

Specimen

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Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft



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Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft

Begründet von
Klaus D. Dutz & Peter Schmitter

Herausgegeben von
Gerda Haßler (Potsdam)
Angelika Rüter (Münster)

in Verbindung mit

David Cram (Oxford), Miguel Ángel Esparza Torres (Madrid),
Stefano Gensini (Rom), Ludger Kaczmarek (Borgholzhausen),
Masataka Miyawaki (†), Jan Noordegraaf (Amsterdam),
Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérand (Clermont-Ferrand)

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Lingua franca in its polymorphous manifestations*

1. S. Baggio e P. Taravacci edited a new and very welcome contribution to the study of *lingua franca*, which follows another book edited by the same team from the Trento University scholar in 2020 about natural and invented languages (reviewed in 2021 in the 31.2 issue of the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft*, pp. 325–332). After the presentation (pp. 3–4), the volume offers, as first chapter, a translation into Italian of *Die Lingua franca*, by Hugo Schuchardt (*Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 33 (1909), pp. 441–461). The translation is by Federica Venier (pp. 5–32) and reproduces, with corrections, the one published in 2009 in issue 29 of the journal *Linguistica e filologia* (pp. 7–31). In that same issue F. Venier also published a comment (pp. 33–60) with extensive bibliographical references. The rest of the volume collects twelve essays and closes with biographical information about the Authors (pp. 327–334) and an index of names (pp. 335–346). The first five chapters (by Cifoletti, Baglioni, Sanga, Banfi, Sottile-Scaglione) cover the notion, features and history of the *lingua franca* proper. The other chapters are about comparable notions (Crevatin, about *Dachsprache*), languages that in various ways happen to be defined as *lingua francas* (De Villa for Yiddish, Manzelli, for Nahuatl, Tosco for Arabic, Micheli for Dyula), writing systems (Astori) and historical and theoretical aspects (Poli). Most of the papers are written in Italian, but two chapters written in English [ARz].

2. Guido Cifoletti’s contribution *Sulla lingua franca barbaresca* (pp. 33–48, *On the lingua franca barbaresca*) offers a clear and precise overview of the ‘*lingua barbaresca*’, a pidginized Italian spoken mainly in Algiers, Tripoli and Tunis from the mid-sixteenth century until the early nineteenth century. The article is structured in several sections, which illustrate, respectively, the textual materials that constitute the corpus on which the Author worked, the historical framing of the context in which this pidgin could develop, some examples of attestations, and the final phase of the language, called *sabir*, in which it became grammatically impoverished and fell into disuse. With regard to textual testimonies, the Author chooses to exclude, unlike H. Schuchardt, poetic texts and those following the French colonization of the Maghreb (19th cent.). Also to be excluded is the *Contrasto della Zerbitana* (late 13th cent.).

*) *Lingua franca, lingue franche. Atti della Giornata di studi (Trento, Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia, Palazzo P. Prodi, 5 febbraio 2021)*. A cura di Serenella Baggio, Pietro Taravacci. Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso 2021, 348 pp. [ISBN 978-88-3613-201-0; EUR 35,00].

which does not represent an example of a lingua franca, but instead an “Italian speech in the mouths of foreigners” (p. 36); this, in fact, is located in the island of Jerba, at a chronological height in which it can be said that “there was [...] not even an Italian language to be pidginized” (p. 35). Testimonies of travelers, memoir books, and even some publications from the 16th–19th centuries, on the other hand, constitute a coherent corpus. The context that fostered the emergence of a pidgin was mainly characterized by the piracy activities of the Maghreb port cities, which consisted of capturing European captives (Miguel Cervantes, among others) for ransom. This area was under the control of the Ottomans of the East, particularly the Barbarossa brothers, who had intervened following centuries of crisis and anarchy—a crisis that made possible, among other things, the conquest of Sicily by the Normans. The ports of Algiers (taken in 1516), Tripoli (1551), and Tunis (1574) became the three Western Regencies of the Ottoman Empire. Here, the privateers known as *Barbareschi* made daily and socially relevant use (p. 38) of the lingua franca *barbaresca*. This should be distinguished from Italian pidgins spoken in other Mediterranean ports (Venice, Smyrna, Constantinople ...), constituting the so-called Mediterranean lingua franca. On the formation of the *barbaresca*, the Author believes that it was not a ‘language of necessity’ (*Notsprache* for Schuchardt), because the figure of the interpreter (*dragomanno*) was established in this environment. Instead it was a language that served Muslims to interface with Christians without surrendering to speak the language of the adversary. The Author highlights the fact that pidgin must first have been created by speakers who were well versed in the Romance languages (renegade Europeans or Iberian Muslims), as they alone were able to make ‘morphological choices’, like the extension of the infinitive to all verbal persons. The *lingua barbaresca* was a “limited and [...] easy language” (p. 41), but it could serve for even articulate and political conversations. Some illustrative episodes brought by the Author are that of the privateer Dragut, who finds himself in the condition of an enslaved person and says: *mudanza de fortuna!*, ‘change of fate!’. Or the English consul Baker who shows up drunk to the sultan and says: *Saper Sultan que gente come mi beber vin, et bestie comme ti beber acqua* (p. 43, ‘You know, Sultan, that people like me drink wine, and beasts like you drink water’). Or again the daughter of a consul who in her diary from Algiers comments on the polysemy of the interjection *fantasia*, ‘what nonsense!’ or of the term *mangiado*, ‘finished, failed.’ In 1830, with the conquest of Algiers by the French, the *lingua barbaresca* began its decline, because the language of prestige was no longer Italian, but French, and especially because at this time religious qualms no longer existed. The lingua franca continued for about fifty years as a post-pidgin continuum called *sabir*, with reduced means of expression, and with French or Arabic lexical basis. The Author comments on some utterances from this phase and, finally, briefly gives an account of elements

partly connected with this lingua franca, such as other idioms called *sabir* and an Italian-based maritime lexicon (‘language of the Kahane’) used widely in the Mediterranean. Overall, the contribution takes materials and arguments from the Author’s monograph (G. Cifoletti, *La lingua franca barbaresca*, 2nd ed., Il Calamo, 2011), and offers a very interesting overview, highlighting the links between the data and debunking some clichés. [AD].

3. Daniele Baglioni’s essay, *Sull’affidabilità delle fonti della lingua franca mediterranea* (pp. 49–66, *On the reliability of the sources of the Mediterranean lingua franca*), can be usefully read keeping in mind the essay by E. Banfi in this same volume, *Sulle tracce della ‘lingua franca’, della ‘lingua itineraria’ e del ‘Levant Italian’: fonti altre intorno a dinamiche socioculturali e linguistiche in area mediterranea tra Medioevo ed Età moderna* (pp. 77–102), *On the traces of the ‘lingua franca’, ‘lingua itineraria’ and ‘Levant Italian’: more sources around sociocultural and linguistic dynamics in the Mediterranean area between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age*. Both papers focus, in different ways, on the topic of sources concerning the very object and concept of lingua franca (and similar ones). Baglioni illustrates the typology of proper sources outlining at the same time a useful method of qualitative evaluation. On pp. 54–55, he graphically represents his idea in this regard, identifying a central typology of sources with respect to which some documents, even important and substantial ones, can be more correctly defined as peripheral. This pattern also corresponds to the central lexical, grammatical and pragmatic (sociolinguistic) evidence of lingua franca, as opposed to peripheral evidence. The core collects direct sources from the 17th and 18th centuries from the Algiers area, related to the historical context of the race wars and witnessing a lingua franca sociolinguistically characterized as *Sklavensprache*. Relying then on the recent philological work of Natalie Operstein (see the bibliographical references in the text), Baglioni makes pointed criticisms of the quality and consistency of the data of one of the most well-known and widely used sources, namely the Dictionnaire de la langue franque. Baglioni’s critique takes shape precisely within the system by which he proposes to distribute sources and, in parallel, features between a central core and a peripheral set. It is, therefore, a welcome contribution to address the study of these issues. [ARz].

4. Of equal usefulness and methodological clarity is the work of E. Banfi, in which he addresses a series of new sources capable of documenting the socio-cultural traits that characterize lingua franca, lingua itineraria and Levant Italian. In fact, in addition to lingua franca (understood in the proper sense), the essay also deals with the so-called *lingua itineraria*, a reality so defined by

such a central figure in Italian literature and history as Ugo Foscolo, and *Levant Italian*. These documentary sources, consisting of journey reports, letters, diaries etc., illustrate the extension of Italian-Romance traits in the Mediterranean area along the lines of certain socio-cultural dynamics typical of the period between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age. The Author refers to the edition of these sources edited by Kyriakos Simopoulou (see references in the essay), describes its structure and contents and finally selects some sources in detail. Through these he is able to show how lingua franca and lingua itineraria trace back to “a kaleidoscopic orality of Italian attested in periods largely preceding the political unification of the peninsula” that must be kept distinct from “that bureaucratic-formal Italian falling under the label of Levant Italian”. [ARz].

5. Sanga’s contribution *Signor, per favor: la lingua franca tra i mendicanti?* (pp. 67–76, *Signor, per favor: lingua franca among the beggars?*) proposes that the beggars’ expression *signor, per favor* in Venice and Padua might be a remnant of lingua franca. This observation, based on direct experience, holds merit considering the Roma community’s history and the use of jargons by marginalized groups. However, as the Author acknowledges in other parts of his work, a more thorough examination of Venetian role in shaping this expression is also warranted. [ARs].

6. The chapter entitled *La lingua franca tra passato e presente: vecchie questioni, “nuovi usi”* (pp. 103–130, *The lingua franca between past and present: old issues, “new uses”*) by R. Sottile and F. Scaglione deals with some sociolinguistic aspects of the lingua franca. The Authors, in fact, are able to observe and model the variation attested in the documentation on the diatopic and diachronic axes. By taking into account the diachronic variation allows the Authors to convincingly demonstrate the diatopic variation through the evolution of the code. In particular, the model elaborated deals with the lingua franca as a pidgin. However, the Authors suggest that this is not a prototypical case of pidgin, since the lexifier language plays a predominant role with respect to the Arabic substrate. The Authors maintain that extra-linguistic factors can explain the non-prototypical linguistic outcome of the pidgin. The second part of the chapter deals with some cases of contemporary use of or linguistic allusion to the lingua franca in literary and commercial texts, putting particular emphasis on a songwriting project. The sociolinguistic interest of these symbolic uses of the lingua franca is, however, limited. [ARs].

7. Crevatin’s contribution *Lingue tetto e lingue di contatto* (pp. 131–140, *Dachsprachen and contact languages*) discusses fundamental concepts within the framework of European linguistic history such as the concepts of *Dachsprache* and contact language by referring to Common Slavic and arguing how it should be interpreted as a communicative and social phenomenon during the Khaganate of the Avars (562–823). Although the Author uses the example of Common Slavic as *Dachsprache* that covered a loosely differentiated dialectal continuum and became a language of use only gradually, the contribution offers a brief discussion of European linguistic history (p. 134) in which it is shown that the change of *Dachsprache* and of language of use were very frequent. The *Dachsprache* is, explains the Author, who also provides an insight into the linguistic history of the term (*lingua tetto* in Italian), a language that serves as a standard language for different dialects that generally lie along a dialect continuum (although it is possible that dialects that lie below the *Dachsprache* may not be mutually intelligible), showing how the *Dachsprache* is such only if the coverage is not only on a linguistic basis but also on a socio-cultural basis, that is, if the socially and culturally dominant language in a given area is in close genealogical relationship with the subordinate language (or group of languages). [FC].

8. Massimiliano De Villa’s article entitled «*Una porta che si apre su molti paesi*»: *lo yiddish come lingua franca tra il Medioevo e la contemporaneità* (pp. 141–180, “*A door opening to many countries*”: *Yiddish as a lingua franca between the Middle Ages and contemporary times*) presents a history of Yiddish from its inception up to the present day. The Author aims to give a historical cut allowing to show the historical-social evolutions of the development of this language diachronically and at the same time underline the fact that it has assumed — in various circumstances — the characteristics of a *lingua franca* in the Jewish world. The discussion starts from the origins: De Villa illustrates the birth of what he defines as the “third literary language in the history of Judaism after Classical Hebrew and Judaic Aramaic” and observes that it has developed alongside both of them, constituting a sort of fusion between German dialects on one side and Hebrew and Aramaic on the other. This adaptation is also observed in writing: in fact, in some cases, Yiddish, while using the Hebrew alphabet, adapts the consonantal writing to alphabetic writing. Furthermore, its morpho-syntactic structure shows typical features of a Germanic language: Yiddish appears to be a “coagulum of sociolects” and in several moments of its history it was considered as a language of the lower social classes (even if De Villa considers this view as reductive). Its origins remain very opaque. Despite this, De Villa refers to three hypotheses that are traditionally formulated around its origin: the Rhenish, the Danubian

and the Sorbian hypothesis (the latter is the least probable). At this point De Villa expands on the history of ancient Yiddish and its literature (such as the adaptations of European chivalric romances), which shows the character of a cultural mixture between the Jewish and European traditions. Hence, Yiddish is constructed as a *lingua franca* for the Ashkenazi community: Hebrew was reserved for community documents and Aramaic for rabbinical interpretation. Furthermore, the fact of using these two languages linked to worship for purposes related to everyday life was frowned upon by some social groups (pp. 167–168). However, the Author observes that Yiddish cannot be treated as a linguistically and socially homogeneous group: in fact, there is a Western Yiddish (Alsace and Germany, which declined around the eighteenth century) and an Eastern Yiddish (Poland, Lithuania and Russia, remained alive until the 20th century). The latter specifically played the role of *lingua franca*, which is “network language and transversal communication“ (page 156). A role that is also confirmed in the context of emigration to the United States, while in Europe the Shoah, the Stalinist persecutions and also the birth of the State of Israel characterized by a new language, *‘ivrit*, have stigmatized Yiddish (although this trend has reversed in recent decades). In Massimiliano De Villa’s article, the role of Yiddish as a *lingua franca* is sometimes lost among the many pieces of information that the Author provides on the history and literature of this language. However, it appears that most of this information is essential to fully understand the context where this language has developed. The text is written in very clear Italian and presented in an educationally accessible way. The numerous footnotes provide useful thematic and bibliographical information for further study. [SC].

9. Astori’s *Scritture franche, scrittura franca* (pp. 182–212, where *scrittura franca* basically means ‘script like a *lingua franca*’) deals with communication between people of different languages and focuses on pasigraphy as a possible solution. He explores the concept of pasigraphy as a universal written language and presents a rather detailed historical exposition of the ideas and scholars related to this topic (cf. in particular, pp. 183–188). The Author also includes among the pasigraphic systems all the earliest written representations traceable to the typology of ideographic scripts (from ancient Egyptian to Chinese), which would directly encode thought without going through the phonetic rendering of the word itself (p. 184).

Other examples, among those mentioned by the Author, include a Yukhagir girl’s letter to her ex-boyfriend and, in more recent times, assembly instructions for furniture or behavior faces in case of emergency landings. Following this detailed and varied historical excursus, he also reports on his experience during ‘General Linguistics’ classes for the Master of Arts degree where he

had given his students the task of inventing pasigraphic systems, examples of which he reports. He then illustrates the more structured systems: the Bliss-symbolics, two picture dictionaries and the Emojitalian. Specifically, in Emojitalian, gender and number inflection is expressed through analytic expression. Nouns do not show inflection, but are assigned to the natural gender and the plural is represented through sign doubling or addition of the numeral. There is a simplification of the syntactic structure and inflection of words to favor the analytic expression of gender and number. Astori’s contribution is part of a broader body of studies, also carried out by the Author himself and by Francesca Chiusaroli, with special reference to Emojitalian (references in the paper). The Author concludes (pp. 206–208) his contribution by problematizing the state of the art and raising a number of research questions, which are certainly useful for the continuation of scientific inquiry. In fact, while, as the Author himself observes, the ‘most exposed nerve’ of pasigraphic systems is the graphic rendering of the morpho-syntactic plane, one has to wonder how far the use of a pasigraphy for international auxiliary purposes is a viable and usable avenue as a global frank code. [FC].

10. The contribution *Il nahuatl come lingua franca della Nuova Spagna e il nome del gatto come shibboleth* (pp. 213–260, *Nahuatl as the lingua franca of New Spain and the name of the cat as shibboleth*) by Gianguido Manzelli is dedicated to the possible role of *lingua franca* that Nahuatl had in New Spain in the first centuries following the Spanish conquest of Mexico. The paper is divided into two parts: in the first one, the Author addresses the issue of whether the definition of *lingua franca* may be used to describe the status of Nahuatl in Mexico, both before and after the Spanish conquest. With the support of a number of authoritative works published from the 1970s to the present, the Author argues for the possibility of considering Nahuatl a *lingua franca*, which is corroborated by the presence, throughout Mexico, of several ethnonyms and toponyms of Nahuatl origin, some of which were also newly coined in the postconquest era. The second part of the paper is dedicated to the native Nahuatl noun referring to the domestic cat — an animal introduced into America by the Spanish — regarded as a possible *shibboleth*, to show that the use, in many Amerindian languages, of the Nahuatl designation of the cat instead of the Spanish one may be indicative of the diffusion of the Nahuatl language as *lingua franca* before being replaced by Spanish. Through a massive amount of data mostly collected from lexicographical sources of both Nahuatl dialects and other Native American languages, the Author traces the boundaries of the diffusion of the Nahuatl noun for ‘cat’ — *miztōn* /‘misto:n/ in Classical Nahuatl and its variants in other dialects — and co-radical lexemes, distinguishing between these forms and those that, although phonetically similar to

mizton, should be unequivocally traced instead to the Spanish nouns *micho*, *mizo*, *Michino*, etc., generally regarded as having an onomatopoeic origin. An interesting aspect on which the Author frequently dwells is the possible role of the Tlaxcala dialect in the diffusion of the lexeme in question. As is well-known, the Tlaxcalans, who were constantly at war with the Tenochca, provided Cortés with military contingents that proved essential in the conquest of Tenochtitlan and other regions of Central America. Hence, the Author suggests that some of the variants of the Nahuatl noun for the cat — specifically those lacking the final nasal (e.g. *mizto* occurring in the 1555 Spanish-Nahuatl dictionary by Alonso de Molina, *mizto* recorded by Geronimo Thomas de Aquino Cortés y Zedeño in his 1765 grammar and vocabulary of Guadalajara Nahuatl, and other similar forms found both in Nahuatl dialects and in other Amerindian languages as borrowings) — can be ultimately traced back to the Nahuatl dialect of Tlaxcala, which, based on some sources, seems to be characterized by the loss of the final nasal. The hypothesis is interesting, though difficult to verify, both because the loss of the final nasal is perhaps not such a peculiar phenomenon as to require the identification of a single source, and because, at least in some cases, it might be a purely graphic phenomenon, given the frequent absence of notation of the nasal in syllabic coda found in both manuscripts and printings (also without a macron). Nevertheless, it could be a valuable starting point for a broader investigation of the possible influence of the Tlaxcala dialect on the other Nahuatl varieties to be carried out by also considering other phenomena. [VP].

11. The chapter *Too many lingua francas? The strange case of Arabic* by Mauro Tosco (pp. 261–276), the first of two chapters written in English, presents the manifold ways in which Arabic appears as a lingua franca. At first he goes through the definitions of lingua franca, clarifying that in the course of the article he will use a strictly sociolinguistic definition of this term and that he will apply it to the situation of Arabic. Subsequently Tosco presents, following a 2001 essay by J. Owens (see Tosco's article for references), the four “magic circles“ of Arabic: speaking about the innermost circle, i.e. that of the Arab world's dialects, he specifies and defines the term (sometimes debated) of “diglossia“. In fact, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) plays the role of a lingua franca to which everyone is exposed, although it does not constitute the mother tongue of any native. The second circle is that of areas where there are Arab communities outside the Arab world (as in Turkey, Cyprus, Nigeria, Iran): these communities constitute minorities and use standard Arabic as a communication tool, although the sociolinguistic situation does not constitute a state of diglossia, as in the first circle. This part is supported by some geographical maps about the spread of Arabic: they give a better idea of the geo-

graphical situation but sometimes, they require some supplementary explanations (most of all figure 3). Outside the borders of what Tosco defines as “true Arabic“, the Arabic language has in the past played the role of lingua franca in many West and East African countries. Today it suffers competition from European languages: Tosco analyzes in particular the position of the Ethiopian and Somali languages. The last point taken into consideration by the Author is the development of pidgins and creoles in the Middle East (Gulf Pidgin Arabic) and in Africa (Juba Arabic): in the first case it appears widespread especially among migrants, while the second case shows more complex scenarios on the political and ideological point of view, linked to the war in South Sudan. The different forms taken by Arabic as a lingua franca are succinctly and effectively summarized by the Author in the conclusion, which reports his thought according to which Arabic as a lingua franca is far from being replaced by English, as other scholars claim. On the contrary, it remains flourishing and vital. [SC].

12. The second English-language paper is *Limits and potential of Dyula in Burkina Faso: instructions for the use in cooperation* (pp. 277–298), by I. Micheli. This is a very interesting paper related to ethnolinguistic and pragmatic research with the goal of facilitating communication in care settings, especially those characterized by mental illness. In massively multilingual African countries where the population is agglomerating in city centers, languages with a tradition of interethnic communication are favored. In particular, the Author considers reasons for and reasons against the use of the Dyula language in care settings. I. Micheli's work is very informative, and concise, but able to give every essential information without weighing down the reading even for those who have not mastered topics in African linguistics. Particularly appreciable is the precision with which the Author punctuates the reasons why she chooses to define Dyula as a lingua franca, despite the fact that, according to what she reports, it would be better to call it a vehicular language. A difference not totally made explicit between lingua franca proper and dyula would actually seem to be a sociolinguistic specificity. While lingua franca, as is well pointed out in the essays by Baglioni, Banfi and Cifoletti, is characterized by social asymmetry, this is not diriment for dyula, which on the contrary tends to have an equalizing effect and characterizes vast strata of the population. [ARz].

13. In the chapter *Lingua franca e Sprachbund fra pluralità e unità* (pp. 299–326, *Lingua franca and Sprachbund between plurality and unity*) D. Poli shows the lines of continuity and resurgence of central themes related to language contact and the possible *francae* dimensions of languages and commu-

nication. In the first section ('Riaffioramenti' [Resurgence]) Poli reconstructs the thread of the investigation of linguistic thought around the very concept of language when this is central for the casuistry of contact languages in general. In addition to Humboldt and to the 'Humboldt current' as understood by F. Venier in a volume entitled *La corrente di Humboldt. Una lettura di Lingua franca di Hugo Schuchardt* (Roma 2012) (The Humboldt Current. A Reading of Hugo Schuchardt's *Lingua franca*), Poli cleverly quotes Gabelentz and wisely reconnects the work of the two brothers von Humboldt around the theme of the organicism of nature, on the one hand, and the fabric of action, thought and expression (p. 302) on the other. Poli does not avoid confronting the classificatory thought prevailing in the nineteenth century. However, he also well highlights instances contrasting the mechanistic views (which he traces back to Linnaeus, vd. p. 303 n. 6), in particular those collocate language in history to reaffirm the centrality of man (ibid.). This first historical overview concludes with the complementary outcomes of H. Paul's individualism on the one hand, and F. de Saussure's sociality of language on the other, complementary outcomes especially when viewed with Weinreich, and even earlier Schuchardt, thanks to which interference is localized in the speech act of the speaker (p. 304). The second section ('Die lingua franca') reestablishes the original value of the term, which is inextricably linked to interference and certain socio-economic conditions. In the next section ('Un interrogativo' [A Questioning]) Poli presents us with a *memento* of great importance and simultaneously connects the issue of *lingua franca* with the more general question of discourse in public space, drawing on the thought of J. Habermas.

Another problem within the former [scil. the overcoming of focal moments of Western culture in the face of the new instances imported by the politics of integration] concerns the risk of the underlying entry of unprecedented modes of colonization, i.e., of sweetened models of Americanization, Sinicization, etc., replacing previous hegemonies based on ideologies (p. 307)¹

Poli recognizes that the soundness of the *langue-parole* pair is being questioned, since the construction of the text now lies in the "communication strategies suited to the conditions of spontaneity in immediate expression".² This observation brings back to a confluence the thought of language (as a landmark monument and symbol of ideal unity) and *lingua franca* (as interfered linguistic life oriented toward practical unification). Here, then, in the

- 1) It.: «Un altro problema all'interno del primo [scil. il superamento di momenti focali della cultura occidentale «a fronte delle nuove istanze importate dalla politica dell'integrazione»] riguarda il rischio della sottesa immissione di inedite modalità di colonizzazione, ovvero, di modelli edulcorati di americanizzazione, sinizzazione, etc., in sostituzione delle precedenti egemonie fondate sulle ideologie».
- 2) It.: «strategie di comunicazione adatte alle condizioni di spontaneità nell'espressione immediata».

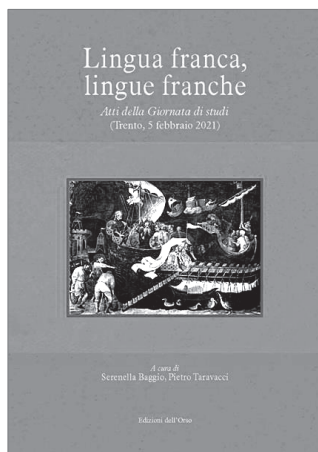
next section ('Lingue franche' [Lingua francas]) Poli recalls the difficulty in arriving at a satisfactory definition of *lingua franca* that would identify its specific features without confusing it with simplified media, such as *pidgin*. In this section Poli also criticizes certain tendencies to form labels that sometimes overlap, and sometimes diverge (he cites various modifiers of the concept of language such as mixed, bridge, common, trade, colonial, auxiliary, vehicular etc., p. 308). The outcome of the overabundance of terminology, which often induces the extensive reuse of terms, would have produced, along with what has been indicated in the previous sections, a concept of *lingua franca* now flattened to that of *passe-partout* vehicular language. After recalling that, *de facto*, globalization is fostering a condition of generalized semi-language, to the detriment of *de jure* assertions in defense of linguistic plurality and richness (eg. the European Union), Poli moves on to the final part of his contribution, consisting of two sections ('La riduzione' [The reduction]) and the concluding 'Coesistenza di opposti' [Coexistence of opposites]). At this point Poli introduces an illuminating reflection on the historical role of Societas Jesus' work in encouraging the use of languages that guarantee maximum spatial extension (p. 313). The title of the section introduces the term 'reduction', which is explained as a critical concept in the S.J. program designed to foster the application of reason to the realization of rules of law and justice and, subsequently, to the acceptance of faith (p. 315).

[...] the Jesuits implement a strategy aimed at safeguarding the dignity (*salus*) of the natives, concretizing the program of reducing the different tribal populations to the same scale of uniform values. Unity in *linguae communes* is to be won by joining the effort of the speakers, in adapting their languages, and of the missionaries, in directing those languages to convergence, with the aim of having a shared instrument for preaching, confessing, and writing (pp. 315–316)³

The goal is communicative uniformity, which smoothes out and perhaps eliminates the problem of misunderstanding among human beings. But this is done not through the imposition of a single language, the *lingua compañera del imperio* (p. 316), but through standardization, that is, through reduction to rules of indigenous languages, which involves convergence of indigenous varieties. The last section is devoted to two eminent figures: Trubeckoj, with the idea of *Sprachbund*, traced back to the ethical-religious horizon of the prince, and Dante, as the one who set the question of the relationship between unity of grammar and plurality of vernaculars (p. 318).

- 3) It.: «[...] i Gesuiti mettono in atto una strategia volta a salvaguardare la dignità (*salus*) dei nativi, concretizzando il programma di riduzione delle diverse popolazioni tribali alla medesima scala di valori uniformi. L'unità in *linguae communes* va conquistata congiungendo lo sforzo dei parlanti nell'adattare le loro lingue, e dei missionari, nell'indirizzarle alla convergenza, con lo scopo di disporre di uno strumento condiviso per predicare, confessare, scrivere».

D. Poli's contribution is very dense and interesting, a valuable moment of reflection and historical synthesis according to an original but always lucid point of view. [ARZ].



Stefano Corno (Lyon) [SC]
stefanocorno@gmail.com

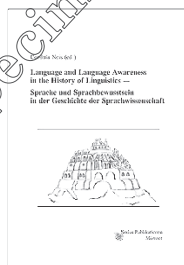
Francesca Cotugno (Verona) [FC]
francesca.cotugno@univr.it

Anna Dentella (Roma) [AD]
anna.dentella@uniroma1.it

Valerio Pisaniello (Pescara) [VP]
valerio.pisaniello@unich.it

Alfredo Rizza (Verona) [ARZ]
alfredo.rizza@univr.it

Alessandro Rossi (Verona) [ARs]
alessandro.rossi@univr.it



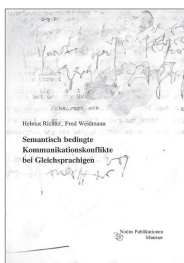
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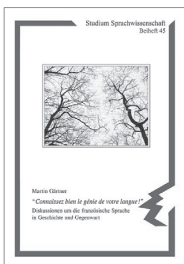
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Gerda Häbler

Leiterstraße 10
DE-14473 Potsdam
hassler@uni-potsdam.de

Angelika Rüter
c/o Nodus Publikationen
Lingener Straße 7
DE-48155 Münster
dutz.nodus@t-online.de

Oder an:

David Cram (Jesus College; Oxford, OX1 3DW; U.K.; david.cram@jesus.ox.ac.uk)

Miguel Ángel Esparza Torres (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos; Campus de Fuenlabrada; Camino del Molino s/n; E-28943 Fuenlabrada, Madrid; maesparza@cct.urjc.es)

Stefano Gensini (Università degli Studi di Roma “La Sapienza”; Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia; Dipartimento di Filosofia; Via Carlo Fea 2; I-00161 Roma stef_gens@libero.it)

Ludger Kaczmarek (Freistraße 2, D-33829 Borgholzhausen; l.kaczmarek@t-online.de)

Masataka Miyawaki (†)

Jan Noordegraaf (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; De Boelelaan 1105; NL-1081 HV Amsterdam; info@jnoordegraaf.nl)

Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérand (Université Blaise Pascal; Clermont-Ferrand II; UFR Lettres, Langues, Sciences Humaines; Laboratoire de Recherches sur le Langage 29, boulevard Gergovia; F-63037 Clermont-Ferrand Cédex 1; jacques-philippe.saint-gerand@univ-bpclermont.fr)

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