

LINGUISTIC REGIONALISM IN EASTERN
EUROPE AND BEYOND

Minority, Regional and Literary
Microlanguages

edited by

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Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main
2018

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in memoriam Jiří Marvan

1936-2016

*POČECHA POETOWI**

*Ścekléni wétrów oblómało
Stómy owocnej zahrady?
Tela sńeha napadało?
Ńebudżeš už nigda mlady?*

*Zaś budu řéky še rozléwać
pod wéłhkym nebém wesna.
Ńebudże će? No budże spjéwać
twoja pėsňa.*

(1942)

*CONSOLATION FOR THE POET***

*The violent winds have broken
Your trees that with fruit were hung?
A lot of snow has fallen?
Will you never again be young?*

*Again the rivers will be swelling
Under a vast sky in spring.
You'll be no more? But your poems
will sing.*

(Translated by Ewald Osers)

**Óndra Łysohorsky. Laško poezija 1931-1977*, edited by J. Marvan and P. Gan, Cologne-Vienna 1988, p. 647.

***Bard swojego ludu / Euro-lašsky poeta / A Euro-Lachian poet / The bard of his people. Óndra Łysohorsky*, edited by J. Marvan, Ostrava 2009, p. 67.

LANGUAGE PLANNING FOR ITALIAN REGIONAL LANGUAGES: THE CASE OF LOMBARD AND SICILIAN

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Introduction

Italy is a multiethnic and multilingual country, boasting over 40 historical languages¹ spoken on its territory, most of which are not recognized by the Italian State as minority or regional languages (COLUZZI 2008). The sociolinguistic situation of Italy is summarized in the following table:

<i>The Italian linguistic repertoire</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Standard Italian	Mostly used in written form and in the mass media
English	Spoken mostly by young educated people, but often not fluently
Regional Italian	Spoken by the majority of Italians, even though with different registers. Different in every region for phonetic, lexical and sometimes even grammatical traits
<i>Minority languages</i>	<i>Both Romance and non-Romance (Germanic, Slavic, Greek and Albanian families). Law 482/1999 recognizes 12 of them.²</i>
<i>Regional languages</i>	<i>All Romance, by most Italians still known as 'dialects', a term that is even used by most Italian linguists working in Italy</i>
<i>Immigrant languages</i>	<i>Belonging to several families from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, spoken by the large number of immigrants living in Italy, some Italian citizens by now</i>

It is not an easy task to assess the level of prestige that a language enjoys, also considering that different languages may enjoy different degrees of prestige among different individuals and social groups. Based on our own research and observations, however, we have attempted to rank these languages

¹ By 'historical languages' we mean languages that have been present on the territory of Italy for many generations. Therefore, they do not include the languages of recent immigrants.

² The full text of the law is available at: <http://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/994821.htm> [last accessed on the 9th November 2016].

according to the prestige they seem to enjoy among the majority of their speakers (the varieties have been placed in descending order from top to bottom, according to the prestige they enjoy). The most prestigious varieties also tend to be the ones that enjoy more official support. The languages in italics occupy a low position in a diglossic relationship with Italian (in FASOLD's (2001, 52-4) sense of 'broad diglossia') and are used mostly in non-official/family settings (however, some of the recognized minority languages and even a few of the unrecognized ones have begun to be used in a limited number of 'high' domains). In Italy the phenomena of code-mixing and code-switching are not as widespread as in other parts of the world, but they are quite common among speakers of the 'low' varieties marked in italics, especially among their older speakers.

Italian regional languages

Two different terms are normally used in English (with parallel translation in many different languages) to refer to 'small' languages spoken only by a minority of the population of a country: minority languages and regional languages.³ Different interpretations of the two terms have been offered, but for this chapter we will call 'minority languages' those language varieties normally very different from Italian, in most cases belonging to different language families, whose speakers tend to have a strong ethnic/national identity that is different from Italian in ethnic and cultural terms. On the other hand, regional languages, which are still termed 'dialects' by most people and institutions (including academia) in Italy, historically tend to have a stronger relationship with Italian, whose speakers on the whole do not object to being seen as 'Italians' (and at the same time as 'Lombard', 'Sicilian', etc.). In short, speakers of regional languages tend to have a weaker distinct ethnic identity. However, from a strictly linguistic point of view, there is no difference between these two groups.⁴ Tomasz WICHERKIEWICZ (2001, 3) listed the following features for what he also calls 'regional languages':

³ Other terms do exist, like dominated or minoritized languages, but their use seems to be more restricted, and our discussion will focus only on 'minority languages' and 'regional languages'.

⁴ For instance, Lombard, which is referred to as a 'regional language' of Italy in this article, is structurally very different from its corresponding majority language (Italian) (PELLEGRINI 1973, 57-86; DE MAURO 2014, 37-41). Similarity profiles resulting from dialectometrical studies show that Lombard and the other so-called Gallo-Italic varieties are closer to standard French than to standard Italian (GOEBL 2008, 43, maps 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8; TAMBURELLI/BRASCA forthcoming).

- close genetic relationship to the corresponding majority language⁵ of the state; regiolects are often regarded as being ‘only’ dialects of a majority/state language;
- relatively long history of common development, especially sociopolitical, of the regional and corresponding majority language;
- lacking or not fully shaped feeling of national separateness within the group of speakers; however, strong regional and/or ethnic identity, with the language constituting the main constituent of the identity/regional ethnicity;
- high dialectal differentiation within the regiolects, which, hence, can be often classified as dialect clusters or L-complexes;
- lacking an adopted uniform literary standard or literary norm, or the standard being *in statu nascendi*;
- rich, often very ancient, literary tradition of dialectal/regional literature;
- relatively low social prestige of a regiolect, often lower than in the past;
- underdeveloped status language planning methods;
- sometimes a confessional separateness of the regiolect speakers;
- opposition within the group against being perceived and officially treated as [a] national minority group, often a paradoxical resistance against being seen as minority group at all; an ‘embedded’ national/linguistic identity.

There are some Italian regional languages to which all of the above features apply, and others to which most of them apply. Going back to the term ‘dialects’ (*dialetti*), which is still in common use in Italy to refer to its regional languages, even though we are aware that the term is sometimes used to refer to non-recognized local languages, we are strongly opposed to its use, as the term is not precise on the one hand, and carries negative connotations on the other, referring to a language variety that is spoken only in low domains by a restricted number of people, often with low levels of education. Another feature that the term ‘dialect’ seems to imply is that the language varieties referred to in such a way do not possess any economic value. In addition, we believe that a language variety considered to be a ‘dialect’ has a much lower possibility of being maintained and revitalized.

We could thus state that there are at least 12 minority languages spoken in Italy, those protected by Law 482/1999,⁶ and some regional languages whose

⁵ Lombard offers an example of the relative importance of this feature. Indeed, all the scholarly literature describes Lombard and the other so-called Gallo-Italic varieties as Western Romance, and in particular as Gallo-Romance, not Italo-Romance varieties (PELLEGRINI 1973, 65-9). Therefore Lombard is as genetically distant from Italian/Tuscan as Occitan, Franco-Provençal, Catalan and, most important, Ladin and Friulian are. However, all these languages are officially recognized and defined, unlike Lombard, as ‘minority’ and not ‘regional’ languages of Italy.

⁶ In reality the number of minority languages spoken in Italy is higher. For example, under ‘German’, we find the standard as well as Alemannic, Bavarian and

number is quite variable according to political considerations and the isoglosses considered, though most scholars would agree to the number's being in the range of 15 (see LEPSCHY 1994, 9). Obviously, the distinction between minority and regional languages is blurred, with some saying that Friulian and Sardinian (which are included in Law 482/1999) should be considered regional languages, and others of the opinion that varieties like Sicilian, Venetan or Piedmontese, just to name a few, should gain the status of minority languages. We consider this distinction to be rather flexible and accept the possibility that a regional language may become a minority language whenever the appropriate conditions arise. In this paper we focus on the language planning carried out so far for two of Italy's regional languages – Lombard, spoken in northern Italy, and Sicilian, spoken in the southernmost of Italy's two large islands.

Carinthian varieties – that is, at least four languages instead of one – and similar considerations apply to other minority languages, particularly Slovene, Romany and Sardinian. Moreover, some argue that the Gallo-Italic dialects spoken in some areas in the south of Italy and Tabarchino, spoken on the Sulcis Islands in southern Sardinia, would need to be added.

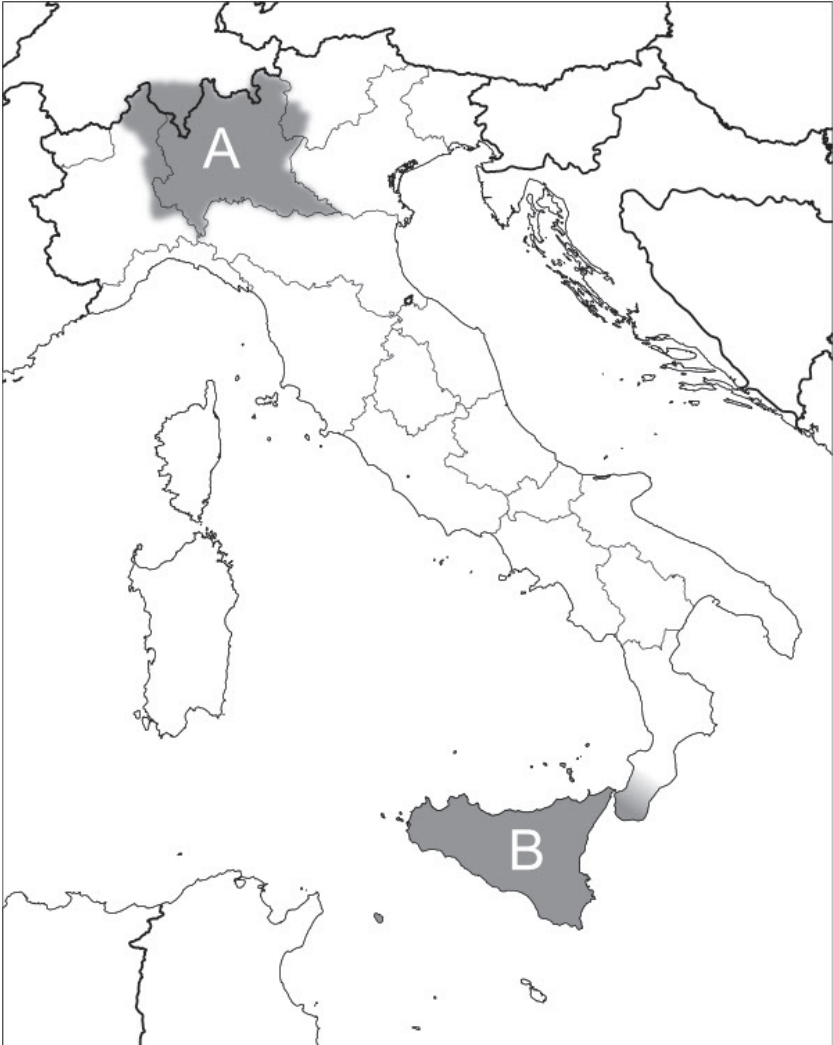


Figure 1: The historical areas in Italy where Lombard (A) and Sicilian (B) are spoken.

Lombard

Lombard is one of the languages of the Gallo-Italic group or, perhaps better, of the Gallo-Romance-Cisalpine group (cf. BEC 1970-1971, 316) belonging to the Western Romance family of Indo-European languages, linguistically closer to the French and Occitan varieties than to Italian. According to the la-

test 2006 ISTAT (The National Institute of Statistics) survey, about 3.5 million people in the Lombardy region can speak Lombard, i.e., 35.7% of the regional population. However, speakers of related varieties in bordering areas such as eastern Piedmont, Canton Ticino and the southern valleys of Chantun Grischun in Switzerland and most areas in western Trentino, should also be added to this figure. In any case these 3.5 million speakers (and we don't know how proficient in Lombard they may be) are on the decrease – even just comparing this figure with the results of the ISTAT survey carried out only six years earlier, we can see a decrease of almost 3 percentage points, from 38.6% in 2000 to 35.7% in 2006. We could reasonably assume that Lombard, in the same way as other Italian regional languages, is losing at least a quarter of its speakers in every successive generation, which clearly places Lombard on the list of endangered languages (COLUZZI 2009). In fact, according to EGIDS (Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale), one of the most well-known scales for the assessment of language vitality, developed by LEWIS / SIMONS (2010), Lombard, like many other Italian regional languages, may score, depending on the area, between 6b and 8a. 6b corresponds to the label 'threatened': 'The language is used orally by all generations but only some of the child-bearing generation are transmitting it to their children', whereas 8a corresponds to 'moribund': 'The only remaining active speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation.' Only two more grades separate the latter grade from the last, 10 'extinct,' and this is another clear sign of the predicament Lombard finds itself in. This means that if nothing is done, Lombard is bound to disappear in the not-so-distant future. Luckily there are some signs of a resurgence of interest in Italian regional languages in general and in Lombard in particular, as will be shown in this paper.

Sicilian

Sicilian is one of the languages of the Italo-Romance family belonging to the Eastern Romance family of Indo-European languages. According to the latest 2006 ISTAT survey, a similar number of people as in Lombardy speak Sicilian in their own region,⁷ i.e., about 3.5 million people, 71.7% of the regional

⁷ The territorial delimitation of the Sicilian language remains controversial. The international classifications mostly used as points of reference (e.g., Ethnologue, UNESCO Atlas) have the siculophone area coincide with the 'dialetti meridionali estremi' (extreme meridional dialects) group's diasystem. This includes Sicilian, central-southern Calabrese, and Salento *parrati* (dialects). Nevertheless, as it is possible to trace a direct influx from Messinese Sicilian in the linguistic mutation process of southern Calabrese (from Greek to Romance; the model could only have been the Messinese one, for Neapolitan was too distant (see FANCIULLO 1996, 112)), southern Calabrese dialects could indeed be classified as Sicilian varieties. However, we would exclude Salento dialects from such classification in this article, even

population, a much higher percentage than in Lombardy. However, these 3.5 million speakers (and we do not know how proficient in Sicilian they may be) are on the decrease – comparing this with the results of the ISTAT survey carried out six years earlier, we can see a decrease of almost 4 percentage points, from 75.3% in 2000 to 71.7% in 2006. Even though Sicilian is spoken more than Lombard, it is to be considered endangered to a degree, although its EGIDS grade may be a little higher than for Lombard. In fact, Sicilian may score, according to the area, between 6a (vigorous) and 6b (threatened). ‘Vigorous’ is defined as: ‘The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language.’ Even though, as things stand now, Sicilian seems to find itself in a less critical situation than Lombard, if current legislation is not enforced and more wide-ranging language planning strategies are not put into place, speakers of the language and the domains where it is used will gradually decrease together with its level of vitality.

The local varieties of Lombard and Sicilian

In most books and articles on the subject, Lombardy is said to feature two main varieties: western Lombard (spoken in the provinces of Varese, Como, Lecco, Sondrio, Milan, Monza, Pavia and Lodi, in addition to Novara and Verbania in Piedmont and Canton Ticino in Switzerland) and eastern Lombard (spoken in the provinces of Bergamo, Brescia and Northern Cremona). However, even though there are some phonetic and lexical differences, and even a few grammatical ones, the features these varieties have in common by far outweigh them, and they can definitely be considered to be one language, sharing common origins, though historical developments and lack of official status and standardization have led to their distancing. As Glauco SANGA wrote (1997, 253): ‘There was a time when a basically Milanese type extended from Novara up to Trento and across to Verona;⁸ and it is this common base that constitutes the unity of the Lombard dialect group, whereas differences are due to later more superficial developments’. Whereas there are minority languages that happen to be quite uniform in the territory where they are spoken, many others find themselves in the same situation as Lombard: ‘communities of dialects’ whose many varieties may be somewhat different from each other, but which still share most structural and lexical features, in addition to an historical territory (which is sometimes reflected in the present-day regional subdivision, although imperfectly as in the case of Lombardy), a culture, etc. Basque, Occitan and Welsh, to name just a few, are all lan-

though the numerous isoglosses in common with Sicilian are nonetheless acknowledged.

⁸ This extension abundantly includes both of what we have just defined as western and eastern Lombard speaking areas.

guages that are not very uniform, actually less so than Lombard. On the other hand, all varieties of Lombard are perfectly mutually intelligible. So we may still refer to two (or more) varieties of the Lombard language if needed, or even to Milanese, Bergamasco, Bresciano, etc., but always bearing in mind they are varieties of the same language. We feel that treating all those varieties of Lombard as representatives of just one regional language by the name of Lombard is the only way for them to survive, because independent language planning for a large number of subvarieties has little chance of being effective and keeping regional ways of speaking in Lombardy alive.

As far as Sicilian is concerned, the language appears to be relatively uniform, and it seems as if most speakers do not object to their variety being called Sicilian. In the literature, there are a large number of studies, such as RUFFINO (1984), that have pointed out the complexity involved in achieving a univocal and precise classification of the main varieties of Sicilian. Therefore, any attempt at a single definition based exclusively on isoglosses seems rather inadequate (MATRANGA / SOTTILE 2013, 236). Somewhat surprisingly though, the perception that Sicilian, with all its varieties, is a relatively homogeneous language is widespread among its speakers, to the extent that 'it is reasonably easy to proceed from one dialect to another since the dialects are essentially mutually intelligible' (BONNER, 2003b, 30).⁹

Therefore, the traditional classification of Sicilian varieties posited by Giorgio Piccitto, closely followed by Pellegrini in the *Carta dei dialetti d'Italia* (which includes the Sicilian varieties in the broader context of the *dialetti meridionali estremi*), still presents many limitations from a lexical, morphosyntactic and ethno-anthropological perspective. So much so that, albeit useful and justifiable in many respects, speaking of *one* western Sicilian in contrast to *one* central-eastern Sicilian turns out to be imprecise and misleading, from a variational, diachronic and sociolinguistic point of view. Agreeing with RUFFINO (2001, 30) in that

la nozione di *dialetto siciliano* finisce col risultare astratta rispetto alla concretezza delle numerose parlate locali [The notion of Sicilian dialect turns out to be abstract when compared to the concreteness of the numerous local parlan-ces]

and having established that

⁹ Naturally, this does not exclude the fact that speakers of a single Sicilian dialect may be convinced that 'the true Sicilian' is that spoken *in loco*. Similarly, it does not exclude that it may be impossible to communicate using 'the same Sicilian' from one end of the island to the other. Nor that all speakers speak *in* Sicilian, yet *a* Sicilian that varies drastically – depending on their perception – at a distance of a few kilometers, or even between one neighborhood and another of the same town.

è più opportuno parlare di (una pluralità di) dialetti invece che di (un solo) dialetto [It is more appropriate to speak of (a plurality of) dialects rather than (only one) dialect] (MATRANGA / SOTTILE 2013, 230),

a plurality which

possiede, dunque, una sua unità di fondo in virtù di una serie di tratti comuni significativi e in qualche misura esclusivi [features its own core uniformity by virtue of a series of significant, and to some degree exclusive common traits] (*ibid.*),

it seems reasonable to refer to the totality (i.e., the plurality) of such dialects as *language*, held together also by extralinguistic (and by no means less significant) factors.

Language planning

The aim of language planning is to stop the language shift that a language may be experiencing and to increase the number of speakers and, if possible, domains these languages are used in. This is done through three main phases, normally known as corpus planning, status planning and acquisition planning. Corpus planning deals with the language itself, trying to come up with a standardized version or at least with a common writing system; the aim of status planning, on the other hand, is specifically to raise the prestige of a language by increasing the domains where it is used, particularly written domains, whereas the purpose of acquisition planning is to increase the number of speakers through the teaching of the language. Let us now look at each of these three phases to see what has been done so far with regards to Lombard and Sicilian by associations and individuals, as very limited promotion efforts have been carried out so far by public institutions.

Corpus planning

Some form of standardization has been carried out for some of the Lombard varieties, and in fact various grammars can be found in book format and even online. However, a standard form of Lombard does not exist. Who knows, perhaps if the language acquires some degree of official status within the region, the need for a standard variety for the whole region may arise one day, but for the time being each Lombard variety is carrying on with its own grammatical, phonetic and lexical features. One way to give a sense of unity to these varieties may be through the introduction of a common writing system that could be employed for all varieties. A prototype of such a writing system will be briefly described below. So far, each Lombard variety has been written using different writing systems, some more phonetic, some more etymological. For example, the western variety of Lombard, and more speci-

fically Milanese, has been written so far using two main systems: the classical one, more etymological,¹⁰ and the modern one, more phonetic, also used in Switzerland. The two systems differ mainly in the way vowels are represented (see table 1).

IPA	Classical	Modern
ɔ	ò	o
u	ó (or 'o' if unstressed)	u
ø	oeu	ö
y	u	ü

Table 1. The main differences between traditional Milanese orthography and the modern system as far as vowels are concerned.

However, as stated before, a new writing system devised by linguist Lissander Brasca about ten years ago and published in 2011, is currently used by a dozen activists and 'freely' interpreted/adapted by others. The system has been called 'Scriver Lombard' and defined as a local-polynomic orthography, and its aim is to allow speakers of all Lombard varieties to write every word of their own local variety in a graphic form very similar or even identical to the form in which the speakers of any other Lombard variety would write it, i.e., in such a way that the identity and meaning of the words would be easily recognized by speakers of other varieties. This implies that the system cannot reflect directly all the phonetic features of any variety, and the speakers of each variety will need to learn how to write using this system, that is necessarily the most etymological (deep) and least phonetic (shallow) among the ones used so far. Not very many writing systems in the world are in fact completely phonetic, and some may distance themselves considerably from the actual pronunciation, although without creating particular problems for readers who are used to that system. English comes up as a notable example, and in fact speakers of different varieties of English (American, Australian, Scottish, etc.) can easily use the same orthography by pronouncing certain items in different ways. The same applies to the local-polynomic system for Lombard. This means that if, on the one hand, new speakers may find it difficult to learn how to read and write the language at the initial stages (but not particularly those who already speak it), the great advantage will be that they will be able to read and understand all Lombard varieties, and the sense of unity of the language will be enhanced. This also means that it will be possible to publish more copies of any written document, from poetry to novels to maga-

¹⁰'Classical Milanese' writing was originally conceived as a phonetic system, but it has become more etymological with time, as spoken Milanese changed, while the written form was maintained, thanks mostly to the prestige of the poets who had used it.

zines and scientific books, enlarging the audience and reducing costs. An example of the same sentence in the Milanese variety written using the classical, the modern and the local-polynomic system may be seen in table 2. In addition, we should mention three other writing systems developed for the Lombard language: Jørgen Giorgio BOSONI's (2003, phonetic) and Claudi MENEGHIN's two proposals (2006, etymological, based on the Alpine Lombard varieties; 2007, etymological).

English	The little boy heard thunder coming down from the sky
Italian	Il bambino ha sentito un tuono venire giù dal cielo
Classical system	El fioeu l'ha sentuu on tron vegnì giò del ciel
Modern system	El fiöö l'ha sentüü un trun vegnì giò del cel
Local-polynomic system	El fiœl l'ha sentud un tron vegnir jo del ciel

Table 2. The same sentence written using the different writing systems.

Whereas a Milanese speaker would read the last three sentences in the same way, the last one could be easily read by a speaker of Bergamasco, for example, and understood just by knowing that 'fiœl' is the word used in western Lombard for the Bergamasco word 's'ciet,' meaning 'little boy'. In fact, the same sentence in the Bergamasco variety would be written like this: 'Ol s'ciet l'ha sentid un tron vegnir jo del ciel,' perfectly understandable by a Milanese speaker, for instance. The list of frequent words which appear completely different in the different varieties is not long and could be learnt very easily.¹¹ As far as modernization of the language is concerned, in addition to the pioneering work of dictionary compilers and the Circolo Filologico Milanese, the Lombard Wikipedia, and talks delivered in various Lombard varieties organized by Simona Scuri of CSPL Italy (Committee for the Protection of the Linguistic Heritage, an association established in 2010 which is now at the forefront for the defense and promotion of Italian regional languages) and by Lissander Brasca are now helping to add modern terminology to Lombard.

The case of Sicilian is that of a language which never developed into a commonly accepted standard form, despite having served as both official and literary language for centuries. Historically, Sicily's linguistic model has never been centralist, but the three main political and cultural centers of the island – Catania, Messina and Palermo – have played the role of 'irradiation centers' within their respective districts (VARVARO 1988, 718). When 'standard Sicilian' is (rarely) referred to in academic publications, what is meant is simply the 'least common denominator' present among the various Sicilian

¹¹ The first monolingual dictionary of Lombard, using the polynomic orthography 'Scriver Lombard', is now available on the web at: <http://dizionarilombard.eu5.net> [last accessed on the 13th November 2016].

varieties. However, over the course of time, a form of illustrious regional *koinè* arose, the origins of which are not directly attributable to any particular urban setting.¹²

The issue with Sicilian is exactly this: featuring a rather solid literary written tradition, yet, at the same time, lacking a single widely accepted orthographic system.

The *questione* posed itself since the beginning of the 19th century, a time during which the climate of *Risorgimento* bestowed the hearts of the population with a renewed enthusiasm for the national (state) language and culture, thus relegating Sicilian to the inferior status of a ‘dialect’ (see for example VECCHIO 2013). Faced with such circumstances, scholars from the emerging demo-ethno-anthropological and linguistic sciences painstakingly devoted themselves to collecting as much data as possible (often transcribing entirely dialectal texts) to prevent the linguistic and cultural heritage of Sicily from falling into oblivion. In 1870 highly distinguished intellectuals such as Leonardo Vigo, Giuseppe Pitrè, Salvatore Salomone-Marino, Antonio Traina and Michele Amari organized a Conference for Sicilian dialect scholars, with the overt aim of sorting out an orthography for Sicilian. The successive results, however, were disappointing, even among the scholars themselves.

During the 1900s, an academic dispute arose – on the one hand there were those who, like Piccitto, supported a ‘dialectological criterion’, based on graphic choices that would highlight the morphemic and/or phonemic structures of the diatopic varieties. On the other were those who preferred the adoption of an orthography based on the authority of tradition, represented by established texts in ‘literary Sicilian’, common to the whole island, to the disadvantage of the ‘local dialects’. Neither of the two proposals prevailed; even the monumental work by Piccitto, the *Vocabolario Siciliano*, published in five volumes from 1977 to 2002, was not consistently edited from an orthographic perspective (See MATRANGA 2013, 1386-7).

¹²TROVATO (2006, 133): ‘Per quanto riguarda la Sicilia, la koinè viene per lo più identificata col siciliano dei poeti del Sei e del Settecento: una lingua che non ebbe il tempo di formare una tradizione e che oggi appare nulla più che una sorta di italiano vestito di forme siciliane; una lingua il più delle volte senza coloriture locali, uguale in tutte le province e ancora in attesa del grande poeta che, col suo prestigio, la imponga a modello [As far as Sicily is concerned, the koinè is mostly identified with the Sicilian of the poets from the 17th and 18th centuries, a language that did not have the time to form a tradition, and that appears today as nothing but a sort of Italian dressed with some Sicilian garments. A language mostly devoid of local hues, one and the same for all the provinces, and that still awaits the great poet that may establish it as a model with his prestige].’

<i>Arba Sicula</i>	<i>tri jorna</i>	<i>isula bedda granni</i>	<i>lingua siciliana</i>
CAMILLERI 2002			
CIPOLLA 2013			
BONNER 2001	<i>tri iorna</i>	<i>isula beddha granni</i>	
<i>Kademia du Krivu</i>			
<i>LinguaSiciliana.org</i> (LSU)			
PAPPALARDO 2014	<i>tri-gghiorna</i>	<i>isula beddha granni</i>	<i>lingua siciliana</i>
PICCITTO 1947		<i>isula bbeddha granni</i>	
MATRANGA 2013	<i>tri jorna</i>	<i>isula beddha ranni</i>	
<i>Scn.Wikipedia</i>		<i>isula bedda granni</i>	
<i>StuporMundi</i>		<i>isula bbeddha granni</i>	
TROVATO 2007		<i>isula bedda ranni</i>	
LEONE 2005	<i>tri-gghiorna</i>	<i>isula bedda ranni</i>	
<i>TerraLab.it</i>	<i>tri ghiorna</i>	<i>isula beddha ranni</i>	<i>linghua</i> <i>sishiliana</i>
VS I	<i>tri-gghiorna</i>	<i>isula bbeddha granni</i>	<i>lingua [linnua]</i> <i>siciliana</i>
VS II	<i>tri-gghiorna</i>		
VS III			
VS IV			
VS V	<i>tri-gghjorna</i>		<i>lingua siciliana</i>

Table 3. The expressions ‘tre giorni’ (three days), ‘isola molto/abbastanza grande’ (quite big island) and ‘lingua siciliana’ (Sicilian language) according to the main Sicilian orthographies. VS stands for ‘Vocabolario Siciliano’ (PICCITTO et al. 1977-2002)

More recently, the need for the elaboration of a common orthographic system (something very different from a ‘common language’) to be used for different purposes has begun to be felt. These purposes may be literary (poetry and texts in ‘dialect’), dialectological (transcriptions of speech in ‘dialect’), lexicographic (publication of new Sicilian dictionaries, such as the new *Conciso*), and editorial (from local associations publishing short promotional texts in Sicilian to catchy advertisements in newspapers). Other reasons may be found in the realm of publishing, particularly of articles and magazines entirely written in Sicilian, such as *Arba Sicula*, and not less important, in channels such as text messages, chats, emails, and the web in general (e.g., websites like Wikipedia,¹³ which has a version entirely in Sicilian). With regards

¹³ *Wikipedia*, for instance, is based on the orthographic choices adopted by BONNER (2001), as well as those by CAMILLERI (2002). Another two orthographic proposals

to academia, the recent exchanges found in some of the contributions by Alfonso Leone and Salvatore Carmelo Trovato (see LEONE 2005 / TROVATO 2007) are worth mentioning, as well as the exemplary and often decisive interventions by Vito Matranga (although some of them may be debatable).¹⁴

Status planning

Status planning employs a number of common strategies to expand the scope of one language in order to increase the number of domains where it is used. They include specific legislation (e.g., as to which languages are to be used in public offices, local government bodies, place names), language requisites for public posts, advertising (promotional campaigns), economic support to individuals, institutions, publishers, etc., literary and musical competitions, CDs with songs in the language to be promoted, radio and TV programs, DVDs, films, modern and appealing newspapers, magazines, literary, scientific and technical works and translations from other high-status languages, mini courses on popular periodicals, public signs, stickers, posters, t-shirts, summer camps for children where the minority language is used, holidays for children in countries or areas where the minority language is also spoken, festivals centered around the local language and culture, etc. Another strategy pertaining to status planning is showing people that the given language is used by the elites, whether they are politicians in power, actors, singers, etc.

Very little of all this has been put into practice for Lombard so far, which is not surprising considering the lack of official status and the lack of financial resources. The regional law recently passed (see ‘conclusions’) may, one hopes, change this.

However, in the last decade we have witnessed a revival of Italian regional languages, Lombard included. Before that, only a few books, dictionaries, magazines, radio programs and language courses were available for some of the Lombard varieties, particular for western Lombard, partly thanks to Canton Ticino and to associations like the Circolo Filologico Milanese. Lombard has even had its own Wikipedia since 2005, which currently has 34,365 entries (last accessed on 8th October 2016). It must also be pointed out here that some Lombard varieties have been used for centuries for literary purposes, particularly from the 15th century onwards, mostly for poetry and theater, but with some examples of fiction as well. Authors such as Carlo Maria Maggi

are available at the following web addresses: <http://linguasiciliana.com/come-scrivere-in-siciliano/> [last accessed on the 21st September 2016]; <http://www.sicilianinformazioni.com/redazione/559249/nasce-laccademia-della-lingua-siciliana-adesioni-poeti-attori-studiosi-cantautori> [last accessed on the 5th March 2017].

¹⁴ Especially with respect to the use of a number of graphemes or, more specifically, to the choice made by the author of distancing as little as possible from the Italian orthographic system. To this regard, see REGIS (2012).

(1630-1699), Carlo Porta (1775-1821) and, to mention a more recent one, Franco Loi (born in 1930), are known by anybody having a good knowledge of Italian (meaning ‘written on the territory that would become Italy’) literature.¹⁵ Such a vast corpus of literature gives prestige to the language and strengthens claims that it should be considered an out-and-out language, not a ‘dialect’. However, the recent revitalization movement does not seem to place literature at the center of its revitalization efforts. Rather, translations of prestigious literature from Italian and other languages and the use of the language for conferences on various topics or on YouTube seem to be the main revitalization strategies carried out at the moment.

Nowadays much more is available in Lombard. Table 4 shows some of the recent initiatives that have been carried out by activists and artists to promote Lombard.

Music	<p>Singer song writers: La Cantina di Ermete (BS), Davide van de Sfroos (CO), Diana Ceriani (VA), Enzo Iannacci (MI), Francesco Magni (MB), Gianluca Gennari (CR), Gio Desfaa (VA), Luciano Ravasio (BG), Ornella Fiorini (MN), Piergiorgio Cinelli (BS), Roberto Sironi (MI), Trenincorsa (VA), Bepi and the Prismas (BG), I Luf (BS), Vad Vuc (Ticino), Charlie Cinelli (BS), Lissander Brasca (MI), Teka-p (MI), Mario Burghiner (VCO), Piero Cucchi (SO).</p> <p>Folk: Aghi di Pino (BG), Baraban (MI), Dindelón (MI), Malghesetti (BS), Rataplan (BG), Samadùr (BG), Smorfiàcc (BG), Vent Negru (Ticino), Vox Bleni (Ticino), Elsa Albonico (VA), Ticin Cantal (PV), Tantapaja (MI), I fio dla nebia (PV)</p> <p>Rap: Dellino Farmer (BS)</p> <p>Blues: Fulvia Consuelo (MI)</p> <p>Pop/rock: I Saltamartin (MB), Solutumana (CO)</p> <p>Heavy Metal: Ul Mik Longobardeath (MI)</p> <p>Others, mixed: Nanni Svampa (MI), Cantamilano (MI), Ciaparatt (MI), Scarp da Tennis (Ticino), Stramilano (MI), Walter di Gemma (MI).</p>
Books	<p>Short stories: El Casciabbal (Simone Milesi) (MB), An bris d'argot (Clelia Letterini) (CR), Cumè na pastòcia (Clelia Letterini) (CR), Stori da Très (Romano Tinelli) (MI), Milàn passaa present fantasii (AAVV) (MI), La vita è una schiscetta (Giorgio Guaiti, parallel texts Italian-Milanese) (MI), Fiur d'urtiga (Enrico Portalupi) (NO)</p> <p>Poetry: Sogn de carta (Giuliana Bernasconi) (BS), Gira girasul (Velise Bonfante) (BS), Gazaboi: Poesie in dialetto cremonese (Giovanni Lonati) (CR), Sarà sü... N la libertà (Paolo Cominotti) (TN)</p> <p>Non-fiction: Scriver Lombard, un'ortografia polinomeg-local per la</p>

¹⁵ For an overview of Lombard (and Sicilian) literature see HALLER 2002.

	<p>lengua lombarda (Lissander Brasca) (MI), Pavia e la so' storia (Ugo Bensi) (PV)</p> <p>Translations: The Four Gospels, The Divine Comedy (Dante Alighieri), Le petit Prince (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry), Amleto e compagni all'ombra del Duomo (William Shakespeare), Dracula (Bram Stoker), The prophet (Kahlil Gibran), Le avventure di Pinocchio (Carlo Collodi), Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Lewis Carroll), I promessi sposi (Alessandro Manzoni), Andersen Grimm Perrault in lengua lombarda (CD), 101 Favole di Esopo (CD), Fliça (graphic novel by Emilio Manzotti and Edoardo Arzani).</p>
Magazines	<p>Terra Insubre. Cultura del territorio e identità (quarterly, about 9 pages in the western Lombard variety).</p> <p>Giopì (fortnightly, about 2 pages in Lombard in the Bergamasco variety).</p> <p>El Nost Paes (available at: http://elnostpaes.eu, Milanese variety).</p> <p>El Sciroeu de Milan (available at: http://www.sciroeu.it/ultimo-numero-1.html, Milanese variety).</p>
Radio programs	<p>RSI Radiotelevisione Svizzera: Dialett in sacocia (Ticinese variety), Radio Meneghina (Milanese variety), Radio Padania.</p>
TV programs	<p>Teleticino: 'Dimalami' (Ticinese variety), 'A vivi dapermi' (Ticinese variety).</p>
Films	<p>'Ona strada bagnada' by Lamberto Caimi (MI), 'Desmentegass' by Lamberto Caimi (MI), 'El prêt nōf' by Ettore Bonetti (BS), 'Matrioskar' by Ettore Bonetti (BS), 'La palmira ul film' by Alberto Meroni (Ticino), 'Frontaliers' by Commissione Cinema Giovani (Ticino), 'Se ta cati ta copi' by Yor Milano (Ticino), 'Duu testimoni scomod' by Yor Milano (Ticino), 'A duu pass da l'eternità' by Yor Milano (Ticino), 'Na bela tosa par tri dotor' by Yor Milano (Ticino), 'Do tosan e tré valii' by Yor Milano (Ticino), 'Il mattino sorge a Est' by Stefano Tagliaferri (LC), 'Panasce' by Stendhal Syndrome (Ticino), 'Elvira' by Ornella Fiorini (MN), 'La Pimpa: na giurnada fōra du solit' by Altan/Smallcodes (Ticino).</p>

Table 4. Recent status planning strategies for the Lombard language.¹⁶

Sicilian may find itself in a worse situation as far as status planning is concerned. While in the musical field a conspicuous number of artists and bands use Sicilian in their compositions, continuing the folk musical tradition constantly revived by the evergreen figure of the *cantastorie* (SOTTILE 2013, 43),

¹⁶The abbreviations refer to the following provinces. Lombardy: BS (Brescia), CO (Como), VA (Varese), MI (Milan), MB (Monza and Brianza), CR (Cremona), BG (Bergamo), MN (Mantua), LC (Lecco), SO (Sondrio), LO (Lodi), PV (Pavia); Piedmont: NO (Novara), VCO (Varbano Cusio Ossola); Trentino: TN (Trento).

the same does not hold for the use of Sicilian in the media and publishing sectors. In the 18th century, the literary tradition had made Sicilian the language of a most refined poetic production (TROVATO 2002, 872), able to ‘dialogare alla pari con le tradizioni egemoni galloromanze’ (to converse on a par with the hegemonic Gallo-Romance traditions) (DI GIROLAMO et al. 1996, 31). During that time Sicilian was employed for official, diplomatic, academic and religious purposes, yet today written language use is confined to a limited number of domains. The main one is the still thriving poetic literary production (TROVATO 2002, 875); others are the new computer-mediated communication channels, mostly used by the younger generation, such as the web, text messages, emails and social networks. While there have been cases of its use in advertising and even electoral campaigns (D’AGOSTINO / PATER-NOSTRO 2013, 473), Sicilian appears to be almost totally absent from broadcasting, both in TV and radio programs (ALFIERI et al. 2013, 716-9). Also, very few books and magazines have been published – mostly translations – with the exception of the valuable initiatives carried out by *Arba Sicula* and its members.¹⁷ No consideration has been given in this chapter to publications that make use of the so-called ‘italiano regionale di Sicilia’ (regional Italian of Sicily), a contact variety of Italian and Sicilian. Prime examples of these are Camilleri’s novels, which have been adapted for television as well.

Sicilian can also boast its own edition of Wikipedia, active since 2004. With about 25,000 entries, it ranks among the top 100 editions for the number of words, and among the main projects written in an Italian regional language.¹⁸ Finally, we would like to highlight the existence of a vast lexicographic production, heir to a felicitous tradition dating back to the 16th century (see TROVATO 2002, 861-6). Its culmination is represented not only by the above-mentioned *Vocabolario Siciliano* in five volumes by Giorgio Piccino, but also by the historic-etymologic vocabulary by Alberto Vârvaro, as well as by the prestigious volumes of the collection *Lessici Siciliani*, published by the *Centro di Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliani* (Centre for Sicilian Philological and Linguistic Studies, henceforth CSFLS). The latter will soon be enriched by the publication of the *Nuovo Vocabolario Siciliano (Conciso)* and of an Italian-Sicilian version.

Music	Singer songwriters: Francesca Incudine (EN), Mario Incudine (EN), Carlo Muratori (SR) — Folk: Agrigantus (PA), Akkura (PA), Francesca Amato (ME), Calandra e Calandra (TP), Cantunovu (SR), Sara Cappello (PA), Alfonso Gagliardo (AG), Francesco Giunta (PA).
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¹⁷To our knowledge, the only paper in Sicilian that has been published in a peer-reviewed journal is BONNER (2003a).

¹⁸On en.wikipedia.org ‘Sicilian language’ has a rather broad connotation, which includes southern Calabrese and Salento varieties. See above.

	I Beddi (CT), Serena Lao (PA), Lautari (CT), Malanova (ME), Nkantu d'Aziz (PA), Sciroccu (SR), Taberna Mylaensis (ME) — Funk: Qbeta (SR) — Rap: Supremo Don Mikaelo (CT), Dante (PA), Nakria (AG), Combomastas — Reggae: Shakalab (TP), Original Sicilian Style (CT), Jaka (TP), Trinakriù — Blues: Strimpella Blues Band (AG), Sissy Castrogiovanni (USA-CT) — Pop/rock: Tamuna (PA) — Others, mixed: Brigantony (CT), Tinturia (AG).
Books	Translations: La Divina Commedia by Dante Alighieri (Santo Bellia, Domenico Canalella, Tommaso Cannizzaro, Franco Rosario Corsaro, Rosa Gazzara Siciliano, Giovanni Girgenti, Filippo Guastella, Alberto La Maestra, Vincenzo Mirabella Corrao), Aeneid by Virgil (Giuseppe Cavallaro, Rosa Gazzara Siciliano, Giovanni Girgenti), Odyssey by Homer (Rosa Gazzara Siciliano), I Sepolcri by Ugo Foscolo (Giovanni Girgenti), Gospel of Luke (Marianna Lipani), Gospel of Matthew (Luigi Scalia, Alessio Patti), Gospel of John (Alessio Patti), Le Petit Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.
Magazines	Arba Sicula. Rivista di folklori e littiratura siciliani (biannual/annual journal, about 150 pages in 'Standard Sicilian') — Sicilia Parra (biannual newsletter, about 20 pages in 'Standard Sicilian').
TV programs	Stupor Mundi (TVM Palermo), 'U Tiggi (Agrigento TV).
Films	'Baaria' by Giuseppe Tornatore (PA), 'La bella società' by Giampaolo Cugno (SR), 'Il dolce e l'amaro' by Andrea Porporati, 'Nuovomondo' by Emanuele Crialese, 'Placido Rizzotto' by Pasquale Scimeca (PA), 'Respiro' by Emanuele Crialese, 'Il ritorno di Cagliostro' by Daniele Cipri and Franco Maresco (PA), 'Rosso Malpelo' by Pasquale Scimeca (PA), 'La scomparsa di Patò' by Rocco Mortelliti, 'Terraferma' by Emanuele Crialese, 'La Terramadre' by Nello La Marca (AG).

Table 5. Recent status planning strategies for the Sicilian language.¹⁹

Acquisition planning

Acquisition planning is the phase of language planning concerned with maintaining or enlarging the pool of speakers of a threatened language through its teaching.

Very little has been done so far in Lombardy to teach Lombard, and most of the initiatives have targeted adults who can already speak some Lombard

¹⁹The abbreviations refer to the following provinces: EN (Enna), SR (Siracusa), PA (Palermo), ME (Messina), TP (Trapani), AG (Agrigento), CT (Catania).

variety but want to improve their reading and writing skills in their heritage language. For example, the Circolo Filologico Milanese has run courses for years, including Milanese literature. Other associations that have organized courses of some Lombard varieties are the Accademia del Dialetto Milanese (Milanese), G.A.T.a.L. (Amateurial Group for Theatrical Activities in Lombardy), the Antica Credenza di Sant’Ambrogio (Milanese), the Ducato di Piazza Pontida (Bergamasco), the Academia dal Rison (Novarese), the Compagnia dij Pastor (Verbano Cusio Ossola and Novarese), among others. As remarked above, most of these courses have targeted people who could already speak the local variety. For beginners self-learning is an option, but teaching material is very scarce – there is some material online, including two courses on YouTube (‘Lezion de lengua lombarda’ and ‘Corso online di dialetto milanese’) and a course on the radio (Radio Meneghina), and grammars and dictionaries can be found for some varieties but not for others (including two phrasebooks in Milanese: ‘A Milano si parla così’ (BUCCINI / COMOLETTI 2001) and ‘Viaggio nel dialetto milanese’ (CAPROTTI 2013)). However, two recent publications may show a change in trend: for the first time two publications are available for children. One introduces a basic Milanese vocabulary: ‘Il Milanese per tutti/El milanés per tücc’, edited by Fabio MAURI (2014), while the other is an out-and-out textbook for kindergarten and primary school children divided into three volumes: ‘La nòsta lèngua’, a course of Lombard (Bergamasco variety) written by Giancarlo GIAVAZZI (2008, 2009, 2010) and published by ALP (Padanian Linguistic Association). The point is Lombard cannot easily acquire new speakers (particularly children) if the language is not taught properly by trained teachers using good language materials similar to those available for other ‘small’ languages like Friulian or Piedmontese in Italy or Galician and Basque in Spain, so that it can become a modern instrument of literacy for the new generations. This obviously implies good financing and official recognition of the language.

If little has been done for Lombard, even less seems to have been done for Sicilian in the area of acquisition planning. Some initiatives are in fact taking place, however, they are mostly amateurish in nature. Among these initiatives, mention must be made of the annual series of conferences *Lingua, cultura e storia di Sicilia* (Language, culture and history of Sicily), organized by the cultural association *Amicizia fra i popoli*, located in Palermo, Sicily. The focus of these conferences is on Sicilian lexicon, phonetics and morphosyntax. Outside Sicily, university modules on Sicilian language and culture are being held at the University of Pennsylvania, USA, and (soon to be activated) at the University of Manoube, Tunisia.

In 2012 the University of Rosario, in Argentina, inaugurated the *Centro de Estudios Sicilianos* (Centre for Sicilian Studies), dedicated to dialectologist Giovanni Ruffino. The aim of the *Centro* is that of ‘promoting the knowledge and dissemination of the values proper to Sicilian culture, which are

deeply present among the population, especially in Rosario, where the majority of the ethnic Italian community has Sicilian origins.²⁰ Courses on Italian linguistics and Sicilian language and culture are also active, some of which are held by lecturers from Sicilian universities. Also worth mentioning is the recent publication, ‘Mparamu lu Sicilianu/Learn Sicilian’, by G. Cipolla, Emeritus Professor at Saint John University, New York. This is a comprehensive, interactive course of 336 pages, which includes a DVD containing exercises and extra materials (CIPOLLA 2013).

As mentioned earlier, online dictionaries and courses are indeed available. Unfortunately, more often than not, these take the form of mere word lists, general grammatical descriptions, or brief guides showing how to write Sicilian ‘correctly’. The website *linguasiciliana.org* offers various lessons, divided by topic and available in numerous languages (Sicilian, English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Serbian, and Portuguese).²¹ Other initiatives have been taken by the *Kademia du Krivu*, which has even put forth its own original Sicilian orthography, as well as liturgical texts that have been used for the celebration of sacred functions. They also offer various learning materials, among them exercises on grammar and orthography, available at *linguasiciliana.com*. In addition, *ilsiciliano.net* also proposes a brief course of Sicilian language.²² In general, despite the number of websites purporting to offer a solid grammatical foundation for the Sicilian language, what is actually found is a series of rather simplistic notions, which are not always reliable. Similarly, it is not rare to find videos on YouTube apparently offering courses in Sicilian, which actually consist of either mere lists of nouns (often rare or in disuse) or, even worse, of clips using Sicilian for playful and lampooning purposes.

We should also mention the presence of Facebook groups and pages ‘for anyone who wants to learn or speak Sicilian’ (*Speak Sicilian!*), which are often not real courses but simply an opportunity ‘to discuss its history, live use and evolution, as well as its relationship with Italian and other languages’ (*Parramu Sicilianu* ‘We Speak Sicilian’). The group *Nzignammuni lu sicilianu* ‘Let’s learn Sicilian’ is connected with a blog of the same name, featuring what may be called a sketch of a Sicilian course, to date limited to some les-

²⁰ The *Centro de Estudios Sicilianos* ‘promueve el conocimiento y la difusión de los valores de la cultura siciliana que están muy presentes en la ciudadanía, especialmente en Rosario, donde la mayoría de la colectividad italiana pertenece a la región de Sicilia’ (<http://www.unr.edu.ar/noticia/5491/centro-de-estudios-sicilianos>) [last accessed on the 21st September 2016].

²¹ <http://www.linguasiciliana.org/category/cursu-sicilianu/sicilian-grammar-in-english-inglesi/> [last accessed on the 21st September 2016].

²² http://ilsiciliano.net/page31_sicilian_language_course.php [last accessed on the 21st September 2016].

sons on articles and nouns.²³ In conclusion, although Sicilian can boast numerous lexical resources (also available online for a quick and wider consultation), as described in the preceding paragraph, the number of grammars *stricto sensu* is definitely low.

Conclusions

As we have seen, Lombard and Sicilian are endangered languages with a highly contested status. Even though initiatives aimed at their maintenance (but sometimes only with artistic and expressionist purposes in mind) are not lacking, these are clearly insufficient to stop or reverse the language shift towards Italian. Obviously, the lack of resources and institutional interest are important obstacles that could only be overcome, we believe, if Lombard, Sicilian and, in fact, all Italian regional languages were to become co-official with Italian in the regions where they are spoken, along lines similar to how Friulian is protected by State Law 482/1999. If not added to this law, at least a new and adequately funded law for the protection and promotion of Italian regional languages should be considered, and this should be a bipartisan law sustained by open-minded politicians of all political backgrounds, without any manipulation and politicization, but with only pure concern for the linguistic rights of the people who still speak these languages and for Italy's diversity and cultural heritage. At the regional level, a new law for the protection and promotion of Lombard (Regional Law 130/2016) has been approved recently, and we believe that in spite of its limitations it is a good document that will, it is hoped, help the maintenance and promotion of the Lombard language.²⁴ As for Sicilian, a regional law for the promotion of Sicilian was passed in 2011.²⁵ Nevertheless, five years after the law was passed, very little has been done for its proper implementation, with the only exception being

²³ <http://nzignamunnisicilianu.blogspot.it/> [last accessed on the 21st September 2016].

²⁴ Heading IV ('Protection of the Lombard language through its local varieties') of the Law of the Regional Council no. 130 'Regional policies in the cultural area – regulatory reorganization', passed on the 27 October 2016 and available at: http://www.consiglio.regione.lombardia.it/banchedati/elencogeneraleatti?p_p_id=motorericercaatti_WAR_motorericercaatti&p_p_lifecycle=1&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-3&p_p_col_count=2&motorericercaatti_WAR_motorericercaatti_method%3AactDetail&motorericercaatti_WAR_motorericercaatti_actId=workspace%3A%2F%2FSpacesStore%2Fc44cf8c1-5600-445a-a7e3-53581726faf3&p_auth=YP82OzQa [last accessed on the 17th October 2016].

²⁵ Regional Law 9/2011 'Norme sulla promozione, valorizzazione e insegnamento della storia, della letteratura e del patrimonio linguistico siciliano nelle scuole' (Norms for the promotion, valorisation and teaching of Sicilian history, literature and the linguistic heritage in schools). The text, published on the *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Regione siciliana*, is available at: <http://www.gurs.regione.sicilia.it/Gazzette/g11-24/g11-24.pdf> [last accessed on the 21st September 2016].

the proposals put forth by the CSFLS. This Sicilian institution has in fact organized many activities – from the setting up of teacher training courses to the publication of an encyclopedic work in two volumes on Sicilian ethno-dialectal culture (RUFFINO 2013). In addition to numerous school projects, conferences and events, CSFLS has created an online portal (*Diálektos: Lingue e culture in Sicilia*)²⁶ that offers the possibility of engaging in discussion forums, and has also established an association of teachers interested in the proper implementation of the regional law. However, despite their undoubtedly scientific value, the projects described above still give the impression of a museum-like attitude towards the local language, which is seen as a mere heritage of an ancient world which no longer exists. The idea of linguistic revitalization is totally lacking, the emphasis being on the relationship between ‘language’ (Italian) and ‘dialect’ (Sicilian). This is due to various factors, but the main one is probably the fact that the language is still widely used for oral communication, leading most people to think that it does not need to be revitalized; viewing Sicilian as a ‘dialect’ and not a language also contributes to this attitude of ‘benign neglect’. Such attitudes betray the spirit of the law, which states clearly that the safeguarding and promotion of the Sicilian linguistic heritage are to be implemented.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time the issue of revitalization has been outlined and discussed in academic terms for two of the Italian regional languages. This is also one of the few academic papers published to date that rejects the label ‘dialect’ for Lombard and Sicilian (and for all the other Italian regional languages). As has been explained, the label is confusing and unclear. Most important, it has negative connotations that, we believe, favor language shift. The authors do hope that more academic research in this area will be published in the future, referring to Italian linguistic varieties of Latin origin for what they are: regional languages.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Fulvio Baravalle for providing them with the map of the areas where Lombard and Sicilian are spoken. Marco Trizzino would particularly like to thank Andrea Musumeci (visiting lecturer in Audiovisual Translation at Middlesex University London and City University London and currently pursuing a PhD in Translation Studies at UCL) for his help with the English version of the sections on Sicilian, and Fonso Genchi for suggesting Sicilian singers and groups for table 5.

²⁶ www.dialektos.it [last accessed on the 13th November 2016].

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