

Parallela 10. Sguardi Reciproci. Vicende Linguistiche e Culturali dell'Area Italoфона e Germanofona

Edited by Raffaella Bombi and Fabiana Fusco

Udine: Forum, 2003, 281 pp., ISBN: 88-8420-126-8, €21.50

Reviewed by Monica Boria and Claudia Peverini, Cambridge

Collaborative research projects between academic institutions both nationally and internationally have become almost common currency in recent years. This has been partly thanks to the European agenda and its plethora of collaborative funding opportunities, and partly thanks to a renewed effort by national research councils and institutes that have increasingly encouraged interchanges between academic communities and the formation of research networks and collaboration projects.

The *Parallela* Series is a publication that testifies the well-established collaborative culture of Italian and German speaking scholars in the field of linguistics; established under the aegis of the Italian and Austrian linguistics societies, their first planning meeting was in Bressanone/Brixen in 1978. Since then they have met regularly to share contributions and methodologies within the framework of a two/three-day themed conference (*Parallela XI* took place in Vienna in Spring 2005)¹. This long standing collaboration is praised by Vincenzo Orioles in his preface to the volume, especially by virtue of the fact that linguistics nowadays appears like a rather divided field of research.

The network of scholars taking part in the symposia has often gone beyond the Austrian-Italian axis, under whose aegis the conferences have always taken place, drawing scholars from obvious countries like Germany and Switzerland and less obvious ones like the United States and Brazil. Institutional support behind these annual meetings and their ensuing publication has included Cultural Institutes, banks, national research funding bodies, academic consortia and research institutes.

As Fabiana Fusco reminds us in one of the introductory essays, each symposium has focussed either on a specific area of linguistics research (i.e. syntax, morphology, information technology and linguistics) or on the cultural cross-fertilisation between Italian

¹ Details can be found in the *Bullettin* of the Società Italiana di Linguistica, which has been among the sponsors of the *Parallela* meetings and has regularly reviewed them.
<http://culturitalia.uibk.ac.at/SLInew/2004/Boll1/parallelaXI.htm>

and German language and philology.² This volume falls within the latter group and collects a selection of contributions presented at the conference held in 2002 in Gorizia and Udine, 'border' cities par excellence. Gorizia's vocation as a locus of cultural intersections over a thousand years of history is well outlined by Raffaella Bombi in the other introductory essay to the collection.

The 17 contributions that follow are all in Italian (apart from Claudia Maria Riehl's, which is in German) and are true to the spirit of the 'Mutual Glances' suggested in the title, which also well renders the snapshot character typical of proceedings. The effort of the editors/organisers in inviting ad hoc contributions, as well as in selecting papers, has resulted in a useful three-part structure to the volume. Unfortunately contributions vary considerably in terms of length and depth of analyses, bibliographical information and referencing style, which we feel detracts from the overall good editorial quality and academic content of the collection.

The first section is devoted to historical 'intersections' between Italian and German linguistics, the second section to current projects and collaborations, the third, and most eclectic part deals mainly with case studies in multilingualism and language acquisition.

Partly due to space constraints, but also following our own research interests, we have decided to focus in detail on a few contributions only, providing however a general overview of each part.

In the first section, entitled *Interdipendenze*, Roberto Gusmani and Harro Stammerjohann's papers set the tone, focussing on the role of two 19th century scholars, Hugo Schuchardt and Graziadio Isaia Ascoli respectively. They point out how their cross-national and cross-cultural identity, especially for the latter, stand out as a crucial aspect of their research.

The contribution of 20th century Italian linguist and germanist Sergio Lupi is outlined by Francesca Chiusaroli. She clearly illustrates Lupi's pioneering position as an 'antiromantic' in the field of ancient and medieval Germanic studies, where the theory of the autonomy and superiority of the Teutonic language and civilization was predominant among scholars of the time, especially in Germany and Britain.

² Bibliographical details of the series are available on the website of the *Centro Internazionale sul Plurilinguismo* (Università di Udine), which organised the 2002 conference: http://www.uniud.it/cip/cip_parallela_precedenti.htm. A table of content for *Parallela X. Sguardi reciproci* is available at: http://www.uniud.it/cip/home_i.html.

In this first section Corrado Grassi's article comparing Italian and German geo-linguistic traditions is notable for the breadth of its coverage, with its overview of the wider historical and intellectual contexts, and for tackling the complex question of what is the correct place of geo-linguistics in light of the most recent developments in the field of socio-linguistics. Grassi convincingly rebuts Norbert Dittmar's recent ferocious critique of geo-linguistics as a legitimate field of inquiry. Dittmar, one of the most prominent German socio-linguists, launches an attack specifically on the methodology and procedures of linguistic atlases, which have enjoyed a long tradition in Germany. Grassi demonstrates how Dittmar's critique has no foundation in the Italian context, where dialectologists have always heavily relied on linguistic atlases and geo-linguistics. Italian geo-linguistics was able to gain a precise and unique identity, which differentiates it from German and other Romance geo-linguistics. This is due to the fact that, contrary to Germany, the Italian dialectology tradition was never concerned with the problem of defining strict dialect borders, but rather with the problem of the classification of the dialects.

The second section of the volume – *Progetti linguistici collettivi* – brings together four essays that well testify to the successful collaborative culture among Italian and German speaking linguists. The well-established cooperation between Italy and Germany in this field is exemplified by the *LEI* project (*Lessico Etimologico Italiano*), as Max Pfinster explains. As the founder of this project, in the late sixties, Pfinster's aim was to compile an etymological dictionary of the Italian language and its dialects modelled on Wartburg's French etymological dictionary. Initially supported exclusively by Swiss first and then German institutions, the project has gradually recruited collaborators and support also from Italian universities and funding bodies, including the Education Ministry. The peculiarity of the *LEI* is its focus on the development of clusters of related lexical items, taking into account geo-linguistic analyses. The entry 'cisterna' is provided as an example of how the dictionary is organised.

Hans Goebl and Roland Bauer's papers focus on another important project, if smaller in scope, the *ALD* (*Atlante Linguistico del Ladino Dolomitico e dei Dialetti Limitrofi*). This project dates back to 1972 and comprises two phases: *ALD-I*, concerned with aspects of phonetics and morphology, and *ALD-II*, for lexis and syntax. The first part has successfully concluded with the publication of seven volumes plus CD-ROM and DVD, the second part

started in 2001 and is still on-going.³ The project's theoretical underpinnings and methodology are explained in detail by Bauer, who provides also a useful historical overview of the origins of 'dialectométrie' as a discipline.

In the final paper of the section Costanza Cigni outlines the methodology adopted in the compilation of a historical-comparative dictionary of *walser* dialects. The project, in collaboration with Elisabetta Fazzini, involves the systematization of material collected in the seventies and largely unpublished.

The final and largest section bearing the umbrella-title *Plurilinguismo e contatti linguistici* opens with Augusto Carli's essay on the politics of language in the early 20th century German colonies. In his discussion of three emblematic projects of the time, Oswald Salzmänn's "vereinfachtes Deutsch" (1913), Adalbert Baumann's "Welt-Deutsch" (1915) and Emil Schwörer's "Kolonial-Deutsch" (1916), Carli shows how these attempts to promote German in the colonies, invariably resulted in a simplification of German that in whatever form (simplified German, or artificial new language) resembled the pidginization they so firmly condemned in the English rival.

The challenge of translating the highly imaginative language and parodic vein of Viennese writer Christine Nöstlinger is the topic of Sonia Marx's essay. A literary case in the Nineties and among the most widely translated authors of young-adult fiction in Italy, Nöstlinger's work and achievements are effectively discussed in this paper, however the question of translating the writer's peculiar idiolect into Italian posed in the title is not actually addressed. Disappointingly, not even instances of the actual Italian versions of her work are provided.

The four articles that follow provide an in-depth examination of specific examples of cultural 'contamination'. Francesca Dovetto's contribution follows the etymological vicissitudes of the term 'bigotto'; Alessio Petralli's paper examines the state of things of the Italian language in Switzerland, focussing in particular on the role of the broadcasting media; Claudia Maria Riehl turns her attention to the influences of Italian on German, through a case study conducted among schoolchildren in Germany and South Tirol.

Paul Danler's article offers an in-depth examination of Tesnière's theory of "*valence du verbe*" as defined in his 1959 masterpiece *Éléments de syntaxe structurelle* as well as its

³ See the project's website for more details:
http://www.sbg.ac.at/rom/people/proj/ald/ald_home.htm.

application to Italian texts. This theory is an effective instrument to analyse how precise syntactic structures can be employed in order to achieve various corresponding discourse strategies that allow the author to: 1) conceal certain information (vagueness strategy); 2) strengthen certain power positions (strategy of hiding the power concentration); and 3) remain anonymous (anonymity strategy). These three strategies are each discussed at length through a careful consideration of how the author can choose to focus or obscure specific positions by giving them more or less syntactic relevance. Although his discussion is both interesting and informative, Danler's article appears unbalanced, as it focuses almost exclusively on the application of this French linguistic theory on Italian texts. Whereas it is a useful contribution for the field of Italian discourse analysis, it has very little relevance (if any) for German linguistics.

The last three papers focus on issues of second language acquisition: Marina Chini's work is part of the relatively young research field of Italian as a foreign language; her study here provides a detailed account of the acquisition of Italian verb inflection among advanced learners with German as their first language. As part of a cross-linguistic project on pre- and protomorphology in language acquisition established in Vienna in the mid 1990s, the collaborative paper by Wolfgang Dressler et al. examines the early stages of acquisition of verb inflection in Austrian German and Italian. Finally Stephan Schneider's case study on bilingual children (Italian/German) focuses on the acquisition of noun compounds, a field of enquiry that, at least as far as these two languages are concerned, appear in need of further research.

In conclusion, the wide-ranging nature of the topics covered in this collection will be of interest to scholars of linguistics and to language teachers.