Spring 6-6-2022

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Recommended Citation

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Essay completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Global Honors, University of Washington, Tacoma

Approved:

_____   _____06/04/2022_____
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Abstract

This research paper focuses on the planning of preservation and revitalization of an endangered

language of Italy, Romagnolo, through measures found in three different sectors of society:

government, education, and culture. This tri-fold method shows how language can affect every

aspect of a group's identity and culture and is found to have a place in all businesses, schools,

homes, and public offices. The process of language revitalization requires cooperation from

many sectors of a society, individuals, educators, and program coordinators included. Language

is so deeply ingrained into every culture and identity, and it is a specific and special piece in the

puzzle of life. It must be treated with care.

Introduction

The topic of language revitalization is not one that is well known in every corner of the

world. This thesis incorporates interdisciplinary measures through government, education, and

culture to ensure that endangered languages are preserved, taught, and not forgotten. To do this,

the Romagnolo language, a 'dialect[1]' of Italian from the northeastern region of Emilia-Romagna,

spoken primarily in the southern part of the region will be used as an example to examine how

this process could work (see Figure 1.1). Many local and/or minority languages in Italy (and all

over the world) have been endangered for hundreds of years; this is often due to lack of

governmental and program support, issues within society and attitudes people have towards local

language preservation, and/or other circumstances (Coluzzi, 2009). In Italy, there is a large issue

with nationalism and language preservation. People either disagree with nationalism and support

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[1] The term dialect is outdated and, in this sense, is not the correct definition for what we mean by dialect.

language diversity, but the groups currently pursuing this change are fascist and too controlling; or nationalists support the idea of one singular language within Italy (Coluzzi, 2006). This paper will explore the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing a micro-nationalist and a macro-nationalist approach to languages (Coluzzi, 2009). Both approaches utilize many institutions of society, including government and education, to contribute to language preservation. The differences lie in *how* they complete this. Micro-nationalism views language(s) as a right or resource, supports private use, favors a sociolinguistic and cultural approach, and maintenance/language equality (Coluzzi, 2006). Macro-nationalism, however, views extraneous languages as creating a deficit, and supports evolutionism in languages. This is like a sort of 'survival of the fittest' attitude, which, in language and culture preservation, is incredibly unhelpful and contradicts the work and research. The biggest worldwide factor driving language extinction is globalization, and the replacement of small languages with larger, more well-known languages; for example, English has replaced Indigenous languages in in North American countries. In the case of Italy, standard Italian (similar to the Tuscan dialect) as agreed upon by the Italian government (with guidance from the then-deceased Dante Alighieri) in 1861, replaced local languages in the government, education, and business sectors. Today, it is difficult to find native speakers and written documentation of Romagnolo; many native speakers are grandparents or great-grandparents – most of whom did not pass down the language because it was seen as a sort of 'useless' knowledge. Learning standard Italian was what would bring the most success at school and work. There is currently a similar situation in many countries, Italy included, where English is learned at a young age because of the opportunities it could potentially bring in both the European and global markets for education, economics, and politics. Romagnolo is currently not protected by the Italian government – and although there are some written documents, poems,

books, and songs – it is experiencing a similar situation to many other languages. To foster

preservation of this language, a tri-fold method, utilizing laws and policies, education systems,

and a sociological lens, will be particularly helpful.

Figure 1.1 Licensed under Wikimedia Creative Commons (Mezzacqui, 4 August 2021)

Contributions & Background Information

This paper will employ a large range of peer-reviewed sources from universities, both in

the United States and around the world, including but not limited to books, government websites,

analyses on policy, journals, and articles on studies. Translations of research works, books, and

dictionaries will contribute directly to the knowledge of the Romagnolo language through this

work. This thesis goes beyond just analyzing research papers! To complete a project of this

magnitude, and one of a kind for this language, this thesis will be part of the foundational

research. The kinds of resources required for this type of proposal are slim; this thesis will seek

to fill holes and bridge gaps in research. This research plan/paper structure includes detailed

sections on sociological concerns, laws and policies, and education sectors and how they relate to

language preservation. The law and policy section will examine laws/policies in Italy and consider how they protect languages, which languages are protected, and what could be added or planned by the government to help contribute. The idea that preservation efforts begin with the government is true in some cases, although in many countries, social movements are often found to have more of an initial effect. However, beginning with the largest driving force for administering projects will have a lasting effect. The sociological section of the research will encompass general attitudes that populations have towards regional languages and the history of minority languages in Italy. The education section will cover Italy's current foreign language education system, and how it currently does not support many minority languages but could. The idea here is that society creates activism and movement through its desire to preserve and protect language; this affects government through pressure to create laws and policies surrounding regional languages; finally, government creates laws/policies concerning education, presenting educational measures that ensure the language is preserved and that those individuals who want to learn it have the correct resources, materials, and that the language will be taught in such a way that retention is apparent and clear. The hope is that this plan can be transposed to other countries and their governments; to save more languages all around the world. Even if all aspects of the plan are not kept consistent, the main goal is that languages are preserved through multiple efforts and disciplines to ensure that all aspects are covered.

These contributions to the field of language research and preservation will bring about some synthesized information. The research will build on what has been done so far and will connect interdisciplinary knowledge across fields. This will also contribute to activism, the aspects of culture and identity, and how these are shaped by globalization. A central hope for the message of this essay is to bring awareness of the dangers of having a global language, like

English, that so frequently replaces local and regional dialects and languages. This research addresses interdependency by noticing and showing relationships in societies that directly affect languages. In this specific case of Romagnolo, creating engagement through preservation and re-education of the language will promote similar activism for languages in other regions or countries.

It fosters community engagement by uniting people under a singular motivation: preservation. This goes beyond just language preservation; culture is also preserved in the form of stories, identities, recipes, customs, music, poetry, and art, to name a few. Finally, this research is very solution oriented in that it seeks to create a solution utilizing the government, education, and sociological sectors to create a safety net. It also addresses the process of decolonization (in the form of de-Italianization), which is an important and essential process for many groups, especially those in the Americas. The idea behind decolonization is understanding the practices which have replaced other cultures. Part of this is re-learning languages! In Italy, this is not so much of an ongoing issue, but countries in South America, Africa, and North America have seen many, sometimes all, native, and local languages become replaced by larger languages. The idea here is that we understand one language is not better than another; for example, English is not better than the Salish language of the northwestern United States, although society, implicitly, may tell us otherwise. A large part of the sociology behind language is debunking these prejudiced and elitist attitudes towards certain languages.

Literature Review

Languages vs. Dialects

Language revitalization is, without a doubt, a time-intensive and extensive project. Where does one even begin? Why should one even try to revitalize a language? At the most very basic

level, we lose much more than just a series of vocabulary and grammatical functions. Entire cultures are lost or forgotten when a civilization moves on from a language. The process of revitalization – or a certain renewal – of a language requires a wide-ranging scope of work to be done in many societal sectors. Therefore, it is important to have an organization, team, or international coalition to take on the generous task of revitalization. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has declared the decade 2022-2032 to be the Decade of Indigenous Languages, with a specific range of planned global meetings, activities, and symposiums geared towards language revitalization (UNESCO, 2022). At the core of language preservation is cultural preservation. First, an organization must begin with reaching its audience through societal impact. People may already know that a language is dying, but they may not know what is being done about it or if they are able to help. In their book, *Revitalizing Endangered Languages,* chapter 4 author Susan D. Penfield offers the following strategy, "Having an overarching strategic plan for a revitalization program contributes to the larger vision of language sustainability for the long term in important ways. But the careful planning of individual projects is equally important. Individual projects can be positioned and implemented to help best meet the long-term goals. The best language planning entails P-I-E (Planning, Implementation, Evaluation)." (Olko & Sallabank, 2021). This PIE-type organization can go one step further and create an all-encompassing plan that involves the government, education, and sociological sectors of a region or country.

It is also important to have a set definition for the terms of language and dialect. It is difficult to put one singular label on a culture or group of people, but the idea of language, or a principal method of human communication, is something that everyone shares. As for the definition of dialect, this is where things become muddy. Minority languages like Romagnolo,

Napolitano, Lombard, and Sardinian, are often considered to be 'dialects' of Italian, but this is not true. A dialect is most often defined as a "particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group." These terms are purely general and do not seek to try and redefine one's culture or identity. Therefore, it is not correct to consider Italian as a tree trunk and Romagnolo, Napolitano, etc. as small branches. Each language is its own tree. This essay will use the term 'minority/regional/local' languages or the Italian term '*dialetti,*' the plural form of dialetto, meaning 'language system from a specific geographical region or group of people,' to describe languages like Romagnolo, Napolitano, and the like. The term dialect comes from the Greek '*dialegesthai*' meaning, 'to converse with.'

Italy was comprised of many different smaller kingdoms and groups of people before it became fully incorporated into the Italy that many know and love today, in 1861. Before this, many people and groups were speaking their own version of vulgar Latin. Vulgar in this sense does not mean inappropriate words, but rather the adaptation and understanding of Latin words of the public. This history goes back to the days before everyone was literate, communities were creating different usages and slang for words that their neighbors did not necessarily understand. Every region had its own language. For us to still consider these languages, that were supposedly 'unified' to become a singular language by the 1861 unification of Italy, as one entity is incorrect. Typically, languages begin as a trunk and dialects are like branches of that language. In Italian, all these separate languages already existed. Perhaps they shared some similar words, patterns, rules, or traits, but they were part of separate kingdoms and communities. Thus, this research essay will continue to use the words 'minority or regional language' where we may typically see the word 'dialect' for a lesser-known language.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), a well-known Italian poet, and author of books such as *The Inferno*; *The Divine Comedy; Purgatory;* and *Paradise*, was one of the key players in the chess game of Italian languages. His work, a treatise titled *De Vulgari Eloquentia* was written to argue for the promotion of the vulgar, or common, language of the Italian people (Alighieri, Chapter 1). However, going through each of the smaller books, Alighieri comments on each of the dialects. Discussing Romagnolo, he remarks on the 'harsh' sound of the language, "There is also, as we have observed, another dialect, so bristling and shaggy in its words and accents that, owing to its rough harshness, it not only distorts a woman's speech, but makes one doubt whether she is not a man." (Chapter XIV). Essentially, *De Vulgari Eloquentia* serves as Dante's way to judge each dialect and try to find one that he decides, has that "illustrious" quality; or one that is suitable enough for all people to use it (Chapter XVII). The Tuscan dialect, specifically that of Florence, was made the written basis for the language now known as Standard Italian (Lepschy, 2002). Dante reveals that "That the Local Italian Dialects are Reducible to One Which is Called Italian" (Ch XIX). Dante's comments on the many (but not all) languages of Italy are interesting. He seems to take the audience on a tour across Italy by language, offering his opinions on every dialect he comes across. In the end, he is searching for that language which has a certain 'illustrious' or powerful quality about it. While it is important to acknowledge his activism and ideas for a language that is just as good as Latin, one that the 'common' people of Italy can all use (otherwise it is rendered useless (XVI)), Dante still calls for the reduction of smaller languages to make room for a more widely known one (XIX). The difficulty is found in the similarities of these languages. While they derived from primarily Latin, there are influences of Dalmatian, Germanic, and French languages all found just in Romagnolo (Grementieri, n.d.; Glottolog, 2021). Imagine the possibilities and overlapping that can be found in other languages!

Society & Culture

The ideas of nationalism, identity, and its association with local or minority languages reach far back into Italian history. Some may argue that it began with the unification in 1861, and that people struggled with identity and where they considered themselves to belong to, their smaller community or a larger Italy? Other scholars have attributed this attitude towards minority languages in Italy back to World War II fascism, considering disparities in social class, resources, and attitudes towards nationalism (Coluzzi, 2006; Tosi, 2000). For example, Arturo Tosi writes in his book *Language and Society in A Changing Italy*, "Privileged social groups that had already been Italianized were admitted into higher education, but large sectors of the rural community (the lower classes in the cities and the rural communities) were having to struggle in the classroom with a mother tongue that was, in actual fact, a foreign language." (Tosi, p. 63). Connecting this back to Coluzzi's work on nationalism and language in Italy, politics most directly affected what was taught in Italian schools. It is extremely difficult to understand the language situation in Italy without also considering its experiences with fascism. Coluzzi writes, "Some authoritative voices did speak in favor of some degree of decentralization or federalism (Carlo Cattaneo, Giuseppe Ferrari, Marco Minghetti, Stefano Jacini, Cavour, etc.), but the fear prevailed that 'any recognition of regions would open the doors to federalism and would endanger national unity, so miraculously achieved' and that 'the autonomy of the communes and provinces, considered as ''natural institutions''' would be lost." (Coluzzi, p. 4). Therefore, minority languages were swept up under the rug, for fear of recognition would allow individual *regioni* [regions], like Emilia-Romagna, Sicily, and Naples, to separate and essentially 'undo' all the work of the 1861 unification. *The consensus was that any recognition and education of minority languages endangered the status and ethos of Italy as a unified country.*

People were discriminated against for their accents when speaking 'standard' Italian, as it was now considered many people's second language. It has been found that there has been a similar issue *today* with discrimination and nationalism in the South. A study from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)] investigated the communities of Naples, Italy, and Chiapas, Mexico, and compared their sociolinguistic climates. The full title is *Human Rights Violations: The Neapolitan and Tsotsil Linguistic Communities*, suggesting that, for example, neglecting to provide resources in many languages does violate some human [linguistic] rights, like the right that every person has "to speak in their first language" (Del Carpio & Verde, 2021). Authors Karla Del Carpio and Massimiliano Verde bring up an interesting point about dialects as well, stating, "Neapolitan is a Romance language: it is not a deformation or a minor Italian language." (Del Carpio & Verde, 2021). However, despite this elevated lingual status that Napolitano receives, locals of Naples are often subject to discrimination from Northerners. Most of the (few) stories that RAI 1 (Radiotelevisione Italiana) reports on Southern Italy focus mainly on crime (Del Carpio & Verde, 2021). Further, the authors argue of the importance of both Napolitano and Tzotzil, as Napolitano is among the most used languages in the world, and Chiapas, Mexico (where Tzotzil is spoken) has government-required language lessons and resources for indigenous children. How is this relevant? Considering the sociolinguistic climate of any region is imperative to the success of a potential educational program to revitalize any local language.

Law, Policy, and Language

How does society affect laws? In turn, how do laws affect education, specifically language education? Because language is such a large part of culture, identity, and society, there should be laws surrounding minority languages to protect them and to foster education.

Massimiliano Verde, the President of Accademia Napolitana, held a symposium in November

2019 titled "Lingue, Diritti e Libertà Nella Società Globale [Languages, Rights and Freedom in

the Global Society]" (Verde, 2019). The Italian educational system has sought to replace local

languages with standard Italian since the 19th century (Guerini, 2011). Law 482, for example,

only protects three local languages. Currently, only 12 languages are officially recognized by

Law 482 (1999) of the Italian Government, "French, Provençal, Franco-Provençal, German,

Ladin, Friulian, Slovene, Sardinian, Catalan, Albanian, Greek and Croatian." (Coluzzi, 2009).

Three of these – counting Ladin, which is spoken in the Dolomites – are of the Italo-Romance

language family. In short, there is little to no protection of minority Italo-Romance languages,

but the government has shown it is not shy when it comes to incorporating language into its

curriculum (Guerini, 2011; Leone, 2015).

There are many organizations around the world which recognize and organize the

standards by which (foreign) languages should be taught and measure proficiency of students.

For example, the United States uses the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language

(ACTFL), and Europe and the Asia-Pacific region use the Common European Framework of

Reference for Language (CEFR) (Read, 2019). This research paper will discuss the usages of the

CEFR for foreign language education as it is used in Italy, with reference to other European

countries, to describe how language policies affect education in a singular country.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Language, hereby referred to as the

CEFR, is the international standard for measuring language abilities in many European countries.

The CEFR seeks to create a base level for language learning, teaching, and assessment to

measure proficiency and efficacy in teaching. Its two main goals are to "1) [T]o encourage

practitioners of all kinds in the language field, including language learners themselves, to reflect

on questions […] regarding the analysis of learning/teaching situations. 2) [T]o make it easier for practitioners to explain to each other and to their clientele what they wish learners to achieve, and how they may do so." (CEFR, 2022).

Education & Preservation

Language education in Italy has, in recent years, adopted the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method for secondary language acquisition (Leone, 2015). However, local minority languages such as Romagnolo, are not often taught in secondary classrooms. Andrea Leone, author of *Outlooks in Italy: CLIL as Language Education Policy* writes,

> However, with the exception of South Tyrol (on the Austrian border) and Aosta Valley (on the French border), Standard Italian has been the sole official language of schooling since at least 1963, when compulsory schooling was extended from age 11 to age 14, and Latin was removed from the curriculum as a vehicular language (Tosi, 2001). In the face of a prolonged literacy crisis, Italian linguists in the 1960s began to explore the relationships among social class, language background, and school achievement (De Mauro, 1963). (Leone, 2015).

This neglect to implement minority languages in favor of legally recognized language varieties of German, French, Slovenian, and Greek, has contributed directly to the decline of minority languages, such as Romagnolo, in Italy. Still, CLIL remains in-tact as the framework for foreign language acquisition in Italian secondary schools, even though minority *dialetti* are not taught, and CLIL allows for the "covert goal of promoting English rather than foreign languages in general." (Leone, p. 10). The presence of English in European countries is incredibly prevalent, and it is becoming more and more difficult to combat its implementation as the 'global language.' A goal of the CLIL method is to promote plurilingualism in Europe, which contradicts its actual application in many countries, Italy included (Leone, 2015). Italian education remains heavily skewed towards English, with 99.6% of students learning English in secondary school (Dan & Yuwei, 2021).

Methodology: Implementing Culture, Politics, and Education into Language Revitalization

The general idea of language preservation is that it incorporates at least one program for revitalization (education). This can be done on a smaller, more community-centered scale, like introducing free language courses at a community center, connecting people to teachers or supplies like books, apps or websites, and dictionaries; or creating a database where people can go to contribute resources. Revitalization processes or programs have usually taken form of one of the following: total-immersion, partial-immersion (bilingual), community-based, master-apprentice, documentation, or reclamation models (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005). There are advantages and disadvantages to each. Total-immersion programs often offer faster results and a higher retention rate, although they require lots of funding and community support. Partial-immersion or bilingual programs are taught in both the target language and the language of the region. For reference, most high school-level foreign language classes are taught in this way, as it is easier for beginning students to learn when they can ask a question in their native language. Bilingual programs are often not as effective as total-immersion programs, as the target language is taught and accepted as a secondary or foreign language. Community-based programs go outside of the classroom and offer more of an informal learning experience (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005). A large advantage of community-based programs is that they often successfully implement the language into the local culture and provide a domain for it to be used in everyday life. However, there have been culture clashes apparent when trying to introduce a community-based program to a culture that has already incorporated another language, like an Indo-European language, and other teaching/learning methods, into its culture. The master-apprentice program pairs learners with native speakers who will teach learners through everyday life

experiences. Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley, authors of *Saving Languages: An*

Introduction to Language Revitalization write that:

> Five key principles underlie the structure of this program: (1) the use of English is not permitted in interactions between the master and apprentice; (2) the apprentice needs to be a full participant in determining the content of the program and in assuring use of the target language; (3) oral, not written, language use is always primary in learning and communicating; (4) learning occurs not in the classroom, but in real-life situations […] and (5) comprehension will come to the beginning language learner through the activity, in conjunction with nonverbal communication. (Grenoble & Whaley, p. 61).

In other words, the master-apprentice program is similar to how we learn language as children at

home, and the practice seeks to replicate results as if the apprentice were a native speaker of the

language. A disadvantage to master-apprentice programs is that the 'master' is often an elderly

member of the community and may not have utilized their language skills for many years.

Reclamation-type programs seek to revitalize a language which has not been spoken for many

years. Because Romagnolo still has some native speakers, this type of program would not be

utilized here. Reclamation relies solely on what has been documented by previous generations of

speakers, while revitalization is able to utilize both resources of documentation and actual

humans. Because, however, there is little extensive-level documentation resources of

Romagnolo, it may be helpful to begin with a reclamation-style process of establishing a lexicon

and grammatical code. Finally, the authors include documentation as a method to revitalize a

language because many revitalization efforts often begin with documentation. Documentation

will be essential in the revitalization of the Romagnolo language because it is the first step on the

ladder.

In terms of adhering to one specific language program, it may be helpful to begin with

pulling and combining methods from multiple program styles. Grenoble and Whaley write, "In

effect, a language revitalization program is designed to change the social context in which people

make choices about language use." (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005). However, there are some hard-

and-fast rules and guidelines which anyone creating a program must adhere to, which include

updating the lexicon, creating literacy measures and assessments, training teachers, utilizing

technology, and measuring success (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005). Technology has grown

exponentially in the last few decades, and newer and better ways of learning languages via a

website or app have become very popular. However, this approach of utilizing apps is often

called 'app/tool driven' technology, and *technological principles*, not apps, should be used when

revitalizing languages (Olko & Sallabank, 2021). In other words, a broader sense of how to use

different modes of technology is more beneficial than the knowledge of how to use a singular

app or website. Technological support is frequently up to the instructor of a class, and there are

often multiple modes to choose from. The tricky part is selecting a beneficial method. The more

technology an instructor is comfortable with using, the more options they have for their class.

However, in Olko and Sallabank's *Revitalizing Endangered Languages,* chapter 17 author

Robert Elliot does note that,

> Integrating technology into your work or class means intimately knowing your
> curriculum, your students, and your own teaching style. […] While many of today's
> students may be adept at using technology generally, their use often falls into very
> specific areas that are not language-learning related; a skilled language revitalization
> worker will know how to use technology specifically to foster language learning, and
> know how to share that knowledge (Elliot, p. 302).

the duty of the instructor is to utilize technology to their best ability and to have it become an

asset in education. This could include classes for teachers on how to use technology to their

advantage; for example, special instruction sessions wherein educators learn how to use basic

software like word processors or search engines, and for more advanced instructors, how to

utilize and create curriculum using online dictionaries, language databases, websites, programs,

or apps. Creating accessible pathways to use technology is important to ensure that teachers (and students) of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities can participate.

Language is an incredibly major part of culture and identity. Many aspects of cultures, identities, and values all overlap which is what makes it difficult to navigate how to promote language preservation. In other words, sociology and language are like a knot that is challenging for anyone to untangle. With the destruction of languages comes the destruction of entire cultures. Stories, recipes, poems, songs, and much more are lost when languages are also lost or replaced by other languages. While it is true Italy has a very rich cultural background, all the traditional things we may think of when remembering Italy (pasta, calcio (soccer), etc.) differ between regions, like languages. For example, a dish like lasagna from the north is different than the lasagna of the south. Language is the same.

The existences of minority languages have long been purposefully ignored by the Italian government, either for reasons pertaining to the country's history with fascism and nationalism, or just to avoid creating more laws and room in the budget; however, this does not mean that others are not also seeing and acknowledging language death in their communities. Federica Guerini, author of *Language Policy and Ideology in Italy*, writes. "Yet, as argued by Shohamy (2006), language policy is not limited to official documents, rules, and regulations. The most effective tools for influencing both individual and group language practices reside in a number of covert, indirect mechanisms. By depicting certain linguistic choices as appropriate or socially rewarding (and by stigmatizing other choices), such mechanisms succeed in affecting the linguistic behavior of community members and in determining their access to state institutions and services." (Guerini, p. 110). Dialects have, for some time, been shunned by educators, parents, and people in power. This creates a discrepancy between those who want to learn a

minority language, those who are ashamed to speak in their minority language, and those who have been told standard Italian is the only language they should be speaking at school, work, and in the home. The idea plays out as so: "Italian language policy in schools has seen, since the years of Unification, a series of measures in favor of the use of the Italian language and the marginalization of dialects." (Robustelli, 2018). The push for speaking only Italian is intriguing, as Italian had not even been offered acknowledgment in the Italian Constitution, until the government added an amendment in 2006 (Guerini, 2011; Vacca, 2017). As for language policy in education, Italian has been pushing out and replacing local minority languages for decades. In the 19th century, these languages quickly became "associated with lack of education, linguistic deprivation, and low socio-economic status, thereby instilling feelings of linguistic insecurity (Labov, 1966) and inferiority in those who could not master a spoken variety of Italian." (Guerini, p. 119-120). This process is referred to as 'Italianization,' or "the implementation of a monolingual language policy aimed to promote the use of the national language in a number of domains previously dominated by the presence of Italo-Romance dialects." (Guerini, p. 123). The dominant status of Italian is "beyond dispute" and *dialetti* are often only used at home and between friends. This is due to the pushing of 'standard' Italian on individuals from the government, through curriculum and laws pertaining to the proper usage of foreign languages in Italian public spaces (Guerini, 2011). In terms of positivity for minority languages, there has been documentation of regional languages from Italy on the Internet, where multilingualism is incredibly prevalent, combatting, in some ways, the 'Italianization' process of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The political history of Italy has negatively affected regional languages for decades. Between nationalism, Lega Nord [the Northern League], Italianization processes, and fascism, it

is difficult to know where to begin advocating for local language preservation. It is apparent that

the federal government may not contribute to a project such as this – given its history – in which

case, other preparations must be weighed. Additionally, the educational system in Italy supports

the education of many languages including standard Italian, English, German, and French

(Guerini, 2011). For Romagnolo and other languages to be taught in the classroom, there must be

a give-and-take situation. Either the government funds solely regional languages and cuts classes

for English and French, or it somehow finds room to fund all these languages, French and

English included. Based on the sociology, characteristics, and history of Italy, it is very plausible

to assume that the former would not happen. In which case, there would need to be a secondary

type of organization offering language classes to communities across the country. Now, it seems

Italy is very particular about what languages are even allowed to be spoken or posted in public

spaces (Guerini, 2011). It is true that the difficulty most certainly lies in gaining total linguistic

rights for regional languages. This is the first step in gaining recognition. How can this be done?

Article Six in the Italian Constitution is vague when it comes to granting rights for linguistic

minorities; however, according to Alessia Vacca in *Rights to Use Minority Languages in the*

Public Administration and Public Institutions: Italy, Spain and the UK, "Art. 6 allows the

adoption of special dispositions which recognize the right of speakers of the minority languages

to use and to cultivate their maternal language, to teach in these languages at school and to use

them with the public authorities and in the media." (Vacca, p. 72). So, if it is not illegal to

promote minority languages in the community as Vacca notes, why are people not doing it?

Article Six is vague in nature and utilizes confusing diction to "be interpreted according to [the]

circumstances in order to avoid comprehensive implementation." (Vacca, p. 72). In effect, the

government avoids certain responsibilities by placing responsibilities for language education on the people of communities. Languages *do* have rights, but only rights *to exist*.

Global Connection and Recommendations

A main facet of this method of language preservation is that it should be able to be transposed to other countries and language situations. Not every country is the same, or even similar, in their individual situations, cultures, and regimes. If even one or two aspects of the project can be used by another country for the means of language preservation and revitalization, this thesis will have completed part of its aspiration. The need for such a program in other countries is apparent, and organizations like the United Nations, UNESCO, and individual governments are working towards language documentation and revitalization. There are people and groups who want to complete a project of this magnitude, but it is difficult to know where to begin. This methodology seeks to alleviate at least some of this pressure and to allow for there to be an easier-to-follow framework and collection of previously utilized methods and their outcomes. For a field like linguistics, the collection of data and resources is often a large part of a project like this. To have an example of another country or region that has implemented a project of this measure, and to see the resources and outcomes that it took, will be beneficial for anyone looking to contribute to the field of language preservation. This is very much a collaborative project and field.

Other countries are faring better than Italy when it comes to language preservation, or at the very least, recognition. One such example can be found in Mexico. Mexico has 68 nationally recognized languages, most of which are indigenous (Gobierno de México [Government of Mexico], 2022). Mexico continually tries to support and utilize its indigenous languages, for example, through the 68 Voces (68 Voices) program. This program provides a series of animated

stories, one in each of the 68 indigenous languages. UNESCO has declared the decade 2022-2032 as the Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL) and will "launch a Global Action Plan to preserve all imperiled languages and revitalize nearly extinct ones in culturally and ethnically diverse nations," (UNESCO Bangkok, 2021). This decade of indigenous languages follows the Year of Indigenous Languages in 2019, which consisted of a similar Action Plan to the new decade's plan. It reports that 78 countries have already "actively contributed to the implementation of activities and mobilization of resources [in 2019, for indigenous language preservation]." (UNESCO, 2022). UNESCO has also debuted a new World Language Atlas, primarily used for documentation and data collection. So far, a global action plan like the one from UNESCO seems to be bringing in a great deal of participation already. A quick search through the IDIL website shows many (27) resources available for Napolitano; but none are available, through 37 webpages, for other Italo-Romance languages.

Conclusion

In the case of Italy, extensive reformations are needed in the legislature, societal sectors, and laws and policies of education. In terms of revitalization, what does this mean? It is prospected to be extremely difficult to encourage the Italian government to embark on a project of this measure, especially one that so purposefully undoes the very work it sought to complete decades ago, speaking of Italianization (Vacca, 2017). Still, there are audiences for this work, according to the sociological and linguistic research compiled in this research essay from the works of Coluzzi, Del Carpio and Verde, Vacca, and Tosi, to name a few. To complete – or even begin – a project of this extent and magnitude, one that holds stake in every region of Italy, will most certainly need a higher power motivating it. Where do we find this larger reasoning, an ethos that is large enough to stir up feelings of pride and aspiration, in none other than the public

itself? By starting with the broadest audience, the average person, they can create more fluent

activism and push for systemic changes in education. Here is where the plan begins to form and

take root. A colossal part of this plan lies in 1) its efficacy, and 2) its ability to be transposed to

other countries or regions. Like education, a one size fits all approach does not often work well

and theories, pedagogies, and other parts of the learning experience are fine-tuned to find the

right fit for a group of people. The concept is that other regions will employ their own methods

of incorporating government, culture, and education into language revitalization programs.

Although this specific tri-fold approach is not new, and governmental changes to and

involvement in language programs have always been an occurrence, this paper has sought to

point out the importance and connections drawn to each sector, much like a Venn diagram would

(Grenoble & Whaley, 2005). Further, as stated in *Saving Languages: An Introduction to

Language Revitalization*, "In order for a school-based program to succeed, the regional and

national government agencies minimally should not interfere, and ideally should invest in the

program, both financially and administratively." (Grenoble & Whaley, p. 52). The government

should provide funding and administrative direction, but should leave its hands out of the

specifics, such as which languages are taught, by whom, how, and when. With no reforms to the

Italian constitution, and according to Article Six, local governments or schools could still most

likely commence with language programs, but the government's cleverly vague language here

infers that it may be unable or unwilling to provide funding at the federal level (Vacca, 2017).

Cooperation from the government would only add to the complexity, but perhaps also the

efficacy, of the program(s). Societal impacts, which seem to be the least predictable, are trickier

to work with. In this, organizations are banking or relying on people to learn about language

death and feel a need or desire to learn a language or help in some way. Creating the desire to

revive languages is easiest in communities that do not have another language to lean on; in the case of Italy this is not true, as according to Dominicis, the adoption of a lingua franca is often the dreaded – and most popular – result, "At some points in their history, members of a community may opt to give up their language, and try to move closer to other countries by adopting a common *lingua franca*." (Dominicis, p. 2). However, sociolinguistic activism is present in some areas of Italy, working hard to combat the destruction of cultures, traditions, and family stories. The multilingual aspect of cultures found in Italy is important and should be fostered, not squandered nor forgotten. Organizations like the Accademia Napoletana [Neapolitan Academy], and the Liga Veneta [Venetian League] are fighting for the proper recognition of Napolitano and Venetian as commonly used languages and their usage and preservation, (Verde, n.d.; Perrino, 2019). Still, it is apparent that the main driving force for this type of movement would come directly from the public, whether that be organizations, educators, or even political groups like Lega Nord and Lega Veneta. Languages are dying and becoming extinct at a rapidly increasing rate, and it is always better to begin preserving, documenting, and teaching before languages are no longer spoken by the public. It is no doubt much more difficult to make progress in language revitalization without assistance, whether that is through legislature that requires the measures to be taught, completed, or documented, or through funding for programs, but it is possible. Plenty of non-governmental or intergovernmental organizations, like the Accademia della Crusca, the Accademia Napoletana, and the United Nations are already doing language research work in and around Italy (Robustelli, 2018).

Along with preserving language also comes the preservation of identity, culture, and communication: just some of the very pillars of society – and by extension – of the human

experience. Some of the benefits of engaging in this work include a sense of connection with one's community, the preservation and documentation of centuries of history, and linguistic and cultural intelligence and diversity. When languages become extinct, a community also loses a piece of its identity. Entire libraries of Alexandria are lost once again. There is always more room at the global meeting table for more languages. Language, as the basis of interpersonal communication, is something astonishing that humans have created. We should be protecting and promoting linguistic diversity as it is reminiscent of cultural backgrounds, values, families, and the idea of identity itself. To effectively pursue revitalization, cooperation is needed from the population, the government, and the education spheres. It takes two generations to lose a language, those who neglect to teach and those who neglect to learn. Let us now take note and aspire to learn from these generations.

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