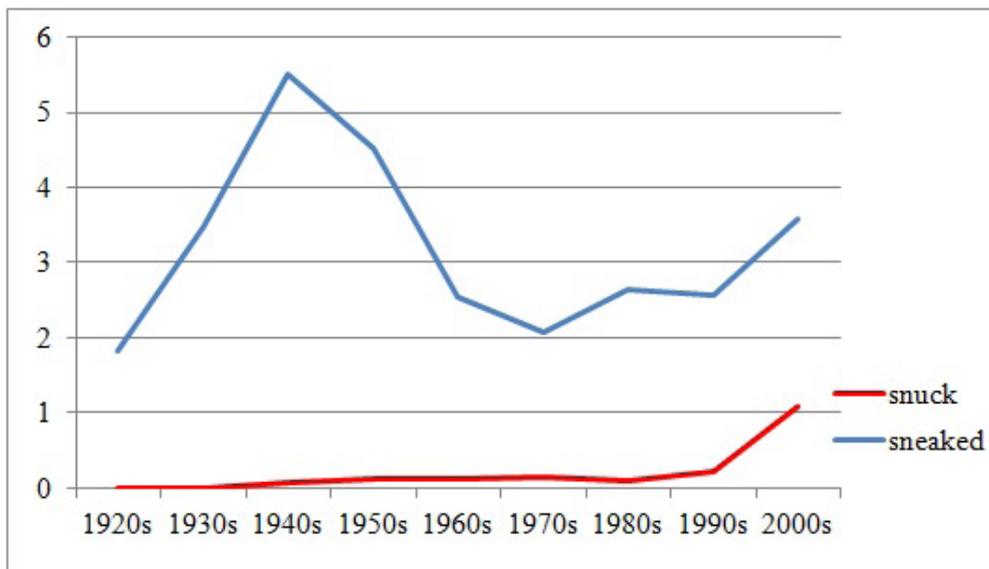


Figure 3 Incidence of *sneaked* vs. *snuck* per million words in The Time Magazine Corpus

Earliest attestations of *snuck*

While the results from Google Books, COHA and the Time Magazine Corpus present invaluable opportunities for uncovering the earliest attestations of *snuck*, timelines produced from unfiltered data derived from these sources require careful scrutiny. Further examination of the individual examples is required to weed out false hits. Many early examples (especially those from the large Google Books Search online tool) need to be discounted because there are OCR errors (e.g. *struck* mistaken for *snuck*, *snack*, *much*, etc.), proper names, or are not relevant for other reasons. Google estimates that over 98% of words are correctly digitized for modern English books. OCR quality is more problematic for earlier periods. Unfortunately, *snuck* is especially vulnerable to error due to the old spelling for <s> which resembles modern <f>. Michel et al. set the OCR quality threshold for their subcorpus to 60%.³³ For instance, there is a dialect word *smuck* meaning ‘smell’ that turns up in various dialect dictionaries and grammars from 1839 onwards.³⁴ Duplication and repetition across different editions of the same works, as well as date, country or language of publication errors make it necessary to adjust the counts for each year or subperiod, a task that becomes more onerous as the number of hits increases over time.

Going through the 19th century American English Google Books results manually to examine the earliest examples of *snuck* occurring between 1860 and 1899 resulted in most having to be rejected as errors of various kinds. The earliest hit from the 1860s is an OCR error for *struck*. Another example from 1870 in a translation of a journal of Soviet literature is misdated. A similar problem led me to reject at least five examples from Canadian Parliament Records incorrectly dated in 1885. Serial

³³ See Michel et al., “Supporting Online Material”, 17.

³⁴ Francis Grose and Samuel Pegge, *A Glossary of Provincial and Local Words Used in England* (London: John Russell Smith, 1839), 147.

publications such as journals and periodicals in fact are the most inaccurately dated subclass in Google Books, with many journals incorrectly assigned publication dates erroneously attributed to the year in which the first issue of the journal was published. These kinds of errors are supposed to have been filtered out of the subcorpus used by Michel et al.³⁵ The earliest apparently genuine attestation from a source published in the US is dated 1886, antedating by one year the *OED*'s first citation from the *Lantern* in 1887. This example is clearly intended to represent a non-standard rural speech variety, as suggested by eye-dialect spellings like *yer* (*your*), *behin'* (*behind*), etc. The two remaining examples from this period appeared in 1889 and 1896. The latter is particularly noteworthy because it is an entry from a publication by the American Dialect Society, founded in 1889. The two examples given are said to be from Western Ohio and they indicate yet another variant, namely, *snucked*, a hybrid form in which the irregular past form is treated as a stem to which the regular past tense ending *-ed* is added: *He snucked that. He snucked up to it.*³⁶

³⁵ See Michel et al., "Supporting Online Material", 6.

³⁶ *Dialect Notes of the American Dialect Society*, vol. 1 (Norwood, MA: J.S. Cushing & Co., 1896), 62.

³⁷ *Ballou's Monthly Magazine*, vol. 63 (Boston: Thomes & Talbot, 1886), 89.

³⁸ "The Mavens' Word of the Day" (Dec 21, 1998), <<http://www.randomhouse.com/wotd/index.pperl?date=19981221>>, 18 February 2012.

"Well, sir, yer boy Aleck got a straw, snuck up behin' a sorrel mule, tickled him on the heels, an' –" The lady started for the door. "An' the blamed critter never lifted a hoof," called the boy.³⁷

³⁹ *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage. The Complete Guide to Problems of Confused or Disputed Usage* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1995), 854-855.

⁴⁰ "The Mavens' Word of the Day" (Dec 21, 1998).

Other examples from the early decades of the twentieth generally support the observations made by Burchfield and several American dictionaries. For instance, Random House writes that *snuck* appears initially to be limited to the speech of uneducated, rural Americans because the earliest examples occur in written representations of dialect or other nonstandard use.³⁸ Both Merriam-Webster and Random House mention the 1930s as the time period when writers started using *snuck* for humorous effect in contexts other than dialect representation.³⁹ In addition, both sources contend that since the 1950s *snuck* "has been found with increasing frequency in neutral contexts – used as a standard past form in written sources without any suggestion of humorous intent."⁴⁰ Although the total number of examples from COHA and Time is too few to confirm this timeline, we know that change arises in specific contexts and becomes more generalized as it spreads to more contexts and users. A steep rise in the frequency of *snuck* from the 1960s onwards does support a pragmatic trajectory in which *snuck* is increasingly used beyond its originally restricted context of representing regional dialect and/or non-standard speech varieties to contexts conveying jocular or humorous overtones, before becoming conventionalized as the unmarked past tense form.

The two examples below from COHA illustrate how comic, jocular overtones can be conveyed by using *snuck* in representations of colloquial, conversational English. In the first of these crime writer Raymond Chandler, noted for his use of vernacular, colloquial American English, puts *snuck* into the mouth of his Los Angeles private detective, Philip Marlow, and the reply clearly indexes the form as 'witty'. COHA contains several similar examples from other Chandler novels. The second example appeared much later in *Time Magazine* (March 22, 1968), but

is also clearly intended to be humorous, as indicated in the title “Yuk Among the Yaks”, about a new 90-minute daily television talk show called ‘This Morning’. Here the choice of *snuck* instead of *sneaked* parallels the sound symbolism in the onomatopoeic slang expressions *yuk* (also *yuck*) ‘laugh’ and *yak* (also *yack*) ‘chatter’, by virtue of having the same monosyllabic structure ending in /k/ and a vowel rhyming with *yuk*.

Morningstar tried to call him up after I left. I snuck back into his office and overheard.”
“You what?” “I snuck.” “Please do not be witty, Mr Marlowe.”⁴¹

Amid all the yak, yak, yak on daytime TV, he has snuck in a genuine yuk.⁴²

This extension from regional dialect to the jocular domain is pragmatically motivated because non-standard varieties are often used for comedic effect. The earliest example of *snuck* from COHA illustrates this linkage between dialect and comedy. It is found in a poem by Eugene Field, who was from Missouri, and wrote mainly children’s poetry. Field’s poem about King Arthur’s court at Camelot adopts a kind of mock Middle English style, parodying Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* (1485).

And whiles he searched, Sir Maligraunce rashed in,
wood wroth, and cried,
“Methinketh that ye straunger knyght hath snuck
away my bride!”⁴³

Field’s use of *snuck* is both jocular as well as anachronistic, as far as I can tell, because I did not find examples of *sneaked* from this time period, let alone of *snuck*, after searching most of the currently available diachronic corpora including HCE (Helsinki Corpus of English), the first diachronic corpus, containing 1.6 million words from ca. 750 to 1700, or the considerably larger CEEC (Corpus of English Correspondence, 1410-1681) containing 2.7 million words. I also searched the Paston Letters (1422-1529), containing roughly a quarter million words from the personal and business correspondence exchanged by three generations of members of the Paston family from Norfolk. There were also no examples in the Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots, the Lampeter Corpus of Early Modern English Tracts, a collection of texts from 1640-1740 from the domains of religion, politics, economy & trade, science, law, and miscellaneous, or in ICAMET (Innsbruck Computer-Archive of Machine-Readable English Texts), 5.6 million words of prose texts and letters, or in the Newdigate Letters containing 2,100 manuscript newsletters dating from 1673 to 1715, most of them addressed to Sir Richard Newdigate.⁴⁴ Other diachronic corpora not in the public domain such as CLMETEV (Corpus of Late Modern English Texts Extended Version, 1850-1920)⁴⁵, containing 6.2 million words and CONCE (Corpus of Nineteenth Century English), a multigenre one million word corpus, also revealed no results.⁴⁶ ARCHER (A Representative Corpus of Historical English Registers, 1650-1999), a multi-genre corpus with ca. 3 million words of

⁴¹ Raymond Chandler, *High Window* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942).

⁴² The Time Magazine Corpus, <<http://corpus.byu.edu/time/>>, 18 February 2012.

⁴³ Eugene W. Field, “A Proper Trewe Idyll of Camelot”, in *A Little Book of Western Verse* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1891), 145.

⁴⁴ For full details and manuals for these corpora see <<http://icame.uib.no/newcd.htm>>, 26 March 2012.

⁴⁵ <<https://perswww.kuleuven.be/~u0044428/>>, 26 March 2012.

⁴⁶ A Corpus of Nineteenth-Century English, compiled by Merja Kytö (Uppsala University) and Juhani Rudanko (University of Tampere).

“It snuck in so smooth and slippery we didn’t even hear it”.* How *snuck* snuck up on *sneaked*

⁴⁷ <<http://www.llc.manchester.ac.uk/research/projects/archer/>>, 26 March 2012. Because ARCHER is not publicly available for copyright reasons, I thank Merja Kytö of Uppsala University and Nuria Yáñez-Bouza of Manchester University for conducting this search for me in the latest working version 3.2.

⁴⁸ LION [Literature on line], <<http://lion.chadwyck.com/>>, 2 March 2012. My access included the core collection.

⁴⁹ Early English Books Online, <<http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/e/ecbo/>>, 2 March 2012.

⁵⁰ The Proceedings of the Old Bailey 1674 to 1913, <<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>>.

⁵¹ Early Encounters in North America: Peoples, Cultures, and the Environment, <<http://alexanderstreet.com/products/early-encounters-north-america>>, 2 March 2012. British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries, <<http://alexanderstreet.com/products/british-and-irish-womens-letters-and-diaries>>; North American Women's Letters and Diaries, <<http://alexanderstreet.com/products/north-american-womens-letters-and-diaries>>; North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries and Oral Histories 1800 to 1950, <<http://alexanderstreet.com/products/north-american-immigrant-letters-diaries-and-oral-histories>>. All accessed on 2 March 2012.

⁵² Victorian Women Writers Project, <<http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/vwwp/welcome.do>>, 2 March 2012.

⁵³ *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* (855).

British and American English contained two instances of *sneaked*, but none of *snuck*.⁴⁷ The Corpus of English Dialogues 1560-1760, a 1.2-million-word corpus of Early Modern English speech-related texts, contained one example of *sneaked* and none of *snuck*.

These negative results led me to search a variety of other text collections and databases, to which historical linguists are increasingly turning in order to augment traditional corpora. One of the most commonly used is LION (Literature On line), a commercial database containing more than 350,000 works of British and American literature from the 8th century to present. Launched in 1996, and advertised as the world's largest cross-searchable database of literature, it includes poetry, drama, and prose, organized into individual collections available by subscription.⁴⁸ Disappointingly, LION contained only 28 examples of *snuck*, all in modern (i.e. 20th century) poetry, and none in its drama and prose collections, including the American Drama collection comprising more than 1,500 dramatic works from 1714 to 1915. There were also no examples of *snuck* in Early English Books Online (EEBO), a joint project of the University of Michigan and the University of Oxford containing digital facsimile page images of virtually every work printed in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, British North America and works in English printed elsewhere from 1473 to 1700.⁴⁹

Other more specialized electronic databases returned similar disappointing results. These included the Proceedings of the Old Bailey, a collection of 197,745 trials held from 1674 to 1913 at London's central criminal court⁵⁰, and several collections compiled by Alexander Street Press available by subscription. The latter included Early Encounters in North America: Peoples, Cultures, and the Environment 1534 to 1850, containing 100,000 pages of text focusing on personal accounts from traders, slaves, missionaries, and explorers; British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries containing more than 100,000 pages of personal writings of women from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales from the last 400 years; North American Women's Letters and Diaries containing diaries and letters from 1,017 women during the 18th to 20th centuries; and North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries and Oral Histories, containing more than 100,000 pages of letters, diaries and narratives from immigrants to North America from various countries, including Britain and Ireland from 1800 to 1950.⁵¹ Only the latter two sources contained instances of *snuck* (one in North American Women's Letters and Diaries and 28 in North American Immigrant Letters, Diaries and Oral Histories), but these were all from the late 20th century. There were only eight instances of *sneaked* and none of *snuck* in Early Encounters, and no instances of either variant in British and Irish Women's Letters and Diaries. I also searched the Victorian Women Writers Project, a collection of writings from lesser-known 19th century female authors, but found only six examples of *sneaked* and none of *snuck*.⁵² I chose these particular resources in order to follow up Merriam-Webster's suggestion that *snuck* may have been "a survival in some obscure northern English or Scottish dialect" brought to North America by settlers.⁵³

As for the equally intriguing form *snucked*, insufficient data prevent drawing firm conclusions. Google Books contained only 43 examples, the first of which is shown below and dates from 1920.⁵⁴ The scare quotes and italics in this example index both *snuck* and *snucked* as non-standard and jocular. Other examples clearly situate the form in the context of dialect representations, often specifically Southern States or African American Vernacular English. “Snucked up on me” is the title of a rap by Diamond, stage name for American rapper Brittany Nicole Carpentero.⁵⁵ I also found a few examples from Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

My intense desire to help my country in the last four years kept me out of the theatrical profession and in the interim many have “snuck” in that should be “*snucked*” out.⁵⁶

Sociolinguistic patterning: How snuck snuck up on sneaked

I am not aware of any large-scale sociolinguistic studies examining social dimensions of use of *snuck* in spoken English. However, both Thomas Cresswell and Thomas Murray report that they found no regional pattern.⁵⁷ After surveying a convenience sample of 10,256 consultants from twelve states (Michigan, Wisconsin, Missouri, Illinois, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, and Ohio), Murray found that *snuck* was widely accepted without regard for gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic class. Only ca. 5% of consultants offered negative evaluations or opinions about users of *snuck*, whom they considered as ignorant or vulgar (216). For those accepting the form, however, approval was complete: fewer than 1% reported that they would not use it in writing (218). Looking at the age distribution of his consultants, Murray (218) concluded that *snuck*'s gain in popularity was not only genuine, but dramatic. Acceptance of *snuck* among the oldest group of consultants between 60 to 80 years old was only 37%, while among the youngest group twenty years old or younger, acceptance was 54%. Hence Murray concurs with Cresswell (154) that *snuck* may be on its way to becoming the new standard form. Mark Liberman adds weight to this view, concluding on the basis of evidence from the LDC's (Linguistic Data Consortium) collection of conversational transcripts, that “basically, *sneaked* is toast”.⁵⁸ There were 52 instances of *snuck* versus 5 instances of *sneak* in the conversations, which amount to about 25 million words, mostly collected in 2003 from people across all ages, regions, socio-economic levels and amounts of education.

The predominance of *snuck* over *sneaked* in spoken American English is supported by the evidence from COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) containing 425 million words, including twenty million words from each year between 1990-2011.⁵⁹ The COCA material is equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers and academic texts, making this the largest freely available corpus of English, and the only large and balanced corpus of American English. Figure 4 shows the incidence of *sneaked* vs. *snuck* per million words in COCA. Overall, *sneaked* (52%) is slightly more common than *snuck*

⁵⁴ These results are based on a search of American English from 1810 to 2007 using <<http://googlebooks.byu.edu/>>. They require filtering to weed out errors and unrelated meanings. See, for example, the entries in the Urban Dictionary, <<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=snucked>>, 2 March 2012.

⁵⁵ P.M.S. (Pardon my swag), (2009), <<http://diamondatl.com/rapper-diamond/biography/>>, 2 March 2012.

⁵⁶ Marie Dressler, “Have Chorus Girls Been Maligned?”, in Mary Ethel McAuley, ed., *The Wanderer or: Or, Many Minds on Many Subjects* (New York: boni & Liveright, 1920), 258.

⁵⁷ Thomas J. Cresswell, “Dictionary Recognition of Developing Forms: The Case of *Snuck*”, in Greta D. Little and Michael Montgomery, eds., *Centennial Usage Studies* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994), 144-154.

⁵⁸ M. Liberman, “Snuckward Ho!”, and “The Unexpected Attractiveness of *Snuck*”.

⁵⁹ COCA (Corpus of Historical American English), <<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>>, 18 February 2012.

(48%). In the spoken material, however, which includes transcripts of unscripted conversation from more than 150 different television and radio programs, *snuck* clearly predominates. Not surprisingly, all the written genres favor *sneaked*, with fiction in the lead and academic texts bringing up the rear, reflecting the conservative tendencies of formal written English over other genres. The evidence from COHA shown in Figure 5 yields a similar picture, with newspapers (followed by non-fiction) being the most conservative genres. Newspapers contained only four examples of *snuck*, two from the 1980s, and two from the 2000s.

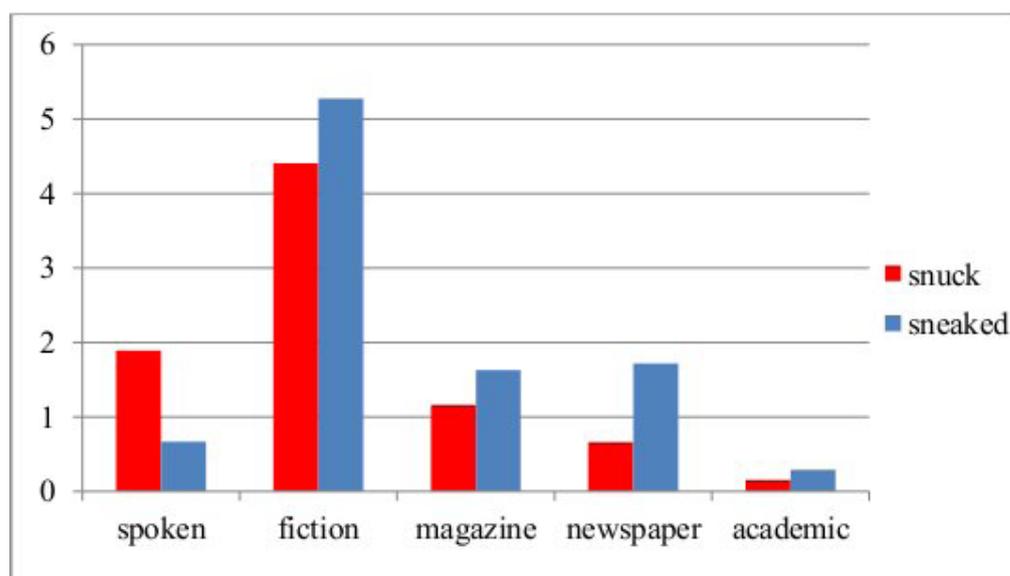


Figure 4 Incidence of *sneaked* vs. *snuck* per million words by genre in COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English)

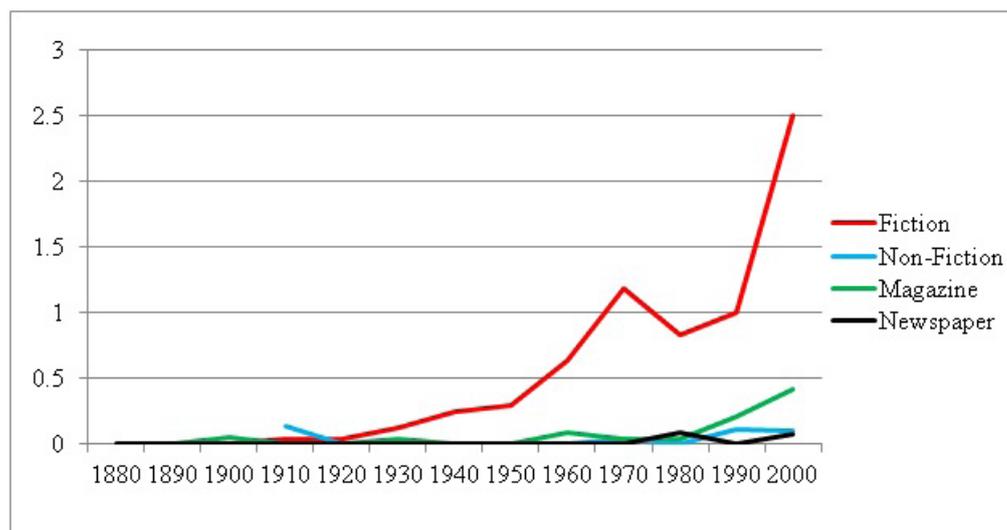


Figure 5 Incidence of *snuck* per million words by genre in COHA (Corpus of Historical American English)

Unfortunately, there is no corpus of British English of comparable size to COCA. Nevertheless, the importance of genre is evident in the BNC (British National Corpus) containing 100 million words of spoken and written material from the 1990s.⁶⁰ Neither *sneaked* (N=132) nor *snuck* (N=11) is frequent, but *snuck* occurs most frequently (N=5) in fiction, with two additional examples in magazines and one example in the category of miscellaneous texts. There are no examples of *snuck* in newspapers or academic texts, and only three examples in spoken English. This leaves the regional distribution of *snuck* beyond American English unclear. Cresswell (152) states that *snuck* is well established and standard in spoken Canadian English and is growing in use in Britain and Australia, but offers no quantitative evidence. As noted earlier, ACE and the Wellington Corpora are too small to yield many examples of either *sneaked* or *snuck*.

⁶⁰ BNC (British National Corpus), <<http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>>, 18 February 2012.

Nevertheless, it is possible to construct a broad overview of the competition between *sneaked* and *snuck* in the major written varieties of English by using Google to gather data from newspaper websites. I compared the incidence of the two variants in a convenience sample of thirty newspapers from the US, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland. Figure 6 shows the percent of *snuck* in each of the major varieties of English as represented by my sample of newspapers. The results show Canada in the lead, with *snuck* at 90%, clearly way ahead of the United States, the only other variety showing a majority of *snuck* (51%) over *sneaked*. My results for the US can be compared with those from COCA in Figure 4. Although COCA included material from ten newspapers published in the US, including *USA Today*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *New York Times*, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Washington Post*, and the Associated Press, the world's oldest and largest newsgathering organization, there were only 60 examples of *snucked* compared to 149 of *sneaked*. This means that overall *snuck* occurred at a rate of 29%, compared to my sample, where *snuck* (51%) and *sneaked* (49%) were nearly equal in frequency in US newspapers.

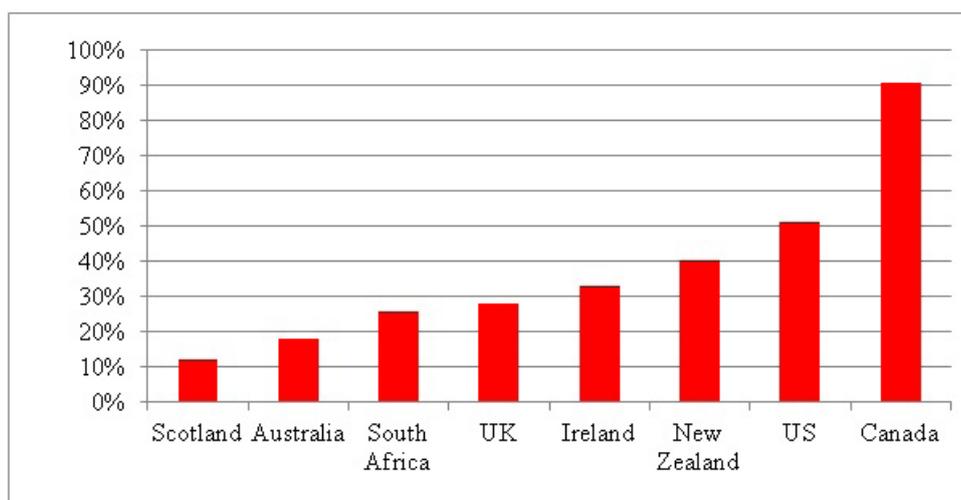


Figure 6 Percent of *snuck* in varieties of English as represented by newspapers

"It snuck in so smooth and slippery we didn't even hear it":* How *snuck* snuck up on *sneaked*

Perhaps more instructive, however, is a more detailed look at the individual papers in the sample. Figure 7 reveals a great range of variability across individual papers, reflecting my opportunistic method of sampling as well as the heterogeneity of newspapers as a genre. Apart from Canada, whose newspapers all cluster together in the lead, each showing *snuck* occurring at a frequency of more than 80%, the newspapers from the other countries show a range of variability. The US newspapers, for example, range from 45% (*LA Times*) to 71% (*USA Today*) in their frequency of occurrence of *snuck*. The biggest range of variability, however, is found in the samples representing Australia and the UK. Three of the Australian newspapers cluster together at the lower end of the spectrum with regard to the frequency of *snuck*, which varies from 14.39% (*The Melbourne Age*) to 19.01% (*The Australian*) and 20.1% (*The Sydney Morning Herald*), while the Melbourne tabloid *Herald Sun* shows predominant use of *snuck* (58.16%) over *sneak* and is even slightly ahead of US newspapers such as *The Washington Post* (52.53%) and the *San Francisco Chronicle* (55.09%), as well as way ahead of the *LA Times* (45.77%), the most conservative of the US newspapers. The difference between Australia and New Zealand is notable, given that these two varieties often share common developments, but this may reflect my choice of newspapers. Most of the newspapers included in my sample are high quality dailies with wide national circulation, while only a few represent tabloid journalism such as *The Sun*, the largest daily tabloid in the UK. Interestingly, however, it is the latter that shows the least frequent use of *snuck* (9.85%), while the high quality dailies such as the *Guardian* (25.51%), *Times* (27.08%), *Independent* (29.23%) and *Telegraph* (43.93%) all show higher rates. Indeed, the difference between the *Sun* and the *Telegraph* is quite striking. The smallest range of variability occurs in the newspapers sampled from Canada (81% to 91%), South Africa (25% to 34%), and New Zealand (39% to 50%).

⁶¹ The other newspapers sampled do not report tallies by sections/topics.

⁶² M. Liberman, "Snuckward Ho!"

Newspapers also comprise a range of sub-genres including, for example, news reports of various kinds (e.g. business vs. political), letters, editorials, advertising, sports, obituaries, to name just a few categories having their own conventions and stylistic markers relating to subject matter. In the US newspapers in COHA,

for example, 20% of the occurrences of *snuck* were in sports reporting, while in the *Irish Times* nearly half (49%) were.⁶¹ Newspapers also have different house styles, presumably at least partly because particular newspapers have a specific audience in mind. Overall, my results suggest a more nuanced view than that of Liberman, who surveyed a smaller sample of eleven newspapers from the US, UK, Ireland and Australia and concluded that "snuck is winning world-wide, with the UK apparently bringing up the rear".⁶²

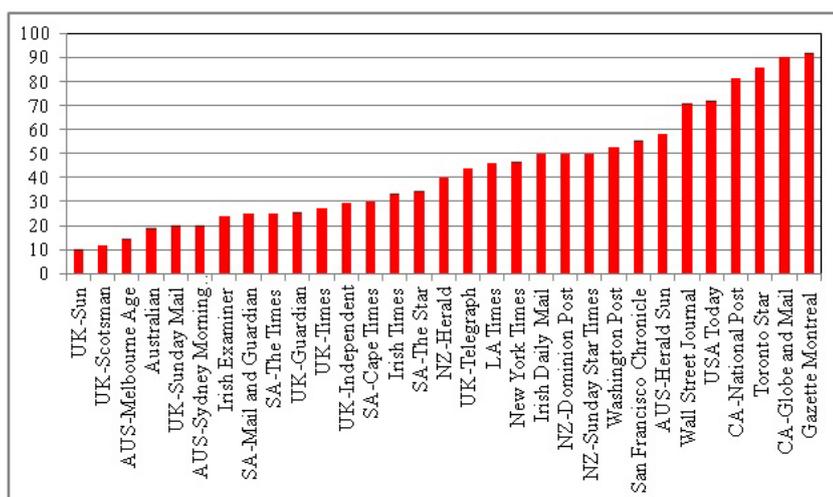


Figure 7 Percent of *snuck* in newspapers representing varieties of English

The newspaper results are interesting in the light of observations on frequency data from the *American Heritage Dictionary's* newspaper databases in 2004 that showed *sneaked* outperforming *snuck* by a factor of 8 to 5.⁶³ The inclusion in my sample of four of the same newspapers in COCA permits a comparison of the findings shown in Figure 8, which shows *snuck* clearly leading over *sneaked* by a wide margin in my sample. Indeed, in each newspaper *snuck* is two to three times as frequent as in COCA, with the biggest difference appearing in *USA Today*.

⁶³ *The American Heritage Guide to Contemporary Usage and Style* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 436.

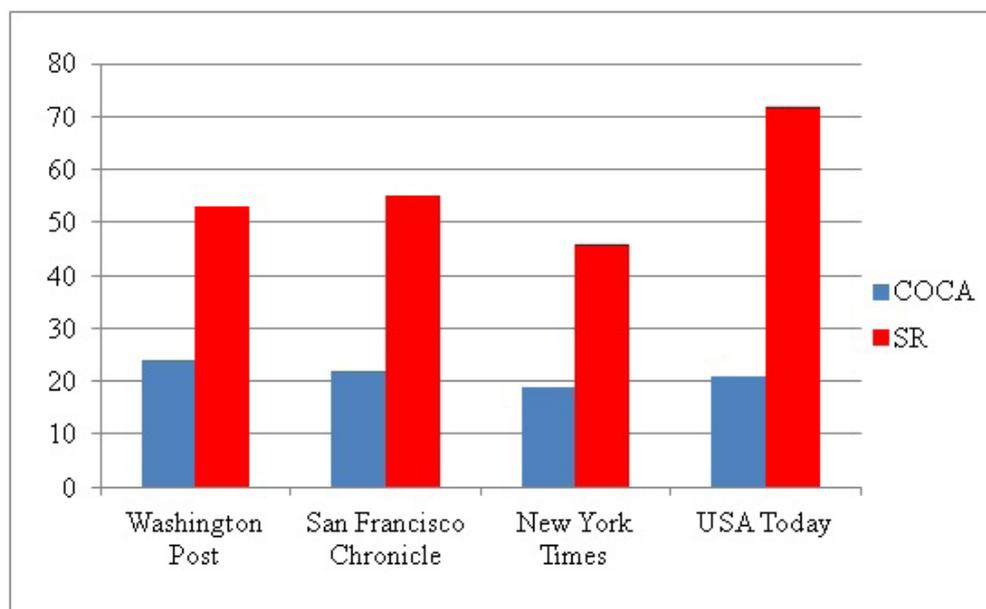


Figure 8 Percent of *snuck* in US newspapers in COCA and my sample (SR)

Conclusion, or Someone will have snuck off while you read this

Much more remains to be done to document the history and evolution of *snuck*, a task which should not be pursued in isolation without due consideration of *sneak* as well. Although the complete story of *sneak* has been beyond my remit here, even casual searching of earlier texts and corpora for *snuck* revealed quite a few examples that antedate by several decades the *OED's* first attestation of the verb *sneak* and other variant forms in the works of Shakespeare. This indicates a clear need for updating the *OED's* information, which has served as the source for countless other dictionaries, which have simply repeated uncritically parts of the etymology and citations from its entry. For example, a blog hosted by dictionary publisher Random House observes that “[l]ike so many others, *sneak* is first recorded in the works of Shakespeare”⁶⁴ In fact, other authors such as Richard Stanyhurst, Anthony Munday, George Whetstone, Anthony Copley, Robert Wilson, and Thomas Nash used it earlier. Indeed, Shakespeare may have borrowed it from them or from Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577), one of the most important sources he and other contemporary playwrights and poets used, which has one instance

⁶⁴ *The Mavens' Word of the Day* (Dec 21, 1998), <<http://www.randomhouse.com/wotd/index.pperl?date=19981221>>, 18 February 2012.

“It snuck in so smooth and slippery we didn’t even hear it”.* How *snuck* snuck up on *sneaked*

earlier than those cited by the *OED*. I also found one example of the verb *sneak* a decade earlier than Holinshed in a text from 1566 translated from Latin by John Studley, a student at Trinity College, Cambridge. I also discovered one instance of the regular past tense form *sneaked* from the following year, which antedates the *OED*'s first citation from 1631, as well as an example of transitive *sneak* from 1641 antedating the *OED*'s first citation in 1684. The revised timeline below compares my findings with those of the *OED*, with attestations antedating the *OED* indicated in bold preceded by my initials.

Revised timeline for first attestations of main variant forms of *sneak* recorded by *OED*

1560 *sneakishly* adverb

1570 *sneakish* adjective

1582 *sneaking* adjective [SR 1576]⁶⁵

1598 *sneak* verb [SR 1566]; *sneaker* noun; *sneak-up* noun; *sneakingly* adverb [SR 1596]⁶⁶
 O Iason doest thou sneake awaye, not hauyng mynde of me, Nor of those former great good turns that I haue done for the? (1566, EEBO, *The seuenth tragedie of Seneca, entituled Medea: translated out of Latin into English*)

1631 *sneaked* regular past tense [SR 1567]

Two or three nights later, the miller sneaked into church with some snails which, after he had secured candles to their backs, were left to creep about. (1567, Anonymous, *Merie Tales, A Corpus of English Dialogues* 1560-1760, p. 79)

1684 *sneak* verb (transitive) [SR 1641]

Because your Grace hath sneakt your head out of the coller so long. (1641, EEBO, *Canterbury's Will*)

⁶⁵ I found five examples of adjectival *sneaking* in LION Drama antedating the *OED*, four of which were from works by George Whetstone published in 1576.

⁶⁶ One example in EEBO of adverbial *sneakingly* in a work by Thomas Nash published in 1596 antedates the *OED*.

My findings also reveal a clear need for systematic charting of the occurrences of *sneak* and its variants in different text types and genres, in order to follow up Burchfield's suggestion that after *sneak* entered the language, it made its way swiftly into the language of playwrights. This may well prove to be true, but would require more diligent searching. To shed light on the early history of *sneak* and its spread through the language, I searched EEBO and LION, which revealed ninety four examples of the past tense form of *sneak* (including variant spellings *sneaked/t* and *sneak'd/ 't*) in EEBO, while LION contained 2,032, most of them (N=1,662) in Drama texts. Searching more specifically through the drama collection in LION, containing more than 5,400 plays (both prose and verse) covering a period of over 700 years from the late 13th to the early 20th century, I uncovered 354 examples of *sneak* and its variants dating from the first attestation in 1585 to 1700. Although LION does not classify these dramas into sub-genres such as comedy, tragedy etc., in 80% of cases (N=283) it was possible to produce a provisional categorization of texts by using subtitles or other information in the title or bibliographic entry. I also searched the Corpus of English Dialogues 1560-1760, which contained eleven

instances of *sneak* and its variants, only two of which occurred in drama, in David Garrick's comedy drama *The Male-Coquette* (1757). The majority (N=7) are found in prose fiction. Two further examples come from the category of Anonymous Didactic Works Other than Language Teaching, variant spellings *sneaked/t* and *sneak'd/ 't*) in EEBO, while LION contained 2,032, most of them (N=1,662) in Drama texts. Searching more specifically through the drama collection in LION, containing more than 5,400 plays (both prose and verse) covering a period of over 700 years from the late 13th to the early 20th century, I uncovered 354 examples of *sneak* and its variants dating from the first attestation in 1585 to 1700. Although LION does not classify these dramas into sub-genres such as comedy, tragedy etc., in 80% of cases (N=283) it was possible to produce a provisional categorization of texts by using subtitles or other information in the title or bibliographic entry. The majority of occurrences (62%, N=221) appeared in texts self-titled as comedies and farces.⁶⁷

For many users *snuck* has indeed snuck in “so smooth and slippery we didn't even hear it”. Another quote from the same source referring to a musical chord also seems apt: “It's snuck in so discreetly, you don't pick it up as being definite dissonance”.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, despite assertions from Random House that “snuck is fully standard in American English”, the growing groundswell toward *snuck* still jars some sensibilities. The late James J. Kilpatrick, a nationally syndicated American columnist with conservative views on grammar, objected strongly to Random House's sanctioning of *snuck* when the dictionary opined that “*Snuck* has occasionally been considered non-standard, but it is so widely used by professional writers and educated speakers that it can no longer be so regarded. It is the only past tense form for many younger and middle aged persons of all educational levels in the United States and Canada”.⁶⁹ Kilpatrick contended that “this tolerant view has not snuck up on me; it has sneaked up on me. I will have none of it. To my ear ‘snuck’ has a jocular sound”.⁷⁰ *Time Magazine* also disapproved of Random House's decision in its review of the dictionary, which may account for the fact that the Time Magazine Corpus contained only seventeen examples of *snuck*.⁷¹

Kilpatrick is by no means the only one on whose ears *snuck* sneaked up. Linguist Edward Finegan, for example, relates his own surprise when asked for advice by a first year law student who showed him an assignment in which an advanced law school student serving as a student instructor had crossed out *sneaked* and replaced it with *snuck*. Wondering who would find *snuck* preferable to *sneaked* led him to consult a dictionary of legal usage relying on the corpus of legal texts provided by Lexis-Nexis, where he encountered yet another surprise: a third of the instances of past tense *sneak* in published American legal cases were realized as *snuck*. After Finegan's search of law journals in Lexis-Nexis revealed *snuck* in the lead over *sneaked*, he concluded that “*snuck* is definitively on the upswing in frequency and status”, and that the instructor who had marked *sneaked* wrong was ahead of the curve, while he himself was behind it in still considering *snuck* as casual, humorous and non-standard.⁷² In fact, the legal dictionary also judged *snuck* as nonstandard

⁶⁷ EEBO's lack of annotation for features such as genre, etc. make this source less useful than LION. It is difficult to compare the LION and EEBO results directly because normalization of the results is not possible, also compilers were also not attempting to establish a representative sampling of text types.

⁶⁸ *Time Magazine* (January 12, 1970), <<http://corpus.byu.edu/time/>>, 18 February 2012.

⁶⁹ *The Mavens' Word of the Day* (Dec 21, 1998), and *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Random House, 1987), 1807.

⁷⁰ James J. Kilpatrick, “Bad Verbs Snuck in and Drug up a Chair”, *Times Daily* (July 8, 1990), <<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1842&dat=19900708&id=CEoeA AA A I B A J &sjid=BMcEAAA A I B A J &pg=1286,941789>>, 18 February 2012. See also James J. Kilpatrick, “What's Past Is Past, Unless It Snuck Up Behind You”, *The Seattle Times* (May 21, 1995), <<http://community.seattletimes.nwsourc.com/archive/?date=19950521&slug=2122055>>, 18 February 2012.

⁷¹ *Time Magazine*, “Surveying the State of the Lingo: The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (November 2, 1987), <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,965885-3,00.html>>, 2 March 2012.

⁷² Edward Finegan, “Linguistic Prescription: Familiar Practices and New Perspectives”, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 23 (2003), 214.

and recommended *sneaked* as the appropriate form for formal writing. This decision is interesting by comparison with my earlier remarks about the *American Heritage Dictionary*'s recognition of *snuck* as standard even before usage trends revealed it to be the most frequently used past tense variant of *sneak* as well as before its Usage Panel accepted it.

Generally speaking, this narrative underlines the unreliability of intuition on matters of usage as well as the need for marshalling quantitative evidence of the kind I have used here. Moreover, it highlights continuing tensions between descriptive and prescriptive concerns. Although Finegan concluded that "*snuck* now fraternizes with snooty *incapacitated*, *clandestine*, *equivocal*, and *regulatory* – not bad for an upstart of dubious genealogy",⁷³ for some it still carries negative connotations. Some readers of the *Mail on Sunday*, the UK's best selling newspaper, regard *snuck* as one of the most hated Americanisms.⁷⁴ Figure 7 shows that this newspaper is one of the more, but by no means the most, conservative users of *snuck* (20%) among my sample of UK newspapers. Nevertheless, British users are not the only ones holding out against the North American mudslide. At least two usage guides on American English that I consulted advise readers not to use *snuck*. Paul W. Lovinger, for instance, opines that "*sneaked* is the proper past tense and past participle of *sneak*. If chosen at all, *snuck* should be restricted to a frivolous context".⁷⁵ In a similar vein is Mark Davidson's "risk-free recommendation- for now use *snuck* only with a playful wink".⁷⁶ These remarks demonstrate that the last stage of change in which *snuck* becomes conventionalized and universally accepted as the unmarked past tense form has not yet reached all users of all varieties of English. Finally, lest readers think I have snuck off without saying more about the competition between *snuck* and *snucked*, it is possible that *snuck* may never replace *sneaked* entirely, especially if *snucked* sneaks up on *snuck*. *Sneaked* is not yet toast!

⁷³ Ibid., 216.

⁷⁴ Matthew Engel, "Britain Declares War on Words that Suck into Our Schedule", (5 June 2010), <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1284254/Britain-declares-war-words-snuck-skedule.html>>, 17 March 2012.

⁷⁵ Paul W. Lovinger, *The Penguin Dictionary of American English Usage and Style* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 287.

⁷⁶ Mark Davidson, *Right, Wrong, and Risky. A Dictionary of Today's American English Usage* (New York: W.W. Norton Co., 2006), 487.

Pragmatic Strategies in Casual Multiparty ELF Conversations

The English language and its spread

Over the last century, English has generally been seen as a powerful language which in the race towards globalisation seems to push aside all other languages in its path. On its way to global status, however, the English language has undergone changes to some of its communicative characteristics, which are often seen as a loss. This may somehow be connected to the fact that, as Hung states: “The rise of English from an international language (one of several) to the first de facto ‘world language’ has taken place within the breathtakingly short space of the last 60 years or so”¹ – even though Kachru and Smith provocatively state that “[English] is by no means a universal language”, first of all because only 25% of the earth’s population uses English and secondly because “those who use English are the best educated and the most influential members of society”.²

Globally, the English language has also been found to be functional and efficient in a large number of domains and has gained multiple identities. These identities are not only multicultural but also intercultural because they may imply interactions among and between Native Speakers (NSs) and Non-Native Speakers (NNSs), even though this well-known dyad, central to the issue of language ownership, might no longer prove to be relevant. The distinction was acceptable when English was spoken by a few people in the colonies and was rarely used to communicate among the locals themselves.³ However, over the past few decades, the dichotomy has become difficult to support especially in some ‘Outer Circle’ countries where English is one local nativised language among others, and local speakers are bilingual, at least.⁴ In this context the Native/Non-native dichotomy seems to stem from a prejudice, and for this reason Kirkpatrick finds it better to use the term ‘nativised’, instead: “By a nativised variety I mean a variety that has been influenced by the local cultures and languages of the people who have developed that particular variety”.⁵

The contradictory situation of the English language was already well recognized in the last century. According to McArthur, the idiosyncrasy lies in the fact that it suffered both a centrifugal and a centripetal tendency:⁶ centrifugal from a possible standard towards non-standard varieties and centripetal towards the achievement of a common standard, which scholars like Quirk, Widdowson and others recognised as early as the Seventies and Eighties.⁷ Since then, the concept has been variously invoked by renowned English scholars, among others, McArthur and Crystal.⁸ English is so widespread that sometimes its centrifugal varieties may prove to be mutually unintelligible and/or incomprehensible and an extra variety (a common standard, perhaps) is required to bridge the gap between two mutually unintelligible Englishes.

¹ Tony T.N. Hung, “How the Global Spread of English can Enrich rather than Engulf our Culture and Identity”, *HKBU papers in Applied Language Studies*, 13 (2009), 41.

² Yamuna Kachru and Larry E. Smith, *Culture, Contexts and World Englishes* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1.

³ Hung, “Global Spread of English”.

⁴ Braj Kachru, “Standards, Codification and Sociolinguistic Realism: The English Language in the Outer Circle”, in Randolph Quirk and Henry G. Widdowson, eds., *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literatures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 11-30.

⁵ Andy Kirkpatrick, *World Englishes: Implications for International Communication and English Language Teaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 7.

⁶ Mikhail M. Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 272.

⁷ Randolph Quirk, “The English Language in a Global Context”, in Quirk and Widdowson, eds., *English in the World*, 1-6; Randolph Quirk, “International Communication and the Concept of Nuclear English”, in Cristopher Brumfit, ed., *English for International Communication* (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), 17.

⁸ David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

The centrifugal tendency was considered both the cause and the result of the lack of homogeneity and of autonomous development. Similarly to many other languages and due to prolonged language contact, English is not homogeneous since it has incorporated, randomly and without specific order, features of many other languages, those languages it interacts with. This contact-induced blending causes hybridization of the language, which may be seen as strictly related to, and perhaps a consequence of, the fact that utterances made by NNSs of English or English as a Second Language (ESL) speakers, even when incorrect or semantically odd, manage surprisingly to convey the message and are, hence, not incomprehensible. This ‘distorted’ English may be seen as a convenient ‘variety’ of the language, since according to Firth it is successful because its users seem not to bother so much about rules and structures but focus rather on the message.⁹ They create a kind of hybrid and/or fragmented language which radiates from a standard to many different kinds of sub-standards, which may prove not to be necessarily confusing.

According to Kachru & Smith, the English language includes three types of varieties: those used as primary languages; those used as additional languages in multilingual communities and those used for international communication.¹⁰ There are, indeed, many examples that show how complicated and confusing the situation of English is. Put simply, it is definitely a world language but the more it becomes so, the more it varies.

McArthur, in his *The English Languages*, reported how some observers noted that without the bridge of another language (namely International Standard English) many Native Speakers of English could hardly understand each other.¹¹ The awareness of how difficult it is for Native Speakers of English to understand other NSs coming from different parts of the English speaking world is, of course, nothing new. In 1949, in fact, Wrenn described faulty communications in English pointing out two main internal forms: personal and standard when the standard was acquired.¹²

The rapid spread of English/es is unquestionably a key feature of our current times, however; English is being transformed into many semiotic systems and this may lead to the creation of non-shared linguistic conventions, hence to incomprehensibility as well as unintelligibility on the phonological level. The language may fail to fulfil its main function: that of communicating, both between natives of different varieties and in intercultural settings.

Studies on World Englishes, in particular, have recently increased, and interest in the spread of English has risen exponentially. Within this wide scope of study, particular attention has been given to the issue of mutual intelligibility and to the possible birth of a Continental variety of English, i.e. the birth of a European variety of English, and to its phonological¹³ and lexico-grammatical features.¹⁴ This possible variety is currently being called ELF Europe and is being studied in depth from various points of view. Most of the research has focused on form(s) and on the description of how removed this possible Continental variety is from standards. In my opinion, ELF studies should also be concerned with how it is

2003), 178; Tom McArthur, “Language Used as a Loaded Gun”, *English Today*, 10.2 (1994), 12-13; Tom McArthur, *The Oxford Guide to World English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 432.

⁹ Alan Firth quot. by Barry Newman in “Global Chatter: the Reality of ‘Business English’”, *The Wall Street Journal* (22 March 1995), later reprinted in *English Today*, 12.2 (1996), 16-20.

¹⁰ Kachru and Smith, *Culture, Contexts and World Englishes*, 2.

¹¹ Tom McArthur, *The English Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹² Leslie Charles Wrenn, *The English Language* (London: Methuen, 1949).

¹³ Jennifer Jenkins, “(Un)pleasant? (Un)intelligible? ELF Speakers’ Perceptions of Their Accents”, in Anna Mauranen and Elina Ranta, eds., *English as a Lingua Franca: Studies and Findings* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 10-36; Jennifer Jenkins, *The Phonology of English as an International Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁴ Barbara Seidlhofer, “Giving VOICE to English as a Lingua Franca”, in Roberta Facchinetti et al., eds., *From International to Local English – and Back Again* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 147-163; Barbara Seidlhofer, “Orientations in ELF Research: Form and Function”, in Mauranen and Ranta, eds., *English as a Lingua Franca*, 37-59.

¹⁵ Here, it is perhaps relevant to distinguish ELF and ELF Europe not because they are different and separate issues but because my analysis focuses on ELF Europe data and my findings thus refer to it specifically. Later in the article this difference is not always specified.

¹⁶ Kachru and Smith, *Culture, Contexts and World Englishes*.

¹⁷ David Abercrombie, *Elements of General Phonetics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 6.

¹⁸ John Laver and Sandy Hutchenson, eds., *Communication in Face to Face Interaction* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), 12. It is perhaps worth remembering that floor-keeping skills, time-control, turn-taking and silence management are part of this third type of information.

¹⁹ Otto Jespersen, *Essentials of English Grammar* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1933); Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, *Politeness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Geoffrey Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics* (London: Longman, 1983).

²⁰ Kachru and Smith list twelve important parameters “for a study of what being polite means in different cultures”, these are: values, face, status, rank, role, power, age, sex, social distance, intimacy, kinship, group membership; see Kachru and Smith, *Culture, Contexts and World Englishes*, 42-46.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

used as a means of interpersonal communication, how it manages pragmatically to narrow the distance between communities and/or cultures, what linguistic and cognitive strategies are at work and how unintelligibility and/or incomprehensibility are avoided or compensated for interactionally by the discourse participants.

The issue of (un)intelligibility is, not surprisingly, related to ELF and ELF Europe,¹⁵ and more generally to language contact (as mentioned above). ELF contexts are intercultural contact contexts, and just as in every intercultural contact situation participants do not share social conventions and/or cultural concepts. Not only unintelligibility and incomprehensibility but also misinterpretation are probable pitfalls, just as they are in World English (WE) contexts, particularly during face to face interactions.

According to Kachru & Smith, in every interaction participants exchange three types of information.¹⁶ The first two are conceptual information, i.e. the content, and what Abercrombie defined as indexical information.¹⁷ For the purpose of this research we refer to the third type, defined by Laver & Hutchenson as interaction-management information, since it is this kind of information that allows participants to bring a conversation/interaction to a close, successfully.¹⁸ What is also included in this third type of information is what is generally referred to as politeness, which is as crucial in ELF/contact contexts, as it is in any interaction, if not more. Every speech community has its own politeness rules and behaves accordingly.¹⁹ Politeness rules are not innate, even though the need for them is evident. They are culture specific; they stem from cultural values and they are put into practice through language; they construe human relationships and social order.²⁰

Even though every speaker, irrespective of the language s/he uses, is aware that there are non-linguistic rules governing interpersonal exchanges and uses them instinctively, s/he usually does not pay much conscious attention to them or to their fulfilment. When interactions occur in language contact situations, speakers seem to rely only or mostly on their linguistic competence. Yet, a common shared language does not guarantee a successful interaction; questions of mutual comprehensibility and interpretability and, thus, pragmatics come into play. This is particularly true, as said, for language contact contexts such as the World Englishes and the ELF ones;²¹ because, as we have all known since Hymes highlighted it, a mere linguistic competence is not enough to carry out a successful interaction;²² a solid pragmatic competence is necessary since additional meanings are brought to the interaction by cultural elements. In ELF contexts, pragmatic competence would seem even more crucial to help interactions flow smoothly than in non-ELF situations.

What I think it is crucial to investigate, is to what extent perfect mutual intelligibility and comprehensibility are necessary for interpretability, or understanding. So far not much research has been carried out on this question.

More specifically related to ELF and ELF in Europe, specifically in our case, what pragmatic skills can ELF speakers be seen to possess and use to accomplish their communicative goals of mutual interpretability? The interplay between intelligibility and pragmatics seems particularly interesting because of the singularity

of ELF contexts. Since speakers in ELF contexts are not using their own language (although it is now becoming more and more frequent to classify as ELF contexts also those in which English NSs are present among NNSs),²³ they have to wait for, and adapt to the actual situation, relying on the strategies they manage to deploy in that particular situation to accomplish their communicative goals.²⁴ In such contexts, as data seem to confirm, some underlying pragmatic competence comes into play to support speakers' actions when their, or their interlocutor's, linguistic competence seems insufficient i.e. when there is a possible danger of intelligibility. The reason why I think this be an interesting issue, worth observing and studying more in depth, is because in Language Learning Processes (LLPs), pragmatics is what is normally learned later and more slowly (rarely completely), while in ELF interactions it proves to be a fruitful and ready resource for ELF speakers to draw on alongside linguistic ones. Pragmatic rules for language are often non-systematically taught because they are generally perceived subconsciously (as stated previously) and NSs, in particular, are often unaware of them until they are broken.²⁵ Differences in pragmatics arise even when NNSs are highly proficient in L2. Furthermore, unlike grammatical errors, pragmatic ones are usually interpreted on a social/personal level rather than as outcomes of a faulty learning process; according to some scholars they may have various consequences: they may hinder good communication between speakers or make the speaker appear abrupt or brusque in social interactions, or rude or uncaring.²⁶ However, in ELF contexts different pragmatic rules may not be a hindrance; data and results show that some apparently underlying and intercultural pragmatic sensibility is a real resource that supports and complements possible linguistic weaknesses.

Intelligibility, pragmatics and ELF

Using a language implies variation or modulation at various levels, as sociolinguistic research has shown.²⁷ When the language used is not any of the participants' mother tongues, variation is quite predictably higher, and variation may lead to unintelligibility; however ethnographic research has demonstrated that interactive aims are fulfilled also when the language used by the participants is not linguistically correct or 'standard'.²⁸

As far as English is concerned, research shows that NSs are often not intelligible to NNSs, NSs do not understand a wide range of English varieties any better than NNSs, and NNSs who understand Inner Circle speakers do not necessarily understand speakers of other varieties of English unless they are used to interacting with them for some reason. Hence, (un)intelligibility is not a problem specific to ELF.²⁹ However, unlike the case of native English speakers, who may use one widely intelligible variety when talking internationally and another, less widely intelligible variety, when talking intra-nationally or within their own speech community – for example within their family or group of friends or colleagues – in ELF communities, speakers do not have two varieties to choose between, there is only a single but

²² Dell Hymes, "On Communicative Competence", in John Bernard Pride and Janet Holmes, eds., *Sociolinguistics*, (Baltimore, USA: Penguin Education, 1972), 269-293.

²³ Jennifer Jenkins, "Current Perspectives on Teaching World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca", *Tesol Quarterly*, 40.1 (2006), 157-181; Jennifer Jenkins, "The Spread of EIL: A Testing Time for Testers", *ELT Journal*, 60.1, (2006), 42-49; Luke Prodromou, "Is ELF a Variety of English?", *English Today*, 23.2 (2007), 47-53.

²⁴ For the role of ELF within intercultural communication see Hülmbauer, Böhringer, and Seidlhofer, "Introducing English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)", *Synergies Europe*, 3 (2008), 25-36.

²⁵ See Gabriel Kasper, "Can Pragmatic Competence Be Taught?", *NFLRC Network #6*, University of Hawaii, Hawaii, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center (1997); and Kenneth R. Rose and Gabriel Kasper, eds., *Pragmatics in Language Teaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁶ See Miyuki Takenoya, "Terms of Address"; Kent Lee, "Discourse Markers 'Well' and 'Oh'"; and Lynda Yates, "Comment-Response Mingle", all in Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor, *Teaching Pragmatics*, <<http://exchanges.state.gov/english/teaching/resforteach/pragmatics.html>>, 7 November 2012.

²⁷ Studies and research on diastatic, diatopic, diamesic varieties and variation support

this claim. They show that variation occurs within codified languages, i.e. despite codification speakers change their language to suit the communicative and social needs they have to fulfil.

²⁸ Beyza Björkman “Pragmatic Strategies in English as an Academic Lingua Franca: Ways of Achieving Communicative Effectiveness?”, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43 (2011), 950-964.

²⁹ Kachru and Smith, *Culture, Contexts and World Englishes*; Larry E. Smith, ed., *Discourse across Cultures: Strategies in World Englishes* (London: Prentice Hall, 1987); Larry E. Smith and John A. Bisazza, “The Comprehensibility of Three Varieties of English for College Students in Seven Countries”, *Language Learning*, 32 (1982), 259-269.

³⁰ Kachru and Smith, *Cultures, Contexts and World Englishes*, 60.

³¹ Anna Mauranen, “English as Lingua Franca: An Unknown Language?”, in Giuseppina Cortese and Anna Duszak, eds., *Identity, Community, Discourse. English in Intercultural Settings* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 269-293; Barbara Seidlhofer, “Language Variation and Change: The Case of English as a Lingua Franca”, in Katarzyna Dziubalska-Kolaczyk and Joanna Przedlacka, eds., *English Pronunciation Models: a Changing Scene* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 59-75.

³² Cecil L. Nelson, *Intelligibility in World Englishes* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Cecil L. Nelson, “Intelligibility since

continuously changing variety; we could say that there is one variety made of countless varieties.

The opposition intra-/inter- national that is applied to English cannot be used as such for ELF, since there is neither one single nation nor one space to refer to.³⁰ However, it is possible to find some issues normally used to reflect upon mutual intelligibility within the World English paradigm, namely the proven ability of English speakers/users to move from one variety to another, which in ELF contexts may mean the ability to move effectively from one EFL to another. Indeed, ELF speakers continuously adapt to newly created language systems since, as we know, ELF is generated every time it is used; it is a new system every single time. Both the description of ELF as a fluid system and its placement between form and function are currently strongly debated key issues in ELF studies by Mauranen, Seidlhofer and others.³¹

Intelligibility is commonly and erroneously used as a synonym of comprehensibility and/or interpretability, and/or of understanding in general; in other words, that if what is said or written is considered intelligible it would mean that people have understood it. However, this is hardly always so. Early pioneering studies on intelligibility did focus mostly on pronunciation and with reference to English the attitude has always been that of considering mutually intelligible, and thus comprehensible and interpretable, only those varieties reasonably similar to the British standard, especially from a phonological point of view.³² But, being intelligible does not simply equate with being comprehensible. Indeed, according to the Smith Framework for “Intelligibility” in the broad sense, i.e. the holistic language-in-use notion of understanding, there are three conceptual layers of complexity which need to be distinguished:³³ intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability. It is, in fact, possible for an utterance to be intelligible but not understood; it would be intelligible because the hearer would be able to recognize the words but not comprehensible or interpretable because the hearer might not be equipped to assign full semantic, denotative and connotative meaning or pragmatic intent to the words; for example, when interlocutors do not share cultural contexts. Understanding in general seems to imply, indeed, framing the utterance in the wider non-linguistic context, i.e. including the Firthian Context of Situation.³⁴ And if the context is not shared, it would be unlikely for the participants of an interaction to understand it fully, i.e. to interpret also its intended import, as well as its simple denotative or semantic meaning; they would recognize words only, i.e. what they hear would be recognizable and *intelligible*; they might understand the words on the semantic level, which would mean that what they hear is *comprehensible*. But, a receiver may not understand the sender’s intent and reply accordingly, i.e. the utterance may not be correctly *interpreted* by the receiver. Interpretability is defined by Smith as “the meaning behind the word/utterance”, i.e. it involves the higher, pragmatic level of understanding.³⁵

Research on ELF shows, indeed, that intelligibility is not a problem.³⁶ This is perhaps because the recognition of the words is instinctively performed in every

interaction, irrespective of the variety used or of the correctness of the speech, since, for example, it is impossible also for NSs to reproduce exactly the same sound twice. Hearers are used to accommodating and integrating phonologically what they hear.

ELF Europe as a language system and object of analysis might be seen to entail the prejudicial assumption that there is, in fact, one single object of analysis; we are all well aware by now that this is not the case, since ELF, as a variety, is generated every single time it is used.³⁷ For this reason, it is an atypical linguistic system since it is the context that generates, modifies and makes it unique. This ‘original context’ is seldom repeatable; it is itself unique.

As mentioned, research on ELF has mainly focused on pronunciation and lexico-grammatical features and not much research has been systematically carried out on pragmatic issues.³⁸ Studies on the pragmatics of ELF are crucial, I believe, to tackle the form vs. function issue of ELF. Together with some of Prodromou’s considerations on ELT, studies on its pragmatics may help to show to what extent ELF Europe for example, is a variety of English,³⁹ despite its currently lacking the fourth, cultural, dimension of true varieties suggested by Llamzon, According to him a new variety of English can be identifiable with reference to four essential sets of features: ecological, historical, sociolinguistic, and cultural. As far as the cultural dimension is concerned, he argues that “works by novelists, poets and playwrights have demonstrated that the English language can be used as a vehicle for the transmission of the cultural heritage of Third World countries. The appearance of this body of literary works signals that the transplanted tree has finally reached maturity, and is now beginning to blossom and fructify”.⁴⁰

However, we do find a number of studies in the 90s which investigated ELF settings with regard to pragmatics or discourse strategies. Among the earliest, we can refer to Alan Firth’s work which showed how interactions were successful despite the occurrence of grammatical infelicities and pronunciation variants, because various strategies were at work.⁴¹ Firth’s research and findings are extremely important, even though it is perhaps worth highlighting that his corpus was made up of business conversations, where the professional need for successful communication probably led to successful business transactions. Hence, participants’ motivation was perhaps higher than, for example, that of casual conversation participants. However, the strategies used by Firth’s businessmen were those normally used by participants in interactions: the ‘Let-it-pass’ strategy where speakers avoid problematic situations by letting unclear items pass; the ‘Make-it-normal’ strategy where reformulation is used to restructure unusual usages; repair strategies were not found.

The business world was the context of another investigation carried out by Gramkow Andresen,⁴² which confirmed Firth’s outcomes: in ELF interactions, speakers focus on content more than they do on form and the conversational aim makes them exploit various compensating strategies and behave cooperatively.

An interest in research on the pragmatics of ELF has re-bloomed recently, however, thanks to several European projects such as, among others, VOICE

1969”, *World Englishes*, 27.3-4 (2008), 297-308.

³³ Larry E. Smith, “Spread of English and Issues on Intelligibility”, in Braj Kachru, ed., *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 88.

³⁴ John R. Firth, “The Technique of Semantics”, *Transactions of the Philological Society*, (1935), 36-72.

³⁵ Smith, “Spread of English and Issues on Intelligibility”, 76.

³⁶ Anna Mauranen and Elina Ranta, eds., *English as a Lingua Franca*; Alessia Cogo, “Strategic Use and Perceptions of English as a Lingua Franca”, *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, 46.3, (2010), 295-312; Alessia Cogo and Martin Dewey, “Efficiency in ELF Communication. From Pragmatic Motives to Lexico-grammatical Innovation”, *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 5.2 (2006), 59-94.

³⁷ Will Baker, “The Cultures of English as a Lingua Franca”, *TESOL Quarterly*, 43.4 (2009), 567-592.

³⁸ Alessia Cogo, “Accommodating Differences in ELF Conversations: a Study of Pragmatic Strategies”, in Mauranen and Ranta, eds., *English as a Lingua Franca*, 254-273; Cogo and Dewey, “Efficiency in ELF Communication”.

³⁹ Prodromou, “Is ELF a Variety of English?”, 47-53.

⁴⁰ Teodoro A. Llamzon, “Essential Features of New Varieties of English”,

in Richard B. Noss, ed., *Varieties of English in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983), 104.

⁴¹ Alan Firth, “The Discursive Accomplishment of Normality: On Conversation Analysis and ‘Lingua Franca’ English”, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 26.2 (1996), 237-259; Alan Firth, “‘Lingua Franca’ Negotiations: Towards an Interactional Approach”, *World Englishes*, 9 (1990), 69-80.

⁴² Karsten Gramkow Andresen, “Lingua Franca Discourse: An Investigation of the Use of English in an International Business Context”, unpublished M.A. thesis (Aalborg, 1993), cit. in Beyza Björkman, “Pragmatic Strategies in English as an Academic Lingua Franca: Ways of Achieving Communicative Effectiveness?”, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43 (2011), 950-964.

⁴³ Juliane House, “Misunderstanding in Intercultural Communication: Interactions in English as a Lingua Franca and the Myth of Mutual Intelligibility”, in Claus Gnutzmann, ed., *Teaching and Learning English as a Global Language* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1999), 151; see also Björkman, “Pragmatic Strategies in English”.

⁴⁴ Cogo and Dewey, “Efficiency in ELF Communication”; see also Gabriele Kasper and Kenneth R. Rose, “Pragmatics and SLA”, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 19 (1999), 81-104; and Gabriele Kasper, “A Bilingual Perspective on Interlanguage Pragmatics”,

(<http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/>) and ELFA (<http://www.eng.helsinki.fi/elva>) and to scholars such as Seidlhofer, Jenkins, Mauranen, Hülmbauer, Björkman and House.

In 1999 House, for example, proposed five performance criteria to achieve pragmatic fluency that can be used to analyse ELF pragmatically:

- Appropriate use of routine pragmatic phenomena such as discourse strategies;
- Ability to initiate topics and topic change, making use of appropriate routines;
- Ability to ‘carry weight’ in a conversation;
- Ability to show turn-taking, replying/responding;
- Appropriate rate of speech, types of filled and unfilled pauses, frequency and function of repairs.⁴³

Analysing her data, House found that casual ELF conversations are, indeed, often successful and effective. Cogo and Dewey consider research in the pragmatics of ELF to start within the scope of the cross-cultural communication field of study and refer to the works by Kasper and Kasper and Rose – even though they underline how these studies are highly constrained by their setting, i.e. formal school settings, by the participants, namely learners, and by the research aim, that is shedding light on Second Language Acquisition (SLA).⁴⁴

My understanding is that ELF cannot be analysed properly out of spontaneous settings. Simulations, formal settings and the like are useful to verify tools of analysis but cannot help in investigating the pragmatics of ELF, since it is a language system generated in and by the setting in which it is used. Indeed, studies in casual conversations partially contradict what Firth and others found in their research. Mauranen, Pitzl and Kaur, for instance, report high frequency of negotiation of meaning and relatively low frequency of the ‘Let-it-pass’ strategy, and consequently very few misunderstandings.⁴⁵

For the purposes of this present study, the analysis of casual conversations conducted by Meierkord proves to be particularly interesting.⁴⁶ Unlike the above-mentioned studies, it focused on small-talk, a type of interaction in which motivation could be expected to be lower than in business encounters and therefore a weaker boost to the accomplishment of the interactional exchange. Contrary to common belief, what she found confirms ELF speakers’ sound cooperative attitude in interactions.

For the sake of completeness, however, one must also mention some recent studies in ELF pragmatics whose results contradict those mentioned above. Their findings reveal instances of ineffectiveness in communication. Planken and Knapp reported fewer examples of safe-talk, and instances of misunderstandings, conversation disruption, and difficulties in being effective in a number of communicative functions, not to mention the occurrence of faulty cooperative forms of negotiation.⁴⁷ Björkman rightly reminds us, however, that the setting of Planken’s study was a business students’ simulation which was then compared against real business negotiations.⁴⁸

In the next section, we shall be examining two casual, spontaneous, multi-party ELF conversations in an attempt to contribute some insights on the pragmatics of ELF in natural settings.

ELF and casual conversations

In 1975 Fillmore asserted that “[t]he language of face-to-face conversation is the basic and primary use of language, all others being best described in terms of their manner of deviation from that base”.⁴⁹ Conversation is a kind of collaborative and, at times, intercultural behaviour.⁵⁰ Dialogues, and multi-logues, are linguistic modes which prove fundamental to an understanding of language and its uses, they in fact enable the process of the construction of texts in and around the existing differences between interlocutors to be highlighted.⁵¹

As Berger and Luckmann stated, the most important vehicle of reality maintenance is conversation;⁵² and as Deborah Tannen later pointed out, each person’s life is lived as a series of conversations.⁵³ As social individuals, indeed, we spend much of our lives interacting with other human beings. Interacting is not merely a mechanical turn-taking activity, nor is it the simple act of producing sounds and combining them into words and sentences with the decoding by the other participants. It is, rather, a meaning-making process, in which participants negotiate their meanings with each other.

The way speakers draw on linguistic resources – whether they be phonetic, grammatical, semantic or discoursal/pragmatic – to shape their own social identities is evident in conversations. It provides information about the context and is also influenced by the cultural context in which the communicative event is being performed. Interacting implies the shaping of a possible meaning. It is a semantic and pragmatic activity which concerns the explanation, the exhibition and the negotiation of one’s own ideas and beliefs about the world, and of one’s attitudes to others.

Meaning-making, negotiation and more generally identity exhibition are characterised by different conversational styles. A casual conversation can be defined as a private text, a type of text in which the ‘interactional’ function of language, in Brown and Yule’s sense, is mainly performed.⁵⁴ It concerns the private or interpersonal sphere and it is not limited or hindered by necessarily fixed patterns. It also strengthens human bonds in so far as it is analogous to what Coupland terms ‘small talk’,⁵⁵ or even to Malinowski’s “phatic communion”.⁵⁶ It is a kind of conversation which implies talking for the sake of talking together; a kind of action which serves to initiate and maintain interpersonal ties between people brought together, perhaps, merely by a desire for companionship.

Casual conversation or ‘ordinary conversation’ has always been considered an interesting issue by scholars belonging to varied fields of study: “... the pervasiveness of spoken interaction in daily life has made it an interesting domain of study for researchers with backgrounds in ethnomethodology, sociolinguistics, philosophy,

in Joseph H. O’ Mealy and Laura E. Lyons Language, eds., *Linguistics, and Leadership: Essays in Honor of Carol M. K. Eastman* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1998), 89-108.

⁴⁵ See Anna Mauranen, “Signalling and Preventing Misunderstanding in English as Lingua Franca Communication”, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 177 (2006), 123-150; Marie-Luise Pitzl, “Non-understanding in English as a Lingua Franca: Examples from a Business Context”, *Vienna English Working Papers*, 14 (2005), 50-71; and Jagdish Kaur, “Pre-empting Problems of Understanding in ELF”, in Mauranen and Ranta, eds., *English as a Lingua Franca*, 107-125.

⁴⁶ Christiane Meierkord, “Interpreting Successful Lingua Franca Interaction. An Analysis of Non-native-/ Non-native Small Talk Conversations in English”, in Karin Pittner and Anita Fetzer, eds., *Neuere Entwicklungen in Der Gesprächsforschung. Sonderausgabe Von Linguistic Online*, 5.1 (2000), <http://www.linguistik-online.de/1_00/index.html>, 13 May 2012.

⁴⁷ See Brigitte Planken, “Managing Rapport in Lingua Franca Sales Negotiations: a Comparison of Professional and Aspiring Negotiators”, *English for Specific Purposes*, 24.4 (2005), 381-400; and Annelie Knapp, “Using English as a Lingua Franca for (Mis-)managing Conflict in an International University Context: An Example from a Course in Engineering”, *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43 (2011), 978-990.

- ⁴⁸ Björkman, “Pragmatic Strategies”.
- ⁴⁹ Charles Fillmore, “Pragmatics and the Description of Discourse”, in Peter Cole, ed., *Radical Pragmatics* (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 143-166.
- ⁵⁰ Susan Eggins and Diana Slade, *Analysing Casual Conversation* (London: Cassell, 1997), 312.
- ⁵¹ Gunter Kress, *Communication and Culture: An Introduction* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1987), 15.
- ⁵² Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday; London: Penguin, 1966), 172-173.
- ⁵³ Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), 13.
- ⁵⁴ Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), distinguish “transactional” and “interactional” meaning and functions.
- ⁵⁵ Justine Coupland, ed., *Small Talk* (Harlow: Longman, 2000).
- ⁵⁶ Bronisław Malinowski, “On Phatic Communion”, in Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland, eds., *The Discourse Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 1999 [1926]), 302-305.
- ⁵⁷ Eggins and Slade, *Analysing Casual Conversation*, 23.
- structural-functional linguistics and social semiotics...”.⁵⁷ Anthropologists focus on it because they consider it a practice through which sociocultural norms and values are expressed and rooted. Sociologists claim ordinary conversation offers “privileged data for studying how people make sense of everyday social life”. Linguists recognize that conversation “tells us something about the nature of language as a *resource* for doing social life”.⁵⁸
- However, its apparent triviality should not suggest that it is almost devoid of meaning. Contrary to popular beliefs, a casual conversation is a highly significant socio-cultural activity. It is, indeed, somewhat prescriptively structured and functionally motivated, since it relies on patterns of such elements as discourse markers, formulaic expressions, frequent collocations and/or adjacency pairs. It is also supported by the more widespread interpersonal needs which drive human beings to define continuously who they are and how they establish relations with others.
- As mentioned above, the importance of casual conversation is also demonstrated by the interest many different branches of linguistics, semiotics and the social sciences in general have recently shown in it. For example, systemic-functional linguistics considers language mainly a matter of social semiotics and, consequently, sees conversations as a way of conducting one’s social life; to use Halliday’s functional framework, of the three metafunctions of his system, it is tenor which concerns us most, because of its focus on interpersonal values.⁵⁹ By highlighting the links between language and social life the functional-systemic approach supports the idea of conversation as a way of doing social life.
- Micro-interactions of everyday life are viewed also by Critical Discourse Analysts as realizations of wider macro-social structures. Bakhtin provides a formidable framework for an understanding of the interrelationships between the macro-level of ideologies and the micro-level of conversation.⁶⁰ According to him, conversational meaning cannot be understood without reference to a larger discourse plane; no instance of language is original, it is always an activation of voices that have been heard and used before. All the above mentioned issues concur to corroborate the claim that casual conversations provide the best data for a solid description of the pragmatics of ELF and the effectiveness or key role of Conversation Analysis as a means of investigation.
- For all these reasons, from the point of view of linguistics, casual conversation is a key site for the negotiation of some dimensions of our social identity, including gender, age-group, social class and speech community membership.⁶¹

The corpus

The corpus used for this author’s general research project, from which two exchanges have been selected here, was purposely constructed and is made up of a total of 58 casual conversations. Gathering spontaneous conversation is an arduous task; unlike written texts, spoken ones are not easy to collect and dealing with casual conversations is even more difficult. Debates, speeches or other programmed oral

linguistic productions are, indeed, somehow more easily accessible and recordable because they are predictable, even though some features – such as gestures and facial and eye expressions – are lost in sound recording.

Recording everyday casual conversations is not easy, also since collecting natural spoken data while behaving in a morally correct manner towards the participants is tricky. Recording without previous consent is more effective but might be ethically dubious. It is, however, more effective because the actors in the communicative event are not anxious or nervous and are spontaneous rather than self-conscious; it also eliminates the so-called observer paradox. However, the problems with participants are not the only ones; there are also problems of reliability and fidelity. Deborah Tannen maintains that recordings destroy the very essence of talk, which is the fact that it usually disappears as soon as it is uttered.⁶² Reliable recordings are difficult to achieve because people might move around in the discursive space while usually the equipment does not and/or, at times, the quality of the recording is lost, affecting pitch and tone.

Therefore, it was my decision not to tell the people beforehand that their conversations were going to be recorded. Recording devices were then placed in some friends' or acquaintances' apartments and offices, in various UK locations; one occupant in each site was asked to help. In all, three people were involved in each location to avoid possible problems with equipment. Fortunately, the recordings went smoothly and no help was needed.

The attempt was also to collect data as varied as possible, and for this reason apartments and offices in which the linguistic context could be considered representative were chosen. The flats and offices were occupied by mixed-language interactants; English NSs were not always present. All speakers were highly competent in English; none of them was a learner of English nor considered a poor English speaker, but were all considered to be at least at the 'independent' level, where variation and adaptation occurs normally.

Casual-conversations were recorded for 15 days, at the end of which period the people were informed about the recordings and were asked whether they wanted to listen to the tape before giving their permission for the recordings to be used.

The first step was to listen to the recordings and to transcribe them. What proved to be a hindrance was mainly the variability in the quality of sound in relation to the movements of the speakers. The second step was to analyse them from a pragmatic perspective. Nearly all the settings share some features, namely a variable number of participants and the triviality of the topics mostly related to everyday life or job problems.

What is presented below is a selection of two conversations chosen according to their degree of typicality within ELF, and the frequency and effectiveness of the linguistic strategies employed. Comparing casual conversations is demanding because they are unstructured events with few predictable items or situations, and for this reason it is extremely important to establish analytical criteria in compliance with the aim of the study.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 6-7.

⁵⁹ Michael A.K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (New York: Arnold, 1978), 142.

⁶⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

⁶¹ Eggins and Slade, *Analysing Casual Conversation*.

⁶² Deborah Tannen, *Conversational Style* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1984), 35.

⁶³ Cogo, "Accommodating Differences in ELF Conversations".

⁶⁴ Howard Giles and Nickolas Coupland, *Language: Contexts and Consequences* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991).

⁶⁵ In the extracts, all names have been changed for privacy's sake, nor can details about where the conversation took place be provided. Conversations have been transcribed according to the system proposed in Paul Ten Have, *Doing Conversation Analysis. A Practical Guide*, (London, Sage, 1999).

The criteria chosen are not the only ones possible but, I believe, they succeed in convincingly describing the pragmatic attitude and competence of ELF speakers. One criterion is frequency which refers to the occurrence of a phenomenon across all the conversations, the other is effectiveness which concerns the degree of success of an interaction, i.e. the absence of communication breakdown and unintelligibility. I believe effectiveness in interactions should be one of the major focuses of pragmatic research in the domain of ELF.⁶³ For this reason, following Giles and Coupland, instances of how participants variously adapt or modulate their language to avoid unintelligibility and accomplish their communicative goals have been highlighted and analysed bearing in mind that, in the ELF domain adapting one's own language and style means also trying to narrow cultural distance.⁶⁴

The first conversation shown below, TALKING ABOUT HOLIDAYS, shows the high cooperative attitude ELF speakers have – the goals seems to converge, all the speakers want to end the conversation successfully, their interactional purpose seems strong.⁶⁵

1. TALKING ABOUT HOLIDAYS

4 participants: Nuria – Spanish, Katia – Italian, Revekka – Greek, and Jane – British
Age 27 – 30 All females; SETTING: at Katia's home in the U.K. talking about holidays.

- (1) J: I went to STA last Friday (.) er (.) ehm just to know (.) you know
(2) just to start thinking about holidays
(3) K: Wow (.) already (.) but (.) er (.) prices are (.) our major problem is that we are **off**
(4) J: **off (.)** when everybody is
(5) K: Yeah, we're off when all the others are and in high season. And if we won't
(6) book well in advance (0.4) we don't get cheap flights or holiday packs
(7) R: **Escucha**, is not a problem of money only (.) er (.) ehm (0.7) is a problem of
(8) crowd. You never get places or rooms
(9) J: Yeah, escucha is true. I was talking to the girl at STA and she said that (0.3) budget
(10) holidays =
(11) R: = **budget holidays?** =
(12) K: = **cheap holidays**
(13) J: ok (.) are not available after July. She can hardly find something for herself.
(14) you understand? She usually book in December for her summer
(15) holidays!!!
(16) R: Girls (.) I am lucky (.) I think (.) bah (.) in a sense (0.8) I go home (.) you
(17) know(.) Greece (0.3)and not need to be elsewhere, to go anywhere (0.8) the
(18) sea (.) our sea. My aunt has a house at the seaside and I go there
(19) for some days (0.3) the sun (.) our wonderful sun (.) that's Greece (0.3) girls!!
(20) J: **Fuck (.)**.lucky you love!! The best I get from my relatives is Yorkshire!!! I
(21) have an uncle there (.) er (.) in Yorkshire (0.9) the best place in the world for
(22) him!! He lives alone and doesn't want to go anywhere (.) awful place
(23) Yorkshire(.)nothing good for your holidays (.) if not for being free
(24) K: I don't know yet (.) actually (.) I don't wanna go to Milan..=

- (25) N: = **where your mum is**
- (26) K: yeah (.) but is damp, hot, sticky and dirty (.)
- (27) N: The air is dirty I remember (.) puah!]
- (28) K: yeah (0.7) I'd rather go to Marco's hometown, is not on the sea but just a 10
- (29) minutes far (1.0)
- (30) N: **Tu quieras** (.) oh (.) ehm (.) you want to spend some of your holidays with his
- (31) mother (.) and his family? You must be crazy, **chica loca** (.) (laughter) you know them?
- (32) Have you ever met them?
- (33) K: They are nice (.) she is very fond of Elena. she loves
- (34) looking after the baby
- (35) N: mmmmm I not believe, mothers-in-law are hardly friendly (1.0) ehmmm
- (36) J: Listen Nuria (.) she wants to start well with her (.) Why do you go on like this?
- (37) Why do you make her worried or angry?er (.) for something,
- (38) **a situation** she hasn't lived (.) yet..at least..you see..
- (39) N: but (.)..but..I..it's for her... (laughter) **safety** (.)]
- (40) J: **safety..yeah** (.) maybe she will (.) when she comes back she will tell us how nice and]
- (41) wonderful and friendly they were (.) **erh** (.) or perhaps she will be desperate and
- (42) will tell us how awful it was down there (0.9) she will be as mad as a
- (43) hatter (.)
- (44) R: Jane is right Nuria (.) just give her time..I (.) **er** (.) **ehm** I know is not easy (.) I
- (45) tried with Jordi's family (.) I used to visit them and spend some time with
- (46) them also (.) even some summer holidays (.)..but she was awful (.) she
- (47) (.) virtually told me off **all** (0.8) **time**]
- (48) K: always ..did she! Unbelievable (.)]
- (49) R: softly, gently in a sense but(.) sometimes she was so nasty (.)]
- (50) K: = nasty? =
- (51) J: = nasty? =
- (52) N: = nasty? =
- (53) R: = yeah, she once complained about the way I was brought up
- (54) J: really ? =
- (55) N: Don't(.)think it Jane! Ehi...Is not because she is Greek and is from the South (.)
- (56) R: that was the last time (.)
- (57) K: **it was the drop..ehm..er..ohu** =
- (58) J: = **it was the straw that broke the camel's back** (.) you want to say, don't you?
- (59) R: yeah (.) I not liked it at all (.) moaning about my mum!
- (60) J: well done (.) but ...we don't know (.) yet
- (61) R. ok we wait and see what happens]
- (62) K: Shhss I want to watch the news. they might say something about the Italian]
- (63) strike (.)
- (64) J: mahh (0.3) I don't think (0.8) look up on the Internet, better.

In this first conversation some instances of positive interactional behaviour can be highlighted. It can be analysed from an interactional point of view, i.e. verifying

⁶⁶ Gene H. Lerner, "Notes on Overlap Management in Conversation: The Case of Delayed Completion", *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 53 (Spring 1989), 167-177; Harvey Sacks, Emanuel A. Schegloff and Gal Jefferson, "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-Taking for Conversation", *Language*, 50.4 part 1 (December 1974), 696-735.

⁶⁷ Cogo and Dewey, "Efficiency in ELF Communication".

⁶⁸ Bettina Heinz, "Backchannel Responses as Strategic Responses in Bilingual Speakers' Conversations", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35.7 (July 2003), 1113-1142.

⁶⁹ Steven Gross, "Intentionality and the Markedness Model in Literary Code-switching", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32.9 (2000), 1283-1303; Carol Myers-Scotton, "Explaining the Role of Norms and Rationality in Code-switching", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 32.9 (2000), 1259-1271.

⁷⁰ John J. Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁷¹ See Juliane House, "English as a Lingua Franca: a Threat to Multilingualism?", *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7.4 (2003), 556-578.

⁷² See Jan Blommaert, "Commentary: a Sociolinguistics of Globalization", *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 7.4 (2003), 607-623; Li Wei, "The 'Why'

how the interaction flows, how interactional goals are accomplished; there are many instances of strategies which can be indicative of a supportive, cooperative and positive behaviour.

First of all, we have examples of utterance completions (ll. 3-4-5, 13-14, 24-25, 57-58), where speakers help each other by disclosing close attention to the interlocutor's discourse and a common interactional aim. As early research showed, completion is a key device to avoid overlapping and conversation disruption. All the same, it is also a strategic tool used to keep the floor, especially as delayed completion.⁶⁶ Utterance completions, moreover, do not fix a hierarchy in the exchange, i.e. there is no one role stronger than another; on the contrary they are examples of supportive behaviour.

Similar and perhaps even more supportive are the instances of latching,⁶⁷ that is when a turn follows the other immediately, without pauses of any kind. Examples of this can be found in ll. 11, 12, 25, 50-53, 58 in which the participants seem to hurry the conversation and speed up the exchange to accomplish their final aim.

As in nearly every conversation between equals, overlaps are a frequent occurrence and this conversation typically displays this feature. Far from being examples of disrespect, overlaps indicate an interest in the conversation and a will to keep its pace up vigorously; examples of overlaps are in ll. 3-4, 19-20, 26-27, 39-40, 48-49, 61-62.

Equally pervasive are the instances of backchannelling, verbal and non-verbal responses that appear to be a universal behaviour in conversations, even though sometimes specific backchannel behaviours are particular to language and culture.⁶⁸ Examples of 'mmm', 'yeah', 'right', 'wow', together with head nods and smiles that are not displayed in the transcription, are clear examples of the speakers' intentions and of a balanced setting. Despite their low semantic value, backchannels play a double role, on the one hand encouraging speakers to go on talking, and on the other supporting the efficiency of the communicative action.

In this conversation other strategies and phenomena can also be retrieved. There are three examples of code-switching (ll. 7, 9, 30, 31). The role and value of code-switching in ELF is still debated; code-switching in ELF is not only an instance of the bilingual or multilingual competence of the speakers,⁶⁹ nor a way to adapt to the situation⁷⁰ or an identity index/marker within a neutral setting, as stated by House.⁷¹ In the domain of ELF studies, scholars like Blommaert consider code-switching just one of its features and others like Wei maintain that code-switching is a strategy used to bring new meanings about.⁷² What code-switching is definitely not, I believe, is a sign of poor language competence. In the conversation shown above, the speakers are highly competent in English and the examples of code-switching concern simple and frequent lexical items which would not justify the choice of another language. In one instance (l. 9) there is an accommodative behaviour when British English Native-Speaker speaker J. uses Spanish <escucha> to accommodate to R. who had just previously (l.7) used it. Interestingly enough, R. herself is Greek, not Spanish. So they are both perhaps humorously accomodating

to N. ? Jane, also possibly displays a further case of accommodative code-mixing, (in l. 64) when she says ‘mahh’ (a very Italian-like expression of doubt), and then seems to produce a slightly foreigner-speak utterance: ‘look up on the Internet (.) better’.

There are two further behaviours worth noticing: ll. 11 and 12 provide an example of clear cooperative interactional behaviour. K. understands R.’s confusion, envisages a possible breakdown and pre-empts a possible problem changing the ‘budget holidays’ to ‘cheap holidays’ to let the conversation flow smoothly. The last noteworthy example of negotiation of meaning is what happens in lines 57 and 58, when K. seems willing to use an idiom and struggles with its possible translation. J. helps her and latches with the correct English idiom asking for a backchannel overtly with a question tag: ‘don’t you?’. The attitude of speaker J., the NS, is clearly cooperative; and both speakers have the same interactional conversational goal.

The second conversation we shall look at here, also takes place in the UK, though not in a home setting, and also has one NS participant.

2. NEW ZEALAND

4 participants: Zaira – Dutch-Malaysian, Ulrike – German, Cristina – Italian, and Rob – British. age: 28-30, setting: a U.K. University department office during coffee break.

- (1) U: wow. I’m **dead** (.) I was at the Post Office all day trying to send this bloody
- (2) parcel to my aunt in New Zealand? Aargh (*scream*) =
- (3) C: = **dead** poor you (.) I know exactly how you feel =
- (4) R: = yeah ... you have an aunt in New Zealand? is German?
- (5) U: ehm yeah sort of (.) she was born in Germany but moved to New Zealand
- (6) when she was fifteen
- (7) Z: Oh Oh er (.) ehm the old continent goes to the newest one (*laughter*) New
- (8) Zealand (.) I went to University in New Zealand
- (9) U: so (.) ehm maybe you can help me (0.8) The nice lady at the Post Office wants
- (10) a code, a special number (.) an ID for the Post Office in New Zealand
- (11) I want to send the parcel to (.) But I haven’t a clue of where I can find this,
- (12) it’s red tape stuff.
- (13) Z: I know (.) gosh if I know (.) I can ask my mum, for the code (.) I mean
- (14) (*Ulrike goes back to work*)
- (15) Z: uff I am happy to help, but if she behave like she did (.) =
- (16) R: = **what you mean** =
- (17) Z: = **I mean** (.) ehm (.) it is not the first time she asks me things about New Zealand (.) Last
- (18) Christmas she wanted to go to visit her relatives and asked
- (19) my help for transport (.) and (.)
- (20) R: and what else?
- (21) Z: er (.) yeah (.) then (.) well (.) nothing in particular (.) **but** (.)
- (22) R: but (.) but
- (23) Z: I felt she wanted more, ‘cos she asked for very specific things
- (24) like buying tickets sending them over to her (.) =

and ‘How’ Questions in the Analysis of Conversational Code-switching”, in Peter Auer, ed., *Code-switching in Conversation* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 156-179.

- (25) R: = What else (.) what did she ask for (.)
- (26) Z: ok then (.)er (.)ehm (.) well..you know my sister was living there, don't you?
- (27) R: yeah I know I know
- (28) Z: ok (.) ehm (.) I had tried to go and visit her since I came here (.) unfortunately
- (29) I could not..flight prices, availability and so on (.) Ulrike knew and (.)
- (30) R: and..
- (31) Z: and perhaps (.) she expects me to ask my sister to help her or to welcome
- (32) her at her place (.) I didn't (.) and she was (0.8) I felt (.) I thought (.)upset
- (33) R: right but that's your own feeling. <Has she told you anything about it? >
- (34) Z: No, actually she hasn't but she is still ehm not so friendly
- (35) with me (.) since (.) then. When she invite people she not ask
- (36) me to join them (.)or (.) when my brother is here she ignore him (.)
- (37) (.) Him enters the room
- (38) and she is watching tv, she doesn't say hello (.) nothing!!
- (39) R: But (.) today she was (.)
- (40) Z: (.) yeah she was friendly and cheerful (.) because she need me
- (41) C: (laughter)
- (42) But don't *rise* your hackles now (.) it's her character, her personality
- (43) Z: Listen don't tell me so (.) I am angry I smell a rat and expect problems (.)
- (44) C: mah (.) who knows (.) what **can she asks** you, she might ask again to be helped
- (45) for the accommodation (.) if she goes there or **she can ask** you to find this
- (46) number she is looking for.
- (47) Z: yeah (0.8) who knows Or(.)you'll see she wanna ask me to tell my sister to go to the Post Office
- (48) and collect the parcel for her aunt..and no **terima kash** ?
- (49) C: **Maybe** (.) I am not sure, I won't swear about it. She might back down on this (.) =
- (50) Z: = **Maybe** (.) let' go back to work my LUV
- (51) C: yeah

⁷³ Helena Kangasharju, "Alignment in Disagreement: Forming Oppositional Alliances in Committee Meetings", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34.10 (2002), 1447-1471; Julia Lichtkoppler, "'Male. Male.' – 'Male?' – 'The sex is male.' – The role of Repetition in ELF Conversation", *Vienna English Working papers*, 16.2, (2007), 39-65.

⁷⁴ Latchings are indicated by = / equal signs.

The general attitude of the participants to this conversation is cooperative and accommodating. There are examples of repetition (ll. 1-3, 16-17, 21-22, 44-47, and 49-50) which disclose a collaborative intent, a cautious behaviour which avoids possible interruptions of the conversations and an alignment with the other speakers.⁷³

There are a number of latchings⁷⁴ (ll. 2, 3, 16, 17, 25, 50) which highlight the informality of the conversation and the setting. Even though we are in an office, the participants are on their coffee break and therefore their way of talking and interacting is diaphasically different from that which might occur in actual work situations.

There are backchannels (ll. 5, 21, 28, 33, 47, 51,) which stimulate the speakers to go on talking and, at the same time, guarantee efficiency. There is also one single example of code-switching (l.48) and it is nearly a closing utterance; anyway,

following Cogo and Schegloff & Sacks, we might say that the choice of code-switching in the final part of an interaction helps the speaker pragmatically to end the conversation.⁷⁵

Unlike the previous conversation, the use of two idioms “don’t rise your hackles”⁷⁶ and “I smell a rat” (ll. 42, 43) does not lead to a necessarily supportive and collaborative stance even though they don’t cause a breakdown in the interaction, a ‘Let-it-pass’ strategy seems to be used, here too. Still, the first idiom is recognized as such, i.e. comprehended and interpreted, despite its not-quite-correctness and triggers a similar linguistic behaviour, since Z. in l. 43 uses another idiom to answer C.’s intention in l. 42 and to accommodate to her.

As previously stated, the two conversations analysed above are only a selection from a wider corpus. Nevertheless, they provide, I believe, strong evidence of these ELF speakers’ attitudes in casual conversation. Their attitude is totally and systematically cooperative and supportive. Some pre-empting strategies can be noted and at least one single instance of the ‘Let-it-pass’ strategy. The success of the interactions is clearly the main aim for each speaker who engages in a negotiation of meaning to accomplish it. From the data, both those discussed here and those from other parts of the project, ELF speakers would seem to ‘prefer’ accommodating and supporting strategies. The specific characteristics of ELF conversations in this case seem to be the choice of safe topics, a fast conversation (latchings serve this aim) and backchannelling.

Interactants seem to follow some politeness rules that might be considered characteristic of ELF. Misunderstandings, conversation breakdown or slow paced conversation do not seem to be features of casual, spontaneous, informal EFL interactions, judging from my data. There are instances of them in some conversations but they are neither frequent and efficient nor typical, and therefore not meaningful as regards the fixed criteria, not to mention, some instances of self-repairs which highlight the positive and efficient attitude of ELF speakers. Some participants, indeed, repeat their statements or rephrase them to avoid misunderstandings and accomplish their communicative aim.

As far as intelligibility is concerned, it will always be an issue because it is strictly related to variation, since the more a language is removed from a shared ‘standard’ the more intelligibility and incomprehensibility is likely to fail. Our data show how ELF speakers do not seem to be frightened of being unintelligible or of being incomprehensible or of being misunderstood: idioms, code-switching, fast-pace, latchings are instances of confident linguistic behaviour. To refer back to Smith’s framework, in an ELF context it might, indeed, prove more useful to distinguish the three layers of ‘understanding’ devised by the scholar and focus more on comprehensibility and interpretability. Intelligibility as such, i.e. the recognition of the words, seems unproblematic; the higher conversational aim seems to make EFL speakers focus on wider chunks of the utterances and neglect single words that are, at times, substituted by trouble-free foreign items in code-switching. ELF speakers prove to be efficient, top-rank speakers, perhaps because of their

⁷⁵ See Cogo, “Accommodating Differences in ELF Conversations”; and Emanuel A. Schegloff and Harvey Sacks, “Opening Up Closings,” *Semiotica*, 8.4 (1973), 289-327.

⁷⁶ Which in standard English would have been ‘don’t *raise* your hackles’.

intercultural competence, which turns out to be far more important than their linguistic/lexical/phonological competence.

As Kachru and Smith claim: “Inner Circle English speakers need as much cultural information and as much exposure to different varieties of English as do Outer Circle speakers if they are to increase their levels of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability of world Englishes”,⁷⁷ and the same can surely be said for ELF speakers. Intelligibility is, then, not a problem solely of varieties ‘other’ than British or American English, it is an issue related to all contexts of which variation is a feature.

⁷⁷ Kachru and Smith, *Cultures, Contexts and World Englishes*, 69.

Conclusions and summary

The spread of the English language and its new role as a global language has raised, and continues to raise, several issues, mostly related to intelligibility. The birth and establishment of ELF, English as a Lingua Franca, in Europe, and elsewhere, is a phenomenon which is difficult to describe because, unlike all other language systems it is not codified nor can it be so easily, since it is generated, every time it is used, by the very context that generates it. Whether or not it can indeed be called a system, what can be asserted is that its role is not simply mono-functional. As time goes by it acquires more and more functions such as the interactional one, which proves to be a fundamental notion to identify ELF pragmatic significance/strength. As a system, ELF is being currently studied and analysed thanks to various European projects and the research of several scholars, as specified earlier here. Earlier research has mainly focused on forms: lexico-grammar and phonology, even though studies in the pragmatics of ELF are growing.

As part of a larger research project, a small corpus of casual NNs-Ns multiparty conversations using ELF was examined for pragmatic clues. The aims of the research were, first of all, to disclose what strategies ELF speakers might choose and enact in their conversation, secondly, to describe what kind of interactional attitude the speakers disclose and, last but not least, to verify whether intelligibility plays a role in ELF conversations. From the data it seems clear that the ELF speakers depicted here (as well as in the other data not presented here) display a sound cooperative and supportive behaviour, that they use several pragmatic and discourse strategies to accomplish their interactional aims, and, furthermore, that intelligibility, in Smith’s terms, is a not problem since they seem to focus on a higher level.

The need for further research into the pragmatics of ELF is evident, and my understanding is that it should be carried out within the World English paradigm as this will widen the scope of analysis for the study of language and variation and of language varieties in general.

Giuliana Garzone, Maurizio Gotti, eds., *Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise. Genres and Trends* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), 451 pp., ISBN 978-3034306201

Reviewed by **Maria Cristina Aiezza**

In recent years, the study of business discourse has become increasingly popular among researchers of English for Specific Purposes. Definable as “social action in business contexts” (Francesca Bargiela-Chiappini, Catherine Nickerson, and Brigitte Plankenet, *Business Discourse*, 2007, 3), it has been investigated in a variety of areas within discourse studies, such as conversation analysis, genre studies, pragmatics, ethnography and cross-cultural studies. The enterprise, or organisation – whatever its nature – has been defined in the end as a system based on the interaction between social actors, as being at the centre of a stream of information, and thus created, managed and maintained through communication (see Alberto Pastore and Maria Vernuccio, *Impresa e comunicazione*, Milano: Apogeo, 2008). The multidimensional domain of corporate communication studies has been approached from several perspectives, such as sociology, marketing, administrative disciplines as well as linguistics and discourse studies.

Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise. Genres and Trends reflects many of the current developments and contributes significantly to the research in the area of language use in the world of business and organisations.

The volume is part of Peter Lang’s *Linguistic Insights*. The series, edited by Maurizio Gotti and featuring an international scientific board, represents a point of reference for researchers of specialised languages and discourses. It gathers monographs and collected papers presenting studies in theoretical and applied linguistics with a special focus on language and communication in a wide range of specialist discourses, analysed from a plurality of methodological approaches, from both a synchronic and a diachronic point of view and always promoting a multidisciplinary perspective. Several volumes and contributions in the series have been devoted to the subject of business discourse, often focusing on aspects such as intercultural communication, variation in business genres, identity representation and promotional trends.

The present volume under review is a selection of articles from the Fifth *Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise* Conference, held in Milan in 2009. Throughout the collection, emphasis is given to the constant changes affecting the business environment and thus communication. As stressed in the text, one of the crucial factors contributing to the shaping of contemporary business discourse is represented by new technologies, which have led both to the reformulation of traditional genres and to the exploration of the resulting innovative ways of interaction. Organisations can now take advantage of the possibilities provided by the electronic age to attract a larger public, promoting corporate reputation and identity and to try and develop integrated, consistent, communication, by

coordinating their messages through the use of the multiple new and traditional tools and media available. One of the most original features of this volume is the large section devoted to the emerging genre and to the corresponding developing research field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reporting – both in the Western and in the Eastern world – a practice used partly to pass environmental, social and governance information and partly to build and maintain a positive corporate image. The globalisation of markets is another process with a decisive influence on corporate operations and communication, which has led several contributors to focus on the interplay of standardising tendencies and local cultures and languages.

After an introduction by the editors, the volume presents twenty papers divided into five sections. The opening part, “General Issues in Research and Practice”, discuss general and methodological aspects, while the other four, ranging from internal to external business communication, examine specific domains of language use: “Corporate Communication as Professional Discourse”; “Corporate Reporting and Social Responsibility”; “Corporate Communication and the Media”; “Advertising and Promotion”.

In the first article, “Discursive Changes in Corporate and Institutional Communication”, Maurizio Gotti reflects upon the changes produced by globalisation and technological innovations in corporate communication, focusing on the need to harmonise global trends and local cultures in promotional texts. He then traces the evolution of the genre of business letters, to conclude with the exploitation of the computer mediated environment for virtual business communication, for the diffusion of annual reports and for disputes and transactions.

Still in the opening section, in her paper entitled “Seeing the Woods for Trees: A Research Agenda with a New Focus”, Mirjalisa Charles delineates the development of the relationship between discourse and organisations and of its conceptualisation in academic studies alongside the internationalisation of companies and the growing importance of information as an instrument of power. Emphasising the role of discourse and communication in creating and shaping companies, she proposes a new proactive, flexible and multidisciplinary research agenda.

While most research in the field has addressed communication with the outside world, the first three studies of the following section look at texts used within the firm itself. Sylvain Dieltjens and Priscilla Heynderickx’s paper, “Instructive Discourse in Internal Business Communication: Comprehensibility and Target Group Orientation”, examine both written and audio-visual instructive texts addressed to factory workers. They identify problematic linguistic and visual elements that can jeopardise the communication process and, by applying readability indices and conducting a survey with members of the target audience, show how the texts could be adapted to the receivers’ decoding competence to improve their understanding.

Martin Warren's research reflects the growing interest in studies of business discourse in the Asian communities. In "Realisations of Intertextuality, Interdiscursivity and Hybridisation in the Discourse of Professionals", he studies all the discourses encountered in a working week by six professionals based in Hong Kong. He analyses the discourse flows concentrating on the references to prior and predicted discourses and on the combination of features of different genres and identifies the most typical linguistic patterns signalling these phenomena.

Multilingualism is the focus of Oliver Engelhardt's chapter, "Management of Multilingualism in Multinational Companies of German Origin in the Czech Republic", which investigates the language management of a German multinational firm in the Czech Republic, where local employees work together with delegates from the parent company. He applies Language Management Theory to the language rule establishing the right of the majority to speak its language in meetings and shows that, even if it is not fully implemented, a language policy can raise awareness of multilingualism among the employees.

In her article "Companies' Websites as Vehicles for Expressing Corporate Identity: A Case Study on the Use of English as a Lingua Franca" Franca Poppi examines the use of ELF in the 'about' pages of the websites of six European energy companies. Applying a qualitative analysis, she highlights some recurring tendencies: deviations from the norm, common lexical choices and the influence of the country of origin.

The next section of the book deals with the current studies on ethical issues in corporate reporting. In the first paper "Metadiscourse on the Move: The CEO's Letter Revisited", Paul Gillaerts and Freek Van de Velde study the Chief Executive Officer's letter in the annual reports of a Belgian bank. They combine the framework of genre and metadiscourse and link textual features to the context of the economic performance of the company, revealing that in good times the bank is more self-affirming, while in bad times it stresses the coherence of the text and tries to gain more credibility.

In "Social and Environmental Reports: A Short-Term Diachronic Perspective on an Emerging Genre", Paola Catenaccio carries out an investigation of the discourse/genre interplay in Corporate Social Responsibility reports issued between 2000 and 2007 by some European and North American companies. The article makes a significant contribution to the literature on this developing genre, redefining a move structure, noticing a growing standardisation, while also pointing to a high flexibility in the arrangement of textual and discursive conventions.

"Doing Well by Doing Good: A Comparative Analysis of Nokia's and Ericsson's Corporate Responsibility Reports" by Donatella Malvasi presents a comparative corpus study of the CSR reports issued by the two telecommunications equipment industries. The keyword analysis and the examination of the concordances of some emblematic words reveal the different strategies adopted in the companies' self-presentations, showing some divergences in the priority given to environmental and social issues and to abstract and factual expressions.

The next studies in the volume reflect the increasing concern of emerging economies to improve their CSR performance and communication. In his contribution, “Virtue and Eloquence: CSR Reporting in China”, Giorgio Strafella reports some of the results of his research conducted in China. He examines the Chinese versions of the Social Responsibility reports issued by companies from a range of industrial sectors in 2007 and 2008, studying their structural and rhetorical features, the dominant reporting strategies and the arguments used for legitimation, while connecting these elements to the local traditional ethics and to the on-going process of industrial reform in the country.

The two following chapters deal with texts presenting Russian companies’ ethical values and performance. In her article, “‘Our Mission and Our Values’: An Approach to Russian Banks’ Communication Strategies”, Paola Cotta Ramusino studies the genre of mission statement, expression of a company’s identity and credo. She examines the rhetoric and discursive strategies deployed in the Russian versions of the statements published on 26 banks’ websites and identifies different approaches to the genre, also highlighting the mix of global and local features, with culture-specific elements exploited to appeal to pathos.

The extremely sensitive area of environmental responsibility and sustainability for an energy company is explored in “Gazprom Environmental Report: Peculiarities of an Emerging Genre” by Liana Goletiani. She analyses the Russian versions of the gas giant’s reports from a sociolinguistic perspective, revealing both the impact of globalisation on linguistic choices and key areas covered and the role of Russian administrative, political and environmental discourse in the definition of the genre.

The first two papers in the fourth section concentrate on the way corporate messages are reported in the media. Geert Jacobs and Els Tobback’s investigation “Saving Opel: Discursive Perspectives on News Management” focus on a single fieldwork study of the media coverage of the 2009 take-over battle for the German car-maker Opel in a French-language Belgian broadcasting corporation. With an ethnographic approach, they show some of the principles guiding the journalist’s choices in the process of news report production, such as the preference for news angles that are close to the audience.

Chiara Degano’s “Business and National Identity: The Press Coverage of Fiat’s Bids for Chrysler and Opel” examines the reporting of the news in US mainstream and business newspapers. Taking into account context, style, structure and content of the articles, she shows the hybridisation between financial and society-related news.

In the last chapter of the section, “Food for Thought: The Discursive Rehearsal of the Milan Expo 2012”, Maria Cristina Paganoni studies a more diversified set of documents of the media campaign promoting the event in 2008 and 2009. She carries out an analysis of the linguistic and rhetorical features of the English versions, noticing the hybridisation of pedagogic discourse with business oriented strategies and competitive urban branding in the arguments supporting the choice of the host city.

The final section is devoted to the analysis of the communicative practices used to reach external audiences, promoting the company's image and advertising its products. The opening chapter of this part, "Genre Variation in Tobacco Advertising" by Giuliana Garzone, gives an extensive overview of the evolution of tobacco print advertisements from the 1920s to the late 1990s, noticing radical changes in the semiotic and discursive strategies employed, associated with the market and societal transformations and with scientific advancement.

A profound change in the promotional approaches is also the focus of Francesca Santulli's "Tourist Brochures as a Means to Convey Corporate Image: The Analysis of a Case Study in a Rhetorical Perspective". She analyses diachronically the Italian versions of the brochures by the tour operator Valtur, focusing on the covers and CEO's letters and showing the rhetorical and semiotic strategies deployed for the re-shaping of the company image, evolving towards a more client-oriented approach.

In her contribution, "Illocution and Perlocution in Advertising: Advising, Promising, Persuading", Barbara Berti studies a sample of advertisements appeared in British magazines and newspapers in 2009 in the framework of Speech Act Theory. She considers ads as performing a perlocutionary act to achieve persuasion by means of two illocutionary acts, advising and promising, often realised implicitly.

Brand management is the focus of Christopher M. Schmidt's paper "The Impact of Globalization on Holistic Brand Communication Strategy Online and Offline: The Cognitive Dimension". He applies an interdisciplinary framework, combining cognitive theory of image schemata and intercultural theory to the study of communication management to show how a holistic brand profile is conveyed in different texts and media by the international company Hitachi.

The last paper, "Advertising ELT Materials on the Web: What Identity for Local Teachers?", by Andrea Nava and Luciana Pedrazzini, investigate how global publishers specialising in English language teaching material construct the identity of the EFL teachers in their corporate global and country-specific websites. They study the glocalisation strategies focusing on the structure, composition and accessibility of the websites, suggesting that the non-native teachers appear to be conceived as less linguistically proficient, autonomous and resourceful.

Overall, the volume provides extremely useful insights to researchers interested in new trends and specific dimensions of corporate communication. As reported, the papers collected in *Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise. Genres and Trends* examine a variety of genres, interactions, and discursive formations with theoretical considerations and case studies from a range of geographical areas and languages. The individual articles present clear scientific and socio-cultural backgrounds for the studies conducted and the qualitative and quantitative analyses are rich in vivid examples of instances of actual communication. The volume delves, indeed, into many forms, contexts, messages and media in the panorama of the corporate communication system, thus contributing to shedding light on the crucial role of language and discourse and their many faces in an enterprise's life.

Edgar Schneider, *English around the World: An Introduction*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 278 pp.,
ISBN 978-0521716581, 27 euro

Reviewed by **Eleonora Esposito**

It looks like almost everything has been said on the global spread of English: in the last decades, a vast array of alternative theoretical models have emerged, all attempting to describe the incredible diaspora of the English language, and the consequent emergence of a diverse range of varieties around the world.

There are two main remarkable features in the available literature on the subject, and both can be linked to a titanic effort to catalogue the almost ungraspable multiplicity of linguistic expressions in English in the four corners of the planet.

The first is the proliferation of terminology in use. In recent years, scholars have been more and more engaged in adamic acts of naming, creating umbrella terms for a number of different approaches to the categorization and study of English around the globe: *World English(es)*, *Global English(es)*, *International English(es)*, *New English(es)* among others. The plural alternative in brackets explicitates a crucial theoretical differentiation: choosing *Englishes* raises awareness on the pluricentric, centripetal and autonomous nature of the varieties of English existing around the globe, instead of an essentially monocentric and unitary model, highlighting the irreducible ‘otherness’ of periphery.

The second intriguing aspect is the visual systematization of these concepts: scholars have been attempting to render the intricate paths of this linguistic diaspora through a number of descriptive models, such as maps and diagrams, that could summarize the diverse and complex sociohistorical implications of this linguistic journey worldwide. This plethora of geopolitical model making encompasses Stevans’ pioneristic “World Map of English” (1980), McArthur’s “Circle of World English” (1987) which shares a number of features with Görlach’s (1990) “Circle Model of English”, Kachru’s famous “Three Circles of English” (1992), and Modiano’s “Centripetal Circles of International English” (1999).

Edgar Schneider valuably contributed to this variegated panorama with his *Postcolonial English: Varieties around the World* (2007). While introducing the label *Postcolonial*, his work does not entail a purely geographical model: the ‘Dynamic Model of Postcolonial Englishes’, evolutionary and ecolinguistic rather than geopolitical, valuably accounts for the development of English in former British colonial territories. He proposes that the new varieties of English in post-colonial contexts have developed as a result of a universal cyclic process, involving a given number of stages: (1) foundation; (2) exonormative stabilization; (3) nativization; (4) endonormative stabilization; and (5) differentiation. With this five-phases model backed up by an extensive number of case studies, Schneider makes us rethink our notion of nativeness; since it demonstrates how English was re-rooted and re-indigenized in post-colonial countries, his work contributes to dispelling a number of colonial hangovers on language competence

in the ‘outer circle’, such as the degeneracy claim, the lack of rules, the native/non-native hierarchical divide. Moreover, by focusing on *Postcolonial Englishes*, the study also integrated the linguistic analysis with a welcome and refreshing perspective on nationhood, identity, multilingualism, and ethnicity.

Deeply influenced by his 2007 work, *English Around The World* is part of the ‘Cambridge Introductions to the English Language’, a series of accessible undergraduate textbooks for English language studies.

One of the most striking features of the series is the custom-made website accompanying each book, complementing the study with audio contributions, solutions to the exercises and suggestions for further studies. Linguistic studies are probably the best candidate for an editorial turn to enhanced books, able to provide the reader with a number of additional resources and examples, as well as with a sort of ‘fieldwork vibe’.

In the nine chapters of the book, Schneider provides a comprehensive overview of the global spread of English in the post-colonial era. The first three chapters introduce the reader to the subject, providing some factual background knowledge on the varieties of English and the major models proposed to categorize them. Since colonialism and its aftermaths have been playing a key role in Schneider’s studies, Chapter 3 provides some historical background on the role of the British Empire and the United States in the globalization of English.

The following three chapters explore the presence of English in specific regional contexts, opening with a survey of the socio-historical context, then describing linguistic features of regional Englishes, and concluding with case studies. The eye on colonially-induced language contact situations inevitably leaves pretty much out of the picture the Kachruvian *Expanding Circle*, that is, the vast number of countries where English spread without a previous colonial history. Schneider thus duly explores individual varieties in North America and the Caribbean (Chapter 4), Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (Chapter 5), and Africa, Asia, and the Pacific (Chapter 6).

The last three chapters take the reader back to the theoretical plane. In Chapter 7 a general perspective on the process of language development demonstrates how an interplay of language internal and language external factors contributed to the birth of new English varieties. Issues and attitudes in the major current debates on the social and linguistic outcomes of the global spread of English are covered in Chapter 8, while Chapter 9 is left for conclusions.

The book is user-friendly and rich in examples, but does not indulge in oversimplification. On the contrary, without giving up on a solid theoretical background, it includes a vast number of fascinating descriptions of intricate multilingual situations around the globe. It is to be recommended reading for students and beginners, but is also a valuable and quick reference manual for specialists. It will be appreciated by readers with an interest in language expansion and its socio-political implications, and by anyone believing, especially when it comes to language, that diversity is the norm.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Susanne Berthier-Foglar, Sheila Collingwood-Whittick and Sandrine Tolazzi, eds., *Biomapping Indigenous People. Towards an Understanding of the Issue* (Amsterdam - New York: Rodopi, 2012), p. XIII+461
ISBN: 978-90-420-3591-1
E-book ISBN: 978-94-012-0866-6
EUR 100,00

Luigi Cazzato, ed., *Anglo-Southern Relations. From Deculturation to Transculturation* (Bari: Negramaro, 2012), p. 183
ISBN: 978-88-97596-12-7
EUR: 15,00

H.D., *Il dono*, a cura di Marina Vitale (Roma: Iacobelli, 2012), p. 200
ISBN: 978-88-62521-80-2
EUR: 18,00

Fiorenzo Iuliano, *Altri mondi, altre parole. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2012), p. 190
ISBN: 978-88-97522-36-2
EUR 18,00

Edwald Mengel and Michela Borzaga, eds., *Trauma, Memory and Narrative in the Contemporary South African Novel* (Amsterdam - New York: Rodopi, 2012), p. XXXI+403
ISBN: 978-90-420-3570-6
E-book ISBN: 978-94-012-0845-1
EUR 94,00

Katherine E. Russo, *Global English, Transnational Flows: Australia and New Zealand in Translation* (Trento: Tangram, 2012), p. 131
ISBN: 978-88-64580-57-9
EUR 12,00

Elsbeth Tilley, *White Vanishing. Rethinking Australia's Lost-in-the-Bush Myth* (Amsterdam - New York: Rodopi, 2012), p. XI+381
ISBN: 978-90-420-3595-9
E-book ISBN: 978-94-012-0870-3
EUR 83,00

Bennett Yu-Hsiang Fu, *Transgressive Transcripts. Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Chinese Canadian Women's Writing* (Amsterdam - New York: Rodopi, 2012), p. X+178
ISBN: 978-90-420-3568-3
E-book ISBN: 978-94-012-0843-7
EUR 40,00