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[Sociolinguistic portrait of the Slovenian-speaking area in Italy

Jordi Magrinyà i Domingo

2006



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[Sociolinguistic portrait of the Slovenian-speaking area in Italy¹

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0. Introduction

This working paper is a result of a field research carried out during the 2004-2005 period. This research consisted in the study of specialized bibliography and in the elaboration of a questionnaire, which was answered by eight people with in-depth knowledge of the object of study: the Slovenian-speaking community of Italy. The aim of this paper is to outline the sociolinguistic situation of local Slovenian speakers of the Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The paper is not intended at describing in detail the historical circumstances of the five Slovenian-speaking areas, but it is rather aimed at offering a general picture of these territories and at mentioning the most outstanding features of each of these areas.

1. Territory and population

1.1. Figures of the territory

The Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia² is located in the North-East of Italy. It borders Austria to the North, Slovenia to the East, the Gulf of Venice to the South and the Region of Venice to the West. According to official data of the Region of 31st December 2004, administratively speaking, it is divided in four provinces (Tržaška pokrajina, Goriška pokrajina, Videmska pokrajina i Pordenonska Pokrajina³) and 219 municipalities, it covers a total of 7.847 km² and has 1.207.870 inhabitants. 54% of the total population lives in urban areas (Euromosaic: ²; Stranj 1999: 32).

The Slovenian-speaking area within this territory covers a belt of approximately 30 km wide along the Italian and the Slovenian border and stretches from the Austrian border until the Adriatic Sea (Komac 2003a: 19). This belt⁴ has a surface of 1524 km² (Kaučič-Baša 2004: 2). Depending on the place from two to four local cultures coexist in this region. See Stranj's (1999: 13) description:

² In Slovenian: Furlanija-Juljska Krajina; in Italian: Friuli-Venezia Giulia; in Friulian: Friül-Vignesie Julie; in German: Friaul-Julisch Venetien.

³ In Italian: Provincia di Trieste, Provincia di Gorizia, Provincia di Udine, Provincia de Pordenone.

⁴ There is no denomination to refer to the whole of the territories that form the Slovenian speaking area of Italy. Specialized bibliography hardly makes any reference to these territories as a whole.

1. All the Tržaška pokrajina: 212 km² with a total of 283.000 inhabitants in the census of 1981.
 2. Less than half of Goriška pokrajina: 193 km² with a total of 96.000 inhabitants in the census of 1981.
 3. A small portion of Videmska pokrajina: 1200 km² with a total of 53.000 inhabitants in the census of 1981.
- In total: 1.605 km² and 432.000 inhabitants.

It should be pointed that Italy does not make censuses of the Slovenian-speaking area as a unity, but of each of the provinces as a whole, and therefore it is difficult to obtain exact figures of the population that lives in the ethnic Slovenian territory. With regard to the size of this ethnic Slovenian territory it is possible to find different data in the bibliography.

While the division in provinces of the ethnic Slovenian territory goes in connection with the administrative division of the Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the territorial division of the Slovene community follows geographic, linguistic (dialectological), political and historical criteria. This division is explained in point 2.

1.2. The four local cultures

In the whole region of Furlanija-Juljska krajina four different local linguistic groups are found -Friulians, Italians, Slovenians and Germans- , but the figures that appear in the bibliography on the number of people in each community do not always coincide.

Stranj's data (1999: 18)	Data (referred to year 1997) of Laval University
Friulians: 600.000 approx. (60%)	Italians: 635.000 (53,5%).
Italians: 500.000 approx. (50%)	Friulians: 531.000 (43,0%).
Slovenians: 100.000 approx. (10%)	Slovenians: 56.000 (4,7%)
Germans: no data	Germans: 0,4 %

In order to understand the reason behind this distortion of numbers, it is advisable to see the explanations given by Stranj and Kaučič-Baša concerning the population censuses:

“The Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia is not regarded as a multiethnic system. Essentially, Italians have been defined as the largest nationality and have been excluded of being considered as a minority of the regional population. Friulian language is still seen as a dialect, which gives the impression that Italian population is by far the largest and that there is only a few Slovenian and German population living in the regional borders” (Stranj 1999: 18).

We have no demographic data of Slovenians in the population censuses after 1971⁵, because the Slovenian minority is reluctant to the census recount, and thus the number of Slovenians shown in the results of the censuses has always been smaller. In addition, the data concerning language shown in the Italian censuses a priori can not be an indicator of the ethnic belonging. These censuses put on the same level the national belonging with the language each individual speaks within the family. As a result, not only Slovenians who have a poor linguistic competence in Slovenian and thus speak Italian are counted as Italians, but also those with a good command of Slovenian who can not speak it within the family are included -the number of mixed marriages has increased in the last years, non Slovenian partners do not know any Slovenian because they do not study it at school”. (Kaučič-Baša 2004: 2).

Consequently, it is obvious that the figures concerning the ethnic origin of the population and the number of speakers are highly politicised and thus are not reliable. As stated by Kaučič-Baša, this is the reason why “the figures about the current number of inhabitants are mere estimations” (Kaučič-Baša 2004: 2).

1.3. Interethnic relations

Even though the interethnic relations are not the same across the Slovenian-speaking area, as explained by Stranj, it is possible to find a widely extended point in common along the Slovenian belt regarding the relationship between the different groups: if we think that there is some kind of interethnic opposition (which is not always the case), this happens between the Italian community, eminently dominant, and the other communities (Stranj 1999:15).

⁵ According to Unuk, “In Italy there are official figures (concerning the ethnic origin) before WWI, after this war there are figures available only of the Slovenian-speaking territory of 1921. After WWII there are figures only of Trzaska pokrajina of years 1961 and 1971” (1997:37).

As a result, it could be said that the most latent interethnic tension in this area is nowadays between Slovenians and Italians. Stranj mentions that the process of italianization -current main cause of tensions between Slovenians and Italians- has always benefited from the processes of migration that have taken place (Stranj 1999: 17).

Lastly, Stranj explains that presently the confrontation and the tensions are latent, but not violent. The Italian community is not afraid of disappearing due to minorities, but rather aims at maintaining class privileges. The minority population -the Slovenian in this case- is afraid of assimilation and gives importance to their own defense: cultural collaboration, demands for protection... (Stranj 1999: 19).

2. The five Slovenian-speaking communities: figures and history

The Slovenian belt is traditionally divided in five different areas, each of which has its own history, its own dialects, and, in short, its own and exclusive idiosyncrasy. In order to understand the current sociolinguistic situation, a short description and a historical overview of each of these zones will be provided (from North to South).

2.1. *Kanalska dolina*⁶

As explained by Komac, it is a narrow valley of around 20 km long. It is located between Italy, Austria and Slovenia. Nowadays four linguistic communities coexist there: the Italian, the Slovenian, the German and the Friulian speaking communities. Only Slovenian and German are considered local languages of Kanalska dolina (Komac 2002: 30; Komac 2003b: 130).

According to figures provided by S.L.O.R.I.⁷, in 1981 there were 1.500 Slovenians, that is to say a 16,4% of the total population. In contrast, official figures mention 1.200 (Unuk 1997: 38). In addition, according to official figures of 1983, there was a total population of 8.866 people, among which a 10,1% (895) were Slovenians, an 81,4% (7.236) were Italians and an 8,5% (755) were Germans

⁶ In German: Kanaltat. In Italian: Val Canale

⁷ Slovensko Raziskovalni Institut v Italiji. Slovenian Research Institute of Italy. It is an organization belonging to the Slovene community.

(Klemenčič 1995: 86; in Komac 2003a: 24). In any case, in spite of the divergence in figures, it should be taken into account that figures of 1910 show that the Slovenian population at that time was conformed by 1.700 persons (Unuk 1997: 38), and thus a tendency towards a decline in the number of people of Slovenian origin should be acknowledged.

2.2. Rezija⁸

It is a small and pretty inaccessible valley with a very small population. Basically, three cultures coexist there: the Italian, the Friulian and the Slovenian (Resian). According to figures provided by S.L.O.R.I., in 1981 a total of 1.500 people was Slovenian, that is to say a 98% of the population (Unuk 1997: 38). Komac indicates that 1400 people live there now, the great majority Slovenians, some Friulians and some Italians who speak either Italian or a kind of mixture between Resian and Italian (Komac 2003a: 25). However, according to Steenwijk, in 1998 there were 1.298 people; twenty years ago there were 1.805 and in 1951 there were 3.359 (2003: 216); according to Komac (2003a: 20) in 1910 there were 4.700. Hamp explains that this notable population decline is due to the following reasons: "After the consequences of urbanization, emigration, the rapid communication networks, the decline of the rural economies, and the earthquake of 1976 the population of the valley has been reduced to less than 2.000 people" (1989: 197).

Besides, Unuk suggests that already in 10th and 11th century Resians were in touch with Kanalska dolina through the valleys of Reklanica and Dunja, whose process of Friulisation ended in 16th century. This way, Resian Slovenians were progressively isolated from the rest of the Slovenians until they completely lost contact (Unuk 1997: 41). For example, as highlighted by Šekli (2004: 48), Resian Slovenians did not participate in the process of creation of a Slovenian literary language (standard) in the second half of the 19th century. It may be that, as a result, nowadays the most latent conflict in the area concerning linguistic issues refers to the origin of the language, that is to say, to the unity of the language.

⁸ In Italian: Resia

2.3. *Beneška Slovenija or the Venetian Slovenia*⁹: *Terske doline and Nadiške doline*¹⁰

Terske doline. Unuk states that this zone is formed by a set of valleys, in some of which Slovenian is still spoken. Moreover, Friulians and Italians live there as well (Unuk 1997: 41). Figures provided by S.L.O.R.I. show that in 1981 5.000 Slovenians lived there, a 35,7% of the total population. However, according to official figures, they were 4.500 (Unuk 1997: 38), and according to Komac (2003a: 26) the official figures of 1983 demonstrate a 37% of Slovenian population. In any case, the number of Slovenians has diminished considerably with relation to 1910 - 14.500 people as shown by Unuk (1997: 38)-. In present, Slovenian is limited to family surroundings (Komac 2003a: 25-26).

Nadiške doline. Komac explains that this set of valleys border Slovenia. The Slovenian population is larger and more homogeneous than that of the valleys of Terske doline (Komac 2003a: 25-26). According to figures provided by S.L.O.R.I. and by Italy, in 1981 there were 8.000 Slovenians, a 89,4% of the total population, which represents a decline in comparison to the 18.500 Slovenians populating the area in 1910 (Unuk 1997: 38).

2.4. *Two provinces: Goriška pokrajina and Tržaška pokrajina*

The Slovenian-speaking area of Goriška pokrajina, located North of Tržaška pokrajina, occupies less than half of the province of Gorica. It is composed by five municipalities that cover 193 km². The main city is Gorica, which has become more symbolically attached to the Slovenian city of Nova Gorica since the entrance of Slovenia in the European Union on 1st May 2004. According to figures provided by S.L.O.R.I., the Slovenian population amounted to 15.000 in 1985, a 16% of the total population (Komac 2003a: 20). This figure shows a large diminution in comparison to the 21.000 of 1910 (Unuk 1997: 38).

The Slovenian-speaking area of Tržaška pokrajina covers a total 212 km² and in 2004 had 242.235 inhabitants in the census. This urban area suffered an utterly important decline regarding the number of population with Slovenian origin in the 20th century. According to official figures, in 1910 the number of Slovenian population amounted to 69.000 people, whereas according to S.L.O.R.I

⁹ In Italian: La Slavia Friulana

¹⁰ In Italian: Valli del Torre and Valli del Natisone

(Komac 2003a: 20) in 1985 there were 49.000 people, at that time a 17% of the total population.

2.5. Summary frame of the history of these five zones and frame concerning the consequences in relation to the percentages of the Slovenian population

(Information extracted from the article “Slovensko-Italijanski odnosi 1880 – 1956. Poročilo slovensko-italijanske zgodovinsko-kulturne komisije”, Komac 2003a, Unuk 1999 and Kaučič-Baša 2004)

Kanalska dolina, Goriska pokrajina, Trzaska pokrajina		Rezija, Beneska Slovenija	
1797	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These three areas are part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, same as a large part of the current Slovenia. - Kanalska dolina has two official languages: German and Slovenian. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They begin to be part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after being part of the Republic of Venice since 1420. 	1797
1866	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Goriska pokrajina and Trzaska pokrajina have three official languages: German, Slovenian and Italian. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They begin to be part of Italy by means of a plebiscite. 	1866
1919	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Treaty of Saint Germain: annexation of one third of the current Slovenian territory to Italy. - Incipient policy of pressure against Slovenes. - The migration of Slovenes from the local territory begins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neither linguistic nor national rights are recognized. - Decline of rural economies. 	1919
20's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrival of fascism. - Prohibition to use Slovenian in public; italianization of place names; prohibition of press in Slovenian; closure of Slovenian schools; migration of between 20.000 and 30.000 Slovenians of Italy. - Displacement of Slovene civil servants to the interior of Italy and of Italians to the Slovenian territory. 		20's
1947	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After WWII and the Treaty of Paris, Goriska pokrajina and Kanalska dolina continue to be part of Italy. - Certain linguistic rights of Slovenes of Gorica are recognized, but not in Kanalska dolina. - Trzaska pokrajina is declared the Free State of Trieste. - Beginning of a policy of creation of homogeneous Italian villages and cities¹¹ in the lands expropriated to the Slovenes. This policy, which became worse after 1954, is still in place nowadays and it is explicitly intended at “correcting the Italian ethnic discontinuity which could be fatal when handing over Trieste to Italy” (Prim. Corrado Belci 1989; cited in Kaucic-Basa 2004:19) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After WWII, and due to the Treaty of Paris, they continue to be part of Italy. - No linguistic rights are recognized to the Slovenes living in this area. 	1947

¹¹ Italians, Slovenes and Croatians willing to settle in Italy after their territories became part of Yugoslavia after II World War were moved there.

1954	- The Free State of Trieste disappears. The city of Trieste and its surroundings are now part of Italy. The Istrian peninsula begins to be part of Yugoslavia. - Some linguistic rights of the Slovenes of the area of Trieste are recognized. - Around 3.000 Slovenes emigrate to Argentina. - Thousands of Italians from Istria move to Trzaska pokrajina.		1954
2000 ¹²	- Act 482 recognizes some rights of the Slovene community of Kanalska dolina.	- Act 482 recognizes some rights to the communities.	2000

Due to these historical circumstances the decline in the number of Slovenian speakers will be notable during 20th century. The following figures show this:

<i>Percentages of Slovenes in the territories of settlement</i>						
Year	Kanalska dolina	Rezija	Terske doline	Nadiške doline	Goriško	Tržaško
1901	27,0	99,4	38,3	99,4	27,6	21,3
1911	19,5	100	35,3	94,8	33,5	32,5
1921	17,0	100	39,6	91,0	28,9	18,5
1951	19,6	39,5	82,6	11,0	13,2	-
1961	8,6	-	-	-	-	-
1971	17,4	90,0	13,7	82,0	11,6	8,2
1981	16,4	98,0	35,7	89,4	14,5	10,3

(Unuk 1997: 37)

3. On dialectology and standardization

One of the main features of Slovenian language is its high degree of diversity if we bear in mind its relatively low number of speakers. According to Logar (1993: 5), Slovenian is the most diverse Slavic language. Accordingly, this linguistic diversity is also present in the Slovenian-speaking area of Italy.

Nowadays the dialects of Kanalska dolina can be divided in two groups: the first belongs to the dialectal group of Primorsko (littoral) and the second belongs to the dialectal group of Koroško (Carinti) (Komac 2003b: 131).

¹² In fact the law was passed on 15 December 1999.

With regard to the languages of Rezijan and of Beneška Slovenija their singularity should be emphasized: “The dialectal features of the area of Beneška Slovenija and Rezija are so that it is easier to understand them through standard Slovenian language” (Dapit 2002: 302). As indicated by Šekli (2001: 50-51) and Dapit (2002: 304), in Rezija there are four very different varieties: Bila, Njiva, Osoanë and Solbica. Nowadays part of the Resian population believes that their language has nothing to do with Slovenian. Something similar happens with some members of the community of Beneška Slovenija. The importance of this lies in two questions: 1. whether these linguistic codes are part of the group of languages protected by law or not; 2. the issue of origin, identity and national belonging of these groups, particularly the Resian, which generates a lot of controversy among this population. These dilemmas are not only a result of the dialectal divergence, as explained by Steenwijk (2003: 220) “Not long time ago, principally during the fascist period, the policy of the state towards the Slovenian minority was very negatively applied on the principle of “divide and win”.

The dialectal varieties of Beneška Slovenija, Goriška pokrajina and Tržaška pokrajina are classified as sub-dialects of the group of Primorsko (littoral). The speakers of the last two have no doubts about the close relationship of their language with Slovenian. As for the most extended Slovenian standard code, Lenček explains that its spheres of use are to be found in writing, in education and in the media. At present its structure - shaped in debates and linguistic discussions since the beginning of its creation until nowadays - differs very much from the spoken forms (Lenček 1982: 251-260). In a situation of such a great dialectal diversity, in which the only common code for the whole community it is not close to the speaker, the creation of different literary languages, which historically has often been in daily agenda (Lenček 1982: 251-260), is still a relatively notable element both in Rezija and in a portion of Beneška Slovenija, as remarked by Dapit (2002). This author explains that in Rezija the use of the local literary language is and has been quite exceptional¹³. According to Šekli (2001: 54-55) in 1991 the Resian community asked Steenwijk to write some Resian literary norms. This linguist wrote five different sets of norms: one for each dialectal group and one for the whole valley. However, as explained by Luigia Negro and Matej Šekli, these norms have not been accepted by the whole of the community and therefore, there is still a lot of controversy concerning their use.

¹³ Rezija is an area with an utterly important oral literary tradition, therefore historically written language has not had almost any chance to develop.

Dapit indicates that the written tradition of Nadiške doline, on the contrary, has played an important role in the life of the valley, even though it has had a closer relationship to the Pan-Slovenian written tradition. At present both written forms coexist in Nadiške doline, the Slovenian literary language and the local literary language, as well as written Italian and Friulian (Dapit 2002: 302).

According to Šekli and Dapit, since the seventies in the 20th century the authors of both Nadiške doline and Rezija started to use its own literary language. This way, the local dialect has gained prestige in the sphere of literary creation. Currently, the youngest authors write mainly in the local literary language (Šekli 2004: 8; Dapit 2002: 305-306).

Šekli (2004: 9) states that in Terske doline, with the exception of the manuscripts Videmski rokopis (1458) and Černejski rokopis (1497), there has hardly been any literary tradition in any Slovenian variety and to some extent this still happens nowadays.

4. Linguistic legislation

4.1. Legislative texts

- Constitution of the Italian Republic (1947)

Article 3

(1) All citizens possess an equal social status and are equal before the law, without distinction as to sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, and personal or social conditions.

Article 6

The Republic shall safeguard linguistic minorities by means of special provisions.

- Statute of Friuli-Venezia Giulia

Part I. Linguistic protection of the Region. Chapter I.

Constitution of the Region.

3. In the region equal rights and treatment are recognized to all citizens, whatever the linguistic group they belong to, with the protection of the ethnic and cultural characteristics of each.

- International agreements after WWII.

These agreements adopted by the Republic of Italy and the Yugoslavian Federation recognize certain linguistic rights to Slovenes of Tržaška and of Goriška pokrajina, but not of Videmska pokrajina.

- Act 482/1999. Norms on the protection of historical linguistic minorities.
- Act 38/2001. Specific for the Slovene minority.

4.2. Positive aspects of the current linguistic legislation

- Recognition of Slovene communities in Videmska pokrajina. For the first time in a legislative text, it is mentioned that these communities are part of Italy.
- Legal possibility to use Slovenian in local administration.
- Slight introduction of Slovenian in education institutions in Videmska pokrajina: the private school of Špeter¹⁴, in which bilingual classes have been taught for years, is recognized by the authorities.
- Creation of the Consultative Committee, which has to influence and decide on matters of interest for the Slovene communities.

4.3. Negative aspects of the linguistic legislation

- The issue of national identity and the name of the language. Legal documents talk about Slovene communities and Slovenian language without taking into account that there are groups, such as the one in Rezija, which do not identify themselves in these terms. Consequently, these communities do not ask for the right to linguistic protection.
- The issue of percentages. The protection does not cover the whole of the territory, where historically Slovenian-speaking population could be found. According to Art. 4 of Law 38/2001, in order for a territory to be considered historically Slovenian so that the policies of protection could be applied, it is necessary that a minimum of a 15% of the electoral roll or a third of the local councillors of the towns in the area so demands it.
- Italian is regarded as the priority language and in some spheres it is imperative.
- The partial application of Act 38/2000. As the reach of the Slovenian-speaking territory has not been determined yet - the main point of divergence is the municipality of Trieste - the application of measures of protection to the rest of the municipalities of the province remains blocked.

5. Education

5.1. *Goriška pokrajina and Tržaška pokrajina*

In these two zones the public education system is conformed by two networks: Italian schools and Slovenian schools. All these schools function according to the same principles and norms. However, in Slovenian schools Italian is a mere subject and the vehicular language is Slovenian. In Italian schools no Slovenian is taught.

Komac (2003a: 28) explains that there are Slovenian public schools for all ages: pre-primary schools, primary schools (5 years of duration), lower secondary schools (three years) and upper secondary schools. The number of enrolments in secondary education seems to be decreasing. The figures available (Komac 2003a: 28) show that the number of enrolments increased considerably only in primary schools, whereas this number decreased significantly in secondary schools, with the exception of the lower secondary school of Goriška pokrajina, which had an increase of one student. According to Unuk, "The low number of enrolments - less than 30 students per school - is a problem for all the schools". (Unuk 1997: 43).

5.2. *Beneška Slovenija, Rezija and Kanalska dolina*

The situation of education in Slovenian has historically been very different in these zones, all of which belong to Videmska pokrajina.

Gruden states that a bilingual school (Italian – local Slovenian of Nadiške doline) started to function in Špeter (Nadiške doline, Beneška Slovenija) in 1980. Its activities as a school were not legalized until 1992 (Gruden 1994: 4). Thanks to article 12 of the Act 38 of 2001¹⁵, in the year 2001/02 the center was recognized by Italy and was incorporated to the public education system. Špolad indicates that in this schools lessons are given by two teachers, one of whom speaks Italian and the other local Slovenian. Moreover, this school also introduces standard Slovenian (Špolad 2001/2002: 167-168). According to Špolad, this school is currently the most important of Nadiške doline (2001/2002: 168). In the television program "Obzorja" broadcasted in February 12, 2005 the introduction of two weekly optional hours of

¹⁴ In Italian: San Pietro al Natisone

¹⁵ This is the only article of this Act that has been applied

Slovenian in the lower secondary school in Špeter and in the high school in Čedad¹⁶ were mentioned.

Far from this, only one hour per week of Resian and of literary Slovenian are taught respectively in some primary schools in Rezija and in Kanalska dolina (Šekli 2001: 6; Komac 2003a: 30; Komac 2003b: 135). In this context, it is important to bear in mind that, as emphasized by Stranj, when pupils start going to Italian pre-schools, they usually stop using the Slovenian dialect even though they understand it (Stranj 1988: 52). It should also be pointed out that as said by Rudi Bartaloth during a visit to Kanalska dolina, already since 1976 Planika organization has been teaching private courses of Slovenian language to children and adults.

5.3. Other aspects on education

A pretty important issue that we find in the schools of the three provinces is that non Slovenian-speaking families and mixed families have started to enroll their children in Slovenian schools. However, there are also a lot of cases in which Slovenian families, and particularly mixed families, enroll their children in non Slovenian-speaking schools. Stranj (1988: 48-49) mentions that a minimum of 75% of Slovenian families enrolled their children in Slovenian primary schools; between 25% and 50% of mixed couples did the same; and, between a 0,1% and a 0,5% of Italian families did so too. At this point, it is important to observe that mixed couples constitute a considerable source of loss of Slovenian speakers. In fact, only between the 25% and 50% of Slovenes whose couple is not Slovene enroll their children in Slovenian schools, the rest do not. There is no need to mention the 25% of Slovenian families which do not enroll their children in Slovenian schools.

It is interesting to point out that there are still cases of parents who doubt whether bilingual education is adequate, even if their children are already enrolled in Slovenian schools or in the bilingual Videmska pokrajina. As explained by psychologist Pertot in the television program “Brez meja” broadcasted on 26 March 2005, it is basically the parents whose children have some sort of learning problems at school that have these doubts. According to Pertot, some psychologists recommend these parents that their children should leave one of the languages, with the belief that bilingualism is the source of the problem. The idea of bilingualism as a negative element is not only present in these cases. In a visit to Rezija, Luigia Negro, the president of the association Rozajanski Dum, mentioned that until not long ago a

¹⁶ Esl.: Čedad. It.: Cividale del Friuli

teacher of the pre-school of Rezija recommended the parents not to speak Resian to their children, because that would negatively affect their development.

As a final point, as explained by Kaučič-Baša (1995: 3), it should be emphasized that with regard to higher education, Slovene students with Italian citizenship can only study in Slovenian in universities in Slovenia.

6. Slovenian media. Television, radio and periodical publications

(Source of information Euromosaic: 9-10; Komac 2003a: 30-32; Unuk 1997: 46; Laval University: 6-7; and other sources mentioned in the text)

Even though Italian legislation makes some distinction in this sphere, the majority of the media in the Slovenian belt of Italy is without any doubts in Italian. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning some of the media of the Slovene community.

Currently there are no Italian television channels - public or private - that broadcast exclusively in Slovenian. Only RAI 3 offers some weekly programs entirely in Slovenian, but these programs can hardly be tuned in all over the Slovenian-speaking territories, particularly in Videmska pokrajina, as explained in the article "Tutela, Italia bocciata".

Concerning the radio there are some stations which broadcast entirely in Slovenian:

1. Radio Opčine. Private station that broadcasts for Tržaška pokrajina.
2. Radio Val. Local station of Gorica.
3. Ljudski Radio Gorica/Radio Popolare Gorizia. Station which broadcasts two hours a day in Slovenian.
4. Radio Trieste A. It is a regional department of the radio and television corporation RAI and it is the most important media for Slovenes in Italy. It covers the whole of the Slovenian belt from Trieste until Kanalska dolina. It has a daily programming of 12 hours: from 7h until 19h. The linguistic code used in this radio is mainly Slovenian standard, even though it is possible to listen to dialects in some programs. Besides, the Resian linguistic code has only a weekly short program of half an hour (Šekli 2001: 6).

Of all the Slovenian publications that can be found in this area, the ones that play an outstanding role in the Slovenian society of the belt are without any doubts the newspaper *Primorski dnevnik*¹⁷ and the weekly *Novi List* published in Gorica. Besides, it should be pointed out the importance of calendars, especially the ones of *Beneška Slovenija* and *Rezija*, as in these areas there are few publications in Slovenian. Apart from these, weekly, monthly and sporadic publications can be found, as well as four publishing houses.

In short, media and particularly television are one of the main causes of the linguistic assimilation of the Slovenian-speaking community in Italy.

7. Slovenian non-governmental organizations

(A list is available in Komac (2003a, 30-32) and Unuk (1997, 44-45))

Slovene communities in Italy have a highly developed system of organizations. The whole of these organizations are divided basically in two groups: the organizations with a catholic tendency, grouped under the confederation *Svet slovenskih organizacij – Confederazione delle organizzazioni Slovene*, and the organizations with a laic and leftis tendency, grouped under the confederation *Slovenska kulturno-gospodarska zveza* (*Euromosaic*: 10-11). In spite of the notable disagreements they had during a certain period of time, at present these two tendencies are closer than ever and have started to work together for the defense of the interests of the Slovene communities in Italy.

Briefly, the rich associative life of Slovenes in Italy should be emphasized, without forgetting that there are areas of *Rezija* and of *Terske doline* in which there are lot fewer organizations than in others.

8. On politics

Following the programs of some of the numerous parties that are governing in coalition, the regional administration is adopting measures that benefit the minority languages of the region.

¹⁷ *Primorski dnevnik* (Newspaper of Primorska – littoral). It is published in Trieste, but it also has publishing houses in Gorica and Cedad. It has a monthly circulation of around 10.000 copies.

The provincial administration of Videm is also in favor of local languages and has recently published an advertisement of an entire page stating “Reclaim your voice. Speak Slovenian” in order to promote Slovenian in Novi Matajur and Dom. Furthermore, this administration published a communiqué in which it stressed that “based on the Act 482/1999, the province of Videm recognizes that Slovenian is a language and offers the possibility to use it in all contexts”. (Primorski Dnevnik, 29.07.2005). The provincial administration of Gorica also seems to be sensitive towards the Slovenian issue. Even though the right wing coalition that ruled the province until 2006 was opposed to any advancement concerning national and linguistic rights of Slovenes to the point of excluding Slovenian from the Statute of the province, the new elected left wing government might bring some hope to the Slovenian community.

With relation to municipal administrations, the situation varies from municipality to municipality, but it could be concluded that in places where right-wing coalitions are in power the Slovenian issue “is not well understood”. Notwithstanding this misunderstanding, it should be pointed out that municipal administrations - particularly Videmska pokrajina and Goriška pokrajina - often show some sensibility towards local communities.

9. Other matters. Why is it disappearing?

9.1. The use of Slovenian and the real possibilities to use it

One of the main problems for Slovenian speakers in Trzaška pokrajina and Goriška pokrajina is that they have few real possibilities to use their own language.

As explained by Kaučič-Baša (1998: 42-43; 44), it should be underlined that due to the lack of even passive Slovenian knowledge by the majority of the Italian population - they do not even study it at school -, Slovenian has no place in the process of inter-understanding between Italian and Slovenian-speaking communities. In consequence, Slovenian is reduced to an inter-group use and it only manifests itself in the relations among the Slovene communities (Kaučič-Baša 1998: 80; 1993: 22). “In practice, Slovenian can only be used in the following spheres: family, friends, school, media in Slovenian, the church, and in businesses run by members of the Slovene communities, but not always” (Kaučič-Baša 1998: 80-90).

Moreover, as highlighted by Kaučič-Baša (1998: 47; 1992: 9), usually Slovenian is not even spoken within the family, particularly in mixed marriages, as it is difficult for Slovenes to keep in touch with the language and the Slovenian environment, and they may end up losing the language completely. This is one of the main reasons behind the decrease in knowledge of Slovenian among the population of this origin.

9.2. *The italianisation of language*

Another problem of Slovenian in Italy refers to the high degree of italianization and venetization.¹⁸ It is obvious that this is not an inoffensive phenomenon of borrowing. As explained by some authors, many Italian words enter massively in the Slovenian code in this area. As a result, as explained by Kaučič-Baša, the most important problems concerning the italianization of the corpus of Slovenes in Italy refer to the semantic fields related to certain professional spheres and to the denomination of events related exclusively to the Italian culture and traditions, which do not exist in Slovenian and thus do not appear in Slovenian dictionaries. From the point of view of the Slovenian speaker in Italy words should be created to cover these areas. The problem is that this lack of Slovenian words does not only affect individuals, but also the whole community (Kaučič-Baša 1993: 23).

9.3. *The issue of prestige*

If we consider everything that has been mentioned until now, it is obvious that Slovenian has no prestige in Italy. All the circumstances that surround Slovenian, its use and its possibilities of use (legislation, education, media, politicization, etc) contribute to this perception of subordination. As expressed by Kaučič-Baša (2004: ¹⁸): “The stereotype that Slovenes are a nation without history and culture is very extended within Italian culture. Slovenes themselves adopt this stereotype unconsciously and identify themselves with its negative content [...]. As Slovenian does not have the prestige of being an official language, it is regarded as inferior and inadequate for public communication. This is how Italians and Slovenes feel about it. In the case of Slovenes they develop a feeling of inferiority that has a negative influence in the use of the language”. Nevertheless, language prestige could possibly be perceived differently depending on the provinces.

¹⁸ As Vittorio Dell’Aquila accurately points out, “Venetian cannot be forgotten as it is the most widely spoken language variety in the region”.

10. Other aspects. Questionnaires.

In order to be able to corroborate, refute, correct, update and expanded on the information obtained in the bibliographic study, a field research was carried. This research consisted in analyzing the answers of a questionnaire given by eight informants selected according to their relationship and knowledge of the circumstances of the area. There was an informant for Kanalska dolina, one for Rezija, two for Beneška Slovenija, two for Goriška pokrajina, one for Tržaška pokrajina and one for all the zones.

10.1. Do Slovenian speakers have the feeling that their language is endangered?

Even though the answers show different points of view concerning the process of linguistic disappearance, the majority of the informants somehow agree that Slovenian speakers are aware of this danger. The informant who has the most different point of view and disagrees with the others is from Kanalska dolina: "I believe that there is not a real, a tangible feeling that the language is endangered", "I think that the dialect will continue to exist perhaps with loans from the literary language. Slovenian literary language will become the language of everyday use, the language of the neighbor and the language for the economic communication with the neighbors".

The reasons why informants allege that there is a general feeling that Slovenian is in danger are neither exclusive nor exactly the same. These are some of these reasons: corruption of the linguistic corpus; diminution of the population; lack of feeling of belonging to a group; the youngest generations do not use the language so much; ignorance about the own dialect; the question of prestige; the pressure by the Italian community; the conception of bilinguals as negative by some speakers; the lack of education in Slovenian.

10.2. How do Slovenian speakers feel about having so many languages spoken in their territory?

The majority of the answers offer a very similar description of the general view of Slovenes concerning the multilingual situation in which they live.

However, different nuances can be found, which helps us to understand that neither the whole of the population nor all the municipalities feel the same way.

After having examined the answers it should be concluded that Slovenian speakers generally do not give an especial value to multilingualism, it seems that they simply accept it as a normal fact and do not think about it.

Nonetheless, the informant of Tržaška pokrajina has a completely different view. It does not coincide with the others, and therefore it should be taken with certain reserves, since he states that Slovenian-speaking people consider their multilingual environment as a positive fact.

10.3. Which relationship do Slovenian speakers have with each of the languages that coexist in their territory?

Even though not all the informants refer to the same languages, we will briefly comment on some of the views regarding the languages they mention.

10.3.1. Slovenian

The relationship towards Slovenian is positive and shows emotional feelings or feelings of familiarity. “Slovenian or Slovenian dialect is the language of the heart”. Moreover, an informant refers to two types of perceptions towards Slovenian: “For some Slovenes our language is like a value, for others it is just a means of communication”.

Besides, there is also the issue of the linguistic code of the dialect and the relationship of Slovenian speakers with Slovenian literary language: “Historically, literary Slovenian has never been present in Rezija, and thus the Resians do not take it as their own literary language”. They are aware of the similarities between literary Slovenian and Resian, but for them they are two completely different languages”.

10.3.2. Resian

The way Resians live their own language is explained in this assertion: “In other conversational situations and with foreigners other codes are used,

as po rozajanskin to ni servija za nikar ‘to speak in Resian is useless’”. It is obvious that Resian does not enjoy any communicative prestige whatsoever.

10.3.3. Italian¹⁹

According to the answers given by the informants, Italian is generally regarded as simply the dominant language in a situation of linguistic contact. It should be pointed out that Slovenian-speaking population does not complain about this and consider this situation as logic and unchangeable: “Without knowledge of Italian, Slovenes of Beneška Slovenija cannot find a job or integrate into society, and thus no competition is possible”, “I have not perceived any hate towards Italian, they are simply aware that it is the official language of their country”. Even though he acknowledges the dominance of Italian, an informant complains about it. “In our everyday life we use Italian, that is to say, Italian has been given to us, and we have to live in Italian, breath in Italian, think in Italian, which is an intrusion in the Slovenian linguistic space, not to speak about the Slovenian spirit and consciousness!”. Following a similar argument another informant points out that “Fascism separated Italian language from old people” and he emphasizes that generally speaking Slovenes are not intolerant towards any other language present in their territory, thus they are not intolerant towards Italian.

In short, Italian in Videmska pokrajina is commonly felt as the dominant language. On the contrary, particularly in Goriška pokrajina and perhaps in Tržaška pokrajina²⁰ too, it seems that there is some kind of discomfort and protest by some Slovenian speakers towards this situation of Italian dominance.

10.3.4. Friulian

Apparently, in areas in which there is a closer contact with Friulian, such as in Rezija and in Beneška Slovenija, there is a more positive relationship towards this language and their speakers. On the contrary, in the rest of the places this relationship is at least more distant. Consequently, assertions with two meanings can be found: “Friulian is the language of our neighbors that should be commanded in order to have a better relationship outside the Slovenian space”; “The

¹⁹ There is no formal difference between Italian and Venetian here, as informants did not make any distinction between them. However, it should be reminded that Venetian is widely spread in the area and it is in contact with Slovenian.

majority of Slovenes know that Friulian exists and understand it, they accept it in a passive way, but there is censorship”; or “The relationship with Friulian is perhaps a bit mixed. In this sense, it also depends on the knowledge: it opens old conflicts and thus it is refused, and besides, the current efforts in favor of standardization and of a more generalized use represent an example of linguistic revitalization”.

10.3.5. German²¹

It is not a coincidence that only informants of Kanalska dolina and Rezija mention this language, as it is geographically the closest. A positive assessment can be concluded from their answers. One states that it is regarded as “a useful language” and the other talks in positive terms, as a language of prestige of a “strong country” and as “an official language” (the word is highlighted on purpose).

10.4. Do Slovenian speakers like to use their language? Do they use it normally?

Even though the informants answered this question very differently, all of them agree in explaining the uses of Slovenian by Slovenian speakers. The election or not of Slovenian depends in two main factors: “Of course that we like to use our language, but not everybody likes it, mainly because they do not have a good command of it, some do not like to show in public that they are Slovenes, particularly in Beneška Slovenija and in Tržaška, Slovenian is not spoken in public, only behind close doors”; “The use of Slovenian by its speakers depends on the command of the language and of the national consciousness”. In the city of Gorica is more common to use Slovenian in public, even though not everybody does so: “It depends on whom! Some use it in every occasion - when we go shopping (in Gorica it is a tradition to use Slovenian due to the regular presence of buyers from Nova Gorica [Slovenia]) or when we answer the phone (even without knowing whether the person who is phoning is Slovene or Italian!). It could be concluded that Slovenian speakers are not able to use their language even in the most favorable circumstances. The historical and contemporary policies that favor monolingualism in Italy have still a big influence in the minds of local Slovenian speakers. To illustrate this point, the words of

²⁰ With regard to these provinces the informant from Kanalska dolina states that “In Trieste and Gorica it is different. The members of the Slovenian minority try hard to put bilingualism in practice”.

²¹ As Vittorio Dell’Aquila remarks, local German varieties enjoy extensive use, perhaps even more than Hochdeutsch or standard German does.

one of the informants: “We would like to use the language more often, more we are not able to do so”.

10.5. Do Slovenian speakers pass on the language to their children?

According to the answers of the speakers, some still pass on the language, but it is obvious that not everyone does so. One informant talks about very worrying figures of non-transmission: “The use of Slovenian is diminishing from generation to generation”; “[...] nowadays the majority of the Resian parents speaks Italian to their children”; “They pass it on but the percentage is limited as mentioned in point 1 [“Every twenty years the assimilation ends up with approximately 20% of native speakers”] and the psycholinguistic message of point 4 [use it always; use it sometimes; use it only when you know that the other speaker is also Slovenian]”. The words of the informants confirm that the abovementioned historical tendency towards a decline still continues. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that currently everything indicates - the informants think so - that a small improvement is taking place regarding linguistic transmission. According to the informants, these improvements are a result of the following phenomena: less stigmatization; a greater cultural awareness and better economic conditions; action by the Slovenian school system and by other organizations; and in addition, the assimilation process stops (children recover the language that parents do not speak it anymore).

11. Conclusions

It is clear that the future of Slovenian in Italy can not be predicted : whether it will live on or it will disappear, where and to what extent. However, if what have been exposed both in the bibliographic research and in the field research of this paper is taken into account, it should be concluded that Slovenian in Italy (all the Slovenian linguistic varieties from this area) is without a doubt an endangered language.

Different symptoms and circumstances that corroborate this assertion have been mentioned throughout the paper. Some of the most notable ones will be mentioned following the classification of “negative factors which determine the future of minority languages without status” available at the UNESCO World Languages Review Synthesis (2005: 95-101).

Political factors

- The prohibition to use Slovenian in public after World War I and after the annexation of these territories.
- The lack of recognition of the presence of local Slovenian population in the province of Videmska pokrajina since the end of WWI until Act 482/1999 was passed.
- The historical politization of the linguistic question (remember the policy of “divide and win” historically applied in Videmska pokrajina).
- The current existence of linguistic policies that favor the predominance of Italian in all spheres and its requirement in certain spheres (the police, the army...), which benefits Italian monolingualism.
- The lack of application of a language protection law.

Demographic factors

- The continuous reduction in population of Slovenian origin since the beginning of 20th century until now.
- The extremely important migratory movements both after WWI and WWII. Historical migrations from rural to urban areas due to economic problems. The departure of university students to universities in Slovenia.
- The highly numerous Italian migration from Yugoslavia and the new demographic structure of Slovenian population which starts after WWII and which breaks the historical continuation of Slovenian settlements, together with the consequent inexistence of essentially Slovenian-speaking population.
- The existence of mixed marriages in which Slovenian language is not transmitted or is not used within the family, or is excluded from education, or is discredited due to its secondary use.

Economic and social factors

- The scarcity of media in Slovenian and the omnipresence of media in Italian. The difficulties to have access to media in Slovenian in places of Videmska pokrajina.
- The scant education in Slovenian (still today) across the province of Videmska pokrajina (particularly in Rezija and Kanalska dolina, with a weekly hour of Slovenian in primary schools). The almost complete inexistence of university education in Slovenian in Italy.
- The stigmatization of Slovenian and some speakers shame and fear for using it, as well as for showing in public that they are Slovene. The conception of Slovenian language as a mere code of communication and its abandonment. The self-denigration of the value of Slovenian language, especially in Rezija. The low social

prestige of Slovenian due to its lack of official status and its invisibility in the eyes of both Slovenian and non-Slovenian speakers.

- The continuous reduction of the intergenerational transmission of Slovenian. A cultural loss by the youngest generations and a generational break.
- The impossibility to use Slovenian with Italian speakers due to their passive knowledge of Slovenian and consequently, the limited possibilities of use in different spheres.
- The lack of awareness of belonging to the group of Slovenian speakers -mostly in Rezija and in Beneška Slovenija-. The issue of the name of the language.
- The scarce associational life both in Terske doline and to a big extent in Rezija. The historical division of Slovenian organizations in catholics and laics.
- The italianisation of the Slovenian corpus. The continuous interferences in the talk of some Slovenian speakers. The loss of linguistic competence by some descendants of Slovenian speakers.
- The generalized negative view of multilingualism by some Italian speakers.
- The historical, economic, political and social subordination of the Slovenian-speaking community, above all in the urban areas, and the fact that to a certain extent this subordination still exists and is accepted - remember that the majority of Slovenian speakers accept that Italian is present everywhere -.

There are plenty of factors that confirm that the future of Slovenian in Italy is really complicated, even though it should be pointed out that in some areas it is more complicated than in others. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that there are factors that offer a minimum of hope.

- A new legislation which does not worsen the previous situation.
- The existence of some mixed couples that enroll their children in Slovenian schools.
- The legal possibility to use one's own language in some administrations.
- A developed system of organizations particularly in Tržaška pokrajina and Goriška pokrajina.
- The possibility to receive education in Slovenian in the schools of Tržaška pokrajina, Goriška pokrajina and Špeter.
- The appearance of positive attitudes towards Slovenian and multilingualism in some non -Slovenian-speaking citizens - mainly in Goriška pokrajina -.
- A feeling of affection towards Slovenian of some of its speakers.
- The lack of acceptance of the linguistic subordination of Slovenian and the use of this language in every occasion by some of its speakers - above all in Goriška pokrajina -.
- The linguistic loyalty of some speakers.

- An improvement in the intergenerational transmission, notwithstanding the continuous decline.
- The appearance of some cases in which assimilation has not taken place. The existence of individual cases that have recovered Slovenian in their adult life.
- The use of literary Slovenian in order to complement some semantic fields totally italianized.

In any case, it is obvious that these circumstances and factors are not enough to counterbalance the situation of risk and the progressive disappearance of Slovenian in Italy that it has been explained in this paper.

In order to get a final portrait of the current situation of Slovenian in different areas along the Slovenian belt, the following words of an informant will be commented on: "If we analyze the phenomenon from a dynamic time perspective, the situation improves in Gorica, as well as in Nadiška dolina (Beneška Slovenija) and in Kanalska dolina, a bit less in Rezija and worsens in Trieste, whereas in the rest of the places of Tržaška pokrajina, the situation is stable after the deterioration that took place in the past decades".

When this informant mentions that the situation improves in some areas, it should be bore in mind that: 1. This does not mean that the improvement is significant enough for the maintenance of Slovenian in the future; and 2. In spite of this relative improvement, the situation is still critical, which means that in reality this improvement is a break in the progressive process of deterioration that has taken place until now.

As a conclusion, perhaps this sentence by an informant from Gorica, the place in which the situation of Slovenian in Italy seems to be the best, helps to summarize the overall situation of Slovenes in Italy and how they feel about it:

"We live in an Italian sea and thus, we have to swim, and this is exactly the reason why it is difficult to carry on and cultivate Slovenian language; it is a tortuous, difficult act, which drowns our spirit everyday".

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Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Number of inhabitants

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13. Summary

Slovenian language is one of the local languages of Italy. Its geographic reach covers an area of 30 kilometers located in the Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia in the border with Slovenia. In this area, Slovenian coexists with three more local languages: German, Friulian and Italian. Since the beginning of the 20th century the number of Slovenian speakers has decreased progressively. A policy that favored monolingualism in Italy, among other historical circumstances, is regarded as the main reason for this decline. Even though it seems that nowadays this decline is losing momentum, the socio-political circumstances are not adequate as to guarantee the maintenance of Slovenian in this area.

Key words: socio-linguistics, Slovenian, Slovenian in Italy, linguistic maintenance, multilingual environment

Povzetek

Slovenski jezik je eden od avtohtonih jezikov Italije. Razteza se na okoli 30 km širokem pasu, ki se nahaja v Avtonomni Deželi Furlaniji-Juljski Krajini vzdolž meje s Slovenijo. Na tem območju slovenščina sobiva skupaj s še tremi avtohtonimi jeziki: nemškimi, furlanskimi in italijanskimi. Od začetka 20. stoletja se število govorcev tamkajšnje slovenščine postopoma zmanjšuje. Jezikovna politika, ki teži po italijanski enojezičnosti, je poleg še nekaterih drugih zgodovinskih dejavnikov glavni razlog za zmanjševanje števila slovenskih govorcev. Četudi izgleda, da se je to zmanjševanje v določenih območjih tega pasu upočasnilo, današnji družbenopolitični pogoji niso dovolj ustrezni, da bi tamkajšnja slovenščina imela zagotovljen obstoj.

Ključne besede: sociolingvistika, slovenščina, slovenenščina v Italiji, jezikovno ohranjenje, večjezično okolje

Riassunt:

La lenghe slovene e je une lenghe autoctone dal Stât talian che si estint suntune fasse di 30 kilometris lunc il confin cu la Slovenie inte Regjon autonome Friûl - Vignesie Julie. In chest teritori il sloven al convof cun trk altris lenghis autoctonis: il todesc, il furlan e il talian. Dal inizi dal 20. secul il numar dai fevelants sloven in cheste zone al è in diminuzion graduâl. La politiche linguistiche in favôr di un monoliguisim talian e je, dongje di altris fatôrs storics, la cause principâl dal cal dal numar dai fevelants sloven. Ancje se al semee che cheste diminuzion e sedi plui lente in ciertis zonis di cheste fasse, lis condizions sociopolitichis a no son avonde favorevulis par garanto la esistence dal sloven in chest teritori.

Peraulis clbf: sociolinguistiche, sloven, sloven in Italie, manteniment linguistic, ambient plurilinguistic

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