

INDICE DEL NUMERO

Gaetano Berruto, <i>Introduzione</i>	pag. 193
Bruno Moretti, <i>Alcune riflessioni sui rapporti nel repertorio sociolinguistico</i>	» 201
Massimo Cerruti, <i>Il concetto di variabile sociolinguistica a livello del Lessico</i>	» 211
Paola Benincà, Christina Tortora, <i>Grammatica generativa e variazione</i>	» 233
Anna Cardinaletti, <i>La variazione diatopica delle costruzioni con soggetto di nuova informazione</i>	» 259
Silvia Dal Negro, <i>Variazione interdialettale nelle parlate alloglotte</i>	» 277
Federica Guerini, <i>Variazione e immigrazione in Italia: prospettive di Ricerca</i>	» 295
Elena Maria Pandolfi, <i>Le dimensioni di variazione e l'italiano della Svizzera: aspetti quantitative</i>	» 313
Chiara Celata, Alessandro Vietti, <i>Prospettive sociofonetiche sulla variazione</i> (Review article)	» 333

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Carla Bagna, <i>Giovani generazioni di emigrati/immigrati e competenze in lingua italiana: immaginari e autovalutazioni a confronto</i>	» 349
Massimo Vedovelli, <i>Note sulla situazione dell'italiano nel mondo, oggi, nel momento della crisi</i>	» 361
Indice dei numeri tematici	» 365

Alcune riflessioni sui rapporti nel repertorio sociolinguistico

Bruno Moretti

Studi italiani di linguistica teorica e applicata XL, 2 (2011), pp. 201-210

SUMMARY

This paper discusses the relationship between language system and socio-linguistic repertoire and also between the different varieties within the repertoire. It proposes to differentiate between the nucleus of the system (i.e. the totality of linguistic elements shared by all the varieties and fundamental for the belonging of a variety to a linguistic system), the ‘core’ of the repertoire (which represents the sociolinguistic point of reference of the social repertoire) and the ‘fundamental variety’ (“varietà basilare”; the variety that constitutes the neutral point of each individual repertoire). These concepts, which assign a foreground position to the distinction between the social repertoire (rooted on his core) and the individual one (rooted on his fundamental variety) is particularly relevant for the study of the relationship between the diastratic and the diaphasic dimensions of variation. In particular the concept of (the) fundamental variety allows to distinguish between a ‘first grade diastratic collocation’ (given by the diastratic value of the fundamental variety itself) and a ‘second grade diastratic collocation’ (given by the individual’s potential to move himself amongst different diaphasic varieties).

Il concetto di variabile sociolinguistica a livello del lessico

Massimo Cerruti

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SUMMARY

The concept of sociolinguistic variable, originally developed to analyze variation in phonology, is founded on two related assumptions: the semantic equivalence of its variants and the identity of their underlying structure. The extension of the concept beyond phonology leads to questioning whether these assumptions, and consequently the concept’s defining criteria, are still valid. In the present paper we address this question with respect to lexical variation, which presents a particular challenge for studies based on the concept of sociolinguistic variable. We wonder whether it is possible to postulate two different types of lexical variable: an ‘onomasiological’ variable, consisting of a set of different words (variants) conveying a certain meaning, or sense (variable), and a ‘semasiological’ variable, consisting of a set of different senses (variants) corresponding to a certain word (variable). From a methodological point of view, we investigate the impact distributional semantics can have on the study of lexical variation in such sociolinguistic perspective; in particular we discuss how distributional semantics can constitute an empirically well founded procedure to discover sociolinguistic variables.

Grammatica generativa e variazione

Paola Benincà, Christina Tortora

SUMMARY

Generative theory takes grammar to be mentally represented knowledge, with the individual as the primary focus of study. The theory treats its research object, “I-language” (internal language), as a system with exceptionless rules, and conceives of the ideal native speaker as a monolingual. While this framework has yielded a robust body of important research results, it must also account for the reality that communities are not linguistically uniform, and that individual speakers exhibit variable linguistic phenomena, depending on the sociological context. Generative grammar cannot ignore the sociolinguistic variation found within the community, as it forms the basis of the input which the learner (i.e., the individual) must make sense of, in order to develop a coherent, exceptionless grammar (or grammars); furthermore, it cannot ignore the fact of intra-speaker variability, as such variability within the individual seems, on the surface, to contradict the claim that a grammar consists of invariable rules. This paper provides an overview of the problems that linguistic variation and intra-speaker variability present for the theory, in the domain of syntax; specifically, with reference to phenomena found among speakers in Italian and English dialect communities, it addresses the following interrelated issues: sociolinguistic (or, “Labovian”) variation, both from the perspective of the learner and the perspective of the generativist; the problem that such variation presents for “clustering” theory; the relationship between variation and change; and the distinction between true syntactic variants (or variable forms), versus closely related forms which may appear at first glance to be variants of one another, but which are attributable to minimal functional differences within the grammar.

*La variazione diatopica delle costruzioni con soggetto
di nuova informazione*

Anna Cardinaletti

SUMMARY

In this paper, a case of syntactic variation is discussed which emerges in the Italian spoken in Veneto. It concerns the position of subject noun phrases which represent the new information of the clause. While in Italian, a new information subject obligatorily follows the verb, it may precede the verb in Veneto Italian. When it precedes the verb, a new information subject is characterized by a special intonation which recalls similar patterns in languages like English and French. This instance of syntactic variation is presumably due to the contact between Italian and the dialectal varieties spoken by the same community. As in other cases of linguistic contact, it affects a word order motivated by discourse considerations and gives rise to unexpected

optionality in the speakers: they display both preverbal and postverbal subjects. The interest of the construction also lies in the fact that it enters the debate on the properties of pro-drop languages. According to the first formulation of the pro-drop parameter (Rizzi, 1982), a correlation exists between the availability of null subjects and the possibility of postverbal subjects. In this debate, it is important to notice that the Veneto dialects, like other northern Italian dialects, are not full pro-drop languages, but display overt pronouns in some persons of the paradigm. They expectedly display a syntax of subjects partially different from Italian. In bilingual communities and speakers, these dialectal properties influence the syntax of subjects in Italian too.

Variazione interdialettale nelle parlate alloglotte

Silvia Dal Negro

Studi italiani di linguistica teorica e applicata XL, 2 (2011), pp. 277-294

SUMMARY

This contribution tries to overcome some of the intrinsic difficulties of studying linguistic enclaves in the perspective of inter-dialectal variation. Taking up the case of German as a minority language in Italy, a variety of dialects have been compared to each other and to the standard language in order to detect patterns of linguistic continuity and discontinuity and to measure reciprocal distance on the basis of grammatical features. Sociolinguistic factors such as isolation, presence or absence of the roof-language in the linguistic repertoire and language contact have been considered and judged relevant in defining the “insular” or “areal” nature of a group of German minority dialects.

Variazione e immigrazione in Italia: prospettive di ricerca

Federica Guerini

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SUMMARY

In this paper a few research perspectives on language variation in immigrant context are tentatively envisaged and discussed, with a special focus on Italy. A recent model, which compares some of the linguistic and sociolinguistic features displayed by the language varieties potentially emerging in an immigrant context (Muysken, 2010), is taken as the point of departure for a discussion of the properties which may distinguish learners’ varieties of Italian from other contact varieties, such as ethnolects (i.e. varieties of Italian spoken by specific and recognizable ethnic groups) or Italian lexifier pidgins. The necessity of a thorough analysis of the structural

outcomes of the contact on the immigrant languages spoken in Italy is also briefly pointed out. It is argued that the research on language variation and contact in Italy as a migration setting would benefit from the adoption of a multidimensional approach, which considers the communicative resources potentially emerging in multilingual settings to be the product of the combination of a set of both linguistic and sociolinguistic features, occurring with different degrees and patterns in each phenomenon actually attested.

*Le dimensioni di variazione e l'italiano della
Svizzera: aspetti quantitative*

Elena Maria Pandolfi

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SUMMARY

This paper deals with the specific situation of Italian in Switzerland, where it is one of the national languages, the mother tongue for Swiss Italian population, and a L2 in the German and French speaking parts of the country. Swiss Italian can be considered a national variety of Italian as a (partially) pluricentric language. As to Italian in Italian speaking territories, the paper quantitatively considers some lexical issues (lexical density, nouns vs. verbs, coordination vs. subordination) and some morphosyntactic aspects, which have been related to the sociolinguistic dimensions of language variation. The data from a Swiss Italian corpus of speech have been compared with the ones from two Italian corpora. The results of the comparison seem to confirm a different collocation on the variation axes of Swiss Italian and Italian in Italy. Diaphasically and diamesically Swiss Italian seems to be collocated towards a higher pole of the variation axes, i. e. towards a more formal pole and towards textual characteristic closer to the written pole.