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**The maintenance and revitalisation of regional
languages in the context of plurilingualism.
The case of Venetian.**

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*In loving memory of my mother Rina
who could cook Venetian cuisine blindfolded
and passed the savoury Venetian language on to me*

Abstract

It is estimated that at least half of the world's population is fluent in two or more languages. This ability has been shown to bring numerous benefits: it makes it easier to learn other languages, improves thinking, promotes contact with different people and cultures, and offers better economic prospects. In addition, multilingualism improves health and well-being outcomes.

The same considerations made for national languages can be extended to regional languages or dialects, which, without adequate and timely conservation and revitalisation measures, are at risk of disappearing.

After presenting the theoretical framework concerning plurilingualism and the conservation and revitalisation of languages, this work gives an overview of Venetian in its linguistic varieties, protagonists of a plurilingualism in constant evolution and dialogue with the Italian national language. The sociolinguistic analysis is followed by a presentation of the initiatives that have been implemented over time for the systematisation and preservation of the Veneto language, as well as case studies from which to draw good practices. A chapter was dedicated to the issue of the orthographic transcription of Venetian, with a personal proposal in this regard.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the research is that—despite the fact that the use of Venetian is no longer stigmatised as it once was—factors such as the lack of awareness among young people of its cultural value, the little incisive contribution made so far by politics and the socio-economic phenomena that hinder its transmission (world of work, migration, globalisation, etc.) may put a serious mortgage on its future.

Abstract (Italian)

Si stima che almeno metà della popolazione mondiale sia in grado di esprimersi correntemente in due o più lingue. È stato dimostrato che questa facoltà apporta numerosi vantaggi: facilita l'apprendimento di altre lingue, migliora il modo di pensare, promuove i contatti con persone e culture diverse ed offre prospettive economiche migliori. Inoltre, il plurilinguismo consente di migliorare gli esiti di salute e di benessere.

Le medesime considerazioni fatte per le lingue nazionali possono essere estese alle lingue regionali o dialetti, che, senza adeguate e tempestive misure di conservazione e rivitalizzazione sono a rischio di scomparire.

Dopo aver presentato il quadro teorico di riferimento relativo al plurilinguismo e alla conservazione e rivitalizzazione delle lingue, questo lavoro fa un excursus sulla lingua veneta nelle sue varietà linguistiche, protagoniste di un plurilinguismo in costante evoluzione e dialogo con la lingua nazionale italiana. All'analisi sociolinguistica segue una presentazione delle iniziative che sono state attuate nel tempo per la sistematizzazione e conservazione del veneto, nonché i casi studio da cui poter attingere alcune buone prassi. Uno spazio è stato dedicato alla questione della trascrizione ortografica del veneto, con una proposta personale al riguardo.

Dalla ricerca si può trarre la conclusione che – nonostante l'uso della lingua veneta non sia più stigmatizzato come un tempo – fattori come la scarsa consapevolezza tra i giovani del suo valore culturale, il poco incisivo contributo dato sin qui dalla politica e i fenomeni socioeconomici che ne ostacolano la trasmissione (mondo del lavoro, migrazioni, globalizzazione, ecc.) possono mettere una seria ipotesi sul futuro della stessa.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMAV	Accademia Musicale Artistica Veneta [Venetian Musical Artistic Academy]
CILVE	Conferenza Internazionale sulla Lingua Veneta [International Conference on the Venetian Language]
CISVe	Centro Interuniversitario di Studi Veneti [Inter-University Centre for Veneto Studies]
CPPDCE	Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions
CSICH	Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
DECA	Drio El Costumar de l'Academia [According to the Use of the Academia)
ECRML	European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
EGIDS	Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale
FCPNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
GFU	Grafia Veneta Unitaria [United Venetian Orthography]
HLD	Healthy Linguistic Diet
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
INDIRE	Istituto Nazionale Documentazione Innovazione Educativa [National Institute for Educational Innovation Documentation]
IPA	International Phonetic Alphabet
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RML(s)	Regional and Minority Language(s)
RLS	Reversing Language Shift
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

From April to September 2022, an immersive virtual reality installation was placed in the courtyard of Ca' Foscari University in Venice, Italy, on occasion of “Last Whispers: Immersive Oratorio for Vanishing Voices, Collapsing Universes and a Falling Tree”, an art project by American photographer and artist Lena Herzog on the world's endangered languages. Inspired by this poignant installation, the author of this thesis took the cue and embarked on an exploration of Venetian, an Italian regional language of his repertoire portrayed at the event.

The world displays an exceptional degree of linguistic variety, encompassing around 7,000 spoken and signed languages. Moreover, approximately 56% of the world population speaks more than one language, with 13% being fluent in three languages, highlighting the prevalence and importance of multilingualism globally (Celedon-Pacchitis et al., 2022).

However, this diversity is under constant threat and is swiftly diminishing due to intricate processes leading to language loss. Factors like the dominance of few languages in the technologically advanced global trade network, media concentration, and national policies pushing towards monolingualism contribute to about half of the world's population speaking just 13 languages. This linguistic homogenisation poses a serious risk to the global linguistic and cultural landscape. Various elements contribute to language attrition, some specific to certain communities and regions, while others, rooted in issues like colonisation and disenfranchising policies, are widespread. The negative impact of these factors is evident from New Zealand to Hawaii, and from Canada to Nepal.

On account of these cultural challenges, in the second half of the twentieth century, linguists and global organisations such as UNESCO have been sharpening the focus on the problem. A pivotal moment was the International Conference on Endangered Languages, held in Nairobi in 1952. This conference marked a global awareness of the importance of preserving indigenous languages and related cultures. In the 1960s and 1970s, linguists such as Joshua Fishman began to explore the links between language and cultural identity, while in the 1990s Michael Krauss raised awareness of the risks of language extinction through his 1992 article ‘The World's Languages in Crisis’. Krauss estimated that only 10% of the world's languages were safe for the longer term, that 50% might at that time be already moribund, and that the rest might also be extinct by the end of the 21st century (Simons & Lewis, 2013).

Being languages a product of biological beings subject to change, both individually and socially according to a natural life cycle, one may wonder why bother so much if they eventually become extinct. As a matter of fact, like any cultural product, languages offer a safe harbour where personal and collective

identities can be anchored, nurtured and developed according to their features and patterns. And yes, every language has its unique combination of sounds, words and expressions that gets lost in translation.

Unfortunately, languages are rather volatile and cannot be treated like a patient etherised upon a table: usually considerable time and efforts are needed to resuscitate and discharge, and what is most challenging is the acknowledgement that there is no medicine fit for all language conditions.

This dissertation aims to fill a gap in the research field of revival linguistics, namely investigate the conditions to maintain and revitalise Venetian, a regional language spoken by millions in northeastern Italy and considered potentially vulnerable by UNESCO standards. Venetian, like many other regional languages, finds itself at a crossroads: despite its historical significance and cultural richness, it faces the risk of obsolescence. While there is no shortage of studies on language endangerment and revitalisation policies to address the decline, to the best of our knowledge there has been no study that takes into consideration Venetian as a potential reverse language shift paradigm. The research topic is intended as a snapshot of contemporary Venetian, a language that keeps floating in a sea of perils much like the namesake city, sharing its role with other languages, such as local varieties, Italian, English, or migrants' own languages. In this context, the research question can be pitched as follows: *'Is it important to maintain and revitalise Venetian? If so, how can it be implemented?'* The answer to this complex question—which triggers many others—unfolds in nine chapters, each addressing particular aspects of language revival.

After this brief introduction, the second chapter presents a theoretical framework related to two concepts underpinning the research: plurilingualism on one side and maintenance and revitalisation on the other. Plurilingualism—defined as the ongoing development of effective communication skills utilising all linguistic and cultural experiences interactively—is explored across four dimensions: linguistic, psychological, sociolinguistic, and educational. The chapter also addresses four dimensions of language maintenance and revitalisation: political, educational, sociological and cultural.

The third chapter deals with the notion of Venetian language, intended as the roof language that encompasses all related linguistic varieties present in Veneto. A quick historical overview helps enlightening the reader on the path taken by this language across the centuries of its existence, justifying the reasons for its worthy preservation. An outline of its linguistic features will also highlight its distinctive position within the family of Romance languages, including Italian.

The fourth chapter addresses the position of Venetian in the sociolinguistic context of the Veneto region, where, unlike other Italian regions, most of the population freely switch between Italian and dialect in informal communication, depending on the context. While an historical overview of the use of Venetian provides proof of its progressive marginalisation, an outlook on contemporary behaviour of

Venetian speakers—including migrants who have adopted it—sheds light on the dynamics underlying its development.

The fifth chapter tackles the issue of language preservation, focusing on the maintenance and revitalisation efforts for the Venetian language. This is done by examining the legal framework—both from the viewpoint of the international law on the safeguard of endangered languages and the relevant national and regional legislation. In particular, Veneto Regional Law 8/2007 will be scrutinised and discussed. The chapter also provides insight into the political arena where these laws are formulated, and it considers contemporary initiatives by public and private actors aimed at promoting Venetian.

Chapter 6 examines the criteria by which languages are deemed safe or endangered, thereby warranting revitalisation efforts according to various evaluation scales. Evaluating the success of language revitalization programmes has become a key focus, driving research into statistical assessments of linguistic diversity, endangerment, and vulnerability. Contemporary efforts seek to move beyond the traditional documentation-conservation-revitalisation triad, favouring more comprehensive, holistic, and community-driven approaches. We will broaden our view of good practices of language revitalisation by considering the cases of Hebrew—a language literally born from its ashes—and Catalan, a language that bears significant similarities to Venetian. Finally, we will analyse what strategies are effective under different circumstances in language revitalisation.

The purpose of chapter 7 is to describe the long and winding way through which an official orthography of Venetian has emerged, an important factor for language conservation. Moreover, a description of Venetian phonology is presented along with the rules established by the Unitary Venetian Orthography of 1995. Finally, we will add a proposal of a modified orthography that leans to the orthography of the main West Romance group of languages, with the aim in mind of connecting the Venetian speaking areas of Europe and Latin America.

The eighth chapter presents and analyses the findings of a self-administered survey on the revitalisation of Venetian, conducted through a questionnaire distributed to over 500 participants. The overall impression is that Venetian remains robustly alive, and its future is taken in serious consideration by its speakers.

Chapter 9 summarises key findings from the research and proposes potential avenues for future research.

While every effort has been made to maintain the dissertation at the highest standards of scientific research, we acknowledge potential limitations, including constraints related to time, financial resources, and equipment. A qualitative analysis of certain findings from the survey conducted in Chapter 8, detailed in Appendix 3, has been omitted and deferred for future study. On the other hand, the quantitative analysis would have benefited from controlling variables and expanding the sample to include participants from outside the Veneto region (e.g., Latin America), thereby enhancing generalisability. Also, greater participation from younger

individuals could have strengthened assertions. Lastly, a deeper familiarity with sociolinguistic literature could have enriched the exploration of various aspects of plurilingualism in Veneto.

In conclusion, this dissertation is not just an academic inquiry but a heartfelt endeavour to contribute to the broader discourse on language preservation. It underscores the importance of regional languages as carriers of unique cultural identities and as essential components of a plurilingual society. Considering that language, deeply intertwined with cultural knowledge and political identity, serves as a significant marker of a community's vitality and well-being, we hope that the upcoming pages will arouse an interest in the Venetian language and attention towards its uncertain future.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The present theoretical framework is aimed at illuminating the phenomena covered by our research questions and the underlying assumptions. This is accomplished by means of a literature review of two key concepts: ‘plurilingualism’ and ‘language maintenance and revitalisation’. Both concepts are closely interrelated, as the former thrives on condition that a plurality of languages be kept alive, otherwise weaker languages and language varieties are put at risk of becoming increasingly marginalised by the overpowering dominant language. We will first tackle the concept of plurilingualism in four interdisciplinary dimensions, encompassing linguistics, psychology, sociolinguistics, and education (Fig. 1). Then, we will investigate the theories that have shaped the concept of language maintenance and revitalisation, where educational linguistics plays an important role (Fig. 2). The exploration of these two areas of linguistics will enable us further on to draw parallel considerations between standard languages and regional language varieties.

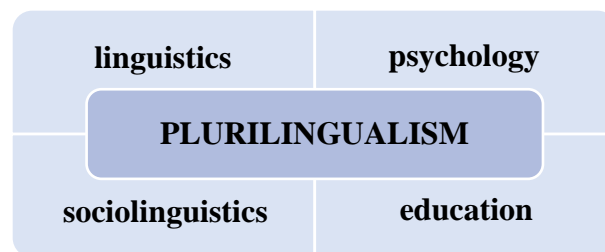


Figure 1 The dimensions of plurilingualism

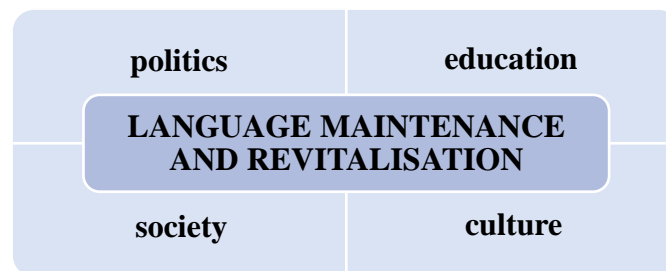


Figure 2 The dimensions of language maintenance and revitalisation

2.2 Plurilingualism: the linguistic dimension

From a linguistics perspective, plurilingualism is sometimes confused with similar terms such as bilingualism or multilingualism, therefore we should dwell for a moment on terminology. While it is understood that *monolingualism* is the condition of knowing only one language, *bilingualism* needs some clarification. Bilinguals are people who, at varying degrees of proficiency, can express themselves in two languages. As Mehmedbegovic-Smith and Bak (2019, March 27) have pointed out, bilinguals are not necessarily native-like proficient in both languages:

One of the potential problems with the term “bilingual” is that for many people it is associated with the idea that both languages have been learned from birth (typically, by both parents speaking a different language to the baby, as in the famous “one parent, one language” model). Moreover, it is often understood to imply a perfect, “native-like” proficiency in both languages. While such situations certainly exist, they do not reflect the most common setting in which languages are acquired and used. In real life, across the world, languages can be learned at different ages (from early childhood to retirement) and used in different contexts (e.g. work versus family etc). A strict definition of the term “bilingual”, implying perfect knowledge and constant use of both languages in all contexts, runs the danger of missing the vast majority of people speaking more than one language. Hence, millions of people across the world might not identify themselves as “bilingual” because they feel that their knowledge of a certain language is not “good enough. (Mehmedbegovic-Smith & Bak, 2019, March 27).

So, how can we define the level of knowledge which makes individuals bilingual? Mehmedbegovic-Smith and Bak suggest that bilinguals *use* more than one language in their everyday life:

(...) the most important criterion is the fact that people use more than one language in their everyday life; in other words, they “live in two or more languages”. This is a very inclusive definition which avoids complex and, in some cases, hard to measure aspects of language such as competency, proficiency, fluency or literacy. It can apply to children and retirees, illiterates and academics, heritage, and community languages; it can even apply to “dead” languages, which are not dead as long as they are alive for people using them. It is also a definition which is open to changes across the whole lifespan: languages can be added, removed and changed; they are not determined by what we have learned in the first years of our life. (ibid.).

In this dynamic outlook on language use, bilingualism is but a special case of *multilingualism*, whereby individuals use more than two languages to face the complexity of modern life. Such situation is the norm in many societies across the developing and developed world: as an example, in an African country such as Cameroon, citizens may use the two official languages (English and French)¹, along

¹ Another—although marginally known—European language is German, which is taught electively as second language in middle school for two years as a colonial legacy.

with one or more of the over 250 local languages. On the other hand, it is also very common to restrict the use of bilingualism to individuals (also those speaking more than two languages) and multilingualism to the societal level (even when it only involves two languages).

As for *plurilingualism*, how could we define it? According to Mehmedbegovic-Smith & Bak (2019, March 27):

It is an even more recent term and its use is still being developed and refined. The main distinction between multilingualism and plurilingualism is that a multilingual approach is about having different languages coexist alongside each other, but separately, within individuals or societies, with the ultimate aim of achieving the idealised competency of the native speaker in each of them. In contrast, a plurilingual approach emphasises the development of effective communication skills which draw on all our linguistic and cultural experiences in an interactive way. (ibid.)

The authors maintain that plurilingualism is an ongoing process that spans one's entire life, involving the acquisition of languages spoken in one's home, within society, and those of other communities. This approach values linguistic diversity and language learning across the lifespan, dismissing the assumption of a single main lifelong language, given that changes occur in language dominance through study, work, emigration, marriage, and so forth. Moreover, it recognises the inherent limitations in anyone's understanding of a single language, whether it be one's native tongue or not. Consequently, plurilingualism challenges the notion of the native speaker² as the ultimate linguistic achievement, instead advocating for the development of effective communicators with a diverse linguistic and cultural repertoire. This approach, endorsed by the Council of Europe, encourages individuals to utilise their varied knowledge in a flexible, creative, and personalised manner (ibid.).

2.3 Plurilingualism: the psychological dimension

From a psychological perspective, in the second half of the 20th century a stream of evidence has pointed to positive effects of plurilingualism on cognitive performance of children, overcoming previous bias which favoured monolingualism. Before then, prejudice was prevalent following research conducted in the early 20th century on immigrants who flooded North America from Eastern and Southern Europe. As Edwards pointed out: “Heavily biased tests and interviews indicated a relationship between the many languages they brought with them and ‘feeble-mindedness’” (Edwards, 2023).

² *Native speaker* is itself a social construct. Florian Coulmas edited already in 1981 a book titled “Festschrift for Native Speaker” in which this notion was deconstructed. Cfr. Coulmas (1981).

Among authors that wrote on the psychological dimension of plurilingualism are Vivian Cook, Jasone Cenoz, Francois Grosjean, Ellen Bialystok, and Virginia Collier. One key contributor to this field was Vivian Cook, whose paper *The consequences of bilingualism for cognitive processing*,³ delves into the psychological aspects of language acquisition and the cognitive benefits of multilingualism (Cook, 1997).

An equally important figure in the psychological dimension of plurilingualism is Jasone Cenoz, whose influential paper, *The Additive Effect of Bilingualism on Third Language Acquisition: A Review*, offers a comprehensive analysis of the additive cognitive benefits accrued through multilingualism (Cenoz, 2003). Cenoz's research contributed to our understanding of the cognitive advantages associated with the acquisition of multiple languages highlighting the interrelation of linguistic proficiency and cognitive development.

Another author that has been instrumental in shaping our comprehension of plurilingualism from a psychological perspective is François Grosjean, with his groundbreaking work *Bilingual: Life and Reality* (Grosjean, 2010). Grosjean explored the complexity of being bilingual, considering the cognitive, linguistic, and social aspects bilingual and plurilingual individuals experience. According to him, a bilingual is not two monolinguals in one person, but a unique speaker-hearer using one language, the other language, or both together depending on the interlocutor, situation, topic, etc. (Grosjean, 1997).

Canadian Ellen Bialystok is known for her extensive research on the cognitive advantages of bilingualism. Her work suggests that bilingual individuals may experience cognitive benefits, such as enhanced executive functions and a delay in the onset of dementia (Bialystok et al., 2012). Virginia Collier, along with Wayne P. Thomas, developed the widely recognised "Collier and Thomas Model", which emphasises the importance of additive bilingualism in education. Their research suggests that maintaining and developing the home language alongside the second language positively impacts academic success (Collier et al., 2007).

More recently, in 2017, Mehmedbegovic-Smith & Bak have proposed the Healthy Linguistic Diet (HLD) model of language exposure and use. This model, which targets students from elementary school, assimilates healthy linguistics habits to physical health habits³. As the authors point out:

Our Healthy Linguistic Diet (HLD) approach is based on an analogy between physical and mental health. Regular physical activity and a healthy diet are important factors in maintaining physical health. In the same way, the learning of languages and their regular use provide essential mental exercise, leading to a better brain health and an increase in "cognitive reserve" resulting in a later onset of dementia and an improved cognitive outcome after a stroke (Mehmedbegovic-Smith & Bak, 2017 May 21).

³ For a video introduction in Italian language, see Cinganotto L. (no date) in the reference section.

HLD therefore focuses on direct efforts towards the establishment of life-long learning practices, encompassing the use of at least two, preferably three or more languages. This focus is underpinned by the recognition that such engagements play a pivotal role in conditioning our cognitive faculties for enhanced functionality across all lifespans, from early childhood to advanced age. The adoption of these linguistic habits is expected to yield heightened concentration in early childhood, superior educational accomplishments, and an elevated standard of intellectual life throughout adulthood and advanced age.

The significance of HLD lies in its potential to enhance linguistic competence and cultural awareness. Firstly, exposure to a variety of languages fosters cognitive benefits, such as improved problem-solving and multitasking abilities (Smith, 2018). Secondly, a healthy linguistic diet encourages intercultural understanding, as individuals proficient in multiple languages are better equipped to navigate diverse social contexts (Gao et al., 2020). Lastly, the linguistic diversity within a healthy diet contributes to the preservation of endangered languages, ensuring a richer tapestry of human expression (Cheng, 2019). In sum, it becomes evident that cultivating a healthy linguistic diet is paramount for the holistic development of individuals and the preservation of linguistic diversity on a global scale.

Clearly, this approach is original and worth exploring in depth. In particular, we may wonder what its peculiarities are and what goals it aims to. What sets this approach apart is the focus on health rather than a variety of unrelated goals. As Mehmedbegovic-Smith & Bak have stated:

“(...) Conceptualisation of language learning as a key ingredient to our well-being represents an important shift to the existing set of arguments promoted by policy makers and educators arguing for the importance of learning other languages for: ‘trade and global economy, greater intercultural understanding, interactions and enhancing social well-being at home and overseas, as well as, as well the object and vehicle of study and research “ (Mehmedbegovic-Smith & Bak 2019-1).

The aim is to instigate and ease a transformative shift in the perception of learning additional languages among various stakeholders, including educators, parents, learners, policymakers, and politicians. This shift involves moving away from viewing language acquisition merely as a skill or academic subject, towards recognising the utilisation of two languages as a fundamental element in our cognitive development and overall well-being. The objective is to disseminate accessible information to children, parents, and communities about the cognitive advantages of bilingualism. The goal is to make the benefits of using two languages as universally recognised as commonplace health advice, akin to the recommendation of consuming two litres of water daily (ibid).

In the Italian context, a research project called “HLD in Italy” has been carried out by INDIRE researchers (Letizia Cinganotto, Raffaella Carro, Laura

Messini). It started with a study visit guided by Mehmedbegovic-Smith to Scoil Bhríde Cailíní, a school in Dublin where HLD has been used during the pandemic with online teaching methodology. As Ires Pereira summarised, the approach prioritizes leveraging pupils' cultural identity and existing knowledge, emphasizing home languages as the foundation for English proficiency. It integrates age-appropriate literacy skills, encourages pedagogical explicitness, and upholds teacher autonomy rooted in ethical leadership (Pereira, 2023).

As poignantly noted by Aikhenvald (2003), “Good health – as defined by the World Health Organization—encompasses physical, mental, and social and emotional well-being⁴. Having a language of one’s own provides confidence and strength, and helps people feel better. Conversely, losing one’s language and letting go of one’s traditions and roots is likely to have detrimental effect on well-being in its every aspect” (Aikhenvald, 2003:17).

Patrick Heinrich (2023) summarised the mental and physical benefits for wellbeing in a paper by highlighting the consequences of language loss among Aborigines in Canada and Australia and Ryukyuan in Japan. The loss of language contributes to various social problems, particularly affecting Indigenous minorities who face prejudice, racism, poverty, and unemployment. This loss also leads to spiritual disconnection, family instability, and weakens cultural autonomy. Adoption of majority languages makes it harder to maintain a community's self-image, while endangering languages results in the loss of cultural knowledge and affects people's perception of their place in the world. Communities without their language struggle to navigate their future, impacting education, governance, and access to ancestral lands, while also undermining legal arguments for asserting rights (Heinrich, 2023).

⁴ Cfr. Schramme (2023).

2.4 Plurilingualism: the sociolinguistic dimension

In an era characterised by increasing globalisation and cultural interconnectivity, the sociolinguistic dimension of plurilingualism emerges as a critical aspect and demands a nuanced examination of its social implications. The first key aspect to consider is the impact of plurilingualism on identity formation. Scholars, such as François Grosjean (2003), have researched into this specialised domain, shedding light on the dynamic interactions between language and society. As Pearson highlighted, Grosjean's point is that bilinguals are not to be counted as two monolinguals joint at the neck, but that bilingual can itself be an identity (Pearson, 2011).

Looking through the lens of sociolinguistics, researchers have examined how people handle complex linguistic environments, managing their sense of self in situations involving multiple languages. For instance, Wei (2011) explores the intricate ways in which individuals proficient in multiple languages construct and express their identities in various social settings, using the concept of 'translanguaging'. Examining Chinese university students in the UK through the tool of Moments Analysis⁵, Wei focused on how these individuals creatively and critically utilise their multilingual resources during social interactions. He argues that individuals actively create multilingual spaces, or "translanguaging spaces", by strategically employing social resources, including language. Translanguaging contributes to the formation of a social world where speakers take on different roles and positions, fostering a sense of connectedness among individuals. This connectedness influences the social behaviours of both the individual and others involved.

Moving beyond individual identity, the second focal point revolves around the role of plurilingualism in shaping societal structures and power dynamics. The seminal work of Bourdieu (1991) elucidates how language proficiency serves as a form of capital, influencing access to resources and opportunities. Plurilingualism, in this context, becomes a sociolinguistic force that can either reinforce existing hierarchies or challenge established power structures. The examination of language policies, as explored by Ricento (2006), further underscores the societal implications of plurilingualism, providing a framework to analyse the ways in which language choices impact social inclusion and exclusion.

The third dimension involves the pragmatic considerations of plurilingualism in everyday communication. Sociolinguists, drawing on the insights of Goffman (1959) and Auer (1998), explore the minute aspects of language use in various

⁵ Wei defines "moments" as "the spontaneous actions or events that have special indexical value to the individual and significant impact on subsequent development of actions and events. (...) Moment Analysis requires both observations of naturally occurring behaviour and metalanguaging data, i.e., reflections and comments by the participants themselves on their own actions". (Wei, 2011:1234).

social contexts. From workplace interactions to educational settings, plurilingual individuals navigate linguistic repertoires, strategically employing different languages to achieve communicative goals. This pragmatic aspect not only showcases the adaptability of plurilingual speakers but also emphasises the dynamic nature of language as a social tool. In essence, understanding the sociolinguistic dimension of plurilingualism, as illuminated by these key points and scholarly contributions, is paramount in comprehending the elaborate interplay between language, society, and individual identity in our increasingly interconnected world.

2.5 Plurilingualism: the educational dimension

Society, including the realm of education, has consistently undergone changes over time. However, in recent decades, a rapid and pronounced sense of transformation has emerged. Nearly three decades ago, Appadurai (1996) introduced a model called 'transcultural flows' to depict these changes. This model identifies five distinct domains of transcultural movements: *ethnoscapes* (depicting the movement of people); *mediascapes* (representing the flow of information); *technoscapes* (illustrating the flow of technology); *financescapes* (capturing financial flows); and *ideoscapes* (highlighting the flow of ideology or ideas). These changes have a profound impact on how the world is perceived. For centuries, social life remained largely unchanged, with traditions shaping learning, and individuals perceiving a relatively limited range of possibilities for their future. However, this static perception has evolved. Presently, education faces the challenge of adapting to and embracing the ever-changing landscapes represented by these 'scapes', and this task can be perplexing (Appadurai, 1996:27 ff.).

Ethnoscapes are of particular interest in contemporary societies as migrations and demographic changes shape the educational settings, which are increasingly becoming an arena where plurilingualism takes place. Researchers such as Otheguy et al. (2015) have investigated the phenomenon of translanguaging in New York schools attended by children belonging to minorities or with an migrational background. The authors resort to a culinary fable as a metaphor for deconstructing named languages. A Japanese academic on a visit to New York was offered different meals that were inspired by Cuban or American recipes but did not represent purely national cuisine dishes, which puzzled the guest, unable to classify them. Otheguy et al. use the metaphor to compare languages to dishes and ditch the notion of *named languages*:

The culinary analogy serves to press against named languages the charge of lexical and structural essentialism. A particular named language, as we see it, cannot be defined in terms of a set of essential lexical or structural features, any more than a cuisine can be defined by a set of essential ingredients or recipes. This charge of essentialism merits some elaboration, as it challenges the familiar demarcation and enumeration of named languages, and the connection that these have to the

comfortable understanding of bilingualism that prevails in many scholarly and educational circles, and that we seek to undermine. (Otheguy et al., 2015:286 ff.)

The authors go on describing the function of *idiolects* on their way to explain their concept of translinguaging⁶:

An idiolect is for us a person's own unique, personal language, the person's mental grammar that emerges in interaction with other speakers and enables the person's use of language. An idiolect is language in sense (b) above, language viewed from the internal perspective of the individual, language seen separately from the external perspective of the society that categorizes and classifies named national languages. (...) An idiolect, then, is the system that underlies what a person actually speaks, and it consists of ordered and categorized lexical and grammatical features. Those are the things that linguists actually analyze and study, not a named language even when, confusedly, they use named languages to report on their research. (Otheguy et al., 2015:288 ff.)

Importantly, Otheguy et al. maintain that “While no two idiolects are exactly the same lexically or structurally, there are, to be sure, large areas of overlap among the idiolects of people who communicate with each other” (ibid). This overlapping area is where speakers’ language repertoires meet and negotiate meaning.

The idiolect is the cornerstone sustaining the concept of *translinguaging*, where the analyst transcends the named language, and returns the focus to the individual’s language, namely the idiolect. This has important implications in language education. Otheguy et al. acknowledge that “language education has focused on teaching a version of a named language known as the standard. (...) Schools everywhere seek to limit translinguaging in all students; even monolingual students are penalised for deploying idiolectal features that fall outside the sanctioned set. (...) Bilingual education programs tend to separate their two languages, in an effort not to ‘contaminate’ the other named language. The result is that the new features fail to become integrated as part of the learner’s idiolect.” (Otheguy et al., 2015:301 ff.). The authors conclude that translinguaging is the best way to protect minority languages:

The traditional named language approach to the protection of the language practices of minoritized groups is constantly colliding with the power of the dominant named language (or languages). This dominant language constitutes a powerful sieve that is interposed between the student and the school to trap many idiolectal features and toss them aside as inappropriate or illegitimate. In contrast, a translinguaging approach invites speakers to deploy all their linguistic resources, both lexical and structural, freely, incorporating new ones and using them without restraint as a part of their idiolect (ibid).

⁶ For further notions on translinguaging *infra* 2.7.

2.6 Language preservation: the political dimension

Language maintenance and revitalisation are critical aspects in the preservation of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. Although the two concepts convey the same meaning of language preservation in endangerment situations, a distinction must be made: according to Grenoble & Whaley language maintenance refers to a language that is truly vital while language revitalisation is about reversing a language shift. Also, while the goal of revitalisation is to increase the number of speakers and extend the domains employed, maintenance aims at protecting the current levels and domains of use. Moreover, revitalisation requires a change in the community attitudes while maintenance strives to protect a language against the pressure of external attitudes. In practice, the distinction between the two notions is not so relevant as programmes involving endangered languages often jointly combine maintenance and revitalisation measures (Grenoble & Whaley, 2005).

Among the dimensions that affect the sustainability and revival of endangered languages, politics stands out as a crucial factor, accompanied by three other significant dimensions that play pivotal roles in language maintenance and revitalisation: the educational, social, and cultural dimensions.

Politics plays a central role in language maintenance and revitalisation efforts. Government policies, legislation, and official recognition of minority languages can either support or hinder the preservation of linguistic diversity. Political will and commitment are essential for implementing language revitalisation programmes, allocating resources, and ensuring the inclusion of minority languages in education and public life.

The idea that languages are an asset to be preserved is relatively recent, as reasons to foster a single common language have been multiple in time: the necessity to assimilate conquered peoples, govern society through laws and courts, lead armies or organise labour are only a few that can be mentioned. From the Middle Ages onwards we have examples of imposition of a national language in various countries, including England, with the “Pleading in English Act” that in 1362 made English the only language in which court proceedings could be held, and France with the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts in 1539, when French was standardised as an administrative language throughout the kingdom of France. In modern times, the industrial revolution, urbanisation, trade, colonialism, migrations and globalisation have all accelerated the extinction of languages.

Which political movements have been in favour or against language maintenance and revitalisation in the context of plurilingualism is object of debate as their nature generally evolves with time. From an historical perspective, the picture along the political spectrum is complicated. Traditionally, conservative parties tend to favour the use of a single national language while liberal parties lean towards a more tolerant attitude towards the maintenance of local cultural traits. In Spain, for example, during the rule of nationalist Francisco Franco (1936-75) regional languages

such as Catalan, Gallego or Basque were harshly repressed. As a reaction, left wing parties of Catalonia involved in the Civil War had a special regard towards the Catalan language, a legacy that survives today. The Irish Sinn Féin political organisation which promotes the use of the Irish language is a republican, left-wing nationalist and secular party.

Besides political parties, two other actors play a decisive role in language defence: grassroots movements and linguistic researchers. O'Rourke and Dayán-Fernández (2024) using social movement theory investigated the role of grassroots Galician language activism in urban-based language revitalisation efforts in Galicia, Spain. They demonstrate that efforts to revive social movements extend beyond merely focusing on language itself, instead emphasizing struggles rooted in language. These struggles not only tackle strategic challenges but also support the development of social connections and alliances among speakers as they engage within specific institutional contexts. A grassroots initiative was set up by a group of activists who became fluent in Galician as non-native speakers (*neofalantes* or *new speakers*). Their project aimed to establish "breathing spaces" for the language, a concept coined by Fishman (1991:59) within the framework of Reversing Language Shift (RLS). These spaces were envisioned as social arenas where minority language speakers could operate without the pressure of competing with the dominant language. The Galician language activists we interviewed endeavoured to carve out such spaces within what they perceived as a predominantly Spanish-speaking and occasionally antagonistic environment for urban-based Galician speakers like themselves. As a marginalised language, Galician had come to symbolise the collective challenges faced by the Galician people, whether in trade union protests, demonstrations against government policies, or other expressions of dissent. This parallels the role of Basque, which is described as serving as a symbol of difference and resistance to the Spanish state and its institutions (O'Rourke & Dayán-Fernández, 2024).

O'Rourke & Dayán-Fernández (2024) highlight the fact that despite exhibiting clear alignment with the definitions found within the broader literature on social movements, language-based movements have surprisingly remained largely overlooked in sociological discussions. They have also been notably absent from contemporary discussions on collective protest strategies (Urla, 2012, cit. O'Rourke & Dayán-Fernández, 2024). Instead, as observed by Fishman (1994), language revitalisation movements have often been portrayed as irrational entities, negatively associated with regionalism, and at times, characterised by violent ethnic nationalism (Fishman, 1994, cit. in O'Rourke & Dayán-Fernández, 2024). Nonetheless, as many scholars have demonstrated, contemporary European minority language activism can also be closely linked with broader movements of progressive identity politics and ethnonationalist mobilisation. Framing language activism within the context of progressive identity politics situates language revitalisation movements within a new sector of social movements that emerged during the protest waves and

decolonisation processes of the 1960s and 70s (Harguindéguy & Cole, 2013; Heidemann, 2014, cit. in O'Rourke & Dayán-Fernández, 2024).

The political role of linguistic researchers is equally important in defence of linguistic heritage. As a matter of fact, a linguist can hardly be agnostic in his field, much like an entomologist confronted with the extinction of a species of butterflies. Researchers' neutrality however should always remain central as a condition of following the scientific method. Another aspect to consider is how funding of linguistic research is leveraged in authoritarian vs. democratic states: within authoritarian regimes, there exist clear methods for controlling knowledge production, with an emphasis on promoting the government's agenda. Interestingly, this process is transparent, as there is no pretence of intellectual autonomy within universities, nor any official endorsement of liberal values such as dissent, the open exchange of ideas, or the pursuit of knowledge for its intrinsic worth. In democratic states, however, as Hutton (2020) pointed out:

In liberal democracies, by contrast, the relationship between the state, institutional interests (both public and private), and knowledge production is much murkier. Democratic polities formally recognize the importance of dissent, for example in the plurality of political parties and the role of the media in scrutinizing government policy. For the government to dictate the fundamental direction and framework within which academic research should be constructed goes against the liberal recognition of the value of dissent, and reflects the idea that knowledge should not be seen purely instrumentally, that there are societal benefits to the free circulation of ideas, and that there is an intrinsic value to intellectual exploration and skeptical inquiry. Yet the principle of democratic accountability also suggests that university research should serve the polity as a whole, and not merely reflect the private interests and concerns of the researcher. The institution and the individual researcher must be held accountable to the state and the taxpayer who is funding the public sector. (Hutton, 2020:34).

2.7 Language preservation: the educational dimension

For many of the issues involved in language revitalisation, language education policies have the most obvious relevance. The educational dimension focuses on the role of formal and informal education in language maintenance and revitalisation. The curriculum design, language-in-education policies, and the availability of resources for teaching and learning the endangered language are crucial factors. Additionally, the involvement of the community in shaping educational initiatives can significantly impact the success of language revitalisation efforts.

Research on plurilingualism and language maintenance in the educational context has been particularly intense in countries experimenting high levels of immigration (hence the need to integrate learners) or an expanding minority, such as the United States with its growing Latin American population. In other contexts, the drive was an increase in importance of the language legacy, as is the case with Wales.

A particular concept that has gained interest in the XXI century is that of *translanguaging* in class. The term translanguaging was coined in Welsh by Cen Williams to refer to a teaching practice of deliberately changing the language of input and the language of output. Translanguaging, as used by Williams, refers to a pedagogic theory that involves students' learning of two languages through a process of deep cognitive bilingual engagement (Garcia & Wei, 2014:64). This process has been investigated by Colin Baker (2001) who identified four main potential educational advantages to translanguaging: first it may help understanding the subject matter more deeply; secondly it may foster the development of the weaker language; third, it may promote cooperation between home and school; lastly, it may be conducive to the integration of fluent speakers with beginners. (Baker, 2001, cit. in Garcia & Wei, 2014:64).

Translanguaging means that the learner's mother tongue (L1) should not be neglected in favour of the official schooling language of immigrants or national minority. Recent research underscores the importance of L1 as a valuable resource for learning, serving to address challenges faced by multilingual learners. Scholars emphasise the compensatory role of L1, with proponents such as Tian and Macaro (2012) and Cummins (2009) highlighting its benefits in providing input and serving as a foundational platform for acquiring new knowledge. Using L1 in instruction holds implications for learning, particularly for learners who may struggle to comprehend the language of instruction. Referring to the South African context, Omidire (2022) stresses the significance of classroom interaction facilitated by promoting the use of home languages, fostering connections that enhance comprehension. The argument in favour of incorporating L1 into the educational environment advocates for allowing learners to scaffold their learning experiences. Additionally,

learners are encouraged to navigate their learning journey by using L1 as a mediator, rather than relying on it exclusively (Omidire, 2022:107).

2.8 Language preservation: the social dimension

The community and social dimensions emphasise the role of the community in preserving and revitalising their language. Factors such as intergenerational transmission of language, community attitudes towards the language, and the presence of social networks within the community all influence the vitality of a language. Community engagement and empowerment are critical for fostering a sense of ownership and pride in the language, encouraging its everyday use. Olko and Sallabank, citing François Grin⁷, have outlined a few conditions that promote language revitalisation at society level:

(...) we can say that for a minoritized language to be revitalized, three conditions must be met: people must be capable of using it (to know the language from the home and/or have access to minority language education), have the opportunity of speaking it (the use of this language in both private and public life is permitted and supported), and they must have the desire to use it, all of which lead to positive attitudes towards the language. To be able to achieve this, there is the necessity of a strong language policy: the possibility of learning the language, the existence of a language infrastructure, with schools, support for families who want to bring up their children in the minority language, creating job opportunities to increase people's motivation to learn it and to use it, and other types of top-down language support. Also, the role of media must not be underestimated. Both the language and the speech community must have a wider positive image. It is also important, especially for the younger generation, that the use of a language is not uniquely linked with the past and tradition, but also with what is perceived as 'modern' and 'cool'. Therefore, for people to have positive attitudes toward a language, it should be used in all domains of their daily life: from the family domain, through school and work, to social media (European Commission, 2018:99).

In contemporary societies, the subjects that play a key role in language transmission are still families, and within families, mothers (Veltman, 1981). This is unsurprising, considering that newborns' first years are crucial for language acquisition. In particular, age three is considered the cut-off point, whereby a child who receives regular exposure to two languages before three is considered a case of simultaneous acquisition, afterwards a case of successive acquisition. (Mc Laughlin 1978, cit. in Matthews & Yi). However, the role of gender in language transmission has been challenged by De Houwer in her research on 1,899 bilingual families in Flanders. The findings from her study failed to show any evidence of parents' gender as a determining factor of language transmission (De Houwer 2007:417).

⁷ Source is undisclosed.

Contrary to popular belief, children who grow up in a bilingual environment from an early age do not necessarily learn to speak the two languages they are hearing, and may speak only one, even with a parent who speaks another language to them. In fact, in bilingual families the Grammond-Ronjat *one parent–one language* strategy does not provide a 100% success rate that children be raised bilingual. In fact, the success rate is about 75% and depends much on the effort that parents put in the transmission of the input language (ibid: 411).

Although the transmission of language across generations encompasses elements beyond just parental speech, societal factors may pose obstacles to effectively nurturing bilingual children. In addressing these challenges, parental assistance becomes vital, and seeking support, such as involving relatives fluent in the minority language or engaging childcare providers, becomes crucial. Nonetheless, the survey highlights the substantial influence of parents and their language usage on the triumph of bilingual family experiences, underscoring their pivotal role in this undertaking (ibid.)

Grenoble & Whaley posit that it is useful to envision language as a way to cultivate community wellbeing (and hence individuals' wellbeing within those communities). Language revitalisation, therefore, is a mechanism by which to improve community health, particularly mental health. As a matter of fact, individuals frequently perceive language as a crucial element in shaping both their collective and personal identities, serving as a means to establish a link with their history. The significance of language extends beyond its mere ability to communicate; it also lies in the sense of community and connection it fosters (Grenoble & Whaley, 2021:912 ff.).

According to Andrason and Olko (2023) the notion of wellbeing in the context of language revitalisation should be interpreted within an approach that values relations:

(...) significantly departs from positivist and quantitative mainstream approaches typical for the Global North that position people as objects. Rather, being nourished by the perspectives of the Global South and qualitative research methods, this alternative relational approach emphasizes human agency. Relational wellbeing is therefore understood as social and collective, active and dynamic, emerging at the interplay of individual, social and environmental processes (...) (Andrason & Olko, 2023:6).

In conclusion, language maintenance and revitalisation in the context of plurilingualism have a direct impact not only on the cognitive abilities of individuals across their lives also but affect the health and well-being of people at both individual and community level, with direct benefits for society at large.

2.9 Language preservation: the cultural dimension

Let now us consider the connection between language maintenance/revitalisation with cultural identity on one hand and material culture on the other. Language is often intertwined with cultural practices, traditions, and expressions. Efforts to maintain and revitalise a language should consider the preservation and enhancements of cultural elements associated with it. Cultural events, oral traditions, and artistic expressions can serve as vehicles for promoting the language and strengthening its ties to the community.

Viewing language as an identity marker is shared by researchers, e.g. Bradley (2001: 152), Crowley (1993: 67), Dixon (1980: 79, 476), Dorian (1999a: 31), Edwards (1984: 289), Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977: 22), Rouchdy (1989a: 95-96), Thieberger (1990: 337-341), and Tovey, Hannan, and Abramson (1989) (Tsunoda, 2006:141).

Language is so heavily intertwined with cultural knowledge and political identity that speech forms often serve as meaningful indicators of a community's vitality and social well-being. However, language and culture often evolve at different speeds. This is particularly true in contemporary societies, where the younger generations are the receiving end of multiple stimuli from mass media and globalisation. Simultaneously, investigations into language ideologies and initiatives aimed at preserving and rejuvenating endangered languages have brought to light ingrained purist or 'traditionalist' language perspectives that oppose and reject linguistic evolution. This sentimental perspective on language and culture tends to excessively praise 'authentic' traditions, often reimagined, and can result in hesitancy to impart the endangered language effectively to younger generations who might introduce changes, despite a stated intent to preserve it. This disconnect between beliefs and actions is evident at language festivals, in educational sessions for children, and among adult learners (Sallabank, 2018).

As for the material culture, the cultural traits of a community have an impact on its social and economic resilience, viability, and development. Moreover, the materialistic traits present in societies affected by globalisation may make it challenging to maintain endangered languages and cultures. The attempts to revitalise a threatened language/culture through folkloristic and business initiatives—Oktoberfest celebrations in German communities such as those held in Blumenau, Brazil are an example—may draw the attention of the mainstream but fail to reverse the downward trend of a language and the sidestream culture associated with it.

The clash between language maintenance efforts with economic activities may result in choosing between economic development and language conservation. Examples of language communities that are challenged by considerable waves of

migrations and the subsequent language loss are to be found in the German-speaking area of Switzerland, Flanders⁸, Catalonia, and Quebec.

In conclusion, understanding the complex interplay between these four dimensions—politics, education, community and social dynamics, and culture—is essential for developing comprehensive strategies and policies aimed at language maintenance and revitalisation. By addressing these dimensions holistically, stakeholders can work towards creating a supportive environment that fosters the sustainability and vibrancy of endangered languages.

⁸ In Flanders the term ‘verfransing’ (Frenchification) and the evocative ‘verbrusseling’ (Brusselisation) are used in this regard. Cfr. Van Horenbeek J. (2018, October 3).

3 THE VENETIAN LANGUAGE

3.1 Definition and general facts

In this chapter we will give an overview of Venetian and its varieties, so as to define our object of study and the implications that follow in our research. First, we will define what we mean by Venetian language, within the West Romance *Sprachbund*, which is marked by peculiarities not found in standard Italian and other language varieties of Italy. The history of the language will lead us to the discovery of a millenary crossroads civilisation, naturally open to foreign contacts and plurilingualism. Finally, the description of the main features of Venetian will enable us to appreciate its unique expressive potential.

First off, we need to focus on the term ‘Venetian’. The Venetian language shares with standard Luxembourgish (Lëtzebuergesch) the singularity of having the name of the country/region (Luxemburg/Veneto) similar to that of the capital/regional capital (Luxembourg/Venice). This fact gives rise to ambiguity when the territory is home to different local linguistic varieties. As a matter of fact, there are several distinct dialect forms of Luxembourgish including Areler (from Arlon), Eechternoacher (Echternach), Dikrecher (Diekirch), Kliärrwer (Clervaux), and so forth. Increased mobility and mass media are gradually shaping a "Standard Luxembourgish" through the process of koineisation (Ammon 2014: 224 ff.). Similarly, Venetian proper is the variety spoken in Venice, which slightly differs from the varieties spoken in other areas such as the Treviso, Belluno, Padova, Rovigo, Vicenza and Verona provinces, within the boundaries of the Veneto Region. However, the adjective Venetian which originally referred to the region Venetia (English exonym for Veneto) ended up defining also anything related to the city of Venice, potentially creating ambiguity—avoided in Italian by employing the adjective *veneto*, relating to the region Veneto and *veneziano*, relating to Venice.

In view of all this, it has been advocated to use a different name for the roof language encompassing all local varieties, for example the term “Venetan”⁹ or “Veneto language”. However, on the one hand, Venetian is the official term adopted by UNESCO’s World Language Atlas¹⁰. On the other hand, these two lexical items have failed so far to gain foot in the Anglosphere, both within academia and among the media and the wider public. Consequently, we shall employ the term "Venetian" to denote the koinè that comprises all linguistic varieties.¹¹ When referring to the

⁹ Venetan is a modern direct adjectivation of the Italian word Veneto (a region) used, for aught we know, only by Italian linguists writing in English. The traditional English exonym for Veneto is Venetia (a Latinate word) and its derivative adjective is Venetian. In Italian, the term ‘Venezia Giulia’ (Venetia Julia, i.e. the area around Trieste) recalls the ancient Latin denomination.

¹⁰ UNESCO WAL (World Atlas of Languages): Venetian.

¹¹ Analogous to how "Catalan" serves as an umbrella term encompassing varieties such as those spoken in Barcelona, Valencia (e.g. Valencian), and the Balearic Islands (e.g. Mallorquí).

variety of Venetian spoken in Venice, we will use the terms ‘Venetian proper’, bearing in mind that Venetian proper itself—much like a game of Russian nesting dolls—is an umbrella term covering different linguistic varieties spread in the different *sestieri* of Venice, the Lagoon islands, and the coast.

In Italy, Venetian is spoken mainly in Veneto and partly in Friuli Venezia Giulia and Trentino Alto Adige regions. In these three North eastern Italian regions bordering the states of Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia plurilingualism is commonplace, represented by the following linguistic minorities: Ladino and Germanic (in Trentino Alto Adige and Veneto), Friulian, Germanic and Slovene (in Friuli Venezia Giulia). Scholars count as many as nine varieties of Venetian (Fig. 3).

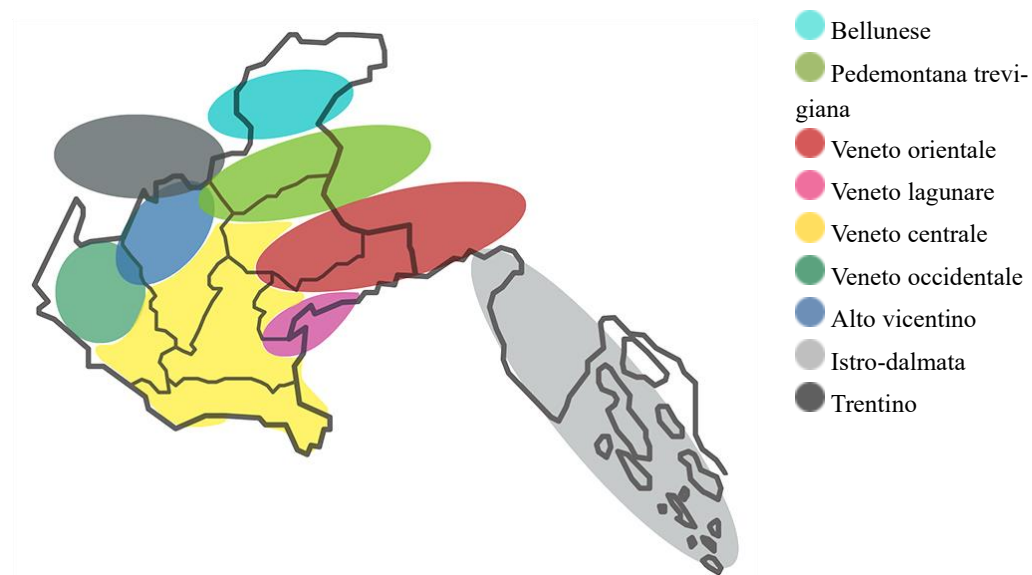


Figure 3 Local varieties of Venetian

Source: <http://www.linguaveneta.net/strumenti/traduttore/>

Venetian is an Indo-European language, belonging to the West Romance group, therefore sharing features with other North Italian regional languages as well as French, Arpitan/Franco-Provençal, Occitan, Catalan, Spanish/Castilian, Galician and Portuguese (Fig. 4). It is classified as ISO 639-3 “VEC”¹² by UNESCO.

¹² Not to be confounded with ‘ven’, which is the code of Venda, a Bantu language.

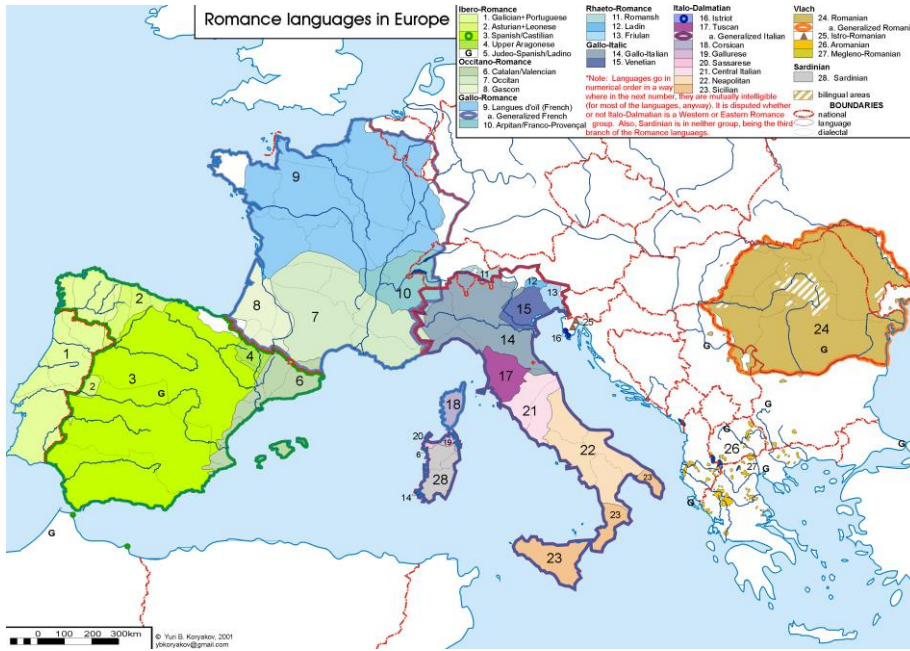


Figure 4 Venetian (area 15) in the Romance group of languages
 Source: Koryakov (2001)

Standard Italian is based on Tuscany dialect and shares features with central and southern Italian languages spoken south of the so called ‘La Spezia-Rimini line’ (in red) as well as other Eastern Romance languages such as Romanian (Fig. 5).

The Romance Linguistic Area in Europe

- Western Romania
- Eastern Romania
- La Spezia-Rimini Line
- Southern Romania (intermediary language : Sardinian)
- Romania submersa (Romance linguistic areal that ceased to exist during the Middle Ages)

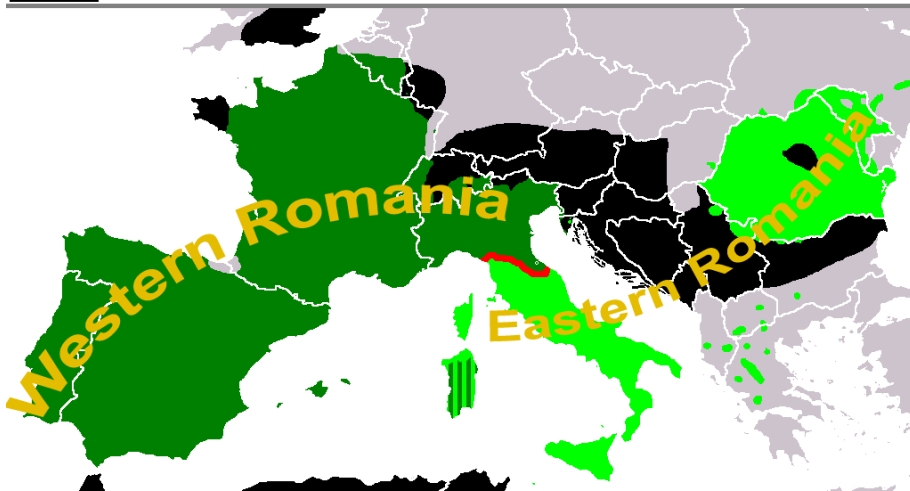


Figure 5 The Romance linguistic area in Europe
 Source: Ernst & Wiegand (2003)

However, some scholars prefer to consider Eastern and Southern Romance languages as separate entities (Fig. 6).

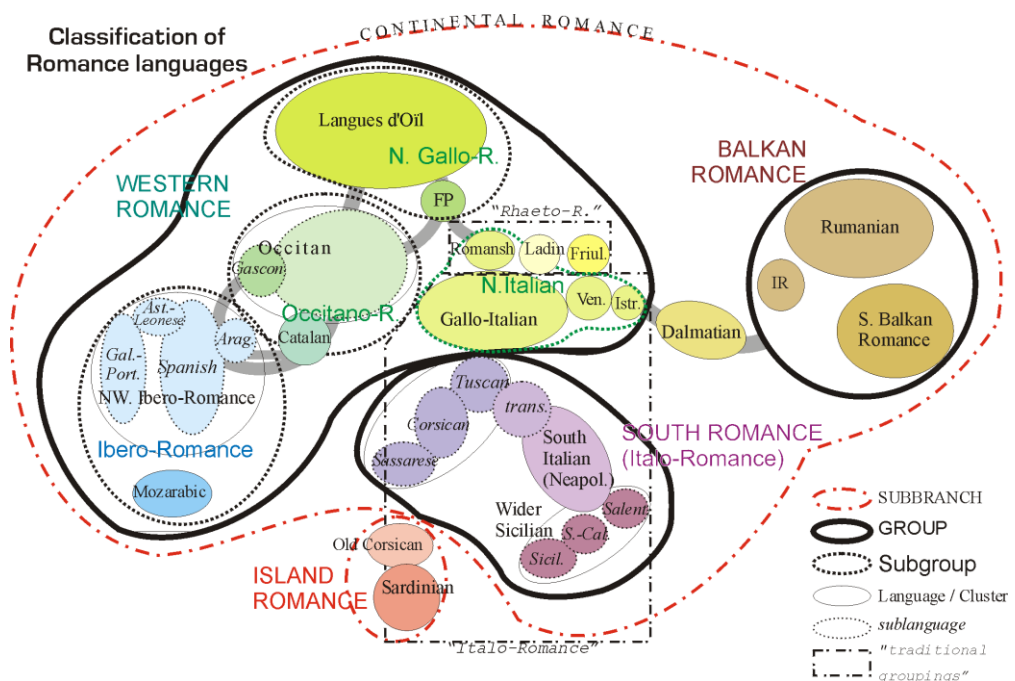


Figure 6 Classification of Romance languages
 Source: Chattopadhyay et al. (2022)

Let us now tackle the question of the size of the Venetian-speaking population, for which we must rely on statistical data. At national level, the General Population Census does not contain questions concerning language affiliation or language use. However, ISTAT regularly conducts multi-purpose surveys, such as surveys on the cultural consumption of citizens, using significant samples of the population. These surveys include questions on foreign language knowledge and language use in daily life (Vietti & Dal Negro, 2012). The latest data about the number of people speaking Venetian¹³ were collected with a survey conducted by ISTAT in 2015 and published in 2017.¹⁴

There are essentially three relevant questions in the language survey conducted in 2015 by ISTAT. These questions examine the everyday use of languages in three key areas: family, friends (both associated with the private sphere) and strangers (which concern the public sphere). The questions are structured in the form of multiple-choice questionnaire and require standardised answers. For the Veneto region we have the following results:

¹³ The questionnaire uses the unspecified term *dialect*, which in principle could include people speaking other linguistic varieties, such as Neapolitan.

¹⁴ ISTAT (2017, December 27)

1. What language do you use in the family?

Italian	Dialect	Both	Other language	Other
28,5%	30,6%	31,4%	9,0%	0,3%

Table 1 What language do you use with friends?

Source: ISTAT (2017, December 27)

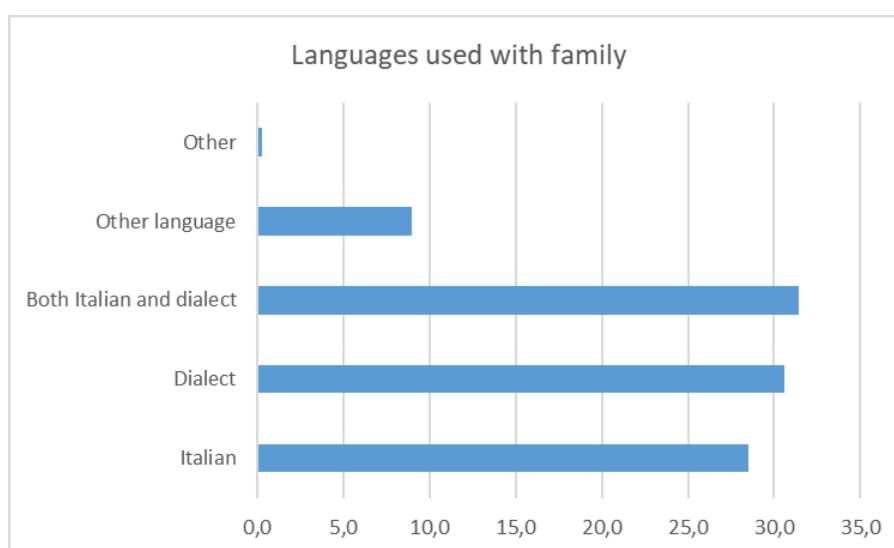


Figure 7 Languages used in the family

Source: ISTAT (2017, December 27)

Over 60% of the interviewed affirmed to use dialect¹⁵ at home, half thereof concurrently with Italian. If in 2015 population in Veneto was estimated to be 4.928 million, we can infer that about 3 million people in Veneto could speak a Venetian variety. If we added speakers from the neighbouring regions Trentino Alto Adige and Friuli Venezia Giulia, their number would be higher, but it is impossible to figure it out from ISTAT data as we cannot disentangle Venetian from other ‘dialects’.

We can suppose that the respondents who claimed to speak another language at home were overwhelmingly people with immigrational background. Also, Italian was spoken at home arguably by families with a higher social status (economic or cultural) or where at least one parent originated from outside Veneto.

¹⁵ Interestingly, the term *dialect* is used by ISTAT even for the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia, whose regional language Friulian was considered a *minority language* with Italian National Law n. 482 of 15 December 1999 (*infra*).

2. What language do you use with friends?

Italian	Dialect	Both	Other language	Other
30,6%	28,7%	33,6%	6,2%	0,6%

Table 2 languages used with friends

Source: ISTAT (2017, December 27)

As we can see, the situation is similar but tilts slightly more towards Italian.

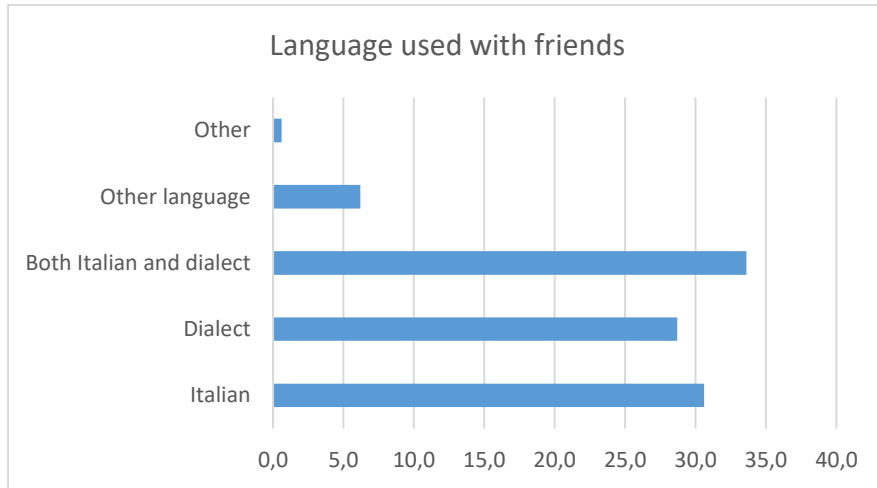


Figure 8 Languages used with friends.

Source: ISTAT (2017, December 27)

3. What language do you use with strangers?

Italian	Dialect	Both	Other language	Other
65,6%	8,7%	23,1%	2,1%	0,1%

Table 3 Languages used with strangers

Source: (ISTAT, 2017)

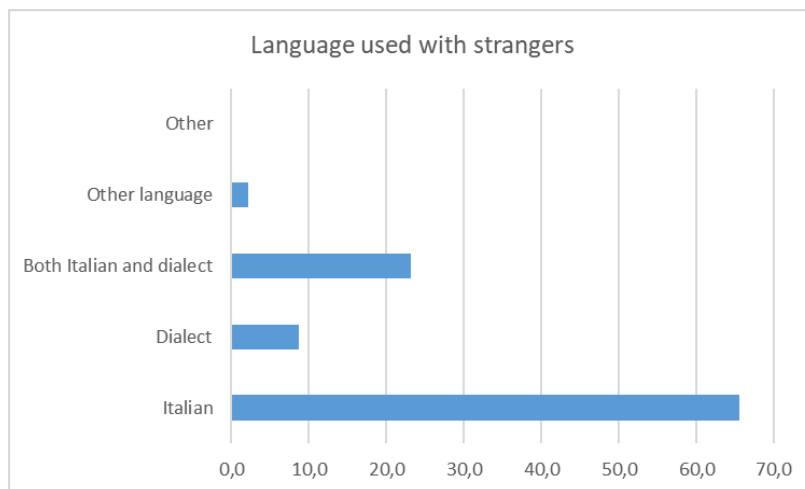


Figure 9 Languages used with strangers

Source: ISTAT (2017, December 27)

In this last case, the situation is markedly different than the one observed in Fig. 7 and 8, as Italian plays a dominant role. It would be interesting to know how the distribution of speakers changed in the urban and countryside contexts.

Abroad, Venetian varieties are mainly spoken in Istria, Slovenia, Dalmatia and Montenegro (ancient Venetian Republic territories), Creta and Cyprus, Romania (Italo-Romanian community in Tulcea), and where the Venetian people historically emigrated, such as Mexico (Chipilo) or the Brazilian states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná and Espírito Santo. We have no reliable data as for the actual number of speakers (Fig. 10). According to UNESCO's World Language Atlas, the total number of speakers of Venetian worldwide would be anywhere between 0 and 9,999,999¹⁶

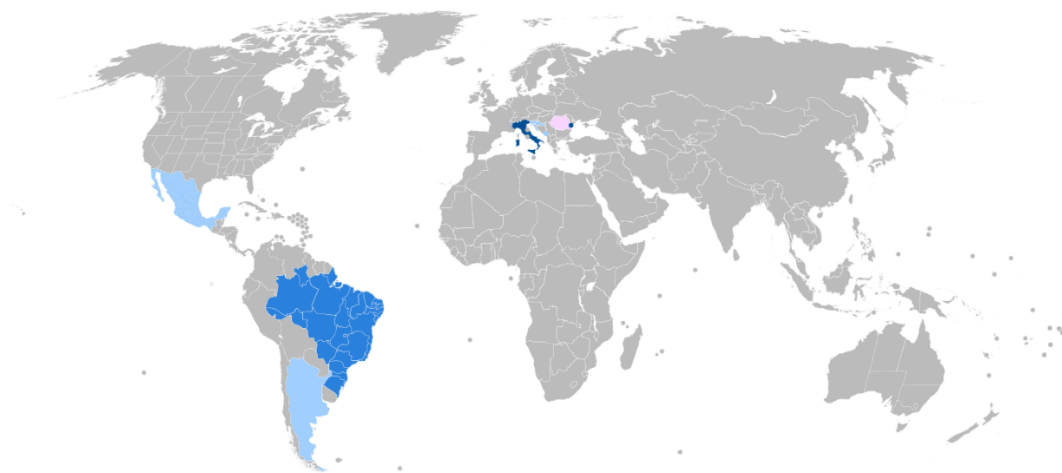


Figure 10 Speakers of Venetian worldwide

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venetian_language

3.2 Origin and history

The Veneto region has a rich linguistic history that dates to pre-Roman times. Before the Romanisation period in the 2nd century B.C., various tribes inhabited the area, including the Veneti, Illyrians, Etruscans and Celts. The most important settlements were, however, attributed to Veneti, who spoke the extinct Indo-European Venetic language. Venetic short inscriptions dating from the 6th to 1st centuries B.C. have been discovered primarily in central Veneto, extending up to Vicenza and as far north as Cadore. The western Veneto region likely hosted Celtic populations, yet due to extensive interaction with the Palaeovenetian culture, archaeological evidence fails to distinctly delineate between the two ethnic and linguistic domains (Pescarini, 2024:7).

¹⁶ UNESCO WAL (World Atlas of Languages): Venetian

With the Roman expansion into the Veneto region, Latin became the dominant language. Latinisation gradually replaced the local languages, leaving a significant impact on the linguistic landscape. Vulgar Latin, a colloquial form of the language, began to merge with pre-existing elements, possibly including remnants of earlier indigenous languages. The important trade centre of Aquileia was founded as a Roman colony in 181 BC. In the 2nd century it boasted a population of over 100,000, being in a strategic position between the Mediterranean and Central Europe.

Following the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century, the Veneto region experienced various waves of raids and migration, including those by Germanic tribes, such as Ostrogoths, Lombards and Franks. These events contributed to linguistic changes, and local Latin-based dialects started to evolve. The influence of the Lombards (or Longobards) left traces in the vocabulary and phonetics of the developing Veneto languages¹⁷. The Indovinello Veronese (Veronese Riddle), written in the 8th century and considered to be one of the first written documents in Latin-based vulgar language, shows some linguistic features typical of Venetian.

During the medieval Communal era (11th-14th centuries), city-states like Venice, Verona, and Padua became powerful trading hubs. The economic and cultural prosperity of this period contributed to the emergence of distinctive local dialects. Trade connections with other regions and cultures influenced the vocabulary, enriching the linguistic diversity of the Veneto area. In 1298, long-haul merchant Marco Polo wrote his masterpiece of travel literature *The Travels of Marco Polo* (it. “Il Milione”) in Franco-Venetian, a hybrid language based on North Italian dialects strongly influenced by the French language.

The Venetian Republic, which lasted from the late Middle Ages to the 18th century, further solidified the linguistic identity of Venetia. Venetian proper developed as the primary spoken language in the area, alongside the influence of the Tuscan-based Italian used in official documents and many books printed in Venice. Venetian literature flourished during this period, with notable figures such as Ruzante and Goldoni contributing to the literary scene. During the Serenissima Repubblica Veneta (Republic of Venice), Venetian proper was the official language used for diplomatic purposes and it was well-known around European courts¹⁸. In this period Venetian was brought to Istria and Dalmatia (the littoral of modern Slovenia and Croatia) and was used as a commerce language in the Mediterranean region—contributing largely to the formation of Sabir, a lingua franca spoken along the Mediterranean coasts until the 19th century and made famous by Molière in his famous passage from the comedy ‘Le bourgeois gentilhomme’ (that any Venetian

¹⁷ Cfr. vec ‘straco’ – eng tired – lng stak; vec. trincar (drink spirits) – eng. to drink– lng trinkan; vec. strucar – eng. push – lng thrukkian (Veneto Storia, *I Longobardi e la “lingua veneta”*).

¹⁸ Cfr. Comune di Venezia (2021, June 24).

speaker would understand): «Se ti sabir / Ti responder / Se non sabir / Tazir, tazir // Mi star Mufti: / Ti qui star ti? / Non intendir: / Tazir, tazir»¹⁹.

Furthermore, Venetian influenced other languages of the Mediterranean Sea, such as Albanian, Greek and Ottoman Turkish²⁰.

As the dominant language of the educated classes in 18th century, French was also used by Venetian authors, such as Carlo Goldoni's in his autobiography *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de ma vie et celle du théâtre* [Memoirs] or adventurer Giacomo Casanova in his bulky *Histoire de ma vie* [History of my life].

In 1797, with the Treaty of Campo Formio, Venice, Istria and Dalmatia came into Austrian possession, including the Venetian navy. Venice remained the main harbour of the navy during the first half of the 19th century; it was later replaced by its own war ports in Pola and Cattaro. During the domination of the Habsburgs over the Kingdom of Lombardy–Venetia (1815-1866), Venetian was still the language of the navy²¹ even if the language of the Government was German. In 1866, at Lissa, an island in the Adriatic Sea, the Austro-Venetian navy fought and won at sea against the Italian/Piedmontese navy. Battle of Lissa went down in history as the last great victory of the Venetian fleet (most of the sailors in fact came from the lands of the former Venetian Republic): orders were given in the Venetian language and to the cry '«...daghe dosso, Nino, che la ciapemo» («...get after her, Nino, we'll catch her!»). Admiral Tegetthoff ordered Vincenzo Vianello from Pellestrina at the end of the battle to ram the Italian battleship 'Re d'Italia', which sank within moments. Faced with that victory, the Venetian crews responded by throwing their caps in the air and shouting 'Viva San Marco!!!'.²²

At the end of the conflict, the Austrians wanted to honour the fallen Venetian and Dalmatian sailors with a beautiful monument, right on Lissa, on which they had the names of the fallen engraved and this motto: 'Men of iron (i.e. the Venetian sailors) on wooden ships, defeated men of wood on iron ships'. When Fascist Italy occupied Dalmatia, this monument was removed by the Italian Navy and is now kept at the military academy in Livorno (ibid.).

With the unification of Italy in the 19th century, efforts to standardise the Italian language had an impact on the linguistic landscape of the Veneto region. Italian, based on the Tuscan dialect, became the official language. Despite this, various Venetian varieties persisted in local communities, especially in rural areas.

19 Molière, Bourg. gentil. IV, 10: [If you know / You answer / If you do not know / Be silent, be silent // I am Mufti / Who are you? / If you do not understand, / Be silent, be silent].

²⁰ See prof. Vera Costantini's contribution in Ca' Foscari University CF News (2020, May 12) *Da quarantena a "qarantina": parole veneziane 'migrate' in turco*.

²¹ From 1897 until 1849 the Austrian Navy was called „österreichisch-venezianische Kriegsmarine“ (Austrian-Venetian War Navy) and it was based in Venice. Cadets were prepared for their career by learning Venetian proper, the command language of the Navy. Although Venetian continued to be the language spoken in the naval sphere, German was introduced as a service language in 1850.

²² Consiglio Regionale del Veneto, *Lingua Veneta*, 1866, l'anno che cambiò il destino dei Veneti.

During the post war decades, a lot of work was done to italianise Venetian speakers, and some generations were taken to the point of being ashamed of their so called “dialect” (Italian government considers Venetian a “dialect”, and not a language to protect). «Parla italian, se no te senbri ignorante!» [«Speak Italian, or else you'll sound ignorant!»] has been a common advice from parents to children for a long time and even in schools. As until the mid-1960s Veneto was a poor region, and it was not unusual to hear Venetian spoken by servants in films shot in Rome-Cinecittà.²³

In contemporary times, Venetian dialects continue to exist alongside Italian. The linguistic diversity is preserved in local communities, with variations in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Efforts to protect and promote regional languages have gained momentum, with cultural initiatives and educational programs supporting the maintenance of Veneto linguistic heritage.

Today there is a new conscience of the necessity of asserting one's cultural background, and so the problem of the local language re-emerges. In some cases, it is dealt with as an instrument for refined poetry, at a level which is widely recognised as having nothing to do with provinciality; in other cases, above all on the part of mass media and public organisations, the local language/culture is viewed in a folkloristic perspective. There is a third position, that tends to revive Venetian as a memory of things gone and adopts an old-fashioned and purist attitude. The renewed interest in Venetian as a written language is creating some problems with spelling and the individuation of a *koine* (*infra* ch. 7).

²³ As an example, the character of Nicoletta in 1958 film “I soliti ignoti” [‘Big Deal on Madonna Street’, ‘Persons Unknown’ in the UK] directed by Monicelli.

3.3 Main linguistic features

Portuguese poet Vergílio Ferreira is famous for his aphorism: “Da minha língua vê-se o mar”—lit. “from my language one can see the sea”—carrying a symbolic power that the Venetian language shares by virtue of its history. At first impression, to the foreign ear Venetian has the quality of Antwerp Flemish, a simple, down-to-earth means of communication fit for seafaring, trading and business. Venetian speakers, when animated, use to speak loudly, making ample use of blasphemes and vulgar expressions that strangers would consider very offensive but are everyday currency for locals and do not shock anyone²⁴.

Describing Venetian can be done highlighting internal differences in its local varieties or by contrasting it with other Romance languages (including Italian). The description we are going to sketch—necessarily succinct—includes phonological, lexical, and syntactical features. The aim is not to provide a thorough description, which is beyond the scope of our research. Instead, we seek to highlight certain elements that make Venetian stand out as a full-fledged language.

First off, let us tackle the subject of local Venetian varieties. Already Dante Alighieri in his *De Vulgari eloquentia*, written in the beginning of the 14th century, distinguished three varieties of Venetian, namely Venetian proper, Trevisan and Istriian (Tomasin, 2023), while modern linguists identify up to five different dialects:

1. Venetian proper (spoken in Venice Island, Venice mainland and along the coast). It has 24 phonemes: seven vowels and 17 consonants. The original Latin voiceless plosives are softened and voiced (when intervocalic) and often disappear entirely: *amicus* becomes *amico* (friend); consonants gemination is absent. There are other traits, but the most typical one is the phoneme *ɫ* (‘evanescent l’) which is softened to a pre-velar unrounded semi-vowel, [e]. As far as the lexicon is concerned, it can be described as one of the most original ones, above all in the sector of marine and navigational vocabulary.
2. Central Venetian (Padua, Vicenza, the area of the mouth of the Po), which are characterised by the survival of the once widespread interdental phones, which can still be heard in rural areas. The second trait is the metaphony which often serves in paradigmatic oppositions such as singular/plural, cf.: *el mónte*, *el ségno* → *i munti*, *i signi*.
3. Northern Venetian (Treviso, Feltre, Belluno): it is the boundary with the Ladin and Friulian areas, and its lexicon is strongly characterised as “alpine”, contrasting with coastal Venetian. While Treviso shows the

²⁴ Goldoni’s comedy *Brawling in Chioggia* (Le baruffe chiogiotte) might just as well be an ideal setting.

influence of Venice, in rural areas of the Bellunese area interdental phones are still quite widespread; metaphony isn't as common as in the central variety.

4. Western Venetian (Verona): it displays some peculiarities deriving from a Gallo/Italic substratum and contacts with Lombard linguistic varieties.
5. “Colonial” Venetian: it exhibits internal varieties and is spoken beyond the core Venetian region, including Venetia Julia, Istria, Dalmatia and other Adriatic areas that were once under the dominion of the Venetian Republic (Bidwell, 1967).

As already hinted, Venetian belongs to the Western Romance group of languages and shares characteristics that are absent in Eastern Romance languages, such as Italian. The phonetic system of Venetian is quite similar to the one of West-Romance languages such as Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, French and Occitan.

While the phonology of Venetian is described in chapter 7, dedicated to the orthography of the language, let us have a look at some other grammatical traits. Like most Romance languages, Venetian has mostly abandoned the Latin case system, in favour of prepositions and a more rigid subject–verb–object sentence structure. It has thus become more analytic, if not quite as much as English. Venetian also has the Romance articles, both definite (derived from the Latin demonstrative *ille*) and indefinite (derived from the numeral *unus*).

Additionally, Venetian maintains the Latin principles of gender (masculine and feminine) and number (singular and plural). Unlike the Gallo-Iberian languages, which typically form plurals by appending -s, Venetian constructs plurals akin to standard Italian. Furthermore, nouns and adjectives in Venetian can undergo modification through suffixes that convey various qualities like size, endearment, or deprecation. This feature adds richness and nuance to the language's expressive capabilities.

In Venetian morpho-syntax there is a distinctive aspect called "clitic subject pronoun" used mandatorily before verbs in the second person singular and third person singular and plural, e.g.: 'Alvise el vien' (Alvise comes), 'I veci fi vien (the old people come). This linguistic trait likely developed to compensate for the lack of differentiation between 2nd- and 3rd-person verbal inflections in most verbs, a contrast that remains in Italian and many other Romance languages.

As in other Romance languages, the subjunctive mood in Venetian is widely used in subordinate clauses. There is a tendency in spoken standard Italian broadcasts by public services based in Rome (e.g. RAI) to overlook the subjunctive mood. This is likely due to the fact that in Central and Southern Italy, the subjunctive is infrequently used, even among dialect speakers. However, in Venetian it is very much alive. Another peculiar aspect of Venetian is the formation of the progressive using the construction to be + behind + ing form whereby Italian employs the verb

stay + ing form. As an example: vec “so drio far” = it “sto facendo” (en “I am doing”).

The foundation of Venetian vocabulary is inherited from Vulgar Latin, yet it also encompasses words originating from Germanic and Greek sources. This Greek influence stems from extensive commercial interactions between Venice and Greece, exemplified by words such as "piron" for ‘fork’, derived from the Greek verb "peirô," meaning ‘to stick’. Conversely, Venetian words have been assimilated into modern Greek and Albanian. Additionally, Venetian shares certain terms with Catalan (or French), evident in comparisons like "goto" for glass in Venetian and "got" in Catalan, or "pare/mare" for ‘father/mother’ in Venetian and Catalan. Further similarities include "tamizo" for ‘sieve’ in Venetian and "tamís" in Catalan, as well as "sóga" for ‘rope’ in Venetian and "soga" in Catalan. Moreover, like many other languages, Venetian has absorbed numerous words from Arabic, as seen in examples such as "naransa" for ‘orange’. This amalgamation of linguistic influences reflects Venice's historical interconnectedness with diverse cultures and civilizations.

The question whether Venetian is a dialect or a language deserves some attention. The term "dialect" in Anglo-Saxon countries commonly refers to a language variety specific to a group of speakers. These dialects, though different, are often mutually intelligible (a marked deviation from standard pronunciation might be present though), especially if they're geographically close, forming a dialect continuum. They're usually regional but can also be defined by social class or ethnicity. A sociolect is associated with a social class, an ethnolect with an ethnic group, and a regiolect with a geographical area. Other terms for regiolect include ‘regionalect’, ‘geolect’, and ‘topolect’. Any variety of a language, including standardised ones, can be considered a dialect. However, in certain countries like Italy, France, Germany, and Japan, "dialect" can have a negative connotation in colloquial settings. Referred to as "*dialetto*" in Italy, "*patois*" in France and *Mundart* in Germany, among other terms elsewhere, it highlights the subordinate status of non-national languages to the official one. These "dialects" aren't true dialects as in the first sense; they don't stem from a dominant language but have evolved separately and parallelly.

Varieties of language are categorised based on linguistic distance, whereby low distance indicates dialect status. Increased differences, whether in spoken or written forms, imply greater linguistic distance. For instance, languages with vastly different syntactical structures have high linguistic distance, while those with minimal disparities may be seen as dialects or siblings. This concept aids in identifying language families and siblings.

Another common way for identifying dialects is mutual intelligibility: if speakers of one variety can understand and be understood by speakers of another, they're considered dialects of the same language; otherwise, they're classified as different languages. However, this definition is contested, particularly in dialect

continua, where each variety is mutually intelligible with the next but not necessarily with distant ones. Language Survey Reference Guide of SIL International, publishers of the *Ethnologue* and the registration authority for the ISO 639-3 standard for language codes, has abandoned this criterion. Instead, it defines a *dialect cluster* as comprising a central variety and all varieties whose speakers understand the central one at a specified threshold level or above. If this threshold is high, typically 70% to 85%, the cluster is classified as a language.

Another criterion sometimes utilised to distinguish dialects from languages is the sociolinguistic concept of linguistic authority. Under this definition, two varieties are deemed dialects of the same language if, in certain circumstances, they defer to the same authority on language matters. This holds true also in the adoption of neologisms.

In sociolinguistics, there are two distinct sets of criteria for identifying a "language": one set focuses on linguistic characteristics in comparison to related varieties (German: Abstand, "distance"). The other set emphasises sociopolitical functions (German: Ausbau, "expansion"). An Abstand language refers to a language variety or group of varieties that exhibit considerable linguistic divergence from all others. On the other hand, an Ausbau language is a standard variety, often with associated dependent varieties. In 1952 the German linguist Heinz Kloss introduced these concepts of Abstand and Ausbau languages, defining them as follows:

Als Abstandsprachen (AbS) können alle Idiome gelten, die in ihrer Substanz, ihrem „Sprachkörper“ von allen anderen lebenden Sprachen so verschieden sind, daß sie als Sprache bezeichnet werden müßten, auch wenn es in ihnen kein einziges Buch, ja keinen geschriebenen Text gäbe. (...) Als Ausbausprachen (AuS) kann man Idiome bezeichnen, die als Dialekte einer ihr begrifflich übergeordneten Bezugssprache behandelt werden müßten, wenn sie nicht zu einem Ausdrucksmittel einer alle oder fast alle Aspekte des modernen Lebens einbeziehenden Kultur geworden wären, die in mancher oder jeder Richtung ausgestaltet wurden zu Werkzeugen all- oder doch vielseitiger literarischer Betätigung ²⁵ (Kloss 1987:302).

The considerations made so far beg the question: is Venetian treated as an Abstand-language by linguists? The question is debated. While no Italian linguist would affirm that dialects are conceptualised as epiphenomena of Italian or deny that all Italian dialects including Florentine are phylogenetically dialects of Vulgar Latin, most agree that they socio-linguistically have fallen short of functioning as Ausbau languages. As Ferguson noticed: "The retreat of dialect, typically towards the rural and the proletarian, that is towards speakers of lower educational

²⁵ [All idioms can be identified as Abstandsprachen (AbS) (lit. distance languages) if they are so different in their substance, their "body of language" from all other living languages, that they should be labelled as languages, even if there were not a single book or text written in them. (...) Idioms can be described as Ausbausprachen (AuS) (extension languages) that should be treated as dialects of a conceptually superordinate reference language, if they had not become a means of expression of a culture that includes all or almost all aspects of modern life, which have been developed in some or all directions into tools of all or multiple literary activity] (own tr.)

attainment, engendered social stigmatisation. With the inevitable register restriction and structural dilution provoked by contact with the more prestigious national language via military service, emigration, social mobility, schooling and the media, the loop of the self-fulfilling prophecy was closed” (Ferguson, 2007:34).

Another question is whether the *Ausbau* Italian language is to be considered a roof language (*Dachsprache*) for Italian dialects. The historical development of Italian dialects from Latin qualifies them from a linguistic standpoint as distinct ‘languages’. However, from a sociolinguistic perspective, their relationship with Italian as a *Dachsprache* categorises them as dialects (Loporcaro, 2013: 3-32).

According to Ferguson the structural distance between numerous Italian dialects and standard Italian is undeniably wider than that between Spanish and Italian. Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish are separate *Ausbau* languages, yet in terms of structure and mutual intelligibility, they are much closer to each other than Venetian is to Abruzzese or Bolognese (*ibid.*).

A mix of phonetical, morphological, syntactical and lexical differences may justify this assertion. Venetian speakers holding a conversation in Spanish would sound less Italian and more from a mysterious Spanish region on account of the fact that Venetian lacks consonant and syntactic gemination—which makes Italian sentences sound like ‘bursting fireworks in the mouth of the speaker’—and presents apocope in many words (whereas Italian words regularly end in a vowel). The following sample sentences should clarify the concept:

<i>Venetian:</i>	Ancuo el podaria noar in mar par ore senza stufarse
<i>Catalan:</i>	Avui podria banyar-se al mar durant hores sense cansar-se
<i>Spanish:</i>	Hoy podría nadar en el mar durante horas sin cansarse
<i>Portuguese:</i>	Hoje ele poderia nadar no mar por horas sem se cansar
<i>Italian:</i>	Oggi potrebbe nuotare in mare per ore senza stancarsi
<i>English:</i>	Today he could swim in the sea for hours without getting tired

A phonological difference between Venetian and Italian is the absence of *z* in ‘senza’ (voiceless alveolar affricate /ts/), the use of apocope, the absence of consonant gemination. A morpho-syntactic difference is represented by the use of the third person pronoun ‘el’ (he), omittable in Italian but mandatory in Venetian as the verb ending in the first and third singular, and third plural personal pronouns coincide in the conditional (vec: mi, el, li podaria; it: potrei, potrebbe, potrebbero). Syntactic gemination is absent, too. A lexical difference appears in the verb ‘stufarse’ (it: stancarsi, en: getting tired). Finally, prosody in Venetian resembles very much that of Catalan and very little the Italian one.

A phenomenon that has been observed in recent years is the Italianisation of the Venetian word-stock²⁶. In Table 1 are a few examples reported by Ferguson (2007:298-299):

<i>Modern Venetian</i>	<i>Contemporary Venetian</i>	<i>Italian</i>	<i>English</i>
armelin	albicoca	albicocca	apricot
cocal	gabiano	gabbiano	seagull
goto	bicher	bicchiere	drinking glass
puina	ricota	ricotta	ricotta cheese
bombaso	coton	cotone	cotton wool
butiro	buro	burro	butter
cheba	gabia	gabbia	cage
cogoma	cafetiera	caffettiera	coffee-maker
forfe	forbice	forbici	scissors
impiria	imbuto	imbuto	funnel
piavola	bambola	bambola	doll
piron	forcheta	forchetta	fork

Table 4 Italianisation of the Venetian language

Source: Ferguson 2007

All in all, the Italian dialects, Venetian and the case of Venetian proper are exceptional cases worth of consideration.²⁷

In the next chapter we are going to consider the sociolinguistic context where the roles of Italian and Venetian interplay.

²⁶ For a Swadesh list of Venetian and Italian, see: Wiktionary, Italian Swadesh list and Wiktionary, Venetian Swadesh list in the reference list.

²⁷ In this regards, linguist Tullio De Mauro wrote «Il caso di Venezia è del tutto eccezionale» [‘The case of Venetian is utterly exceptional’]. De Mauro (2003:16) cit. by Ferguson (2007:21).

4 PLURILINGUALISM IN THE VENETIAN CONTEXT

After getting acquainted with the Venetian language, in this chapter we are going to explore its role in contemporary Veneto society, its variation in use and the attitudes and perceptions it engenders. As is known, linguists have sketched out four main dimensions of language variation:

The main factors in the societal structure of a given linguistic community that can co-occur with (inner) linguistic differences fall into four types. First, time and space; then, social stratification; and last, social situations. Correspondingly, we can formulate four axioms: (i) a language varies with the passing of time; (ii) a language varies with the geographical distribution of its speakers; (iii) a language varies with the social class/group of its speakers; (iv) a language varies with the communicative situations in which it is employed (Auer & Schmidt, 2010).

In addition, a fifth dimension, the diamesic, pertaining the means of communication used, is also cited. However, in the following paragraphs, we will forgo it and focus rather on the social and situational dimensions of language variation (better suited for our research), laying also aside the temporal and geographical ones.²⁸ In the context of diglossia, which characterises Veneto region, the interplay occurs in the continuum of the linguistic repertoire between standard Italian (or the regional variety thereof) and Venetian varieties (and to a lesser extent between Venetian varieties and Venetian koiné). Diglossia is seen a type of bilingualism in a society where one of the languages has high prestige (referred to as “H”), and the other has low prestige (“L”).²⁹ On the other hand, we speak of *dilalìa* when the community master two languages that do not, however, have a strict division of situations of use. On the contrary, where one language is appropriate, the other may also be so (Berruto, 2012). The Italian sociolinguistic situation can be described as dilalic, whereby Italian and dialect, in addition to being in close contact with each other, no longer have a strict division of contexts of use and Italian itself is gradually encroaching upon informal communication, previously conveyed only by dialect.

As Gianna Marcato noted, the enduring vitality of Veneto's dialects, which function as authentic oral languages, stems from their deep-rooted experience with multilingualism. This resilience is a clear outcome of the "linguistic tranquillity" nurtured over time by these dialects being spoken within a rich civilisation that honoured the region's traditional structures and cultural diversity. Venice, historically a hub of cosmopolitanism, fostered a commercial ethos that prioritised

²⁸ The terms diastratic, diaphasic, synchronic and diatopic can be used correspondingly. See cit. of E. Coseriu in (Berruto, 1980:29).

²⁹ When the speakers of an entire community master two languages, similar or not, and use them in different contexts, this is referred to as diglossia. Diglossia implies that there is a formal high language, used in specific contexts such as bureaucracy, administration, written communication, etc., and a low language, typical of everyday communication (Ferguson, 1959:325-340).

interaction and profit over imposing cultural norms. While Venice's influence shaped the speech of the Veneto's elite, it never evolved into a dominant metropolis, thus allowing for the preservation of a decentralised regional culture. This, in turn, safeguarded the rich repositories of traditional dialects (Marcato, 2012:43).

From a diastratic perspective, historically Venetian varieties have been spoken by all social classes, regardless of their status. All the artistic attractions that countless tourists admire in Venice today—literally every marble step—were created by architects (Palladio, Longhena, etc.), masons and painters that used Venetian at work, not Italian. All industries, including the building one were financed directly (or indirectly via the Church) by traders and businesspeople speaking Venetian. The same applies to other artistic gems of Veneto, including Padua, Vicenza, Verona and the myriad of quaint towns that populate the countryside.

One notable characteristic we aim to emphasise is the inherent 'democratic' nature of the language across all social strata. Several points can elucidate this assertion. Unlike the majority of European states, the Republic of Venice (697-1797) has never been a monarchy but rather an oligarchy, and its cultural influence extended in whole Venetia. The direct consequence is the higher level of freedom of speech and the relatively low level of deference Venetians are used to show before authority. While in the 16th century Aldus Manutius fled his native Latium for Venice to set up his printing works, the Roman Catholic theocracy exercised a strict control on freedom of speech, at the basis of both the Inquisition and the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. Moreover, the presence of a German community in Venice favoured the diffusion of the Lutheran ideas and the first Bible translation in Italian was published in Venice in 1532—despite church prohibitions—two years before Martin Luther's Bible translation in Germany.³⁰ On the other hand, nearby town Padua was a beacon of science and research thanks to its university, the second oldest in Italy. All things considered, the socio-cultural elements that have historically fostered freedom of speech have also permeated the Venetian language, to the extent that speakers at all social levels are known for being loathe at worshipping any authority per se. There is maybe a parallel between the Swiss German and the Venetian language survival, namely a strong sense of identity coupled with a critical attitude towards anything threatening one's freedom.

Since the end of World War II, the Italian economic miracle was accompanied by a growing level of education provided in Italian language, which gave birth to a new class of bilingual citizens proficient in both Venetian and Italian. The mandatory military service, which scattered young people all over Italy, internal migrations and the onset of television exponentially increased the number of bilingual speakers to the extent that nowadays there are virtually no monolingual Venetian speakers. In 1963 middle higher education becomes compulsory in Italy, increasing

³⁰ Mühlstedt C. (2014, August 27). The Evangelical-Lutheran community in Venice is the oldest Lutheran community in Italy and, above all, one of the oldest outside Germany, as evidenced by a letter that Martin Luther personally wrote to Protestants in Venice and Veneto.

the schooling of young people up to the age of 14. Early adopters of Italian were families sending their offspring to pursue an education, especially to lycea. On the other hand, children from the working class would usually opt for a technical or vocational school.

Over time, society began to stratify into classes that spoke either Venetian or Italian, depending on the context. This division fostered feelings of inadequacy among less affluent individuals and triggered a process of emulation. However, this erosion of Venetian's domains of use began to slow down in the 1980s. During this period, socio-economic success became less tightly linked to higher education. Indeed, individuals with technical or commercial education backgrounds launched businesses that proved more lucrative than traditional job market opportunities. For instance, many affluent individuals initially employed as factory workers eventually established their own workshops, which subsequently grew significantly by leveraging international chain values. These entrepreneurs continued to use Venetian even in their professional environments, thereby enhancing its prestige in relation to Italian.

Furthermore, it is not uncommon to observe Venetian speaking *nouveaux riches* sending their children to international schools or arranging for them to study abroad. This trend has led to the emergence of a new generation of young, affluent individuals proficient in both Venetian and English, while Italian takes a secondary role. Often, these entrepreneurs establish factories in Eastern Europe or overseas branches, serving as managerial playgrounds for family members. This phenomenon is reflected at Venice airport business class lounges, where numerous managers and affluent travellers converse in Venetian.

The shift in the social perception of the Venetian language—from a less prestigious dialect overshadowed by Italian to a coveted asset—has been evolving almost imperceptibly since the early 2000's³¹.

This transformation can be attributed to several factors: firstly, national and international migrants often have lower economic status compared to the local Venetian-speaking population, largely due to significant portions of their income being allocated to rent payments for housing³². This economic disparity is particularly evident among Venetian-speaking elderly individuals who possess substantial assets in the form of real estate. Secondly, many foreigners, unable to integrate into the job market as employees or seeking opportunities for advancement, opt to become self-employed. For instance, a substantial number of construction companies have been established by Albanian and other Balkan migrants who initially arrived in Italy as manual labourers, often in irregular employment situations. In their view,

³¹ Marcato reports the trend among some higher-class speakers to recover or preserve the use of dialects as a mark of distinction from the Italianising lower classes (Marcato, 2002:18).

³² This phenomenon has also affected the way standard Italian is perceived in its variation. Galli De' Pratesi demonstrated in her pioneering study, that the northern Italian accent, associated with economic success, is increasingly perceived as the most prestigious (Galli De' Pratesi, 1984).

Venetian—the unofficial language of construction sites—represents the language of income, whereas Italian is associated with expenses such as taxation, bureaucratic hurdles, and fines encountered when dealing with Italian-speaking public officials.

Additionally, the cultural predominance once held by Italian public media has gradually waned, no longer serving as the definitive source for high-quality information or entertainment³³.

Particularly in the last decade, social media have been supplanting traditional media such as TV and personal content in all language varieties has started to populate the internet³⁴. This is a noteworthy change, as historically the Venetian language has been marginalised from the mainstream media, such as newspapers³⁵ or books, although Venice had been an important centre since the dawn of the printing industry.

Worth mentioning is the monthly magazine ‘Quatro Ciacoe’ (lit. ‘Four Chats’), which was established in Padua in 1982 and halted its publication in 2022. For many years, Manlio Cortelazzo, an emeritus professor of Italian dialectology at the University of Padua's Faculty of Letters, authored the column "Linguistic Observatory: Chronicles in Dialect." Following his death in 2009, the column had been continued by his son, Michele Cortelazzo, who is a professor in the Department of Linguistic and Literary Studies at the University of Padua. This apolitical and non-partisan magazine dealt with Veneto culture and traditions³⁶.

As for the cinema art, unlike Roman dialect, which integrated extensively into standard Italian during the 1950s, Venetian remained secondary. In recent years the position of Venetian is all but improving,³⁷ as the latest production

³³ From personal observation, even the grammatical quality of Standard Italian in the national TV broadcaster RAI has decreased over the years (lack of subjunctive in speech, altered phonology, etc.). Incidentally, the best Italian elocution was arguably represented by foreign broadcasting companies: Tele Montecarlo, Radio Televisione della Svizzera Italiana (RTSI) and, above all, Tele Capodistria/Koper (Slovenia).

³⁴ In the new millennium, technological advancements and the ubiquity of the Internet have made dialects even more prominent among young Italians and this gave rise to a new ‘cool’ element associated to them. A notable phenomenon is the trend of re-dubbing popular films in various dialects, which has gained significant popularity on YouTube over the years.

³⁵ The name gazette originates from Venetian ‘gazeta’—named after the cost of the newspaper—one gazeta, a Venetian coin. It is still the standard Russian word for ‘newspaper’ (газета).

³⁶ Archived content is still retrievable at: <http://www.quatrociacoe.it/>

³⁷ Despite the dominance of Roman dialect in the early 1950s, Venetian maintained a continuous, albeit minor, presence in cinema. Back then, Veneto was portrayed as a stagnant and backward region. Altogether, the view of the Venetian dialect's role in cinema is surprisingly marginal, as it is often relegated to the back seat rather than explored as a cultural resource. Regardless of films that are book or opera adaptations such as *Death in Venice* (*Morte a Venezia*, 1971) or *Don Giovanni* (1979), modern productions such as *The Anonymous Venetian* (*Anonimo Veneziano*, 1979) and *To Forget Venice* (*Dimenticare Venezia*, 1979) fail to represent people's everyday vernacular.

demonstrate.³⁸ In music, Venetian never equalled the popularity other regional languages acquired, such as Neapolitan³⁹.

Finally, as in many European academic institutions, the cultural supremacy of the national language is challenged by academic English, to the extent that some countermeasures are being implemented⁴⁰.

As far as gender is concerned, it is commonly perceived that a certain degree of linguistic hypergamy—women’s tendency to emulate the highest linguistic standards—exists in the Venetian context, too. As Berruto (1980) described with reference to Norfolk male groups, the language used inside the them differs markedly from RP English, perceived ‘too refined’ (Berruto, 1980: 105-107). Female speakers, however, tend to adhere more to the standard language or what they perceive as more refined and tend to use the local dialect less than their male counterparts. This has very important implications as mothers still play a crucial role in the development of children’s linguistic development (Grassi et al., 1997:193) and indirectly to the transmission of endangered languages⁴¹.

Speakers’ age reveal a few surprises: as older people tend to be more conservative one would expect that their knowledge and care of the Venetian language be the highest. However, this is not always the case. Aged people tend to spend on average more time watching TV programmes, aired exclusively in Italian—which has some influence on their expression. We have observed aged people using Italianisms such as ‘ogi’ (it. oggi) instead of ‘ancuo’ (today), ‘pomeriggio’ (it. pomeriggio) instead of ‘dopopranso’ (afternoon) and so on. On the other hand, older people often feel embarrassed if a stranger speaks to them in Venetian, as if they felt the mark of ignorance of Italian and consequent shame—prompting a “*Do you think I cannot speak Italian?*” type of reaction. This was the generation that experienced first-hand the shift towards more Italian in the family domain, that went to middle school where they were taught that standard Italian is modern and better. This generation also experienced the economic boom of the 50’s and 60’s and associate dialect with a situation of poverty and limited access to qualified jobs. Hence their ambiguous position.

With reference to the situational factors of variability, code-switching and code-mixing are common phenomena in the interplay between Venetian and Italian.

³⁸ Perhaps the relatively recent film *Ten Winters* (Dieci inverni, 2009) by producer Mieli –starring a cast of Italian actors who interpret Venetian youth but speak with distinct South Italian accents – epitomises the disconnection between the plot and the Venetian background scenery. In fact, while artistic freedom is undebatable, one may wonder why Venice and the Prosecco hillside were chosen for the setting.

³⁹ Venetian language forays into music have been notably made by the rock group Pitura Fresca (lit. ‘Fresh paint’). Formed in 1989 and disbanded in 2002, the band achieved success in 1991 with their album *Na bruta banda*, featuring the song *Pin floi*. In 1997, they participated in the Sanremo Music Festival with the song *Papa Nero* (“Black Pope”).

⁴⁰ See for example the situation in Dutch universities: NL Times (2024, February 8).

⁴¹For a report on Venetian, cfr. Il Redpillatore (2023, September 17) *Lo snobismo linguistico delle donne venete*.

Speakers seamlessly switch between languages or incorporate elements of one language into the other during communication, especially if emotional elements come into play. This linguistic flexibility allows speakers to express themselves more effectively and to navigate various social contexts.

Ferguson (2007:43-44) has sketched a schema to describe the functional distribution of Italian and Venetian (proper) since Italian unification⁴²:

- 1866: Italian (unmarked writing) ~ Venetian (speech and genre writing)*
1950: Italian (unmarked writing and formal speech, both out-group and in-group)
~ Venetian (genre writing and informal in-group speech) ‘
2006:
- 1. Unmarked writing: Italian*
 - 2. Genre writing: Venetian*
 - 3. Out-group speech: Italian*
 - 4. Formal in-group speech: Italian*
 - 5. Informal in-group speech:*
 - (a) Italian H1 \leftrightarrow Venetian H2*
 - (b) Italian H \leftrightarrow Venetian L*
 - (c) Italian H1 ~ Venetian H1/H2*

According to Ferguson, Pattern 5 (a) illustrates a common continuum where both Italian and Venetian are recognised as High spoken languages (H), although hierarchically arranged. This continuum features a complex and complementary distribution, with frequent codeswitching and codemixing influenced by pragmatic discourse factors. However, it is important to note that substantial portions of discourse are conducted entirely in Venetian. The choice between languages may depend on the status of the interlocutor or the functional context, but it often appears to be driven by subconscious cues related to the subject matter or register. Abstract and delocalised topics tend to favour Italian, albeit with frequent Venetian interjections.

Pattern 5 (b) depicts a scenario where Venetian is considered a Low language (L), while Italian, albeit strongly regional, is prominent. This pattern is often observed among individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds or those with less educational attainment, who may exhibit linguistic insecurity and have a weaker command of Italian.

Pattern 5 (c) represents a situation where both languages hold prestige but are used separately. This pattern is typical of a small group of educated speakers who possess a strong linguistic self-awareness and may view themselves as bilingual rather than diglossic.

⁴² Drawing on Trumper's (1977) description of the linguistic situation of Emilia Romagna (a region bordering Veneto), Ferguson employs the marking 'Low' language (L) for dialect and 'High' language (H) the regional Italian. While Emilia Romagna is characterised by a strong 'microdiglossia' that juxtaposes L with H, Veneto displays a strong 'microdiglossia', with local dialect and Italian mediated by Venetian-based Common Veneto. See also Regis (2018).

The use of Venetian within the family is interesting for the intergenerational transmission of Venetian: upwardly mobile parents frequently code switch in the home: using Venetian among themselves, Italian with their children and during face-to-face interaction with Italians from other regions (Ferguson, 2007:44). From direct observation we have noticed that several children would use Italian both when parents use Venetian or Italian, until they reach teenage, when they realise that Venetian is the language used by adults and wish to feel like adults, too. Venetian would also gain ground when non-standard emotional situations occur (both positive and negative): watching a football match, when angered or overjoyed, after drinking spirits, etc.

As noticed by Bernard (2021), starting perhaps from the 1980s onward, dialect increasingly assumes a function that is fundamental and symptomatic in terms of Bühler (1934)—that of identity. Using dialect becomes a stylistic factor (a kind of ‘cool’ element), almost a sociocultural asset rather than just a sociolinguistic practice. In the context of such developments, now widespread throughout Italy and preceded by sociolinguistic changes in major urban centres, especially in Rome, for many speakers (though not all), the retention of a few 'flagship features' is often sufficient to mark city, regional, or local identity.

Another interesting aspect is the attitude of migrants towards Venetian. Goglia (2018) analysed the situation of code switching among immigrants who speak Venetian. After noticing that “evidence of the presence of dialects in immigrants’ linguistic repertoires comes from the kinds of jobs that many do (e.g., factory workers, carers for the elderly, builders, cleaners, nurses) that require them to learn and use dialects as part of their linguistic capital”, he maintains that “The use of dialects would not be a sign of delay in the acquisition of Italian, or the inability to distinguish between Italian and dialects, but a clear sign of achieved acquisition of an unmarked multilingual mode already present in some social contexts in Italy”. In his study, Igbo Nigerians refer to Venetian as a local language. They show their understanding of the parallels between the Nigerian and Italian linguistic repertoires whereby Igbo and Venetian share a similar status and each coexists with a roof language (English and Italian respectively). It is not uncommon that immigrants can speak two or more regional varieties if they have spent time in different parts of Italy and the use of dialect code switching can also be interpreted as a sign of successful integration in the host society. Interestingly, Goglia cites Amoruso (2007) who noticed that for Tunisian immigrants, “Sicilian takes on for some of them the role of an alternative language to the rule, a language of fun and freedom against the normative oppressiveness of Italian" (Amoruso, 2007; Goglia, 2018:708-711).

It has been noted that code switching has increased over time as Venetian gained more and more prestige and its speakers became conscious bilinguals. As Tucciarone (2004) acknowledged:

Ultimately, what was intended to be thrown out the door came back in through the window. Having attained sufficient competence in spoken Italian, one realises both the expressive possibilities of dialect as much as of the opportunities offered by code switching. It so happens that the renewed use of dialect leads to an accentuated process of interference that fatally leads, as proposed by Francescato (1986), to transfiguration. Thus, the vitality of dialect insofar as it is still used by speakers, is opposed to the vitality of the dialect in the technical sense, understood as a language able to resist interference and degradation. However, it must be recorded that the dialect situation is all to the advantage of the vitality of the use at the expense of the original forms of dialect. (...) The new prestige enjoyed by the dialect favours greater contact between the two systems, since code-switching is now widely used and has wide social acceptability (Tucciarone, 2004:27-28).

A research conducted by Goglia & Fincati (2017) regarding the linguistic patterns of immigrant children in Veneto is particularly noteworthy. They observed that among the various immigrant groups, children of Chinese descent tended to primarily use their parents' native language, whereas children from Albanian, Kosovan, and Macedonian backgrounds leaned towards using Italian more frequently. Interestingly, Ghanaian children reported a higher usage of both Italian and immigrant languages, which was attributed to the common practice among West Africans of conversing in a bilingual manner. The study found that immigrant languages were predominantly used when interacting with non-Italian friends from the same country of origin, as well as with parents and grandparents. However, when communicating with siblings, Italian was utilised as frequently as the immigrant languages. The research also revealed that approximately half of the participants acknowledged the existence of the Veneto dialect within the local linguistic landscape, with over a third of them even admitting to speaking it. Most of the respondents mentioned using the Venetian dialect when conversing with Italian friends and classmates. From these findings, it can be inferred that the dialect, primarily intertwined with Italian, is part of the linguistic repertoire of the second generation. Some children may also view it as a language to learn and employ for communication with peers, shedding any negative connotations it may carry (Goglia & Fincati, 2017).

A survey conducted in 2010 by the Quaeris Institute among 600 immigrants residing in the Veneto region, comprising 300 students and 300 workers, revealed that one in three immigrants believes that alongside Italian, dialect should be made a compulsory subject in schools. Workers expressed the belief that familiarity with Venetian language is essential for better integration and for understanding their rights concerning contracts and safety regulations. Students viewed knowledge of the dialect as a means to connect with their peers, such as in social settings like discos⁴³. Among foreign workers, 85% deemed Venetian valuable for their work environment and local interactions. Of the respondents, 26% felt they "had" to learn Venetian, while 74% expressed a "desire" to learn it. The survey was commissioned

⁴³ Quaeris (February 1, 2010) *Lingua veneta fattore di integrazione*.

to Quaeris by the 'Ispirazione' Foundation and the cooperative 'Insieme si può', organisations already offering instruction in Venetian language in the kindergartens they operate and in vocational training courses.

A theory that can help us understand the socio-linguistic dynamics involved in the interplay between Venetian and Italian is the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). CAT was presented by Howard Giles in 1971 and posits that people adjust their communication style, including their accent, dialect, and vocabulary, to accommodate or align with others during social interactions (Satchdev et al., 2012). Communication accommodation theorists examine how individuals adjust their communication behaviours through convergence and divergence. These adjustments are influenced by their goals of seeking social approval, enhancing communication efficiency, and expressing identity. In the Veneto context, CAT can be applied in various ways:

- *Convergence*: Convergence involves adapting one's communication style to match that of the interlocutor. In Venetian society, if someone from outside the region is attempting to communicate with locals, they might adjust their accent, pronunciation, and vocabulary to resemble that of the Venetian dialect. Concurrently, there inhibition of one's strongest regional peculiarities may take place. This convergence facilitates smoother communication and fosters a sense of belonging.
- *Divergence*: On the other hand, divergence occurs when individuals intentionally maintain their distinct communication style, even when interacting with speakers of a different dialect or a different regional version of Italian. In the case of Venetian speakers interacting with non-Venetian speakers, they might retain their unique linguistic features as a way to assert their identity and preserve their cultural heritage. An example could be the use of additive 'pure' (e. also), largely used by Italian speakers from Central and Southern Italy but avoided by Venetian speakers when speaking Italian⁴⁴.
- *Accommodation Strategies*: CAT also includes various accommodation strategies such as overaccommodation (excessive adjustment), underaccommodation (insufficient adjustment), and optimal accommodation (appropriate adjustment). In the context of the Venetian dialect, individuals might employ these strategies based on factors such as social status, power dynamics, and the nature of the relationship with the interlocutor. For instance, the regional Italian of Veneto does not portrait syntactical gemination. However, some speakers wishing to sound more 'standard Italian' may use it randomly e.g. a Padova (pronounced as 'Appadova').

⁴⁴ In Venetian 'pur' is only used with a concessive conjunction function. See the trending of 'pure' in De Stefano G. (2021, April 20).

This unsystematic phonetic feature may represent a form of overaccommodation and may appear to some as a form of affectation.

- *Social Identity*: CAT emphasises the role of social identity in communication. In Venetian society, individuals may adjust their communication style based on their perceived social identity, including factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. For example, a young Venetian professional interacting with peers may use a different communication style compared to when interacting with elderly relatives.
- *Intergroup Communication*: CAT also applies to intergroup communication dynamics. In Venetian society, there may be distinct intergroup dynamics between speakers of the Venetian dialect and speakers of standard Italian or other regional dialects. Understanding CAT can help in navigating these intergroup interactions and fostering mutual understanding and respect.

In essence, Veneto society is undergoing profound changes on account of demographic and societal changes, reflected in the socio-linguistic landscape. Younger generations move abroad to seek life opportunities and expand their linguistic repertoires, making plurilingualism an increasingly common situation. Moreover, the existing multipolar mediatic resources and the prospected disruption by A.I. may further complicate the picture with unforeseeable consequences.

In conclusion, language variation in contemporary Veneto region society is characterised by the use of Standard Italian and Venetian varieties as register language of choice in specific domains, such as family, specific work environments and the new media. Even long stay migrants seem to follow common patterns of expression on top of their existing linguistic repertoire. In the next chapter we will see what efforts—in both legal and operational terms—have been done in the last decades to protect Venetian and allow its transmission to the younger generations.

5 LANGUAGE PRESERVATION EFFORTS

In this chapter, we will examine the endeavours undertaken by both institutional and private entities to safeguard and revive the Venetian language. This analysis will encompass the legal framework that enables these actions and an examination of the political landscape with its inherent power dynamics, which shape the implementation of these efforts.

5.1 The legal framework

Veneto was annexed to Italy in 1866, after enjoying 1,100 years of independent history as Republic of Venice (697- 1797 AD). Back then, virtually nobody spoke Italian in Veneto and withal 78% of Italians were illiterate (Loporcaro, 2013:182). The newly formed Italian state sought to build a nation by spreading the use of the Italian language, especially through the schooling system⁴⁵. Regional languages were disparaged and considered a hurdle against the victory over illiteracy. Nevertheless, in the 1920's, thanks to the ideas of linguist and senator Isaia Ascoli, who advocated the benefits of bilingualism, realistic expectations were set, and dialects were used in class to teach Italian. This approach was short-lived, as in 1934 the Fascist regime embraced a nationalistic linguistic policy and forbade the use of dialects in school curricula.

After World War II, the Italian territories of Istria (including the city of Fiume), Zara and some Dalmatian islands joined Yugoslavia and an exodus of Venetian speaking people left their motherland to be distributed all over Italy. Despite the regime change, the Italian governments continued to disregard regional languages, exception made for a handful of historical minority languages, such as German or French. In fact, in the new Italian Constitution of 1947, it is stated that the 'The Republic protects linguistic minorities by means of appropriate regulations' (art. 6).

In 1966, Italy ratified the *Convention against Discrimination in Education* (CDE), whereby the term "discrimination" includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition, or birth (UNESCO, 1960).

In the 70's, linguist Tullio De Mauro criticised the Italian pedagogical bias against dialects and grassroots movements started to advocate for a higher visibility

⁴⁵ The Kingdom of Sardinia law no. 3725 of 1859 (aka 'Casati law' and extended to Unified Italy) stipulated compulsory elementary schooling but attendance was low and inspections showed severe unpreparedness of teachers, most of whom spoke no Italian but regional languages (Grassi et al. 1997:244). Prior to that law schooling was mostly administered by the Catholic Church.

and dignity of regional languages. In this period books on dialectology were being published and newspapers began to host articles about linguistic cultural heritage.

The 1977 Directive issued by the Council of the European Community regarding the education of migrant workers' children (Brussels 77/486/EEC) mandated member states to implement measures facilitating the teaching of the mother tongue and the culture of the migrant workers' country of origin. Additionally, it stipulated that within compulsory free education, one or more official languages of the host country should be taught. Consequently, Italian children whose families have migrated to another European nation, even if they speak a regional dialect distinct from standard Italian at home, would receive mother tongue education in standard Italian as opposed to their home dialect (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2012:462).

In 1978, Italy ratified the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) whereby article 27 mandates the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities to enjoy their own culture, to profess their own religion, and to use their own language (United Nations 1966).

In 1981, the Venetian language was recognised by the Council of Europe (Doc. 4745 on Minority languages) and was assigned code 'vec' in the ISO (UN) 639-3 code of languages.

In 1992, a European treaty, the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*, in short ECRML (CETS No. 148), was adopted under the auspice of the Council of Europe. This convention, which entered into force in 1998, is unique on the worldwide legal scene and applies to 79 regional or minority languages in 25 Council of Europe member states. In art. 1, the Charter defines what languages should be considered worth of protection, stating that:

regional or minority languages» means languages that are:
i. traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population; and
ii. different from the official language(s) of that State;
it does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants; (...) (Council of Europe, 1992).

Clearly, this definition is too vague to be self-sufficient and leaves open to each member state how to define cultural heritage and territory. Therefore, each state is free to choose the languages within the scope of the Charter. In fact, the Charter is based on the so-called menu system meaning that in addition to common “objectives and principles”, individual states parties have different sets of undertakings. They can choose various undertakings for different regional or minority languages spoken on their territory depending on the size and needs of the languages (Oszmiańska-Pagett & Crnić-Grotić, 2022).

In 1995, the Veneto Region government published the *Handbook of the Unified Venetian Orthography* (*infra* chapter 7).

In 1996, the *Barcelona Declaration*, also called the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, was signed by the International PEN Club⁴⁶ and various non-governmental organizations. Its aim is to advocate for linguistic rights, particularly for endangered languages. This declaration emerged at the end of the World Conference on Linguistic Rights, which took place from June 6th to 9th, 1996, in Barcelona, Spain. While it was submitted to the UNESCO Director General in 1996, it hasn't been officially endorsed by UNESCO.

In 1998, Italy adopted the Council of Europe's *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (FCPNM, CETS No. 157). Interestingly, the only countries members of the Council of Europe that have not signed this Convention are Andorra, France, Monaco and Turkey. Apparently, Corsicans and Kurds seem to enjoy a similar level of protection in their respective countries. The Convention represents the first legally binding multilateral agreement aimed at safeguarding national minorities as a whole. A slew of articles provides conditions that implement the protection of national minorities, including art. 9 envisaging that "persons belonging to a national minority are not discriminated against in their access to the media"; art. 10 which "makes it possible to use the minority language in relations between those persons and the administrative authorities" as well as use this language for defence at courts, if necessary with the free assistance of an interpreter; or art 14 stating that "The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language (...) implemented without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language".

Also, in 1998 OSCE issued The Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities, which seek to provide guidance to OSCE member States on how best to ensure the linguistic rights of national minorities, involving community life, NGO's, the media, economic life, administrative authorities and public services, independent national institutions, the judicial authorities and liberty deprivation (OSCE, 1998).

Both the Charter and article 6 of the Italian Constitution were first fully implemented with the approval of the Italian National Law n. 482 of 15 December 1999 - *Rules on the protection of historical linguistic minorities*. This law identified 12 regional languages deemed worth of protection, i.e. languages of the Albanian, Catalan, Germanic, Greek, Slovenian and Croatian populations and those speaking French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan and Sardinian. Other regional idioms, including some defined by UNESCO as 'at risk' or 'vulnerable' such as Emilian, Ligurian, Lombard, Neapolitan, Piedmontese, Romagnolo, Sicilian and Venetian are not covered by national law. This despite the resolution no. 262 of 22 November 1999 by the Veneto Regional Council calling on the Italian State to

⁴⁶ PEN International is a global organisation of writers established in London in 1921. Its primary objective is to foster camaraderie and intellectual collaboration among writers worldwide.

recognise Venetian as a language. Incidentally, the site “Ethnologue” recognises 27 minority languages in Italy, namely: Arbëreshë Albanian, Arpitan, Campidanese Sardinian, Cimbrian, Corsican, Emilian, Friulian, Gallurese Sardinian, International Sign, Italian, Italian Sign Language, Judeo-Italian, Ladin, Ligurian, Logudorese Sardinian, Lombard, Mòcheno, Napoletano, Occitan, Piedmontese, Romagnol, Sassarese Sardinian, Sicilian, Slavomolisano, Slovene, Venetian, and Walser.⁴⁷

As Mishota (2024) argues, “it should be noted that Venetian is recognised as a language at the regional level and abroad in Brazil and partially in Slovenia and Croatia at present” (Mishota, 2024:189). Therefore, the choice of the Italian government to exclude Venetian from the group of protected languages seems even more surprising.

Since 1999, despite the lack of consistent support from successive Italian governments, the Veneto Region has undertaken actions to advance the status of the Venetian language. A significant milestone was Regional Law No. 3 of January 14, 2003 (published in BUR No. 5/2003), which provides in Article 22 (Initiatives for the promotion and enhancement of the Veneto identity) that:

“The Regional Council promotes and encourages initiatives for research, dissemination and valorisation of the cultural and linguistic heritage on which the Veneto identity is based, by organising conferences, seminars, exhibitions, research, publications and events aimed at raising awareness of the cultural and linguistic complexity in which the expression and signs of the Veneto identity can be recognised” (Veneto Region, 2003, own tr.).

In 2003, UNESCO released a position paper regarding languages and education, acknowledging the intricate connection between identity, culture, authority, and statehood concerning the utilisation of particular languages in educational settings (UNESCO 2003a). This paper reiterated the significance of native languages, consistent with UNESCO's previous expert analysis from 1953 advocating for the use of vernacular languages in education. However, it also emphasised the necessity of striking a balance between incorporating local languages for learning and ensuring access to global languages through education (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2012:463).

Another significant moment is represented by Veneto Regional Law no. 8 of 13 April 2007 (BUR no. 37/2007), which deals with the protection, enhancement and promotion of Veneto's linguistic and cultural heritage. In its drafting, the importance of the measure is underlined by the presence of a Council of Europe resolution of 16 March 1998, which states that “the right of peoples to express themselves in their regional or minority languages in the context of their private and social life constitutes an imprescriptible right”. Hence the intervention of the Region, through the work of the Regional Council, which emphasises that “the most

⁴⁷ Ethnologue, Italy.

advanced states that respect minority rights have understood that when a people is aware of its own identity, it is more open to understanding the cultures of others”. The regional law presents some basic aspects of the Veneto language: article 2, in fact, defines what is to be understood by the Veneto language, indicating 'the specific languages historically used in the Veneto territory and in the places where they have been maintained by communities that have significantly preserved the same matrix'. Article 5 establishes a Veneto People's Day, which coincides with March 25, the founding day of Venice: “in order to promote knowledge of the history of the Veneto, to valorise its original linguistic heritage, to illustrate its values of culture, customs and civic spirit, in their roots and in their perspective, as well as to make the Statute and the symbols of the Region known in an appropriate manner”. The remaining articles regulate the actions that the Regional Council may carry out “in order to foster the knowledge and dissemination of the Veneto's linguistic heritage”.

In 2007 Italy adopted the UNESCO *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* (CPPDCE). This treaty was set up in response to the fears that globalisation would lead to an increasingly uniform global culture, inasmuch as it allows states to protect cultural diversity by promoting and defending their own cultural industries. Notably, the United States refused to ratify, arguing that cultural products are commodities in the same way as other goods and services. Article 7 of the convention mandates the promotion of cultural expressions by the parties involved, ensuring that individuals and society have access to a rich variety of cultural influences both domestically and globally. Article 8 empowers states to recognise instances where urgent safeguarding of a cultural expression is necessary and to take suitable actions. These parties are required to inform the Intergovernmental Committee, which can subsequently offer relevant recommendations. Articles 9 to 11 oblige states to openly share information, enhance cultural diversity through educational initiatives and public awareness campaigns, and collaborate with civil society to realise the convention's objectives (UNESCO 2005).

Also, in 2007 Italy adopted the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (CSICH), whereby “intangible cultural heritage” is exhibited, among other areas, in the following domains:

- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) performing arts;
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- (e) traditional craftsmanship. (UNESCO 2007)

Italy hosts the greatest number of UNESCO heritage sites in the world (58) but is also a powerhouse of intangible cultural heritage items such as food, art and

craftsmanship. The rich tapestry of cultural and linguistic diversity may be considered the basis of its creativity.

Article 113 of this treaty encourages the media to produce high-quality television and radio programmes, including documentaries, to increase the prominence of intangible cultural heritage and its significance in modern societies. Regional broadcasting channels and community radios have the potential to significantly contribute to the promotion of local languages and cultures, as well as the dissemination of information regarding effective safeguarding measures.

In 2007, Italy voted along with 144 other countries in favour of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). Four countries voted against it (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstained. Art. 13 establishes that “Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalise, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons”, while art. 16 claims that “States shall take effective measures to ensure that State-owned media duly reflect indigenous cultural diversity. States, without prejudice to ensuring full freedom of expression, should encourage privately owned media to adequately reflect indigenous cultural diversity” (United Nations, 2007).

In 2012 the proposal of law no. 5246 was presented by the Veneto Region at the Italian Chamber of Deputies aiming at amending Article 2 of Law No. 482 of 15 December 1999 (*supra*) by adding Venetian to the list of the protected minority languages. The proposal, however, was rejected (Camera dei Deputati, 2012).

In November 2014, Veneto-Brazilian (aka 'Talian') was declared by the Brazilian National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage as a cultural-immaterial heritage (Língua e referência cultural brasileira). In the Talian-speaking region (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Paraná, as well as in Espírito Santo) newspapers feature articles written in the language and some radio programmes are broadcast in Talian.

In 2016, the Veneto Regional Law of 13 December 2016, no. 28 concerning the application of Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (*supra*) and hence the qualification of the 'Veneto people' as a 'national minority' was approved but challenged by the central government and judged unconstitutional.

On 18 February 2017, hundreds of European and UNESCO students, citizens, and academics attended the first International Conference on the Venetian Language (#1CILVE); the 'Declarasion 10 Aprile' was signed there. Linguistic and cultural diversity is protected by the EU (Article 3 TEU; Article 22 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights).

In 2017 the Parliamentary Question - E-003105/2017 (Protection of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in Europe - The Case of the Veneto Language) was

presented at the European Parliament. Three questions were put to the European Commission:

- *Does it consider it possible to provide a minimum European level of protection in the sui generis case of Veneto, a minority language present in three EU Member States but protected in none of them?*⁴⁸
- *What action could it take with the Member States concerned to encourage them to support and promote financially the teaching and learning of this language?*
- *Would it be possible to allocate European funds to support the activities of independent research and dissemination bodies such as the Academia de la Bona Creansa, which are active in teaching the Veneto language and promoting multilingualism within the EU? (European Parliament 2017).*

What conclusions can be drawn by this brief overview of legislative output? From a perspective of international law, the issue of language minority protection is dealt with at a level where prescriptions and recommendations are necessarily general and need to be transposed into national law. At national level, States are often unwilling to grant linguistic rights to minorities within their borders for fear of losing political or administrative control. However, as former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues by the Human Rights Council Fernand De Varennnes noted,

The values of tolerance, coexistence and integration are part of the foundation of a modern democratic state. Attention to these values does not involve a loss of sovereignty or a threat to unity. On the contrary, their careful application may help avoid and resolve tensions and conflicts involving linguistic issues in a number of countries—tensions and conflicts that may threaten the State (De Varennnes, 1999:318).

⁴⁸ The EU state members where a minority speaks a variety of Venetian are Italy, Slovenia and Croatia.

5.2 The Veneto Regional Law 8/2007

On a regional level, Veneto Regional Law 8/2007 "Protection, enhancement and promotion of the linguistic and cultural heritage of Veneto" deserves a closer look.

Article 1 – Aims

In implementing Articles 2 and 4 of its Statute, the Veneto Region promotes the protection and enhancement of the linguistic heritage of Veneto.

There is a referral to art. 1 and 2 of the Statute of the Veneto Region, approved by Italian National law of 22 May 1971, no. 340:

Art. 1 Veneto is an autonomous Region, in the unity of the Italian Republic, according to the principles and within the limits of the Constitution and gives itself the present Statute.

The Region consists of the communities of the population and the territories of the provinces of Belluno, Padua, Rovigo, Treviso, Venice, Verona and Vicenza. The capital is Venice.

Article 2 The self-government of the Veneto people shall be implemented in forms that correspond to the characteristics and traditions of its history. The Region shall contribute to the enhancement of the cultural and linguistic heritage of the individual communities. (Regione Veneto, 1971)

Clearly, the principle of autonomy and protection of cultural and linguistic heritage stand out from a national law. Therefore, it can be confidently stated that the foundation of any efforts to maintain and revitalise the Venetian language is fully legitimate at a national level. Continuing with law 8/2007:

Art. 2 - The Veneto language

1. The specific idioms historically used in the Veneto region and in the places where they have been maintained by communities that have significantly preserved the same matrix constitute the Veneto or Veneto language.

2. The Veneto region considers the protection, valorisation and promotion of the Veneto's linguistic and cultural heritage to be a central issue for the development of regional autonomy. (ibid.)

Article 2 defines the Veneto language collectively, i.e. considering the different varieties spoken in Veneto region that are mutually intelligible. Art. 2 considers the protection, valorisation, and promotion of the Veneto's linguistic and cultural heritage instrumental for the development of regional autonomy. Given that autonomy at any degree is a politically laden concept upon which not everyone agrees, it seems divisive to mention it in correlation to the pursuit of valorisation of an endangered language. In fact, protecting a cultural heritage should arguably be a shared value across political orientations.

Article 3 - European context

1. *The Veneto Region, recognising that the protection and promotion of the various local or minority languages is an important contribution to the construction of a Europe based on the principles of democracy and respect for cultural diversity, maintains and develops the traditions present in its territory.*
2. *Within the limits of its statutory powers, the region considers the protection and promotion of the languages traditionally spoken on its territory to be a specific obligation towards the community of European peoples. (ibid.)*

The European Union project is designed to work at regional level according to the principles of subsidiarity, proximity, and partnership. The centrality of the Regions is thus reflected in the importance to simultaneously pursue cohesion and diversity in all EU regions. Art. 2 mentions the fact that the Veneto Region linguistic protection policies are bound by statutory powers.

Article 4 - Adherence to the principles of the European Charter

1. *Without prejudice to the power of the State with regard to international agreements, the regional government, in exercising its competence in cultural matters, bases its actions on the following principles stated in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*
 1. *regional or minority languages constitute cultural wealth;*
 2. *resolute action is needed to promote regional languages in order to preserve them;*
 3. *the written and oral use of regional languages in the various expressions of social life must be facilitated and encouraged;*
 4. *studies and research on regional languages must be promoted;*
 5. *appropriate forms and means of teaching and studying regional languages at all appropriate levels must be made available within the regional sphere of competence;*
 6. *publishing activities that enhance the Veneto's linguistic heritage shall be supported. (ibid.)*

Article 4 refers to the 1992, a European Council's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (*supra*), thus anchoring Regional Law 8/2007 directly to international law. Regional or minority languages must be protected and promoted in written and oral form in the schooling and the publishing systems.

Article 5 - Veneto People's Festival

1. *In order to promote knowledge of the history of the Veneto, to valorise its original linguistic heritage, to illustrate the values of culture, customs and civic spirit, in their roots and in their perspective, as well as to make the Statute and the symbols of the Region adequately known, the 'Festa del Popolo Veneto' is established. It shall fall on 25 March, the day of the founding of Venice.*
2. *Each year the Regional Council establishes actions aimed at achieving and illustrating these aims, in particular among the younger generations and in agreement with the competent State bodies in schools of all levels. (ibid.)*

Article 5 is about the Veneto People's Festival, a new cultural event to be celebrated in coincidence with the birthday of the city of Venice (25th March). This festival is the most tangible tool to engage the population with the cultural roots of the region.

Art. 6 - Knowledge and dissemination of the linguistic heritage of the Veneto Region

1. *In order to foster the knowledge and dissemination of the linguistic heritage of the Veneto, the Regional Authority promotes*
 - a. *its preservation, valorisation and transmission;*
 - b. *journalistic and radio and television information;*
 - c. *artistic creation;*
 - d. *the publishing and dissemination of books and publications;*
 - e. *the organisation of specific sections in public libraries of local authorities or of local interest;*
 - f. *research;*
 - g. *the organisation of activities and meetings aimed at promoting the use and knowledge of the original Veneto language heritage.*
2. *The Region also promotes, in agreement with public and private broadcasters, the implementation of cultural and information programmes in the Veneto language of proven cultural value.*
3. *Municipalities and their consortia, mountain communities, bodies, institutes and associations implementing programmes or individual initiatives aimed at these objectives may apply for grants in accordance with the procedures set out in Article 12. (ibid.)*

Article 6 lists a number of initiatives that could foster the conservation of Venetian. However, it is questionable how many of these measures have been actually implemented. Without proper financing or other tax incentives, a television broadcasting station cannot go a long way. An example is the television station Televenezia, which dedicates just a section on Venetian dialect and its 'untranslatable' words⁴⁹. A radio station in somewhat Italianised Venetian language (Veneto Radio) is still on air but broadcasts mainly global music like a conventional radio station⁵⁰.

Art. 7 - Promotion of research

1. *The Region promotes, also in collaboration with the universities of the Veneto and with qualified public and private cultural institutes and centres, scientific research on the original linguistic heritage of the Veneto.*
2. *To this end, the Regional Council deliberates, also on the basis of proposals formulated by the bodies mentioned in paragraph 1 and after hearing the competent Council Commission, annual or multi-annual research programmes and establishes scholarships and annual prizes for degree theses concerning the history, culture and historical linguistic heritage of the Veneto. (ibid.)*

⁴⁹ See 'Venezia Radio TV, dialetto veneto' in the reference list.

⁵⁰ See Veneto Radio in the reference list.

Art. 7 refers to the collaboration of the Veneto Region with Regional universities. We like to mention the *Centro Interuniversitario di Studi Veneti* (CISVe) which promotes scientific research on the literary, linguistic and cultural tradition of the Venetian regions both in Italy and in communities of Venetian origin abroad. The Centre also promotes the conservation and scientific study of the twentieth-century documentary heritage, through the funds of the "Carte del Contemporaneo" Archive, established in its own premises. The universities Ca' Foscari (Department of Humanities), Padua (Department of Linguistic and Literary Studies) and Verona (Department of Cultures and Civilisations) are members of CISVe—the administrative seat being at Ca' Foscari. Over the years, CISVe has been involved in the organisation of conferences and seminars, the promotion of intellectual production (the journal 'Quaderni veneti. New digital series' and the series 'Quaderni Veneti. Studies and research, directed by the Director of CISVe and published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari), and has also acted as a consultant for the Veneto Region in the field of promoting cultural actions on Veneto emigration and language policies.⁵¹.

Art. 8 - Direct Activities

1. The Veneto Region

- a. promotes, in agreement with the Administrative Service Centres (CSA), within the framework of school education, optional training and refresher courses aimed at teachers of all levels, in order to provide them with knowledge of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Veneto; these courses are financed by the Region itself;*
- b. promotes, in agreement with the Administrative Service Centres (CSA), optional courses on Veneto history, culture and language; these courses are financed by the Region itself, distinguished by school level;*
- c. collects the documentation produced in the course of the research referred to in Article 7 or received in accordance with the provisions of Article 12 and arranges for it to be deposited in the library of the Regional Council, and encourages its publication and dissemination.*

2. The Regional Council shall establish an annual prize for works written in the Veneto language.

3. In agreement and in collaboration with the competent State bodies, the Regional Council shall also organise a competition in schools of all levels on the original linguistic heritage of the Veneto. (ibid.)

Art. 8 of the regulation outlines direct activities to be undertaken by the Veneto Region: the promotion of optional training and refresher courses for teachers on Veneto's linguistic and cultural heritage, the funding of optional courses on Veneto's history, culture, and language, the collection and preservation of research documentation for dissemination, the establishment of an annual prize for works in the Veneto language, and collaboration with

⁵¹ See CISVe in the reference list.

state bodies to organise school contests focusing on Veneto's linguistic heritage.

“Article 9 - Toponymy

The Region promotes and supports surveys on toponymy in the manner provided for by article 7 and contributes to the initiatives in this regard promoted by the municipalities and their consortia, according to the modalities provided for by article 12.” (ibid.)

Toponymy as an area of linguistic study is of great cultural value as the indication of place names serves in linguistics as a visual representation of power dynamics between colonisers and the colonised, reflecting postcolonial nationalist feelings and evolving political alliances. The Italianisation efforts that affected South Tyrol during the Fascist era also extended to the rest of Italy and continue to this day. This ongoing process is exemplified by the controversy surrounding the restoration of the Venetian *nizioleti* (street signs of Venice).⁵²

“Art. 10 – Veneto Unitary Orthography

In order to guarantee a correct definition of spelling, toponymy and any other linguistic aspect, the Regional Council avails itself of a special commission of experts.” (ibid.)

The subject of article 10 will be dealt with in detail in chapter 7 (*infra*). In short, at present two types of orthography of Venetian officially recognised by the region coexist: the first one (known as 'unitary orthography') was elaborated by a commission of linguists led by Manlio Cortelazzo, appointed by the regional government in 1995; the second (known as 'official orthography') was developed by a new commission mainly composed of non-linguists appointed in 2010 (Pescarini, 2024:iv-v).

“Article 11 - Regional information

The Regional Government undertakes to reserve special spaces in its periodical publications of general information, open to the collaboration of qualified bodies and institutes, for the presentation of the original linguistic heritage of the Veneto or in any case aimed at promoting its use and knowledge.” (ibid.)

“Article 12 - Procedures

The Regional Council, after hearing the opinion of the competent Council Commission, defines, for the interventions identified by this law, the deadlines and modalities

⁵² See Beggiano E. (2023, October 30) *Venezia, italianizzati e stravolti sui “nizioleti” i nomi storici delle calli*, Serenissima news.

for the presentation of applications, the types of eligible expenses, the modalities for the disbursement, accounting and revocation of the allocated benefits.” (ibid.)

“Article 13 - Financial regulation

- 1. The burdens deriving from the implementation of this law, quantified in 250,000.00 euros for each of the financial years 2007, 2008 and 2009, shall be met by withdrawing the same amount from the upb U0185 "Special fund for current expenses", item no. 9 "Interventi per la cultura", of the 2007 and 2007-2009 budgets; at the same time, the appropriation of the U0169 "Manifestazioni ed istituzioni culturali" (Cultural events and institutions) is increased by € 250,000.00 on an accrual and cash basis in the financial year 2007 and by € 250,000.00 on an accrual only basis in the following two financial years.” (ibid.)*

What appears to be most significant is the limited scope and resources granted to the implementation of its goals. In fact, this law did not explicitly grant Venetian any official status, but a mere recognition of it as being object of protection and enhancement, as an essential component of the cultural, social, historical and civil identity of Veneto. As far as the financial dimension is concerned, this law was financed until 2014, with a gap in the last 10 years. Resources have been spent on research and studies as well as organising the Feast of the Veneto people (held on 25th March, birth of Venice) and a Contest about the Veneto Linguistic Heritage that was open to schools. In implementation of art. Article 9 – Toponymy (“The Region shall promote and support toponymy surveys in the manner provided for in Article 7 and shall contribute to the initiatives in this regard promoted by the municipalities and their consortia, in the manner provided for in Article 12”), in 2017 a document aiming at giving places-names a double Italian and Venetian version was not approved.

5.3 The political arena

The importance of politics in the vicissitudes of endangered languages cannot be overstated. Therefore, it is worthwhile exploring how political ideologies and practices have tackled the issue of language protection across time and space.

In general, if the poorer and less educated layers of society (i.e. the working class) are the ones who are supposed to use dialects the most, then in political marketing they should become target of the left-wing political offer. However, left-wing governments have also been favouring the advancement of the less affluent by implementing education laws that envisaged centralised and levelling educational programmes. As an example, the French revolution led to the imposition of Parisian French over regional languages, in the name of linguistic uniformity (Flaherty, 1987:311). Furthermore, after WWI, in the early stages of the Soviet Union, national languages such as Ukrainian were revived due to the Bolshevik policy of *korenizacija* (коренизация, "indigenisation"). However, when Stalin consolidated his power in the late 30's this policy was reverted in favour of enforced Russification, in view of bolstering overall centralisation. The Cyrillic writing system was introduced for various Soviet languages, including those spoken in Central Asia, which had previously transitioned from Arabic to Latin alphabets in the late 1920s. Finally, in contemporary China, formally a Communist state, the constitution provides protection for minority languages according to the principle of "foundation and diversity" (zhǔtǐ duōyàng 主体多样) i.e. the maintenance of the fundamental position of the common language, namely Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese) and the maintenance of linguistic diversity. In practice, the policies urging to make the country uniform and the sheer number of people of Han ethnicity settling down in ethnic minority territories have made the local languages *de facto* endangered (Tibetan) or moribund (Manchu).

What seems more important than the rhetoric of right/left opposition is the depth of commitment of politicians towards languages that claim their right to existence, i.e. how radical is their political proposal. Nowadays, language protection is at the centre of debate of *radical politics* as it is argued that language revitalisation represents a radical endeavour inasmuch as it confronts the prevailing global order—a worldwide system of linguistic suppression that is currently eradicating at least half of the world's languages. Language revitalisation envisions an alternative world, not merely an improved iteration of the existing one. It envisions a world where the prevailing power structures facilitate the flourishing of all languages. Achieving this entails a profound overhaul of current social and political frameworks, which currently perpetuate the marginalisation of Indigenous peoples and the ongoing subjugation of other communities based on factors such as race, ethnicity, caste, and religion (Roche, 2020).

Sometimes it is the historical context that dictates what political parties are inclined to support linguistic claims. An example is the Catalan language, which has been at the centre of the political debate in Catalonia's efforts toward more autonomy—if not outright independence—from Spain. In the Catalonian context, the policy of the far-right leader Franco aimed at suppressing regional identities in favour of a nationalistic view of the Spanish culture. Therefore, in the mid-70's, once Franco's era was gone, the left-wing parties naturally reacted taking the side of the Catalan language and culture.

Another illustration is Ireland. During the 19th century, the Irish Conservative Party, commonly referred to as the Irish Tories, aligned itself with the Conservative Party in Great Britain. Concurrently, in Northern Ireland, the Ulster Unionist Party emerged as the predominant conservative party throughout much of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, in the Irish Free State, the conservative electorate leaned towards supporting *Cumann na nGaedheal*, which later evolved into *Fine Gael*. Conversely, *Sinn Féin*, a left-wing party, has always been fervently advocating for the revival of the Irish language. Sinn Féin is notably in favour of reinstating Irish as the predominant spoken language across Ireland and promoting the establishment of a genuinely bilingual society⁵³.

Furthermore, another significant stakeholder, such as the Catholic Church, has played a role in shaping the destiny of a language. In 1842, in Brussels, the capital of Brabant, an historically Flemish-speaking region, 38 percent of the population spoke French, while 61 percent spoke Flemish. Throughout the Belgian nation, the aristocracy and middle classes primarily spoke French, often as a second language, and French served as the language of the legal system and government. In this context, where nearly the entire population was Catholic, the Catholic Church endorsed the Flemish language as a means to counteract the spread of anti-clerical ideas stemming from the French Revolution and conveyed in French language.

In other national contexts the situation is complicated and sympathy towards linguistic protection swings between right and left within a large bandwidth. In Italy, for example, Umberto Bossi, the founder of Lega Nord—now labelled in the international press as 'extreme right' party—was once member of the Communist Party. In the 1990's the identitarian Lega Nord used to plead for the promotion of the regional languages of Northern Italy, where its working-class electoral base lived. Such languages experienced some pressure on account of internal migrations in the 1950's and foreign migration from the 1990's. However, when in 2017 Lega Nord dropping the adjective Nord ('North') simply became *Lega*, a nationwide party, its attitude toned down to please a nationwide electorate. In the Veneto Region, Lega Nord/Lega has been ruling the Region within a Centre-right coalition

⁵³ Cfr. Sinn Féinn, *Equal Rights For Irish Speakers*.

for a considerable number of years: its regional party leader and President of the Region Luca Zaia has been in office since 2010.

The most prominent Italian left-wing party, *Partito Democratico*, founded in 2007 on the ashes of the former left-wing *Partito Comunista Italiano* (Italian Communist Party), has experienced a significant erosion of its working-class electoral base. One contributing factor is the wage squeezing effect caused by migrant workers. Additionally, the party has shifted from its traditional internationalist positions to embrace global capitalism and focus on human rights. Given that its electoral base has shifted from the working class to include public servants, the urban elites and people with migration background, it is unsurprising that the interest in protecting regional languages—beyond those already recognised in the Constitution—has diminished.

In conclusion, language protection appears vulnerable to the political climate of the time. However, a potential opportunity for Italian regional languages may arise from the possible future approval of a bill implementing the so called ‘differentiated autonomy’ for Italian regions, as per the third paragraph of Article 116 of the Constitution. This bill would enable ordinary statute regions to request greater autonomy in 23 areas, including education and culture, thereby empowering regions to allocate resources for language maintenance and revitalisation.

Other consequences beyond income redistribution are believed to arise once linguistic policies that elevate Venetian to the same status as Italian are implemented. This situation could resemble the reality in South Tyrol, where varying levels of proficiency in Italian, German, and Ladin are required to qualify for public sector employment.⁵⁴ As a matter of fact, redefining the requirements for job applications in public sectors such as education, health, and services could pose challenges for Italian monolinguals, particularly migrants from the South. However, we believe that should this occurrence materialise, it should be viewed positively, as an opportunity to develop one’s plurilingual skills. Beyond South Tyrol, there are numerous examples of bilingual areas where learning an additional language is a standard step to accessing public employment: Aosta Valley (Italian/French), the Brussels area (French/Flemish), certain Finnish regions (Finnish/Swedish), Quebec (French/English), parts of the USA (English/Spanish), and so forth.

⁵⁴ Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano – Alto Adige *Esami di bilinguismo e di ladino*.

5.4 Contemporary initiatives and challenges

Despite the absence of a robust legal framework and sufficient financial resources, several initiatives have been implemented in Veneto to raise public awareness about language preservation. The Veneto Region, politically lead by governments where Lega Nord/Lega played a key role, has been the main actor in this context. As we learn from the Veneto Region website dedicated to the Veneto identity, the Region encourages initiatives aimed at enhancing the Veneto's cultural and linguistic heritage in order to promote knowledge and awareness of its origins. These include:

- The Festival Spettacoli di Mistero (Mystery Shows Festival), organised from the end of October to the beginning of December by local Tourism Boards (Pro Loco) adhering to Unpli, features over 200 events in a month on the trail of the incredible heritage of Veneto tradition, beliefs, fantastic figures and roots at the origins of history. Although it is not specifically a linguistic revival event, it serves as a cultural folkloristic kermesse during the autumn season, including Halloween time.
- the Festa del Popolo Veneto (Festival of the Veneto people). Since 2007 on 25th March (the day of the mythical foundation of Venice), the Region promotes knowledge of the origins of Veneto, its historical, artistic and linguistic heritage, involving students from Veneto and Italian schools in Istria and Rijeka (Croatia);
- traditional Venetian recreational and sports disciplines so as not to forget the traditions, opportunities for social cohesion between sea and water sports, bowling, ball games and various disciplines;
- historical events, palii, jousts and re-enactments, expressions of the community's historical and cultural heritage that enhance the historical, cultural, artistic and landscape contexts of the Veneto region;
- training courses for teachers and students to develop the study and knowledge of Veneto history and culture and the history of Veneto emigration⁵⁵.

The above-mentioned public initiatives retain a more broadly cultural rather than a linguistic imprint. In fact, an untiring actor engaged with the revitalisation of the Venetian language has been a private enterprise, the *Accademia dela Bona Creansa*—literally Academy of Good “Creansa”—whereby *creansa* is a unique Venetian word derived from Spanish ‘criar’ (to foster) expressing good education, respect, courtesy. Since its inception in 2015, the *Accademia dela Bona Creansa*

⁵⁵ Regione del Veneto (2023, December 29). *Iniziative regionali di promozione dell'identità veneta*.

(hereafter abbreviated as Academia) has achieved significant results, despite limited resources and thanks to the contribution of numerous supporters who share its vision. Academia has actively engaged in several international conferences, organising two of them⁵⁶, and has hosted hundreds of events across various states. Its publications include scientific, popular, educational and recreational works. Academia has also provided counsel to various sectors, produced several translations and forged partnerships with universities, public bodies, and other institutions.

According to information from Academia's official page, the organisation is committed to promoting Veneto culture. Through its focus on language, Academia explores not only into linguistic aspects but also delves into the collective psyche of the Veneto community. It aims to uncover the core principles guiding Veneto people's thoughts and perspectives. Venetian culture is portrayed as a rich tapestry of history and ideas that has made significant contributions not only to Italian culture but also to the global cultural heritage. However, this cultural wealth has been increasingly overlooked over the past two centuries and is at risk of fading away. What drives Academia's research is the belief in the untapped potential of Veneto culture: if properly understood and appreciated, it can yield substantial benefits, not only for the local community but also as a model of diverse cultural expression, countering trends towards cultural uniformity, linguistic monoculture, and narrow-mindedness. Academia endeavours to safeguard and celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity, serving as a counterforce to the prevailing push for cultural standardisation and homogenisation.

As for the linguistic dimension, Academia has been dealing with multiple aspects. For instance, it suggested its own orthography of Venetian called DECA (Drio El Costumar de l'Academia), developed by an internal commission and approved in 2013. It was used to publish in 2016 the first university handbook in the Venetian language.⁵⁷

Language course in Venetian seem to meet the favour of students⁵⁸. In this context, Academia has been organising courses in Venetian—short-term meetings targeted to an adult audience held once a week for seven weeks. The first meeting is a presentation of the course, followed by actual classes. Established for the first time in 2014, by the end of December 2019, the 'Corso de Veneto' editions had grown to 50 Courses held in six Veneto provinces, training almost 850 graduates and involving thousands of people in all for the public opening and closing events of the courses.

⁵⁶ In February 2017 and March 2019, respectively, the 1st (#1CILVE) and 2nd (#2CILVE) International Conference on the Venetian Language, where scholars such as Ronnie Ferguson (St. Andrews University), Christopher Mosely (UNESCO), Paolo Balboni and Graziano Serragiotto (Ca' Foscari University, Venice), Tilbert Stegmann (Goethe Universität Frankfurt/M.), and Marco Tamburelli (Bangor University) lectured.

⁵⁷ Mocellin, Klein, Stegmann (2016) *EuroComRom: I Sete Tamizi - La chiave par capir tute le lengue romanse!*, Editiones Eurocom: Frankfurt/M

⁵⁸ TVA (2022, November, 21).

Another initiative implemented by Academia is the 'Percorsi di Lingua Veneta' (Venetian Language Pathways), Veneto language teaching during curricular school hours. It consists of seven one-hour classes administered to first grade secondary schools, totalling 29 classes so far. According to prof. Alessandro Mocellin, language teacher and president of Academia, participation has been good, also considering that classrooms count a number of students with foreign background.⁵⁹

Furthermore, the 'SwiftKey Keyboard' smartphone app was made available free of charge. In addition to having the Venetian keyboard layout provided with the famous and indispensable Venetian 'Ł', it also contains an auto-corrector function with a vocabulary of 36,000 Venetian words already entered.

Worthy of mention is certainly the creation of the 'Venetian ABC' language course for English speakers, but also for Italians and Brazilians (soon also for French and German speakers), offered on the online platform Memrise. Finally, Academia helped setting up the Venetian language version of Wikipedia, which currently has 67,313 pages of content.

The Veneto region has been financing a number of initiatives within its budget for cultural events⁶⁰. If we consider the 2022 budgeting year, here are some examples:

- the Culture Department of the Municipality of Arquà Polesine, in collaboration with the Municipal Library, was awarded €4,100 to organise the XXIX edition of the 'Raise' Literary Prize, an event dedicated to poetry and fiction in the varieties of the Veneto language, reserved for all writers with Veneto culture or roots, even remote ones, resident both in Italy and abroad. The aim of the initiative is to promote the Veneto language and culture through a prose and poetry contest and the subsequent printing of a volume containing the winning poems and prose.
- The project "VoiceOn Veneto - Umori...in cucina" received a grant of €1,500 to facilitate a five-session course aimed at exploring the art of reading aloud a play in Venetian, specifically the variety of Vicenza. This initiative included casting for the proposed play, intensive study, rehearsals spanning 11 sessions, and culminated in a public presentation titled "Umori...in cucina". The play, a light-hearted comedy penned by the course instructor, aimed to highlight the generational clash among women with distinct personalities initially causing division. The community was invited to attend the presentation, where alongside a serving of homemade tagliatelle, copies of the play signed by the actors and director were distributed.
- La canzone veneziana [The Venetian song] by A.M.A.V. Accademia Musicale Artistica Veneta. The initiative, financed for €3,500, consisted of two evenings of concerts dedicated to music in the salons in Venice between the 19th and

⁵⁹ Academia dela Bona Creansa, *Il dialetto entra in classe*.

⁶⁰ Giunta Regionale del Veneto (2022).

20th centuries with stories by Luca Scarlini and music performed on period instruments in a journey through time. The first concert was dedicated to the "tradition of Venetian songwriting", while the second was dedicated to the "Venetian canzonette (songs) inspired by cultured music".

- Venetian Identity Route. From the Ancient Venetians to the Serenissima (€14,000). The project, carried out by the Municipality of Cadoneghe (Padova province), developed into a series of cultural activities for the preservation of the linguistic heritage, favouring research initiatives aimed at rediscovering and enhancing the ethnic-cultural heritage of past eras that fosters awareness of one's own identity by facilitating dialogue between generations. An educational course was planned for classes IV and V of the primary school with the Venetian alphabet as its theme, with the aim of raising awareness of the origin of this forgotten alphabet through the participation of each student in creative workshops. Conferences were also scheduled on a historical overview of ancient Veneto and the influence of ancient Rome on the conquered Veneto territories, on the theme of the Venetian language and the Italian language in comparison, where the characteristics of the Venetian language, in space and time, are presented, with references to the types of oral and written, scientific and literary production. The program included events such as the historical re-enactment of ancient Rome in Cadoneghe and the historical re-enactment of the Serenissima, which commemorates the Doge's journey to his holiday retreat via the ascent of the river Brenta. Finally, there were musical and theatrical performances in the Venetian language featuring cabaret moments. These segments portrayed the virtues and shortcomings of belonging to the Veneto region through monologues and dialogues in Venetian.

6 CASE STUDIES OF LANGUAGE REVITALISATION

While efforts to revitalise Venetian so far appear to have been modest for reverting its downward trend, other formerly endangered languages may offer an example of how to effectively draw a roadmap to salvation. Languages that lend themselves well as case studies with a positive output are Modern Hebrew and Catalan, while others such as Irish⁶¹ or Taiwan's Hokkien and Indigenous languages⁶² fail to provide best practices to emulate. Due to space constraints, we will only address the best practices of Modern Hebrew and Catalan.

In order to decide what type and level of revitalisation efforts are needed for a particular endangered language, it is useful to introduce a couple of classification tools: the UNESCO language vitality and endangerment scale and the EGIDS.

According to UNESCO experts, a language is in danger “when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children” (UNESCO, 2003:2).

UNESCO's language vitality assessment is identified by nine factors: six major factors (1-6), three factors (7-8) related to attitudes and policies and one (9) about documentation (Fig. 11):

1. *Intergenerational language transmission.*
2. *Absolute number of speakers.*
3. *Proportion of speakers within the total population.*
4. *Shifts in domains of language use.*
5. *Response to new domains and media.*
6. *Availability of materials for language education and literacy.*
7. *Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use.*
8. *Community members' attitudes towards their own language.*
9. *Type and quality of documentation.*

Note that none of these factors should be used alone. A language that is ranked highly according to one criterion may deserve immediate and urgent attention due to other factors (UNESCO 2003:7).

⁶¹ Despite Irish legislation for revitalising the Gaelic language during the 20th century, English has been increasingly seen as essential for social and political advancement.

⁶² Taiwan has introduced a series of policies dedicated to bolstering the revitalisation of Indigenous languages. These efforts started with the Education Act for Indigenous Peoples in 1988 and culminated in the most recent Development of National Languages Act in 2019. However, the pressure from Mandarin Chinese is unbeatable, mostly for economic reasons, making such laws the framework for a Sisyphean task.

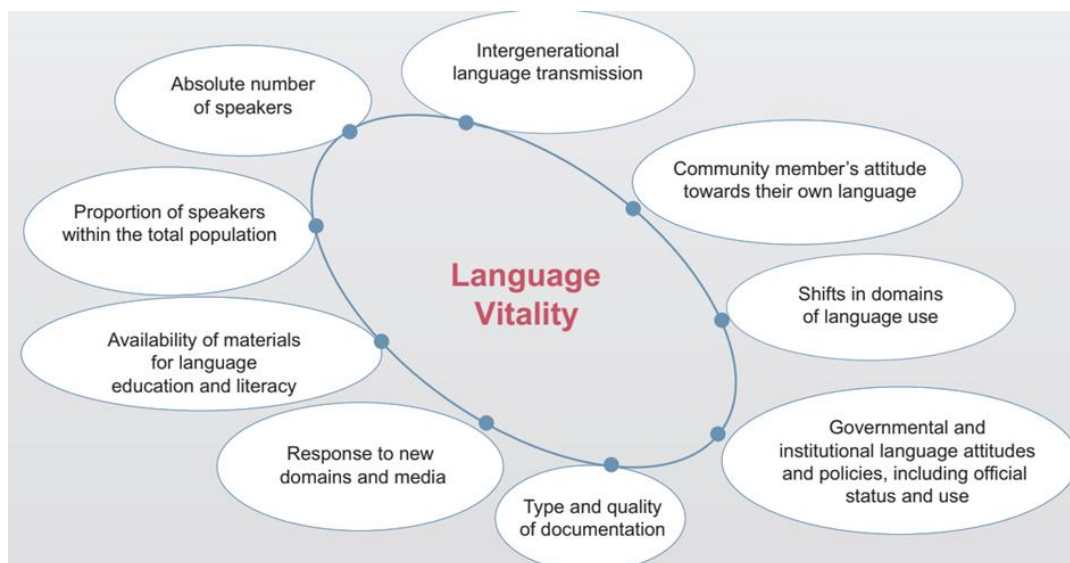


Figure 11 Language vitality assessment according to UNESCO

Source: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192416>

For each of the nine factors enumerated above a corresponding scale ranks the degree of endangerment from grade 0 to 5. As an example, factor no. 1, considered the most important, is framed as follows:

5	<i>safe</i>	Language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted
4	<i>unsafe (vulnerable)</i>	Most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)
3	<i>definitively endangered</i>	Children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home
2	<i>severely endangered</i>	Language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves
1	<i>critically endangered</i>	The youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently
0	<i>extinct</i>	while the parent generation may understand it, they do not

Table 5 The UNESCO's scale of language endangerment: transmission

Source: UNESCO 2003a

In this context, Venetian is considered by the UNESCO World Atlas of endangered languages as potentially 'unsafe' or 'vulnerable' (4).⁶³

⁶³ UNESCO WAL (World Atlas of Languages): Venetian

The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS), developed by Lewis and Simons (2010) from the seminal Fishman's 8-level Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), measures a language's status in terms of endangerment or development. The EGIDS is a comprehensive scale assessing language vitality across various dimensions and levels and it resembles Fishman's GIDS in focusing on usage disruption. The EGIDS consists of 13 levels with each higher number on the scale representing a greater level of disruption to the intergenerational transmission of the language⁶⁴ (Table 3).

The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS)

0	International	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy.
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.
2	Provincial	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	Wider Communication	The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
5	Developing	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
6A	Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6B	Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8A	Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
8B	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

Table 6 The EGIDS

Source: Lewis and Simons, 2010

⁶⁴ Ethnologue. Methodology.

At the lowest vitality levels (EGIDS 9 and 10), emphasis is on language's role in identity marking, with “Extinct” indicating no association with identity and “Dormant” implying symbolic use by an ethnic group. Higher levels (6a, 6b, 7, 8a, 8b) gauge daily use and intergenerational transmission. Levels 4 and 5 assess educational support and literacy. EGIDS 3 examines vehicularity, indicating wider communication usage. Provincial and National levels (2 and 1) consider governmental recognition and media/workplace usage. EGIDS is hierarchical, each level incorporating features of lower ones, except for EGIDS 3, where the ability to serve as a vehicular language takes precedence over educational and written materials support. In this classification, Venetian is ranked as 5 (developing)—together with Bavarian and Scottish Gaelic—with the following remark: “The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardised form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable”⁶⁵.

6.1 The rebirth of Hebrew

Modern Hebrew is perhaps the language that has proved to be the most successful in resurrecting like a phoenix from the ashes of a liturgic language of the Jewish diaspora and becoming the official language of a vibrant state. Linguist Ghil’ad Zuckermann differentiates between ‘reclamation’ (revival of a no-longer spoken language), ‘revitalisation’ (revival of a severely endangered language) and ‘reinvigoration’ (revival of an endangered language that still has a high percentage of children speaking it) (Zuckerman, 2020:199-200).

The reclamation of the Hebrew language occurred in Europe and Palestine towards the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This transformation saw Hebrew transition from solely a sacred language of Judaism to a spoken and written language used in everyday life in Israel. The process commenced with the influx of Jews from various regions who settled alongside the existing Jewish community in Palestine during the first half of the 20th century. Both Arabic-speaking Jews in Palestine and the linguistically diverse newcomers adopted Hebrew as a common language, serving as the historical linguistic bridge among all Jewish groups. Following the Israeli Declaration of Independence in 1948, Hebrew was established as one of the two official languages of Israel, alongside Modern Arabic. However, in July 2018, a new law was enacted, designating Hebrew as the sole official language of the state of Israel, while granting Arabic a "special status".

Zuckerman has written extensively about the genesis of Modern Hebrew he calls Israeli. He explains how the modern hybrid language Israeli is similar to and dissimilar from ancient Hebrew, elaborating on the phonology, phonetics,

⁶⁵ SIL in Eurasia.

morphology, syntax, lexicon, and semantics of Hebrew and Israeli. The differences between Israeli and ancient Hebrew cannot be compared to the ones between Modern English and Shakespearean English, as the Israeli sound system continues the phonetics and phonology of Yiddish rather than of Hebrew, as Yiddish was the native language of almost all Hebrew revivalists. Thus, Zuckermann proposes the Founder Principle: Yiddish is a primary contributor to Israeli because it was the mother tongue of the vast majority of revivalists (and first pioneers in Palestine) at the critical period of the beginning of Israeli (Zuckerman, 2020:15). Hebrew is spoken by approximately 4.8 million individuals within the country. Beyond Israel's borders, there are approximately 300,000 Hebrew speakers scattered across various countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Canada, as well as the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza. Notably, Hebrew stands out among the world's languages as the sole successful example of reviving a dormant language⁶⁶, defined technically as a language with no native speakers (UCLA, 2011).

In Israel, where a significant Arab minority (approximately 20%) and a substantial population of Jewish immigrants speaking various languages, including 600,000 Russian speakers, are represented, the society is highly multilingual. Nevertheless, Hebrew is actively promoted on both official and social fronts, reflecting its pivotal role as a symbol of Jewish nationalism. While Arabic and English hold some official status alongside Hebrew, Hebrew predominates in official, public, and private spheres among its 9,842,000 citizens⁶⁷. It is the primary language used in workplaces, except in the Arab sector. Government schools offer instruction in either Hebrew or Arabic, with Hebrew being compulsory for students up to the tenth grade, even in Arabic schools. Recent educational policies have shifted from neglecting immigrant languages to recognising their value and investing in their preservation, particularly Russian and Amharic. As in many other countries, the use of English in Israel has also seen a continual increase, serving as the lingua franca of the diaspora. At any rate, Hebrew maintains a vibrant presence in the media, including newspapers, magazines, books, and digital platforms and serves as the language of formal education up to the university level (UCLA, 2011).

But how was Hebrew resuscitated in the 19th century? We can learn it from Jack Fellman's book *The Revival of Classical Tongue*, which illustrates the story of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (born Eliezer Yitzhak Perlman; 7 January 1858 – 16 December 1922). Ben-Yehuda was a Russian-Jewish linguist, lexicographer, and journalist. He is celebrated for compiling the first Hebrew dictionary and for his editorial work

⁶⁶ EGIDS 9 (SIL in Eurasia).

⁶⁷ As of December 2023, Israel's population stands at approximately 9,842,000, consisting of: 73.2% (ca. 7,208,000) Jews, including 503,000 in the West Bank. 21.1% (ca. 2,080,000) Arab citizens, 5.7% (ca. 554,000) classified as "others." Central Bureau of Statistics, State of Israel (2003)

at HaZvi, one of the earliest Hebrew newspapers in Israel. Ben-Yehuda played a pivotal role in revitalising the Hebrew language and his efforts to revive Hebrew as a spoken language can be outlined in seven main stages:

- *Family usage*: Ben-Yehuda initiated Hebrew speaking in his family after relocating to Jerusalem in 1881. However, he encountered challenges due to the language's lack of basic vocabulary, often resorting to gestures for communication. At this point, only a few other families in Jerusalem adopted Hebrew as their spoken language.
- *Dissemination through newspapers*: Ben-Yehuda utilised newspapers, like Ha-Havatzet, to advocate for Hebrew revival not only among Jews in Palestine but also those in the diaspora. These newspapers served as vital communication channels with Jewish communities worldwide.
- *Formation of Hebrew-Speaking Societies*: Ben-Yehuda, with support from Yehiel Mikhal Pines, established "The Revival of Israel" society, aiming to promote Hebrew as a spoken language. Despite facing opposition from traditionalists and Ottoman authorities, this society influenced future language revival movements.
- *Introduction of Hebrew in schools*: Ben-Yehuda proposed teaching Hebrew in schools as a means to promote spoken Hebrew. He became the first Hebrew teacher at the Alliance Israelite Universelle school in Jerusalem, advocating immersive teaching methods. The implementation of Hebrew in schools appears all the more striking, considering that from 1948 to date over three million immigrants have been absorbed in Israel.
- *Publication of Hebrew newspapers*: In 1884 Ben-Yehuda launched Ha-Zvi ('The gazelle'), a newspaper written in a combination of Biblical and post-Biblical Hebrew, to further the Hebrew revival. Although initially lacking readership in Palestine, it contributed to the cause until its demise in 1914. In 1908, the newspaper's title was altered to HaOr ('The Light') as a result of licensing constraints. During the First World War, the Ottoman government prohibited the publication because of its advocacy for a Jewish homeland.
- *Formation of a Language Council*: Recognising the need for collective decision-making in language development, Ben-Yehuda founded Va'ad Ha-Lashon (The Academy of the Hebrew Language) to fill linguistic gaps and create new words. Established in 1908, the Hebrew Academy gained official recognition as a state institution in 1953. Its primary focus involves compiling subject-specific word lists, addressing each topic individually. Their initial undertaking was creating a list of arithmetic terms tailored for schoolchildren. Then, many new words were invented from scratch to denote objects unknown in Jewish antiquity, such as 'tomato' called 'agvaniyyah (עגבנייה), calqued from the German *Liebesapfel* (literally "love apple"). As Rabin (1963) reported, estimating the total number of coined words is challenging, likely ranging from twenty to thirty thousand. However, many of these terms didn't stand the test of time. For

instance, it took seven attempts to settle on a term for "match," while "lampshade" has been translated in fourteen different ways, and "pull-over" has twenty-three variations. The council's efforts began to impact local society in the early 20th century (Rabin, 1963:391-392).

- Ben Yehuda aimed to establish a vernacular form of Hebrew to foster Jewish nationalism, necessitating the introduction of new words and concepts into the language. His task involved not only encouraging Hebrew usage for secular purposes but also convincing the Jewish community to adopt an entirely new vocabulary (Fellman, 1973).

Ben Yehuda successfully persuaded school administrators in Jerusalem to adopt modern Hebrew as the language of instruction. He trained additional teachers to sustain this effort, thereby expanding the use of modern Hebrew. Teaching in modern Hebrew not only increased the number of speakers but also facilitated the integration of the language into everyday life in Palestine. As these children grew up speaking Hebrew, they began forming their own Hebrew-speaking families, further advancing the language's revival.

Today, of the 9.5 million people in Israel aged 20 and over, almost everyone uses Hebrew, and 55 percent speak it as their native language. Around the world there are around 15 million Hebrew speakers⁶⁸.

Yet there is a caveat: even positive movements can have unintended consequences, and language revitalisation efforts for one language may inadvertently lead to the suppression of others. The impressive revival of Hebrew as a spoken language, while inspirational, has come at the expense of other languages: as an example, Yiddish, once widely spoken among Jews, is now critically endangered. The promotion of Hebrew as the dominant language in Israel has resulted in the suppression of other local languages as part of a deliberate strategy to establish Hebrew as the primary language of the region (Hinton et al., 2018:497).

⁶⁸Yang A. (2013, May 11) *Hebrew wasn't spoken for 2,000 years. Here's how it was revived.* National Geographic.

6.2 A passion for Catalan

Another example of successful language shift reversal is Catalan. This case study is in many ways inspirational for the revitalisation of Venetian, being both West Romance languages spoken by people living in prosperous peripheral regions in their respective countries. Additionally, Catalan must face the pressure of Castilian, an international language⁶⁹.

Catalan is spoken in Catalonia, as well as in the Balearic Islands, parts of Valencia, Andorra, the French province of Roussillon, and the Italian city of Alghero, a territory home to over 13 million speakers. Catalan ranks as the ninth most spoken language in Europe, surpassing languages like Swedish, Danish, Finnish, or Greek in terms of speakers. There are over 80 television channels and 100 radio stations broadcasting daily in Catalan, along with a rich publishing tradition. Annually, almost 6,000 books are published in Catalan in Spain, accounting for about 12% of the total number of books published in the country.

Efforts to suppress Catalan language and culture have longstanding historical roots, but they were heightened during the era of Francisco Franco (1936-1975). The dictator enforced a ban on the Catalan language in public domains, mandating Spanish as the exclusive language of public life⁷⁰. Following the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, repression extended beyond politics to encompass culture as well. Catalan institutions were suppressed, and the use of Catalan was prohibited within the school system. The aftermath saw Catalonia deprived of crucial resources for its cultural production and preservation. Catalan language suffered a decline in prestige vis-à-vis Spanish, leading some affluent Catalans to adopt Spanish more prominently.

Simultaneously, a significant influx of migrants from southern Spain and the Aragon hinterland, numbering between one and two million, arrived in Catalonia post-1950s. Many of these newcomers had little interest in Catalan nationalism or the Catalan language, yet their demographic force was formidable: in 1910 only 5,4 percent of the population was immigrants, by 1970 it was 47,7 percent, so that by the end of the Franco era about half of the residents of Catalonia has no cultural links to the regions (Laitin, 1989:302-303). Despite these challenges, the Catalan people persevered in using their language at home, leading to its survival against all odds. With Franco's death in 1975 and the restoration of democratic freedoms,

⁶⁹ Globalisation and overtourism take a toll, too. As a matter of fact, nowadays not only Spanish but also English and German are ubiquitous, for example in Mallorca. By now there are already two or three generations of German-speaking families living on the island in addition to the German tourism that continues to thrive. A similar situation occurs in Ibiza and Formentera with Italians.

⁷⁰ See the 2006 film *Salvador* by Manuel Hueriga, which depicts the time anarchist Puig Antich spent on death row prior to his execution in 1974, in the last days of the Franco's dictatorship. People who visited him in prison were forbidden to speak in Catalan and forced to use Spanish.

the 1978 constitution acknowledged linguistic diversity and permitted languages other than Castilian Spanish to be official within the state.

Now, how did the Catalan government succeed in implementing policies that improved the situation of the Catalan language? Since the death of Franco, similar to movements in Quebec, Flanders, and Wales, Catalan nationalism can be analysed through the lens of the tipping problem, where incremental changes and efforts gradually gain momentum and achieve critical mass.

The nationalist party in Catalonia, the CDC, pursued a concerted agenda of language reform. This involved promoting the Catalan language while ensuring that non-Catalan speakers did not face undue burdens. The CDC government enacted a Law of Linguistic Normalisation, enjoying unanimous parliamentary support, which included provisions for side payments to those who used Catalan. Additionally, the government committed to purchasing a set number of copies of all books published in Catalan, guaranteeing a moderate profit for publishers with Catalan works. Subsidised television broadcasts, such as those of the Football Club of Barcelona, were made available exclusively to Catalan speakers. Furthermore, many jobs, which required minimal training or expertise, were reserved for Catalan speakers to teach their language (Laitin, 1989:314).

In reaction to the sluggish advancement of Catalanisation, several groups of linguistic militants have surfaced, including *Crida a la Solidaritat* ("Call to Solidarity") and *Terra Lliure* ("Free Land"). They have undertaken actions such as defacing signs written in Castilian and humiliating officials who use Castilian. While tactics vary, *Terra Lliure* has been involved in violent activities, whereas *Crida* has renounced terrorism. Nonetheless, both employ strategies to challenge those who uphold the existing situation and to advocate for change (ibid).

A major role in fostering the study of Catalan has been played the Institut Ramon Llull, an organisation funded by the Generalitat de Catalunya. Institut Llull provides resources, materials, and training for teachers of Catalan as a second language, as well as cultural exchanges, language camps, digital resources, translations, etc. Interestingly, over 150 universities worldwide offer courses in Catalan, and there are more than 400 journals published in the language. However, Catalan studies are relatively underrepresented in Spanish universities, reflecting historical discrimination and contemporary concerns over Catalonia's push for independence. Only seven universities in Spain (outside Catalonia) teach and research Catalan, whereas the UK has 22 universities offering Catalan studies, France has 20, and the US has 24.

As far as the initiatives to spread the use of Catalan are concerned, they encompass all types of social interaction. For instance, to increase social cohesion and avoid language abandonment, self-reflection and role-playing workshops are organised by the government to raise the awareness of the importance to resist

language switching at work or in social settings such as shopping, cultural events, etc. As an example, participants are given following pieces of advice⁷¹:

- *Començar sempre en català tenint presents els motius d'atendre i d'entendre'ns en aquesta llengua.*
- *Escoltar molt la persona, de manera que se senti acollida.*
- *Potenciar la comunicació a través dels recursos que ofereix el llenguatge no verbal, com per exemple:*
 - *Parlar a una velocitat inferior a la normal.*
 - *Simplificar el vocabulari.*
 - *Acompanyar el missatge amb gestos.*
 - *Fer preguntes que mirin de comprovar que l'interlocutor o interlocutora ha entès correctament la informació.*
 - *Interpretar els missatges incomplets i ajudar a completar-los.*
 - *Anticipar el tema de conversa, de manera que pugui comunicar-se amb una resposta simple.*
 - *Repetir frases i, si escau, traduir-les. És a dir, primer dir-les en català i després traduir-les a la llengua de l'interlocutor o interlocutora.*
- *En cas que detectem que l'interlocutor o interlocutora té dificultats per entendre'ns, podem fer servir les estratègies següents:*
 - *Parlar amb frases d'estructura senzilla i escoltar molt (la persona se sentirà més acollida).*
 - *Si s'utilitza una altra llengua diferent del català, intentar repetir alguna paraula o frase en català, per exemple, i acomiadar-nos en català.*
 - *Si se'ns demana que canviem de llengua, trobar-ne una que sigui tan familiar com sigui possible per a l'interlocutor o interlocutora.*
 - *Intentar evitar les situacions tenses pel fet d'utilitzar una o altra llengua.*

⁷¹ - Always start in Catalan keeping in mind the reasons for attending and understanding each other in this language.

- Listen to the person a lot, so that s/he feels welcome.
- Enhance communication through the resources offered by non-verbal language, such as:
 - Speak at a slower than normal rate.
 - Simplify the vocabulary.
 - Accompany the message with gestures.
 - Ask questions to check that the interlocutor has understood the information correctly.
 - Interpret incomplete messages and help complete them.
 - Anticipate the topic of conversation, so you can communicate with a simple answer.
 - Repeat sentences and, if necessary, translate them. In other words, first say them in Catalan and then translate them into the language of the interlocutor.
- If we detect that the interlocutor has difficulty understanding us, we can use the following strategies:
 - Speak in sentences with a simple structure and listen a lot (the person will feel more welcome).
 - If a language other than Catalan is used, try to repeat a word or phrase in Catalan, for example, and say goodbye in Catalan.
 - If we are asked to switch the language, find one that is as familiar as possible to the interlocutor.
 - Try to avoid tense situations due to the fact of using one or another language (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2011:11-12, own tr.).

An interesting subject in the language maintenance efforts is the upgrading of the language technological tools vis-à-vis the increasing challenges posed by the digitalisation of communication. A 2011 study conducted by META-NET, a European network of excellence, involving over 200 language technologies experts, cautioned that over 20 European languages, including Catalan, risked digital obsolescence unless they received increased technological support in four key areas: machine translation, voice interaction, textual analysis, and linguistic resource availability. In order to ensure that citizens can communicate and interact in Catalan digitally at a level equal to speakers of other languages, such as English or Spanish, in 2020 the Catalonia government launched the AINA project (provided with a budget of € 13.5M financed with NextGeneration EU funds) which is geared to generate the digital and linguistic resources necessary to facilitate the development of voice assistants, automatic translators or conversational agents in Catalan.⁷²

The Catalan experience suggests that banning a language can paradoxically contribute to its preservation. When a language is prohibited, its speakers often feel resentment and resist authoritarian attempts to suppress their culture. This resistance can foster a sense of solidarity and determination to safeguard their linguistic heritage, ultimately leading to increased efforts to maintain and promote the language. Hence the importance of grass-root movements and intra-group coercion.

Ultimately, we can affirm that the linguistic hegemony of Catalan in Catalonia is a fruit achieved patiently through deliberate, deep and all-out efforts to defend one's identity—a far cry from policies carried out elsewhere that view heritage languages as folkloristic ornamentation.

6.3 Effective language revitalisation strategies

In these paragraphs, we are going to analyse what strategies work under different circumstances in language revitalisation. For instance, while both Catalan and Hebrew are rightfully considered success stories for language revitalisation, the demographic and sociolinguistic situation is vastly different.

The majority of Hebrew early learners spoke Indo-European languages (mainly Yiddish and European languages) and had to cope with very different morphosyntactic features. However, in the case of Catalan the linguistic distance to Castilian was much smaller, and there were plenty of speakers and passive bilinguals. Therefore, the situation of Venetian seems to fit more into that of Catalan, whereas Italian plays the role of Castilian⁷³.

⁷² BSC (Barcelona Supercomputing Center (2020, December 10).

⁷³ While Catalan is a local or regional language within Spain, where there is great linguistic homogeneity and local varieties are similar to standard Spanish, in Italy the situation is much more varied and complex for historical reasons. Venetian is only one of many dialectal varieties, the revitalisation of which is conceivable.

In this context, it is important to frame the language object of revitalisation as the field has abandoned the idea that one solution fits all cases.

Frequently, communities emphasising language revival hope for widespread adoption of their language for everyday communication. Present strategies for language revitalisation focus on increasing language exposure. A language is considered "vital" when it is encouraged in various settings such as homes, schools, communities, workplaces, and media. Sole attention to one of these arenas is insufficient as acquisition must be coupled with ongoing language usage for successful revitalisation.

Individuals in endangered language communities may initially perceive widespread language adoption as unattainable. However, the prerequisite of having the language integrated into all aspects of life is not essential before initiating revitalisation efforts. Instead, it is an organic progression that evolves gradually from the grassroots level. Many dedicated individuals take the initiative to expand language usage across various domains independently, serving as role models for others. These pioneers invest years in establishing immersive educational institutions, community learning initiatives, and language-focused events such as camps. Consequently, opportunities arise for additional enthusiasts to contribute to language preservation efforts, such as conducting linguistic research, teaching in educational settings, and fostering the creation of literature and media in the language. This part is very difficult, because although individual enthusiasts abound everywhere, this rarely evolves into a new social language movement. There must be clear advantages for everyone to see for language revitalisation to happen. If everything remains the same (just in another language) then nobody will be convinced. This new imagination of the benefits of revitalizing language is called "ideological clarification". Kroskrity citing Fishman highlights the importance of ideological clarification as an apparent achievement of community consensus about the linkage of language renewal to other projects of cultural revitalisation (Kroskrity, 2013).

Moreover, language revitalisation efforts typically coincide with a commitment to preserving or rejuvenating ceremonial customs and other cultural practices, naturally fostering additional avenues for language usage. However, this transformation is not instantaneous; it unfolds gradually and may span multiple generations before reaching its full potential.

Some negative elements to be aware of are represented by conflicting attitudes inside the community and negative reactions from the surrounding society.

In endangered language communities, just like in any community, attitudes towards language revitalisation vary widely. Alongside committed language revitalisation activists, there are individuals who hold positive views about language revitalisation but are not actively involved, as well as those who are indifferent or somewhat negative towards it. Some may even actively oppose language revitalisation, viewing it as futile or holding onto outdated prejudices against it. Many see it as parochial, and activists need to spell out how and why it is not. To gain

momentum, the movement must engage positively inclined individuals and capture the attention of the indifferent, while influencing those who are negative or oppose language revitalisation may prove to be more challenging. Language revitalisation must always be forward-looking and future oriented. It is usually about bringing equality, tolerance and cultural freedom (anyone can join, and anyone is free to not join).

Ideally, interest and activism in language revitalisation would spread naturally, connecting an increasing number of people to the cause. However, in reality, language revitalisation is seldom a straightforward process: assimilation and conscious revitalisation often occur concurrently, with trends varying across regions and over time. Ideologies never spread naturally and what is worse, “being right” is of precious little consequence, too. What passes as common sense is always a reflection of power, and new common sense (Venetian is important and should be maintained!) requires a redistribution of power. Language revitalisation is empowerment of dominated people. Language is not the end but the means to achieve this. Furthermore, language revitalisation may remain a concern only for a minority within the community, yet their efforts remain invaluable. Moreover, individual attitudes towards language revitalisation can evolve over a lifetime; for example, formerly indifferent individuals may reevaluate their linguistic and cultural heritage upon starting a family. Language revitalisation aims to revalue once stigmatised or undervalued language varieties and identities, which can be emotionally burdensome for those who were previously coerced into abandoning their native language for societal assimilation. While some may find empowerment and healing in this process, others may experience pain and conflict due to negative memories and conflicting language ideologies, posing significant obstacles to language reclamation despite improved attitudes and supportive state policies.

For younger generations, who may lack the burdensome experiences of the past, the language revitalisation process may seem mentally easier, but practical difficulties arise as many have not had the opportunity to learn the endangered language at home. Fear of ridicule or criticism can inhibit learners from speaking. As an example, to address emotional barriers resulting from past assimilation policies, the Sámi in Scandinavia have implemented a programme based on cognitive-behavioural therapy to help individuals overcome these hurdles and start speaking Sámi (Hinton et al., 2018:495-497).

In response to the language revitalisation movement, there may be negative reactions or counter-movements within broader society. Conservative elements in society, apprehensive about the perceived growing influence of a minority language and viewing the promotion of other languages as inconvenient or even unpatriotic, work to undermine bilingual education efforts. In other cases, it is excellence in schooling within a language group that is perceived as elitist and hence fought, as was the case with South African Stellenbosch University which in 2015 had to switch from Afrikaans (recognised by UNESCO as a potentially vulnerable

language) to English on account of students' pressure⁷⁴. Arguably, the issue is more complicated than Afrikaans being vulnerable and the English the most powerful language in the history of humanity, but it does not alter the substance of facts.

The simultaneous revitalisation of one language and the decline of others often go hand in hand, presenting a significant ethical dilemma in language revitalisation efforts. Endangered languages can face suppression not only from dominant majority languages but also from the revitalisation movements of other endangered languages (see the case of Hebrew replacing Yiddish, *supra*). According to the ethical principles of language revitalisation, such movements should not contribute to the oppression or endangerment of other languages; rather, they should contribute to the enrichment of linguistic diversity.

Language revitalisation efforts, and their achievements, often occur at levels below formal community programmes. These grassroots initiatives are individualistic, diverse, and continuously evolving, contributing incrementally to overall growth. State policies which fail to recognise this can do little to reverse language shift. Fishman discusses about this as he calls the Irish strategy to revert the decline of Gaelic "Irlandisation" (lots of legislative support but little engagement at grassroots level) and he warns from taking such an approach. The reason why this strategy does not work lies in the fact that an endangered language needs to fulfil societal functions which the replacing language does not cover as well (Fishman 1991). Put simply, no function —no future. This begs the question about the (envisioned) societal function of revitalised Venetian. The answer to this question might be that a community who speaks Venetian might share the feeling that their identity is different from the superimposed national one and coagulate it into speaking their local language. In other words, a different linguistic outfit would fit better. In parallel, a person from Basel conducting a conversation can switch from Swiss German to High German at will but feels that the latter does not convey the same *Weltanschauung* as the former one. On a different level, Austrians struggle to use certain High German words, such as 'lecker' (en. tasty, lit. 'licker') as they would not do justice to the Alpine Republic culinary traditions, and this is arguably a product of material culture: a stereotyped Berlin family would lavish on furnishing the home and skimp on fancy food, while a Viennese family would reputedly do the opposite.

Success in language revitalisation is not a fixed endpoint but an ongoing process. It's more accurate to view a programme as "being successful" rather than having "succeeded." Language revitalisation unfolds across generations, never culminating in a final destination but rather encountering and overcoming challenges while celebrating both minor and major accomplishments along the way. These

⁷⁴ Deutsche Welle (2015, November 13) *Students in South Africa win language victory*.

In other cases, such as in South Tyrol, Italy—where German is a recognised minority language in Italy but a majority language in this province), the educational system struggles with the integration of non-German speaking children whose families wish them to grow bilingual. Südtirol News (2024, February 5).

small victories provide the foundation for tackling new obstacles and pursuing larger objectives, ensuring that the work is perpetual. Indeed, attained language revitalisation goals are not granted forever, as the case of Catalonia shows, where the tug of war between the Spanish speaking community and the Catalan educational system are the daily bread of the press.⁷⁵

When evaluating the success or failure of a language revitalisation programme, both communities and funders often seek assessment. However, this raises numerous questions: What criteria should be used to determine success or failure, and who gets to decide? Were the programme's goals realistic, and have they remained consistent over time? Is it even appropriate to assess success at a particular moment? For instance, some cultural committees overseeing language teaching programmes may face pressure from uninformed tribal councils to quantify success by the number of fluent speakers produced after just one year, highlighting the need for education on the complexities of assessing success. In fact, questioning whether "success" is a reasonable metric at all is a valid consideration.

Achieving fluency for an entire community in an endangered language presents considerable challenges. Motivations vary widely, with many individuals showing little interest, and constant exposure to the dominant language of the surrounding society further complicates matters. The question that needs to be addressed is the following: what is the advantage of being a Venetian speaker vs. an Italian speaker? It does not necessarily need to be of an economic nature, but some advantage must exist for the language to be maintained and revitalised. Nobody speaks two languages e.g. Italian/Venetian if they fulfil the same function. The ideological clarification consists in acknowledging that local languages fulfil a social function, namely that of making people feel better: if tangible heritage items such as architectural, culinary or fashion elements provide sensorial satisfaction, so should likewise intangible heritage items (e.g. a language) do for the mind.

Advocating for the reversal of language shift extends beyond linguistic preservation; it signifies a commitment to empowering communities, nurturing hope, and safeguarding diverse identities. As Fishman maintained: "RLS (Reversing Language Shift) appeals to many because it is part of the process of re-establishing local options, local control, local hope, and local meaning to life. It basically reveals a humanistic and positive outlook vis-a-vis intragroup life, rather than a mechanistic and fatalistic one. It espouses the right and ability of small cultures to live and inform life for their own members as well as to contribute to the enrichment of humankind as a whole" (Fishman, 1991:35).

According to Fishman, "RLS espouses the right and ability of small cultures to live and to inform life for their own members as well as to contribute thereby to the enrichment of humankind as a whole. It is, however, not a question of opposing

⁷⁵ Cfr. the row over Spanish-language teaching in Catalan schools: *The Economist* (2024, January 4).

the use of the local language to that of other languages—such as official, trade, vehicular languages—but rather advocating for a complementary use, where each language fulfils the function to which it is best suited” (ibid.).

In fact, it is unlikely that every member of a community will become proficient in and regularly use the indigenous language. Language revitalisation efforts may ultimately remain a minority pursuit within communities, with only a relatively small number of individuals becoming proficient speakers and advocating for the language in each generation. Fluency in the endangered language may become a specialised skill, akin to other traditional practices such as basket-making or singing (Hinton et al. 2018:500). Such is probably the fate of the gated communities of Afrikaners in South Africa, as the villages of Kleinfontain or Orania exemplify⁷⁶.

It is crucial that language communities, as well as individuals within those communities, have the autonomy to establish their own language revitalisation objectives, free from external imposition. For language revitalisation to genuinely serve as a healing and empowering endeavour, it must emerge organically from within the community, rather than being dictated by outside experts. Imposing language revitalisation initiatives on individuals or communities is counterproductive; instead, it should be community driven.

Moreover, the goals set for language revitalisation should be attainable and realistic, avoiding setting the bar too high. If the objectives appear daunting or unattainable, it can instil fear of the original language and breed feelings of inadequacy for not achieving enough. Language revitalisation is a gradual and continuous process, often commencing modestly and evolving over time towards more ambitious goals. Starting small allows for incremental progress and fosters a sense of accomplishment, motivating further engagement and commitment to the revitalisation efforts.

⁷⁶ UNPO (Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization (2018, August 3).

7 TOWARDS A COMMON VENETIAN ORTHOGRAPHY

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the transcription systems used for the language varieties spoken in Veneto-speaking territories and communities. It begins by examining the significance of writing in maintaining the vitality of a language. The discussion then focuses on the methods of transcribing Veneto in dialect literature from the 16th century to the mid-19th century, culminating in the Unitary Venetian Orthography (*Grafia Veneta Unitaria*) issued by the Veneto Regional Council in 1995 and subsequently revised into the Official Venetian Orthography (*Grafia Veneta Ufficiale*) in 2017⁷⁷.

However, languages occasionally undergo orthographic reforms, as exemplified by the German language reforms in the 1990s⁷⁸. Therefore, at the end of this chapter, we propose an innovative language transcription system. This system considers the fact that Venetian varieties belong to the Western branch of Romance languages, thereby facilitating communication between Venetian speakers in Europe and those residing in Latin American countries.

7.2 *Scripta manent*

In general, the vitality of a language (or language variety) in a given territory depends on many factors, such as the relative number of speakers out of the total population, the prestige derived from an oral or written literary tradition, or the degree of institutionalisation of its use. Historically, the most important factor seems to be the former, i.e. *the relative number of speakers out of the total population*. Examples are numerous. For instance, during the era of the so-called barbarian invasions⁷⁹ from 164 to 476 A.D., the extensive Anglo-Saxon settlements in Britain led to the displacement of Celtic languages by Germanic ones. Later, during the Norman rule, the French language massively influenced the English language, but did not oust it. By contrast, this was not the case for the Gothic, Lombard and Frankish settlements in Italy, whose languages were overwhelmed by the Romance languages. Even Ostrogoth, although leaving a written legacy, the *Codex Argenteus*, did not survive.

⁷⁷ For an account on the differences of the two, cfr. Academia della Bona Creansa (2024, June 15).

⁷⁸ See also the debate about gender neutral orthography.

⁷⁹ Alternatively, in transalpine countries, with a more neutral term, these movements are referred to as "Völkerwanderungen"—migrations of peoples, encompassing not only Germanic groups but also Avars, Huns, and others.

Similarly, in Qing China, Manchurian, despite being the language of imperial edicts and administration, failed to win over the Han masses and is now virtually extinct. We can therefore conclude that in a context of widespread illiteracy where a language is spoken by most of the population, there is no need to fear for its survival and development, even in the absence of written traditions.

On the other hand, languages spoken by a *minority of the population* have been able to be transmitted precisely because of the presence of a writing apparatus and literary *corpus*. This is the case, for instance, of languages such as Hebrew, which survived the centuries of the diaspora only thanks to the anchoring of written texts—especially religious ones—while its speakers were gradually assimilated into the cultural milieu of the host area or elaborated original idioms, such as Yiddish⁸⁰. Other languages, such as Arabic or classical Chinese, were able to spread and influence other languages through canonical texts. If, therefore, the fact of possessing a script is not a sufficient condition to guarantee the vitality of a language, it is nevertheless a decisive preservation factor when this language enjoys a minority status.

In the case of the Venetan *koiné*⁸¹, in the context of contemporary society pervaded by the Italian-speaking *mass media*, recourse to the written medium can be considered a strategic means of integrating the language into the everyday life of speakers. Even more, considering the absence in the main audiovisual *media* – media that are available to other language varieties, such as, for example, Swiss German⁸². In the following paragraphs, we will examine the evolution of Venetian orthography from its inception to the present, culminating in the proposal we will present.

⁸⁰ Thus, for example, Sephardic Jews on the Iberian Peninsula cultivated the Hebrew language alongside the Iberian languages and language varieties and *Ladino* (a variety of Castilian with Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian elements, etc.).

⁸¹ It is debated whether a Venetian *koiné* exists. Here we take the affirmative position of Grassi et al., 1997: 176).

⁸² Swiss German, as is well known, does not have its own writing system (except for informal communication, e.g. on chat rooms etc.) and uses standard German in print media. However, the use of standard German in public broadcasting is also subject to 'helvetisation': see the case of the speaker Annalisa Achtermann, who was required to unlearn her standard German accent in order to adopt the Swiss accent when going on air. Blick (2023, March 30).

7.3 The Venetian phoneme inventory and its transcription

Linguists have developed a transcription system that is independent of the orthographies of individual languages, based on a principle of regular correspondence between linguistic sounds (phonons) and graphic signs. The most widespread phonetic alphabet, also in the transcription of language varieties, is the IPA alphabet (Leoni et. al., 2022: 32 ff.; Grassi, 1997: 296 ff.). The phonemes of Veneto, with its local varieties, amount to 27, including 19 consonants, seven vowels and one semi-vowel⁸³ (Zamboni, 1974:10) (Fig. 12).

CONSONANTS							
		Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar
Plosives	Voiceless Voiced	[p] [b]			[t] [d]		[k] [g]
Nasals		[m]			[n]	[ɲ]	
Fricatives	Voiceless Voiced		[f] [v]	[θ] [ð]	[s] [z]		
Liquid	Trill Lateral				[r] [l]		
Affricates	Voiceless Voiced					[tʃ] [dʒ]	

VOWELS		
	Front	Back
Close	[i]	[u]
Semi-close	[e]	[o]
Semi-open	[ɛ]	[ɔ]
Open and central	[a]	

Figure 12 Consonants and vowels of the Venetian varieties

⁸³ The scheme was adapted by Zamboni, supplementing it with the addition of the two dental fricatives.

Regarding consonants, the plosives [p, b, t, d, k, g], nasal [m, n, ɲ], labio-dental fricatives [f, v] and palato-alveolar affricates [tʃ] [dʒ] do not differ significantly from Italian.

As for other consonant sounds, the dentals [θ] and [ð] are attested in some northern varieties of Veneto, e.g. in Bellunese, Feltrino and Trevigiano. E.g., Italian [tʃ]ento (cento) corresponds to Venetian [s]ento and northern Venetian [θ]ento; Italian pe[dʒ]o (*peggio*) corresponds to Venetian pè[z]o and northern Venetian pè[ð]o.

Concerning the liquid consonants r and l, in the varieties of Veneto the [r] is always produced with a single touch of the tongue, while for the [l] the matter is more complex. In fact, the lateral [l] is pronounced clear when it is located within a word and is preceded or followed by a consonant, as for example in *molton* 'mutton', *salgaro* 'willow', *saltar* 'to leap', etc. however, when [l] is placed between vowels or at the beginning of a word followed by a vowel, it is characterised by a peculiar pronunciation, commonly known as evanescent [l], which is widespread in central and eastern Veneto, while it is absent in the northern and western peripheral varieties (Tomasin 2010, 729).

Here are some examples where the sound [l] is transcribed with ł:

[l] Between vowels: *zogatoło* 'toy', *połastro* 'chicken', *zało* 'yellow' (1)

However, if one of the two vowels is a front vowel, [l] fades altogether and is not pronounced at all: *caligo* 'haze', *vilan* 'rude', *putela* 'girl'

[l] Initial + vowel: *liso* 'smooth', *ługanega* 'sausage', *łengoa* 'tongue', *łigar* 'to tie' (2)

The semivowel is the palatal [j] that appears in words such as *ojo* 'oil', *mojo* 'wet', *jeri* 'yesterday', etc.

7.4 Historical background

We will consider herewith a few authors of Veneto dialect literature, to highlight how the spoken language has been transcribed over time.

Among the first dialect authors, Angelo Beolco (1496–1542), also known as Ruzante or Ruzzante, was a playwright and actor hailing from Padua. Belonging to a wealthy and influential family; Ruzante received a quality education and devoted himself to writing scripts and organising performances in Padua and Venice. His works, mainly written in Paduan dialect, have two prominent characteristics: naturalness and distortion. The author carefully reproduces the rhythm of spoken language but distorts certain linguistic elements to create a theatrical satirical effect, arousing hilarity in the audience. The result is a satirical language that varies according to the origin, personality, and social class of the characters. Ruzante's contributions thus mark a significant period in the evolution of theatrical language, with his innovative use of dialect and satirical elements that influenced later playwrights

such as Goldoni. The following transcription conventions can be observed in this author's works:

- the voiced alveolar fricative sound [z] is sometimes represented with the grapheme <s> (*dise, amorose, preson, pesa*) and occasionally with <z> (*pi-anze, zò, piezo*);
- the voiceless alveolar fricative [s] is represented with a simple or double <s>, as in the words *adesso, cassiti, fosse, cossì, intendesse, messiere, assè, poesse, essere*;
- the grapheme <ç> is used to represent the voiceless interdental fricative as in *çiera, çento, francese*. For some words, however, the grapheme <z> is adopted (*canzon, bolzon, tinazo, inanzo, rizola, desgrazia*);
- the lateral [l] is expressed in all phonetic contexts; therefore, the evanescent pronunciation does not seem to have been present at the time.

Marin Sanudo (1466–1536) was a man of letters, an historian and a politician, born in Venice into a noble family. He received a classical and cultured education. From 1496 to 1533, he devoted himself to writing *Diaries*, in which he recounted what happened every day in Venetian councils and in the city in general, including letters, documents, reports on culture, trade, customs and public works. In his *Diaries*, the author uses the graphemes <s>, <ss>, <z>, and <x> with great ease: as an example, he randomly uses the terms *trevisano-trevixano-trevigiano* (i.e. related to the town of Treviso).

Carlo Goldoni (1707–1793) is considered the greatest Italian playwright. In his comedies Goldoni used both Italian and Venetian, as well as French, Spanish and Bergamasque, to the extent that scholars refer to Goldoni's 'multilingualism'. This is due to the author's need to typify characters considering their origin, occupation or social environment. In Goldoni's comedies, the writing of Venetian is very similar to that of Italian and the graphemes do not always correspond to the respective phonemes (Folena 1958, 35). From an analysis of the author's works, we infer that:

- the voiced alveolar fricative sound [z] is represented with <x> only for forms of the verb 'to be', while in other words the grapheme <s> is used, as in *piase* and *casa*;
- the voiceless alveolar fricative [s] is represented with <s> or <ss>. Although the geminate [s] does not exist in Venetian, Goldoni uses it for a large number of words, e.g. in *missier, cussì, fusse*. He also doubles other consonants such as [dʒ] in *voggio, muggier*, [f] in *soffrir, sofferto*, [t] in *suttilo*, [k] in *zucca barucca*, [ts] in *pezzo, bezzetti, giazze*, but not methodically and consistently.
- the voiceless and voiced palatal affricates are represented with the trigraph <chi> and the digraph <gi> respectively, as can be seen in *chiave, chiamo, muggier*.

- the lateral [l] is written clearly in all contexts; the evanescent pronunciation seems not to exist.

An important author for the history of transcription is Giuseppe Boerio (1754–1832), who graduated in law in Padua and served as an officer of the Serenissima. His main work, the *Dictionary of the Venetian Dialect*, was published in an edition that includes an Italian-Venetian index in 1856. In Boerio's dictionary, the spelling differs little from the Italian orthographic tradition, e.g., the digraph <ch> represents the palatoalveolar sound [tʃ] in words such as *call, nail, key, church*; in Italian <ch> represents the voiceless velar plosive[k] (Boerio, 1998).

In conclusion, the orthographic systems proposed by Ruzante, Sanudo, Goldoni and Boerio share the feature that they are not uniform and consistent, because one sound is often represented by two or more graphemes. An example is the voiced alveolar fricative, which is expressed as <s>, <z> or <x>.

7.5 The Unitary Venetian Orthography

Grafia Veneta Unitaria (GFU, lit. “Unitary Venetian Orthography”) is a handbook, written in Italian, with the aim of bringing together under a single set of rules the different writing methods of the Veneto language varieties. It was written by a scientific commission appointed by the Veneto Regional Council in 1995 under the supervision of linguist Manlio Cortelazzo. The graphemes proposed and described in the manual are as follows (Giunta Regionale del Veneto, 1995):

1. <a>: open central vowel.
E.g. aqua 'water'
2. <â>: non-rounded back vowel. This vowel is attested in Veneto-Ladin dialects.
E.g. âla 'she'
3. : voiced bilabial plosive consonant.
E.g. barba 'beard' and 'uncle'
4. <c>: voiceless palato-alveolar affricate consonant. It is used with this phonetic value only in front of the vowels <e> and <i>.
E.g. macia 'stain'
5. <ç>: voiceless velar plosive consonant. Used before the vowels <a>, <o> and <u> and at the end of words.
E.g. pèca 'footprint'

6. <c'>: palate-alveolar voiceless affricate consonant. It can be encountered in word final position in northern varieties.
E.g. ciuc' 'fresh cheese' (Comelico)
7. <ch>: voiceless velar plosive consonant. The ch nexus makes it possible to assign a velar value (as in Italian) to the consonant followed by <e> or <i>.
E.g. chieto 'quiet'
8. <ç>: palate-alveolar voiceless affricate consonant. Alternative sign to c (*supra* 4)
Eg. çave (key)
9. <d>: voiced dental plosive consonant.
E.g. cadena 'chain'
10. <dh>: interdental voiced fricative consonant.
E.g. Fri. Sept. fredha 'cold'
11. <ð>: interdental voiced fricative consonant. Alternative grapheme (*supra* 10)
12. <e>: (semi)closed front vowel.
E.g. renga 'herring'
13. <é>: front (semi-)closed vowel. Grapheme used in three contexts:
 - in oxytones that do not end in a consonant: paré 'wall' (Ampezzo),
 - in proparoxytones: pévare 'pepper'.
 - in some homonyms: né 'nor' (conjunction) c. ne (pronoun)
14. <è>: semi-open front vowel.
E.g. perèr (pear tree)
15. <f>: voiceless labiodental fricative consonant.
E.g. finferli 'chanterelles' (type of mushroom)
16. <g>: voiced palatal affricate consonant. Used in front of the vowels <e> and <i>. Alternative grapheme: <ġ>.
E.g. giara 'gravel'
17. <g>: voiced velar plosive consonant. Used with phonetic value in front of the vowels <a>, <o>, <u>:
E.g. gato 'cat'

18. <gh>: voiced velar plosive consonant. Used in front of the palatal vowels <e> and <i>:
E.g. ghèto 'ghetto'
In ancient texts, the grapheme <gh> was very rare and <g> had both palatal and velar values.
19. <gl>: voiced velar plosive consonant + lateral alveolar consonant.
E.g. glàndola 'gland'
20. <gl>: palatal lateral consonant.
E.g. maniglia 'handle' This sound is not present in the Veneto language varieties but can be used for Italianisms.
21. <gn>: palatal nasal consonant. Alternative grapheme: <ñ̃>.
Eg. gnaro 'nest'
22. <ñ̃ >: palatal nasal consonant. It is the sign adoptable in place of gn (*supra* 21)
23. < ġ >: voiced palatoalveolar affricate consonant. Alternative (*supra* 16).
24. <h>: voiceless postvelar aspirated consonant. This type of pronunciation is typical of rural Feltrino.
E.g. ahari 'business'
25. <i>: closed front vowel.
E.g. intrada 'entrance'
26. <j>: front semi-consonant. It replaces the <i> when it can also alternate in the same variety with palatal g:
– at the beginning of words: jèri 'yesterday', jutar 'to help'.
– between two syllabic vowels: ajo 'garlic', mèjo 'better'.
27. <k>: voiceless velar plosive consonant.
E.g. karèga 'chair'
28. <l>: alveolar lateral consonant.
E.g. molton 'mutton'
29. <ł>: relaxed dorso-palatal semi-consonant. This is the so called 'evanescent el'. It occurs in two cases:

- at the beginning of a word after a non-palatal vowel (<a>, <o>, <u>):
longo 'long'
 - between non-palatal vowels: góndola 'gondola'
30. <m>: bilabial nasal consonant
E.g. mar 'sea' The consonant clusters *mb* and *mp* are replaced with *nb* and *np* respectively. E.g.: inportant 'important'.
31. <n>: velar and alveolar nasal consonant
E.g. ponaro 'chicken coop'
32. <ñ>: nasal velar consonant. Restricted use to some Ladin-Veneto varieties.
33. <o>: (semi)closed back vowel
E.g. bote 'barrel'
34. <ó>: semi-closed back vowel. Grapheme used in the following cases:
 - oxytones that do not end in a consonant: e.g. bogó 'snail' (Garda)
 - proparoxytones: e.g. dódese 'twelve'
 - homonyms: e.g. són 'sound' c. son '(I am)').
35. <ò>: semi-open back vowel
E.g. gòto 'glass'
36. <p>: voiceless bilabial plosive consonant
E.g. porcel(o) 'pig'.
37. <q>: voiceless velar plosive consonant + semi-consonant u
E.g. quarèò 'brick' Italian words such as *acqua* are written as *aqua*, because doubling does not exist in the Veneto language varieties.
38. <r>: alveolar vibrant consonant
E.g. rosto 'roast'
39. <s>: alveolar voiceless fricative consonant
E.g. salgaro 'willow tree' Between vowels, the grapheme <ss> is adopted.
E.g. còssa 'thing', cussì 'so'.
40. <s>: voiced alveolar fricative consonant. It represents the sound [z] between vowels or before a voiced consonant.
E.g. sdentegà 'toothless'

41. <sc̣>: voiceless alveolar fricative consonant + voiceless palato-alveolar affricate consonant. It is the alternative spelling of the two distinctly pronounced consonants <s-c> (*infra* 42)
E.g. fiṣcar (whistle)
42. <s-c>: alveolar voiceless fricative consonant + palato-alveolar voiceless affricate consonant. The dash warns that the two consonants are to be pronounced separately.
E.g. mas-cio (male and pig)
43. <ṣ̌>: voiceless palato-alveolar fricative consonant. It corresponds to the sound that in Italian is represented by the digram <sc>.
E.g. ṣ̌chena 'back'
44. <ṣ̌>: voiced alveolar fricative consonant. It represents the sound [z] in the following cases:
- at the beginning of a word after a vowel: ṣ̌irlo 'wild myrtle' (Treviso)
 - after a consonant: vèrša 'cabbage' and 'open'.
 - in the final position: garàṣ̌ 'garage'.
45. <ss>: voiceless alveolar fricative consonant. Only within and between vowels.
E.g. strassa (rag)
46. <ʈ>: voiceless post-dental plosive consonant.
E.g. butyro 'butter'
47. <u>: closed back vowel.
Eg: dudolèr 'jujube' (Treviso)
48. <v>: voiced labiodental fricative consonant.
E.g. vaca 'cow'
49. <x>: voiced alveolar fricative consonant. It is used to replace the <ṣ̌> in the following cases:
- with the third person singular of the present indicative of the verb èssar(e) 'to be', also with enclitics: xe '(is) / (are)', xeo?, xea?, xei?, xee? 'Is it he? Is it her? Is it?';
 - between vowels: piaxe '(he/she) likes', roxa 'rose', dixè '(he/she) says';
 - after a consonant: pianxe '(he) cries', vèrxè '(he) opens' and 'verze';
 - at the beginning of the word: xonta 'addition', xèro 'zero'.

It is inadvisable the use of <x> to represent the vocalised <s> before a consonant: xdentegà 'toothless', svampido 'silly person'.

50. <ž>: voiceless interdental fricative consonant. Can replace zh, (*infra* 51).
e.g. avež 'silver fir' (Agordino)
51. <zh>: voiceless interdental fricative consonant. Similar to the English th of *thin*, it is quite frequent in rustic Veneto dialects.
E.g. mèzh 'half' (agordino)
52. <z>: voiced dental affricate consonant. It is placed between vowels.
E.g. liziér 'light'
53. <z>: voiceless alveolar affricate consonant. Like the Italian March z, in all positions except between vowels (-> zz):
E.g. zélega 'swallow' (rustic Vicentine)
54. <ž>: voiced palatoalveolar fricative consonant. Present in dolomitic dialects.
E.g. agažon 'flood' (Ampezzo)
55. <ž>: voiced affricate dental consonant. Examples from Vittorio Veneto variety:
 - at the beginning of a word followed by a consonant: ženòcio 'knee', žogo 'game';
 - after a consonant: franža 'fringe'.
56. <zz>: voiceless dental affricate consonant. Only between vowels.
E.g. nazzion 'nation'

This set of graphemes is undoubtedly much more complete and precise than the spelling systems proposed by past authors. Moreover, it considers all the dialectal varieties spoken in Veneto. However, it still fails in providing a one-to-one correspondence between sounds and graphemes.

7.6 A draft proposal of an alternative transcription

The draft proposal we have developed considers the fact that Venetian varieties belong to the group of Western Romance languages. Therefore, it adopts certain solutions characteristic of major vehicular languages such as French, Castilian, and Portuguese, which are spoken as first languages or lingua franca by approximately a billion people. These suggestions aim to facilitate connections between European and Latin American communities. In some digraphs, the letter "h" is used to modify certain sounds, such as palatalisation.

1. <a> open central vowel
E.g. ancuo 'today', amia 'aunt', aranati 'ducklings'
2. bilabial plosive consonant sound
E.g. boaro 'bovaro', britola 'billhook'
3. <ch> voiceless palate affricate consonant
E.g. techa 'pot', macha 'stain', schopo 'rifle' This grapheme was chosen to represent [tʃ] because it is in use in two widely spoken vehicular languages, English and Castilian (a Western Romance language).
4. <c> voiceless velar plosive consonant followed by [a], [o], [u].
Ex. caza 'house', cogo 'cook', sincue 'five', cuadro 'picture'.
5. <d> dental plosive consonant sound.
E.g. dindio 'turkey', dottor 'doctor', deo 'finger'.
6. <è> half-open frontal vowel.
E.g. deo menèo 'little finger', chèo 'child (Treviso)'
7. <é> semi-closed frontal vowel.
E.g. zénte 'people', fén 'hay', azéo 'vinegar', zénocho 'knee'. The frontal semi-open vowel already has an accent: <è> (*supra* 6). Therefore, one might consider it superfluous to mark the frontal vowel half-closed, which will be pronounced as such by exclusion.
8. <f> voiceless labiodental fricative consonant.
E.g. forfe 'scissors', fruà 'worn', frapoła 'crease'
9. <j> voiced palatoalveolar affricate consonant /dʒ/

E.g. jarin 'gravel', jardin 'garden', justar 'to fix', jeri 'yesterday' (Venetian)
Some words continue to be written with <g>, for uniformity with other European languages (cf. en: Germany, Jamaica).

10. <g> voiced velar plosive consonant: followed by [a], [o], [u];

E.g. goto 'glass', gorna 'gutter'

<gu> followed by [e], [i] = <ghe>, <ghi> (Italian)

zguembo '(crooked) longui 'long'

The choice of using <gu> instead of <gh> is motivated by the adoption of this grapheme in the Western Romance area (fr. Guermantes, sp. Guernica, pt. Guimarães, cat. Guifré, etc.).

11. <i> Closed frontal vowel

E.g. inrabiarse 'getting angry', indormia 'anaesthesia', bizi 'peas'

12. <j> palatal semi-vowel

E.g. ojo 'oil', mejo 'better', voja 'want'. In Venetian proper, it represents the voiced palato-alveolar affricate [dʒ]. E.g. tajo 'cut, voja 'want, jeri 'yesterday'. This grapheme is thus 'multifunctional' and lends itself to different readings depending on the linguistic variety.

13. <l>: Liquid alveolar lateral

Ex. miel 'honey', late 'milk'

14. <ɭ> relaxed dorso-palatal approximant (l evanescent) and silent lateral.

E.g. bałon 'ball', toła 'table', putęła 'little girl'

In some peripheral variants, this consonant is pronounced as a simple alveolar lateral.

15. <m> nasal bilabial.

E.g., mascho 'male', muzeto (type of) 'big trotter', mato 'crazy'.

16. <n> velar and alveo-dental nasal:

E.g. nona 'grandmother', nioło 'sheet'

17. <nh> nasal palatal:

E.g. nhénte 'nothing', nharo 'nest', manhar 'eating'

The solution takes the example of Portuguese (Romance vehicular language).

18. <ò> half-open back vowel

E.g. tòco 'piece', sòto 'blade', chozòto 'chioggiotto'

19. <ó> semi-closed back vowel. The semi-open back vowel already has an accent: <ò> (*supra* 18). One might therefore consider it superfluous to mark the semi-closed back vowel, which will be pronounced as such by exclusion. E.g. bón 'good', cantón 'corner', marangón 'carpenter'.
20. <p> voiceless bilabial plosive
E.g. pita 'turkey', połenta 'polenta', pichinin 'small', pistor 'baker'
21. <q>: voiceless velar plosive consonant. Followed by <u> it gives the equivalent of the Italian ch + e, i. The choice of using <qu> instead of <ch> is motivated by the adoption of this grapheme in Western Romance languages (fr. Quercy, sp. Henrique, port. químico, etc.).
E.g. parqué 'because', queba 'cage',
22. <r> vibrating alveolar
Es. rezentar 'rinse', rènto 'inside', radicho 'radicchio'
23. <s> voiceless alveolar fricative
E.g. dèso 'now', nàsar 'to be born, èsar 'to be'
24. <t> voiceless dental plosive.
E.g. tòco 'piece', toła 'table', tòcho 'sauce'
25. <u> closed back vowel.
E.g. ua 'grape'
26. <v> voiced labio-dental fricative.
Ex. ava 'bee', véndema 'grape harvest', vin 'wine', varequina 'bleach'
27. <z> voiced alveolar fricative
E.g. razón 'reason', dieze 'ten', caza 'house', tełeviziòn 'television', nazar 'sniff'. The choice of using this grapheme instead of 's' is motivated by the fact that it is widely used (English, French, European Portuguese, Slavic languages) and easier to learn (no ambiguity in the representation of voiced and voiceless sounds).
An example of a text written with this transcription system is the following translation from Russian into Venetian proper (mainland variety) of the novel *Anna Karenina*'s incipit by Lev Tolstoj:

Tute le fameje contente le se someja. Onhi fameja scontenta invense, la ze scontenta a la so maniera. Tuto jera incazinà inte la fameja Oblonskij. La princhipesa, avendo savuo que so mario el gaveva na relasion co la governante francheze que jera stada in caza sua de tori, la gaveva diquiarà a so mario que no la podeva pi vivar co ju

*soto el steso teto. Sta situasion, que durava za da tre jorni, la jera na disgrasia par li spozi, e anca par tuti i membri dea fameja e par el personal de servio*⁸⁴.

7.7 Conclusion

The classic or traditional Venetian orthographic system is the one in which the Venetian language was written, particularly its Venetian proper variant. Although partly abandoned in favour of a system that more closely follows the Italian one, it is still used today in the writing of *nizioleti*⁸⁵, the street signs of the city of Venice and adjacent towns and villages in the lagoon.

As hinted on paragraph 5.1, at present two types of orthography of Venetian officially recognised by the region coexist: the first one (known as 'unitary orthography' and described in this chapter) was elaborated by a commission of linguists led by Manlio Cortelazzo, appointed by the regional government in 1995; the second (known as 'official orthography') was elaborated by a new commission mainly composed of non-linguists appointed in 2010 (Pescarini, 2024:iv-v).

Veneto Region law no. 8 of 13 April 2007 envisaged in its article 10 —Unified Venetian orthography— that: “In order to guarantee a correct definition of orthography, toponymy and any other linguistic aspect, the Regional Council avails itself of a special commission of experts” (Regione Veneto 2007, own translation). The Commission, chaired by the Regional Councillor for Venetian Identity, Daniele Stival, met on 7 May 2010 for the first time and was composed of sociologist Sabino Acquaviva, Ca' Foscari University lecturers Rodolfo Del Monte and Ludovico Pizzati, linguist Michele Brunelli, Venetian language scholar Gianfranco Cavallin and Veneto Nostro association president Davide Guiotto. In 2017 the commission issued a Decalogue of Venetian Orthography.⁸⁶ In 2018, Aggregazione Veneta, a private apex association, initiated a call for an original orthographic system and established a commission comprising 13 members. However, internal disputes led to a deadlock, resulting in the failure to select a proposal.

⁸⁴ Original text: “Все счастливые семьи похожи друг на друга, каждая несчастливая семья несчастлива по-своему. Всё смешалось в доме Облонских. Жена узнала, что муж был в связи с бывшею в их доме француженкою-гувернанткой, и объявила мужу, что не может жить с ним в одном доме. Положение это продолжалось уже третий день и мучительно чувствовалось и самими супругами, и всеми членами, и домочадцами” (Lev Tolstoj).

⁸⁵ Lit. ‘little bed sheets’.

⁸⁶ Consiglio Regionale del Veneto, *Lingua Veneta, Grafia Veneta Ufficiale*. See also Academia dela Bona Creansa (2024, June 15) where prof. Mocellin highlighted the differences between Unitary and Official orthographies.

8 SURVEY ON THE REVITALISATION OF VENETIAN

In this chapter, we present the findings of a sociolinguistic survey conducted on the topic of this paper, namely the maintenance and revitalisation of regional languages, and more specifically of Venetian. The survey, conducted in April-May 2024, aimed to explore specific aspects of the topic by analysing the collected data to discern patterns, trends, and correlations. The insights gained from the findings derived from the survey contribute significantly to our understanding of the research question outlined in the Introduction⁸⁷.

8.1 Methodology

The survey was designed as a 26 items questionnaire administered through the survey service of the European Commission.⁸⁸ The questionnaire was drafted in both Italian and English, allowing participants to select their preferred language (refer to Appendices 1 and 2 for the full text in English and Italian, respectively). In this survey we upheld the principles of confidentiality and anonymity, ensuring that participants identities (e-mail or ID) were protected. Participants were informed that the collected data would be used exclusively for research purposes and presented in an aggregate form.

A sample of 512 participants took part in the survey. The data collection method involved disseminating invitations to participate through a link posted on various social media platforms, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp groups. The sampling technique aimed to include participants from diverse backgrounds and walks of life.

Participants were first asked to provide some biographical data (e.g., age, gender, region of birth). This was followed by a series of closed multiple-choice questions specifically related to the conservation of Venetian culture. Some questions allowed only one response (items 1-6, 12, 13, 17, 20, 22, 23, 25), while others permitted multiple responses or all applicable responses (items 7-11, 14, 16, 18, 24). Occasionally, questions included an option for participants to comment on the reasons behind their chosen responses. Additionally, participants had the option to select "I do not know" or "I do not reply," or to skip questions altogether. The average time to complete the questionnaire was estimated to be four minutes.

⁸⁷ About the characteristics of sociolinguistic surveys, see Grassi et al., 1997:285-287.

⁸⁸ European Commission, EUSurvey

8.2 Data analysis and discussion

Upon completion of the survey phase, the data were cleaned to prepare for analysis and interpretation. For absolute data and ratios, refer to Appendix 1 (survey results), which contains a translation of the original Italian version of the survey (Appendix 2) used by all participants. Responses to questions 15, 19, 21, and 26—which solicited free comments—have been relocated to Appendix 3 for potential future qualitative analysis.

The first part of the questionnaire (questions 1-4) collected personal information from the participants, including age, level of education, gender, and place of birth. Question 1 asked participants for their *age*, resulting in an average age of 46 years and a median age of 49 years.

In a sample of 500 participants, the age ranges are distributed as shown in Figure 13:

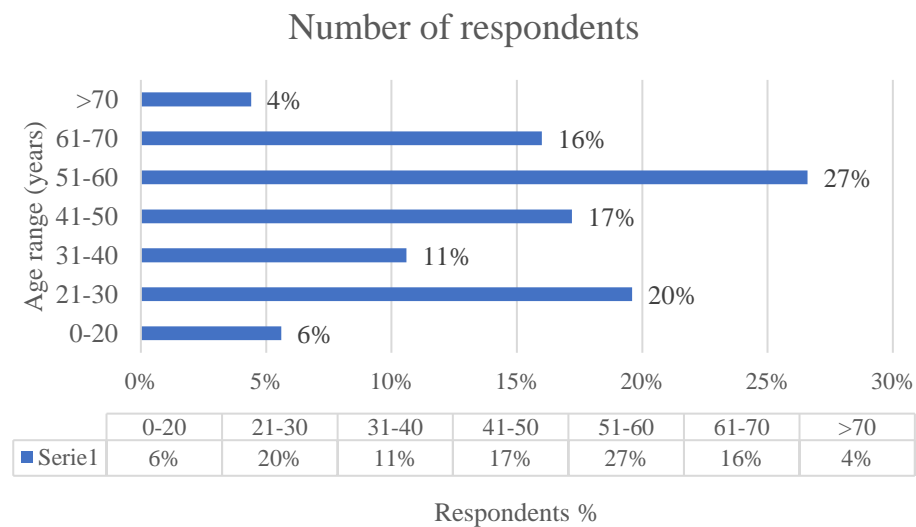


Figure 13 Age distribution of participants

Source: own survey

The figure illustrates the distribution of respondents across different age ranges, highlighting the diversity of the sample in terms of age.

Question 2 inquired about the *level of education*, revealing a relatively high level of education among participants. The distribution was as follows: elementary (0.2%), middle school (11.2%), high school (47.8%), bachelor's degree (11.2%), master's degree (26.8%). 2.8% did not reply. This data is illustrated in Figure 14:

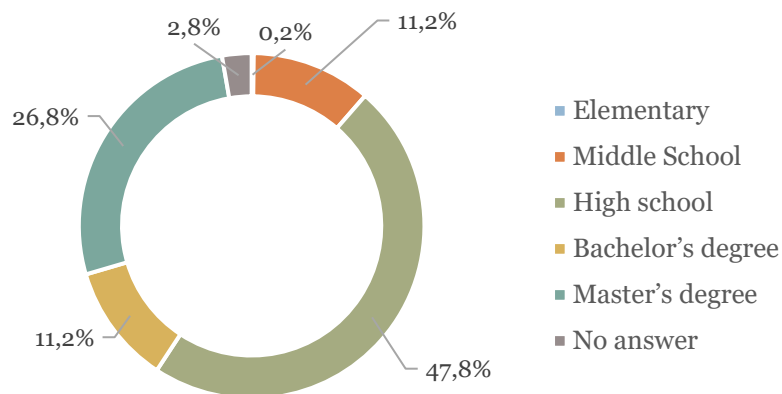


Figure 14 Level of education

Source: own survey

The data indicates a relatively high level of education among participants, with the majority holding at least a high school diploma. Notably, 26.8% of respondents have attained a master's degree, suggesting a well-educated sample population.

Question 3 inquired about gender distribution, revealing a slight predominance of males over females (51.6% and 45.5%, respectively). Additionally, 1.2% opted for the 'I do not reply' option, while 1.8% did not respond or skipped the question (Fig. 15).

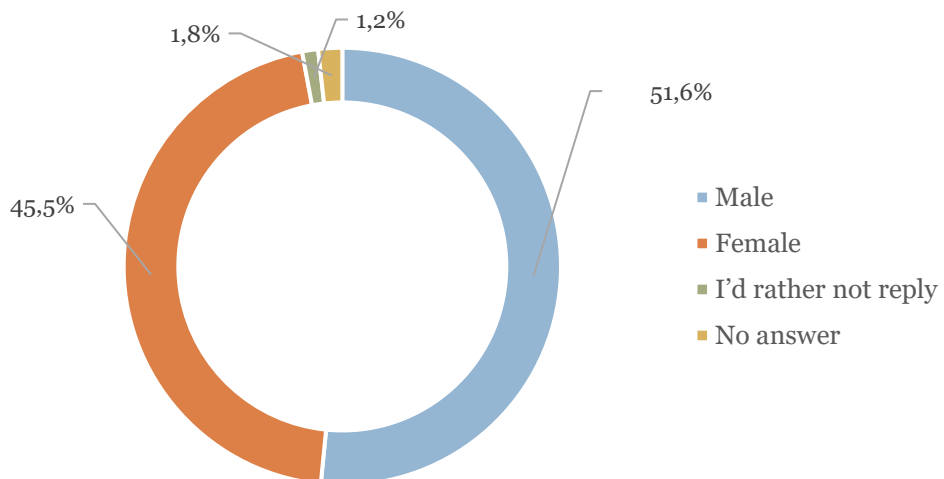


Figure 15 Classification of participants by gender

Source: own survey

Question 4 asked about the participants' *place of birth*, with the following results: 88,2% born in Veneto, 6,1% born in another Italian region, 4,1% born abroad, 1,6% did not reply or skipped the question. This data is illustrated in Figure 16:

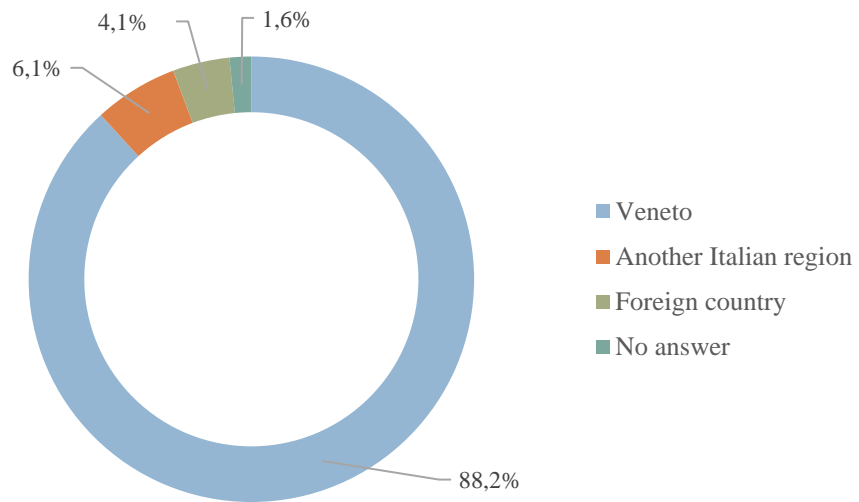


Figure 16 Place of birth of participants

Source: own survey

Questions 5 and 6 asked about the place of birth of the participants' parents. The results for the mothers' places of birth were as follows: 88.8% of mothers were born in Veneto, 6.7% were born in another Italian region, 3.7% were born abroad, 0.8% did not reply or skipped the question (Fig. 17).

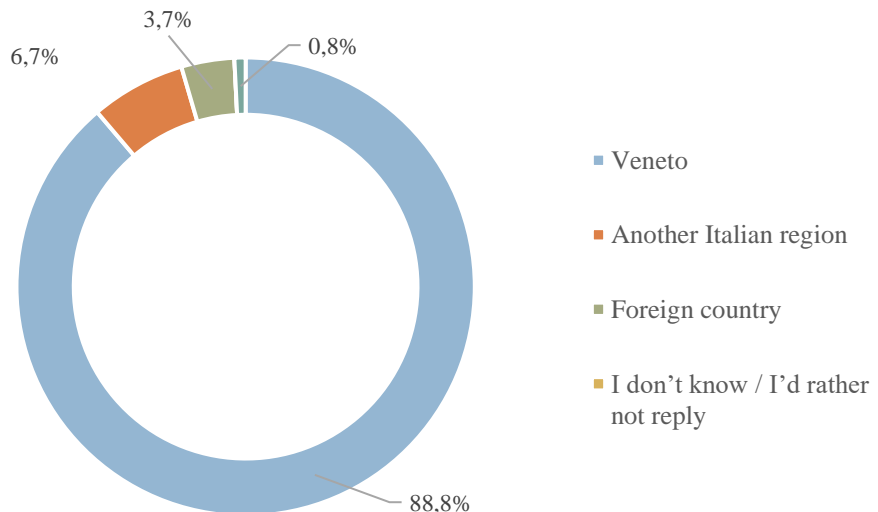


Figure 17 Mother's place of birth

Source: own survey

A significant majority of participants' mothers (88.8%) were born in Veneto, reflecting the strong regional roots within the sample. The remaining percentages indicate a smaller representation from other Italian regions and abroad, adding some diversity to the parental background of participants.

As for fathers, 86,4% were born in Veneto, 10,6% were born in another Italian region, 2,4% were born abroad; 0,6% of informants did not answer (Fig. 18).

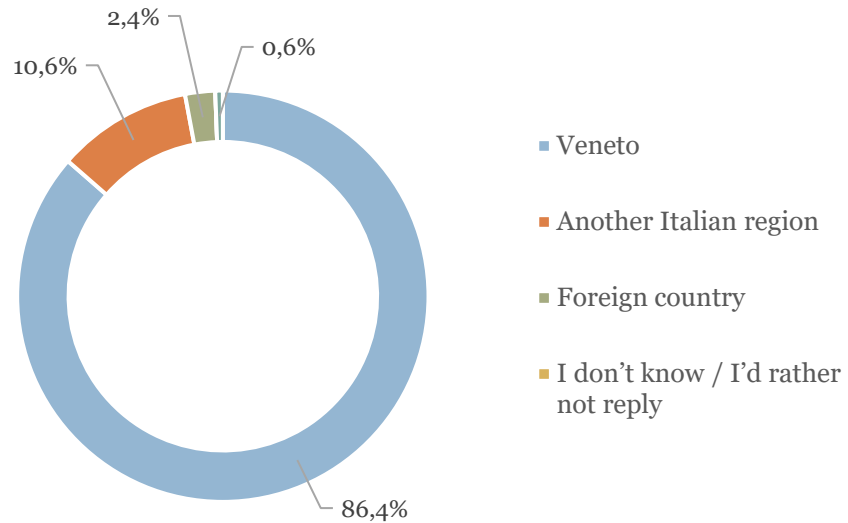


Figure 18 Father's place of birth
Source: own survey

The data shows that a majority of participants' fathers (86.4%) were born in Veneto, indicating a similar trend to that of mothers in terms of strong regional ties. A notable proportion were born in other Italian regions or abroad, contributing to the diverse geographic background of participants' paternal lineage.

Question 7 and 8 regarded languages spoken daily by parents. *Mothers speak* a variety of Venetian at a ratio of 86.6 %; 65.4 % speak Italian, 4.3 % in another regional language, 10.8 % other languages; 0.6 % of participants did not reply (Fig. 19).

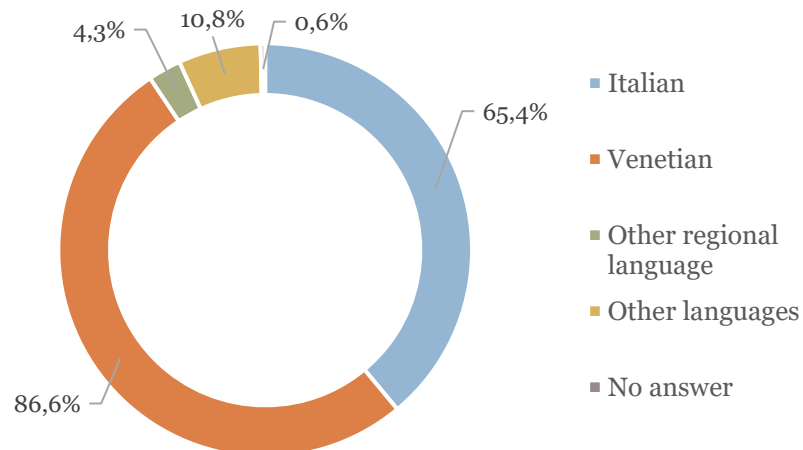


Figure 19 Daily language use of participants' mothers.
Source: own survey

For *fathers*, the distribution of daily languages spoken was as follows: 86% speak Venetian; 64,2% speak Italian, 6,5% another regional language (e.g. Sicilian or Friulian, etc.) 9,3% other languages; 1 % of participants were unsure or did not reply (Fig. 20).

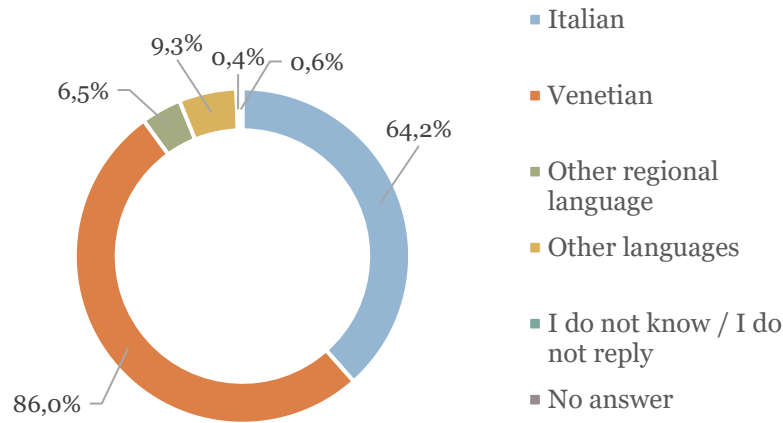


Figure 20 Daily language use of participants' fathers
Source: own survey

The majority of participants' fathers (86.4%) speak various Venetian dialects in their daily lives, reflecting a strong adherence to regional linguistic traditions. Italian is also widely spoken (64.2%), while smaller percentages use other regional languages or languages from outside Italy. The proportion of respondents who did not provide a response was minimal (1%), indicating generally high engagement in the survey.

For question 9, which explored the *language participants were raised with within their family or community*, the responses were: Venetian 88.4%, Italian 65%, another regional language 4.7%, other languages 5.7%; 0.4% did not reply (Fig. 21).

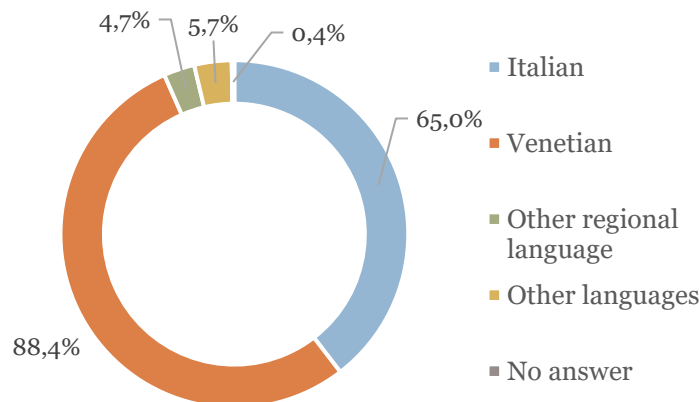


Figure 21 Languages spoken in the family/community.
Source: own survey

Questions 10 and 11 asked about the language used among friends or at work. *Among friends* Venetian is used by 78%, Italian by 69,3%, another regional language by 3,3%, other languages by 9,4%; 0.2% did not reply (Fig. 22).

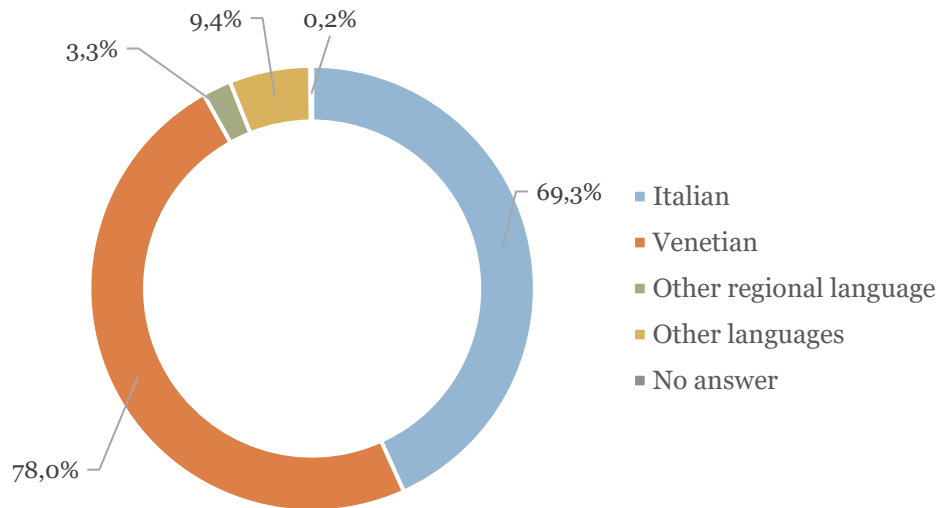


Figure 22 Language use among friends.
Source: own survey

At work Italian is used by 79,3% of the informants, Venetian by 59,6%, other regional language by 2,2%, other languages by 14,8%; 2,8% did not reply (Fig. 23).

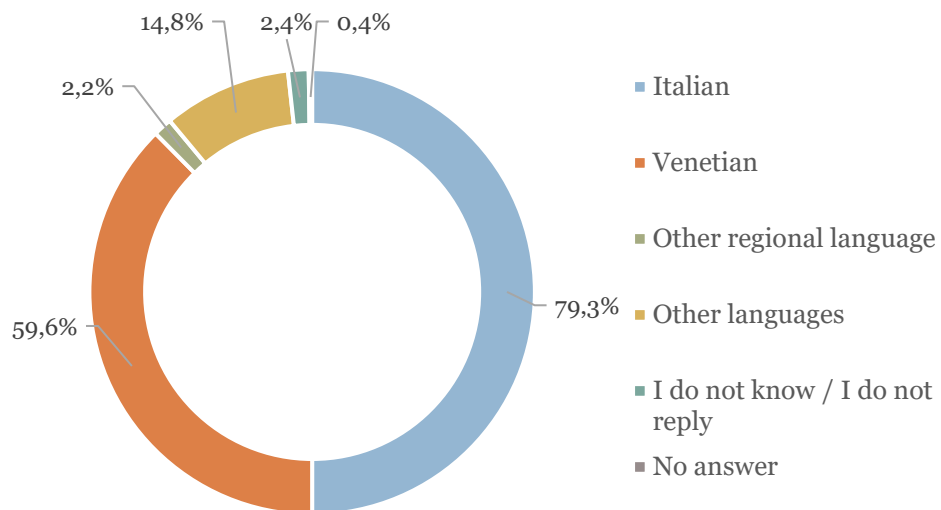


Figure 23 Languages used at work.
Source: own survey

Among friends, a significant percentage of participants (78.0%) use Venetian dialects, indicating a strong cultural and linguistic bond in informal settings. Italian (69.3%) is also widely used, reflecting its role as a common language among

peers. Smaller percentages use other regional languages or languages from outside Italy, with a very low proportion of participants not responding to the question.

With question no. 12 participants were asked about their *fluency in Venetian*. Some 74,2% of them claim a good command, 15% speak a little, 7,9% understand but do not speak it, 2% know a few words and expressions, 0,8% neither speak nor understand it; 0,2% did not reply (Fig. 24).

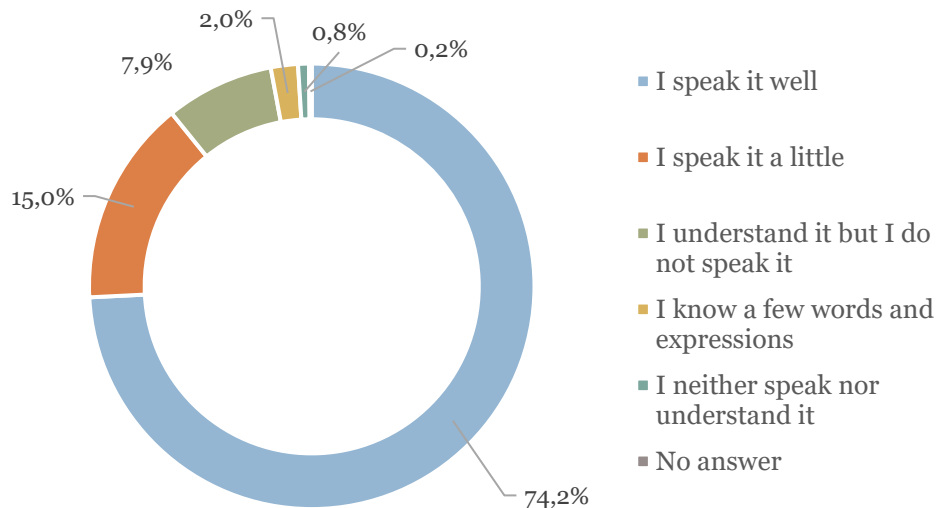


Figure 24 Self-reported level of fluency in Venetian.

Source: own survey

Question 13 asked respondents *whether they consider it appropriate to maintain and revitalise the Veneto language*. An overwhelming 95,3% answered affirmatively, 2,0% negatively, 2,4% were unsure and 0,4% did not provide a response. When asked why they held their views (question 14), the responses were diverse: 74.6% cited its role as a bearer of linguistic and cultural heritage, 69.9% emphasised its importance to their identity, 32.9% expressed fondness for the language, often citing familial connections (e.g. it is their grandparents' language), 27% simply expressed a personal preference for Venetian, and 11.6% believed it could aid in learning other languages such as English, French, or Spanish. Additionally, 3.5% provided other reasons, and 4.3% did not respond to the question.

Question 15 intended to delve deeper into the reasons why Venetian should be supported: “If you indicated ‘other’ in the previous question, could you elaborate on your answer?”. Answered are reported separately in Appendix 3.

Question 16 is linked with question 13, asking: “*If you answered yes, in which of the following ways (would you revitalise Venetian)?*” Multiple answers were allowed, and most people chose to reply “Interacting with speakers” (59,84%), followed by “at school” (44.49%), “in the media (radio, TV, cinema, press)” (36,42%), “studying materials such as dictionaries or literature” (35,24%), “on

social media/internet (33.27%), “at school, through extracurricular courses” (29.33%). 6.3% did not answer.

Question 17 was posed to participants who responded affirmatively to two answers in question 16 regarding *learning Venetian at school* (73.8% of respondents). The question asked about their opinion on how Venetian should be taught in schools (“If you answered yes at school, do you think teaching should be”): compulsory (28,5%), optional (25,2%), partly compulsory, partly optional (22,6%); 23,6% did not answer (Fig. 25).

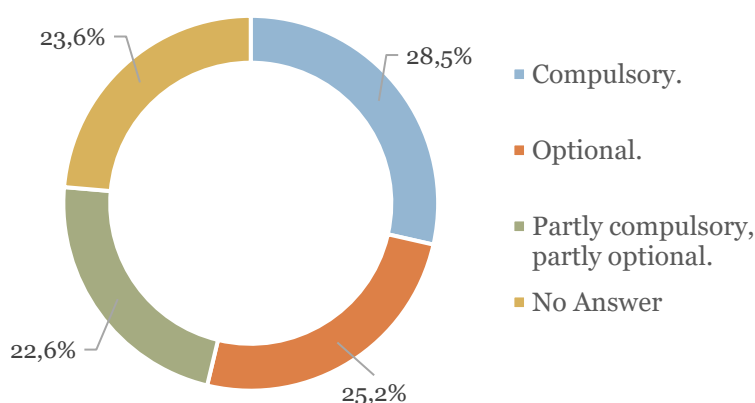


Figure 25 Opinion on teaching Venetian at school.
Source: own survey

Half of the respondents (51.1%) believe that teaching Venetian at school should be compulsory or partly compulsory, suggesting strong support for integrating the language into formal education as a standard practice. A significant portion (25.2%) is in favour of it being optional, allowing flexibility in learning choices. However, a notable quarter of participants did not provide a response, indicating some uncertainty or neutrality towards the issue of Venetian language education in schools.

Question 18 delved into the reasons of those who argued against the *promotion of Venetian at school*. The 79 replies ranged from “I have other priorities” (34) to “It is a waste of time; it is better to learn other languages such as English” (24). Fewer (11) answered “It is useless in economic terms” or “I do not like it” (2). 2,4% replied with “other”.

Question 19 is linked with the previous one and asked: “If you indicated ‘other’ in the previous question, *could you elaborate on your answer?*”. Replies are to be found in Appendix 3.

Question 20 inquired about participants' awareness and engagement with cultural productions in the Venetian language. Participants were asked *whether they had ever enjoyed cultural products in Venetian language* (such as a play by Carlo Goldoni or read a poetry collection by Andrea Zanzotto). 82.3% answered

affirmatively, 11,6% had never enjoyed but would like to give it a try, 5,3% answered negatively and were not interested; 0,9% did not reply (Fig. 26).

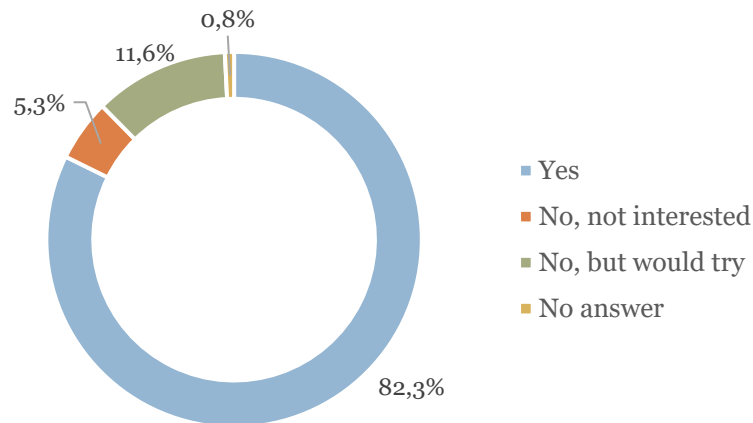


Figure 26 Awareness of cultural production in Venetian.
Source: own survey

Question 21 explored the cultural desires of the respondents. The detailed answers can be found in Appendix 3, which would provide valuable qualitative insights.

Question 22 explored the participants' views on whether the protection of the Venetian language is linked to regional autonomism (“Do you think that the protection of the Venetian language is linked to regional autonomism?”). A significant majority of participants (66,5%) do not necessarily believe that the protection of the Venetian language is linked to regional autonomism. However, a substantial minority (31,3%) does see a connection between language protection and regional autonomy demands. A small percentage of participants did not provide a response to this question. (Fig. 27).

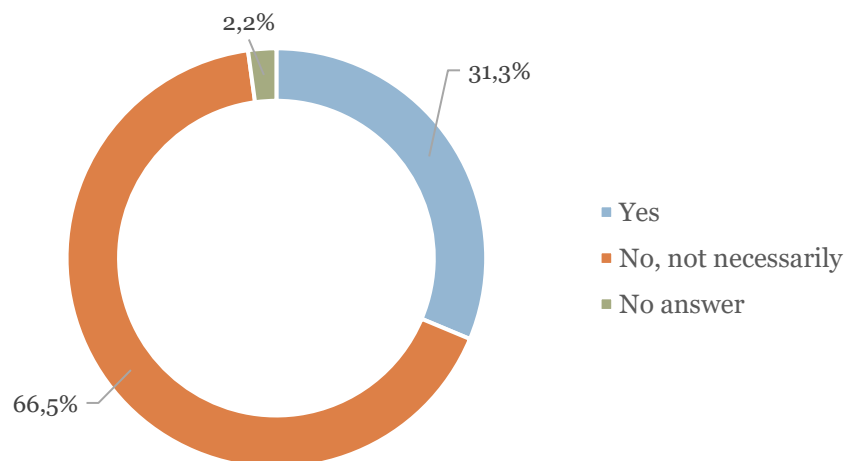


Figure 27 Venetian language and autonomist demands.
Source: own survey

Question 23 inquired about participants' opinions regarding the use of Venetian language in street signals, such as city names (“How would you consider seeing street signals in Venetian language?”) (Fig. 28).

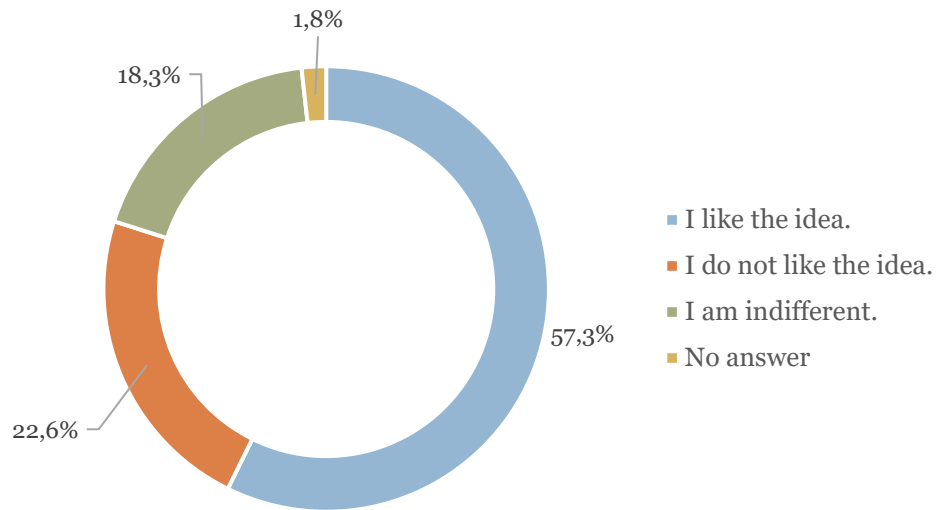


Figure 28 Street signs in Venetian.
 Source: own survey

Many participants (57.3%) expressed a positive attitude towards seeing street signals in Venetian language, including city names and other indications. A notable minority (22.6%) did not favour this idea, while a significant proportion (18.3%) remained indifferent. A small percentage of participants did not provide a response. These findings highlight varying levels of support and opposition to the use of Venetian language in public signage.

Incidentally, literature has drawn the attention to the importance of signposting in the local language (in addition to the official toponymy). As an example, Hinton et al. (2018) report the following situation in Northern Norway:

In a European example, a general practitioner with several decades of service in the northernmost part of Norway was interviewed about the fact that more Sámi language place names were put up in the landscape. He said it was a good investment in public health because it “ gives you good feelings about who you are, where you come from, about your history and the traditions of your people. You feel safer and stronger. That is important and very valuable (Hinton et al. 2018:497)

Question 24 investigated participants' awareness of various initiatives supporting the Veneto language. The responses were: 60,4% of informants knew of the existence of vocabularies and grammars, 50,2% were informed about initiatives performed by both public and private organisations and 32,7 knew that there is a radio airing in Venetian language. 12,8% did not answer (presumably were not aware of the initiatives). The substantial percentage of participants who were aware

indicates some degree of engagement and interest in these cultural and linguistic preservation efforts.

Question 25 utilised the Cantril ladder scale to assess participants' life satisfaction levels. The question asked respondents to place themselves on a scale from 0 (worst possible life) to 10 (best possible life), with each step representing their current life satisfaction.

The question was formulated thus: “Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time? (1 to 10 on a Cantril Scale).”

This question puzzled a few people who inquired about the usefulness of such a question in this context. The data indicates that 72% of respondents positioned themselves in the range of 5 to 8 on the Cantril scale, with an average and median value of 7. This suggests a general state of relative well-being among the participants. A small percentage (2,36%) did not provide a response to this question. (Fig. 29).

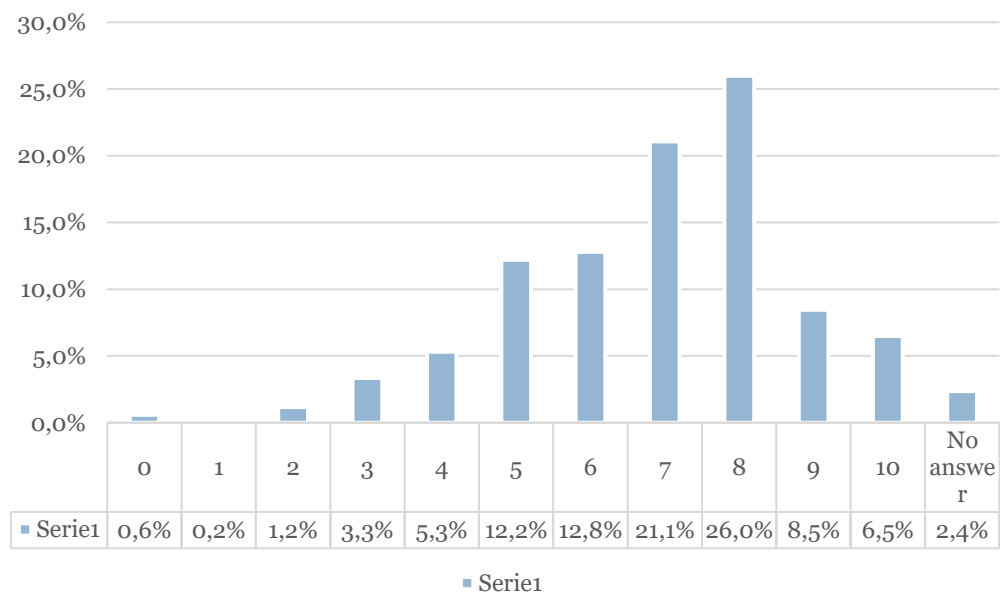


Figure 29 Life satisfaction levels on a Cantril scale

Source: own survey

Question 26 served as a space for participants to freely express comments, suggestions, ideas, and feelings that they found difficult to articulate elsewhere in the survey. The responses gathered from this question are compiled in Appendix 3 of the survey report, where they will be available for future qualitative analysis.

In the following paragraphs we will expand our study by observing possible associations between variables selected from the survey on the revitalisation of the Venetian language.

First off, we will focus on key demographic variables and their relationship with attitudes towards the Venetian language. We will refer to data presented in Appendix 1. Here are a few statistical outcomes:

1. Age range and knowledge level of Venetian

The variables considered are the following ones:

- age (Q1)
- knowledge level of Venetian (Q12: What is your level of Venetian?)

To facilitate data processing and interpretation, several adjustments were made based on the survey response. The age categories (Q1) were grouped into seven ranges: 0-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, and over 70 years. Regarding language proficiency (Q12), responses indicating "I know a few words and expressions" were merged with "I speak it a little" into a single category labelled "I speak it a little". Similarly, responses indicating "I understand it, but I do not speak it" and "I neither speak nor understand it" were consolidated into a category labelled "I do not speak it".

Hypothesis 0 (null hypothesis): There is no relationship between age and knowledge level of Venetian.

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between age and knowledge level of Venetian.

By statistical convention, a significance level (alpha) of 0.05 is commonly used. If the calculated p-value from the statistical test is greater than 0.05, we accept the null hypothesis (Hypothesis 0), indicating that there is no significant relationship between age and knowledge level of Venetian. If the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept Hypothesis 1, suggesting that there is a statistically significant association between age and knowledge level of Venetian.

Analysis: A chi-square (χ^2) test can be used to determine if there is a significant relationship between educational level and the belief in revitalising the Venetian language. To perform the analysis, we need to construct contingency tables for each hypothesis and calculate the χ^2 test statistic. We will calculate the expected frequencies and then use the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum(O_i - E_i)^2/E_i$$

where O_i is the observed frequency, and E_i is the expected frequency.

Using JASP software, we drew up contingency tables and found the p-value for the χ^2 statistic with appropriate degrees of freedom. Then we determined whether the variables are dependent from one another (Table 7).

Contingency Table

1. Age range	12. What is your level of Venetian?			Total
	I speak it a little	I do not speak it	I speak it well	
0-20	12	5	11	28
21-30	34	18	46	98
31-40	8	6	39	53
41-50	8	3	75	86
51-60	15	11	107	133
61-70	8	1	71	80
>70	1	0	21	22
Total	86	44	370	500

Table 7 Contingency table Q1+Q12

Source: own survey

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to test whether knowledge level of Venetian was similar for all age ranges (H_0). The results highlighted an association ($\chi^2(14) = 89.279, p < .001$), between the two sets of variables.

In Figure 30, a mosaic plot was utilised to examine the relationship between age ranges and proficiency in speaking Venetian. The green area within the plot represents the percentage of individuals who affirm to speak Venetian well, segmented by different age groups. Observing the plot reveals distinct trends:

- Generally, there is an observable trend where proficiency in speaking Venetian tends to increase with age.
- Conversely, younger age groups exhibit higher percentages of individuals who do not speak Venetian fluently, as depicted in areas outside the green segment.
- A slight deviation from this trend is noted in the 51-60 age range, where the proportion of fluent speakers appears less pronounced compared to adjacent groups. However, this is not statistically relevant.

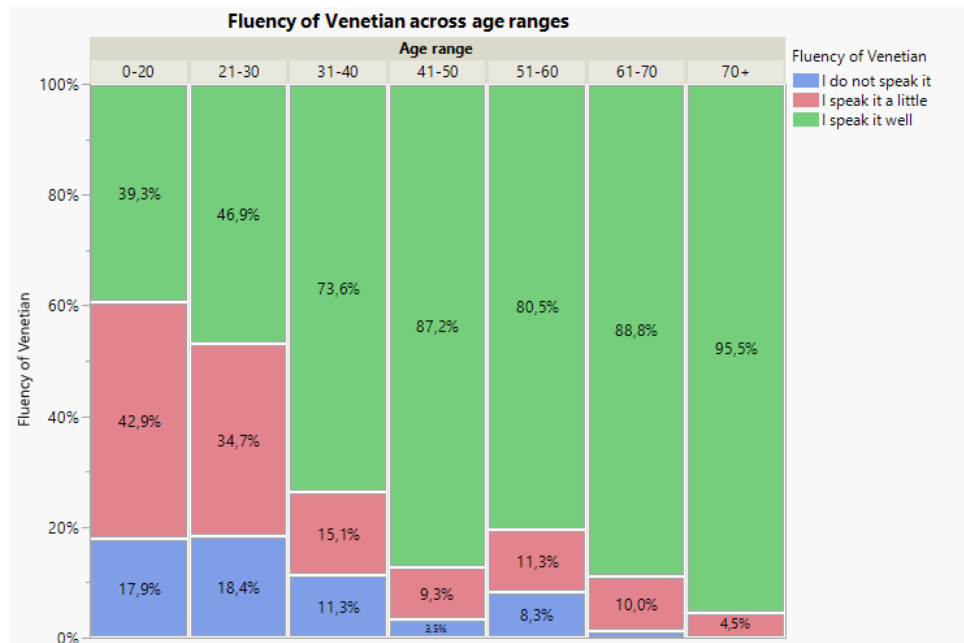


Figure 30 Mosaic plot Q1+Q12 (%)
 Source: own survey

2. Educational level and attitudes towards Venetian language

The variables considered are the following ones:

- educational level (Q2)
- attitudes towards revitalisation (Q13: Do you consider it appropriate to maintain and revitalise the Veneto language?)

To facilitate data processing, we have reduced the replies in Q2 merging the category ‘Elementary school (totalling only one reply) with ‘Middle school’ and ignored the reply ‘I don’t know’ in Q13.

Hypothesis 0 (null hypothesis): attitudes towards revitalising Venetian are identical for all the educational levels identified.

Hypothesis 1: there is a relationship between the level of education and the attitude towards revitalising the Venetian language.

Analysis: A chi-square (χ^2) test can be used to determine if there is a significant relationship between educational level and the belief in revitalising the Venetian language. To perform the analysis, we need to construct contingency tables for each hypothesis and calculate the χ^2 test statistic. We will calculate the expected frequencies and then use the formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum(O_i - E_i)^2/E_i$$

where O_i is the observed frequency, and E_i is the expected frequency and whereby df (degrees of freedom) = $(r-1)(c-1) = (4-1)(2-1)=3$ where r = no. of rows and c = no. of columns.

Using JASP software, we drew up contingency tables and found the p-value for the χ^2 statistic with appropriate degrees of freedom. Then we determined whether the variables are dependent from one another (JASP software shows 3 decimal positions across all figures. Hence, 57.000 reads as 57 participants, etc.; SR = standardised residuals) (Table 8).

2. Educational level		13. Do you consider it appropriate to maintain and revitalise Venetian?		
		No	Yes	Total
Elementary +	Count	0.000	57.000	57.000
Middle school	SR	-1.172	1.172	
Master's degree	Count	5.000	128.000	133.000
	SR	1.597	-1.597	
Bachelor's degree	Count	1.000	50.000	51.000
	SR	-0.063	0.063	
High school	Count	4.000	236.000	240.000
	SR	-0.632	0.632	
Total	Count	10.000	471.000	481.000

Table 8 Contingency table Q2+Q13

Source: own survey

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to test whether the attitudes towards revitalising Venetian were similar for all educational levels (H_0). The results were not significant ($\chi^2(3) = 3.259, p = 0.353$), suggesting that there is no association between educational levels and positive attitudes towards Venetian language revitalisation.

3. Gender and use of Venetian Language

The variables considered are the following ones:

- gender (Q3)
- knowledge and use of the Venetian language (Q12: What is your level of Venetian?)

Hypothesis 0 (null hypothesis): there is no relationship between gender and the knowledge level of the Venetian language.

Hypothesis 1: there is an association between gender and the knowledge level of the Venetian language.

Analysis: we continue to use the χ^2 test to assess if there are significant differences in the knowledge level of the Venetian language between males and females.

Using JASP software, we drew up contingency tables and found the p-value for the χ^2 statistic with appropriate degrees of freedom. Then we determined whether the variables are dependent from one another (Table 9).

Contingency Table

12. What is your knowledge level of Venetian?	3. Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
I know a few words and expressions	Count 8.000 SR 2.543	1.000 -2.543	9.000
I understand it but I do not speak it	Count 30.000 SR 3.704	10.000 -3.704	40.000
I speak it well	Count 158.000 SR -3.058	210.000 3.058	368.000
I speak it a little	Count 35.000 SR -0.058	40.000 0.058	75.000
I neither speak nor understand it	Count 2.000 SR 0.122	2.000 -0.122	4.000
Total	Count 233.000	263.000	496.000

Table 9 Contingency table Q3+Q12

Source: own survey

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to test whether knowledge level of Venetian was similar for all genders (H_0). The results highlighted an association ($\chi^2(4) = 21.389, p < .001$), between the two sets of variables.

The most suitable graphic tool to visualise associations between categorical variables is the mosaic plot. Using this time JMP software, we drew up the relevant graphic. In Fig. 31 the green area shows the percentage of people who affirm to speak Venetian well across genders. Males (79,8%) display a higher mastery of Venetian than females (67,8%).

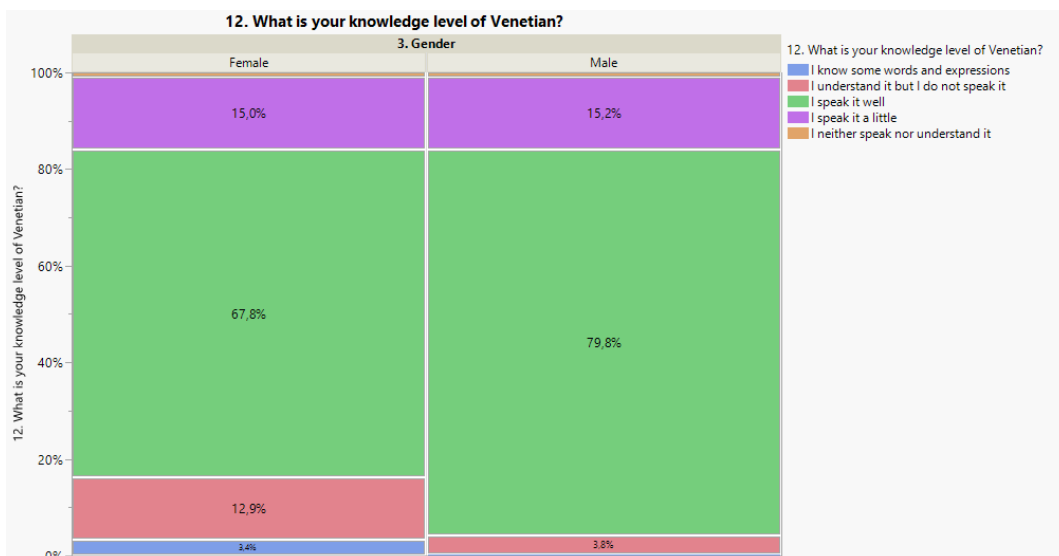


Figure 31 Mosaic plot of Q3+Q12

Source: own survey

4. Place of birth and support for language revitalisation

The variables considered are the following ones:

- place of birth (Q4)
- support for revitalisation (Q13: Do you consider it appropriate to maintain and revitalise the Veneto language?)

To facilitate data processing, we have ignored the reply ‘I do not know’ in Q13. Null hypothesis: the variable place of birth and the variable support for the revitalisation of Venetian language are independent.

Analysis: we continue to use the χ^2 test to check if there is a link between place of birth and support for Venetian language revitalisation (Table 10).

Contingency Table

		13. Do you consider it appropriate to maintain and revitalise Venetian?		
		No	Yes	Total
4. Birthplace	Count			
	SR			
Other Italian region	Count	0.000	28.000	28.000
	SR	-0.796	0.796	
Foreign country	Count	0.000	19.000	19.000
	SR	-0.650	0.650	
Veneto	Count	10.000	422.000	432.000
	SR	1.054	-1.054	
Total	Count	10.000	469.000	479.000

Table 10 Contingency table Q4+Q13

Source: own survey

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to test whether birthplace and support for the revitalisation of Venetian are independent variables (H_0). The results were not significant ($\chi^2 (2) = 1.111, p = 0.574$), suggesting that birthplace and support for the Venetian language are independent variables.

5. Knowledge of Venetian and attitude towards compulsoriness of its study at school

The variables considered are the following ones:

- knowledge of Venetian (Q12: What is your level of Venetian?)
- Venetian as school subject (Q17 If you answered yes at school, in which of the following ways:)

To facilitate data processing, we have reduced the replies in Q12 merging the category ‘I know a few words and expressions’ with ‘I speak it a little’ and merged the reply ‘Partly mandatory, partly optional’ with ‘Mandatory’ in Q17.

Null hypothesis: knowledge of Venetian and attitudes towards its teaching at school are independent.

Analysis: we continue to use the χ^2 test to check if the two variables are independent (Tab. 11).

Contingency Table

12. What is your level of Venetian?		17. If you answered yes at school, in which of the following ways:		
		Optional	Mandatory	Total
I know a few words and expressions + I speak it a little	Count	23.000	35.000	58.000
	SR	1.110	-1.110	
I understand it but I do not speak it	Count	9.000	7.000	16.000
	SR	1.987	-1.987	
I speak it well	Count	93.000	209.000	302.000
	SR	-2.087	2.087	
I neither speak nor understand it	Count	1.000	1.000	2.000
	SR	0.501	-0.501	
Total	Count	126.000	252.000	378.000

Table 11 Contingency table Q12+Q17

Source: own survey

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to test whether the knowledge level of Venetian and the attitude towards making it mandatory at school are independent (H_0). The results were not significant ($\chi^2(3) = 5.950, p = 0.114$), suggesting no association between the set of variables.

6. Birthplace and belief about relation between support for Venetian and regional autonomy

The variables considered are the following ones:

- place of birth (Q4)
- regional autonomism (Q22: Do you think that the protection of the Venetian language is linked to regional autonomism?)

Null hypothesis: the variable place of birth and the opinion that protection of Venetian language and regional autonomism are not linked.

Analysis: we continue to use the χ^2 test to check if the two variables are independent (Table 12).

Contingency Table

22. Link between Venetian language and regional autonomism?				
4. Birthplace		No, not necessarily	Yes	Total
Other Italian region	Count	22.000	6.000	28.000
	SR	1.227	-1.227	
Foreign country	Count	14.000	5.000	19.000
	SR	0.534	-0.534	
Veneto	Count	284.000	139.000	423.000
	SR	-1.319	1.319	
Total	Count	320.000	150.000	470.000

Table 12 Contingency table Q4+Q22

Source: own survey

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to test whether the birthplace and the opinion that protection of the Venetian language is linked to regional autonomism (H_0). The results were not significant ($\chi^2(2) = 1.865, p = 0.394$), suggesting that the variables are independent.

7. Knowledge of Venetian and attitude towards street signs in Venetian

The variables considered are the following ones:

- knowledge level of Venetian (Q12)
- support for Venetian toponymy (Q23: How would you consider seeing street signs in Venetian language — e.g. city names?)

Null hypothesis: the knowledge level of Venetian and the variable support for Venetian toponymy are independent. Analysis: we continue to use the χ^2 test to check if the variables are independent (Table 13).

Contingency Table

23. Street signs in Venetian					
12. What is your level of Venetian?		I like the idea	I am indifferent	I do not like the idea	Total
I know a few words and expressions	Count	2.000	1.000	6.000	9.000
	SR	-2.223	-0.586	3.148	
I understand it but I do not speak it	Count	11.000	7.000	22.000	40.000
	SR	-4.138	-0.194	5.031	
I speak it well	Count	236.000	65.000	60.000	361.000
	SR	5.269	-0.614	-5.607	
I speak it a little	Count	36.000	15.000	24.000	75.000
	SR	-1.987	0.327	2.026	
I neither speak nor understand it	Count	0.000	3.000	0.000	3.000
	SR	-2.059	3.629	-0.948	
Total	Count	285.000	91.000	112.000	488.000

Table 13 Contingency table Q12+Q23

Source: own survey

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to test whether the birth-place and the opinion that protection of the Venetian language is linked to regional autonomism (H_0). The results were significant ($\chi^2(8) = 60.871, p < .001$), suggesting an association between the variables.

In Fig. 32 (mosaic plot) the violet area shows the percentage of people who affirm to speak Venetian well across genders. Supporters of street signs in Venetian mostly speak the language well (82.8%), compared to 53.6% of opponents and 71.4% of the indifferent; notably, those who don't speak Venetian were generally indifferent (3.3%) and not hostile (Fig. 33).

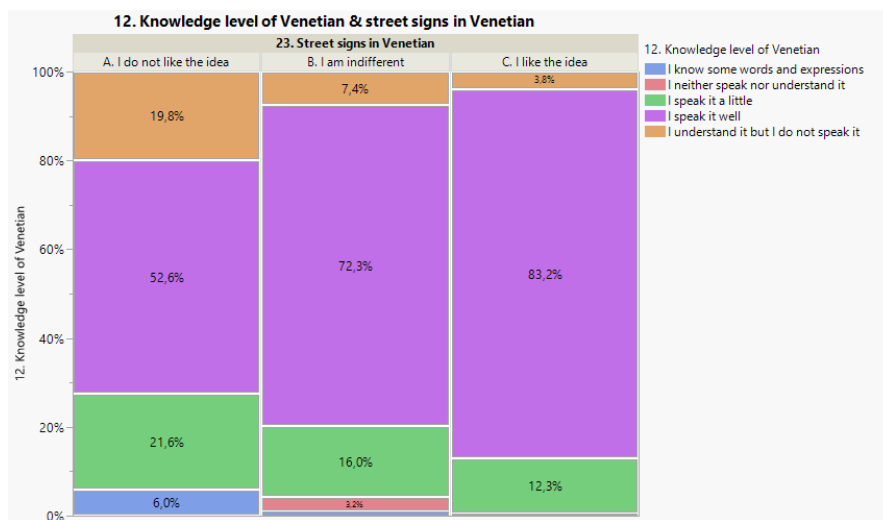


Figure 32 Mosaic plot Q12+Q23

Source: own survey

8. Knowledge of Venetian and level of life satisfaction

Variables:

- knowledge level of Venetian (Q12)
- life satisfaction level (Q25)

To facilitate data processing and interpretation, we have squeezed the replies in Q12 merging 'I know a few words and expressions' with 'I speak it a little' into 'I speak it a little and 'I understand it but I do not speak it' with 'I neither speak nor understand it' into 'I do not speak it'; also, we grouped Q25 answers into interval categories, merging the categories 0,1,2,3,4 into a Low '0-4' category, the categories 5,6,7 into an Average '5-7' category and 9,9,10 into a High '8-10' category. Analysis: we continue to run the χ^2 test to determine whether knowledge of Venetian significantly influences life satisfaction feelings (Table 14).

Contingency Tables

12. What is your level of Venetian?	25. Life satisfaction level (Cantril scale)			Total	
	Low 0-4	Average 5-7	High 8-10		
I do not speak it	Count	4.000	23.000	15.000	42.000
	SR	-0.278	1.026	-0.862	
I speak it a little	Count	6.000	45.000	34.000	85.000
	SR	-1.220	1.164	-0.410	
I speak it well	Count	44.000	168.000	161.000	373.000
	SR	1.230	-1.658	0.903	
Total	Count	54.000	236.000	210.000	500.000

Table 14 Contingency table Q12 + Q25

Source: own survey

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to test whether the variables knowledge level of Venetian and the level of life satisfaction are independent (H_0). The results were not significant ($\chi^2(4) = 3.575, p = 0.467$), suggesting no association between the variables.

9. Age and life satisfaction level

Although not strictly related to the linguistic domain, we tested the relation of these two variables to remove the doubt that advanced age (the stronghold of Venetian speakers) is associated with less life satisfaction because of a deteriorated psycho-physical condition.

Variables:

- age (Q1)
- life satisfaction (Q25: Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time? (1 to 10 on a Cantril Scale).

Analysis: we continue to run the χ^2 test to determine whether knowledge of Venetian significantly influences life satisfaction feelings (Table 15).

Contingency Table

		25. Life satisfaction level (1 to 10 on a Cantril Scale)			
1. Age range		Low 0-4	Average 5-7	High 8-10	Total
0-20	Count	2.000	16.000	10.000	28.000
	SR	-0.617	0.991	-0.619	
21-30	Count	14.000	48.000	34.000	96.000
	SR	1.400	0.425	-1.308	
31-40	Count	4.000	31.000	18.000	53.000
	SR	-0.772	1.610	-1.150	
41-50	Count	7.000	39.000	40.000	86.000
	SR	-0.827	-0.554	1.079	
51-60	Count	13.000	57.000	58.000	128.000
	SR	-0.204	-0.929	1.071	
61-70	Count	11.000	36.000	30.000	77.000
	SR	1.132	-0.250	-0.456	
70+	Count	1.000	8.000	12.000	21.000
	SR	-0.892	-0.934	1.506	
Total	Count	52.000	235.000	202.000	489.000

Table 15 Contingency table Q1+Q25

Source: own survey

A chi-square goodness-of-fit test was conducted to test whether the variables age and the level of life satisfaction are independent (H_0). The results were not significant ($\chi^2(12) = 11.210$, $p = 0.511$), suggesting no association between the variables.

Summary:

1. **Age and knowledge level of Venetian:** significant association.
2. **Educational level and support of revitalisation:** no significant association.
3. **Gender and use of language:** significant association.
4. **Place of birth and support:** no significant association.
5. **Knowledge of Venetian and attitude towards teaching it at school:** no significant association.
6. **Birthplace and opinion about relation between support for Venetian and regional autonomy** no significant association.
7. **Knowledge of Venetian and attitude towards street signs in Venetian:** significant association.
8. **Knowledge of Venetian and level of life satisfaction:** no significant association.
9. **Age and life satisfaction level:** no significant association.

Upon closer examination of the findings, a statistical analysis revealed a few significant associations.

1. Age range and knowledge level of Venetian: the statistical test proved that there is an association between the variables in the direction expected: the higher the age the higher the level of knowledge and conversely, younger age groups tend to have lower levels of proficiency. This finding suggests that language transmission faces significant challenges.
2. Educational level and support of revitalisation: the absence of a clear association between these variables may depend on various factors. Individuals holding higher education degrees, such as Bachelor's and Master's, may exhibit varying attitudes based on their field of study specialization: Humanities students, typically more attuned to issues of cultural diversity and minority languages, might demonstrate greater sensitivity and support for the revitalization of regional languages. In contrast, students in technical fields like natural sciences and engineering might show less inclination towards language-related concerns. Moreover, individuals who have achieved a high proficiency in Italian often display a more accommodating stance towards regional languages. They may appreciate the cultural significance of these languages in different societal contexts or domains.
3. Gender and use of language: gender disparities in language use reveal a notable preference among males for Venetian. Chapter 4 highlighted the concept of 'linguistic hypergamy' influencing females, who typically tend to conform more closely to elevated standards of language. In contrast, males often avoid refined language perceived as overly feminine, thereby demonstrating a higher prevalence of Venetian usage.
4. Place of birth and support for the Venetian language: The lack of association between place of birth and support for the Venetian language could be interpreted as a reflection of respect or indifference among individuals born outside Veneto. This may suggest that those born elsewhere, who presumably do not speak Venetian or use it less frequently than locals, demonstrate varying levels of engagement or disinterest in supporting the language.
5. Knowledge of Venetian and attitude towards compulsoriness of its study at school: no association has been observed between variables.
6. Birthplace and opinion about relation between support for Venetian and regional autonomy: There was no observed association between the variables. This suggests that participants in the survey tended to separate cultural considerations from political ones in their perspectives.
7. Knowledge of Venetian and attitude towards street signs in Venetian: An association was observed, as individuals with knowledge of Venetian language appear more supportive of street signs in Venetian, whereas those without knowledge of Venetian tend to express indifference towards this issue.

8. Knowledge of Venetian and level of life satisfaction: here was no observed dependence between knowledge of Venetian language and levels of life satisfaction. However, it is important to consider that external factors, such as the post-pandemic situation, may have a more significant influence on life satisfaction levels than linguistic factors alone.
9. Age and life satisfaction level: we can interpret a lack of association between the variables by observing that all ages come with their specific problems that impact on life satisfaction, transcending the influence of Venetian language proficiency.

The implications for language policy and planning are multiple, necessitating targeted interventions tailored to specific areas of concern. Particularly crucial is the need for heightened focus on language transmission among younger generations. Particularly crucial is the need for heightened focus on language transmission among younger generations. This demographic group appears to exhibit lower proficiency levels and engagement with the Venetian language, emphasising the importance of strategies that foster greater awareness, education, and cultural appreciation from an early age.

An impactful intervention seems to be the use of street signs reflecting the toponymy of Venetian. Street signs are regularly replaced due to wear and tear, rust, and other factors, with municipalities typically managing this upkeep rather than the Italian state.⁸⁹ Peter Backhaus' study on Tokyo's street signs illustrates that the linguistic landscape is a new field of investigation. Research into language use on signs contributes significantly to the study of urban multilingualism and broader investigations into language and society (Backhaus, 2006).

A recommendation for revitalising Venetian could involve actively engaging population cohorts that currently feel less connected to the revitalisation process. This can be achieved through incremental implementation of pragmatic linguistic policies, coupled with continuous evaluation of progress and careful consideration of feedback. By adopting this approach, stakeholders can foster a sense of inclusivity and participation among all demographic groups, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of efforts aimed at revitalising the Venetian language and culture.

⁸⁹ To follow the debate, see *Giornale dei Comuni* (2016, October 28).

9 CONCLUSIONS

The exploration of plurilingualism and language revitalisation, centred on the Venetian language, offers a comprehensive understanding of the diverse challenges and ongoing efforts in this domain. Key findings and insights from this dissertation are summarised as follows:

Resilience of Venetian

- Despite historical reluctance towards its institutionalisation and the associated stigma stemming from the annexation of Venetia into the Kingdom of Italy, the Venetian language has demonstrated remarkable resilience in contemporary contexts.
- Current sociolinguistic data illustrate a declining trend in negative perceptions, as an increasing number of speakers are embracing their linguistic heritage. This phenomenon is particularly evident among younger generations who perceive the Venetian language as possessing a 'cool' factor for self-expression. Additionally, foreign migrants are utilising Venetian in their workplaces without inhibition, further contributing to its revitalisation.

Threats to continuity

- **Youth disengagement:** There is a marked lack of awareness among younger generations regarding the cultural and historical importance of the Venetian language. In response to this gap, the Veneto region has implemented cultural programmes in schools aimed at educating students about Veneto's history. However, these initiatives only superficially address the issue and are not conducive to an effective learning or use of the language.
- **Political support:** Political measures aimed at preserving the Venetian language have been inadequate and inconsistent, lacking a cohesive long-term strategy for language maintenance. While laws protecting the Venetian language have been enacted by the Veneto region, their implementation has been modest due to financial constraints.
- **Socio-economic factors:** Urbanisation, globalisation, migration, and shifting economic dynamics have negatively impacted the intergenerational transmission of the Venetian language. However, the emergence of new media and artificial intelligence (AI) may contribute to the revival of the language. Additionally, the tourism sector could act a driving force, with tourism establishments offering entertainment in Venetian or using the language to emphasise regional identity—for instance, by incorporating Venetian language in restaurant menus alongside other languages. When tourists visit a region where a

language other than the national language is spoken, the presence of this linguistic diversity often acts as a captivating and exotic stimulus for exploration and discovery⁹⁰.

Effective strategies and initiatives

- **Educational programmes:** Implementation of educational initiatives that integrate Venetian into school curricula has met with good interest and shown positive outcomes in language retention among young learners. Our own survey indicated that half of the respondents are potentially in favour of the compulsory introduction of Venetian in schools, and a further quarter are in favour of the optionality.
- **Community engagement:** Grassroots movements and community-led projects play a crucial role in fostering pride and active use of Venetian in daily life. More could be done to encourage these movements by direct public financing of in form of tax relief.
- A far-sighted and ambitious policymaking by the Veneto region, municipalities and private stakeholders could breathe life into the revitalisation initiatives of Venetian. As an example, establishing a permanent public committee specifically dedicated to this cause could enhance actions and provide the momentum needed to reverse the decline of Venetian.
- In the 16th century, Venice was as internationally renowned as modern cities like New York or Berlin today. We propose that Veneto-based companies with global stature—such as Benetton, De Longhi, Luxottica, or Prosecco wine consortia—integrate cultural ties of the region into their brand identity and support sponsorship programmes that benefit both their businesses and the preservation of the Venetian language.
- **The creation of safe harbours:** 'Safe harbours,' designated spaces where both young and elderly individuals can socialise in their leisure time in a context where the language, values, and traditions of Veneto are appreciated, represent a viable strategy for revitalising Venetian and its cultural heritage. The integration of these cultural safe harbours within the broader work environment, mass media, and political system ensures they do not become isolated or antagonistic enclaves. The primary challenge in maintaining the language lies not in excessive isolation from the mainstream but rather in the risk of assimilation, even among groups committed to cultural and linguistic preservation.
- **Media and technology:** The use of digital platforms and social media has emerged as a significant tool for promoting Venetian, offering accessible resources for learning and engagement. Meanwhile, public investments should be directed towards producing and broadcasting radio and TV programs tailored for the older generations, who predominantly speak Venetian and would

⁹⁰ In 2023, Veneto was Italy's most visited region with 72 million visitors, 70% of whom were from abroad (Profita, 2024).

significantly benefit in terms of well-being during their senior years. On the other hand, younger generations could benefit from engaging with cutting-edge digital innovations, such as AI, that incorporate the use of Venetian.

Case studies and best practices

Among the best practises of language revitalisation, we have chosen the cases of Hebrew and Catalan, the latter more viable for revamping Venetian.

- **Hebrew revitalisation:** The rebirth of Hebrew provides a robust model of successful language revitalisation achieved through systematic educational policies and community involvement. However, due to the unique circumstances surrounding the revival of Hebrew in Israel, it is improbable that this model can be replicated in the Veneto region.
- **Catalan revival:** The case of Catalan and its reintroduction into public life and education exemplifies effective strategies that could be suitably adapted for Venetian. Strengthening cultural connections between Catalonia and Veneto, along with implementing structured language policies, could potentially yield positive outcomes for the revitalisation of Venetian.

Unitary Orthography improvement proposal

- A critical element in language preservation is the establishment of a standardised orthography. Following an explanation of the principles of the Unitary Veneto Orthography, we propose an original framework with improvements aimed at facilitating better communication and preserving linguistic consistency across different Venetian-speaking regions, including those situated in Latin America.

Policy recommendations

- **Comprehensive language policies:** National governments and regional institutions should devise and implement comprehensive language policies that include funding, research, and education. In this context, universities could play a key role by integrating systematic courses on Venetian language and culture into their academic offerings.
- **International collaboration:** Collaborative efforts at the international level, particularly within the European Union, can offer assistance and resources for the revitalization of regional languages.
- **Cultural promotion:** Promoting Venetian culture through festivals, literature, and art is crucial for fostering language preservation efforts.

Our contribution to the field of revival linguistics

Our contribution encompasses multiple areas: through our review of literature on plurilingualism, we have identified a theoretical rationale for the revitalisation of Venetian, specifically the enhancement of cognitive capacity and well-being, underpinned by the concept of a linguistic health diet (LHD). Learning to speak Venetian involves training oneself in a phonological system that is markedly different from Italian, making it a useful tool in learning foreign languages and increasing awareness about one's own linguistic repertoire. Moreover, translanguaging has proven to be an interesting tool to integrate all languages, including Venetian, in the educational system. Investigation into the contemporary sociolinguistic situation in Veneto highlighted interesting phenomena, such as the increasing prestige that regional languages are gaining in various contexts. A proposal for refining the official orthography could potentially unify Venetian-speaking communities worldwide.

Finally, our self-conducted survey has shed light on several key phenomena regarding the state of Venetian language revitalisation. Firstly, there is a concerning decline in knowledge among younger generations, posing a significant challenge for language transmission. Additionally, we noted a gender disparity, with males tending to speak Venetian more frequently than females. Despite these challenges, there exists a resilient spirit within the Venetian-speaking community, accompanied by a strong desire to protect the language from erosion. Our findings reveal a nuanced approach to revitalisation: while there is a strong commitment to preserving the language, speakers also exhibit a relaxed attitude, as evidenced by their frequent code-switching in daily life—which underscores the language's vitality and adaptability in contemporary contexts. Lastly, individuals from outside the Veneto region showed significant tolerance and respect for revitalisation efforts.

Future research directions

Further research should explore the long-term impacts of current revitalisation efforts and identify emerging challenges. Examples include:

- **Conducting comparative studies** with other regional languages, particularly Catalan and possibly Ukrainian, which can offer additional insights and strategies applicable to the Venetian context.
- **Implementing large-scale surveys** to assess population needs and help develop strategies for implementation in pilot projects, followed by subsequent evaluations for scaling up.
- **Investigating the role of new media and technology** in language learning and engagement, which could be crucial as digital landscapes and AI evolve.

In conclusion, the future of the Venetian language, as with all regional languages, depends on a sustained and collective commitment to uphold linguistic diversity. This commitment entails:

- Establishing robust educational frameworks.
- Increasing political advocacy to prioritise language conservation on political agendas.
- Fostering greater community involvement and supporting grassroots initiatives.
- Embracing innovative uses of technology and media.

By affirming the significance of regional languages and implementing strategic revitalisation efforts across multiple communication platforms, the Venetian language and its associated cultural traditions can thrive and contribute to enriching Italy's linguistic heritage.

APPENDIX 1 Survey results

1. Age

2. Educational level

			A=Answers	%
2.1	Elementary		1	0.2%
2.2	Middle School	■	57	11.22%
2.3	High school	■	243	47.83%
2.4	Bachelor's degree	■	57	11.22%
2.4	Master's degree	■	136	26.77%
2.5	No answer		14	2.76%

3. Gender

			A	%
3.1	Male	■	262	51.57%
3.2	Female	■	231	45.47%
3.3	I'd rather not reply		6	1.18%
3.4	No answer		9	1.77%





4. Place of birth

			A	%
4.1	Veneto.	■	448	88.19%
4.2	Another Italian region	■	31	6.1%
4.3	Foreign country	■	21	4.13%
4.4	I don't know / I'd rather not reply		0	0%
4.5	No answer		8	1.57%

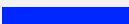




5. Mother's place of birth

			A	%
5.1	Veneto	■	451	88.78%
5.2	Another Italian region	■	34	6.69%
5.3	Foreign country	■	19	3.74%
5.4	I don't know / I'd rather not reply		0	0%
5.5	No answer		4	0.79%

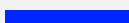




6. Father's place of birth

			A	%
6.1	Veneto.		439	86.42%
6.2	Another Italian region		54	10.63%
6.3	Foreign country		12	2.36%
6.4	I don't know / I'd rather not reply		0	0%
6.5	No answer		3	0.59%






7. Languages spoken by your mother

			A	%
7.1	Italian		332	65.35%
7.2	Venetian (all varieties: Venetian proper, Paduan, Vicentino, etc.)		440	86.61%
7.3	Other regional language (i.e. Sicilian, Friulian, etc.)		22	4.33%
7.4	Other languages		55	10.83%
7.5	I do not know / I do not reply		0	0%
7.6	No answer		3	0.59%

8. Languages spoken by your father

			A	%
8.1	Italian.		326	64.17%
8.2	Venetian (all varieties: Venetian proper, Paduan, Vicentino, etc.).		437	86.02%
8.3	Other regional language (i.e. Sicilian, Friulian, etc.).		33	6.5%
8.4	Other languages.		47	9.25%
8.5	I do not know / I do not reply.		2	0.39%
8.6	No answer		3	0.59%

9. Languages spoken in the family / community where you were raised

			A	%
9.2	Italian.		330	64.96%
9.2	Venetian (all varieties: Venetian proper, Paduan, Vicentino, etc.).		449	88.39%
9.3	Other regional language (i.e. Sicilian, Friulian, etc.).		24	4.72%
9.4	Other languages.		29	5.71%
9.5	I do not know / I do not reply.		0	0%
9.6	No answer		2	0.39%

10. Languages spoken with friends

			A	%
10.1	Italian.		352	69.29%
10.2	Venetian (all varieties: Venetian proper, Paduan, Vicentino, etc.).		396	77.95%
10.3	Other regional language (i.e. Sicilian, Friulian, etc.).		17	3.35%
10.4	Other languages.		48	9.45%
10.5	I do not know / I do not reply.		0	0%
10.6	No answer		1	0.2%

11. Languages spoken at work

			A	%
11.1	Italian.		403	79.33%
11.2	Venetian (all varieties: Venetian proper, Paduan, Vicentino, etc.).		303	59.65%
11.3	Other regional language (i.e. Sicilian, Friulian, etc.).		11	2.17%
11.4	Other languages.		75	14.76%
11.5	I do not know / I do not reply		12	2.36%
11.6	No answer		2	0.39%

12. What is your level of Venetian?

			A	%
12.1	I speak it well		377	74.21%
12.2	I speak it a little		76	14.96%
12.3	I understand it but I do not speak it		40	7.87%
12.4	I know a few words and expressions		10	1.97%
12.5	I neither speak nor understand it		4	0.79%
12.6	No answer		1	0.2%

13. Do you consider it appropriate to maintain and revitalise the Veneto language?

			Answers	%
13.1	Yes.		484	95.28%
13.2	No.		10	1.97%
13.3	I don't know.		12	2.36%
13.4	No answer		2	0.39%

14. If you answered yes, why?

			A	%
14.1	I like it.		137	26.97%
14.2	I am fond of it (e.g. it is my grandparents' language)		167	32.87%
14.3	It is part of my identity.		355	69.88%
14.4	It could turn useful to learn other similar languages (English, French, Spanish, etc.).		59	11.61%
14.5	It is a carrier of a linguistic and cultural heritage.		379	74.61%
14.6	Other: (indicate)		18	3.54%
14.7	No answer		22	4.33%

15. If you indicated 'other' in the previous question, could you elaborate on your answer?

16. If you answered yes, in which of the following ways:

			A	%
16.1	At school.		226	44.49%
16.2	Through extracurricular courses.		149	29.33%
16.3	Interacting with speakers.		304	59.84%
16.4	Studying materials such as dictionaries or literature.		179	35.24%
16.5	In the media (radio, TV, cinema, press).		185	36.42%
16.6	On social media / internet.		169	33.27%
16.7	No Answer		32	6.3%

17. If you answered yes at school, do you think teaching should be:

			A	%
17.1	Compulsory.		145	28.54%
17.2	Optional.		128	25.2%
17.3	Partly compulsory, partly optional.		115	22.64%
17.4	No Answer		120	23.62%

18. If you answered no, why?

			A	%
18.1	It is a waste of time; it is better to learn other languages such as English.		24	4.72%
18.2	It is useless in economic terms.		11	2.17%
18.3	I do not like it.		2	0.39%
18.4	I have other priorities.		30	5.91%
18.5	Other: (indicate).		12	2.36%
18.6	No Answer		443	87.2%

19. If you indicated 'other' in the previous question, could you elaborate on your answer?

20. Have you ever enjoyed cultural products in Venetian language?

			A	%
20.1	Yes (e.g. I saw a play by Goldoni or read a poetry collection by Zanzotto, etc.).		418	82.28%
20.2	No, and I am not interested.		27	5.31%
20.3	No, but I would like to try.		59	11.61%
20.4	No answer		4	0.79%

21. If you answered 'yes' or 'no, but I would like to try', which contents would you be most interested in?

22. Do you think that the protection of the Venetian language is linked to regional autonomism?

			A	%
22.1	Yes.		159	31.3%
22.2	No, not necessarily.		338	66.54%
22.3	No Answer		11	2.17%

23. How would you consider seeing street signals in Venetian language? (E.g. city names, etc.)

			A	%
23.1	I like the idea.		291	57.28%
23.2	I do not like the idea.		115	22.64%
23.3	I am indifferent.		93	18.31%
23.4	No answer		9	1.77%

24. Are you aware of the following initiatives in favour of the Veneto language? Please tick those you are aware of.

			A	%
24.1	There is an official spelling of the Venetian language.		250	49.21%
24.2	There is a translation of Telegram in the Veneto language.		133	26.18%
24.3	There is an organisation that carries out many initiatives (Accademia de la Bona Creansa)		255	50.2%
24.4	Veneto language courses have already been organised in schools.		111	21.85%

24.5	There is a Veneto regional law (no. 8/2007) that deals with saving the Veneto language.		193	37.99%
24.6	There is a version of Libre Office in the Veneto language.		61	12.01%
24.7	There is a Veneto-language radio (https://www.venetoradio.com/).		166	32.68%
24.8	There are vocabularies and grammars.		307	60.43%
24.9	No answer		65	12.8%

25. Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to 10 at the top. The top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time? (1 to 10 on a Cantril Scale).

			A	%
25.1	0		3	0.59%
25.2	1		1	0.2%
25.3	2		6	1.18%
25.4	3		17	3.35%
25.5	4		27	5.31%
25.6	5		62	12.2%
25.7	6		65	12.8%
25.8	7		107	21.06%
25.9	8		132	25.98%
25.10	9		43	8.46%
25.11	10		33	6.5%
25.12	No answer		12	2.36%

26. Space for comments, suggestions, expression of ideas and feelings.

APPENDIX 2 Survey results (original Italian version)

1. Età

2. Grado di istruzione

			Risposte	%
2.1	Elementari		1	0.2%
2.2	Medie		57	11.22%
2.3	Superiori		243	47.83%
2.4	Laurea triennale		57	11.22%
2.4	Laurea magistrale		136	26.77%
2.5	Nessuna risposta		14	2.76%

3. Genere

			Risposte	%
3.1	Maschile		262	51.57%
3.2	Femminile		231	45.47%
3.3	Non rispondo		6	1.18%
3.4	Nessuna risposta		9	1.77%

4. Luogo di nascita

			Risposte	%
4.1	Veneto		448	88.19%
4.2	Altra regione italiana		31	6.1%
4.3	Stato estero		21	4.13%
4.4	Non so / non rispondo		0	0%
4.5	Nessuna risposta		8	1.57%

5. Luogo di nascita della madre

			Risposte	%
5.1	Veneto		451	88.78%
5.2	Altra regione italiana		34	6.69%
5.3	Stato estero		19	3.74%
5.4	Non so / non rispondo		0	0%
5.5	Nessuna risposta		4	0.79%

6. Luogo di nascita del padre

			Risposte	%
6.1	Veneto		439	86.42%
6.2	Altra regione italiana		54	10.63%
6.3	Stato estero		12	2.36%
6.4	Non so / non rispondo		0	0%
6.5	Nessuna risposta		3	0.59%

7. Lingue parlate dalla madre

			Risposte	%
7.1	Italiano		332	65.35%
7.2	Veneto (ogni varietà: veneziano, padovano, vicentino, ecc.)		440	86.61%
7.3	Altra lingua regionale (per es. siciliano, friulano, ecc.)		22	4.33%
7.4	Altre lingue		55	10.83%
7.5	Non so / non rispondo		0	0%
7.6	Nessuna risposta		3	0.59%

8. Lingue parlate dal padre

			Risposte	%
8.1	Italiano		326	64.17%
8.2	Veneto (ogni varietà: veneziano, padovano, vicentino, ecc.)		437	86.02%
8.3	Altra lingua regionale (per es. siciliano, friulano, ecc.)		33	6.5%
8.4	Altre lingue		47	9.25%
8.5	Non so / non rispondo		2	0.39%
8.6	Nessuna risposta		3	0.59%

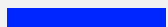





9. Lingue parlate in famiglia / nella comunità dove son cresciuto

			Risposte	%
9.2	Italiano		330	64.96%
9.2	Veneto (ogni varietà: veneziano, padovano, vicentino, ecc.)		449	88.39%
9.3	Altra lingua regionale (per es. siciliano, friulano, ecc.)		24	4.72%
9.4	Altre lingue		29	5.71%
9.5	Non so / non rispondo		0	0%
9.6	Nessuna risposta		2	0.39%







10. Lingue parlate con gli amici

			Risposte	%
10.1	Italiano		352	69.29%
10.2	Veneto (ogni varietà: veneziano, padovano, vicentino, ecc.)		396	77.95%
10.3	Altra lingua regionale (per es. siciliano, friulano, ecc.)		17	3.35%
10.4	Altre lingue		48	9.45%
10.5	Non so / non rispondo		0	0%
10.6	Nessuna risposta		1	0.2%





11. Lingue parlate al lavoro

			Risposte	%
11.1	Italiano		403	79.33%
11.2	Veneto (ogni varietà: veneziano, padovano, vicentino, ecc.)		303	59.65%
11.3	Altra lingua regionale (per es. siciliano, friulano, ecc.)		11	2.17%
11.4	Altre lingue		75	14.76%
11.5	Non so / non rispondo / non lavoro		12	2.36%
11.6	Nessuna risposta		2	0.39%








12. Qual è il Suo grado di conoscenza del veneto?

			Risposte	%
12.1	Lo parlo bene		377	74.21%
12.2	Lo parlo un po'		76	14.96%
12.3	Lo capisco ma non lo parlo		40	7.87%
12.4	Conosco qualche parola ed espressione		10	1.97%
12.5	Non lo parlo né lo capisco		4	0.79%
12.6	Nessuna risposta		1	0.2%

13. Ritiene opportuno conservare e rivitalizzare la lingua veneta?

			Risposte	%
13.1	Sì		484	95.28%
13.2	No		10	1.97%
13.3	Non so		12	2.36%
13.4	Nessuna risposta		2	0.39%

14. Se ha risposto sì, perché?

			Risposte	%
14.1	Mi piace		137	26.97%
14.2	Ci sono affezionato (per es. perché è la lingua dei miei nonni, ecc.)		167	32.87%
14.3	Fa parte della mia identità		355	69.88%
14.4	Mi potrebbe tornare utile per imparare altre lingue (per es. inglese, francese, spagnolo, ecc.)		59	11.61%
14.5	È veicolo di un patrimonio linguistico e culturale		379	74.61%
14.6	Altro		18	3.54%
14.7	Nessuna risposta		22	4.33%

15. Se nella domanda precedente ha indicato 'altro', potrebbe elaborare la Sua risposta?

16. Se ha risposto sì, in quale dei seguenti modi?

			Risposte	%
16.1	A scuola, in orario curriculare.		226	44.49%
16.2	A scuola, come attività extra-curricolare.		149	29.33%
16.3	Interagendo con persone parlanti la lingua		304	59.84%
16.4	Studiando materiale didattico come dizionari od opere letterarie.		179	35.24%
16.5	Attraverso i media tradizionali (radio, TV, cinema, stampa).		185	36.42%
16.6	Sui social media / internet		169	33.27%
16.7	Nessuna risposta		32	6.3%

17. Se ha risposto di sì a scuola, pensa che l'insegnamento debba esser:

			Risposte	%
17.1	Obbligatorio		145	28.54%
17.2	Facoltativo		128	25.2%
17.3	In parte obbligatorio ed in parte facoltativo		115	22.64%
17.4	Nessuna risposta		120	23.62%

18. Se ha risposto no, perché?


			Risposte	%
18.1	È una perdita di tempo, è meglio apprendere altre lingue, come per es. l'inglese		24	4.72%
18.2	È inutile in termini economici		11	2.17%
18.3	Nessuna risposta		2	0.39%
18.4	Ho altre priorità		30	5.91%
18.5	Altro		12	2.36%
18.6	Nessuna risposta		443	87.2%

19. Se nella domanda precedente ha indicato 'altro', potrebbe elaborare la Sua risposta?**20. Ha mai fruito di prodotti culturali in lingua veneta?**

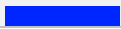



			Risposte	%
20.1	Sì (ad esempio, ho visto una commedia di Goldoni oppure letto una raccolta poetica di Zanzotto, ecc.)		418	82.28%
20.2	No, e non sono interessato		27	5.31%
20.3	No, ma mi piacerebbe provare		59	11.61%
20.4	Nessuna risposta		4	0.79%

21. Se ha risposto sì oppure 'no, ma mi piacerebbe provare', a quali contenuti sarebbe maggiormente interessato?










22. Ritiene che la protezione della lingua veneta sia correlata all'autonomismo regionale?

			Risposte	%
22.1	Sì		159	31.3%
22.2	No, non necessariamente		338	66.54%
22.3	Nessuna risposta		11	2.17%

23. Come considererebbe vedere la segnaletica stradale in lingua veneta (es. toponomastica)?

			Risposte	%
23.1	Mi piace l'idea		291	57.28%
23.2	Non mi piace l'idea		115	22.64%
23.3	Mi è indifferente		93	18.31%
23.4	Nessuna risposta		9	1.77%

24. È al corrente delle seguenti iniziative a favore della lingua veneta? Spunti quelle che conosce.

			Risposte	%
24.1	Esiste una grafia ufficiale della lingua veneta		250	49.21%
24.2	C'è una traduzione di Telegram in lingua veneta		133	26.18%
24.3	C'è un ente che porta avanti numerose iniziative (Accademia de la Bona Creansa)		255	50.2%
24.4	Si sono già organizzati dei percorsi di lingua veneta nelle scuole		111	21.85%
24.5	Esiste una legge regionale del Veneto (la no. 8/2007) che si occupa di salvaguardare la lingua veneta		193	37.99%
24.6	C'è una versione di Libre Office in lingua veneta		61	12.01%
24.7	C'è una radio in lingua veneta (https://www.venetoradio.com/)		166	32.68%
24.8	Esistono vocabolari e grammatiche		307	60.43%
24.9	Nessuna risposta		65	12.8%

25. Immagini una scala con gradini numerati da zero in basso a 10 in alto. La cima della scala rappresenta la migliore vita possibile per Lei e la base della scala rappresenta la peggiore vita possibile per Lei. Su quale gradino della scala si sentirebbe personalmente in questo momento? (da 1 a 10 su una Scala Cantril)

			Risposte	%
25.1	0		3	0.59%
25.2	1		1	0.2%
25.3	2		6	1.18%
25.4	3		17	3.35%
25.5	4		27	5.31%
25.6	5		62	12.2%
25.7	6		65	12.8%
25.8	7		107	21.06%
25.9	8		132	25.98%
25.10	9		43	8.46%
25.11	10		33	6.5%
25.12	Nessuna risposta		12	2.36%

26. Spazio per eventuali osservazioni, suggerimenti, espressione di idee e sentimenti.

APPENDIX 3 Survey-derived comments

In this section we have gathered comments received from three open-ended questions, namely no. 15, 19, 21 and 26. Most of them were written in Italian and only a few appear to be written in a Venetian variety.

Question 15 intended to delve deeper into the reasons *why Venetian should be supported*: “If you indicated ‘other’ in the previous question, could you elaborate on your answer?”. Here are the short replies (21 instead of the 18 expected):

- 15.1 “Just as it is important to preserve biodiversity, so it is important to preserve language varieties and our cultural roots”.
- 15.2 “I think it should be used but I do not consider it essential to study or preserve it in any particular way”.
- 15.3 “Because it is the most beautiful of the Italian dialects/languages”.
- 15.4 “It is a historical heritage”.
- 15.5 “It has helped me so much to communicate with South Americans”.
- 15.6 “It sometimes expresses concepts more precisely than Italian, so it allows one to relate and integrate better. Moreover, it would be unthinkable to abandon it, while other Veneto communities value it (historical emigrants in South America). We are its linguistic 'homeland”.
- 15.7 “One people one history”.
- 15.8 “Language is the voice of culture. If it disappeared, if the Veneti disappeared, the rest of us would disappear too” (original written in Venetian: “la lengua lè la voce della coltura. Se sparisse quela, sparisse i Veneti, sparemo anca noialtri”).
- 15.9 “It has unique and special words and idioms.”
- 15.10 “Language is an instrument to feel safe”.
- 15.11 “It is a language and has a VEC code”.
- 15.12 “We have already lost Cimbrian”
- 15.13 “More expressive than Italian and adds value to personal culture”.
- 15.14 “Venetian means practicality and clarity, sincerity. It serves to differentiate oneself from Italian, the language par excellence of complication and bureaucracy”.
- 15.15 “Veneto is a language, not a dialect, which bothers many, and since 1886 attempts have been made to erase an identity of a people”.
- 15.16 “To communicate with Istrians and Brazilians, also for work purposes”.
- 15.17 “It is an invaluable cultural heritage”.
- 15.18 “Because it is my language”.
- 15.19 “Being part of my identity, I would like it to be transmitted and spoken by my children as well”.

- 15.20 “I have no particular interest in this dialect, whether it disappears or remains, it makes no difference”.
- 15.21 “I think it is right to preserve it, but I do not find it necessary to revitalise it. I love the linguistic facets that Italy enjoys, and I think it is a shame to lose them, at the same time, however, I think it should be something secondary, compared to the Italian language”.

The above reported replies offer a mixed bag of attitudes; however, the impression we draw is that sentiment prevails over indifference.

Question 19 is linked with the previous one (18) which delved into the reasons of those who argued that Venetian ought not to be promoted at school. It asked: “If you indicated ‘other’ in the previous question, could you elaborate on your answer?”. Replies were:

- 19.1 “Not my region”.
- 19.2 “I don't think it's feasible these days with classes populated by a majority of foreign students”.
- 19.3 “Because there is no single Venetian dialect, but many local variants”.
- 19.4 “The national language should be studied. The local language should be cultivated in special circles inside libraries”.
- 19.5 “It can be studied instead of religion class”.
- 19.6 “We live in Italy....at school you must learn Italian correctly!”
- 19.7 “I answered yes, it is still a language like any other that deserves to be learnt, it is older than Italian which uses words taken from the Venetian language (ciao, quarantine etc)”.
- 19.8 “School is national so the language that should be spoken is Italian and not other regional accents”.
- 19.9 “VEC certified language”
- 19.10 “I do not perceive Venetian as an endangered language”.
- 19.11 “There are many varieties of Venetian, so what should the choice of studying one over another be based on?”

Question 21 delved into the cultural desiderata of respondents. We asked those who answered 'yes' or 'no, but I would like to try', which contents they would be most interested in. Here are a few summarised replies:

- 21.1 “Theatre performances or information programmes such as local news programmes in the Ladin language of Cadore, Ampezzo or Fodoma etc.”.
- 21.2 “Comedies and poems”.
- 21.3 “Anything that does not turn into fanaticism”.
- 21.4 “Literature”.

- 21.5 “Literature works, videos”.
- 21.6 “Interviews, cultural content”.
- 21.7 “Literary works and historical documents in the Venetian language”.
- 21.8 “Technical and scientific works.
- 21.9 “Theatre and films”.
- 21.10 “Venetian theatre is interesting”.
- 21.11 “Works and books written in that language (e.g. The Treviso Arithmetic, or Arte dell'Abbaco)”.
- 21.12 “Books, plays, theme parties”.
- 21.13 “I would be interested in theatre in Venetian language, particularly about the typical legends of our places”.
- 21.14 “Mostly books. I myself, in 2018, translated and published 'The Adventures of Pinocchio' the Venetian and in a few days I am going to talk about it with the children of a middle school in Cavarzere”.
- 21.15 “User-friendly material, videos, films, TV series dubbed in Venetian”.
- 21.16 “Stories of the Serenissima Republic, Tales and Memories of the Veneto. people, poems”.
- 21.17 “News broadcasts in Venetian”.
- 21.18 “The original Veneto cuisine.”
- 21.19 “In addition to literary works in 'old' Venetian, there are musical and theatrical groups in contemporary Venetian.”
- 21.20 “Anything that can be useful to keep our language from disappearing” (“tuto queo che poe esser utile a non far sparire la nostra lengoa” — original written in Venetian)
- 21.21 “Comedies by Goldoni and other Veneto authors.”

Question 26 was meant to create a forum where participants could express content otherwise difficult to express elsewhere, and what formulates thus: “*Space for comments, suggestions, expression of ideas and feelings*”.

- 26.1 “Give space to local radio and TV stations for any broadcasts in dialect or local language.”
- 26.2 “I also suggest a parallelism with our Istrian brothers. I personally know both the communities and the areas (particularly Buje and Groznjan). Traditions and language have been preserved, the same as we had here in Veneto a few years ago. This could be a good starting point to revive and revive our history and culture. With best wishes and thanks for this thesis/survey.”
- 26.3 “It is important to teach not only the Venetian language, but also the thousand-year history of the Serenissima.”
- 26.4 “Not sure what question 25 has to do with it.”
- 26.5 “Unfortunately, my three daughters are fluent in English and other languages but not in Venetian dialect, although they understand it. With my husband, on the other hand, I speak and have always spoken in dialect.”

- 26.6 “I think it is important that dialect, before being spoken in schools, is spoken in the family, taught to children and grandchildren, because if parents and grandparents do not speak it first, it will become a dead language. Dialect represents our culture and our roots, but it seems that in recent years we are ashamed to speak it, always preferring Italian. If the Veneto people do not value their origins, dialect will be destined to disappear and remain just a memory.”
- 26.7 “The survey is badly done and badly structured”.
- 26.8 "My mother was born in Basel, Switzerland, to Italian parents. My grandfather spent 20 years working abroad and was honoured by the association 'Trevisani nel mondo' [it. “Treviso people in the world”]. They returned to Italy to get married and came back to Switzerland for good when my mother was six years old. In the meantime, they sent money to Italy to build their house. In Switzerland, they spoke German at work, but at home, also in Switzerland, they spoke Venetian. My mother currently understands and reads French and German and speaks Venetian and Italian well. However, if you ask her to write something in Italian, she has some difficulties and checks in a dictionary or on the internet to ensure a sentence or word is 'Italian-correct', much like she did with English or other languages when learning from scratch. Even when they attended the 'Italian mission', a club where they could meet other Italians, they spoke Venetian among Venetians (most of them, those from other regions, which I won't name, wouldn't even let them into Switzerland). With my sister and me, our parents and grandparents made an effort to speak Italian so that we wouldn't appear ignorant in formal settings such as at the bank, at the post office, at a physician's cabinet, at the city hall, with professionals and educated people, or in other formal contexts. In addition to getting decent grades in grammar and Italian and not going home with bad grades because we didn't use doubles or used Venetian terms as if they were normal: stua instead of stufa (stove), capus instead of cavolo (cabbage), sorz instead of topo (mouse), scheniel instead of sgabello (stool), zoc instead of ceppo (stump), pomer instead of melo (apple-tree), vendema instead of vendemmia (grape harvest), goto instead of bicchiere (glass), even though goto is different from bicer (glass), and other examples. When there was a question a chorus of laughter would rise when I or others used Venetian to express oneself. I don't have social networks, apart from Whatsapp and Telegram which are used on a tablet in the name of the family business for correspondence or to post photos and documents. But I use Venetian in written form there too (obviously without the specific orthography, that is still an enigma for me). All I'm saying is that the more time goes by, the more I feel like an extraterrestrial at home.”

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