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Benvenuto Terracini and the problem of language death¹

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The problem of language endangerment and language death has assumed great importance in the last decade or so following the clarion call sounded by Michael Krauss (1991). Much of the concern is practical, and rightly so. If at all possible, communities where the ancestral language is under threat urgently need to be helped to reverse the situation through the preparation of teaching and other materials, and more intangibly but perhaps more importantly, by fostering a sense of linguistic self-esteem and pride. Yet language revitalization is sadly often not a realistic goal. Where it is not possible to salvage the language as a continuing social institution, there is an urgent need for a kind of 'rescue linguistics' akin to the rescue archaeology practised when ancient sites are soon to be buried under modern buildings.²

Some linguists — Dixon is perhaps the best known example — have argued that the situation is so pressing that all other kinds of work, and in particular theoretical research, should be put on hold and the professional attention of all those who practise linguistics should be focused exclusively on the world's threatened languages (Dixon 1997: 128-138). This is surely an overreaction, not least because like any complex phenomenon, the processes which lead to language death deserve careful and objective study in the same way as any other scientific question. Cancer or AIDS will not be rendered curable by suspending all theoretical research in molecular biology and genetics, but rather by ensuring that the fruits of such inquiry are fed into the search for a cure for these and other diseases. Conversely we cannot put off finding even partial treatments for pathological conditions, whether biological or linguistic, until the infinitely

distant day when we will have acquired all the necessary knowledge and understanding. Rather, in linguistics as elsewhere, theoretical and applied work must proceed in parallel.

And theoretical work in turn should be aware of its own history. The biologist Lewis Wolpert has suggested that a measure of the importance of a scientific paper is the number of previously published papers it renders irrelevant, but this bleakly anti-historicist vision of the development of knowledge seems to me not only implausible and self-deluding (an issue, however, I cannot debate here), but also intellectually ungenerous. In the contrary belief that ideas from the past can continue to reinvigorate modern debates, the purpose of the present note is to rescue not a language but a contribution to the debate that has gone largely unnoticed, namely 'Come muore una lingua' ('How a language dies') by the Torinese scholar Benvenuto Terracini (1886-1968).³ The reasons for this neglect are not hard to find. First, the article was originally published in Spanish in a not easily accessible collection of essays in Buenos Aires in 1951 and a revised and extended Italian version appeared in 1957; neither version was reviewed outside a rather restricted number of specialist journals. Second, Terracini's reflections on language and linguistics belong to a current of thought which may broadly be labelled 'idealist', and which has impinged little if at all on the discipline in the the form we know it and teach it at the beginning of the twenty-first century.⁴

We begin with a few words about the man himself.⁵ He was awarded his *laurea* for a thesis on the dialect of Usseglio in 1909, and, after a period of study in Paris and Germany (1910-13), progressed through a series of teaching posts before being appointed to the Chair of Glottologia at the University of Milan in 1929, from which he was removed in 1938 as a consequence of the racial laws promulgated by the Fascist government in that year. In 1941 he went into exile in Argentina, taking up the Chair of Romance and General Linguistics at the University of Tucumán, before returning to Turin in 1947 to the Chair of Glottologia, to which was added responsibility for the teaching of history of the Italian language. Whereas the pre-war years are marked by the publication of numerous articles, monographs and reviews in the areas of dialectology and Indo-European linguistics, after the war, at a time when he was already in his sixties, there comes, in addition to the continuation of his dialectological work through the

direction of the Turin-based ALI, a series of more general theoretical and methodological publications, culminating in what is generally agreed to be his masterpiece, *Lingua libera e libertà linguistica* (1963/1970). The volume which contains 'Come muore una lingua' was first published in Buenos Aires in 1951 with the title *Conflictos de lenguas y de cultura*, and a revised and extended Italian version, *Conflitti di lingue e di cultura*, was published in Venice in 1957.⁶

Much in Terracini's early career had led him to an appreciation of the role of the individual in language, whether that individual be a local dialect speaker of the kind that he had been investigating from the days of his *tesi di laurea* on, or one of the authors whose style he frequently made the subject of his classes in Argentina.⁷ And it is the individual who lies at the centre of his view of language change, of which language death is in turn seen as an aspect. Where much twentieth-century linguistics, inspired by idealizations like Saussure's *langue* and Chomsky's competence or I-language, makes a sharp distinction between the internal processes by which one language gradually changes over time and the external factors of language contact which may lead one language to replace another, Terracini sees both as different ways in which an individual may stop using one language and start using another. 'Morire per una lingua vuol dire, in conclusione, mutarsi in un'altra.' [in conclusion, for a language, to die means to change into another'] (CML: 5).⁸ There is nothing in principle different between the process of language shift, to use a modern term, whereby a speaker of Gaulish comes to speak Latin or a speaker of Cornish English, in both cases leading to the death of the ancestral language, and the process whereby speakers of Latin shift to the vernacular. In other words, what matters is not so much the genetic relatedness or otherwise of the languages as the relative role different languages play inside a speech community, and the perception that the individual speakers have of the status of the different languages which surround them. 'Allora morire per una lingua, cioè mutarsi, viene a significare il momento in cui per un determinato gruppo di individui una forma particolare di cultura si ritira più o meno violentemente di fronte a forme nuove.' [thus, for a language, to die, that is to change, means the moment in which for a given group of individuals a particular form of culture retreats more or less violently in the face of new forms] (CML: 6). This reversal of perspective and the prioritization of the individual/community over the structure of the language

clearly place him in the tradition of Schuchardt and of his teacher in Paris, Gilliéron, rather than on the Neogrammarian side of the debate. The individual's sense of his/her own language is something instinctive, not the product of conscious reflection 'bensì di un sentimento elementare che ha radici nello stesso carattere sociale dell'attività linguistica' [but rather of a basic sense which has its roots in the same social circumstance as linguistic activity] (CML: 7). From this we are led to a formulation which Terracini attributes to another of his Parisian *maestri*, Antoine Meillet: 'una lingua muore quando il parlante ha il sentimento di averla mutata per un'altra' [a language dies when the speaker has the sense of having changed it for another one] (CML: 7). Note the shift of preposition here; it is not the language which changes itself 'in un'altra' but the speaker who changes it 'per un'altra'.⁹

For this account to hold water what is required prior to language change of any kind is at least two languages: 'sarebbe possibile impostare tutto quanto il problema del cambio linguistico come un problema di bilinguismo' [it would be possible to formulate the whole problem of linguistic change as a problem of bilingualism] (CML: 10). Even if we do not want to go this far, 'la morte di una lingua si può concepire come un caso particolare di bilinguismo' [the death of a language can be conceived as a special case of bilingualism] (CML: 10), in particular a bilingual situation in which one of the languages outweighs the other in prestige, so that speakers have a clear reason to opt for the more prestigious language even if it is not the language they have learnt at their mother's knee. Prestige is also linked to power, whether spiritual or temporal:

Se è ormai un luogo comune affermare che nelle lotte linguistiche prevale generalmente il prestigio di forze spirituali, ciò naturalmente non impedisce che la lingua culturalmente vincitrice, in qualche caso, ricorra alle armi del potere temporale. Anche tra lingue vi sono assassini.

[Even if it is by now a commonplace to state that in struggles between languages it is generally the prestige of spiritual power which prevails, this obviously does not prevent the language which is culturally the winner in some cases having recourse to the weapons of temporal power. Even between languages there are murderers.] CML: 13)

The discussion at this point clearly prefigures the modern distinction between ‘language murder’, where the speakers of the dominant language overwhelm those of the recessive one, and ‘language suicide’, where the speakers of the recessive language voluntarily give it up in the face of a language with greater prestige (Aitchison 2001: Ch 16). Although there are all too many sad exemplars of the former in the modern world, it is the struggle to understand and reverse the psychosocial mechanisms of language suicide or surrender which is at the heart of modern efforts to revitalise dying and endangered languages.

Having diagnosed — with striking precision, limpidity and prescience — the phenomenon of language death in its social context, Terracini moves on to consider some concrete examples, dividing them into two categories which he calls:

- a) ‘morte per disfacimento del sistema’ [death by decay of the system] (CML: 14-24);
- b) ‘morte per irrigidimento del sistema’ [death by rigidification of the system] (CML 24-34).

Note first that ‘system’ here refers not to the linguistic system as understood in a structural or generative sense (for which he reserves the term ‘struttura’ or ‘strutture’) but rather to the whole sociolinguistic matrix within which a language is used. As examples of ‘disfacimento’ he interestingly juxtaposes a classic case from the linguistic history of Europe, namely the replacement of Gaulish by Latin, with a phenomenon that he encountered in exile, the decline, already detectable more than fifty years ago, of the indigenous languages of the New World, in this instance the Quechua of Santiago del Estero.¹⁰ To this may be added the case cited early on in his article of the speech of Forno di Lemie, in the Franco-Provençal region of the Viù valley, where a colony of Piedmontese speakers, the descendants of 14th century miners, still preserve vestiges of their ancestral tongue (CML: 7-9). Had he remained in Argentina, Terracini intended to undertake serious fieldwork on Quechua, but as it is we are left only with the tantalizing prospect of what might have been if field experiences in North-Western Italy had been put side by side with those in Central Argentina. Even so, there is enough in the paper for us to appreciate the range of Terracini’s conceptualization of the problems attendant on language contact, endangerment and ultimately death. Worthy of note too is the way modern situations are projected back onto the past in an attempt to achieve an imaginative, albeit necessarily intuitive,

reconstruction of the sociolinguistic situation in which the Gauls found themselves under Roman rule. This is very different from the kind of reconstruction of the linguistic system, understood as structure, that characterizes the Neogrammarian endeavour.

One of the consequences of the 'disfacimento del sistema' is the gradual restriction of the dying language to particular registers and contexts, notably those of the family and private rather than public matters. The individual's command of his/her language is seen as being reduced in ways that are reminiscent of the concept of 'semi-speaker' introduced into the study of language death through Nancy Dorian's seminal work on the Gaelic communities of North-West Scotland (Dorian 1981). Once again too the ancient and modern situations are compared. Speaking of the Gauls, he writes:

Il loro sentimento di cambiar lingua non doveva esser molto diverso o più intenso di quello che spinge il nostro contadino a lasciare la sua parlata rustica per una norma più colta dell'italiano regionale.

[Their sense of changing language cannot have been very different or more intense than that which drives our peasants to abandon their rustic speech in favour of the more educated norm of a variety of regional Italian.] (CML: 16)

Of the Quechua speakers, he goes on:

Così una lingua vicina a spegnersi cade effettivamente nelle condizioni di un dialetto o di una parlata locale ormai piegata definitivamente sotto il prestigio di una lingua nazionale: si restringe allora all'intimità familiare ... (CML: 17)

[Thus a language which is close to dying in fact falls into the same condition as a dialect or a local form of speech which is already cowed under the prestige of a national language; it becomes restricted to the intimacy of the family.]

In both cases the *tertium comparationis*, implicit or explicit, is the language situation of contemporary Italy as he had experienced it in his dialect researches.

If Terracini's category of 'morte per disfacimento del sistema' is the one that offers most suggestive parallels with the modern problem of language endangerment, there is nonetheless

much of interest and value in a larger theoretical perspective in his idea of 'morte per irrigidimento del sistema'. This section of the paper is in fact devoted to one particular circumstance, namely the death of Latin, which may not at first sight seem to have much in common with that of Gaulish or Gaelic or Quechua, given the enormous prestige that Latin had even at the time of its 'death' and which it retained over the many centuries in which it was in Europe the principal language of religion, culture, civic administration and international communication. On Terracini's view, however, Latin is dead at the point at which it is no longer the chosen vehicle of daily communication within the communities in which it once reigned supreme. There is once again a situation of bilingualism involving Latin and the emerging Romance vernaculars, only this time and paradoxically it is the 'higher' language which dies. The reason must be the loss of the sense of the language within the community:

... il latino morì allorquando i popoli romanzi, al primo spuntare del loro nuovo spirito di nazionalità, acquistarono coscienza del fatto che questo trovava nel linguaggio volgare la propria espressione adeguata.

[Latin died at that moment when the Romance peoples, at the first sprouting of their new spirit of nationality, became conscious of the fact that this spirit found its most adequate expression in the vernacular.] (CML: 26)

Here too there is more than a tinge of idealism in the wording: 'spirito', 'coscienza', 'espressione', but compare this passage with the following from a recent overview of the history of the Romance languages, and the key idea of speakers' choice as motivating the change is remarkably similar:

Latin was killed, then, by Romance speakers who perceived it as dead, beyond their reach, and superseded by a new prestigious language that could adequately fulfil all the functions previously performed by Latin. (Posner 1996: 154)

The difference between Posner and Terracini are in the datings of this change, too large a question for us to address here, but the spirit of their remarks clearly tend in the same direction as regards the mechanism if not the timing of the shift.

Latin of course survives as a language of culture and administration, and that makes it different from the language death cases discussed above. However it survives in a strictly

codified form that is transmitted through the educational system; in Terracini's terms it becomes rigid ('irrigidito'). A language that is cut off from its social underpinning in everyday use is necessarily different in kind from one that it is transmitted from generation to generation in society, changing and adapting as circumstances require. The germ of the same idea is already in Vendryes (1933, 1951), and Terracini integrates it into a more general view of the ways languages interact in societies:

J. Vendryes ha detto a proposito del latino che una lingua incomincia a morire il giorno che «on y fait des fautes». Direi piuttosto: il giorno in cui tutti (dico tutti compresi gli scrittori) non solo sbagliano, ma hanno paura di sbagliare. Conseguenza di questo timore è la pederteria, l'uso di formule tradizionali prive di contenuto ...'

[J. Vendryes has said, speaking of Latin, that a language begins to die the day that "people make mistakes". I would rather say: the day in which everyone (including writers) not only makes mistakes but is afraid of making mistakes. The consequence of this fear is pedantry, the use of traditional, contentless formulas.] (CML: 31)

In his later work, in particular in the synthesis of the history of the Italian language which constitutes the last chapter of *Lingua libera e libertà linguistica*, Terracini goes on to develop an account of how Italian expands from the point at which it takes over from Latin to become itself a fully-fledged literary language, but we will stop our story at this point and return to the question of language endangerment and death. First, though, a word about the question of Terracini's idealism.

As I have tried to indicate at various points in the foregoing, several aspects of his work have led commentators to place Terracini on the idealist side of the idealism/realism dichotomy, even if with some caveats. Thus, Benincà (1988: 87) describes him as 'la personalità forse più complessa e profonda della linguistica idealistica' [perhaps the most complex and profound personality among idealist linguists]. Segre (1982/6: 265) however dissents: 'avrebbe poco senso collegare Terracini con le teorie idealistiche, e in particolare con Croce' [it would make little sense to link Terracini with idealist theories]. Terracini's pre-war work contains relatively little in the way of overtly theoretical pronouncements, although the theoretical vision is undoubtedly there in the

detail of the descriptions and the comments on the linguistic communities that he studied. An exception is his article on semantic change (Terracini 1938), which seems to mark a watershed ('spartiacque' Corti 1970: 17) in his scholarly output. Interestingly, this is the only work by Terracini that is mentioned, and then only in the briefest of possible footnotes, by Nencioni in his famous critique of the idealist current in linguistics in Italy (Nencioni 1946/1989). This suggests that at that time, when Nencioni felt impelled to take on Croce, Vossler, et al, Terracini, although already in his late 50's, either did not seem a major figure on the Italian linguistic scene or did not obviously seem to belong to the idealist camp. It is curious that the much later occasional piece (Nencioni 1983), a survey of some recent developments in linguistics, contains no in-text references to particular books or articles but lists seven items of bibliography: three general collections, a book each by Bally, Benveniste, and Jakobson and Terracini's *Lingua libera e libertà linguistica*. In another such reflection on the state of the art a few years before, reviewing the debate aroused by his earlier work and commenting much more specifically on developments within Italy, Nencioni (1975) makes no mention at all of Terracini, though he does several times cite Devoto, author of 'Il lungo dialogo con Benvenuto' (Devoto 1968). And yet Terracini does figure in an earlier overview by Nencioni (1952) and after his death he wrote a full necrology (Nencioni 1969). Moreover, Terracini would seem to have much to offer to those who 'ritenevano che i migliori risultati della moderna linguistica italiana professantesi crociana potevano più coerentemente venir ricondotti ad un idealismo già provato in esperienze linguistiche esemplari, quali quelle di Wilhelm von Humboldt e di Hugo Schuchardt' [thought that the best results of that current of modern Italian linguistics which calls itself 'Crocean' could most consistently be linked back to a form of idealism which had already been tested in classic linguistic work such as that of Wilhelm von Humboldt or Hugo Schuchardt] (Nencioni 1946/1989: 155). Perhaps Terracini was too closely associated with Turin and therefore by (undeserved because historically unfounded) association with Bertoni and the Neolinguistic school. Or perhaps the evident Crocean strains in Terracini's work were still too strong for Nencioni and others to accept him easily. Segre (1982/6), as we have already noted, emphasises the distance between Terracini and Croce connecting him

precisely to Humboldt and Schuchardt (p.266). The least we can say at this juncture is that the history of the realism vs idealism debate within Italian linguistics needs revisiting.

That the time is also ripe for the reconsideration of some of Terracini's ideas about language and society is suggested by Rosanna Sornicola's recent methodological reflections on dialectology and sociolinguistics (Sornicola 2002), which came into my hands as the present paper was close to completion. Where Benincà (1988: 87-8) for instance, while granting the subtlety of his sociolinguistic observations, sees Terracini's views as threatening the (too jealously guarded?) autonomy of linguistics, Sornicola canvasses his work, and in particular his dissection of the delicate relation between the individual and society, as offering a counterbalance to a positivistic insistence on objective structure and statistics. Constraints of space and time mean that further discussion of these intriguing questions will have to be put off until another occasion.

As we have noted, all too often all that can now be hoped for in situations of language endangerment is documentation, but the goal wherever possible remains not simply documentation via the compilation of grammars, dictionaries and text corpora, but the subsequent feeding back of this research into the community in the form of teaching and other materials in order to foster the sense of language awareness and pride which is the key to survival (Crystal 2000: ch 5). This is by no means an easy matter, as the contributors to Fishman (2001) all testify, but the way forward surely lies in developing and refining our understanding of how individuals and community interact in the domain of language. In this sense, Terracini's work is groundbreaking. Within the field of modern language endangerment research, this goal is often referred to by the term 'revitalization', which bears more than a passing etymological connection to the core Terracinian concept of *vitalità* (Grassi 1969), about which he writes:

A proposito di parlate rustiche fu escogitato ed elaborato il concetto di vitalità a indicare quel particolare grado di attività linguistica che una comunità manifesta da una parte con una, anche minima, elaborazione autonoma del materiale linguistico, accompagnata da un principio almeno di tendenza espansionistica, dall'altra coll'esercizio di una resistenza ricca di virtù assimilatrice verso le correnti che premono dal di fuori.

[In connection with rural dialects, the concept of *vitalità* was invented to indicate that particular degree of linguistic activity which a community displays when on the one hand it shows even slight signs of developing its own range of expression, something which leads in principle at least to the capacity to expand beyond its immediate domain, and when on the other hand it is able to resist or assimilate the pressures that come from outside.]

(Terracini 1963/1970: 175)

Once again there is an unmistakable idealist flavour in the way the issue is formulated (and later on in the same passage he talks of *vitalità* as involving ‘il sentimento di elaborare una forma originale di cultura’ [the sense of developing its own original form of culture]). Yet the underlying diagnosis subtly identifies the tension between autonomy and hegemony (‘tendenza espansionistica’) which will always be found when the language of one region or community achieves a partially codified status as a local norm. In this sense, the delicate and well-studied interplay of regional and local languages and dialects in Italy provides a valuable testbed for ideas concerning the development of local languages in other parts of the world.¹¹

In conclusion, then, Terracini’s elegant and succinct dissection of the problem of language death deserves to be more widely known for a number of reasons: first, because — like any fine work of scholarship — it is there and merits recognition and citation; second, because his juxtaposition of problems and examples from various points in time and space lends a broader perspective and theoretical depth to what can all too often seem an intensely modern and essentially practical issue; third, because it is embedded within a philosophy of language and linguistics which in many respects runs against the modern grain but which can suggest new ways of thinking about these problems. Let me finish with Terracini’s own eloquent and moving final words on what happens when a language dies and why we should therefore fight to see that whenever possible it does not happen:

Ma allorquando tale tradizione è interrotta in qualsiasi modo e sopravvive soltanto il nome o la memoria vuota e nuda della civiltà che le corrispondeva, o persino il nome si è perso, allora questa lingua potrà essere l’oggetto di ricerche e di ricostruzioni erudite, preistoriche;

ma per una profonda coscienza storica dell'umanità è perduta. La sua individualità è svanita per sempre nel mare indistinto del pensiero umano da cui un tempo era sorta. [But when such a tradition is interrupted in any way and only the name or the empty, bare memory of the civilization that corresponded to it survives, or when even the name itself is lost, at that point this language may be the object of research and erudite prehistoric reconstruction; but as far as a deep, historical awareness of its humanity is concerned, it is lost. Its individuality has vanished for ever back into the featureless sea of human thought from which it had once emerged.] (CML: 35)

FOOTNOTES

1. I would like to dedicate this article to the memory of Maria Corti (1915-2002), who I met briefly during my stay in Pavia in spring 1983. Corti was one of Terracini's earliest and most renowned students, and the author of several valuable essays about him and his work (Corti 1970, 1989, 1996), as well as being the addressee of his open letter 'Variazioni sul tema della lingua italiana (lettera aperta a Maria Corti)' (1966). Her work, and that of Cesare Segre, Bice Mortara Garavelli and others, builds on Terracini's ideas on the relation between linguistics and stylistics (see also Segre 1999: 106-114). The present study deals with an aspect of the complementary strand, which we may (not too anachronistically) dub sociolinguistic. Ultimately, the two strands converge in a unified vision of language, literature, the individual and society — see in particular Terracini (1963/70) — though we will not have space to go into that here. I am grateful to Giulio Lepschy for his comments on a first draft of this paper.

2. It is good to be able to report that various charitable and international agencies have in recent years allocated funds for exactly such documentation: we may cite most recently the Volkswagen Stiftung (with a research base at the Max Planck Institute in Nijmegen), and the Elisabet Rausing Trust (based at the School of Oriental and Asian Studies in London). For a list of other agencies and initiatives, as well for an excellent overview of the issues, see Crystal (2000). The situation that Krauss surveyed in his conference address ten years on (Krauss 2001), while still grave, is thus a good deal more optimistic.

3. Not of course that Terracini was the first to have thought about the problem — cf Vendryes (1933, 1951) cited at various points in the article under discussion — but it is not my intention here to review the whole history of the question.

4. I return briefly to the question of Terracini's idealism at the end of this paper.

5. For appreciations of the man — 'una delle poche persone cui credo si adatti la definizione di maestro di vita' (Segre 1999: 108) and 'era nato maestro' (Corti 1970: 9) — and assessments of his work, see in addition to the articles by Corti already mentioned, Nencioni (1969), Beccaria (1976), Segre (1982/86) and the contributors to Soletti (1989).

6. Ideally one should also note the differences between the Spanish and the Italian versions of the article (Corti 1996), but I have not been able to obtain a copy of the Spanish edition.

7. The move to Argentina forced Terracini to shift the focus of his research, in part because he could not there have access to the rich library resources that traditional philological research required nor, obviously, to the Piedmontese and Franco-Provençal speech communities, and in part because his students did not have the classical training that would have been taken for granted in an Italian university of the time. Thus he nurtured his interest in stylistics and the history of the language — conceived essentially as the history of the literary language — which formed such an integral component of his writings in the later years of his life.

8. Quotations from 'Come muore una lingua' are followed by the sigla CML and the pagination as in the 1996 edition. Translations of the quoted passages from this article are my own.

9. It is easy too to see how the insistence on the crucial role of the individual's 'sentimento' can be linked to an idealist philosophy of language, especially when as later he refers to a speaker's acting on this sense as 'l'affermazione da parte del soggetto parlante della propria libertà spirituale' (CML: 10). However, the juxtaposition of the views of Meillet suggests a less extreme interpretation. It is in the differential reading of passages such as this that the debate over the idealist or otherwise nature of Terracini's thought arises.

10. The language is listed as having approx 60,000 speakers in the current version of Ethnologue (July 2002).

11. On a more pessimistic note, we may add that Italy is not itself free from the problem of language endangerment. Sardinian, to take an example that was close to the heart of Terracini the author of *Saggio di un atlante linguistico della Sardegna* (1964), though currently reckoned to have approx 1.5 million speakers, seems perilously close to the position diagnosed by Terracini insofar as increasingly parents opt not to use Sardinian with their children, preferring instead that they should have access to the wider social and economic prospects that a command of standard Italian offers. Similar problems affect dialects elsewhere in Italy, and constitute a local Italian version of the worldwide crisis to which Krauss drew attention (Parry 2002). This seems to me

much more pressing and real an issue than the current concern in Italy with the alleged influence of global English (Vincent 2002).

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