

The manifestation of possession in the shop signs of New York's Little Italy

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This qualitative analysis was conceived as a sociolinguistic research in a linguistic landscape. The research focuses on language change and innovation in a context where Italian is officially recognized as a heritage language. Nonetheless, we would not consider any of the described linguistic phenomena as identity-induced phenomena. The aim is rather to show how multilingual context in urban communication dynamics can induce language change innovating migrated language varieties. We analyze three different linguistic constructs observed in the linguistic landscape of Mulberry Street (New York's Little Italy). These constructs can be connected to the linguistic behavior of several generations of Italian emigrants, as evidenced by the findings of this study. We specifically examined the following: (a) English noun modification, through an Italian noun modifier, (b) possessive sentence structure, using the English possessive case for an Italian proper noun; and (c) Italian morphosyntactic structure with locative particles (*da*) in prenominal position. The aforementioned structures, according to our hypothesis, are related to the same communicative intent (i.e. to underline deictic orientation toward Italianness as associated to the Italian language). The research corpus consists of 60 texts extrapolated from shop signs on Mulberry Street in 2011; the data collected has been tracked over time until 2021.

Our results confirm the functional comparability of different syntactical structures and demonstrate that, when investigating language contact conditions, we can observe different lexical and syntactic choices in language mixing as a symptom of different attitudes of generations of emigrants.

KEYWORDS: linguistic landscape, Little Italy, Italian emigration.

1. Introduction

Several studies focused on Italian as a heritage language show interesting phenomena of language innovation. In fact, language variation in a multilingual context is frequently an innovative force in language change. This study focuses on language change and innovation in a context where Italian is officially recognized as a heritage language. Nonetheless, none of the linguistic phenomena described will be considered identity markers. The aim is to demonstrate how a multilingual context in urban communication dynamics can cause language change,

resulting in innovation in migrated language varieties. In this work, we describe a qualitative analysis carried out in the more general context of sociolinguistic investigations devoted to linguistic landscapes. Linguistic landscape analyses are characterized by a theoretical approach focused on expressive and communicative public-social expressions of linguistic landscapes (Landry & Bourhis 1997). Such analyses generally address the multilingualism that emerges within the analyzed region and often leads to the analysis of linguistic policies (Shohamy 2006); wider investigations focus on the connection of linguistic landscapes with the dynamics of a global language market, as in the case of investigations on the Italian language (Vedovelli & Casini 2013; Vedovelli 2014).

Based on linguistic data collected within the linguistic landscape of Mulberry Street, New York's Little Italy, this analysis elaborates on a set of linguistic structures that can be correlated to the linguistic action of generations of Italian emigrants (Bettoni 2001, 2008; Bettoni & Rubino 1996; De Fina 2007, 2012, 2015; De Fina & Bizzoni 2003; Turchetta 2005; Prifti 2013; Di Salvo & Moreno 2017; Turchetta & Vedovelli 2018; Di Salvo 2019). This work focuses on three distinct linguistic constructions identified in shop signs found in the Mulberry Street linguistic landscape. Namely, we examine (a) English noun modification, through an Italian noun modifier (i.e. *Gelato King*), (b) possessive sentence structure, using the English possessive case for an Italian proper noun (i.e. *Ruggero's*); and (c) Italian morphosyntactic structure with locative particles (*da* 'at/to') in prenominal position (i.e. *da Gennaro*). According to our hypothesis, the structures listed above share the same communicative intention of indicating ownership of a specific environment that can be considered Italian or associated with Italianness. Such structures were also identified in a previous study (Turchetta & Ferrini 2022), which focuses on texts in North American Little Italy linguistic landscapes associated with commercial-cultural categories such as 'Italian heritage,' 'Italian legacy,' and 'Italian affection' (Turchetta, Di Salvo & Ferrini 2021). We will focus here on the aforementioned linguistic constructions, as part of a set of communicative strategies that Italian emigrant shop owners adopt, regardless of the linguistic variety in which those constructions are conveyed: this is thus analyzed in terms of a display of identity, realized through the use of specific possessive constructions when referring to a given place. The use of an English noun as a modifier, as well as sentence structures that use the possessive case, have already been studied in English language literature (Wang 2013; Lowe 2016; Rosenbach 2010, 2019; Breban & De Smet 2019) but no further studies were found dealing with language contact in these constructions in emigration scenarios. In this regard, our analysis represents a novelty. So far, the literature dealing with English proper

nouns as modifiers and English possessive case claimed that in their variations these two structures are equal (Rosenbach 2002, 2007, 2010, 2019). In investigating the same research goals, we have attempted to gauge whether in such cases, the aforementioned structures can be related to the semantics of possession, adding the Italian sentence structure 'da + Italian proper noun' to the discussion.

2. Theoretical framework

As mentioned, in this study we used the linguistic landscape data collection methodology to investigate communicative uses in linguistic sceneries (Landry & Bourhis 1997). As claimed by Bagna & Machetti (2019: 44), linguistic landscape analysis was born as a branch of sociolinguistics with the aim of providing a methodology for analyzing how different languages are used within multilingual societies. The term 'linguistic landscape' originates from the work of Landry & Bourhis (1997) that focuses on the perception of French-speaking students with respect to signs present in Canadian provinces. At the same time, Landry & Bourhis (*ibidem*) underline the importance of language selection in sign texts, to assess the ethnolinguistic vitality of multiethnic groups in a given environment. The latter work represented a starting point for many scholars who ventured into the same endeavor, eventually changing their research objectives, methodology, and analysis tools (Gorter 2006). The crucial importance of this methodology emerged in the field of language planning (Barni & Extra 2008; Bagna & Machetti 2019) and during the survey of territories in which the existence of different linguistic communities led to conflicts (Shohamy 2006; Bagna & Barni 2007).

Our research stems from the sociolinguistic analysis of linguistic varieties used by Italian migrants in the world and aims to investigate the connection between integration of Italian emigrants in the host society and their strategies for shaping a given territory affected by their presence.

Italian language varieties within the framework of Italian migration were first considered in the *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita* ['Linguistic history of unified Italy'] (De Mauro 1963), then carried out by Turchetta (2005) in *Mondo in italiano: varietà e usi internazionali della lingua* ['The world in Italian: International varieties and uses of the language'], through the different phases found as *parallelismo*, *discontinuità* e *slittamento* ['parallelism', 'discontinuity' and 'slippage'], again defined by *Storia linguistica dell'emigrazione italiana nel mondo* ['Linguistic history of Italian emigration in the world'] (Vedovelli 2011), up to the analy-

sis found in *Lo spazio linguistico italiano globale: il caso dell'Ontario* [‘The Italian linguistic global space: The Ontario case’] (Turchetta & Vedovelli 2018) and by Barbara Turchetta and Margherita Di Salvo, who investigate the language spoken by Italian migrants in Canada. The aforementioned researchers pursued the same goal in identifying trends in Italian and dialect transmission, connecting shifts towards the new languages of the host country. Turchetta & Di Salvo (2018) submitted a bilingual perceptual questionnaire and interviewed Italian Canadian citizens. Collected data show that, regarding the first generation, a longer period of stay in a new country would eventually bring a fading number of cultural references associated with the country of origin. New cultural categories emerge from new life experiences, and new socialization processes bring new communication patterns. Original linguistic expression capabilities mutate in a new environment in response to new communication acquisition needs. At the very beginning of the integration process, repertoires undergo significant modifications (Turchetta 2020). The second generation of migrants (newly designated as ‘generation zero’ by Turchetta 2020) builds cultural and linguistic baggage, associating previous and new cultural and linguistic patterns (*ibidem*). Evidence of this hybridization of linguistic and cultural patterns derived from the results of an Italian research project devoted to ‘Italian language, global language market, Italian companies in the world: new linguistic, sociocultural, institutional, economic-productive dynamics’.¹ Our study will follow this path. For this investigation, the questionnaire compiled by Turchetta & Di Salvo (2018) was developed further, including questions on the use of Made in Italy products, and administered to Italian migrants in other immigration countries through social networks. The first results questioned the concept of ‘Italianness’ associated with the Made in Italy products that the respondents claimed to use (Turchetta, Di Salvo & Ferrini 2021). In fact, the products described as Made in Italy were not available in Italy. Indeed, exporting dairy products or pork meat to countries such as the United States is impossible. Hence, it was assumed that respondents considered Made in Italy products manufactured in the host country but with a name in Italian or an Italian dialect.

In a previous study on the linguistic landscape in Toronto (Ferrini 2018), we addressed the use of Italian on store signs or local products made by Italian Canadian or non-Italian entrepreneurs. These commercial and linguistic categories cannot be associated with the label ‘Made in Italy’. To explain this point, Barbara Turchetta (Turchetta, Di Salvo & Ferrini 2021) developed a threefold classification, dividing commercial products and the cultural and linguistic identities they come from in ‘Italian heritage’, ‘Italian legacy’, and ‘Italian affection’. It must be noted

that the expression 'Italian heritage' used by Turchetta in a different way from heritage language studies focusing on structural aspects of migrant varieties such as Montrul (2015) or Polinsky (2018). While Polinsky and Montrul use it to identify the languages spoken in the family by second-generation speakers, Turchetta uses it to identify products that, in Italy or abroad, recall the Italian tradition of craftsmanship as well as old memories in Italian migrants through the use of Italian and dialect brands. In Turchetta's model, 'Italian legacy' is used for those products that in a foreign context are not closely linked to the Italian tradition of craftsmanship, but nevertheless recall it in some way. Finally, 'Italian affection' indicates products realized in a foreign context, but with no direct link to the Italian tradition of craftsmanship inspired by Italian and dialect brands.

This classification has been expanded in Di Salvo's (2022) study of the spoken language of Italian migrant generations in Canada, as well as in Turchetta and Ferrini's (2022) study of North American Little Italy linguistic landscapes in Boston, New York, and Toronto. We found texts related to Turchetta's theoretical categories (Turchetta, Di Salvo & Ferrini 2021). Contact phenomena, particularly at the morphosyntactic level, were interpreted as related to 'Italian legacy,' and thus as a result of linguistic creations in subsequent generations of Italian migrant generations.² Among the structures that are typically involved in such process, we find the constructions that are analyzed in this paper, namely: modification of an English noun through an Italian modifier, possessive structures using the English possessive case for an Italian proper noun, and to the Italian morphosyntactic structure of locative particles (*da*) in prenominal position. In our interpretation of 'contact', borrowed from Weinreich (1953), proper Italian nouns, as well as Italian surnames, are taken into consideration, based on the assumption that they are used in restaurant signs to indicate the Italian origin of their activity. It is worth emphasizing the significance of an emigrant shop owner's desire to reveal an Italian American given name or surname, especially considering first-generation emigrants' refusal to give their children Italian names (LaGumina 2019). LaGumina (2019) describes a practice used by first-generation emigrants that involves changing their surnames as well as their given names with American adaptations in order to protect their children from the same discrimination they faced.

Numerous studies analyze the linguistic aspects of migrants' settlements inside cities and underline that the texts found within the commercial signs and shop windows written by immigrants describe a cultural universe. At the same time, they express the power of a given community through its language together with the desire for an iden-

tity expressed by the same group (Barni 2004: 15). In our case study (i.e. New York Little Italy) it must be noted that the use of Italian by shop owners served different purposes over time. The Little Italy area, originally inhabited by first generation Italian emigrants and by 'generation zero' (Turchetta 2020), has subsequently been employed by the municipality for the (re)construction of Italian-theme areas to attract tourists interested in the 'Italian way of life' (Krase 2019). In the early immigration phases, Italian neighborhoods provided support and mutual aid to their inhabitants (Krase 2019: 643). Once the need for solidarity ended, these urban areas, despite being abandoned by citizens of Italian origin moving towards the suburbs, maintained their Italian appearance, sometimes amplified, for economic purposes (Turchetta & Ferrini 2022). In the linguistic landscape of New York's Little Italy, we witnessed the stratification of textualities that respond to different communication needs and different communication actors. First, there was the need for the first generation to manifest its very existence in the foreign territorial context (Barni 2004), while afterwards the subsequent generations (in collaboration with the municipalities), that inherited their grandfathers' businesses, needed to publicize the existence of a 'Made in Italy provider point'; and hence the intention of territorial marking through word choices (Turchetta & Ferrini 2022). In this sense, 'territorial marking' can be considered an *a posteriori* category within which we can identify different language choices. We propose to ascribe to this category the use of Saxon genitive with an Italian proper noun, the modification of an English noun through an Italian modifier, and the Italian morphosyntactic construction of locative particles in pronominal position ('*da* + proper noun'). According to our hypothesis, the use of these structures in the given context (linguistic landscape) makes them comparable.

In fact, Rosenbach (2007, 2019) postulated the semantic equivalence of 'Saxon genitive form + proper noun' and an English noun modification through a modifier. Rosenbach's reflection (2019) is integrated into the theoretical reflection, related to variation studies and semantic equivalent (Labov 1966). In her research, Rosenbach includes a case study of proper nouns as a special subtype of noun modifiers. Combinations such as the *Bush administration* or the *Barcelona newspapers* demonstrate this pattern (2007: 162):

The general argument is that determiner genitives and noun modifiers present a case of constructional gradience. That is, their defining features include certain overlapping syntactic and semantic properties. (Breban & De Smet 2019: 881)

3. Data collection

The analysis is based on a corpus of 60 signs collected by the author in New York's Little Italy, specifically Mulberry Street, in 2011. The corpus data has been gathered during fieldwork activities which involved interviews with business owners and participant observation. The interviews aimed to understand the reasons behind the business's name choices and possibly the relationship with the owner's family history.

For data collection, we used the 'The Ontario case 2019' method (Ferrini 2018), which was previously borrowed from Barni and Bagna (2006, 2007, 2008). Data collected on an iPad are geolocated using GPS and then compiled in an Excel file. After recording a text on a spreadsheet, our database, we proceed to the linguistic analysis of the text, which is made up of the letters on the sign.

Our corpus is organized as in Bagna & Barni's (2006) and Barni & Bagna (2007) methodology in the following categories: SITE, COUNTRY, LOCALIZATION, TEXTUAL GENRE, PRESENT LANGUAGES, SITE OF APPEARANCE, ITALIANNESS SYMBOLS, SHIFT OF REFERENCE FILED, ENTRY and GRAMMAR MARK. Our corpus is comprised of text, divided by SITE (New York), COUNTRY (USA) and LOCALIZATION ('central urban areas or suburbs', 'industrial', 'commercial', 'crafts and rural areas', 'posh', 'ethnic city center', 'ethnic suburbs', 'residential area', 'Little Italy', 'downtown', as in Barni & Bagna 2007). In our analysis, data are classified based on their TEXT GENRE, to check the identity of the sender of the message: 'public', 'local entity' or 'private' (*ibidem*). The category TEXT GENRES can be further divided into: 'public notice', 'signs', 'menus', 'instructions', 'contracts', 'personal documents', 'school reports/communication', 'labeling', 'posters', 'brochures', 'newspapers', 'writings on the wall', 'road signs', 'religious text', 'ads', 'recipes', 'schoolbooks', 'timetables', 'tickets', 'regulations', 'display cabinets', 'writing on public transportation', 'purchase agreements' (*ibidem*: 536). In this case, we chose to focus on shop signs. The second part is about the OTHER LANGUAGES USED IN THE TEXT: if the text only includes Italian, the collector will encode 0, while with other languages a different code will be given based on the language detected. 'English only' is intended for signs with given names and surnames of Italian or Italian American origin, thus considered as part of the Italian variety. Methods used for this analysis have been developed further (Turchetta & Ferrini 2022), including other categories such as: 'linguistic behavior', where code-switching or code-mixing trends have been detected, 'contact phenomena', where such trends could eventually be detected, and 'donator field', where the expressions collected can be associated with the lexical fields from which they come. For instances of contact, we decided

not to include signs where the contact might have occurred with other words like *pasta* and *pizza*, which are already part of the Collins English Dictionary (Turchetta & Ferrini *forthcoming*). The text is then divided by PLACE OF THE OCCURRENCE, to be chosen among ‘restaurants’, ‘hospitality’, ‘healthcare’, ‘justice’, ‘public administration’, ‘public activities’, ‘religion’, ‘sports’, ‘leisure time’, ‘public places’, ‘public transport’, ‘reception’, ‘volunteering’, ‘education services’, ‘education bodies’, ‘family context’, ‘private events’, ‘public events’, ‘working environment’, ‘workers bodies’, ‘services for workers’, ‘life-long learning’, ‘public associations’, ‘itinerant trade’, ‘food’, ‘monuments’ (Bagna & Barni 2007). As for SHIFT IN REFERENCE FIELDS, occurrences used in places or contexts inconsistent with the linguistic meaning and use will be classified (Vedovelli 2005). The analysis table ends with categories like ENTRY and GRAMMAR MARK. In the first section the entry is reported in capital letters next to each recorded text.

4. Corpus and linguistic analysis

Our observations are based on a corpus made by a set of 60 signs recorded in 2011 inside New York’s Little Italy, more specifically on Mulberry Street. All the signs can be referred to trends in restaurants, thus originating from the owner’s linguistic choices. These are short texts, with a maximum word count of six.



Figure 1. *Cannoli King*, 148 Mulberry Street, New York.

The linguistic varieties used within our corpus for textual construction are primarily composed of Italian texts, which are found to be the only language present in the text in 65% of the cases, followed by the presence of contact instances (33% of the cases), and finally by the presence of English (1.3% of the cases). Amongst the most frequent morpho-syntactic constructions with a sign of contact, the following structures are reported: (1) Italian proper noun as a modifier of the English noun, and (2) Italian proper noun, with a possessive case. While, among the Italian morphosyntactic phenomena we can find: (3) a 'modified + modifier' structure, and (4) a structure with a locative particle followed by an Italian noun.

4.1. Italian noun as a modifier of the English noun

In English, the structure of a modifier followed by a modified element is commonly used. However, as Cerruti (2015: 400) recalls, in Italian, restrictive adjectives can also occur before a noun, something that could come from English, either as a case of syntactic calque, or as the reinforcement of an existing pattern in Italian. In this corpus we found six Italian texts with a 'modified + modifier' structure. In any case, these structures are allowed in spoken and written language, as (1) part of a title of a classic Italian literary text, *Piccolo Mondo Antico* ['Little World of the Past'].

- | | | | |
|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| (1) ITA | La | bella | vita |
| | ART | ADJ | N |
| (2) ITA | Antica | Pesa | |
| | ADJ | N | |
| (3) ITA | La | bella | Ferrara |
| | ART | ADJ | N |
| (4) ITA | Il | piccolo | bufalo |
| | ART | ADJ | N |

Other structures in the corpus with a 'modifier + modified' structure are related to instances of contact. In this case, a contact can occur among (5) an Italian proper noun (surname) as a 'modifier + denomination of the place with an English noun';³ (6) and (7) an Italian product as a modifier and an English honorary title; (8) kinship terminology in Italian as a modifier and the name of a place with an English noun, and vice versa; (9) a toponym as a modifier in English and the name of a place with an Italian noun.

- (5) ENG Ferrara Bakery
 N(Ita) N
- (6) ENG Gelato King
 N(Ita) N
- (7) ENG Cannoli King
 N (Ita) N
- (8) ENG Zia Maria Little Italy
 N (Ita) LOC
- (9) ENG Naples Ristorante e Pizzeria
 N N(Ita) CONJ(Ita) N(Ita)

In the American variety, this structure is employed in the name of shops, schools, or churches in order to express possession. We can put in correspondence the British use *St. Mary's is very ancient* to the American *St. Mary is very ancient*. In this case, British English will use the possessive case, while American English will leave the noun as it is. An interesting theory was developed about this, claiming an equivalence of constructions with determiner genitives and proper noun as modifiers in English (Rosenbach 2007, 2010, 2019). The researcher speculates that a proper noun plays a central role as a modifier in defining the sentence, since it has been found that it can be replaced by determiner genitives (Rosenbach 2019). Rosenbach then gives examples where genitives and proper nouns can be interchangeable as modifiers. The equivalence mentioned by Rosenbach is defined in a variationist perspective as descriptive synonymousness, that is, the identity of the descriptive meaning (Rosenbach 2019: 761).

4.2. 'Modifier + modified' structure in Italian

The structure showing a modified component at the beginning of the sentence, followed by a modifier, is a conventional structure in Italian. Indeed, the texts we collected are only in Italian. These consist of noun phrases where the modified element is a noun containing the description of the business activity, and the modifier is an adjective related to it, as shown in (10) and (11).

- (10) ITA Ristorante l' Ultimo
 N ART ADJ
- (11) ITA Villa Bianca
 N ADJ

4.3. Italian structure 'locative particle + proper noun'



Figure 2. *Da Nico Ristorante*, 164 Mulberry Street, New York.

In the Italian texts occurring our corpus, we found structures with a preposition followed by a proper noun, as in (12) and (13).

(12) ITA da Nico
PREP N

(13) ITA da Gennaro
PREP N

As already pointed out by Jansen (2011), the semantic value of the relation expressed by the Italian prepositions depends on the context in which they occur. Moreover, Italian prepositions show a wide range of variability according to regional, social, and contextual factors. However, a basic value, “a nucleus of similar meanings” (Jansen 2011: 1), can be found, relating to spatial meaning.

As Rohlfs (1954) pointed out, the most ancient meaning of the preposition *da* (‘from’) is to encode origin, as in *vengo da Napoli* (1954: 220). The preposition thereafter assumed several other functions: it

could indicate the agent *lodato dal padre (ibidem)*, a temporal distance *da allora (ibidem)*. In our corpus, the preposition *da* has a directional locative function, introducing the place to reach, which also coincides with the given name of the owner of the place. In contrast with Dardano & Trifone (1995: 407), who interpret this manifestation as improper use, according to our interpretation, this use represents the denotatum's semantic transfer from a place to a person, and thus an innovative connotative meaning of the syntactic structure: a new strategy used by speakers as an effort to focus on the personal identity and the symbolical meaning represented by the environment. The structure '*da* + proper noun' seems to be introducing a noun with a possessive and locative value, at a semantic level, thus it can be replaced by the Italian structure '*di* [of] + noun', absent in our corpus. Rohlfs (1954: 220) states that the line between *di* and *da* is not rigidly defined. In fact, in earliest Italian, *di* was often used with the current meaning of *da*, while over a significant fraction of the southern territory of Italy *di* (or *de*) occupies the same place as the less used *da*, e.g. in the Calabrese variety *aju de fare* (Rohlfs 1954: 208), in the Sicilian variety *vinèmu di Missina (ibidem)*. Other examples, collected from the linguistic landscape of Italian zones present in other non-Italian cities reached by Italian emigrants, seem to create the same effect at the semantic level: *Da Maria* in the Little Italy of Toronto (Ferrini 2018) and *da Luca* in the Italian neighborhoods of Mannheim (Ferrini 2016) are all proper nouns introduced by a locative particle. The global meaning of this construction can be reconducted to the expression of possession: if a sign reports the text *Da Nico Ristorante* it expresses the idea of a restaurant belonging to someone called Nico.

4.4. Possessive case as instance of contact: Italian word compared to the English possessive

We can find cases where the Italian term is defined by the English possessive case among the structures where contact occurs more frequently. The most common relation defined by the English possessive case is that of 'identity' or 'ownership', but it can also be used, in the British version, to define a working place. Possession in English can be expressed through the possessive case, the particle *of* or possessive pronouns and adjectives. In Italian, possessive pronouns and adjectives are graphically/phonetically the same but can be distinguished because of their position in the sentence. In English, though, they are different and can be easily distinguished. The English possessive case is used with nouns relating to people, groups of people, countries, and animals, and it shows a relation between two things. In order to form the possessive

case, it is necessary to use the Saxon genitive, but if the noun is plural or ends with an *s*, it is graphically necessary to add an apostrophe after it. In English, the possessive case it is not generally used to express the relationship between people and places, when the noun of the possessor is followed by a sentence, or with objects (Taylor & MacLaury 2010). In these cases, to express possession and belonging speakers can use a construction with *of*. The literature is divided on how to interpret the equivalence between the possessive case and the structure with *of*: on the one hand, Stefanowitsch (2003) and Gries & Stefanowitsch (2004) point out that these two structures convey a different meaning, and thus this variation cannot be described in terms of a linguistic variable *stricto sensu*; on the other hand, according to the interpretation we decided to follow, Rosenbach's (2002: 22), they both express a relationship between the possessor and the thing possessed, therefore an identity exists, and can be used as a sentence.

In our corpus, we can find as instance of contact: the use of the English possessive case with an Italian proper noun, as in (14); an Italian American proper noun, followed by an Italian noun indicating the type of commercial activity, as in (15); an Italian surname followed by a modifier and a modified element in English, as in (16); an Italian surname followed by a sequence of nouns in Italian, as in (17). Cases where the possessive case appears to define an Italian proper noun seem to have two functions: identifying the workplace, but also indicating its owner.

- | | | | | |
|------|-----|--------------|-----------|--------------------|
| (14) | ITA | Ruggero | 's | |
| | | N | POSS(Eng) | |
| (15) | ITA | Frank | 's | Trattoria |
| | | N(Italoamer) | POSS(Eng) | N |
| (16) | ITA | Monte | 's | Venetian room |
| | | N(Ita) | POSS(Eng) | ADJ (Eng) N(Eng) |
| (17) | ITA | Di Palo | 's | Ricotta Mozzarella |
| | | N | POSS(Eng) | N N |

As previously seen in literature dealing with Italian as a spoken migrant variety (Turchetta & Vedovelli 2018; Di Salvo 2019), the use of Italian, as a linguistic skill, for subsequent migrant generations, is usually barely preserved within the family. We observed that in each case where contact occurred, the leading language, working as a guide to the structure's sentence, is English, while Italian is limited to proper nouns or to words already present in dictionaries, which are thus to be consid-

ered as established loanwords. The complete absence of dialect can be explained by the texts we decided to analyze, since they are not used among communities, but to represent one’s commercial activity to an audience outside of the community.

Among self-representation and marketing strategies, the most important one is the FORM OF THE CONTENT ‘identity/possession’, which as a FORM OF EXPRESSION can occur with the possessive case, the noun as a modifier, and in a structure with the locative preposition *da*. In our study, we postulated an equivalence between a proper noun as a modifier and the possessive case and our hypothesis was confirmed. There is some correspondence, not in terms of semantic equivalence, as in Rosenbach (2019), but in terms of functional comparability (Winford 1996: 180-182). Beside this correspondence, we also focused on the Italian structure with the particle *da*, indicating the owner of the place, if followed by a proper noun. As a confirmation of the central role English plays for the authors of the texts we analyzed, we should consider that, except for the structure with ‘*da* + proper noun’ (found only twice in the corpus), identity and possession are only expressed in the English construction. Let us reconstruct (14) using the two code switching structures and the Italian structure.

(14) ITA	Ruggero	's	
	N	POSS(Eng)	
* (14.1) ENG	Ruggero	Restaurant	
	N (Ita)	N	
* (14.2) ITA	Ristorante	da	Ruggero
	N	LOC	N

(14) and (14.1) are instances of contact, (14.2) is an Italian text that, as such, responds to the Italian morphosyntactic structures. We can relate them by considering them as part of the Italian migrant variety. Assuming they are part of this variety, we must consider that they have different morphosyntactic constructions. Therefore, the principle of identity in this structure is absent. However, the three texts can be functionally compared: they indicate a place that can be distinguished by specifying the owner. In other words, they indicate possession. In (14.1) and (14.2), in addition to the owner’s proper noun, the type of store is also specified. Instead, in (14), only the designation of the owner is specified, and therefore the context defines the type of store. We can assert that the structures ‘Italian proper noun as modifier + modified element in English’, ‘Italian proper noun + possessive case’, and ‘*da* + Italian

proper noun', though showing different deep and superficial structures, express functional comparability. Obviously, we claim this for our reference corpus, and, therefore, we refer to the written variety of migrated Italian observed in Mulberry Street linguistic landscapes. Future studies may indicate whether this assertion could be confirmed in larger corpora. In the Mulberry Street linguistic landscape, the communicative intention related to the possession of the signed location manifests itself in terms of language choice, according to what has been already observed regarding the spoken language (Turchetta & Vedovelli 2018; Di Salvo 2019). This communicative intention comprehends the entire repertoire possessed by emigrated shop owners, i.e. the English language, the residual (built in emigration) Italian language, and instances of contact. The observed linguistic structures inscribe themselves in the already observed linguistic ductility which derives from a hybrid identity that in turn structures itself in daily conversation with oneself and with others (Turchetta & Vedovelli 2018).

The sign texts seem to be constructed by adhering to linguistic models of the commercial exhibition, typical of North American linguistic landscapes, and by adhering to Italian models. English 'modifier + modified' structure and 'proper noun + Saxon genitive' are typical of North American signs as in *Pizza Hut* or at the restaurant called *Houlihan's*, which we recorded in Manhattan's ten best restaurants list. Conversely, the 'da + proper noun' structure is typical of Italian linguistic landscapes, e.g. *Da Giggetto al Portico di Ottavia*. The shops adhering to the American model are more recent, while the signs adhering to the Italian model are older. The same Italian structure, 'da + proper noun', that seems to disappear in Italy, has been observed in Mannheim (Ferrini 2016) and Toronto (Ferrini 2018). Also in this latter case, it seems to be a language use that allows for more fashionable names, constituted by independent lexical elements.

5. Conclusion

This qualitative analysis was conceived as sociolinguistic research in a linguistic landscape. We analyzed three different linguistic constructs observed in the linguistic landscape of Mulberry Street (New York's Little Italy), which can be correlated to the linguistic action of several generations of Italian emigrants; more specifically, we examine the following: (a) English noun modification, through an Italian noun modifier, (b) possessive sentence structure, using the English possessive case for an Italian proper noun; and (c) Italian morphosyntactic

structure with locative particles (*da*) in prenominal position. According to our hypothesis, the aforementioned structures are related to the same communicative intent, i.e. to underline deictic orientation toward Italianness as associated to the Italian language. We witness the stratification of textualities that respond to the different communicational needs of its current and historical inhabitants: first the need of the early generations of emigrants to manifest their presence on foreign territory (Barni 2004) that we can correlate to the adherence to the Italian model and thus to the Italian use of ‘*da* + proper noun’; second to the need for subsequent generations, that inherited the shops, to manifest the existence of a spot where the real Made in Italy is available (Turchetta & Ferrini *forthcoming*). This latter need is fulfilled through adhesion to the American linguistic model in which the Italian lexicon is introduced.

Notes

¹ This study is part of the ‘Italian language, global linguistic market, Italian companies in the world: new linguistic, socio-cultural, institutional, economic-productive dynamics’ PRIN 2017 research project, coordinated by Massimo Vedovelli.

² Categories were assigned after meeting with the owner of the place and, if not possible, through the website of the commercial activity.

³ *Ferrara* is a surname.

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