
Article:
Santello, M (2021) Popular children's songs and the display of Italian multilingualism in Australia. Journal of Multilingual Theories and Practices, 2 (1). pp. 98-116. ISSN: 2632-4490

https://doi.org/10.1558/jmtp.18564

Article

Popular children's songs and the display of Italian multilingualism in Australia

Marco Santello

Abstract

Italians in Australia have been shown to have a varied linguistic repertoire, due to the presence of a high number of regional languages/dialects spoken in Italy, which they brought with them upon migration. Yet, their own efforts to bring attention to their multilingualism have not been fully explored. This article examines an audiocassette recording of a collection of children's songs produced at the end of the 1970s by an Italo-Australian association for local circulation. It focuses on the design of the audiocassette cover and the range of regional languages/dialects of the songs in the collection, showing how (often mixed-language) texts and images aid language display. The results bring to the surface a deliberate effort to shed light on the rich multilingualism of Italy, which is consistent with the changing role of community languages in the period when this audiocassette was produced. These Italians in Australia make visible their multilingualism, presenting a range of regional languages/dialects also through their use in traditional songs, thereby showing another way in which multilingualism can be acknowledged and valued.

KEYWORDS: MULTILINGUALISM; MIGRATION; ITALIAN.

Affiliation

University of Leeds, United Kingdom
email: m.santello@leeds.ac.uk

1 Introduction

Italian multilingualism in migration settings has been studied with particular care to explain what happens to the Italian language as it comes into contact with other languages after speakers migrate. For example, linguists have shown that changes occur at many levels, including the grammatical one (Prifti, 2014), and in terms of patterns of use (Bertini Malgarini, 1994; Bettoni, 1993). In general it has been established that Italian migrant communities have created forms of multilingualism that are driven by the contact between Italian, the language(s) of the context of migration and various other languages and dialects (Haller, 1993; Tosi, 2010).

However, there are many ways in which migrants engage with their multilingualism in an active manner. It happens not only when individuals and communities use their language as they speak or write to each other but also when they purposefully consider their multilingualism and decide to celebrate it and/or make it known. In this article my attention toward multilingualism in these settings goes beyond linguistic changes in situ, and is directed at how cultural products[1] can become sites where multilingualism holds relevance. It will be clear how display (Eastman and Stein, 1993) is involved in the ways in which multilingualism is thematised through the collection of songs that I will discuss. This is in the wake of recent advancements in applied linguistics research that have illustrated how artefacts can be illuminating for those interested in multilingualism (Aronin, 2018). This focus is mindful of the fact that migrant communities organise themselves to provide educational support as well as spaces for youth to express their identity (Lee and Hawkins, 2008); by concentrating on Australia I will bring to the fore the interconnections between cultural production and multilingualism in a moment where

a specific community was taking steps to look after itself in terms of cultural production.

The aim of this article is indeed to explore multilingualism as an element that is central to specific forms of cultural materials such as collections of Italian popular children's songs. As I mentioned above and will illustrate in greater detail below, this kind of analysis is rather uncommon in the study of Italian multilingualism in migration settings, which has traditionally been interested in spoken interaction, examined either through direct analysis of recorded speech or via alternative ways to understand the changes that were occurring among speakers, by means of methods such as surveys and interviews. Yet, the investigation presented here can shed light on how, in spite of the push toward the abandonment of languages that often occurs as a result of migration, migrants themselves can combine the valorisation of pre-departure languages with a concurrent acknowledgement and use of local ones. This article shows how this can also be done through types of cultural production that link back to traditional music like the one analysed here. It does so by trying to unearth how a specific type of concrete object (a cultural product) is connected with the multilingualism of a migrant community.

I focus on a collection of children's songs called *Canzoncine, filastrocche e cantilene* (Children's songs and nursery rhymes) that was produced by an Italo-Australian workers' association in 1979. This collection, which comprises 51 tracks recorded in an audiocassette enclosed in a self-designed case, was made to be circulated among children at that time. Through the analysis of codemixing practices and the semiotic arrangement (Sebba, 2013a) of the audiocassette cover, and the range of regional languages/dialects that feature in the songs of the collection, I investigate the ways in which multilingualism has been put forth. I will argue that, by

devising such a product, this Italo-Australian association placed value on Italian multilingualism by means of language display (Eastman and Stein, 1993). It will be evident that it did so also at a textual level whereby certain parts of linguistic repertoires are more visible than others.

2 Multilingual Italians in Australia

This audiocassette was created in a moment in Australian history when the country was opening up to multiculturalism and coming to terms with the end of decades of explicitly racist migration policies. It was the birth of a projected new Australia, where community languages were beginning to enter public discourse as resources available to the country, and increasingly less as troubling aftermaths of mass migration (Clyne, 1991). When new policies were put in place, Italian was soon recognised as one of the most important community languages, owing to the number of Australian residents of Italian background; Italian started to be taught extensively in schools and at university precisely because it was a language widely spoken in the country and, on that ground, made available for the sake of social justice and equal opportunity (Kinder, 1992:288–290). Moreover, Italian was progressively assigned the value of a language that represented one of the modern European languages worth being studied in light of their lustrous artistic and historical past and, as such, actively promoted (Lo Bianco, 1989). This is to be placed in the context of the large number of Italians who migrated to Australia from the 18th century to this day (Cecilia 1992), leading to 4.6% of the entire Australian population declaring their ancestry as Italian either exclusively or in combination with other ancestries, and 2.8% actually born in Italy, according to the latest census (ABS 2016).

Italian migrants would speak predominantly regional languages/dialects, rather than Italian, at home and continued to do so in Australia. There are several languages that have gained now official protection in Italy, i.e., the languages of the people who are considered linguistic minorities by law: Albanian, Catalan, German, Greek, Slovene, Croatian, French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan and Sardinian (Law 482, 15 December 1999). But other regional languages/dialects[2] exist in the country; most of these are traditionally referred to as dialects (Coluzzi, 2006) but also called languages in some sociolinguistic research (e.g., Tamburelli, 2012), and coexist with Italian in a rather complex configuration, also in light of regional differences particularly in terms of prevalence of Italian in different settings. In spite of their unofficial status, when Italians left their country these were what they used to speak mostly in their everyday life, together with a regional variety of Italian, that is, a local variety of the national language variously marked at the syntactic, lexical and phonological level due to the contact with a regional language/dialect (cf. Berruto and Bernini, 2012 for an overview). To give an idea of the scenario, suffice it to say that in 1951 about 18% of Italians would speak Italian habitually and an extra 18% would often codeswitch into Italian while speaking a dialect/regional language (De Mauro, 1970:442).

As a result of the broad linguistic diversity of Italy, above and beyond official minority languages, Italians in Australia are multilinguals whose repertoire is usually characterised by the presence of Italian, English and Italian regional languages/dialects. Because of the limited number of regions from which Italians usually came from (Bosworth, 1990), among the languages/dialects most widely present in Australia there are, in the main, Neapolitan (Campanian, Abruzzese and Calabrian varieties), Sicilian (Calabrian and Sicilian varieties), Venetian and Friulian[3]

(cf. Bettoni, 1991), although other languages and dialects are also present. The majority of Italian-born Australians would use one of these across settings, but also have various degrees of competence in Italian and, to a lesser extent, Australian English (Rubino and Bettoni, 1990). Second generations usually begin the acquisition of Italian regional languages/dialects by interacting with their parents and other family members in early childhood, but as soon as they are surrounded by other children, especially in schools, English becomes their strongest language. In their case too, competence in Italian is usually lower than competence in a regional language/dialect, mainly due to the fact that Italian is not employed in conversation to the same degree (Bettoni, 2007), although it has been noted that it was common for young kids to have at least some passive competence in Italian (Bettoni, 1985:78).

This kind of language maintenance and language use is to be viewed also in light of the attitudes towards Italian regional languages/dialects held by the speakers. As has been noted in various other parts of the world, albeit with some significant differences (Lo Cascio, 1987), these are often treated as 'low languages' and tend to be associated with negative stereotypes of uneducated, rural and humble backgrounds. Moreover, in spite of their pervasive presence in everyday interactions, forms of language mixing are generally censored by the speakers, in both spoken and written communication (Rubino, 2009). I will explain below how these patterns of attitudes are in a dialectical relationship with the data examined here, where various parts of the linguistic repertoire are displayed.

3 Italo-Australian associations and *Canzoncine, filastrocche e cantilene*

Since the very beginning of their settlement in Oceania, Italians have created places in which they shared common experiences and fostered mutual help.

Newspapers and magazines largely written in Italian have been circulated in various parts of Australia and often functioned as reference points for Italo-Australians (Ricatti, 2011). Some media, such as the Italian-language radio station *Rete Italia*, have become sites where Italians could play out various constructions of the self, also thanks to their complex linguistic repertoire (Rubino, 2012). Cultural associations of different nature have also been created throughout the country. Mutual aid societies like the Aeolian Clubs in Sydney and Melbourne (Pascoe, 1992:195–208) progressively replaced informal congregations of itinerant workers in people's houses, even before the period of Italian mass migration. In Queensland, migrants gathered around an Italian lay Catholic association, the Federazione Cattolica Italiana (FCI), a local branch of an association founded by the Scalabrinian fathers in Melbourne in 1960 (Girola, 2009). In Western Australia, Italian youth have been involved in more articulated networks which included playing soccer on Saturdays, and gathering in bars and cafes for 'grapevine meetings' (Baldassar, 1992), while older migrants have often assembled around more traditional bocce[4] clubs (Baldassar, 2001:195–208).

Of particular relevance for the present paper is FILEF (Italian Association of Migrant Workers and Their Families), the association that produced the collection of children's songs under analysis here. The association was established in 1972 in Melbourne and Sydney, with the purpose of promoting the social and collective life of migrant workers and to sustain welfare for Italians (Battiston, 2012). Since its inception, FILEF has also been involved in a number of cultural activities, including audiovisual exhibitions on migration history, the creation of resources for the teaching of Italian in schools, and the organisation of street theatre productions (Rando, 1992:198). The collection of songs considered in this paper needs to be contextualised

within the range of activities promoted by FILEF in the 1970s. During that period the association was increasingly concerned with the promotion of Italian culture and language (Alcorso, Popoli and Rando, 1992:112–116). Members – mostly volunteers – ran courses, organised exhibitions and were regularly involved in creating educational material. Furthermore, in the mid-1970s, FILEF inaugurated a women's group to deal with migrant women's issues in the workplace and in the community. As Vasta (1990) explains, specific initiatives devoted to childcare and children's education were developed, including various kinds of cultural products.

The collection of songs *Canzoncine, filastrocche e cantilene* was produced by FILEF in 1979 and was intended to be distributed to anyone who would want to make their children acquainted with these types of songs and nursery rhymes. The songs were chosen from a large corpus of recordings called *C'era una volta una filastrocca* (One upon a time there was a nursery rhyme) – explicitly acknowledged in the endpaper of the cassette cover – one of the many collections of popular children's songs produced in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s by numerous composers and editors.[5] In actual fact, the basin for the selection probably encompassed a range of collections of popular music for children in Italian and in other languages/dialects (and sometimes a mix of these), which were available on vinyl in Italy at that time. These were widespread in Italy, which has a long history of oral traditions related to languages and dialects; in this paper, however, I am not interested in how the selection was made but in what it entails as a form of representation among migrant communities that give account of their work of signification in relation to their multilingualism; it will be clear that multilingualism is central to this specific cultural product in Australia.

Among the aspects that make this audiocassette worth studying are indeed the centrality of languages it shows in a particular historical moment, which was seeing very relevant changes in Australian society. In addition, it offers an entryway into Italian popular music in Italian diasporic setting in Australia, which according to Sorce Keller (2016) can be a way to create commonality beyond regional affiliations even when the languages/dialects of songs are not shared among all Italians. Taking forward this suggestion, it is pertinent to examine more specifically the interconnections between multilingualism and popular music emphasising the meaning-making potential of the former. I consider two parts of this audiocassette: the cardstock cover of the cassette case and the range of songs that are included in this collection.[6] These two components, which I call outer and inner layer, show further language layering, whereby multilingualism is constructed and displayed in two different but complementary fashions.

4 Analytical framework

This study views a physical object as something able to reveal aspects of multilingualism beyond what happens in spoken interaction and beyond language in public spaces (Aronin and Ó Laoire, 2013). More broadly, it considers the importance of artefacts for the study of multilingualism in taking into account the relationship between the multilingual environment in which they are and the multilingualism that they show (Aronin, 2018). The idea behind it is that these objects are also part of the language practices that multilinguals engage in or are exposed to, in this case both pre and post migration. In this audiocassette, while a 'mimetic enactment of language' (Pennycook, 2007:592) might be one of the features that this cassette shows, it will be

apparent that what it does is the result of more complex signification, especially when we look closely at its visual aspects in conjunction with codeswitching.

Sebba (2013a) argues that although codeswitching has been studied and theorised since the 1960s, such a theoretical development was not achieved for written forms of mixing. For the analysis of multilingual texts, for instance, one might well need to consider, in addition to linguistic aspects, visual aspects which are not relevant in the analysis of conversational codeswitching. I conduct my analysis using the method he proposes, focusing on grammatical units, on genre-specific units such as headings or paragraphs and on visual/spatial units which he defines as 'contiguous areas of the surface (page, screen, sign, etc.), which are separated from the rest by areas of blank (text-free) space or by lines, bands or similar visual devices' (Sebba 2013a:106). Drawing on Sebba's methodological framework, in the analysis of units I consider three elements: (i) language-space relationship, (ii) language-content relationship and (iii) type of codemixing. Language-space relationships have to do with the relationship among different units, which, for example, can be symmetrical or asymmetrical; these are important because they can indicate an 'order by language' structure, whereby in a bilingual text one language comes first and the other comes second. Language-content relationships look at the content of what is written and can be of three types: equivalent (similar content repeated in two different languages), disjoint (the content in each language is different) and overlapping (a mix of equivalent and disjointed). According to Sebba, units where more than one language is used can be termed 'mixed units' (where one can determine a prevailing language) and others are 'language-neutral units' (where the mixing is such that a prevailing language in the unit cannot be determined). This analysis of language use within texts is also consistent with what Gafaranga (2017) terms translinguistic apposition, but

pays more attention to the visual aspect in relation to groups who have experienced migration.

5 The inner layer

The audiocassette contains 51 tracks. Table 1 reports their position in the recording, their titles and the languages in which they are sung, which I have attributed.

Table 1. The songs on the audiocassette *Canzoncine, filastrocche e cantilene*

SIDE A	Title	Language/Dialect
1.	È arrivato l'ambasciatore	Italian
2.	Miraladondondella	Central Italian / Romanesque
3.	La capra	Lombard
4.	Cavalluccio	Italian
5.	Madama Dorè	Italian
6.	Zucca pelata	Lombard
7.	Il grillo e la formicuzza	Italian
8.	Pianta la fava la bella villana	Italian
9.	Seta moneta	Italian
10.	O che bel castello	Italian
11.	Giro giro tondo	Italian
12.	Porta aperta	Italian
13.	Cincirinella	Neapolitan
14.	Alla fiera del Mastr'Andrè	Neapolitan
15.	Ninna nanna calabrese	Neapolitan / Calabrian
16.	L'aria de campagna	Lombard
17.	Trenta quaranta	Lombard
18.	In mezzo al prà	Lombard
19.	Un piatto di maccheroni	Italian
20.	Al canto del cucù	Friulian
21.	Serafin, sa fè su lì	Lombard
22.	Burata burata	Venetian
23.	Tourrutusela cavalun	Lombard
24.	Lunga lunghessa	Lombard
25.	Tidoletto	Central Italian / Romanesque

SIDE B		
1.	Fra' Martino campanaro	Italian
2.	Va la Rosina bella	Lombard
3.	Filastrocca del merlo	Venetian
4.	Gine Ginappole fa ballar le trappole	Italian
5.	Mi pizzica, mi muzzica	Sicilian
6.	La me nona l'è vecchierella	Venetian / Trentino
7.	Lusarola	Lombard
8.	Trota trota cavalon	Emiliano-Romangnolo
9.	Li campani de Calvaton (Missing)	Lombard?
10.	Giuanin e Giuanela	Lombard
11.	De sa turre è su forti	Sardinian
12.	Piso Pisello	Central Italian / Romanesque
13.	Me compare Giacometo	Venetian
14.	La mosca	Italian
15.	Lumaga lumaghin	Lombard
16.	Caterina di curaj	Lombard
17.	El vapurin de Com	Lombard
18.	È arrivata la befana	Italian
19.	Tant che l'era piscinin	Lombard
20.	Quell'uccellino ch'è chiuso 'n gabbia	Central Italian / Romanesque
21.	Manina bela	Venetian
22.	Ocio belo	Venetian
23.	Pugni pugneti	Venetian
24.	'Cca ce sta 'na funtanella	Neapolitan
25.	Chicchirichi tra le formiche	Central Italian / Romanesque
26.	Ninna nanna sette e venti	Italian

Looking at the languages/dialects column it is immediately clear that this range of songs does not revolve around Italian. In fact, only 15 of the 51 songs are in Italian and the rest are in Italian regional languages/dialects (or partly so). In order to analyse this diversification, I consider two points: the range of languages/dialects represented and the position of the songs in the collection.[7]

First, eight languages/dialects in addition to Italian are present. These span the varieties spoken in the centre-north, to central Italian languages/dialects, to southern

and insular ones. It is a composite combination that conveys the idea of a highly diversified multilingualism, where many languages/dialects are shown. This collection therefore positions itself as multilingual, in that assumed societal monolingual norms did not prevent the presence of songs written and sung in other languages/dialects spoken in Italy, irrespective of the fact that most of them have never obtained official recognition. A form of commitment to multilingualism (cf. Sebba, 2013b:117–119) is therefore noticeable, linked to the choice of numerous languages/dialects in addition to Italian, thus pointing towards an awareness and even an endorsement of linguistic diversity. After all, as previously mentioned, these were the years that 'saw the beginnings of the community languages movement as a central element in multicultural education and the most tangible of all policy interventions in multiculturalism' (Lo Bianco, 2016:19), so more attention given to multilingualism can be seen as consistent with larger societal changes.

However, a closer look at the range of specific languages/dialects sheds light on additional aspects. The collection encompasses an abundance of songs in Lombard (16), Venetian (7) and Central Italian (4). Although Venetian is arguably commonly spoken in Australia (cf. Baldassar and Pesman, 2005), Lombard and Central Italian, as previously discussed, are not as much. Their use in Australia is most likely comparatively rare and, specifically, Lombard is rarely encountered in Australia, as migration from the northwest of Italy has been scarce in recent times; yet Lombard is by far the most represented of the languages/dialects in the collection, even more so than Italian. It is evident therefore that the kind of multilingualism proposed here is the multilingualism *of* Italy. This is further corroborated by the presence of a song in Sardinian, again a language which is comparatively less common among Italians in Australia. In this range of languages/dialects one can recognise the typical signs of

language display (Eastman and Stein, 1993:188–189). Namely, (i) there is limited ongoing contact with the speakers of the displayed language, in that, as mentioned above, commonly Italians in Australia did not have regular contact with many of the languages/dialects in which the songs are written; (ii) these languages/dialects are simply part of a list of songs; the communication involved here requires no semantic or structural expression.

The second point I would like to consider is the position of these languages/dialects in the collection. Looking at the list, it is readily apparent that the first tracks are mainly in Italian and only gradually do the other languages/dialects start to appear. Of the 15 Italian songs, 10 appear on Side A of the cassette and are mainly among the earlier tracks of the list. Moreover, only four songs on Side A – two in Neapolitan, one in Calabrian and one in Venetian – match the languages/dialects widely spoken by Italians in Australia. Besides Italian, other northern and central languages/dialects have been included, while languages that are more common among Italians in Australia, such as Sicilian, are on Side B, in a comparatively less exposed site. This should not be understood as a type of hierarchical structure such as the one suggested by Sebba (2013b), but as an indication that the languages presented in this audiocassette do not mirror the local repertoire of Italians in Australia. Here, northern and central languages/dialects such as Central Italian, but most evidently Lombard, are more visible, together with Italian, which holds the most prominent position. This again shows that it is the repertoire of Italy that is displayed through the range of songs in this collection.

Canzoncine, filastrocche e cantilene, therefore, displays a high degree of multilingualism. However, as mentioned above, this is achieved by showing parts of the multilingualism of Italy, thus effectively displaying Italian linguistic diversity

from afar. Yet, the songs (and languages) that feature in this audiocassette are reproduced in a migrant context where the repertoires are no longer those of the starting point, which establishes a form of communication that is necessarily different from what would occur in Italy. This does not mean that there is a voluntary dismissal of the local Italian Australian repertoire, but that this collection of songs generates meaning locally thanks to a direct reference to the multilingualism of Italy, which becomes an object of display in Australia; it speaks to both the upholding of multilingualism among Italians in Australia and the representation of the repertoire of Italians in general, rather than in specific reference to Italian migrants. While drawing directly from existing collections of songs, one can argue that it is not only the relationship with the sources that determines the local significance of these semiotic systems but their becoming a resource for the community (cf. Higgins, 2009). In other words, this collection becomes a tool through which Italians in Australia know and value the repertoire of Italy, in conjunction with a deliberate effort to promote Italian multilingualism in this migration setting.

6 The outer layer

The four parts of the cardstock cover of the audiocassette case – the front, the back flap, the spine and the internal endpaper – display complementary aspects.

Figure 1. The front cover of *Canzoncine, filastrocche e cantilene*

The front cover (Figure 1), the most exposed and extended part, shows drawings and words in Italian and in English. Language-spatial relationships are generally asymmetrical, in that Italian holds a dominant position by occupying the greater part of the paper surface, in contrast to English, which is smaller in size and flanked by two drawings. Italian words are not only larger, but also come first, thereby strengthening their role. In terms of language-content relationships, the contents of the Italian and the English parts are neither perfectly equivalent nor disjointed. Instead of having the three Italian words translated into English, the words in English can be considered a dynamic equivalent of the Italian title.[8] Rather than breaking of equivalence of information content, to use Sebba's (2013b:109) words, it is the visual part here that appears to establish a degree of language imbalance in favour of Italian. At the same time, the sheer presence of English accounts for the linguistic repertoire of the projected audience: the choice of code takes into consideration the patterns of distribution of linguistic resources in the sense that it

probably considers that not everyone has the same competence in Italian and in English in written modes (see Blommaert, 2013:449–453 for a focused analysis of patterns of distribution in writing). It is also possible that the funders of this audiocassette expected the use of English for the reasons above.

Figure 2. The spine of *Canzoncine, filastrocche e cantilene*

The spine (Figure 2) contains two lines – the upper in Italian and the lower in English – in asymmetrical relationship, where again Italian is in the forefront. The two do not express the same content; they are one the continuation of the other, and constitute an example of a mixed-language unit characterised by the use of codeswitching (Sebba, 2013a:107–109). The multilingual nature of this text is therefore even more evident in the spine than in the front, as in the former both the language-content relationship and the type of language mixing construct the product bilingually.

Figure 3. The back-flap of *Canzoncine, filastrocche e cantilene*

The back-flap (Figure 3) is dominated by drawings and contains only Italian words. This is to be explained in light of the limited space available and the larger area afforded to the visual part. In terms of content, the flap shows children holding flags

that say ‘w le lingue’ and ‘w l’italiano’, thus indicating support for languages in general, and for Italian in particular. The expression of this support is represented as being given by the children themselves, who are in this instance joyful and encouraging. This, while consistent with the layout of the cover described thus far, has a more intricate relationship with the endpaper.

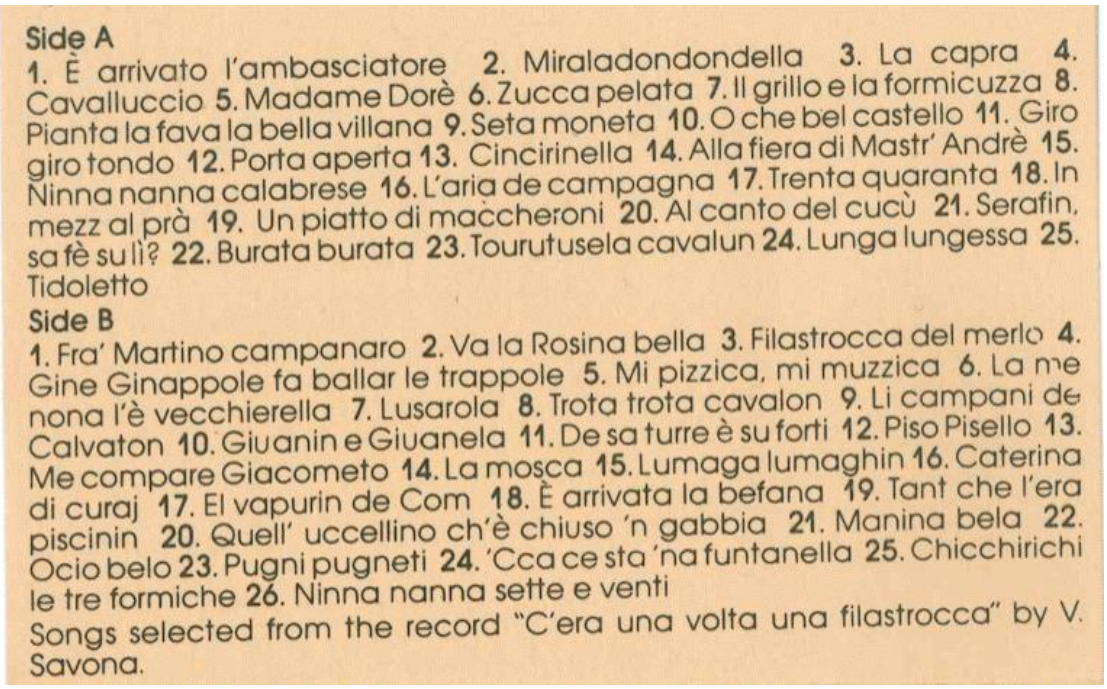
Side A
1. È arrivato l'ambasciatore 2. Miraladondondella 3. La capra 4. Cavalluccio 5. Madame Dorè 6. Zucca pelata 7. Il grillo e la formicuzza 8. Pianta la fava la bella villana 9. Seta moneta 10. O che bel castello 11. Giro giro tondo 12. Porta aperta 13. Cincirinella 14. Alla fiera di Mastr' Andrè 15. Ninna nanna calabrese 16. L'aria de campagna 17. Trenta quaranta 18. In mezz al prà 19. Un piatto di maccheroni 20. Al canto del cucù 21. Serafin, sa fè su lì? 22. Burata burata 23. Tourutusela cavalun 24. Lunga lungessa 25. Tidoletto
Side B
1. Fra' Martino campanaro 2. Va la Rosina bella 3. Filastrocca del merlo 4. Gine Ginappole fa ballar le trappole 5. Mi pizzica, mi muzzica 6. La me nona l'è vecchierella 7. Lusarola 8. Trota trota cavalon 9. Li campani de Calvaton 10. Giuanin e Giuanela 11. De sa turre è su forti 12. Piso Pisello 13. Me compare Giacometo 14. La mosca 15. Lumaga lumaghin 16. Caterina di curaj 17. El vapurin de Com 18. È arrivata la befana 19. Tant che l'era piscinin 20. Quell' uccellino ch'è chiuso 'n gabbia 21. Manina bela 22. Ocio belo 23. Pugni pugneti 24. 'Cca ce sta 'na funtanella 25. Chicchirichi le tre formiche 26. Ninna nanna sette e venti
Songs selected from the record "C'era una volta una filastrocca" by V. Savona.

Figure 4. The endpaper of *Canzoncine, filastrocche e cantilene*

The endpaper (Figure 4) contains a list of all the songs and nursery rhymes recorded in each side of the cassette. At first sight it may appear to be a numbered sequence of songs in Italian, written in plain font. However, as explained above, many of these songs are not in Italian, but in regional languages/dialects. I have already discussed this point when considering the contents of the cassette, but there are two more elements worth pointing out. First, the presence of some degree of language mixing due not only to the simultaneous presence of Italian and non-Italian songs, but also to the codemixed paratextual final clause, in Italian and English. Linguistic diversity is again brought to the fore by more than one element, where several

languages and dialects are juxtaposed in various ways. This is also noticeable in the presence of the English words 'Side A' and 'Side B', which contribute to enhancing the level of multilingualism of the endpaper. Second, we can see some forms of italianisation in relation to orthography. This can be viewed in instances such as in *Filastrocca del merlo* where 'filastrocca' is the italianisation of the Venetian 'fiłastroca', realised through the doubling of the letter 'c' that corresponds to a gemination of the velar /k/, which does not exist in Venetian. Although the writing system of Venetian is not normativised and hence there is limited push towards the use of orthographic adjustments even now, it is significant that there is no deviation from the orthography of standard Italian.

Mixed-language texts as well as images are used in the cardstock cover to show overt support of multilingualism while characterising the audiocassette itself as a multilingual product. Indeed, what we can see in this audiocassette draws heavily on the repertoire of Italy, but configures the communication also in light of the local context, where English is widespread. Yet, Italian tends to prevail visually in the front cover and in the spine as well as in the internal endpaper; this multilevel composition suggests a design whereby the exterior, more accessible and exposed part of the product places Italian as the language to be exhibited, the preferred code (Scollon and Scollon, 2003), the standard migrant language that is most prominently offered to those who handle the cassette. English, on the other hand, is given less prominence (as to content and expanse), and Italian regional languages/dialects are in the internal part. It is evident that the limited space available in the cardstock cover necessarily implies a language choice, which in this case involved the use of English and Italian, with favour accorded to the latter. This type of organisation, rather than suggesting necessarily a language hierarchy, is a way for the audiocassette to display

multilingualism in a manner that takes into account the relevance of Italian and English for this cultural product locally. In other words, while the more composite multilingualism of Italians is in the internal part, this does not signify that it is undervalued, but that it is expressed through the songs themselves rather than visually offered in the more exposed part of the outer layer, which is also aligned with the predominantly spoken use of Italian regional languages/dialects.

7 Final remarks

In expressing her discontent with the little attention devoted to artefacts in applied linguistics, Aronin (2018) pointed out the need to explore more particularly what goes on beyond signs in public places. Keeping in mind her suggestion to consider both the object and the environment in which it is placed, in this study I looked at collection of songs showing a way in which Italian migrants have tried to bring to the fore Italian multilingualism through a cultural product that links back to musical tradition. It sheds light on aspects of the multilingualism of Italians that were probably undervalued or at least not well-known in Australia at the time when this audiocassette was produced. We notice a symbolic investment in multilingualism, which is consistent with the changing role of community languages in the period when this audiocassette was produced, a crucial historical juncture which was seeing Australia overtly embracing multiculturalism and linguistic diversity. An association here shows an effort to separate itself from assumed generalised monolingual norms, asserting multilingualism through a variety of tools including Italian English codemixing practices in the outer layer and the display of standard Italian as well as regional languages/dialects in the inner layer of the audiocassette. The analysis of further internal elements shows that the linguistic repertoire that is being promoted is

that of Italy, with the result that the languages/dialects that find a higher level of exposure are those that one would associate with Italians in Italy; in other words, the collection links directly to the tradition of Italian songs, passed on and transmitted through the local languages and dialects of Italy. Moreover, the use of Italian orthography, the presence of Italian in more exposed parts of the cassette, and more general forms of language display contribute to a representation of multilingualism where Italian plays a key role alongside other languages and dialects, including English.

I have argued that in the case analysed here multilingualism is put forth through language display (Eastman and Stein, 1993) combined with various forms of codemixing and semiotic arrangements (Sebba, 2013a). These are examples of how Italians with their 'deliberate efforts' (Clyne, 2001:389) have acknowledged multilingualism for their own fruition. This multilingualism taps into the repertoire of Italy, valued and brought to light in relation to a long tradition of popular children's songs and nursery rhymes. It does, however, both accept and use English, which is here used as part of the local context. This audiocassette may be seen as an instance of re-appropriation of multilingualism, where the (already) polycentric Italian communities in Australia find ways to relate to the languages and dialects of the place where they collectively come from. Looking at this type of cultural product we can see a form of representation that undoubtedly involves an awareness of multifarious linguistic repertoires, at a moment when the acceptance of multiculturalism in Australia was giving Italians the opportunities to openly celebrate and nurture their cultural and linguistic specificity. In a way we could say that through products such as the one analysed here Italian migrants can cast light on the multilingualism of Italy for themselves, highlighting the value they attribute to it.

To the best of my knowledge this is the first study that delves into the representation of multilingualism in Australia taking as an entryway a cultural product produced by Italians like this collection of children's songs. As such it indicates a different look-out point onto the multilingualism of Italians and invites one to consider how tradition can be linked to the acknowledgement and display of multilingualism in migration settings. In other words, it poses the question of how Italian migrants, in this case through their own associations, have used and valued their tradition for the purpose of upholding the richness of their multilingualism as well. It comes with a recognition of how the putting together of cultural products in migration settings can show signs of incipient promotion of multilingualism on the part of the communities themselves, which can become fertile soil for future efforts in promoting linguistic diversity, while not disregarding the importance of the local languages encountered and used after migration. In this sense, looking back at these forms of production can illuminate on the first steps of a journey toward a recognition of the value of different parts of the linguistic repertoires of migrants, which has the potential to become relevant for the understanding of processes then and now (Bettoni, 2010).

About the author

Marco Santello is an applied linguist with research interests in multilingualism, and is currently a lecturer in Intercultural Competence in the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, UK. He studied as an undergraduate at the University of Padua, Italy, and as a postgraduate at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan and the University of Sydney, Australia. He is particularly interested in language and mobility and code-switching.

Acknowledgements

I sincerely thank the anonymous reviewers and all the colleagues who commented on earlier versions of this paper. This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK) under the grant 'Transnationalizing Modern Languages'.

References

ABS: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) Cultural diversity in Australia, 2016 Census Article. Retrieved from https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Cultural%20Diversity%20Article~60

Alcorso, C., Popoli, C. G. and Rando, G. (1992) Community networks and institutions. In S. Castles, C. Alcorso, G. Rando and E. Vasta (eds) *Australia's Italians: Culture and Community in a Changing Society* 106–124. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Aronin, L. (2018) Theoretical underpinnings of the material culture of multilingualism. In L. Aronin, M. Hornsby and G. Kiliańska-Przybyło (eds) *The Material Culture of Multilingualism* 21–45. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91104-5_2

Aronin, L. & Ó Laoire, M. (2013). The material culture of multilingualism: Moving beyond the linguistic landscape. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 10.3: 225–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2012.679734

Baldassar, L. (1992) Italo-Australian youth in Perth (space speaks and clothes communicate). In R. Bosworth and R. Ugolini (eds) *War, Internment and Mass Migration: The Italo-Australian Experience 1940–1990* 207–223. Rome: Gruppo editoriale internazionale.

Baldassar, L. (2001) *Visits Home: Migration Experiences between Italy and Australia*. Carlton South: Melbourne University Press.

Baldassar, L. and Pesman, R. (2005) *From Pesani to Global Italians: Veneto Migrants in Australia*. Crawley: UWA Press.

Battiston, S. (2012) *Immigrants Turned Activists: Italians in 1970s Melbourne*. Kibworth Beauchamp: Troubador Publishing.

Berruto, G. and Bernini, G. (2012) *Saggi di sociolinguistica e linguistica*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso.

Bertini Malgarini, P. (1994) L'Italiano fuori d'Italia. In L. Serianni and P. Trifone (eds) *Storia della lingua italiana* Vol. 3, 883–922. Turin: Einaudi.

Bettoni, C. (1985) *Tra lingua, dialetto e inglese: il trilinguismo degli Italiani in Australia*. Leichhardt: Filef Italo-Australian Publications.

Bettoni, C. (1991) Language variety among Italians: Anglicisation, attrition and attitudes. In S. Romaine (ed) *Language in Australia* 263–269. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620881.020

Bettoni, C. (1993) Italiano fuori dall'Italia. In A. A. Sobrero (ed) *Introduzione all'italiano contemporaneo. La variazione e gli usi* 411–460. Bari: Laterza.

Bettoni, C. (2007) Un profilo socio-linguistico della comunità italo-australiana. In A. Ciliberti (ed) *La costruzione interazionale di identità: repertori linguistici e pratiche discorsive degli italiani in Australia* Vol. 56, 36–67. Milan: FrancoAngeli.

Bettoni, C. (2010) Tra lingua, dialetto e inglese: mezzo secolo di emigrazione italiana in Australia. In A. Ledgeway and A. L. Lepschy (eds) *Into and out of Italy: lingua e cultura della migrazione italiana* 153–163. Perugia: Guerra.

Blommaert, J. (2013). Writing as a sociolinguistic object. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 17.4: 440–459. https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12042

Bosworth, R. (1990). Storia dell'emigrazione e storia nazionale: Australia. *Altreitalie*, 4.1: 24–42.

Cecilia, T. (1992) Gli italiani in Australia, 1788–1945: una cronistoria. In S. Castles, C. Alcorso, G. Rando and E. Vasta (eds) *Italo-australiani: la popolazione di origine italiana in Australia* 33–49. Turin: Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli.

Clyne, M. (1991) *Community Languages: The Australian Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511597084

Clyne, M. (2001) Can the shift from immigrant languages be reversed in Australia? In J. A. Fishman (ed) *Can Threatened Languages Be Saved? Reversing Language Shift, Revisited: A 21st Century Perspective* 364–391. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853597060-018

Coluzzi, P. (2006) Minority language planning and micronationalism in Italy: The cases of Lombardy and Friuli. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 27.6: 457–471. https://doi.org/10.2167/jmmd451.1

De Mauro, Tullio (1970). *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita*. Rome-Bari: Leterza.

Eastman, C. M. and Stein, R. F. (1993). Language display: Authenticating claims to social identity. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 14.3: 187–202. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.1993.9994528

Gafaranga, J. (2017) *Bilingualism as Interactional Practices*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748675951.001.0001

Girola, S. (2009). Serving the changing needs of Italian migrants. *Spunti e Ricerche* 24.1: 114–132.

Haller, H. W. (1993) *Una lingua perduta e ritrovata: l'italiano degli italo-americani*. Scandicci, Firenze: La Nuova Italia.

Higgins, C. (2009) From Da Bomb to Bomba: Global hip hop nation language in Tanzania. In H. S. Alim and A. Pennycook (eds) *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip*

Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language 95–112. New York: Routledge.

Kinder, J. (1992) Italian in Australia 1940–1990. In R. Bosworth & R. Ugolini (eds.) *War, internment and mass migration: the Italo-Australian experience 1940–1990* 279–290. Rome: Gruppo editoriale internazionale.

Law 482, 15 December 1999, Gazzetta Ufficiale Serie Generale 297 del 20/12/1999. Retrieved from https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1999/12/20/099G0557/sg. https://doi.org/10.1088/2058-7058/12/12/3

Lee, S. J. and Hawkins, M. R. (2008). 'Family is here': Learning in community-based after-school programs. *Theory into Practice* 47.1: 51–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840701764763

Lo Bianco, J. (1989) Labelling Italian. In J. Lo Bianco and C. Bettoni (eds) *Understanding Italy: Language, Culture, Commerce: An Australian Perspective* 168–176. Sydney: Frederick May Foundation for Italian Studies.

Lo Bianco, J. (2016) Multicultural education in the Australian context: An historical overview. In J. Lo Bianco and A. Bal (eds) *Learning from Difference: Comparative Accounts of Multicultural Education* 15–33. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-26880-4_2

Lo Cascio, V. (1987) *L'italiano in America Latina*. Florence: Le Monnier.

Pascoe, R. (1992) Place and community: The construction of an Italo-Australian space. In S. Castles, C. Alcorso, G. Rando and E. Vasta (eds) *Australia's Italians:Cculture and Community in a Changing Society* 35–55. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Pennycook, A. (2007) 'The rotation gets thick. The constraints get thin': Creativity, recontextualization, and difference. *Applied Linguistics* 28.4: 579–596. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amm043

Prifti, E. (2014) *Italoamericano: italiano e inglese in contatto negli USA: analisi diacronica variazionale e migrazionale*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110300352

Rando, G. (1992) Narrating the migration experience. In S. Castles, C. Alcorso, G. Rando and E. Vasta (eds) *Australia's Italians: Culture and Community in a Changing Society* 184–201. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Ricatti, F. (2011) *Embodying Migrants: Italians in Postwar Australia.* Bern: Peter Lang. https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-0351-0195-9

Rubino, A. (2009) Language maintenance strategies and language attitudes of new migrants from Italy. In A. Mahboob and C. Lipovsky (eds) *Studies in Applied Linguistics and Language Learning* 203–223. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars.

Rubino, A. (2012). Negotiating repairs in an Italo-Australian phone-in radio program. *Studi italiani di linguistica teorica e applicata* 41.2: 293–316.

Rubino, A. and Bettoni, C. (1990). The use of English among Italo-Australians in Sydney. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 14.1: 58–89. https://doi.org/10.1075/aral.14.1.04rub

Scollon, R. and Scollon, S. B. K. (2003) *Discourses in Place: Language in the Material World*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203422724

Sebba, M. (2013a) Multilingualism in written discourse: An approach to the analysis of multilingual texts. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 17.1*:* 97–118. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006912438301

Sebba, M. (2013b) The visual construction of language hierarchy. *Journal of Language & Politics* 12.1: 101–125. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.12.1.05seb

Sorce Keller, M. (2016) Continuing opera with other means: Opera, Neapolitan song, and popular music among Italian immigrants overseas. *Forum Italicum* 50: 244–263. https://doi.org/10.1177/0014585815593527

Tamburelli, M. (2012) Dalla diglossia al bilinguismo: note sul mantenimento del patrimonio linguistico d'Italia. In G. Agresti and M. De Gioia (eds) *L'enseignement des langues locales institutions, méthodes, idéologies: Actes des Quatrièmes Journées des Droits Linguistiques* 187–202. Rome: Aracne.

Tosi, A. (2010) The language of Italians in Britain. In A. Ledgeway and A. L. Lepschy (eds) *Into and out of Italy: lingua e cultura della migrazione italiana* 99–110. Perugia: Guerra.

Vasta, E. (1990). Gender, class and ethnic relations: The domestic and work experiences of Italian migrant women in Australia. *Migration* 7.1: 7–31.

Notes

[1] I use the term cultural product in its widest sense.
[2] In this paper I use 'regional language/dialect' rather than only one of the two, in consideration of the amount of diversity of languages/dialects discussed here and the different terms in use.
[3] Following the ethnologue classification.
[4] Bocce is a traditional game that is based on throwing heavy spheres onto a court in the attempt to get as close as possible to a smaller target sphere.
[5] Broadcasting and recording children's songs was a common practice in Italy in the three decades after World War II. One prime example of this is the children's song festival *Lo Zecchino d'Oro*.
[6] Analysis of the execution of the songs is beyond the scope of this research.
[7] As previously mentioned, the tracks were selected from an extended range of songs collected by Virgilio Savona under the label *C'era una volta una filastrocca*. It is not the aim of this article to investigate the formation of the corpus or to compare it with this collection.
[8] In the audiocassette itself the distinction between *canzoncine* (children's songs) and *cantilene* (sing-songs) is unclear.