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## ITALIAN DIALECT CLASSIFICATIONS

Federica CUGNO \*

University of Turin

federica.cugno@unito.it

ORCID 0000-000302998-4210

### Abstract

This paper provides a historical overview and a critical analysis of Italian dialect classifications. After various empirically-based classifications proposed since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, five scientific classifications were formulated. Ascoli (1882/1885) adopted a genealogical classification, arranging Italian dialects in three macrogroups (Gallo-Italic dialects and Sardinian; Venetian, dialects of central Italy, southern dialects and Corsican; Tuscan). This distribution, with some adjustments regarding the position of Veneto, Sardinian and Corsican dialects, also returns in Merlo's ethnic classification (1924; 1933), that underlines the effects of substrates. Rohlfs (1937) proposes a similar three-part classification using a geolinguistic approach based on the areal diffusion of eighteen linguistic phenomena. Devoto's proposal (1970) follows a quantitative model, by measuring the structural affinity between eleven dialectal systems. Pellegrini's classification (1973, 1977), accepted by most contemporary scholars, is based on the contextual application of sociolinguistic and geolinguistic criteria. He subdivides Italian dialects in five systems (northern dialects, Friulian, Tuscan, central-south dialects, Sardinian), each of which is further divided into subsections.

**Keywords:** dialect classification, isoglotic dialectology, ethnolinguistics, Welsh

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\* Università degli Studi di Torino, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Istituto dell'Atlante Linguistico Italiano, Via Sant'Ottavio 20, 10124 Torino, Italia.

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## CLASSIFICAZIONI DIALETTALI DE L'ITALIÀ

### Resum

Aquest article ofereix una visió històrica i una anàlisi crítica de les classificacions dialectals de l'italià. Després de diverses classificacions de base empírica proposades des del segle XIV, es van formular cinc classificacions científiques. Ascoli (1882/1885) va adoptar una classificació genealògica, tot ordenant els dialectes italians en tres macrogrups (dialectes gal·loitàlics i el sard; el venecià, dialectes del centre d'Itàlia, dialectes del sud i el cors; el toscà). Aquesta distribució, amb alguns ajustaments pel que fa a la posició dels dialectes del Vèneto, el sard i el cors, també torna en la classificació ètnica proposada per Merlo (1924, 1933), que subratlla els efectes dels substrats. Rohlfs (1937) proposa una classificació similar en tres grups fent servir un enfocament geolingüístic basat en la difusió areal de divuit fenòmens lingüístics. La proposta de Devoto (1970) segueix un model quantitatiu, i mesura l'afinitat estructural entre onze sistemes dialectals. La classificació de Pellegrini (1973, 1977), acceptada per la majoria dels estudiosos contemporanis, es basa en l'aplicació contextual de criteris sociolingüístics i geolingüístics. Subdivideix els dialectes italians en cinc sistemes (dialectes del nord, friülà, toscà, centre-sud, sard), cadascun dels quals es divideix a més en subdialectes.

**Paraules clau:** classificació dialectal, classificació etnològica, dialectologia isoglòtica, italià

## CLASSIFICAZIONI DEI DIALETTI ITALIANI

### Abstract

Questo articolo fornisce una panoramica storica e un'analisi critica delle classificazioni dei dialetti italiani. Dopo varie proposte di ripartizione di natura empirica formulate a partire dal XIV secolo, sono state elaborate cinque principali proposte classificatorie di stampo scientifico. Ascoli (1882/1885) ha adottato un principio classificatorio di tipo genealogico, distribuendo i dialetti italiani in tre macrogruppi (dialetti galloitalici e sardo; veneto, dialetti dell'Italia centrale, dialetti meridionali e della Corsica; toscano). Questa ripartizione, con alcuni aggiustamenti concernenti la posizione dei dialetti veneti, sardi e della Corsica, è ripresa anche da Merlo nella sua classificazione (1924; 1933), fondata su un parametro etnico, che accentua l'azione dei substrati. Rohlfs (1937) propone una classificazione tripartita, impiegando però un criterio geolinguistico basato sulla diffusione areale di diciotto fenomeni linguistici. La proposta di Devoto (1970) segue un modello quantitativo, che si avvale della misurazione dell'affinità strutturale esistente tra undici sistemi dialettali, mentre la classificazione di Pellegrini (1973, 1977), accettata dalla gran parte degli studiosi contemporanei, si fonda sull'applicazione contestuale di criteri sociolinguistici e geolinguistici. Egli suddivide i dialetti italiani in cinque sistemi (dialetti settentrionali, friulano, toscano, dialetti centro-meridionali, sardo), ciascuno dei quali ulteriormente articolati in sottosezioni.

**Parole chiave:** classificazione dialettale, classificazione etnica, dialettologia isoglotica, italiano

## 1. Introduction

The variety and complexity of the linguistic scenario in Italy makes it very difficult to identify dialect groups whose homogeneity of features can be demonstrated, to a certain degree, in terms of their internal similarities as well as the differences when compared to dialects close to them. Despite this, since the dawning of Italian dialectology, various scholars have attempted to draw up classifications of the different varieties using various types of interpretive criteria.

Concerning dialectal varieties spoken in Italy, alongside the problem regarding the most suitable and functional principles for the identification of dialects, is the question related to the identity of dialects belonging to the Italo-Romance system. Opinions differ as to the position of Sardinian (spoken in Sardinia, except, according to the most shared opinion, in the extreme north of the island), Friulian (spoken mostly in Friuli) and Ladin (spoken in a few valleys of the Province of Trento as well as in the area between south-east Alto Adige and northern Veneto). Applying a criterion based on their internal structural features – but discordant positions are evidenced in the details of the specific classifications – the varieties mentioned would not come under the Italo-Romance group since they have such specific features that they constitute linguistic systems of their own.

Applying this interpretive standard, and thus excluding Sardinia, Friuli and the Ladin areas, the labels Italo-Romance dialects, in the strictest sense, refers to the numerous local linguistic outcomes of spoken Latin that would occupy the rest of the peninsular territory of Italy and the island of Sicily. Exceptions would include the area in north western Italy (the Aosta Valley and part of Piedmont) and a few municipalities of southern Italy in which Occitan and Franco-Provençal dialects belonging to the Gallo-Romance group are spoken, and the areas or localities distinguished by the presence of various other alloglot languages from Latin (the Catalan dialect of Alghero) and non-Latin origins (varieties of Greek, Albanian, Croatian in South Italy; Germanic and Slovenian in the north; Romani, with a variable territorial distribution determined by a limited sedentarization). Italo-Romance dialects are also spoken in the following

territories not included inside the Republic of Italy: in the Republic of San Marino, where a Romagnol type dialect is present; in Switzerland, in Canton Ticino and in part of the Canton Grigioni, where western Lombard-Alpine dialects are spoken; in France, in Menton, and in the Principality of Monaco, where a Ligurian dialect of western type is present; in a few Istrian localities in Slovenia and Croatia where dialects of Venezia-Giulia are common.

Despite what was predicted in the 1970s by some scholars, Italian dialects are not rapidly and inexorably extinct, but still have a good vitality, albeit with significant regional differences. Unlike Friulian, Ladin and Sardinian, which are among the linguistic minorities protected by law n. 482/1999 “Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche” (Rules for the protection of historical linguistic minorities), the Italo-Romance dialects do not enjoy any form of state protection.

Regarding the classification of Italian dialects, five main classifications have been proposed throughout history: 1. Ascoli’s classification (1882/1885), 2. Merlo’s classification (1924, 1933), 3. Rohlfs’s classification (1937), 4. Devoto’s classification (1970), 5. Pellegrini’s classification (1973, 1977).

## 2. Classifications of dialects

After various empirically based classifications proposed since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, principally centred on ethno-geographic criteria and impressionistic assessments (see Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia*, I, XV-XIX; Fernow 1808; Biondelli 1853), the first scientific classification was formulated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century following the development of Italian dialectology. In his proposal Ascoli (1882/1885) arranged Italian dialects in three macrogroups, adopting a genealogical approach, also followed by Merlo’s ethnic classification (1924, 1933), that repropose Ascoli’s schema, pointing out the effects of substrates. The spread of linguistic geography and the publication of the *Sprach- und Sachatlas Italiens und der Südschweiz* (AIS) (Jaberg, 1928/1940) form the basis for Rohlfs’s classification (1937) based on the areal diffusion of eighteen linguistic phenomena. Instead, Devoto’s proposal (1970) methodologically departs from the

previous classifications because it follows a quantitative model, by measuring the structural affinity between eleven dialectal systems. Finally, Pellegrini's classification (1973), with the corresponding map of dialects of Italy (1977), is based on the contextual application of sociolinguistic and geolinguistic criteria. This dialectal schema, updated with a few modifications and integrations, is still accepted by most contemporary scholars.

### *2.1 Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (1882/1885)*

The first homogeneous and scientific systemization of Italian dialects was formulated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (1829-1907), an Italian glottologist and dialectologist trained and educated in the field of historical and comparative linguistics.

#### *2.1.1 Framework: Isoglottic Dialectology*

In line with the theoretic-scientific orientation of the time, Ascoli adopted a genealogical type classification, believing that the division of Italian dialects was the result of an evolution which branched out from the common Latin-based system, considered as a stable and unifying force. His division was illustrated in the essay entitled *L'Italia dialettale* (Ascoli 1882/1885). It differs from preceding divisions (see Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia* I, XV-XIX; Fernow 1808; Biondelli 1853) because of an exclusively linguistic criterion based on the analysis of prevalently phonetic features of Italian varieties considered from a diachronic perspective: Italian dialects are arranged in three groups based on their different and gradual dependency on the unifying Latin matrix, measured from the greatest to least affinity to the language of origin. Considering that Italian has its roots in Tuscan dialect and in particular the 14<sup>th</sup> century dialect of Florence, the comparison between the single dialects and Latin is thus translated into a comparison between each dialect and the national language.

The lynchpin of Ascoli's classificatory profile (see Figure 1) is Tuscan, which constitutes the dialect group of reference used to measure the other Neo-Latin systems in Italy; these systems are organized on a progressive scale according to their similarity to Tuscan. After having preemptively isolated a group of spoken languages (Occitan dialects, Franco-Provençal dialects, central Ladin, oriental Ladin or Friulian) that depend, to different degrees, on Neo-Latin systems that are not typical of Italy, the scholar identifies a group of dialects different from the actual Italian system, but at the same time, do not belong to any Neo-Latin system outside of Italy. This section includes the Gallo-Italic dialects, whose peculiarities are traced back to a Celtic substratum, considered the first cause of the unit of this linguistic area – divided in Ligurian, Piedmontese, Lombard and Emilian – identified on the bases of phonetic and morphosyntactic features that distant them from the Tuscan system. Among the former are, among others: the loss of pretonic and final unstressed vowels; the presence of front rounded vowels [y] < Ū and [ø] < Ö; the palatalization of tonic A; the presence of velar nasal in syllable-final or intervocalic position; the palatalization of CT; the distinctive palatalization of PL>[tʃ], BL>[dʒ], FL>[ʃ] in Ligurian; metaphony triggered by -[i] with reflex on the grammatical category of number. Among the morphosyntactic peculiarities is evidenced the reiteration of the pronoun (in Emilian, Lombard and Piedmontese).

A similar discontinuity with respect to Tuscan is also documented in the Sardinian dialects, subdivided in Logudorese, Campidanese and Gallurese subdialects, which in fact are included in the same group. A third group includes Venetian, the dialects of central Italy (with reference to Umbria, the Marches, and the province of Rome), southern dialects and Corsican, or rather the varieties that, although they do not conform with clearly Tuscan type, along with Tuscan can form a Neo-Latin system of its own. Specifically, Venetian is closer to Tuscan for its lack of the Gallo-Italic features mentioned earlier and for the diphthongization of [ɛ] and [ɔ] in an open syllable, but it differs for others, including the shortening of long consonants and the outcome [tʃ] < CL; a few particularities are also identified in the field of verbal morphology (e. g. extension of the ending for the third person singular to the third person plural) and the syntax (inversion of the subject clitic in main interrogative

clauses). Central and southern Italian dialects share the conservation of the occlusive consonants with Tuscan, despite various phenomena of sonorization, and they differ for another series of phenomena, including, in particular, the outcomes [nn] < -ND-, [mm] < -MB-, [c] < PL-, [j] < BL-, [ʃ] < FL- and the tendency of gemination. Finally, Tuscan is defined by the lack of common innovative traits from the other dialect areas and and by a closer affinity with Latin.

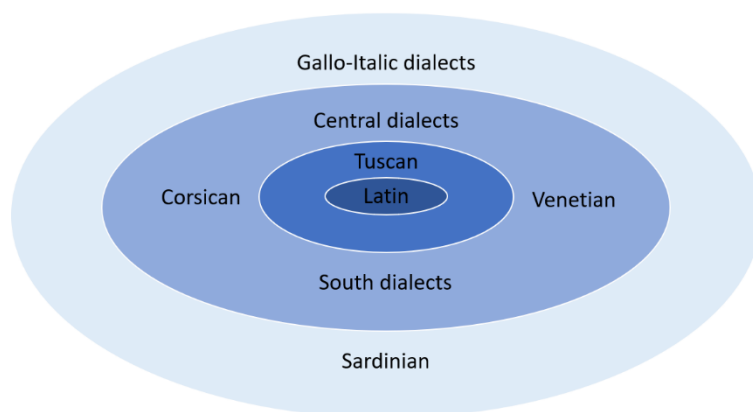


Figure 1. Graph of the positions of Italian dialect varieties compared to Latin according to Ascoli's scheme

## 2.2 Clemente Merlo (1924; 1933)

In 1924 Clemente Merlo (1868-1960) an Italian glottologist and dialectologist particularly well-versed in the dialects of central-south Italy and the canton of Ticino, corroborates Ascoli's scheme, making a few corrections regarding the position of Sardinian and Veneto dialects. In his classification, which appeared in the first issue of the journal *L'Italia dialettale* he founded (Merlo 1924) and repropoed in 1933 (Merlo 1933), the author adopts the same historical-genealogical organization as his predecessor, but underlines the important effects of substrates, already partially mentioned by the Friulian scholar.

### 2.2.1 Framework: Ethnological classification

In Merlo's classification the action of substrates is interpreted according to rigid materialistic determinism: the phonetic peculiarities that distinguish the various Italian dialects are traced back to the effects the numerous and very different ethnic groups in ancient Italy had on them.

### 2.2.2 Classification of dialects

Merlo divided Italian dialects into three groups based on their respective ethnic features:

- northern dialects, of Celtic substrate,<sup>1</sup> with addition of Veneto;
- Tuscan dialects, of Etruscan substrate;
- central-south dialects, of Italic substrate.

Given the rigid mechanical approach, the features considered are exclusively phonetic and, for the most part, adhere to those already proposed by Ascoli. Further internal distinctions among the dialects belonging to the same macrogroup are attributed to the action of other hypothetical minor substrates; for example, the existing gap between the Ligurian and Venetian varieties and the rest of the group of northern dialects is attributed respectively to the influence of the ancient Ligurian and Venetic substrates. In the same way, the gap between Sicilian, Calabrese and Salentino and the rest of the southern varieties is tied to the concurrence of the southern substrate and of other substrates, which have caused such features as the absence of central vowels, a system of three-element final vowels ([-a], [-i], [-u]), the presence of retroflex consonants from Latin clusters LL, TR and STR. In this scheme Sardinian, from a southern substrate, is placed in a separate group with Corsican and Lunigianese dialects. Also, the Ladin dialects (that include Friulian) are considered a separate

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<sup>1</sup> Which correspond to Ascoli's Gallo-Italic dialects (Ligurian, Piedmontese, Lombard and Emilian).



group, which includes Dalmatic from the Island of Krk. In contrast to Ascoli's classification, Venetian is placed among the northern dialects.

Even though Merlo's classification provided an historical perspective to Ascoli's configuration, it appears flawed by a deterministic methodology and by the idea that any present dialectal difference can certify the existence of a particular ethnic presence, even when documented evidence is lacking.

### 2.3 Gerhard Rohlfs (1937)

Gerhard Rohlfs (1892-1986), a German glottologist and linguist, great scholar and diligent expert of the world of Italian dialects, also proposes a three-part classification that reflects the previous ones. He, however, uses a geolinguistic approach, focused on the observation of areal distribution of some linguistic phenomena. In fact, his division is based on the analysis of maps from *Sprach- und Sachatlas Italiens und der Südschweiz* (AIS) (Jaberg 1928, 1940), which Rohlfs himself contributed to, carrying out the surveys in areas of research in central-south Italy and Sicily.

#### 2.3.1 Framework: Isoglottic Dialectology

Rohlfs' proposal (1937) has its theoretical basis in the newborn linguistic geography, a discipline concerned with the empirical, analytic and theoretical study of areal distribution of individual linguistic features. This new perspective of research, on the one hand, evinces the general progressiveness of the differences on a continuum, and on the other, with the publication of the first linguistic atlas, facilitates the identification of isoglosses. The scheme elaborated by the German scholar is based on the identification of two bundles of isoglosses that run through the Italian peninsula, whose route makes it possible to circumscribe the areal boundaries of three dialectal macro-areas distinguished by the presence or absence of a certain number of phonetic, morpho-syntactic and lexical phenomena.

### 2.3.2 Classification of dialects

The classification is based on the analysis of eighteen linguistic phenomena. The languages spoken in Sardinia are deliberately excluded since they are considered an autonomous linguistic group, distinguished by an independent linguistic development, which reflects a phase of earlier Latin civilization.

The geolinguistic representation of the results of this survey (see Map 1) leads to the identification of two bundles of isoglosses, resulting from the interweaving and overlap of various linguistic boundaries. The first of these bundles, formed by the overlapping of the southern boundaries of seven of the phenomena considered, runs roughly along the La Spezia-Rimini line, determining the group of northern dialects and opposing the systems present in the rest of the Peninsula. This first linguistic boundary coincides with the frontier that divides the Romance linguistic domain in western and eastern sections: here some linguistic phenomena that characterise the western Romance varieties are interrupted (e. g. the partial conservation of final consonants in Latin and consonant degemination in the word); however, they are not found in the eastern Romance varieties, which are distinguished by features whose areal diffusion is interrupted at the same boundary. The second group, formed by the concentrating of the northern frontiers of the remaining eleven phenomena considered, is formed by a convergence of boundaries, which, however, is less clear and precise than in the previous group. This is developed along the Roma-Ancona line, separating the group of dialects of central-south Italy from the other Italian varieties. Compared to these two macrogroups, the dialects from central Italy, corresponding to almost all areas in Tuscany, north-eastern Umbria, the central Marches and northern Latium, are distinguished, by the absence of the eighteen traits examined.

The first linguistic boundary is formed by the isoglosses that define the southern boundary of the following phenomena (six phonetic and one lexical):

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| a) voicing of intervocalic voiceless consonants     | (isoglosses 1, 3) |
| b) dropping of final unstressed vowels, except [-a] | (isogloss 2)      |
| c) shortening of long consonants                    | (isogloss 4)      |

- d) syncope of pretonic and post tonic vowels (isogloss 5)
- e) vowel nasalization and loss of final nasals (isogloss 6)
- f) lexical type for “today” from Latin HINC HODIE (isogloss 7)

The second linguistic boundary is marked by the traces of isoglosses that identify the northern boundaries of the following phenomena (four phonetic, five lexical, one morphological and one morpho-syntactic):

- g) lexical type *ferraru* versus *fabbro* “smith” (isogloss 8)
- h) lexical type *frate* versus *fratello* “brother” (isogloss 9)
- i) lexical type *femmina* versus *donna* “woman” (isogloss 10)
- j) enclitic possessive adjectives with names of relatives (isogloss 11)
- k) lexical type *tenere* versus *avere* “to have” (isogloss 12)
- l) outcome [-ss-] < -X- + V(owel) (isogloss 13)
- m) presence of conservative Latin masculine gender (isogloss 14)
- n) the lexical type *fagu* versus *faggio* “beech” (isogloss 15)
- o) postnasal weakening of voiceless consonants (isogloss 16)
- p) metaphony triggered by -[i] (isogloss 17)
- q) metaphony triggered by -[u] (isogloss 18)

In his research, Rohlfs does not fail to notice how the linguistic boundaries identified correspond to the reasoning of a geographic and historic-administrative nature, linking the Italian dialect situation depicted in the surveys by the AIS to the historical-cultural events in Italy. Thus, the area of greatest convergence of the lines forming the La Spezia-Rimini route corresponds to the Tuscan-Emilian chain of the Apennines. Being rather inaccessible in its central segment, throughout history it has often represented a sort of natural barrier; initially it separated Etruria from the territories of Celtic ethnicity in north Italy, then in late antiquity, *suburbicaria* Italy (with its capital in Rome) from the so-called *annonaria* Italy (with its capital in Milan). Later in the Middle Ages, it represented the frontier between the Byzantine territories

of the Archdioceses of Ravenna and of Rome. The bundles of lines that developed prevalently along the Roma-Ancona route, corresponding for the most part to the Latium and Umbrian route of the Tiber river, was, on the other hand, in antiquity, the frontier between the Etruscans (to the west) and Italics (to the east) and, in the Middle Ages, between the territories of the Church of Rome and the territories of the Lombard Duchies of Spoleto and Benevento.

The schematism of this three-part image in northern, central and central-south varieties appears weakened by the author's observations on the internal subdivisions of the three macrogroups, and above all, on the cultural dynamics that acted and are acting on the territory, which contradict the idea that absolute and unchangeable dialect boundaries exist. He draws attention to the action carried out by important centres of linguistic innovations, observing the influence Tuscany had on Corsica, which had led the varieties of the island toward the Tuscan type, on Veneto and on Latium and, more recently, on Lombardy, whose capital, Milan, in turn, became the centre of diffusion of the national language in outlying areas. The specificity of the varieties of the extreme South (Sicily and southern Calabria), although not marked on the map by specific isoglosses, is mentioned throughout the study, with examples referring to phonetic and especially lexical aspects that reflect conditions closer to the northern varieties. According to Rohlfs, in fact, the varieties positioned under the Nicastro-Catanzaro line, were not the direct result of the local ancient Latin culture, which had been interrupted by the Byzantine domination and the Arab domination. Rather after the end of the Arab domination, the influence of peoples from north western Italy brought about a neo-Romanization. Subsequently, Gallo-Romance influences, which had expanded during the Norman rule, contributed to this process.

The considerations leading to the geolinguistic division illustrated by the two bundles of isoglosses contribute, therefore, to explaining the innate dynamism of linguistic systems and therefore the inevitable relativity of any type of classification.

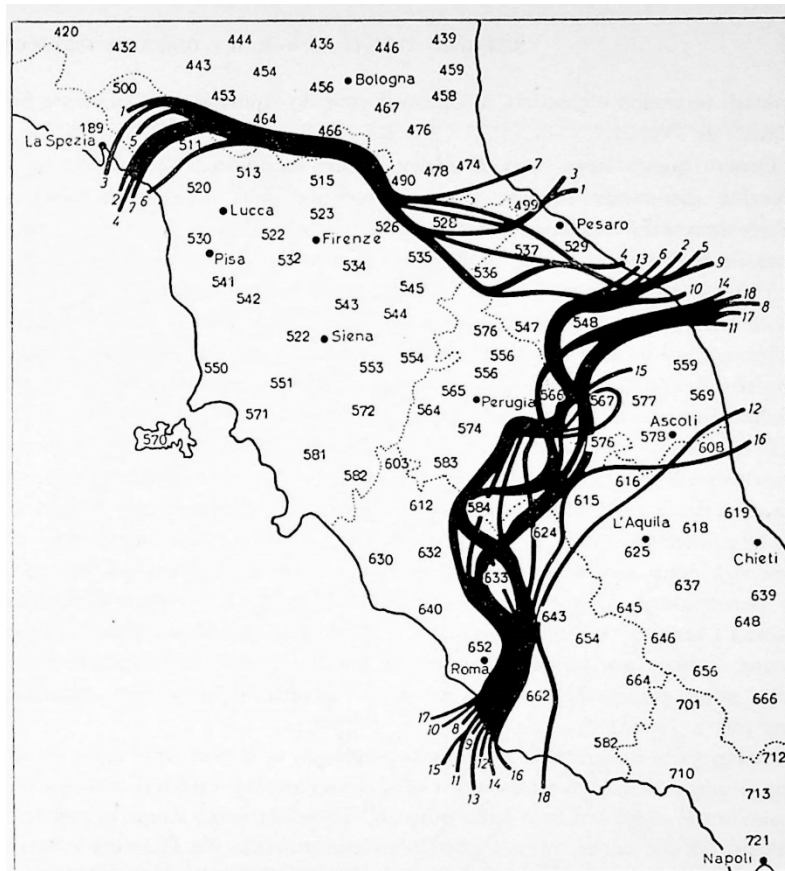


Fig. 2 - Limiti dialettali in Italia.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Limite merid. di <i>ortiga</i> «ortica» | 10. Limite sett. di <i>femmina</i> «donna» |
| 2. „ „ „ <i>sal</i> «sale»                 | 11. „ „ „ <i>figliomo</i> «mio figlio»     |
| 3. „ „ „ <i>cavei</i> «capelli»            | 12. „ „ „ <i>tène le spalle larghe</i>     |
| 4. „ „ „ <i>spala</i> «spalla»             | 13. „ „ „ <i>còssa</i> «coscia»            |
| 5. „ „ „ <i>sler o slar</i> «sellaio»      | 14. „ „ „ <i>lu cimice</i> «la c.»         |
| 6. „ „ „ <i>pā</i> «pane»                  | 15. „ „ „ <i>fagu</i> «faggio»             |
| 7. „ „ „ <i>incō, incù</i> «oggi»          | 16. „ „ „ <i>mondone</i> (nt > nd)         |
| 8. „ „ sett. „ <i>ferraru</i> «fabbro»     | 17. „ „ „ <i>dienti</i> «denti»            |
| 9. „ „ „ <i>frate</i> «fratello»           | 18. „ „ „ <i>acitu</i> «aceto»             |

[I numeri sono quelli dei punti d'inchiesta dell' AIS]

Map 1. The La Spezia-Rimini Line and the Roma-Ancona Line: the most important isoglosses (source Rohlfs 1937: 10)

#### 2.4 Giacomo Devoto (1970)

The classification by Giacomo Devoto (1897-1974), Italian glottologist and linguist, follows an historical-genealogical approach, which considers the relationship between dialects and Latin and excludes any factor outside of language, only focusing on the observation of linguistic systems. The main methodological novelty of this

division consists in the numeric calculation of linguistic facts adopted, counting on the greater objectivity a quantitative approach might offer.

#### 2.4.1 Framework: Isoglottic Dialectology and quantitative classification

Devoto's proposal (1970) follows a quantitative heuristic model also applied by Muljačić (1967) in the classification of Romance languages. It aims to observe the various dialect systems according to their peculiar linguistic features, excluding all extra-linguistic influences, be they geographic or historic. The method consists in choosing a limited number of different but significant features per level of language; in the ensuing indication of their presence or absence in each language considered; in their assignment of numeric values resulting from a comparison of two varieties; finally, in the sum of the points obtained for each language. The degree of structural affinity between the linguistic systems examined is obtained by comparing their total score.

#### 2.4.2 Classification of dialects

Devoto's classification considers eleven linguistic areas identified on the basis of the geographic subdivisions accepted by dialectological studies. It observes the existing relationship between the Latin and the present situations, assessed on the basis of the following exclusively phonetic features, since morphological traits – the formation of the plural, the article, the outcome of the conditional moods – are not considered in the final evaluation:

- a) pentavowel system or heptavowel system
- b) anaphonesis
- c) internal or external diphthongization
- d) various alterations of the tonic vowel
- e) presence of rounded vowels
- f) dropping of unstressed vowels

- g) metaphony
- h) palatalization and assimilation of velar consonants before palatal vowels and of the consonant clusters [-kl-], [-gl-], [-pl-], [-bl-], [-fl-]
- i) lenition
- j) aspiration, cacuminalization, nasalization and labialization
- k) assimilation and dissimilation
- m) assimilation of the consonant clusters [-nd-] e [-mb-]

Attributing a higher value (1) to features prevalently stable and a lower value (0) to those prevalently instable, adding decimals for greater distinctions, the scholar obtains the results illustrated in Table 1. This classification lists Florentine in first place, followed by the variety from Salento and Sardinian, which thus reveals a greatest affinity to Latin, while the central dialects, generally considered closer to Tuscan, are only in fifth place; just as curious is the position of Friulian that displays a greater affinity to the southern Tyrrhenian and Adriatic dialects. Devoto's classification offers, then, a very different picture of the relationships of affinities and differences than the one illustrated by previous scholars. Yet, Pellegrini (see 2.5) too reached even different results, who in the same years (1970) experimented with the quantitative method increasing the number of traits selected by Muljačić (1967) from 40 to 44, inserting in the category of Romance languages some of the minor varieties like Lucanian, Fassano and Cadorino. This new sampling revealed that the closeness between Lucanian and Romanian is relatively greater than between Lucanian and Italian, or still, that a variety of Ladin like Fassano is very close to Cadorino, a variety spoken in Veneto, and at the same time fairly distant from the varieties of the same group, or rather Engadine or Friulian. The randomness of results of this type of classification has shown how deceptive the objectivity of numbers can be (Cortelazzo 1988: 450), while also showing how the subjective choice of features can condition the outcome, considering that "the features important to establishing the differences between one variety and

another can become completely irrelevant when the differences between these and a third variety are to be observed"<sup>2</sup> (Grassi 1997: 79).

Paragrafi	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Tor.
<i>A</i>													
1) Fiorentino	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0,5	1	0	1	1	9,5
2) Salento	0,5	0	0	1	1	1	0	0,5	1	1	1	1	8
3) Sardegna	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	7
4) Venezia euganea	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0,5	0	1	1	1	5,5
<i>B</i>													
5) Lazio, Umbria, Marche	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0,5	1	1	1	0	6,5
6) Sicilia e Calabria meridionale	0,5	0	0	1	1	1	0	0,5	1	0	1	0	6
7) Meridione tirrenico	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0,5	1	1	1	0	5,5
8) Friuli	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	4
9) Meridione adriatico	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,5	1	1	1	0	3,5
10) Regione gallo-italica orientale	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0,3	0	1	0	1	3,3
11) Regione gallo-italica occidentale	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,2	0	0	0	1	1,2

Table 1. Distances of dialect varieties (Devoto 1970: 65)

## 2.5 Giovan Battista Pellegrini (1973, 1977)

The Paduan linguist, glottologist and philologist Giovan Battista Pellegrini (1921-2007) proposes a new classification of dialects in his study published in 1973. This classification will subsequently find a cartographic representation in *Carta dei dialetti d'Italia* (Pellegrini, 1977), which, based on the geolinguistic model introduced by Rohlfs, illustrates the areal distribution of the principal varieties and of thirty-three specific linguistic features.

### 2.5.1 Framework: Isoglottic Dialectology

The division proposed by Pellegrini (1973) is based on the contextual application of sociolinguistic and geolinguistic criteria. The diffusion of the theoretical principles of sociolinguistics has shaped the scholar's perspective, which has also been conditioned by the modified Italian sociolinguistic situation, that is, the progressive diffusion of the most prestigious national language and the contextual expansion of the areas of

<sup>2</sup> "i tratti importanti per stabilire le differenze tra una varietà e un'altra possono diventare del tutto privi di pertinenza quando si tratti di osservare le differenze tra queste e una terza varietà" (Grassi 1997: 79).



overlap and mutual influence between Italian and dialects, even if always to the advantage of the standard language. Consequently, in his classification all the varieties that gravitate towards the Italian pole and are influenced by it, are considered part of the Italian-Romance system. In line with this principle, on the one hand, he includes Friulian and Sardinian in this group of Italo-Romance dialects, two varieties that in the preceding classifications had been excluded because of their profound structural differences with respect to Italian. On the other hand, he leaves out the varieties of Corsican, whose language of reference is French, despite the significant structural similarities these spoken languages have with Tuscan.

The description of the five groups characterised by a considerable independence (northern dialects, Friulian, Tuscan, central-south dialects, Sardinian) is based on knowledge accumulated in a long tradition of dialectological research and on the data from the AIS (Jaberg, 1928/1940), which photographs the Italo-Romance situation in the periods between the two wars. In the light of this documentation, similarities and differences are measured on the basis of about fifty linguistic features, for the most part phonetic, but also morpho-syntactic and lexical. Considering the number of phenomena mentioned, the context outlined is more detailed, but also more complex and varied, compared to Rohlfs' more schematic description. This is particularly evident in the *Carta dei dialetti d'Italia* (Pellegrini 1977), based on the same sources and integrated with older and more recent published and unpublished materials. Compared to Rohlfs' map, Pellegrini's map offers a complete cartographic representation of the linguistic situation in Italy, with indications of all the spoken languages inside national borders, as well as all those outside of the Italo-Romance system.

The spatial distribution of the Italo-Romance groups is illustrated, identifying each system with a different colour and highlighting the differences and similarities between neighbouring linguistic systems with different colour tones. On the other hand, the thirty-three isoglosses described and that show the areal distribution of some of the features reported in the general discussion in 1973 are not used simply to trace the boundaries between the groups identified; rather, they are used to show the

complexity of the Italian dialect situation, identifying various subdivisions, micro-areas and areas of transition. In Pellegrini's analysis, in fact, an underlying awareness emerges of the extreme internal variability of each linguistic system, so that continually more minute and detailed divisions in each group can be observed, ultimately revealing the differences, existing and perceived by the speakers, between the varieties of two localities near-by or even within the same variety.

### 2.5.2 Classification of dialects

Notwithstanding the considerable dialect fractioning, and despite admitting that further subdivisions are possible or that every classification is relative and subjective, Pellegrini subdivides Italo-Romance in the following five systems, each of which is further divided into subsections, indicated in detail in the legend of the *Carta* (see Map 2):

I. Northern or Cisalpine Italian dialects, organised in:

- a. Gallo-Italic dialects: Ligurian, Piedmontese, Lombard, Emilian
- b. Veneto dialects

II. Friulian dialects

III. Centre-southern dialects, further divided in:

- a. Dialects of the central area: dialects of central Marches, Umbria, Latium, Cicolano-Reatino-Aquilano
- b. Middle south dialects: dialects of the Marches, southern Abruzzo, Molise, Puglia, southern Latium and Campania, Lucania, northern Calabria
- c. Extreme southern dialects: Salentino, central south Calabrese, Sicilian

IV. Sardinian, divided in:

- a. Logudorese, Campidanese
- b. Gallurese, Sassarese

V. Tuscan dialects

The first group, made up of northern dialects, includes all varieties spoken in north Italy (central-east Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy, Trentino, Veneto, part of Friuli and Venezia Giulia, Emilia-Romagna), as well as in the areas surrounding the Marches (until Fano and Senigallia) and Tuscany (Lunigiana, in the province of Massa, part of the Garfagnana, in the province of Lucca, and the upper valley of Senio, in the province of Florence). This linguistic group is distinguished by numerous phonetic and morphological features, whose areal extension is at times indicated in *Carta dei dialetti d'Italia* by numbered isoglosses.

Among the phonetic features considered, reported below, the first three characterize the Gallo-Romance varieties in north-western Italy and the Ladin and Friulian varieties of the north-east while the others define the area of the north Italo-Romance group:

1. Conservation of Latin [-s] (isogloss 1)
2. Conservation of Latin clusters with L (PL, BL, FL, CL, GL) (isogloss 2)
3. Palatalization of Latin CA and GA (isogloss 3)
4. Lenition of the intervocalic unvoiced consonants, at times also completely deleted (isoglosses 10, 11, 12)
5. Simplification of geminates, initially circumscribed to occlusives and fricatives and later extended to nasals, liquids and vibrants (isogloss 13)
6. Conservation of the phonological opposition between [ll] and [l], the latter rhotacized in vast Cisalpine areas
7. Evolution of Latin CL- to [kj-] and subsequently to [tʃ-]
8. Conservation, only in marginal areas, of the affricates [tʃ] < C + [e], [i] and [dʒ] < G + [e], [i] Otherwise changed into dental affricate or in sibilant
9. Voiced outcome of -CL- > [-gl-] resulting in the medio-palatal or prepalatal affricate almost everywhere
10. -CT- > [it] changed then, especially in Lombardy, to [tʃ] (except for in Emilia-Romagna and Veneto) (isogloss 8)

11. Dropping of unstressed vowels, in protonic and posttonic position, except for [-a] ed [-e]
12. Presence of [y] and [ø] (isogloss 7)
13. Diphthongization of [e] > [e̞i] in open syllables in Piedmontese and Ligurian, but once diffused also in Lombardy and partially in northern Veneto
14. Palatalization of [-a] > [-ɛ], in Piedmontese circumscribed to infinitives, but common in Emiliano-Romagnolo with attestations also in Marches and Umbria (isoglosses 5 and 6)

There are two morphological features:

15. The ending of 1st person plural (e. g. Piedmontese [-'yma], Venetian [-'emo]) compared with [-iamo] in Florentine and the national language, and with other endings in other systems
16. The analytical formation of the conditional with -HABUI, especially in ancient texts, compared with the ending [-ia] < HABEBAM in modern varieties

Within this system, the peculiarities of Veneto and Ligurian dialects are indicated. The former are different from the other northern varieties for the following four phonetic particularities:

1. Absence of rounded vowels (isogloss 7)
2. Residual presence of diphthongization in closed syllable of metaphonetic origin
3. Greater conservation of atonic vocalism, also in final position
4. Diffusion, in rural Veneto, of interdental consonants [θ] < C + [e], [i] and [ð] < G + [e], [i]
5. Absence of deletion of posttonic vowels that separates the Veneto dialects from Emiliano-Ferrarese dialects (isogloss 9)

The individuality of Ligurian is indicated by the following four phonetic traits:

1. Conservation of final atonic vocalism
2. Outcome [tʃ] < PL and [dʒ] < BL (isogloss 4)
3. Outcome [ir] < [dr] < [tr]
4. Deletion of [-r-]

The group of Friulian dialects is considered by Pellegrini independent of Ladin and Rhaeto-Romance dialects, and is identified on the basis of specific phonetic (e. g. isoglosses 1-3) and morphologic features.

The central southern dialects are characterized by the following phonetic and morphological phenomena:

1. Presence of metaphonesis, triggered by final vowels, with variable characteristics and outcomes (isoglosses 27, 31)
2. Tendency to diphthongization and considerable instability of tonic vocalism, especially in the Adriatic area
3. Outcome of final vowels: in the dialects of the central area, the Latin -O and -U are conserved; in the southern dialect, as a rule, the final atonic vowels are reduced to [ə]; in the extreme southern dialect  $\bar{E}$ ,  $\check{I}$ ,  $\bar{I}$  > [i], and  $\bar{O}$ ,  $\check{U}$ ,  $\bar{U}$  > [u] (isoglosses 18, 24, 25, 26)<sup>3</sup>
4. Presence of an area (Lausberg area) characterised by archaic vocalism with the distinction of  $\bar{O}$  > [-o] and  $\check{U}$  > [-u] (isogloss 23)
5. Assimilation of the clusters [mb] and [nd] (isogloss 17) conserved in Calabria south of the Amantea-Crotone line and in Salento south of the Santa Maria al Bagno-San Cataldo line (isogloss 28)
6. Vocalization of unvoiced consonants after N (isogloss 19)
7. Outcomes PL-, CL- > [c-], [tʃ-] (isogloss 21)

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<sup>3</sup>In Calabria the isogloss winds along the line Cetraro-Bisignano-Torre Melissa line and in Salento touches Taranto including Grottaglie, Francavilla Fontana and San Vito dei Normanni.

8. Residual conservation of the clusters with L (sometimes with L > [r]) in the area around Sulmona (isogloss 22)
9. The retroflex articulation [d̠] <-LL-, [-ll-]
10. In verb morphology the conservation of -S and -T in the Lausberg area
11. The constant voiceless articulation of the dental alveolar fricative in an intervocalic position
12. In the system of articles, traces of forms derived from IPSE (in Abruzzo, Latium) and examples of outcomes [(l)o], [(l)u], [(l)a] from ILLU, ILLA;
13. Outcome [tʃ] < CL-, PL- versus [c], and [-ttʃ-] < -CL-, -PL- versus [-cc-] in southern Sicily (isogloss 33)
14. Frequency of plurals in [-ora]
15. Postposition of the possessive adjective (isogloss 20)
16. Formation of the conditional with the pluperfect indicative in many southern dialects
17. Use of the verb *tenere* 'to keep' for *avere* 'to have' and of the verb *stare* 'to stay' for *essere* 'to be'
18. Absence of the present perfect in Calabria (isogloss 29)
19. Lack of the infinitive in Calabria (isogloss 30)
20. Linguistic features related to the presence of a largely ancient Greek-speaking area in north-eastern Sicily (isogloss 32)

The Sardinian system is characterized by twelve phonetic and morphological features, in addition to some lexical elements. The most conservative features that typify Longudorese in particular are:

1. Tonic vocalism that presents simple neutralization of the Latin quantities without the fusion of Ī and Ē and of Ū and Ō
2. Conservation of the Latin velar consonants in front of palatal vowels (residual phenomenon in Campidanese)
3. Conservation of -S in the nominal and verbal inflection and of -T in the third person of the verb

4. Definite article derived from IPSUM
5. Conservation of the pluperfect indicative
6. Conservation of lexical forms not found in other Romance varieties

The system of Tuscan dialects does not perfectly describe the boundaries of the modern-day region of Tuscany since it excludes Lunigiana, some of the towns in the Tuscan Apennines in the Province of Florence, and a southern area of the Province of Grosseto. The northern boundary is thus marked by the line that goes from the area between La Spezia and Carrara to the west and reaches the area between Rimini and Fano to the east, under which phonetic and morphological features peculiar to the Tuscan variety are found, including:

1. The development of intervocalic -R<sub>l</sub>- > [j] (widespread also in the bordering areas of Umbria and north Latium (isoglosses 14, 14a)
2. Diphthongization of Latin tonic Ĕ and Ō in open syllables
3. General absence of metaphony
4. The so called *gorgia toscana* “Tuscan throat”, a spirantization of intervocalic stops (isoglosses 15, 16)
5. The double form of the singular masculine definite article [il]/[lo] with alternation regulated by the syllabic structure of the noun

Other typical features of Florentine transferred to Italian are:

6. The outcome -AR- > [er] in unstressed position
7. The raising of the high-mid vowels ([e] > [i]; [o]>[u]), before palatal sonorants or nasal+velar, called ‘anaphonesis’
8. The extension of the ending 1st person plural *-iamo* to all conjugations

Comparing this cartographic representation with Rohlfs’ maps, a few differences can be observed. In the north, a wide group of isoglosses is proposed that follow,

grouped and compact, Rohlfs' La Spezia-Rimini line; nevertheless, the central south system described by Pellegrini is characterised by a network of isoglosses that develop, for the most part, in the northern group, without, however, ever actually drawing a clear boundary comparable to the Roma-Ancona line drawn by Rohlfs. Consequently, the spoken languages outside of Tuscany, but located north of this line, are inserted among the dialects of the centre-southern macrogroup and specifically, in the central subsection. Therefore, these varieties emerge closely tied to dialects that in the previous geolinguistic description were placed under this line because of a series of phenomena that stopped right along that boundary. To the contrary, the marked and even innovative individuality of the Tuscan varieties in Pellegrini's map is missing in Rohlfs' maps, characterised only by the absence of phenomena found in the northern and southern varieties. Finally, particular emphasis is placed on the distance between the southern and extreme south dialects, whose linguistic boundaries in Calabria and in Salento is evidenced in two different isoglosses.

In terms of typology of features considered to define linguistic groups, Pellegrini did not stray far from tradition, preferring phonetic features already identified by his predecessors, while adding some new morpho-syntactic phenomena. Unlike Rohlfs, he does not use lexical isoglosses and the only examples related to lexicon concern the characterisation of Sardinia in the conservative sense.





Map 2. *Carta dei dialetti d'Italia* (Pellegrini, 1977) [<https://phaidra.cab.unipd.it/view/o:318149>]

### 3. Discussion

The examination of the various proposals for classification formulated since the mid-Nineteenth century reveals that the three-block division – northern, Tuscan and central-southern dialects – formulated by Ascoli remains the model of choice (e. g. Ledgeway 2016a). Even in subsequent schemes, independently of the quality of the criterion introduced by the different scholars, it continues to be valid and accepted by the scientific community, even with revisions stemming from a progressive increase in the linguistic and extralinguistic factors considered. In particular, the scientific categories used by Ascoli and Merlo spring from a reflection focused on the historical

interpretation of dialects, considering the issues of linguistic boundaries as less important. In fact, the classification of Ascoli and Merlo are based on exclusively genealogical-type principles and, in particular, on the concept of substrates, whose importance stems from Italy's particular linguistic history and specifically from the considerable fragmentation that preceded the process of Latinization. With the birth and diffusion of theoretical and methodological principles of linguistic geography, spatial dimension is added to the historical dimension, drawing attention to the importance of contact and reciprocal conditioning between the dialects from neighbouring areas. In fact, however, the use of a geolinguistic-type criterion for classification introduced by Rohlfs and based on the observation of the geographic distribution of linguistic phenomena, many already adopted by his predecessors, simply confirms, even if on the basis of different methodological premises, Merlo's taxonomy. However, the division based on the identification of bundles of isoglosses is not without challenges either, since the linguistic boundary of the La Spezia-Rimini line is clearly drawn only in the scarcely populated areas of the Tuscan-Emiliano Apennines, while along the two western and northern sides the evolution of the isoglosses is clearly more fluid. Even less certain is the linguistic boundary marked by the Roma-Ancona line, whose instability can be attributed to fewer networks of research by the AIS in the areas involved. The lack of attention to linguistic phenomena which can identify significant subsections distinguished by a considerable convergence of outcomes from inside the three macro-areas, leads to the definition of an excessively simplified linguistic representation. This does not take into consideration, for example, the well-known peculiarities of the Veneto dialects in the panorama of spoken northern languages, or the distance of Sicilian, Calabrian and Salentine compared to the group of southern dialects (Map 1).

Year	Ethnological Classification	Isoglottic dialectology	Dialectometry
1850-1899	Ascoli		
1900-1949	Merlo	Rohlf's	
1950-1999		Pellegrini	Devoto

Table 2. Analysis of different theoretical frameworks in the Italian dialectology

Although Devoto's classification uses a new methodology based on a purely quantitative evaluation of the data, it continues to draw on the genealogical approach connected to Latin. Also, this type of classification must contend with the impossibility of examining the set of all the phenomena to consider as well as with the subjective nature of the linguistic features chosen. Considering the unsatisfactory results obtained by Devoto from the examination of just linguistic data, the model of division that still finds greatest acceptance is the one introduced by Pellegrini, which not only studies linguistic features but adds concomitant factors like history, the contact between languages, and linguistic variability, usually according to the modern sociolinguistic perspective. With Pellegrini's taxonomy, which also considers the theoretical reflections in the field of sociolinguists, it is definitively acknowledged that an operation of classification must be based on linguistic criteria, though inevitably subjective, as well as various extralinguistic factors. Consequently, the complex classification of Italian dialects is seen as the result of the concurrent action of a wide series of elements: the influence of the pre-Latin languages, the various chronology of the processes of Romanization based on a non-monolithic Latin, the political fragmentation of the Italian territory and the dynamics created over the years with the more prestigious regional varieties and, beginning with the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Italian.

The classification and the corresponding map proposed by Pellegrini, updated with a few modifications and integrations, are still in handbooks today on the field of dialectology and accepted by most contemporary scholars. In particular, a general propensity to using broader framework can be observed: in addition to Sardinian and Friulian already considered by Pellegrini, it includes the group of Ladin varieties in the

Italian dialects, forming a sixth and separate system. Also the varieties of Corsica are generally put with the Tuscan dialects since they reveal a noticeable structural similarity to Italian, even though French acts as their standard language (e. g. Loporcaro 2009, Ledgeway 2016b).

Another aspect that the more recent descriptions share (e. g. Maiden 1997, Cortelazzo 2002, Avolio 2009, Loporcaro 2009, Holtus 2011) is an empirical division based on regional units, even if caution is needed for the more complex situations, like the one in the Marches or in Puglia and Calabria. This type of division is based on the assumption that in Italian linguistic history, regional division, however fluid and permeable it may be, is the result of important historical-geographical factors that contributed to the creation of centres of political-administrative, religious and literary relevance, which often played an important role in levelling the centripetal currents and diffusion of regional features.

In any case, the regionally-based subdivision is tied to a general sharing of the traditional macro-categorization. As a rule, it is explained in a specific preliminary chapter or is recalled during the discussion of each region; this turns out to be functional for a more detailed and intensive description of Italian dialects. Further documentation from new studies and geolinguistic and dialect surveys in the past decades, has led to remarkable progress in terms of qualitative and quantitative knowledge. This has made it possible to better define the areal borders of phenomena already identified, also using the new data offered by the maps from the *Atlante Linguistico Italiano* (Bartoli 1995-), and to establish new subareas. For example, a further division was uncovered in the section on upper southern dialects with the identification of the principal lines of inner discontinuity, which coincide with bundles of isoglosses documented in the Eboli-Lucera lines (Avolio 1989) and Cassino-Gargano (Avolio 1990). The former defines the Lucano (in the south east) and Campano (in the north west) types characterised respectively by the outcomes  $-C\bar{l} > [tts]$ , compared to Campano  $[tʃ]$ ,  $-LL > [dd]$  (central Campano  $[ll]$ ) or by the conservation of the form of the object clitic of 1st plur.  $[nə] < N(O)S$ , as opposed to the Campano  $[nɔʒə] < HINCE$ . The Cassino-Gargano line indicates the southern boundary of features that from the upper middle area reach Gargano, through Abruzzo and Molise:  $S\bar{l} > [ʃ]$ ,  $-B\bar{l} / -V\bar{l} > [j]$ , the

palatalization of [s] before a dental, opposed to the respective outcomes [s], [dʒ] and [ʃ] south of the line.

Another evident consequence of the advances made in dialectological research is the identification of features belonging to fields of analysis traditionally neglected like morphology and syntax, which have, in fact, corroborated the classic division by increasing the number and qualities of concomitant and similar features that characterise the macrogroups and their subcategories. Without going into detail for each regional description, quick reference will be made to the most important morphosyntactic features added to those, for the most part phonetic, traditionally considered crucial for the classic division of Italian varieties.

Among those common to all the varieties in northern Italia, in addition to a more accentuated tendency to substitute synthetic forms with analytic forms leading to a progressive reduction of syntactic movement are:

- The occurrence of a partitive article, shared with northern Tuscany but not found in southern dialects or Sardinia, which is composed of the preposition 'of' and the definite article;
- The loss of the personal pronoun forms derived from EGO e TU, substituted by the corresponding oblique forms (e. g. Piedmontese [mi] and [ti]);
- The presence of subject clitics that accompany the verb, obligatory or optional depending on the verbal person, a feature shared with Friulian, where the clitic is not omissible;
- The prenominal position of possessives, whereas the postnominal position is characteristic of most central and southern varieties and Sardinian;
- The postverbal position of subject clitics in questions, whose diffusion is, however, decreasing, a feature shared with Friulian;
- The addition of pronominal clitics to the infinitive and not to modal verbs, a feature shared with Friulian;

- The postverbal position of the negation which characterises the group of Gallo-Italic dialects, except for Ligurian, from Veneto, where the negative particle is in preverbal position.

The main morphosyntactic features which the central-south dialects share are:

- The presence of one form for the singular masculine definite article ending in a vowel, compared to the presence of a double vowel and consonant series in Tuscan and northern dialects;
- The widespread presence of masculine plurals in [-a], shared with the Tuscan dialect, and in -ORA;
- The prepositional marking of the direct object, with some restrictions that vary from one dialect to another, a feature shared with Sardinian and Corsican;
- The postposition of the possessive after the noun (a feature shared with Sardinian), with the exclusion of the Sicilian varieties, with development of enclisis with a limited series of nouns depending on different conditions from place to place.

The following phenomena are shared only by the middle and upper southern dialects:

- The presence of a distinction between masculine and gender-neutral pronouns with forms that vary from one dialect to another;
- The distinction of three degrees of proximity in the demonstrative pronoun and in the deictic adverb of place and manner;
- Oscillation of *essere* "to be" and *avere* "to have" as auxiliaries in compound tenses, with different distributions from one dialect to another.

The following features are, on the other hand, shared by the upper and extreme southern varieties, except for dialects from the middle area:

- The real lack of a synthetic future substituted by periphrasis, except for rare surviving forms;
- The disappearance of the present subjunctive, substituted by the present indicative in the subordinate clauses and imperfect subjunctive in the main clauses;
- The progression of the direct object clitic to the direct object, with conditions that vary from one dialect to another;
- Placement of pronominal clitics on the modal verb and not on the infinitive, a feature shared with Sardinian.

A significant syntactic characteristic of extreme southern varieties is the strong restriction for use of the infinitive, considered a Balkan feature, substituted in many contexts by an explicit dependent clause, even if with important differences: the syntax of the Calabria particle [mu] partly differs from Salentine [ku] in that the former follows the negator, whereas the latter precedes it, recalling the distribution of the complementizers.

For the Tuscan system, in addition to features of nominal syntax shared with the northern varieties like the partitive article and the possessive placed before the noun, other morphosyntactic features have been added, including:

- The generalization of [ 'te] that functions as the subject;
- The obligatory presence of subject clitics in addition to the tonic pronoun with finite verbs;
- The tridivision of demonstratives and some adverbs of place (*questo, codesto e quello; qui, costì e lì*), that cross the border into Umbria and Latium and is also shared by Sardinian;
- The substitution of the first person plural of the present indicative with the construct *si* + third person sing. (*noi si va a Roma* "we are going to Rome").

Regarding the Sardinian varieties, in addition to the phenomena shared with Tuscan or with the central-southern dialects already mentioned, there is the presence of interrogative forms with the inversion of the finite and the auxiliary verb, or of the object and the verb, and the proclisis of the pronominal particles with the infinitive.

Finally, it can be observed that the lexical field, already marginally represented in traditional taxonomy, is confirmed scarcely relevant from a classificatory perspective being ill-suited to the detection of distributional regularity. Rarely, in fact, does geographical distribution correspond to the major phonological and morphosyntactic divisions. The most common representation, in fact, shows a patchwork distribution of lexical types, characterised by forms typical of a compact area, to which marginal or isolated outcrops are added in other areas.

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