

Standard and neo-standard in mobile communities. The case of German-speaking Switzerland

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This paper seeks to address if restandardization dynamics unfold in a migratory setting. The study takes as a test case the double standard situation of contemporary Italian and aims to ascertain to which extent the linguistic repertoire of Italian speakers living abroad remains stable.

To this end, we explored the linguistic repertoire of Italian speakers living in German-speaking Switzerland by combining two approaches. A qualitative survey analysis of reported language use showed that migration does not seem to affect the configuration of the Italian varieties in their repertoire. This stability was further investigated in a variationist corpus analysis of 18 syntactic and morphological standard and neo-standard features, in which we measured the role of duration of migration and age. An exploratory Principle Component Analysis does not yet provide a clear indication of stability or change. However, it does suggest that both duration of migration and age may affect the distribution of standard and neo-standard features.

KEYWORDS: restandardization, migration, neo-standard Italian, literary standard Italian.

1. Introduction

Contemporary Italian has undergone, after the Second World War, substantial changes. With the emergence of true native speakers of Italian, together with the regression of Italo-Romance dialects, Italian broke free from the corset of limited and domain-dependent usage and spread as spoken national language (De Mauro 2014). This resulted in a language situation described by Cerruti & Tsiplakou (2020) as a double-standard situation, in which a traditional norm, namely the *standard letterario* ('literary standard') coexists with a new standard, defined by Berruto (2012 [1987]) as 'neo-standard Italian'. The latter, according to Auer (2017), differs from the traditional standard as it is to be considered as more informal, personal, modern and displaying an oral character. According to Cerruti *et al.* (2017) these changes are part of a process of restandardization, where two standard norms (the literary standard and neo-standard) together serve as a model for the Italian

speaker community. The term ‘restandardization’ emphasized Italy’s difference in language change with respect to other linguistic communities, where a changing standard language ideology is manifested in a different way (see Kristiansen & Coupland 2011), viz. in Norway, through a process of destandardization (the standard norm loses prestige), or in the Netherlands, through a process of demotization (the standard norm broadens out with new features).

Processes of ongoing restandardization have been described to the best of our knowledge mainly from an intranational point of view (see Cerruti, Crocco & Marzo 2017; Moretti *et al.* 2019; Ballarè 2020). This paper seeks to address if and how restandardization processes unfold in a migratory setting namely in German-speaking Switzerland. Resuming our findings published in 2021 (Marzo, Natale & De Pascale 2021) in which we found that belief systems, as an important factor in restandardization processes, are sensitive to the variable ‘mobile speaker’, we use the Swiss-German migratory setting as a test case for investigating the effect of migration on neo-standard Italian. We hypothesize that Italian mobile speakers that belong to the actual and new Italian migration wave towards Switzerland, participate in restandardization processes because of their large access to the entire national linguistic space (Vedovelli 2011).

The following article is structured as follows: §2 gives a brief overview of the characteristics of the new wave of Italian immigration, comparing it in socio-demographic terms with migrants who moved to Switzerland in the 1950s and 1960s. §3 deals with mobility as a crucial variable to capture the sociolinguistic trends observed in the laboratory of new Italian migration. In §4, we present the data, the hypotheses and the explorative tools used for the study. In §5 we report the results of a qualitative and quantitative analysis. The final section explores the theoretical and methodological implications of our empirical findings.

2. *The ‘new’ Italian migration to Switzerland*

Italy’s history as a nation has been distinctly marked by both internal and external migration movements over the last 160 years. In terms of external migration, migratory movements can be divided into three periods. A first emigration wave, which predominantly targeted overseas destinations, began with the founding of the nation state and extended until the beginning of the twentieth century. A second wave of migration, oriented mainly towards northern and central Europe, was closely linked to the ‘economic boom’ and occurred primarily during the 1960s

and 1970s. During this phase Switzerland has been among the preferred migration destinations for Italians. Switzerland, in fact, became after the Second World War the European country which experienced the highest rate of immigration. The immigration rate was even higher than in the United States, the country of Italian immigration arrival par excellence (Ricciardi 2018). A third migration wave defined as ‘new migration’ is taking place since 2008 and has been caused by the financial crisis which has hit the Italian labour market hard, causing a high rate of unemployment, especially among young people. Again, Switzerland qualifies as one of the preferred targets. This new migration differs from the previous migration waves with regard to various sociodemographic factors such as origin, education, occupational sectors and mobility.

Unlike the migratory movement of the 1960s and 1970s which had a particular impact on the South of Italy, the new wave affects entire Italy, from North to South, including economically powerful centres like Milano or Torino which are still preferred targets for the ongoing internal migration (Kuteeva 2015; Impacciatore & Panichella 2019). As to education, among the new migrants, people with a university degree are increasingly numerous, representing circa 30% of the total (Licata 2017). For the specific case of Switzerland, Fibbi & Wanner (2020) cite a percentage of even 46% for Italian migrants with a university degree. The presence of highly qualified persons among new mobile Italians led several Italian media to refer to this phenomenon as brain drain (*la fuga dei cervelli*, literally ‘the escape of brains’). The relatively high rate of migrants with a university degree exhibits a considerable difference compared to migrants of the period of the economic boom when mainly unskilled uneducated people moved (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1969; Recchi, Barone & Assirelli 2016). In line with the heterogeneous educational qualifications of new mobile Italians, the occupational sectors are not restricted to construction, industry or catering trade anymore but extend from construction over catering trade to cutting-edge research covering a wide field of professions. Another factor that is seminal to the socio-linguistic comparison of ‘old’ and ‘new’ Italian migration concerns the mobility of migrants, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

3. Mobility

The recent decades have been characterized by an increased volume of mobility, which can be described and measured in two ways: on

the one hand in a sense of spatial, physical or geographical dislocation of people (Knox *et al.* 2008) and on the other hand in a virtual sense.

As regards mobility in spatial terms, migrants have nowadays, apart from the lockdown period, many more opportunities to travel cheaply and frequently. In fact, passenger traffic showed an extensive growth during the last decades (see for Switzerland the report of the Federal Statistical Office).¹ For new Italian migrants trips to Italy are not limited to summer vacations, as they used to be for most Italian migrants in the sixties or seventies. Surveys and interviews with new Italian emigrants in Switzerland have shown that trips to Italy are nowadays regular and frequent, reaching up to weekly visits (Natale 2021).

As regards mobility in a virtual sense, we can observe an increase, as in the whole modern and technological world, in ‘connectivity’. Indeed, the growth of digital technology consents to stay connected and to cross borders virtually, via the web or mobile communication (Androutsopoulos & Juffermans 2014) “allowing new forms of coordination of people, meetings, and events to emerge” (Sheller & Urry 2006: 207). Interviews with new Italian migrants (see Natale 2021) highlighted that intensive use is made of this form of connectivity. The excerpt from the following interview illustrates how frequent the exchange of information with friends and relatives in Italy can be:

Interviewer: Se prendiamo 10 messaggi o 10 telefonate che in un giorno si fanno, quante di queste telefonate o di questi messaggi sono destinati a persone che vivono in Italia? (*If we take 10 messages or 10 phone calls that are made in a day, how many of these calls or messages are to people living in Italy?*)

Informant 1: A me tutti i messaggi... (*To me all the messages...*)

Informant 2: I messaggi praticamente tutti... Io chiamate qua in Svizzera non... non ne faccio. Se chiamo, chiamo in Italia. Chiamo... i mie... C’ho amici qua in Svizzera, sì. Però i miei migliori amici stanno in Italia, stanno. La mia famiglia sta in Italia. Quindi, se io chiamo che devo parlare di una cosa seria con... con qualcuno, io chiamo il mio amico che sta in Italia o mio cugino che sta in Italia. Ma qui... qui no. (*The messages practically all... I don’t make any calls here in Switzerland. If I call, I call to Italy. I call... my... I have friends here in Switzerland, yes. But my best friends are in Italy. My family is in Italy. So, if I call to talk about something serious with... with someone, I call my friend who is in Italy or my cousin who is in Italy. But here... not here.*)

Furthermore, recent interviews report that media use in general (streaming services, online newspapers, TV, radio etc.) shows a clear

preference for media available in Italian (Natale 2021). The daily exposure to media in Italian allows for an uninterrupted participation in the political, cultural and social events in Italy, which is reflected for example in the animated expression of political opinions in Facebook forums like *Italiani in Svizzera* ('Italians in Switzerland'). All these connections to Italy and its language led to an unbroken and close contact with Italian and prevents those 'fractures' which have arisen for example, in previous migratory settings, where Italian varieties spoken abroad progressively drifted away from their counterparts in Italy (see Vedovelli 2011; Prifti 2014). We claim that the persistence of Italian in the daily lives of new migrants has implications on their language, which we will elaborate in the following paragraphs.

4. Method

4.1. Data and hypotheses

As outlined in the previous sections, high-mobility contexts – in the sense of a close contact to Italy and Italian – allow for a continuous access to the Italian linguistic space (Vedovelli 2011). We assume that current trends observed in contemporary Italian (see Ballarè 2020 for an actual state-of-the-art and see Cerruti & Vietti 2022) as outcomes of a downward convergence (Auer & Hinskens 1996) may occur abroad to the same or comparable degree as in Italy. We hypothesize that the uninterrupted possibility to participate in processes of restandardization unfolding in Italy can be verified in a migrational setting. In order to test our hypothesis, we have compared two groups of Italian migrants. One group is composed of ten informants (see next section for details) that have left Italy more than ten years ago. The second set consists of ten informants who have recently arrived in German-speaking Switzerland (between one and three years). In this sense, the second group functions as a control group since it cannot be assumed that the experience of migration is linguistically detectable yet. We suggest that in both groups neo-standard features tend to cluster the same way with respect to their distribution (cf. Cerruti & Vietti 2022) and hence expect that neo-standard Italian does not manifest variation with regard to the duration of migration.

This hypothesis on language stability in a migratory context counters the generally accepted insights on the effects of language contact and mobility on language change (Blommaert 2016). It is widely rec-

ognized that when people move, their communicative practices become sensitive to mobility and that global (physical and virtual) mobility has a tremendous impact on language (as it was for first generation labour migration). However, as we stated above, we assume that the high mobility of recent Italian migration has an opposite impact on the linguistic repertoire of Italian speakers, viz. that it leads to continuity and stability of the developments corresponding to trends observable in Italy.

In order to test this hypothesis, we will explore both qualitatively and quantitatively the linguistic repertoire of Italian speakers living in German-speaking Switzerland. First, we performed a qualitative analysis of a survey dataset, consisting of sixty online questionnaires ($n = 60$) where respondents were asked to report on their linguistic repertoires, their linguistic choices in specific domains and on their behaviour in terms of virtual and physical mobility. This sample of respondents is structured as follows: it is stratified along a gender dimension (36 respondents are female and 24 male) and along the speakers' regional origin (24 speakers are from Northern Italy, 7 from Central Italy and 18 from Southern Italy; 11 respondents did not want to indicate their origin). The average age of the respondents is 35 years (with 3 respondents being older than 50 years, 27 between 40 and 50, 26 between 30 and 40, and 4 younger than 30). All respondents of the sample have lived in German-speaking Switzerland for at least five years. The findings of the survey reinforce the mobile behaviour of the new Italian migrants: 32 respondents (53.3%) travel to Italy more than 5 times a year, up to weekly visits; 17 respondents (28.3%) travel to Italy three to four times a year while 11 respondents (18.3%) reduce their visits to Italy to one or two visits a year. In §5.1 we will discuss to what extent this high mobility affects the respondents' language repertoires.

After this survey analysis, we scrutinized a self-collected corpus of semi-structured interviews carried out with another sample of Italian migrants in German-speaking Switzerland ($n = 20$), of approximately 70 minutes each (circa 23 hours of recordings). The corpus has been manually transcribed and annotated in the MAX QDA program. We have compared the most typical of standard and neo-standard Italian features (Berruto 2017; Ballarè 2020) by means of an explorative analysis allowing to discover underlying patterns of similarity or change in both groups.

In order to investigate these patterns, we have compared two groups of speakers that differ regarding duration of migration in German-speaking Switzerland: one group consists of 10 informants (6

female, 4 male; aged between 35 and 52 years) that have been living in German-speaking Switzerland for more than ten years while the second group is composed of 10 informants (5 female, 5 male) who recently left Italy (between one and three years). The subjects in the first group all have a university degree, four of them have earned a PhD. Eight informants of the first group work in the field of exact sciences (especially in physical or pharmaceutical research) while two teach Italian as a foreign language. The informants of the second group (aged between 23 and 31 years) are either master or doctoral students at the University of Bern. Both southern and northern origins are represented but with a concentration on northern Italy (5 southern against 15 informants from the north). The topics covered in the sociolinguistic interviews relate to the physical and virtual mobility of the respondents, their language habits and skills, their attitudes towards (Swiss) German and their social networks.

4.2. Linguistic features of neo-standard Italian

In the quantitative analysis we have examined 18 morphological and syntactical phenomena that can be located either in the realm of the neo-standard or in the domain of the literary standard. The selection of these features is based on Cerruti & Vietti's (2022) study of coherence patterns in standard and neo-standard Italian. Five variables (see the following table for examples taken from our own corpus) belong to the subset of literary standard features and 13 variables are associated with neo-standard phenomena (Berruto 2017).

STANDARD TYPE	DOMAIN	FEATURE	EXAMPLE	CODE
Literary	Morphosyntax	Passive voice	Non è il Hochdeutsch quello che viene parlato. <i>It is not Hochdeutsch that is spoken.</i>	PASSIVE.ST
Literary	Relative pronouns	Relativization through the relative pronouns <i>cui</i> and <i>quale</i>	È un ambiente in cui mi sento inserito bene. <i>It is an environment in which I fit in very well.</i>	REL.ST
Literary	Personal pronouns	Reflexive pronoun <i>sé</i>	Ha chiamato tutti attorno a sé. <i>He called everyone around him.</i>	REFL.SE.ST
Literary	Demonstrative pronouns	Distance-neutral demonstrative <i>ciò</i>	Per tutto ciò che hanno portato gli italiani. <i>For all that the Italians have brought.</i>	DEM.CIO.ST
Literary	Demonstrative pronouns	Proximal and distal <i>questo</i> and <i>quello</i>	Essendo in questo ambito tri-nazionale devo adattarmi. <i>Being in this tri-national sphere, I have to adapt.</i>	DEM. QU.QUELLO.ST
Neo-standard	Subordination	adverbial subordinator <i>che</i> , labelled as 'multifunctional <i>che</i> '	Ci son dei fine settimana che io scrivo sul calendario 'Occupato'. <i>There are some weekends that I write on the calendar 'Busy'.</i>	MFNC.CHE.NEO
Neo-standard	Demonstrative pronouns	apherisis of the proximal demonstrative <i>questo</i>	Sta cosa un po' mi preoccupa. <i>This thing worries me a little.</i>	DEM.ST.NEO
Neo-standard	Demonstrative pronouns	distance-neutral demonstrative <i>quello</i>	Quello che sto facendo ora è un corso B2. <i>What I am doing now is a B2 course.</i>	N.DEM.QU.NEO

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Neo-standard	Demonstrative pronouns	Routinized formula with textual functions	Lascia che ti dica quelle che sono le mie aspettative. <i>Let me tell you what my expectations are.</i>	QUELL*.CHE.NEO
Neo-standard	Clitic pronouns	3SG indirect object clitic <i>gli</i> used for female referents	Gli ho parlato in inglese (alla signora) <i>I spoke to him/her in English (to the lady).</i>	CL.GLI.NEO
Neo-standard	Clitic pronouns	Existential constructions with <i>ci</i> as pre-copular proform	Ci sono molte opportunità da scoprire. <i>There are many opportunities to be discovered.</i>	LOC.CI.NEO
Neo-standard	Clitic pronouns	Idiomatic verb- <i>ci</i> constructions	Mi ci è voluto molto per capirlo. <i>It took me a long time to figure it out.</i>	VCI.NEO
Neo-standard	Clitic pronouns	Idiomatic verb- <i>ne</i> constructions	Non riesco a farne a meno. <i>I can't get enough of it.</i>	VNE.NEO
Neo-standard	Grammaticalization	Non-nominal uses of <i>tipo</i>	Faccio corsi tipo tandem. <i>I take tandem-type courses.</i>	TIPO.NEO
Neo-standard	Syntax	Phrasal verb constructions	Andiamo giù una volta al mese. <i>We go down once a month.</i>	PHRASAL V.NEO
Neo-standard	Syntax	Left dislocation	A Milano, ci vado spesso. <i>To Milan, I go there a lot.</i>	L.DISLOCATION.NEO
Neo-standard	Syntax	Right dislocation	Lo uso pochissimo, Facebook. <i>I use it very little, Facebook.</i>	R.DISLOCATION.NEO
Neo-standard	Syntax	Cleft sentence	È la pigrizia che ogni tanto mi prende. <i>It's laziness that sometimes gets me.</i>	CLEFT.NEO

Table 1. List of linguistic variables studied: standard and neo-standard features.

4.3. Data exploration with Principle Component Analysis

In order to explore underlying patterns of similarity or change, we performed a Principle Component Analysis (PCA). Principle Component Analysis is a common descriptive and exploratory method frequently used in the first stage of data processing. The method serves to give an overview of the problem and to understand the relationship between variables in the dataset. It summarizes a large set of correlated variables into smaller and more easily interpretable dimensions of variation. In technical terms, the purpose of PCA is to identify in a group of variables related to each other x_1, x_2, \dots, x_q , new synthetic variables (the so-called ‘components’) y_1, y_2, \dots, y_q , of which each constitutes a linear combination of the original variables x , providing as faithful a synthesis as possible. The technique thus makes it possible to identify and extract from a large amount of variables a structure that groups the most important variables, which sometimes remain latent. A component basically constitutes the line that best fits a system of points in a space, indicating the best association between these points (the variables).

The first principal component will be able to explain the largest percentage of variance, the second will explain somewhat less, the third less still, and so on, until the last components help explain little or none of the variability present in the entire original set of variables.

In the present study, the PCA constitutes an exploratory phase, with the main purpose of creating structure within the linguistic standard and neo-standard features. From a practical point of view, the exploration using the PCA offers the possibility to clearly glimpse, based on two or three components, the main trends in the speech of our sample.

However, the disadvantage of using PCA is that it does not accept missing data, because data points will be scored by how well they fit into a principal component based upon a measure of variance within the dataset. This obviously poses a frequent problem in small datasets with a lot of sparseness, such as ours. To solve this problem, we have used imputation techniques, where the missing values are estimated (or imputed, see Dray & Josse 2015). When applying this imputation technique, a number of features (specifically: PASSIVE.ST, REFL.SE.ST, DEM.CIO.ST, R.DISLOCATION.NEO), dropped out and could not be used in the PCA, due to too high a number of missing values. All analyses for PCA and imputations were performed in R. In the next section we will move on to illustrate first the results of the survey study and the quantitative explorations of the PCA through a series of easily interpretable graphical representations.

5. Results

5.1. Survey study: stable versus fluid repertoires

We begin with the hypothesis that the new repertoires present greater stability than those of the 1960s and 1970s. Let us begin with the repertoire of the latter. We observe in their repertoire a dynamic development which reflects the linguistic processes underway in Italy in terms of a widening and diversification of the repertoire. The thousands who emigrated from Italy in those years mostly spoke local vernaculars (or dialects, in Italian *dialetti*), as did the majority of Italians that they left behind (De Mauro 2003; Vedovelli 2011). Until the 1950s, Italians living in extraterritorial contexts were mostly not fluent in the national language, which in Italy began to spread during the twentieth century (De Mauro 2014). While in Italy the use of dialects gradually started to be limited to home and family, or even abandoned in favour of a common pan-Italian variety (according to ISTAT statistics, in the 1980s only 14% of Italians living in Italy spoke exclusively dialect: see Antonelli 2011), among Italian migrant communities, the local vernaculars remained the main form of speech for decades. As a consequence, Italians exported their dialectal characteristics that mingled with the dialectal features of their compatriots who came from other Italian regions. Contact between these different regional features has engendered a series of koineization processes that we might expect when speakers of different varieties of languages interact. This led Italian linguists in the 1980s and 1990s to characterize heritage Italian as a form of *italiano popolare* (Berruto 1983). *Italiano popolare* (generally translated as ‘popular’ Italian or ‘folk’ Italian, see Cerruti *et al.* 2017) is defined by linguists as a social variety of Italian spoken by less-educated speakers and is generally situated along the lines of interlanguages in second-language acquisition. Although, the notion of *italiano popolare* and its application to heritage Italian and Italian in Italy has been considered complex and highly questionably, the plethora of studies on Italian labour migration after the Second World War has clearly described the repertoire of this community as dynamic and highly dynamic, fluctuating between a heritage dialect language, a koineized lingua franca and a local vernacular, that was mostly learnt only partially. In the specific case of German-speaking Switzerland, migrants acquired High German or Swiss German (this refers to Swiss German dialects, the spoken varieties in the diglossic Swiss German situation, cf. Berthele 2004) often only in a rudimentary way while the boundaries between the two varie-

ties were often not perceptible. The often slow and stunted acquisition of High German or Swiss German is, in part, also due to the predominant role that Italian played in those years as a *lingua franca* (Berruto 1991).

The repertoire of the new emigrants, on the other hand, shows a different trend in that the migratory experience does not seem to affect the configuration of the Italian varieties in their repertoire, which, upon arrival in Switzerland, is already compact and articulated. Let us now turn to the description of the new repertoires. First and foremost, in our survey among the new emigrants, 31% of the 60 respondents indicated they have native skills in dialect, confirming the alternating use of Italian photographed in the 2015 ISTAT survey.² Dialect use is nevertheless quantitatively reduced compared to the years of the economic boom. Second, Italian has been acquired by all the informants as their mother tongue in Italy. The analysis of the interviews confirms, on the basis of regional accents and the presence of morphosyntactic features (Berruto 2017), that we deal with neo-standard Italian (see §5.2). Third, most of the respondents are skilled in at least one foreign language, especially English, already before emigration. Two speakers (3.33%) stated to have native-like competences in English, while 34 (56.7%) self-reported an excellent command and 17 (28.33%) a good command in spoken and written English. Only a minority (7 respondents or 11.67%) indicated to have intermediate competences. Regarding the acquisition of the local (vernacular) languages, 28 respondents (46.6%) stated to have only a rudimentary knowledge of High German. Furthermore, those who are willing to acquire High German, prefer it over Swiss German. 46 speakers (76.67%) took lessons in High German while only 8 (14.29%) took advantage of the numerous Swiss German courses offered.

Overall, the repertoire of new Italian migrants bears a close resemblance to the repertoire of Italians in Italy displaying structures which seem less affected by the spatial displacement and its linguistic consequences. Compared to the first wave of migrants, languages in the repertoire are thus to be considered as more stable. As stated above, we assume that this stability is due to the intense contact with Italian through physical (geographical) and virtual mobility, which allows for an uninterrupted participation in current linguistic trends in Italy. This raises new questions about the complex role of mobility in language change. We will return to this in the discussion section.

5.2. Principle Component Analysis: standard and neo-standard features

Looking at the main variety in the repertoire, namely neo-standard Italian, which has become the daily language of general use among Italians, we may now ask in more detail to which extent it changes according to the duration of migration. We have hypothesized that it presents similar patterns, due to the strong connectivity of the new migrants with their Italian homeland.

As our dataset contains many linguistic variables for a limited number of observations, a regression analysis or a random forest would not be appropriate as a first step. We have therefore chosen to perform a PCA. As mentioned in the methodological section, this method serves to reduce the complexity of a large set of variables to a set of variables or components (= the principal components or dimensions) that can be easily interpreted and are capable of highlighting and synthesizing the information inherent in the original dataset. In this specific case, a PCA explores how standard and neo-standard features are organized and which dimensions of variation can be extracted from the corpus. Furthermore, the method also determines how the subjects of the dataset use these features and whether they use the phenomena differently depending on their personal profile and specifically the duration of migration. In other words, to what extent the linguistic behaviour of Italians living abroad since a long time differs from the behaviour of those who have left Italy only recently.

In a first stage we determine the number of dimensions or components that are needed to explain the variation in the dataset. The next plot (Figure 1) shows the eigenvalues indicating the proportion of variance explained by each of the components (or dimensions): the first dimension accounts for the largest portion of the overall variance (35.0%) and the second one for more or less 18% of variance. Since there is a gradual decrease in explanatory power from component 3 onwards, only the first two components were used for this analysis (Bartlett's Test significance value for this PCA is 0.000).

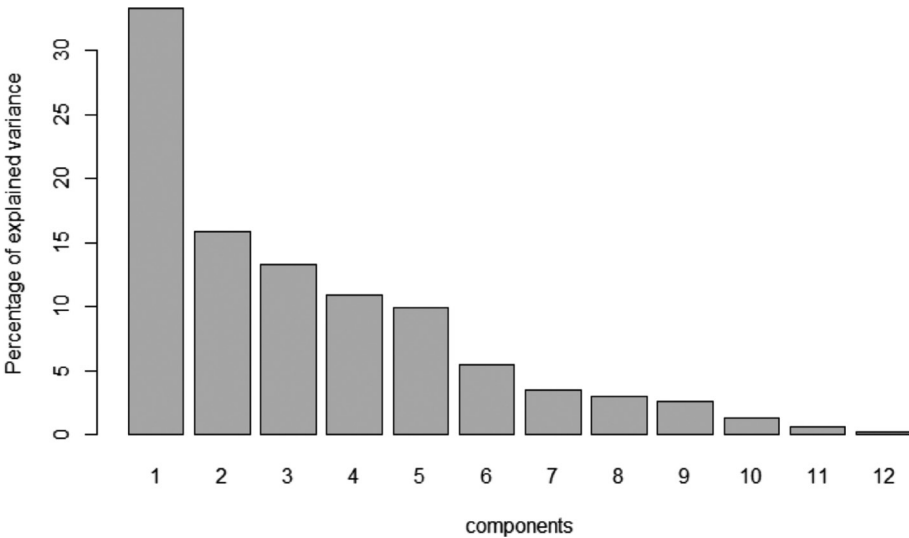


Figure 1. Plot with contribution to explained variance for each component.

PCA results in a representation of linguistic features in a quadrant indicating the correlations between the variables. In other words, the linguistic elements are positioned based on their co-occurrence (clusters) and their association with a specific dimension. It can be visualized by means of two types of graphs, one depicting the linguistic variables and the other the sample subjects, which are to be interpreted as the coordinates of the linguistic features. The position of the sample subject has to be linked to that of the linguistic phenomena, which allows to understand which linguistic traits characterize individual informants, or groups of informants (when clusters are formed).

The following component interpretation criteria apply to all PCA graphs. First, variables or subjects that cluster (viz. that are situated closely in the graph) are more correlated with each other: clusters of variables should thus be interpreted as characteristics that are more often used together or as subjects that present similar linguistic behaviour. Second, variables that are closer to an axis (for example, axis 1 or axis 2) are correlated with that specific dimension: this means that the characteristics of these variables are fundamental for interpreting the dimension and thus for understanding the underlying dimension that clusters all the features or traits.

Figure 2 shows the graph with the linguistic variables, which is based on the set of twelve linguistic features after the imputation techniques

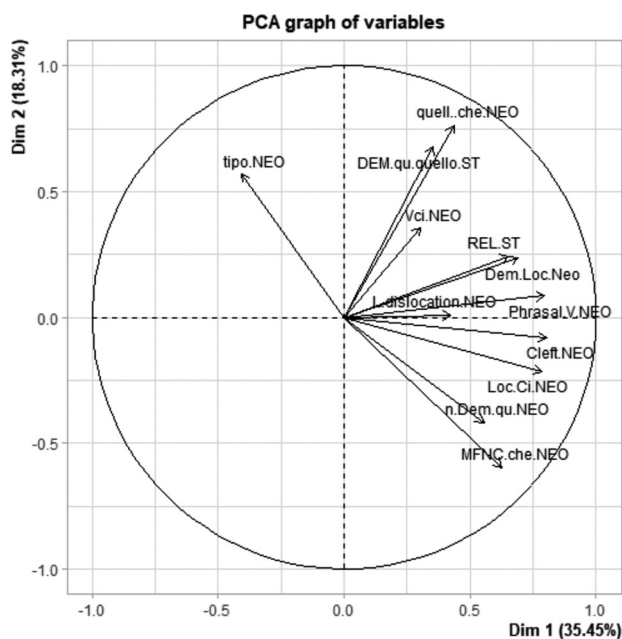


Figure 2. Principle Component Analysis with linguistic variables (dimension 1 and 2 plotted).

In Figure 2 almost all features, standard and neo-standard, are clustered in the right quadrant of the horizontal axis (component 1, which accounts for 35% of the variation), except TIPO.NEO (non-nominal use of *tipo*). On the vertical axis (component 2, which accounts for 15% of the explained variation), there is a different distribution. Below the axis, there is a cluster of ‘prototypical’ neo-standard features cluster, such as ‘*che* polivalente’, ‘*ci* polivalente’, ‘cleft sentences’ and ‘distance-neutral demonstrative *quello*’; in the upper right quadrant, instead, both standard and neo-standard features are clustered together.

Based on this very preliminary observation, it seems that the first group of exclusively neo-standard features (at the bottom of the dimension 2 axis) occur more often used together, whereas the other cluster (in the quadrant above dimension 2) contains features from both standard and neo-standard Italian. The comparison of this first graph with the one in which subjects are projected offers a series of possible interpretation keys.

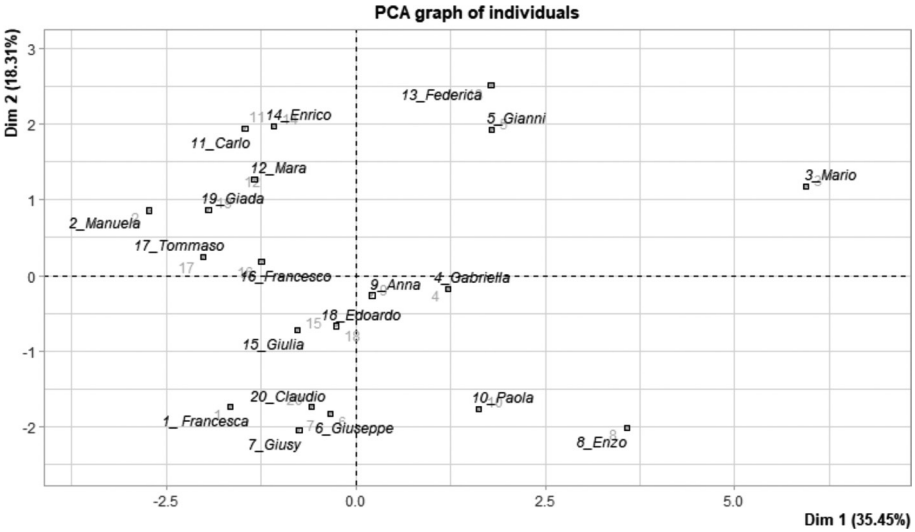


Figure 3. Principle Component Analysis with subjects (dimension 1 and 2 plotted).

It is immediately clear that the subjects are divided into two groups: in the two (upper and lower) right quadrants are located mainly subjects who emigrated more than 10 years ago (we recall that the group is identified by the numbers from 1 to 10), except Federica. In the left half of the graph, the majority of subjects are speakers who recently left Italy (identifiable by numbers above 10, except Giusy, Francesca and Manuela). The second group seems to be characterized by a recognizable and typical neo-standard non-nominal use of *tipo* (TIPO.NEO), which seems very specific to this second group. The others use both standard and neo-standard features, but on the vertical axis they are divided into two different groups, one using prototypical neo-standard features ('*che* polivalente', '*ci* polivalente', 'cleft sentences' and 'distance-neutral demonstrative *quello*'), the others using a mixture of standard and neo-standard.

We interpret the first component in light of the speakers' duration of migration. On the left side are the speakers who recently came from Italy, on the right side are the speakers who have been abroad for a longer period of time. The second component offers no clear information at this stage; the distribution of the speakers in the upper and lower quadrants is clear but does not seem to be exactly interpretable from the current data of the respondents.

At first glance, the interpretation of the first component in terms of duration of migration seems to reject our initial hypothesis: speakers

who are established abroad since a long time present different linguistic characteristics compared to speakers who have recently left Italy. However, a close inspection of our dataset reveals that this disaggregation of subjects is not determined exclusively by the duration of their living abroad. Indeed, these speakers are not only newly emigrated Italians, they are also much younger in age. In fact, in the dataset there seems to be a strong correlation between the factor age of the speaker and the duration of migration. All the newly emigrated speakers are all in their twenties, which may also explain the difference in linguistic behaviour.

This raises an important methodological question for this study and for future research on the role of migration in standard language change mechanisms. Based on our dataset and this exploratory and thus still preliminary results, we cannot determine which factors have the greatest influence on possible changes in Italians' language repertoire: do Italians use their standard and neo-standard features differently when they spend long periods of time abroad, or is it, rather, a matter of age? In the latter case: do younger people use different features, both in Italy and abroad? What happens to those features when they migrate? We will discuss this methodological pitfall further in the discussion section.

6. Discussion and conclusions

From this explorative study, it could be deduced that the duration of migration might be an explanatory factor for the different linguistic behaviour of the two groups. However, we would like to preface a hasty interpretation with a methodological consideration, since the two groups differ not only with regard to the duration of migration, but also with regard to the age of the speakers. Thus, just as the duration of migration might have an impact on the subjects' linguistic behaviour, so might have their age. So far, in research on the diffusion of neo-standard features and on restandardization of Italian in general, only little attention has been paid to the role of age, with the exception of Grandi's study (2018), who investigated the acceptability and perception of neo-standard elements. Although still in a very preliminary way, the present study suggests that there might be a different distribution of neo-standard phenomena according to the age of speakers.

Therefore, age parameters will have to be taken into account in the further expansion of the corpus in order to fully understand the correlation of age and duration of migration. This means that we will have to combine different age groups (younger and older) with the parameter of

duration of migration in order to measure more closely the correlation between the two.

And finally, to map the functional specification of the standard language (as demonstrated by Cerruti & Vietti 2022) and the double standard situation abroad, the dataset will need to be expanded to include material in which register variation can also be measured. For example, interviews will need to be expanded to include conversations in more formal settings (for example, exam interviews among university students or job interviews among older informants).

With regard to the formulated hypothesis that high mobility produces linguistic continuity, the combination of survey and corpus data does not yet clearly indicate stability or change of the restandardization dynamics: new Italian migrants, who have a higher physical and virtual mobility, present a higher diversification in their repertoire which, however, does not seem to involve language change and diversification in the distribution of standard and neo-standard features. In fact, the co-occurrence of standard and neo-standard phenomena is evident in the context of migration – independent of the variables age and/or duration of migration, although further research is needed in order to unravel the real effect of age in the differentiation of the groups.

Notes

¹ < www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/mobility-transport.assetdetail.18144780.html >.

² < www.istat.it/it/archivio/207961 >.

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