The existence of Standard Italian in Australia and its promotion since Immigration

Thesis by

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PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
I dedicate this research
to my parents who have selflessly spent their lives working
to give me the best education, both academic and cultural to prepare me for life.

to my grandparents for their courage to venture to a new world to give their children and grandchildren the opportunities they never enjoyed.

to my brothers and sisters for their support and understanding.

to my partner in life who believes in me and encourages me to do better than my best; whose love has guided me through these last years.
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Chapter One  

Introduction

Language is a form of human expression. It is the way people communicate with one another to express thoughts, ideas, decisions, desires and essentially to relay information successfully. There are numerous types of language, perhaps the most common of which are the written and spoken languages. Other forms include sign language, Braille and even primitive smoke signals. The term "language" comes via French, from the Latin word "lingua" meaning "tongue". Even today, the spoken language is often referred to as "tongue". It is not known exactly when language began or even how it began, although a common theory is that it began as an imitation of natural sounds of animals such as grunts, groans, whistles and barks (World Book Encyclopedia; 1979, pp. 62 – 63). What is known, however, is that language changes everyday as it is influenced by human and historical changes. Words that exist in our vocabulary today did not all exist for example a hundred years ago. Nor, perhaps, will they exist a hundred years from now. This is the same for all languages around the world, including the Italian language.

Since the beginning of Italian history, Italians have spoken innumerable varieties of language. Discussions concerning these countless varieties could continue incessantly; and for this reason it is important to
outline immediately the aim of this discussion. Throughout the ensuing chapters, all information gathered and analysed, has been done in order to achieve one aim: to discuss the existence of a Standard Italian language in Australia as well as various dialects and regional varieties, and to analyse its promotion since Italian Immigration to Australia. There is an immense wealth of information about Italian and English languages and so it is my objective not to be lost in general discussion but rather to adhere to my main aim as closely as possible.

It is also necessary to outline that although this area of study has been previously documented and will be referred to throughout these chapters, it is imperative to make note that many of these arguments analysed have been gathered from the Italo-Australian population itself which is constantly changing. From this growing population, language trends and levels of language perception have been researched and represented herein. In Australia, the research into Italo-Australian communities, their presence and customs, has mostly been documented in the last fifty or so years since World War II. For this reason, much of the Source material relating to this area of Sociolinguistics, is mostly from the last two decades.

Before any discussion of analysis, certain definitions must be outlined and compared. In the realm of language, definitions are not easily made as
terms are perceived differently by different people. The initial terms requiring definition include: **language; standard language** and **dialect**. A brief outline of Italy's language history must also be included so as to understand why certain language use exists in Italy and Australia.

The term **Language** is defined as the method used by a communicator to relay a message to a recipient. This method is not always effective although its objective is constant. That is, it acts as a form of communication between members of society. Lo Bianco illustrates the diversity of the term language effectively when stating that it is not only "a source of individual, personal identity" but it acts also as "a source of group and cultural identity" as well as "a national identity" (Lo Bianco; 1987, p.1). Language has the ability to bring countrymen together and can also tear nations apart. Lo Bianco continues in stating that for this reason, language in society "is an instrument of power and sometimes of domination but can become a means of emancipation and freedom". Throughout these chapters, differing views of language, levels of languages and how these levels are perceived will be outlined and analysed.

Language in itself is constantly changing which is why a fixed definition needs to be broad. The criteria upon which a definition could be based
are being updated everyday, as new situations in human history occur that pave the way for language innovation. Two forms of language of particular relevance to our discussion are the standard form of language and the dialect version of a language.

The standard form of a language is defined as the language of a group or nation whose governing body recognise it as the national or identifying language of that group or society. That is, it is the language recognised throughout the group as the universal form of communication of its members. Bettoni defines Standard Italian as "the official language of communication used in the national and international arenas, the language of industry and commerce, of government administration and of education. It is used above all in written communication and spoken in formal contexts" (Bettoni and Di Biase; 1992, p.1). Here Bettoni introduces the contexts of written communications and formal environments which lead to the assumption that speakers of such a standard national language are literate people of a certain class in society. To link this definition to the Italo-Australian population, it is necessary to understand that the majority of Italians who immigrated to Australia were of the rural working class, often illiterate and thus not fluent speakers of Standard Italian. This factor, among others will be discussed further in Chapter Two where the characteristics of immigrants are analysed in relation to their effects on the promotion of Standard Italian and dialects in Australia.
In Italy, Standard Italian "has been in existence for eight hundred years" (Hull; 1989, p.1) although it was not spoken by many people outside Tuscany and Rome until after Italy's unification, when it was spread throughout Italy as the language of the prestigious class of medieval poets and writers. Although its beginnings were in Tuscany and Rome, today's Standard Italian in Italy is the most prestigious variety of Italian, being that of Milan: the "economic capital of the country" (Hull; 1989, p.14). Hull continues in stating that it is this variety which is aspired to, rather than the Florentine or Roman Italian.

The term dialect is only one of many ways to describe the regional varieties of a language. They are also referred to as community languages as they are primarily spoken within small communities as opposed to whole countries. One of the most important factors determining the progression of dialects or community languages is society's perception of them. As Bettini described Standard Italian as being the language chosen in formal situations, dialects are often perceived therefore as the informal alternative and by extension the colloquial language used predominantly by those in lower social positions as they are seen as not well educated if they cannot speak fluently Standard Italian without their regional accent. These "high" and "low" social perceptions are embedded within our subconscious and are evident in most language
situations. In the English example, if a person speaking Her Majesty’s English were to converse with another speaking Cockney English, it is a trait of human nature that an assumption would be made. The assumption would be that the first speaker has a higher level of education than the second does, which is of course not necessarily accurate. These issues will be discussed further in Chapter Seven where society’s perception of Standard Italian, dialects and regional varieties are analysed in detail.

Hull describes in detail the origins of the dialects of Italy in stating that they belong to “one of three major Romance linguistic types: Italian proper, Sardinian, and Padanian” (1989; p. 5). The dialects of these three linguistic types represent the evolution of Vulgar Italian in particular regions, as illustrated below:
The above illustration outlines the relationship between the modern Romance languages (Hull; 1989, p.5).

The three main Romance languages existent in Italy, can be subdivided into many dialects and regional varieties; as has been effectively done by Hull (1989; p.6). Of Sardinian, there are two varieties: Logudorese, spoken in the centre and central north of the island; and Campadinese, spoken in the south. Of true Italian, there are four main groups: the North-Western group, which includes the language of Tuscany, as well as the Cismontane and Ultramontane varieties of Corsican; the Roman group, which includes Marchese, Umbrian and Latian; the Neapolitan group, including Abrutian, Campanian, North Calabrian, and Apulian; and the Neo-Italian group, which includes Salentine, South Calbrian and Sicilian.

Padanian can be divided into five main groups; being: the Ladin group, including Dolomitic, Engadinish and Rhenanian varieties; the Semi-Ladin group, including the Lepontian, Upper Adduan, Anaunian and Cadorine dialects; the Transpadane group, including West Lombard, East Lombard, Tridentine, and Plavian varieties; the Cispadane group, including Piedmontese, Emilian, Romagnol and Metauran dialects; and the Italo-Padanian group, including Ligurian, Venetian and Istrián (Hull; 1989, p.5).
In Australia the existence of another language form is accepted by few sociolinguists. This third form is seen by these sociolinguists crucial to understanding how language use has changed and continues to change in Australia. Since immigration to Australia, Italians have come from so many different regions, each of them speaking their own dialects with individual regional accents. As with any language, our environment alters our language as we learn to communicate to include our changing habitats. This altered language incorporates the Standard language as well as regional dialects and hence is recognised by some sociolinguists as a third variation. In Australia's case, this third variation is referred to as Australitalian and is defined by those who believe in its existence as a combination of Standard Italian and regional dialects and also incorporates English terms required when the interlocutor is referring to objects and concepts specific to our Australian environment.

Many researchers believe Australitalian does not exist but rather define it as another dialect. These sociolinguists see it as a dialect as it is a variation of Standard Italian, corresponding to the earlier definition of dialect. In my opinion, Australitalian does not exist as a language variety because as each dialect or regional variety has varieties within themselves, it would be impossible for two speakers to be conversing in exactly the same language, as they would be incorporating different linguistic styles and
structures into their language. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Eight.

After defining these terms and concepts, it is now possible to begin analysis of historical and recent events and practices in Australia, which have shaped these languages into the forms, as we know them today.
Chapter Two  

Italian Immigration to Australia

Since its beginning, Italy’s history has been filled with political turmoil. Governments have risen and fallen so often that it has become an international point of discussion. During times of high unemployment and war, the Italian people have ventured out into the world to make a better life for themselves and for their families. It is hard for most of us to conceive of the notion of leaving our families from as early as ten years of age and earlier to sail to countries which for some of them, only existed as a myth. And yet they left. Many Italians travelled within Europe, mostly to neighbouring France and Germany. Many went to the Americas which they had heard from others was filled with land and riches for all to share. A large proportion of immigrants came to Australia with the notion that it was another version of America. What most of them found was hardship, intolerance and prejudice.

Although Italian immigration to Australia has been relatively constant throughout Australia’s history, there are two main periods of growth of immigration which occurred around the periods of World War. Bettoni and Rubino describe Italy as the “terra di emigrazione” (meaning the “land of emigration”), because between 1876 and 1965, 25 million Italians emigrated from Italy in search of a better life (Bettoni and Rubino; 1996, p.6).
The first portion of Italians, the smaller number of immigrants compared to the second, came to Australia in the years before and immediately after the First World War. Between the years of 1926 and 1946, approximately 59,339 immigrants came to Australia from Italy (York; 1993, pp. 143-146). Along with many other Europeans, including a large number of French and German immigrants, they became known as pioneers of early Australia. Upon arrival, they found almost nothing, and together with hardworking Australians, many of them worked on roads and railways to make money for their families. The working conditions were poor, with many hours a day of work and very few hours of rest, yet for many the living conditions in this barren land were still better than what they would have had in rural Italy due to the damaging effects of poverty, depression and war.

The second wave of Italian immigrants to Australia, being the larger group, came in the years before, during and particularly after the Second World War. Some came alone and others with spouses, parents, children and relatives. From the 1986 census results, it is known that between 1947 and 1986, “more than three hundred thousand people had emigrated to Australia from Italy” (Cresciani; 1998, p.244).

The majority of Italian immigrants who have come to Australia were aged between 18 and 40 on arrival. These immigrants also generally came from
relatively low socio-economic areas. These immigrants became renowned for their hard work and selflessness when it came to employment and supporting their families. Upon arrival, they received little or no assistance from Australian Governments, and even less from Italian Governments. As they were aged between 18 and 40, these immigrants are the ones who have given the most to Australia at the least cost. Totaro describes how the Australian Governments gained the most from these newcomers as they "had not had to pay the cost of their education nor of their job skills training" which these immigrants received (if at all) in Italy before emigration "and yet [Australia] receives from them many years of productive work" (Totaro; 1982, p.111).

The fact that these Italians enjoyed little or no education and training has had its downfalls as well. Although the cost has been avoided of educating this population, the disadvantages include that many of these immigrants have remained illiterate and have not had the opportunities to formally learn the English language among other valuable information courses due to many factors including work and family commitments and restrictions. This is particularly a disadvantage for the Italian immigrants as they and their descendants are the second largest ethnic population in Australia after the Anglo-Celtic immigrant population; and therefore the largest population of a non-English speaking origin. For this reason, Australia now has the legacy of aged immigrants who are retired or close
to retirement age who continue speaking Italian or their regional dialect. The language uses of Italian immigrants and the effects on the progression of Standard Italian in Australia will be discussed further in Chapter Four. An important influence on the dispersion of the Italian language in Australia is how the Italian immigrant population itself has spread throughout Australia. Freddi describes this population as “povera e dialettofona”, meaning “poor and speaking dialect” (Freddi; 1988, p. 41).

These immigrants generally travelled to farmlands as well as main cities which explains why there are large Italo-Australian communities in almost all of Australia’s capital cities. The generality of the Italo-Australian community dispersion has had a large impact on the progression of Standard Italian, which will be discussed in detail.

The means of transport to Australia for the first wave of immigrants, and most of the second wave, was by ship and the main ports at which they embarked were Perth, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. It follows then, that the largest Italo-Australian communities today are found in these four capital cities (Cresciani; 1988, p.244). A large number are also found in Adelaide and Tasmania. Even the social trends of Italian immigrants has an effect on language promotion as there are many marriages within the Italian communities, and as they remain close to the first generation Italian immigrants, these communities grow each day and continue to speak Standard Italian, dialect or regional variety. With the continual growth of
population, these Italian communities become Italo-Australian communities as their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren being born in Australia enjoy their Australian lifestyles, which include their Italian heritage and tradition.

From this history, it is possible to define the Italian immigrant population as being in general from rural and agricultural areas, often illiterate and speaking only their regional dialect. Of course there were those who were professionals, although the majority were labourers and farmers who created small communities across Australia. Due to their tendency to stay together, these Italian communities grew constantly and closely with other Italian communities. All of these factors meant that initially the main language spoken within these communities was dialect. This was followed by the insertion of English into their language. The fact that these communities are so widespread across Australia has meant that Italian, whether it be the Standard, dialect or regional version, is widely spoken around the Australian continent.
Chapter Three  Australian Immigration Policies

As mentioned earlier, an important influence on the growth of Italo-Australian communities and the location of these communities was made by the decision of where to settle, often according to the port or airport from which their Australian lives began. Perhaps even more influential to the decision of where to settle, was the Australian Government Policy of the time. At different times throughout Australian history, Governments have changed Immigration policies according to what was most needed at the time and how the newcomers could be enticed to provide labour to achieve these goals. For example, at the time of the building of Australia's railroad tracks and bitumen roads, Australian Government Policy encouraged the working class labourers to immigrate from Italy and other nations to come to specific parts of Australia where their skills were needed. During the times of development in rural Queensland after World War II, men who were eager to work were made into sugar cane cutters. In return these workers received payment and were assisted in finding housing for their families.

Since 1788, Australian Governments have attempted to induce people to emigrate. Several agreements were made throughout Australia's history between Australia and other nations in order to entice these people to come, and to stay. In 1793, Australia's first group of eleven immigrants who
landed in Sydney, were free settlers, enticed by free passage; and “by 1830 free settlers comprised 18% of the 77,000 Europeans in New South Wales” (Australian Population and Immigration Council; 1977, p.22).

Assistance was offered again by the Australian Government between 1905 and 1914, where free or part-paid passages were granted and free land was offered. Due to the Depression, assisted arrivals were virtually non-existent between 1931 and 1937. In contrast to this uneventful period for immigration, during the years between 1947 and 1951 a total of 470,000 migrants (consisting of 310,000 assisted migrants and 160,000 unassisted migrants) arrived on Australian shores (Australian Population and Immigration Council; 1977, p.25). This assistance came through Government Policy when in 1947, Australia entered into an agreement with the Preparatory Commission for the International Refugee Organisation to accept “an annual quota of 12,000 displaced persons” (Australian Population and Immigration Council; 1977, p.25).

Again in 1951, the Australian Government signed the Assisted Migration Agreement with the Italian Government, which encouraged the migration of Italians to Australia: “In exchange for the heavily subsidized seafare (the immigrant had to contribute only ten pounds sterling), the newcomers were required to undertake that they would remain in Australia for at least two years after arrival” (Cresciani; 1988, p.244).
Although passage to Australia was financially assisted at certain periods in Australian history, once they arrived, most Italian men began to work. However the men were not the only ones who came to Australia to work hard. Whilst they were constructing railroads, or cutting cane, or laying bricks, or mixing cement, or cultivating the land, their women spent up to sixteen hours a day in factories eager to earn whatever they could. These humble jobs included folding handkerchiefs, packing foods, working sewing machines and so on. At any one time in Australia’s Immigration Policy, child care centres were not provided for these hardworking mothers and so they would keep their older generation at home (being usually the grandmothers and aunts) to look after the children until their mothers returned from the long shifts in the factories. These factories consisted of many diverse products, which meant that the women required at times specific skills. As training was too time consuming, they would often learn these skills on the job.

One of the most respected traits of these hardworking immigrants was their humility. Rare was the immigrant who would mind undertaking menial jobs and even more rare was the immigrant who complained about them. Most of these newcomers were so content to be working that they would take any position, which made them an ideal workforce. As stated in Chapter Two, first generation immigrants to Australia were not only ideal for Australian employers, but also for Australian Governments, as they
required little training, meaning few establishment costs and overheads. The Government, however, received from them an average of forty years in the workforce as well as bearing children who would become Australia's future workforce and as they were so hardworking, they ensured their children followed a good work ethic.

Throughout over two hundred years of Australian history, Australia's Immigration Policies have changed several times: ranging from one extreme of assimilationist White Australia Policy, to the other extreme of open Multiculturalism. Each of these periods in Australia's history has had a remarkable influence on the acceptance of Italian Immigrants by the Australian population and by extension the popularity of Italian language study.

During both the first and second wave of Italian immigration to Australia, the Government Policy of their new nation was one of complete Assimilation. Bettoni and Di Biase quote Billy Snedden, the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs during the fifties and sixties, when he states that Australia must have "only one culture... we do not want pluralism" (Bettoni, Di Biase; 1988, p.316). From this it is obvious that if the Australian Minister at the time encouraged new Australians to immerse themselves into Australian culture and lifestyle then it follows that the same encouragement would have taken place regarding the English language.
The problem during this period of Australian history is not that English was encouraged, but rather community languages (including of course Italian and its varieties) were discouraged.

As soon as they disembarked from the ships on which they travelled for up to sixty days to Australia, Italian immigrants were strongly encouraged to learn English and ensure their children learned their new national language as well. Complete immersion and assimilation was the Government Policy and for many of these immigrants, this Policy has meant their grandchildren today do not speak Italian at all.

Education was a luxury many first generation Immigrants did not enjoy and because of this, many found it quite difficult to learn English, being a language so different from Italian (or the dialect or regional variety of Italian they knew). Although they may not have received a good education, most first generation immigrants ensured their children were not hindered by lack of education as they enrolled them in schools across Australia. It is this second generation that in my opinion has paved the way for growth in Italian language study in Australia.

Surprisingly the majority of second generation Italo-Australians (and I move to this term due to the fact that many of this second generation came to Australia at such an early age that they are considered Australians) did
not learn Italian at school. This happened for several reasons. One reason was Australia’s slowly changing Government Policies and attitudes in general towards second language acquisition, and another, in many ways linked to the first, was lack of foreign language teaching facilities in Australian schools. These reasons are linked because until the Australian Government opinion towards Immigration and the benefits of second language acquisition improved through its Policies, little Government funding was allocated to schools, organisations and associations specifically aimed at language learning facilities. Due to the lack of these facilities in the Australian school system, many students of Italian turned to Associations and Organisations such as Com.It.Es and Co.As.It. who are now assisted by the Italian and Australian Governments with the specific aim of encouraging Italian language and culture education across Australia. These associations are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

In 1987, the Prime Minister at the time, Bob Hawke, announced an official Government Policy to all Australians specifically named: the “National Plan for a Multicultural Australia”. Moreno and Nardi-Ford discuss Mr. Hawke’s pledge to multiculturalism where he states that the “National Plan for a Multicultural Australia is aimed towards a future in which all Australians, without distinction of origin, are able to participate in all aspects of the nation’s life; a future in which all of the community’s
resources are accessible to all" without fear of any person suffering from any form of discrimination or prejudice (Moreno & Nardi-Ford; 1992, p.11).

From the point of view of the second generation Italo-Australians, this new official Policy was difficult to adapt to because their parents had encouraged them so strongly in the past to learn English and not necessarily Standard Italian, so they would not suffer the same prejudice suffered by their parents, that to find themselves in the eighties with children of their own who are now supposed to be encouraged to learn Italian was very strange.

For this reason, in so many Italo-Australian family environments across Australia, there exist first generation Italians who speak dialects and little English, second generation Italo-Australians who speak predominantly English as well as dialects learned at home, and third generation Italo-Australians who speak English, a little dialect and are now encouraged to learn Standard Italian. This transition through the generations from monolingual to bilingual to trilingual Australians will be discussed in further detail, however what is relevant to this discussion is that this trend towards second language study is directly linked to Australian Government Policy.
Chapter Four

Italian Language Teaching Methods

"L'Australia condivide con altri paesi di lingua inglese l'illusione di credere che possedendo la lingua internazionale più diffusa non ci sia alcun bisogno di impararne altre"

"As do other English-speaking nations, Australia believes in the illusion that in possessing the language used the most internationally, there is no need to learn others"

(Bettoni & Di Biase 1988; p.316)

For most of Australia's history, this statement has been very true. The Eighties saw a gradual shift in this opinion, but it was not until the end of that decade that the perception of second language acquisition was officially changed. After Bob Hawke's announcement of Australia's official position of Multiculturalist society (see Chapter Three), the Australian Government Publishing Service released Lo Bianco's National Policy on Languages in which Australian Policy was defined in detail.

The maintenance of the Standard Italian language, which by the Eighties became for some the re-acquisition of Italian, was discussed in detail by Lo Bianco as he describes children of Italo-Australians as having an active
or a passive capacity in Standard Italian. For Italo-Australian children whose knowledge of Italian is passive (meaning they understand Italian but do not necessarily speak it) additional learning may be required rather than refinement of their language skills as would be the case for children with an active capacity (Lo Bianco; 1987, p.121).

The advantages to these children of learning Standard Italian are many and varied. They include benefits of a: linguistic, cognitive, psychological, socio-psychological, vocational and economic nature (Lo Bianco; 1987, p.121). These expand to represent benefits such as high levels of bilingualism which assist not only in vocational pursuits but even in understanding the differences between the Italian and English languages, which by extension assist in the comprehension of Italian and Australian cultures. In general, the more we understand about different cultures, the easier it is to make relationships between our own and other cultures. Lo Bianco describes bilingualism as being "educationally, culturally and intellectually enriching" (1987; p.124).

Although the Italo-Australian community is the largest non-Anglo-Saxon community (according to the 1986 Australian Census), French, German and Latin languages were the official languages included in the Australian Secondary school curriculum until the mid-Seventies (Moreno & Nardi-
Ford; 1992, p.94). Before this time, very few schools taught Italian, as they did not receive adequate funds to do so. The schools that did teach Italian were generally Independent Schools or Catholic Schools.

Roberts describes the Australian school system as an "assimilationist agency" as they make "no allowance for cultural differences among the children and effectively reinforce the natural conformist tendencies among the young" (1972, p.51). Roberts states this due to the way in which most schools in Australia do not embrace cultural difference but rather condemn it. The way in which schools do this is through the selection for stream placement program. This is done within the first week after enrollment, which is "a time when a migrant child is particularly vulnerable, disoriented and intimidated by the new and foreign environment" (Roberts; 1972, p.53).

A significant problem of the Australian School system in relation to second language acquisition is the problem of a decentralised education system (Bettoni & Di Biase; 1988, p.317). In other words, each Australian State or Territory has varying systems of education that work independently of each other. Within these States or Territories, there are also several types of schools available, including private, religious and state schools (or public). Although English, Mathematics and Science subjects are compulsory to a certain degree, no other subject is obligatory in each of these types of
schools and so there exist differences between the levels of education of the schools.

The religious schools tend to place more emphasis naturally on religion than most private or public schools. The main distinction between private and public schools today is that most private schools enjoy better equipment and facilities as they often receive substantial funding from Parents and Associates of their students. The level of education however rarely differs between private and public schools as Government funding and information is equally accessible to all Teachers and Educators.

At primary and secondary school level, the proficiency of Italian is relatively high. Emphasis is placed on grammatical structures and linguistic capacity, which is extended at university level. At University level, the main objectives for Italian acquisition include high proficiency at a linguistic capacity but even more so at an academic and vocational level (Bettoni in Moreno & Nardi-Ford; 1992, p.58). Here emphasis is placed on Italian Cultural History, as well as Language and Literature studies. It is relevant to note however that out of 36 Australian Universities, of which 26 offer Italian Language Courses, only 4 have an independent Italian department; being the University of Sydney; La Trobe University; Flinders University and the University of Western Australia (Moreno & Nardi-Ford; 1992, p.58). The course structures offered by Universities, although varied, are in need of
constant improvement so as to be more specific in nature. For example, in New South Wales, only one University offers a course specifically aimed at Language Acquisition with the objective of achieving Interpreting and Translation qualifications being the University of Western Sydney. Considering that 36 Universities offer languages other than English, should it not follow that Universities extend the skills of their students for future vocational benefits? In my opinion, they should.

Australian Schools and Universities are changing day by day. In the last three decades Australia has seen an incredible increase in the study of Standard Italian. This is due not only to the success in more recent years of excellent school and university language acquisition facilities, which have become more easily accessible to more and more students, but also to the existence of many Italo-Australian organisations and associations who have supported the progression of the Italian language by assisting teachers and institutions in updating their resources and facilities.
Chapter Five

Italian Organisations & Associations

List of Organisations and Associations referred to in this Chapter:

* C.I.A.C. Comitato Italiano Assistenza Canberra
  (Italian Assistance Committee Canberra)

* Co.As.It. Comitato Assistenza Italiano
  (Italian Assistance Committee)

* Com.It.Es. Comitato Italiani all'Estero
  (Italian Committee to Overseas)

* F.I.L.E.F. Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Emigrati e Famiglie
  (Italian Federation of Emigrated Workers and Families)

* I.I.C. Istituto Italiano di Cultura
  (Italian Institute of Culture)

* I.L.T.A. Italian Language Teachers' Association

Perhaps the most influential characteristic affecting the existence of a Standard Italian language in Australia and its progression is the existence of Italian organisations and associations in Australia. Throughout Australia, there are many organisations and associations whose main objectives include the diffusion of the Italian language as well as encouraging the understanding of Italian culture and heritage in Australia and Italy. Of all these organisations and associations, only a few will be analysed, which are in my opinion perhaps the most effective in Australia.
The concept of safeguarding and maintaining Italian language and culture abroad dates back to the period of Italian political unity, in the early 1860's. In June and July 1888, several Italian representatives of all areas of thought joined together to create the foundation of the Società Nazionale Dante Alighieri (National Dante Alighieri Society), and by 1891 there were more than 40 committees throughout Italy (Mayne; 1997, pp. 11-12).

Pasquale Corte, the Consul General of Italy for Australia, founded the first Dante Alighieri branch in Australia in 1896 in Melbourne. Through 103 years of service, the Dante Alighieri Society in Melbourne has not only extended itself to Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth, but it has continued to uphold its aims as outlined in Article 1 of its Constitution being: "to protect and to promote the Italian language and culture in the world, while upholding the sense of Italianità; reviving the spiritual ties of Italians in foreign countries with the motherland and developing among foreigners love and respect towards Italian civilisation" (Mayne; 1997, p.17). The Dante Alighieri Society originally began in Australia by teaching Italian language and culture to adults. In recent years however, the Society has also included assistance to various school programs in its objectives.
Frederick May Foundation

In 1976, the Frederick May Foundation for Italian Studies was formed after the death of Professor Frederick May of the University of Sydney. Professor May primarily promoted the “diffusion of <Italianistic> studies in Australia on an interdisciplinary basis” (Angeletti, in Angeli; 1987, p.7) and this became the specific objective of the Foundation.

Perhaps the Foundation’s most recognised achievements have been the organisation of the three Australian Conferences on Italian Culture and Italy Today, held in 1978, 1980 and 1982. These international Conferences were aimed at encouraging the image of Italy in Australia by informing the conference members on current Italian practices and structures (Angeletti, in Angeli; 1987, p.7).
Centro Didattico Italiano

Each State has its own Centro Didattico which not only gives assistance to the promotion of the Italian language by providing Italian evening classes, but also assists teachers in each state by providing them constantly with relevant information to keep them up to date with language shifts and changes in Italy and in Australia (Moreno & Nardi-Ford; 1992, p.141). These centres also organise exchange programs between Italian and Australian schools.
C.I.A.C.

Comitato Italiano di Assistenza Canberra

The Italian Assistance Committee in Canberra plays a very important role as it not only assists in Italian language teaching and learning needs of the Australian Capital Territory, but also receives all Italian students who arrive in Australia’s Capital City. One of the duties of the C.I.A.C. is to liaise between the Italian Ambassador to Australia positioned in Canberra, and the Italian Consulate Offices in each Australian State. It is a point of reference for each of the State offices.

Within C.I.A.C. there is a specific committee occupying itself solely with education assistance, which began in 1969. This sub-committee initially was concerned with after school Italian classes and Saturday schools and then in 1982 began including assistance within school hours (Moreno & Nardi-Ford; 1992, p.147).
Comitato Scuola della F.I.L.E.F.

One of the main objectives of F.I.L.E.F. is to maintain the quality of assistance received in Australia from the Italian Government, and research the Italo-Australian language and culture situation so as to advise on how best this Italian Government assistance can be distributed. At the Convention organised by the Italian Ambassador to Australia in 1991, Nina Rubino represented the F.I.L.E.F. school committee where she described how according to F.I.L.E.F. the assistance would be most beneficial to developing the "linguistic resources of young Italo-Australians" with the aim of encouraging bilingualism and cultural links between the first and second generation Italo-Australians and Italy. (Moreno & Nardi-Ford; 1992, p. 126).

F.I.L.E.F. has several methods of achieving this objective, one of which is researching the needs of students in State Schools across Australia and fulfilling these needs. In particular, by assisting Italian teachers across the nation in their linguistic preparation. F.I.L.E.F. does not concentrate on only one level of education but all levels being primary, secondary and tertiary education.
Co.As.It.
Comitato Assistenza Italiano

There are many aspects where the objectives of Co.As.It. organisations and F.I.L.E.F. overlap as they too direct most of their efforts towards the encouragement of Italian language study in schools across Australia. The head of the Sydney branch of Co.As.It., Giuseppe Fin, described at the Convention that Co.As.It. specialises in the quality of Italian education in primary and secondary schools (Moreno & Nardi-Ford; 1992, p.130); and how the perception of the Italian language at school level (unlike at University level) has altered because of the Australian Government Policy to encourage the study of language of Australia's closest neighbours being Japan, Indonesia and Malaysia.
Istituti Italiani di Cultura

Sydney and Melbourne have an Italian Institute of Culture and its title emphasises perhaps what differentiates these institutes from other existing organisations and associations in that its main objective is not only to promote Italian language study but in fact to promote the understanding of Italian culture to students of Italian. Carlo Coen represented Melbourne’s Italian Institute of Culture at the Convention where he outlined that according to the Institutes, encouraging the study of Italian culture is essential not only to the learning of the language but to the promotion of continuing relationships between Australia and Italy. The reason for this is that the better the understanding of Italian culture the easier it is to continue the relationship between the nations.

* * * * * *

In many ways, these “comitati di assistenza scolastica” overlap in their objectives and methods. Perhaps if they were to centralise their efforts, these organisations would be even more effective as there would be only one association to which the Italian and Australian Governments would direct their assistance. Without these associations, however, the progression of Italian Language study would most definitely not have been as successful as it has been over the last century.
Chapter Six  

Italian Language Situation in Italy

Whether or not Italian dialects are disappearing is one of the most important discussions which reoccurs among Italian sociolinguists. Some claim that dialects will inevitably disappear taking with them a great deal of tradition and culture. Others insist that rather than disappear altogether, they are being Italianised, leading to a more widely spread use of Italiano regionale. In my opinion, the relationship between Italian and the great variety of dialects is one which has lead to an almost obliteration of dialect in favour of either Standard Italian or English.

This relationship between Standard Italian and its dialects reflects the changes in tradition and culture which have occurred in Italy throughout its history as a unified country. Linguistically, Italy is in many ways not unified. Over a century after its political unification, the continuing strength of Standard Italian and its dialects has meant that the country can be defined as having a bilingual population. Francescato defines bilingualism as being “la capacità, da parte di uno stesso parlante, di servirsi di due lingue con uguale spontaneità e scorrevolezza”, which when translated means “the capacity one person has in using two different languages with equal spontaneity and fluency” (Francescato; 1986, p.203). Where one
dialect was used in almost all situations, a more Italianised version of dialect has become more and more widely used. Berruto describes the *dialetto italianizzato* as being defined "in baso alla ricorrenza in esso non solo di prestiti lessicali, dalla lingua nazionale, ma anche di tratti morfosintattici ed eventualmente fonologici derivati dal contatto...con l'italiano" which means that traditional speakers of dialect have not only borrowed from Standard Italian lexical forms, but also morphosyntactic and phonetic traits deriving from contact with Standard Italian (Berruto; 1993, p.27).

One of the first events assisting the process of transferal from dialect to Standard Italian was political unity. After unification in 1861, the Italian Government chose to encourage a language which could be understood by the majority of the population, being Standard Italian. In this period, Ferguson's concept of diglossia was in practice, in that the use of one language as a formal register "varietà alta" and another as an informal register "varietà bassa" became evident (Ferguson; in Francescato; 1986, p.204).

The immense numbers of people who emigrated from Italy, particularly between 1870 and early 1900's, meant that those left behind (including families of these emigrants) received money from abroad with strict
instructions that educating the family was first priority to create better opportunities for future prosperity. So as many Italians, both rich and poor, were until now illiterate and this push for education meant that schools were now forced to use in all schools a unified language accepted nationally as Standard Italian.

Not only was external emigration an important factor in the regression of the use of dialects in Italy, also during this period were internal migration and “l’urbanismo”. Altieri Biagi describes these movements as “grandi spostamenti di masse dalla campagna alla città, dalle regioni più povere, a economia esclusivamente agricola e pastorale, a regioni in via di rapida industrializzazione” which translates as “great movements of people en masse from the country to the city; from regions whose economies were agriculturally based to the regions in the process of rapid industrialisation (Altieri Biagi; 1985, p.116). This process of industrialisation also affected the use of dialects, as they could no longer be used in all arenas. Most dialects did not contain the vocabulary necessary for discussion concerning industrialisation and so words and phrases were borrowed from Standard Italian: the regional structures and phonetics remained and a more regional Italian was used (defined by Bruni as “Italian coloured by dialect”; 1984). In most instances today, however, this regional Italian has been almost completely phased out as Standard Italian has taken its place.
Perhaps the most important factor which affected and continues to affect the diffusion of Standard Italian in Italy was the emergence of journalism and media in the early decades of the twentieth century. Newspapers reached everyone, and in order to be accessible by the majority, Standard Italian was used. From 1924 radio transmissions across Italy made the diffusion of the Standard Italian accent possible and from 1954 television projected Standard Italian to all who could afford the medium.

By the 1960’s, from the population who was once characterised almost completely as dialectophone, over 20% were habitually using Standard Italian as everyday means of communication. In 1974, the Institute of demoscopic and statistical surveys, DOXA, conducted an important survey concerning the use of Standard Italian and its dialects in various situations. The results showed that 51.3% of Italians continued to use dialect in the home and in informal situations whereas 25% claimed to use Standard Italian in all situations. The strength of dialects is recognised but by 1982 less than half the Italian population chose their regional dialect, or Italianised version of it, over the Standard language (Coveri; 1986, p.199-200). According to Coveri, dialects are destined to disappear (1986; p.198). Again in 1988 and in 1993 DOXA repeated its surveys and results have shown that dialects are in fact disappearing in Italy as Italians choose to use them less each day, in both family situations as in outside the home (Vignuzzi; 1988, p.241).
In contrast, there exists among sociolinguists, the opinion that dialects are not disappearing at all, but rather reemerging. Francescato introduces the idea that "il dialetto si trasfigura" (1986; p.207). He states that the rising popularity of bilingualism has meant that they are not dying, nor are they strengthening, but rather are undergoing transformation into what may be considered a convergence of Standard Italian and its various dialects. With the older generation as supporters and main users of dialect, the fact that they will one day pass on may mean that the original, traditionally rich and cultured dialects may disappear but ironically it is mainly the adolescent generation in Italy which is reintroducing dialectal phrases as a stylistic change from the norm.

Grassi condemns the concept of a total convergence of Standard Italian and its dialects claiming that it will eventually influence the dialects through Italianisation to such an extent that the variations will hardly seem evident (Grassi; 1993, p.307). Sobrero, on the other hand, emphasises the fact that dialects, with time, are losing the local characteristics which differentiate between them and are becoming enriched by so many forms of Standard Italian that the two forms that were once so clearly separated are slowly (but surely) converging (Sobrero; 1986, p.196).
Just as the unification of Italy assisted the progression of Standard Italian, the unification of Europe has meant that now many separate countries each with a national language are creating relationships for the future. As its monetary system has already begun to converge, to become the Euro, many sociolinguists ponder the concept of one language to bind Europeans as well. As the majority of nations outside this European Economic Community are nations whose national language is English, the notion of the English language becoming more widespread in Europe is speculated. In Italy, as in many other European nations, the influence of American film and music industries has meant that English vocabulary and phrasing are already commonplace. While I fumbled over vocabulary in a conversation with an Italian sociolinguist, attempting to describe how a person we were discussing was a "bambinaia", he promptly corrected me stating that this term was not really used nowadays as it has been replaced by the English term (with Italian accent) "Babysitter".

However unfortunate it is that Italy seems to be losing its colourful and historical dialects, the new reality is that now English is making its way through the Standard Italian language. Although it is difficult to believe that Standard Italian will ever die, trends show that English is sneaking its way through Italian vocabulary in an attempt to pave the way for international understanding and communication.
Chapter Seven

Standard Italian vs. Dialect

"Italian is the official language of communication used in the national and international arenas, the language of industry and commerce, of government administration and of education. It is used above all in written communication and spoken in formal contexts whereas dialects are local idioms, common to a particular district or province, used within the family, amongst friends and people from the same area, to make jokes, have arguments and talk about everyday matters" (Bettoni; 1985, p.1).

There are many points of discussion regarding the relationships between Standard Italian and dialects of Italian, as well as innumerable advantages of obtaining fluency in each form. As discussed earlier, the Italo-Australian community is the largest non-Anglo-Saxon community in Australia. This means that it is the largest minority group with the potential for the most bilingual members. Knowledge of Italian whether it be Standard or dialect is encouraged among the Italo-Australian community with the aim of achieving the advantages of a bilingual population.

Pascoe discusses in his research, the increase in trade between Australia and Italy, particularly since the first and second waves of Italian Immigration to Australia (1987, p.92). This occurred because those who
migrated not only began encouraging imported goods from Italy for themselves, but also successfully promoted them among the Australian population. Along with new products, foods and clothing, Australian people also became better informed about, and attracted to, Italian culture and traditions. These are all factors which contribute to the increase in the study of the Standard Italian language in Australia.

In Australia, however, there exists as in Italy, the Standard form of Italian as well as the dialect varieties of Italian. Bettoni discusses how these language varieties differ from one another in terms of “different phonology, a different morphology, a different syntax, a different lexicon and different discourse-related rules” (1990, p.5). Bettoni continues by describing how unlike English dialects where the main differences are social differences illustrated by accents, in Italy dialects are “language systems altogether separate from the Italian language” (1990, p.6). Having outlined this difference, it is important to note, that in both Italy and Australia, dialects are perceived as having a “social standing subordinate to the language” (Bettoni; 1990, p.7).

This notion of how language varieties are perceived is of particular importance to our discussion of differences between Standard Italian and dialects because often it is how they are perceived which decides how
they proceed in society; how they are taught and how the people who speak them are accepted. Language varieties are differentiated by many factors including their strength in associating themselves with prestige, power, wealth, education, age and formality. If a language is seen as more prestigious or powerful, for example, than another language variety, then the first is perceived as socially more acceptable or "higher" than the second. In this way we can define languages as High or Low varieties and within these divisions exist subdivisions of High and Low varieties of the varieties. Figures One and Two below attempt to illustrate, based on Bettoni's model (1990, p.13) these divisions and subdivisions, taking into account the change from Italy's language situation to Australia's language reality where two diglossic situations confront each other simultaneously:

Figure One - Italy's diglossic language situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>Standard Italian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Italian Dialects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure Two - Australia's Language Reality where two Diglossic situations confront each other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Standard Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italian Dialects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Low varieties, Standard Italian and Dialects as community languages are found. In this Chapter, these are the two languages to be analysed in terms of how they are perceived and how they are taught. As discussed in previous chapters, the classes of immigrants, in the first and second waves of Immigration from Italy to Australia, were of rural and generally low economic origin. The majority of these were only partially bilingual as their mother tongue was their regional dialect and the High language to which they aspired but spoke in a limited capacity was Standard Italian.

The advantages of fluency in dialect include benefits such as regional identity, informality in the home and with others of the same social and
regional classes. As many of them were illiterate or uneducated their grammatical structures were not perfect and so communicating in dialect often allowed them to identify with one another through their dialects. This characteristic has overflowed into Australia where second and third generations of Italo-Australians, not necessarily fluent in Standard Italian, recognise the bonds between themselves, their parents and other Italo-Australians through dialect. Although this sense of identification is strong among the community, Bettoni and Rubino (1991) researched the language situation in Australia and found that dialect was slowly disappearing, being overtaken by Standard Italian and even more so by English. This is seen among Italo-Australian communities when younger generations are addressed by parents in dialect however choose to answer in English (Bettoni; 1990, p.16).

The study of Standard Italian on the other hand is becoming increasingly popular in Australia, and not only within Italo-Australian communities. A reason for this is, as discussed earlier, is the important relationship in economics and trade between Italy and Australia. Several studies have shown that there is a language shift in Australia from dialect to Standard Italian and then to English. The first shift to Standard Italian is most commonly due to the fact that there are so many different regional dialects in Australia that in Italo-Australian communities existing of speakers of a number of different dialects, it has often been necessary to
revert to Standard Italian in order to communicate successfully. This use of Standard Italian has led to a form of unification among Italo-Australian communities who have chosen to stay together as Bettoni and Rubino’s survey illustrates in finding that 96% of first generation and 74% of second generation speakers claimed that most of their closest friends were also Italo-Australians. This shows that even if their use of dialect is diminishing, they are often around other Italo-Australians with whom they speak Standard Italian (Bettoni & Rubino; 1991).

The second process of language shift in Australia, however, incorporates the influence of English on the Italian language varieties. As Italo-Australians experience situations in Australia that are different from those in Italy, their Italian vocabulary may be limited. To overcome these limitations, these community members are forced to include terms and phrases in English which cannot be expressed in Standard Italian or dialect; or simply are more effectively expressed in English.

The multicultural political stance of Australian Government has also meant that the study of community languages has been encouraged. As culturally rich dialects may be, it is evident that they are disappearing in Italy and that as initial shift to Standard Italian in Australia has taken place. In my opinion, this can only be beneficial to our Italo-Australian
communities because although the heritage of traditional dialects is unfortunate to let slip away, the advantages of a unifying Standard language equally accessible to all students regardless of origin, sex, age and social class positively outweigh the advantages of maintaining regional variations.
Chapter Eight  "Australitiano"

The use of Italian dialects in Australia is regressing, as several studies illustrate, as the first immigrants from Italy to Australia become older and the traditional bilingualism of their children becomes weaker. Most of these immigrants were ambitious and hard working and because they themselves tended to be from poor, rural working-class origins, they understood and instigated to their children the importance of education. Having originated from these rural classes meant that for most first generation immigrants, an Italian dialect was their first language. Bettoni describes these immigrants as "monolingual speakers of dialect, some were bilingual speakers of dialect and popular Italian, very few indeed were bilingual speakers of dialect and standard Italian, and even fewer were monolingual speakers of standard Italian" (Bettoni, in Angeli; 1987, p.103).

On the socio-demographic point of view, italo-Australians have tended to have concentrated themselves in suburbs and areas where other italo-Australians lived. There was a very high rate of endogamy (where italo-Australians marry other italo-Australians) and this furthered the use of dialects and Standard Italian within Australia, as they would speak the language at home and with parents, children and friends. Although upon
arrival in Australia for first wave immigrants, the Government Policy was openly one of Assimilation, it seemed to have the reverse effect on the Italo-Australians as they held on to their languages and traditions.

As seen throughout human history, all human beings adapt to their environment. Just as in Italy, Italians seem to have transferred from dialects to Standard Italian, in Australia Italo-Australians seem to have transferred from dialects to English; however some sociolinguists, including Leoni believe that a transitional language between dialect and English exists and is sometimes known as “Australitaliano”. This transitional language has not been widely accepted in the sociolinguistic world as there is no linguistic basis for such an assumption. Andreoni describes it clearly as being a language developed to meet the linguistic needs of Italo-Australians in a new environment (in Leoni; 1981, p.x). Leoni defines Australitalian as being "representative of two cultures, a product of a fruitful linguistic encounter, which far from favouring one language to the exclusion of the other, rather fuses them into what one hopes is a positive expression of [Italo-Australian] culture" (1981, p.xxii).

Sociolinguists who follow this theory believe that with this phenomenon came the practice of Bettoni’s theory that different variations of language belonged to a certain scale within most Italo-Australians. Within these divisions were subdivisions which are accepted as reflective of Italo-
Australian linguistic tendencies: the “varietà alta” consisted of the formal English language; while the “varietà bassa” was subdivided into the more prestigious popular Italian and the less prestigious Italian dialect (Bettoni; 1993, p.416).

The change in linguistic systems is relatively great between first and second generation Italo-Australians. The second generation tends to have dialect as their first language until their schooling begins. Upon arrival at school, not only do most second generation Italo-Australians need to accustom themselves to new social environments, they are also forced to learn English almost immediately. More and more, however, the move to English and away from traditional language means that the use of these languages will regress completely with time.

In 1991, Bettoni and Rubino researched the patterns of language used in the Italo-Australian community in Sydney, taking into account the three major forms of language use (being Standard Italian, Dialect and English). The results showed that a shift to English is occurring. The shift started with the first generation and increased dramatically among second generation speakers. The survey also found that the use of English depends more on age and generation of the speakers and addressees rather than on the topic or place of conversation.
Rubino and Bettoni’s survey showed that 16% of first generation Italo-Australians used English in both formal and informal situations but by the second generation, 67% of the community chose English in all situations. This huge difference is reflective of the trend to be accepted in the future. The reasons for the choice of English depended on various aspects such as age and generation, situation, topic of conversation and regional origin of the speakers and addressees. The results showed that English is used less when talking to a first generation person (older) and more when talking to a second generation speaker (younger). This illustrates that linguistically as the older generations pass on, dialects and regional varieties (which are incorrectly labelled as AustraliItalian) will no longer be used in Australia but that the constant move towards total use of English is inevitable.
Chapter Nine

Conclusion

The Italian language spoken in Australia has been given many names. Andreoni calls it "Australitaliano" created from the combination of "Australian" and "Italian" (1981; p.xii). Carsaniga condemns the generalisation of the many combinations existent in Australia as "Italian" stating that "qualsiasi lingua diversa dalla lingua di maggioranza parlata da persone di origine italiana è comunemente classificata come italiano" (1988; p.138); which back translates to: "any language different from the language spoken by the majority of people of Italian origin is generally classified as Italian". These different languages to which Carsaniga refers are of course the many dialects spoken within Australia. Carsaniga continues in stating that Italian Immigrants in Australia may be described as "trilingual" (p.139) in that they speak three distinctly separate languages: being English, Italian and dialect.

Australian Immigration Policy has largely dictated the trend and methods of teaching and learning Italian in Australia. The great influx of immigrants in the fifties and sixties introduced a vast number of non-English speaking people into a society of close to zero-tolerance immigration policy. Assimilation was the key word to the policy and all immigrants were encouraged to leave their country, culture and subsequently their
language behind. Bettoni quotes Billy Snedden, the Minister for Education and Ethnic Affairs of the time, when he states that Australia must have “un’unica cultura” (1989; p.316). The classes of Immigrants, however, were not very well educated. They arrived with little more than a primary school achievement and so to learn English was very difficulty indeed. Some succeeded although the majority continued speaking their dialects, encouraging their children to learn the dialect as well.

Over the last century, Australia has moved from an assimilationary society to a policultural society to a multicultural society. As outlined by Bettoni and Di Biase (1989), the National Policy on Languages, as published by the Australian Government Publishing Service in 1987, guaranteed to all foreign language speakers: “a) il mantenimento e potenziamento di tutte le lingue comunitarie; b) ampi servizi di assistenza interpretario e traduzione nelle lingue comunitarie; c) la possibilità di imparare le lingue comunitarie” (p.316). From this point in Australian history, learning a foreign language has been encouraged, particularly in a conversational capacity, throughout schools, universities and associations. The choice of where to study Standard Italian often depended throughout recent decades, on the reason for learning the language.
At most schools, Standard Italian is taught for the purpose of travel and communication, and emphasis is placed on basic grammatical structures along with commonly used conversational expressions. At University, the emphasis is evenly spread between grammar (more complex structures are taught), literature, history and cultural studies. The reason for study, mentioned earlier, is particularly relevant as it is directly linked with the discussion of whether or not a Standard Italian exists or not.

The majority of immigrants from Italy to Australia consisted of the lower class farmers and labourers travelling to Australia in search of a better life for themselves and their children. Freddi (1990) describes them as “povera e dialettofona” meaning “poor and speaking dialect” (p.41) and continues to explain that because they themselves were often not educated, they could not speak grammatically perfect Italian; and so, in travelling to Australia, they continued to speak with their wives and children in a dialect which eventually included English terms as they began to learn the language of their new nation. This causes a large problem in the discussion of a Standard Italian as the immigrants’ children, now raised in an English speaking nation are taught the dialect of their parents and then are placed in the position when learning Standard Italian at school, that the language they think they speak perfectly is not Italian but a version of it. One may even venture to suggest that the
dialect spoken by the children of Italian Immigrants in Australia is not even the dialect but an altered version of it.

These children of Italian Immigrants grew up learning their version of their parents’ dialects and were often ridiculed for it as Andreoni explains: these speakers were "ridiculed first for their accent...then they were criticised because they Italianize English words" (1981; p.x). This criticism is one of the reasons for which the students of Italian in Australia are often not people of Italian origin because “children of these families, who are ridiculed..., return home full of bitterness and resentment towards their parents because they have taught them a 'pseudo-language'" (Andreoni; 1981, p.x). According to Andreoni, this often leads to these children refusing to speak their dialect at home and Italian at school.

Australitalian is often mistaken for a combination of Italian and English spoken by those who are poorly educated. In my opinion, although dialects or regional varieties in Australia are affected by surrounding influences, they are simply evolving, they are not transforming into a new "language" as Australitalian is often described. That is, if one considers the English language, it would be evident that the many ways it has changed
over the last fifty years, reflect social, financial and educational influences. It follows then, that the Italian language existent in Australia, its dialects and regional varieties, are going to be influenced by the social, financial and educational influences of the host nation: English.

Australians look more each day to Europe for examples. As described earlier, Australian society has moved from policultural to multicultural. Freddi (1990) outlines the difference between the two types of Immigration Policy in saying that a policultural society instigates the “frazionamento della comunità italiana” (p.42) meaning that each individual cultural denomination lived separately in one nation. Multiculturalism on the other hand, is the “integrazione nella diversità” (p.42) meaning an integrated society of diverse denominations. In other words, a multicultural society is one in which numerous minority groups live in harmony with one another, accepting each other’s different cultures; and not hindered by other traditions and beliefs when practicing their own.

Australia’s move towards a multicultural society has been influenced by many decisions. In particular, the changing face of information and technology distribution in Australia. Bettoni and Di Biase describe the

This back-translates as: “the nineties represent a paradox for Australia: a world always more complex and interdependent, linked to high technology which integrates international markets, and requests exchanges – human, commercial and cultural”. Hence, despite where the past has taken the Italian language, today the world is demanding international links, common goals, international markets, not only at economic levels but also at social and cultural levels as well. The influences, which alter a language and thus dictate which language should be taught and how this educational information should be distributed are currently not encouraging a unification of sorts, but rather an acceptance of cultural and regional differences. The proximity of our neighbouring countries is closing everyday, meaning that international communication is no longer a concept of the distant future.

This discussion may then be linked to Italo-Australian communities in that if Standard Italian becomes the only language in Italy, it is necessary that if second language acquisition were encouraged in Australia, parents
should encourage the learning of their Standard language and not their regional dialect. Despite the cultural and historical benefits of continuing the diverse variations of Italian, it is inevitable that they will not proceed forever in Australia as the first generation immigrants who speak them are gradually aging. As this generation grow older, the younger ones must be encouraged to speak the language used in Italy, being a Standard Italian so that the economic, social and cultural links being made between Australia and Italy can continue into the next century.

The language situation in Australia is unique and incomparable to any other throughout the world. It is amazing how so many different varieties within varieties of language can co-exist in one nation. How languages are used effectively is of particular importance as it reflects the substance of which a nation’s population is made. The Australian population as a whole successfully communicates in thousands of languages everyday which illustrates how effective the multiculturalist political stance of the Australian Governments is.

Within this effective whole, exist the Italo-Australian communities whose hard work and ambition have assisted the nation’s fabrication. It has been shown throughout these chapters, that many sociolinguists have varied
opinions regarding the language situation in Australia and how they should be taught within the minority community. As Italo-Australian communities continue to grow, there is an evident language shift from regional dialect to Standard Italian due mainly to the vast number of dialects that exist within these communities. This is seen by some sociolinguists as beneficial as a Standard language not only unifies a community but also allows universal comprehension of media, cinema and other factors.

The linguistic reality in Australia is, in my opinion, changing everyday. As older monolingual generations get older, and younger bilingual and trilingual generations include increasing numbers of English terms and phrases into their chosen form of Italian language, English is slowly superseding all forms of Italian language in the Italo-Australian communities. Although this is how the language reality is forecast in Australia, it really only reflects the situation within Italo-Australian communities. This needs to be recognised because although this language shift to English is definitely occurring within Italo-Australian communities, Australia is enjoying a surge in interest in the study of Standard Italian in schools, universities and associations from people not of Italian origin.
The future of Standard Italian has somehow detached itself from its past. Although the large numbers of Italian immigrants to Australia has meant that Standard Italian has been diffused and promoted throughout Australia, it is now the international importance of second language acquisition which has encouraged its progression into the future. Bettoni (p.109) encapsulates the future of the Italo-Australian language situation when stating:

"Of paramount importance here for language maintenance are the Italian courses in schools and universities, the ethnic radio, multicultural television, the Italian press and all the institutions, societies and associations that work for bringing Italy and Australia in closer contact."
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