

L'Europe transculturelle dans le monde global

Transcultural Europe in the Global World

Cet ouvrage aborde une double problématique cruciale aujourd'hui en Europe : la nécessité de réconcilier le discours traditionnel sur l'héritage commun avec la diversité culturelle d'une part, et l'impératif d'élaborer des stratégies permettant à chacun de vivre dans un contexte différent de celui de ses origines, d'autre part. Les études réunies ici portent donc sur la reconfiguration de l'Europe où les contacts entre les différentes cultures et leurs interactions s'accroissent et se multiplient, en considérant la dimension transculturelle des phénomènes de transmission comme un facteur politique majeur de changement qui réclame de nouveaux outils conceptuels et de nouvelles méthodes d'enquête.

Ce volume rassemble les principales contributions au projet européen homonyme *Transcultural Europe in the Global World*. Ce projet a donné lieu à plusieurs séminaires, qui se sont déroulés à Prague, Coimbra, Rome, Cagliari et Nanterre, et ont réuni des chercheurs issus de différentes disciplines et spécialistes d'aires culturelles diverses.



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sous la direction de

Alessandro Benucci

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Places and Forms of Speaking: Working with Migrants’ Linguistic Repertoires (in Contexts of Segregation)

ABSTRACT

A key notion in sociolinguistics, that of “repertoire” is to date the only one that fully accounts for the complexity of forms of multilingualism in the new migration contexts. After providing an overview of the existing literature in this field of research and a sketch of the linguistic resources used by new migrants, the heuristic relevance of the repertoire notion to describe second language structures and acquisition is discussed. This will let the epistemological conflict between sociolinguistic and acquisitional approaches to multilingualism be overcome in future.

Keywords: mediterranean routes, migrants’ repertoires, multilingualism, additional language development.

RÉSUMÉ

La notion sociolinguistique de « répertoire » est la seule qui rende pleinement compte de la complexité des formes de multilinguisme dans les nouveaux contextes migratoires. Après avoir donné un aperçu de la littérature existante dans ce domaine de recherche et un aperçu des ressources linguistiques utilisées par les nouveaux migrants, la pertinence heuristique de la notion de répertoire pour décrire les structures et l’acquisition d’une deuxième langue est discutée. Cela permettra à l’avenir de surmonter le conflit épistémologique entre les approches sociolinguistiques et acquisitionnelles du multilinguisme.

Mots-clés : routes méditerranéennes, répertoires des migrants, multilinguisme, développement des langues additionnelles.

I. WHAT DO WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT “REPertoire”?

It is barely worth mentioning that “repertoire” is a key notion in sociolinguistics, where it indicates the sum of linguistic resources (languages and language varieties) coexisting in a linguistic community or in an individual.

That being said, the ultimate goal of this contribution is not (or rather is not entirely) sociolinguistic. Rather, it is a matter of recognising the great heuristic efficacy of the notion and moving it from its sociolinguistic domain to that of linguistic analysis (of structures and their development). This explains why the first sections of the article (2 to 4) adhere to a fully sociolinguistic perspective, which is to date the only one able to explain linguistic phenomena in a migratory context, while the last section (5) raises the matter of the internal systematicity of languages and thematizes the epistemological conflict (rather than attempting to overcome it) between sociolinguistic approaches, on the one hand, and theoretical and acquisitional approaches, on the other.

Let us therefore start with repertoires, socio-linguistically understood, and those who use them.

2. KEY NOTIONS TO UNDERSTAND NEW MIGRATIONS

The linguistic repertoires dealt with in this contribution are those used by individuals whose migratory route starts in sub-Saharan Africa, crosses the Mediterranean Sea and lands in Europe, often passing through the Sicilian coasts. In fact, a long reference will be made here to studies conducted at the University of Palermo or that I am currently conducting in collaboration with this university. In this research context, much emphasis is placed on the need to avoid labels referring to migrants' legal status (such as refugee, asylum seeker, economic migrant, illegal migrant, etc.), which are irrelevant to understanding the new linguistic of migration dynamics. Generic labels such as "new migrants" and "new migration" are preferred to achieve this purpose, where the adjective "new" refers not only to the time elapsed since their arrival in Europe, but to the characteristics of the migratory paths and individual profiles, which show specific features compared to those observed a few decades ago¹.

Unlike other past migratory experiences, even in the recent past, new migration is a largely individual and male mobility that follows articulated and fragmented paths of varying duration and has weak links with Europe (i.e., there are no migratory networks catalysing new flows). It is a typically unplanned

1. Mari D'AGOSTINO, "Multilingual young African migrants : Between mobility and immobility", in *Exploring (im)mobilities: language practises, discourses, imaginaries and narratives*, Anna DE FINA and Gerardo MAZZAFERRO (eds.), Bristol, Multilingual Matters, 2021, p. 17-37.

journey, built step by step and including numerous more or less deliberate stops. In her recent study on the new migrant population in Palermo, Mari D'Agostino singled out, among those discussed in the existing literature, three core concepts to describe this journey, involving space in various senses: trajectory, digital connections and immobility².

The notion of trajectory refers to the fact that migration should not be understood as a linear path from A to B, through which people are automatically displaced to a different place from where they departed. Rather, we are dealing with multiple and multidirectional trajectories, appropriately defined as “open spatiotemporal processes, with a strong transformative dimension”³. Along these complex paths, often built on previous and dense internal mobility (to study in another country or city; for work; to get married), linguistic repertoires (as well as writing experiences) are enriched and rearticulated⁴.

In contrast to the past, the migratory experience relies heavily on digital media in terms of planning, information exchange, before, during and after departure. This fosters the creation of transnational networks that facilitate movement within Europe, thus compensating for the absence of migratory networks. The use of digital technologies indicates a portability of belonging networks and the possibility for “connected migrants”, as Dana Diminescu defined them, to maintain a sense of co-presence, of being here and

2. EAD., *Noi che siamo passati dalla Libia. Giovani in viaggio fra alfabeti e multilinguismo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2021, p. 93-111.

3. Joris SCHAPENDONK, Ilse VAN LIEMPT, Inga SCHWARZ, Griet STEEL, “Rerouting migration geographies: Migrants, trajectories and mobility regimes”, in *Geoforum*, n° 116, 3, 2018, p. 211-216. See also Michael COLLYER, “Stranded migrants and the fragmented journey”, in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, n° 23, 3, 2010, p. 273-293; Michael COLLYER and Hein DE HAAS, “Developing dynamic categorisations of transit migration”, in *Population, Space and Place*, n° 18, 4, 2012, p. 468-481; Heaven CRAWLEY, Franck DÜVELL, Katharine JONES, Simon McMAHON and Nando SIGONA, *Destination Europe? Understanding the dynamics and drivers of Mediterranean migration in 2015*, MEDMIG Final Report, www.medmig.info/research-brief-destination-europe.pdf

4. Mari D'AGOSTINO and Egle MOCCIARO, “New migration processes and new frontiers for linguistic research”, in *Language and literacy in new migration: Research, practice and policy*. Selected papers from the 14th Annual Symposium of LESLLA (Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults), Palermo, 4th-6th October 2018; EAD. (eds.), Palermo, University of Palermo Press, 2021, p. 29-50.

there at same time⁵. In this context, movement takes place within a variety of places and social spaces, even virtual spaces, of departure and arrival⁶.

Compared with the complexity of the trajectory and the connections that characterise it, the third core notion may appear discordant. In fact, new migratory flows clash in a dramatic and generalised way with migration policies that drastically limit mobility. Glick Schiller and Salazar used the label “mobility regime” to refer to the role of policies, approaches, actions and perceptions in constructing the division between freedom of movement and illegality of movement⁷. Immobility manifests itself in various forms of segregation, occurring in connection houses (i.e., temporary places of gathering and shelter for migrants during their journey), in prisons in Niger and Libya and, then, in the isolation of hostels for asylum seekers in Europe, which may continue for many months after landing by boat⁸.

3. PLACES AND LANGUAGES

Linguistic repertoires are articulated in a complex way against the background sketched in section 2. Starting with the points of departure of the journey, sub-Saharan Africa is characterised by a high degree of societal

5. Dana DIMINESCU, “Connected migrants: an epistemological manifesto”, in *Social Science Information*, n° 47, 4, 2008, p. 565-579.

6. On digital practices, see Jannis ANDROUTSOPOULOS, “Networked multilingualism: some language practices on Facebook and their implications”, in *International Journal of Bilingualism*, n° 19, 2, 2015, p. 185-205; Ana DEUMERT and Kristin Vold LEXANDER, “Texting Africa: writing as performance”, in *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, n° 17, 4, 2013, p. 522-546; Koen LEURS and Sandra PONZANESI, “Connected migrants: encapsulation and cosmopolitanization”, *Popular communication*, n° 16, 2018, p. 4-20.

7. Nina GLICK SCHILLER and Noel B. SALAZAR, “Regimes of Mobility Across the Globe”, in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, n° 39, 2, 2013, p. 183-200. A similar label is “bounded mobility”, which stresses that mobility is regulated, mediated and intrinsically linked to forms of immobility and unequal power relation: see Andreas HACKL, Julya Sophia SCHWARTZ, Miriam GUTEKUNST and Sabina LEONCINI, “Bounded mobility: an introduction”, in Miriam GUTEKUNST, Andreas HACKL, Sabina LEONCINI, Julya Sophia SCHWARTZ and Irene GÖTZ (éds), *Bounded mobilities. Ethnographic perspectives on social hierarchies and global inequalities*, Bielefeld, Transcript, 2016, p. 19-34.

8. Mari D'AGOSTINO and Egle MOCCIARO, “New migration processes and new frontiers for linguistic research”, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

multilingualism⁹, which is reflected in a generalised individual plurilingualism. Each individual has a varied linguistic repertoire, which may comprise three, four or even dozens of languages, dominated at different proficiency levels. This depends first and foremost on traditional mobility practices, such as exogenous marriages or the practice of family fostering of children. As a result, there can be more than one “mother tongue”, namely the mother’s language in the strict sense and the father’s language; the latter may not coincide with the former and may be learnt at the same time or only later, in the not infrequent cases where the father emigrates for work. In addition, there are other languages used outside the family, with friends, with neighbouring villages or at work, which often involve internal mobility. Both early learnt languages and additional languages include local languages with a low degree of standardisation and vehicular languages of wider use. The latter are historically used as lingua franca and include African languages such as Wolof, Mandinka and Pular; European languages from the colonial heritage, which generally have an official status, are the languages of schooling and are widespread even outside the school; and finally contact languages, i.e., pidgins, most typically pidgin English. It has been observed that, in many communities in this area, “The idea of ‘mother tongue’ and someone’s ‘first language’ has little relevance [...] [S]peakers use a number of different languages in different contexts, and live in multilingual families and multilingual neighborhoods. Their multilingual skills are part of their cultural lives and social integrity¹⁰”.

Growing up in highly multilingual contexts increases people’s familiarity with diverse ways of acquiring new language skills, frequently on the basis of very limited input, during different phases of their lives and in relation to different experiences. In this perspective, multilingualism (the one we are dealing with and multilingualism in general) is not the sum of full linguistic competences, but a set of mobile linguistic resources, activated in different

9. Approximately 30 percent of the world’s languages are spoken in Africa. See Kathleen HEUGH, “Multilingualism and education in Africa”, in *The Cambridge handbook of African linguistics*, H. Ekkehard WOLFF (ed.), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019, p. 577-600. See also Efurosibina ADEGBIJA, *Language attitudes in sub-Saharan Africa. A sociolinguistic overview*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 1994.

10. Friederike LÜPKE and Anne STORCH, *Repertoires and choices in African languages*, Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 2013, p. 77; see also Brigitta BUSCH, “Expanding the notion of linguistic repertoire: on the concept of Sprachenleben – The lived experience of language”, in *Applied Linguistics*, n° 38, 3, 2017, p. 340-358.

circumstances and not necessarily or permanently linked to ethnic identities or pre-established identity aspects¹¹. This is *multilingualism at the level of discourse*, that is, it concerns communicative situations as a whole, in which participants mobilise different linguistic resources that coexist and mix in the texts produced¹². To refer to this fragmentary mixture, Blommaert used the label “truncated repertoires”; the term “polylingualism” proposed by Jørgensen alludes to a similar situation¹³. According to some scholars, the fragmentary process of imitating and reproducing pieces of language grasped in such multilingual contexts can hardly be described in the canonical terms of acquisition. For example, Canagarajah and Wurr point out that for multilinguals “language acquisition involves learning how to align one’s language resources to one’s needs and situations, rather than aiming to achieve a target-level of competence¹⁴.” This view of multilingualism and of multilingual speakers’ acquisition strategies is highly relevant to understanding how repertoires increase during mobility.

4. MULTILINGUALISM ON THE MOVE

D’Agostino identified five directions along which migrants’ repertoires increase through mobility, as well as immobility, i.e., in the temporary communities in which they are segregated in Africa and Europe:

- Addition of new languages, both of wide circulation (e.g., Wolof, Mandinka, Fula; English, French; pidgin, especially Nigerian pidgin) and of more restricted circulation.

11. Friederike LÜPKE and Anne STORCH, *Repertoires and choices in African languages*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

12. Mari D’AGOSTINO, *Noi che siamo passati dalla Libia*, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

13. Jan BLOMMAERT, *The sociolinguistic of globalization*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010; J. Normann JØRGENSEN, “Polylingual languaging around and among children and adolescents”, in *International Journal of Multilingualism*, n° 5, 3, 2008, p. 161-176.

14. A. Suresh CANAGARAJAH and Adrian J. WURR, “Multilingual communication and language acquisition: new research directions”, in *The Reading Matrix*, n° 11, 1, 2011, p. 1-15. The analysis proposed by Canagarajah and Wurr stems from Lachman Mulchand KHUBCHANDANI, *Revisualizing boundaries: a plurilingual ethos*, New Delhi, Sage, p. 1997.

- Addition of different varieties of the same language of wide circulation (e.g., Senegalese Wolof is added to Gambian Wolof).
- Reactivation of skills that have long been inactive, e.g., languages that were part of the early childhood repertoire.
- Initiation of literacy processes (numeracy, reading, writing), frequently in non-formal contexts, e.g., among pairs and/or in different languages, e.g., Arabic.
- Re-functionalisation, for other purposes, of skills already acquired; in particular the use for communicative needs of strings of sounds memorised in the learning phase and/or daily recitation of the Qu'ran¹⁵.

In Italy, the plurilingual repertoires are functional to the communicative interchanges in the reception centres, which are in fact multilingual spaces fostering polylingual interaction. These linguistic mosaics often emerge in migrants' narratives, as in the following passage from a conversation with a Burkinabe learner, who had been in Italy for 24 months at the time of the interview, conducted in Italian and adapted for the purposes of this article¹⁶:

(1) Narrative by a Burkinabe learner

MLG: Here I don't use Bissa because I haven't met anyone speaking Bissa.

INT: But you speak French.

MLG: I always use French and also Italian. [...]

MLG: Where I work, here in Palermo, they speak Italian, more than French.

INT: Yes, sure, but do you speak French with the other guys who speak French?

MLG: Yes, even if I don't speak good French. In my country, I used to speak Bissa and Mòoré. Because in my village I didn't study at the French school. But when I arrived here in Italy, I didn't find anyone who spoke my language. I had to use French, that's why I now understand a bit more French than I used to. My understanding of French started here, in Italy. [...]

15. Mari D'AGOSTINO, *Noi che siamo passati dalla Libia*, op. cit., p. 116.

16. Egle MOCCIARO, *The development of L2 Italian morphosyntax in adult learners with limited literacy*, Palermo, University of Palermo Press, 2020, p. 85-86. In addition to English translation, adaptation consisted of the removal of all conversational markers that characterised the original transcription and the addition of punctuation to help reading.

MLG: I can say that I also learnt the Italian language. I can say that I know the name of many things in Italian, more than in French.

MLG (these are the initials of his name) claims to speak Italian, and in fact the conversation with the interviewer (INT) was quite effective on a functional level: he learnt to activate this resource in the context requiring it. However, of course, the frequency, formal complexity and communicative effectiveness of the various “pieces of competence” are a measure of the intensity of the communicative exchanges in which they originated. In the new migratory contexts, exposure to Italian is particularly sporadic and fragmentary. The input in Italian is often only the so-called foreigner talk, i.e., the simplified form of Italian typically used by professionals in the hosting centres; or it may be the Italian used by other migrants as a lingua franca. This may still enrich migrants’ linguistic mosaic with new tiles that can be used in basic communication (see “the name of many things in Italian” in the excerpt above). However, the scarce and often non-existent relationship with the locals results in a great scarcity of opportunities to practise a new language and to use reality as a learning environment. Hence, the development of the local language, when it does occur, is very slow and, even some time after arrival, migrants’ comprehension and production skills may remain very poor. Moreover, input in the local language can be further reduced by lack of access to written texts, which results from the low or no literacy skills, frequent in the context in question¹⁷.

While Italian is only marginally present in the repertoires we are considering, the other local language, Sicilian, is completely absent. Being partly proficient in it only 20 years ago, in a different migratory scenario, was the emblem of integration into the local community. In the current situation of segregation and reduced contact, Sicilian is a language spoken only by and among locals, “they-code”, so to speak, that excludes others. The following extract comes from an interview conducted with MLG two years after the one

17. A large-scale study conducted in 2017 and 2018 in Palermo showed that about 30% of the 774 participants, both newcomers and medium- or long-term residents, proved not fully literate in any of the home languages of their repertoires. The study is reported in Mari D’AGOSTINO and Angelo LO MAGLIO, “Profili dei migranti: competenze linguistiche e alfabetizzazione”, in Mari D’AGOSTINO (ed.), *La forza delle lingue, nella migrazione e nella inclusione*, Palermo, University of Palermo Press, 2018, p. 23-29.

reported in (1). As in the previous case, the interview has been translated here and adapted for the purposes of this work¹⁸:

- (2) Narrative by a Burkinabe learner
 INT: And do you understand Sicilian?
 MLG: No, I don't understand Sicilian [...] something, little, mmh I can say no [...]
 INT: But do you happen to have someone speaking to you in Sicilian?
 MLG: No, because they mix, they say 'ciao compa' ((hi bro)), they mix a bit [...]
 INT: People you worked with, aren't they Sicilian?
 MLG: No, they are... they speak Sicilian, they are Sicilians
 INT: And yet, when they speak to you, do they only speak Italian?
 MLG: Italian, but they also speak Sicilian among themselves [...]
 INT: Were there Sicilians who played ((football)) at the Foro italoico?
 MLG: Yes, yes, there are
 INT: And did they speak Sicilian among themselves?
 MLG: Yes, they speak Sicilian too [...] but they don't speak Sicilian with us, because we don't understand Sicilian [...] that's why, when they speak with us, they speak Italian [...] but they use bad Sicilian words, but I don't remember [...] they want to speak badly of us.

A mirror of the languages used or not used by migrants, especially those who are young (even minors) or young adults (18-30 years old) consists in digital practices on social media. Here we find a polylingual dimension similar to that observed in reception centres, as spontaneous digital interaction takes place simultaneously in several languages. These are of course English and French (depending on the user's origin), but also African languages, especially the most widely spoken ones, while those with a low number of speakers are significantly underrepresented¹⁹. It is interesting and perhaps surprising that these multilingual writing practices involve not only competent writers,

18. Mari D'AGOSTINO and Egle MOCCIARO, "Palermo 2000–2020: Sicilian in old and new migrations", in Francesco Goglia and Matthias Wolny (ed.), *Italo-Romance dialects in the linguistic repertoires of immigrants in Italy*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, p. 39.

19. Friederike LÜPKE, "African(ist) perspectives on vitality: fluidity, small speaker numbers, and adaptive multilingualism make vibrant ecologies (Response to Mufwene)", in *Language*, n° 93, 4, 2017, p. 275-279, pointed out that languages with limited geographical distribution and low number of speakers not suitable to be used in digital communication, which is translocal in nature. See also Ana DEUMERT and Kristin Vold LEXANDER, "Texting Africa: writing as performance", *op. cit.*

but also those who are new to writing. In (3), we can observe an interaction initiated by a young Senegalese emerging writer, whose pseudonym is Yero²⁰:

(3) Facebook interaction of a young migrant with emerging literacy		
IP	je salut tout mes amis la vie c'est ça je suis fière de tous le monde	
RPs		
Friend 1	on te salue toi aussi frère	'I greet you too, brother'
Yero	merci star	'thanks, star'
Friend 2	FRIEND 2 BOROM SISILIA	'FRIEND 2 FROM SISILY'
Yero	Boy bamba samahart	'My friend, the brave' (= <i>samaharit</i> , Wolof)
Friend 2	La yalla def déh	'My God accept it' (Wolof)
Friend 3	COURAGE BRO.ON TE SALUT	'COME ON BRO. I GREET YOU deeply'
Yero	merci star nakal dagabak (= <i>dangabah</i> , Wolof)	'thanks star, how are you' profondément
Friend 4	Yé broh	'Yes, bro' (= brother)
Yero	merci bro	'thanks bro'

The opening post (IP, initiative post²¹) is rather complex on a formal level and indeed incongruent with Yero's writing skills, who has in fact copy-pasted it from a friend's wall – common practice on Facebook. The post is followed by several short and rather stereotyped comments (RPs, replica posts) in different languages. Indeed, in these contexts, Yero finds the space for activating an informal literacy process, through holistic imitation practices, reinterpretation and reuse of pieces of written language that, in his perception, convey meaning.

5. CROSSING THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BORDERS: OPEN QUESTIONS

How these polylingual practices work from a strictly linguistic perspective (i.e., acquisitional and structural) rather than a purely sociolinguistic one is yet to be figured out.

20. Mari D'AGOSTINO and Egle MOCCIARO, "Literacy and literacy practices": plurilingual connected migrants and emerging literacy", in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, n° 51, March 2021, 100792, p. 10.

21. Jannis ANDROUTSOPOULOS, "Networked multilingualism: Some language practices on Facebook and their implications", *op. cit.*

Here, linguistics and sociolinguistics are sometimes in conflict. In a nutshell, this is because the former very often simply ignores the context linguistic facts (even those concerning the development of additional languages) are produced in, hence their sociolinguistic coordinates. On the other hand, sociolinguistics explicitly accuses generalist and acquisitional scholars of anchoring their descriptions to a rigid notion of competence, which is by definition monolingual. On closer inspection, sociolinguists' arguments seem more precisely aimed at theoretical linguistics formal approaches and, in particular, those pertaining to a generativist matrix. The question is answered as soon as we move away from formal approaches and place ourselves in the perspective – anything but new or limited in use – of emergentist or usage-based models. Rather than a competence-based approach, these models adopt a performance-based or a discourse-based approach to language description, proposing that language continuously emerges from speakers' actual utterances, from discourse²². This is well summarised by Joan Bybee, who writes that “linguistic structure is viewed as emergent – governed by certain regular processes, but always changing as it is re-created in the individual and in specific usage situations”²³.

The relevance of usage-based models for the analysis of plurilingual repertoires is not an entirely new observation. However, the paradigm shift called for by scholars such as Canagarajah and Wurr to overcome the monolingualism bias (a recent invention even in the West)²⁴, remains, as far as I know, inconsequential,²⁵ even in research areas that should in principle be sensitive to such calls²⁶. Although based on notions such as discourse and

22. Paul J. HOPPER, “Emergent grammar”, in *Berkeley Linguistic Society*, n° 13, 1987, p. 139-157; Joan BYBEE, “From usage to grammar: the mind's response to repetition”, in *Language* n° 82, 4, 2006, p. 711-733.

23. Joan BYBEE, “Usage-based theory and exemplar representation”, in *The handbook of construction grammar*, Thomas HOFFMAN and Graeme TROUSDALE (ed.), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 50.

24. A. Suresh CANAGARAJAH and Adrian J. WURR, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

25. This is although Vivien Cook's early proposal of the notion, of enormous heuristic relevance, of “multicompetence” to describe the coexistence of more than one language in the mind of a single individual. See Vivien J. COOK, “The poverty-of-the-stimulus argument and multi-competence”, in *Second Language Research*, n° 7, 2, 1991, p. 103-117.

26. Alongside US-based emergentism *à la* Bybee, we can mention the European functionalist-inspired acquisitional research that, since the 1980s, has reconstructed the grammars of interlanguages from a far from discretising and target (hence,

continuum, the usage-based conception of language is still, in both the generalist and acquisitional spheres, essentially monolingual, if not in intention at least in descriptive practice²⁷. Polylinguals' speech, which is the subject of this article (and in fact plurilingualism in general) suggests the languages coexisting in a speaker are not disconnected islands: they are always in contact and form a continuum rather than a sum (a "multilingualism at the level of discourse" as D'Agostino described it). This continuity could result in a "grammar of mixed languages"²⁸, constructed in interaction and in actual discursive practices. A usage- and discourse-sensitive analysis should therefore be able to include and systematise repertoires variation, mobility and fluidity. "How do we bridge this gap, then?"²⁹ asks Heike Wiese, who, in recent years, has been trying to take the notion of repertoire beyond the boundaries of sociolinguistics and operationalise it in the description of language systems. As a research question, she wonders how to account for grammatical patterns and structural systematicity while eliminating rigid and monolingual linguistic boundaries and proposes that grammatical systems can be built on communicative situations that do not presuppose language borders. These are called "comm-sits" and allow discourse to be analysed from the point of view of the constructions that do emerge there, regardless of their classification in a specific ("named")

competence) based perspective; see Wolfgang KLEIN and Clive PERDUE, "The basic variety (or: couldn't natural languages be much simpler?)", in *Second Language Research* n° 13, 4, 1997, p. 301-347. As for Italy, see the typologically inspired research conducted by the Pavia school, whose results are summarised in Anna GIACALONE RAMAT (ed.), *Verso l'italiano, Percorsi e strategie di acquisizione*, Roma, Carocci, 2003.

27. As far as second language acquisition is concerned, this can be partly linked to another methodological limitation, which concerns sample selection. In fact, much research is essentially based on convenience samples largely consisting of the so-called WIERD populations (Western, Industrialised, European, Rich, Democratic, see Joseph HENRICH, Stephen J. HEINE and Ara NORENZAYAN, "The weirdest people in the world?", in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, n° 33, 2-3, 2010, p. 61-83), which are easier to select and study, but hardly representative when measured on a global scale (see Sible ANDRINGA and Aline GODFROID, "Sampling bias and the problem of generalizability in applied linguistics", in *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, n° 40, 2020, p. 134-142).

28. A. Suresh CANAGARAJAH and Adrian J. WURR, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

29. Heike WIESE, "Communicative situations as a basis for linguistic systems: Integrating linguistic multi-competence with grammatical structure", in *Working Papers in Urban Language & Literacies*, n° 287, 2021, p. 5.

language (e.g., the systematic absence of plural markers in market language³⁰). In this sense, “grammatical systems can transcend ‘language’ borders³¹”.

This is certainly a fascinating and promising theoretical proposal, which could also offer insights into the description of the repertoires considered here and the space occupied in them (if any) by Italian-based segments. Elsewhere, we proposed the provisional label of “truncated acquisition” for the fragmented development of Italian in a migration context, which of course paraphrases Blommaert’s truncated repertoire³². Truncated acquisition is acquisition seen from the perspective of the communicative spaces available in contexts of (im) mobility. An acquisition that is undoubtedly imperfect and fragmentary if we only observe its products (i.e., Italian interlanguages). However, in the linguistically composite space inhabited by migrants, fragments of local languages mingle with other, more or less extensive, fragments of their repertoires. Therefore, from the process perspective, we are dealing with new pieces enriching the polylingual mosaic. These new pieces can be observed from the perspective of their acquisition, i.e., as constituting an autonomous system, although fragmentary and provisional. Alternatively (and/or additionally), they can be integrated in a broader construct, the polylingual speech, trying to assess whether it is possible to trace recurring patterns (whether functional or grammatical). The need to find systematicity within this construct will certainly open avenues for new research.

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30. Heike WIESE, “Overcoming language borders in structural analysis”, Plenary talk at *SLI2022. LV Congresso internazionale della Società di Linguistica italiana*, Brixen, 8-10 settembre 2022.

31. Heike WIESE, “Communicative situations as a basis for linguistic systems”, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

32. Mari D’AGOSTINO and Egle MOCCIARO, “New migration processes and new frontiers for linguistic research”, *op. cit.*, p. 48; Jan BLOMMAERT, *The sociolinguistic of globalization*, *op. cit.*