Abstract

Australia still has a vibrant linguistic heritage, both from its indigenous people and the people that have left their countries of origin to call Australia home. The Italian community in Australia is the largest non-English-speaking group. However, like all other established immigrant groups, the Italians have been showing a steady shift away from their Italian languages to the use of English only. An analysis of recent censuses and data, obtained through recordings in the home and by participant observation in a transactional domain, presented in this article makes it clear that there are little grounds for optimism on the maintenance of either Italian or any of the Italian regional varieties in Australia.

Keywords: language shift; Italian; Sicilian; Australia.

1. Australia’s multicultural make-up

Australia is truly a multilingual country. Ethnologue (Gordon 2005) reports that there are 231 living languages in Australia. Of these, about 100 are Aboriginal and Torres Island languages and the others are languages other than English spoken by its immigrant communities (see also Clyne 2005). In total, according to the 2006 census, slightly more than 4.4 million people, or 22% of Australians, speak a language other than English.

Australia has experienced a gradual change in the make-up of its population. From Table 1 we can see that the bulk of the immigrant population before the 1990s was from Europe. The last two decades have seen a decline in the number of Europeans coming into the country and an increase in Asian, mainly Chinese and Vietnamese migrants. The Italy-born group is still the largest non-English-speaking group in Australia.¹ According to the 2006 census, the Italian community consists of around 220,500 people who were born in Italy. This is
Table 1. *Population of Australia by birth place*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1954&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1961&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1971&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1981&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1996&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>2001&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>2006&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>United Kingdom</strong>&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>664.2</td>
<td>755.4</td>
<td>1,081.3</td>
<td>1,075.8</td>
<td>1,072.5</td>
<td>1,036.2</td>
<td>1,038.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>160.7</td>
<td>291.4</td>
<td>355.7</td>
<td>389.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Italy</strong></td>
<td><strong>119.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>228.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>288.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>275.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>259.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>238.5</strong></td>
<td><strong>220.5</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>111.1</td>
<td>142.8</td>
<td>206.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>151.1</td>
<td>154.8</td>
<td>159.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>147.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>103.9</td>
<td>120.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>159.0</td>
<td>145.8</td>
<td>126.5</td>
<td>116.4</td>
<td>109.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>104.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>109.3</td>
<td>110.0</td>
<td>109.3</td>
<td>110.6</td>
<td>108.2</td>
<td>106.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>102.1</td>
<td>98.6</td>
<td>95.1</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>74.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong (SAR of China)</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>71.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total overseas-born</td>
<td>1,285.8</td>
<td>1,778.3</td>
<td>2,549.9</td>
<td>2,950.9</td>
<td>3,908.2</td>
<td>4,105.6</td>
<td>4,416.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian-born</td>
<td>7,700.1</td>
<td>8,729.4</td>
<td>10,173.1</td>
<td>11,388.8</td>
<td>13,277.8</td>
<td>13,629.5</td>
<td>14,072.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>8,986.5</td>
<td>10,508.2</td>
<td>12,719.5</td>
<td>14,516.9</td>
<td>17,892.4</td>
<td>18,972.3</td>
<td>20,061.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

na, not available; <sup>a</sup>, census counts; <sup>b</sup>, estimated resident population at 30 June; <sup>c</sup>, includes Ireland in 1954, 1961, and 1971; <sup>d</sup>, excludes Special Administrative Regions (Hong Kong and Macau) and Taiwan Province; <sup>e</sup>, includes country of birth “not stated” and “at sea.”

1.1% of the total Australian population. However, this primacy is under threat by the Chinese-born and Vietnamese-born groups. The Italian community in Australia has also gone through significant changes, particularly in its linguistic make-up and these changes will be the focus of this article.

2. The Italian community in Australia

Since the mid-1970s two aspects concerning Italians in Australia have come to the forefront: the aging of the Italy-born members of the community and the growing numbers of the second and subsequent generations. Indeed, the main change that the Italian community has undergone in recent times is that it is now well into its third and fourth generations. Census data show that the number of second-generation Italian-Australians has become larger than that of the Italy-born population. In 1976 the size of the second generation was 86% that of the first generation. In 1981 it was 18.5% bigger than the first generation (Rosoli 1989; Ware 1981). By 1991 the second generation was 29.2% larger than the first generation. By 1996 it had overtaken the first generation by 40.2%. These figures, however, do not include third and later generation Italo-Australians, which Price (1986) reported already numbered around 60,000 in 1978. The 2006 census reports that over 830,000 people claimed some Italian ancestry (Table 2). This makes the total number of Italo-Australians about 4.1% of the entire Australian population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ancestry</th>
<th>Both parents born overseas</th>
<th>Father only born overseas</th>
<th>Mother only born overseas</th>
<th>Both parents born in Australia</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>435,338</td>
<td>103,264</td>
<td>38,466</td>
<td>255,226</td>
<td>832,294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A detailed analysis of the Italian community in Australia is beyond the scope of this article and has been dealt with elsewhere (Cavallaro 2003, 2010). In this article, the linguistic make-up of the Italo-Australian community and generational shift to speaking English will be presented and analyzed.

3. The Italian language in Australia

According to the 1991 census, 418,804 people in Australia reported speaking Italian at home, an increase of 0.7% from the 415,765 in 1986. Kipp et al. (1995) posit that the figures in the census could really be an underestimate of the real use of community languages in Australia. They argue that the census
question only asked for the language spoken at home and did not take into account that many people, especially the second generation, may use their community language at the home of their parents and/or relatives, and at other community functions, but state that English is their home language. There has been a steady decline in the number of Italian speakers since 1991, with the 2006 census reporting that the number of Italian speakers had fallen to 316,893. The ten languages other than English (LOTEs) most spoken at home are listed in Table 3.

As Table 3 shows, Italian is still the language other than English most widely spoken in Australia, although the speakers Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese are still increasing. However, far from being a linguistically homogeneous community, the Italian community in Australia reflects the complex linguistic situation in Italy. Most Italians that migrated to Australia only speak their local dialects and/or a form of italiano popolare. Very few spoke Standard Italian and even fewer spoke English. Language, then, has always been a very important issue for Italians and, in Australia, Italians quickly realized that economic success was associated with how well and how fast they and, especially, their children, mastered the English language. Acquiring the use of English has been difficult for many first generation migrants. However, the opposite is true with the subsequent generations. In other words, growing up in Australia has meant that children inevitably acquire English, and many fail to develop an active competence in any form of “Italian” or of their parents’ dialect (see discussions in Bettoni 2003, 2007; Bettoni and Rubino 1996; Rubino 2002; and Walker 2003).

### Table 3. The most spoken LOTEs in Australia (number of speakers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>418,804</td>
<td>375,754</td>
<td>352,157</td>
<td>316,893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>285,700</td>
<td>269,775</td>
<td>263,075</td>
<td>252,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>202,494</td>
<td>224,713</td>
<td>244,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic**</td>
<td>162,857</td>
<td>177,606</td>
<td>208,736</td>
<td>243,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>92,360</td>
<td>138,742</td>
<td>220,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>110,187</td>
<td>146,267</td>
<td>173,610</td>
<td>194,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>90,479</td>
<td>91,253</td>
<td>93,181</td>
<td>97,998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>113,336</td>
<td>98,810</td>
<td>75,810</td>
<td>75,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td>64,429</td>
<td>71,347</td>
<td>71,893</td>
<td>67,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>130,739#</td>
<td>69,152</td>
<td>69,628</td>
<td>63,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>66,932</td>
<td>62,771</td>
<td>58,854</td>
<td>53,390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


#, in the 1991 census this category included Serbian/Serbo-Croatian; *, in the 1991 census all the Chinese languages were grouped together; **, includes Lebanese.

4. Linguistic make-up of the Italian community

The Italo-Australians form a very complex speech community. This is in direct contrast to the popular (but erroneous) belief that Italians speak “Italian.” In actual fact the community is linguistically fragmented with its members speaking either a dialect, a regional or popular variety of Italian or Standard Italian, or a mixture of all these varieties (Rubino 2000, 2006; Chiro and Smolicz 2002). This linguistic fragmentation is a factor that contributes to the Italian community’s intergenerational shift to English.

One further aspect compounding the complexity of the linguistic make-up of the Italian community is that in Australia all these “Italian” speakers are in contact with the English language. This close contact with the English language has given rise to ways of speaking that are unique to Australia. The varieties (for there are various) spoken in Australia are often referred to as “Italo-Australian” or “Australitalian” (Andreoni 1967). These terms are applied conventionally to the different varieties of Italian and Italian dialects that are noticeably influenced by English. “Australitalian” is described as a speech variety that is obviously Italian (or dialect) but that exhibits a noticeable influence (lexical, phonological, syntactic, pragmatic, or semantic) from the English language in Australia (see Andreoni 1967, 1978; Bettoni 1981, 1985a, 1987; Comin 1971, 1985; Leoni 1981, 1990; Rando 1967, 1968, 1984; Ryan 1973).3

These varieties are heavily stigmatized both by the English-speaking majority and by members of the Italo-Australian community. In a series of studies to test the attitudes of the Italian community in Sydney toward English and the different varieties of Italian spoken in Australia, Bettoni and Gibbons (1988, 1991) found that English and Standard Italian rated favorably both on solidarity (that is, on likeable/unpleasant and mate/stranger axis) and power (that is, on rich/poorest and educated/uneeducated axis) traits; a “light mixture” consisting of some English transfers on a regional Italian (that is, an Italian with a heavy local accent) basis rated neutral or unmarked for the same traits; and dialect scored close to the mean for solidarity but slightly less for power. However, a “heavy mixture” consisting of a substantial number of English transfers on a dialect base was found to be strongly stigmatized on all traits. Language attitude studies (Bettoni and Gibbons 1988, 1991; Callan and Gallois 1982; Hogg et al. 1989) have also shown that all Italian varieties in Australia hold lower status positions in comparison to the English language. Even Standard Italian in Australia is rated relatively low in importance and prestige when compared to English. It is also true that in recent times Italian, alongside other languages, has gained some prestige in Australia, mainly through the association of the language with the success of multicultural politics; particularly those of the newly elected Labor Party with its more positive focus on multi-ethnic identity. This more liberal political environment has coincided with a period when
Italy has seen a rise in its international profile and a small wave of wealthy and well-educated Italian migrants arriving in Australia (Ballassar 2005).

Researchers (Smolicz 1983; Haugen 1977; Gonzo and Saltarelli 1983; see also Clyne 2003), however, argue that the development of contact languages, such as Australitalian, arising from the mixing of the host language with the ethnic language is for the sake of better communication within the community and should not be discouraged by maintaining the linguistic norms of the country of origin. Clyne (1991) proposes that, because of its inconsistency and lack of norms, Australitalian is purely a confirmation of the influence of English on the Italian varieties. He stresses the fact “that there are as many varieties of community languages in Australia as there are speakers” (Clyne 1991: 162); and this is because:

the nature and degree of influence and general adaptation of the base language to the Australian context will depend largely on the individual speaker’s activities and lifestyle as well as their experience of both languages and cultures. [. . .] Actually the Queensland cane cutter, the tobacco farmer in Northern NSW, the Western Australian fisherman, the academic and the city fruiterer will all have different Australian needs to be satisfied by the Italian language. (Clyne 1991: 162)

We can consider, therefore, that the “Italian” spoken in Australia is a continuum that has Standard Italian with no interference at one end and heavily anglicized regional varieties at the other, and in between these two ends there is a large number of regional and popular varieties with differing amounts of interferences. This has led to a particular linguistic make-up of the Italian community.

Within the Italian community in Australia, therefore, there seems to be a prestige ladder comprising various rungs. Australitalian can be found on the bottom rung; according to Bettoni (1985a, 1989), allocating the bottom rung to Australitalian is due to a linking of traditional Italian values, which hold dialects in low esteem, and of Italo-Australian values, which do not tolerate English interferences (see also Hogg et al. 1989). On the next rungs we find dialects, regional, popular, and Standard Italian, and the top rung is occupied by English. The reason why Standard Italian is not regarded as prestigious as English is because, in the Australian context, it is classified as a minority language and, hence, carries the stigma of an inferior (to English) language. Therefore, it is seen by the Italo-Australians as less important and as having a lesser communicative efficacy than the English language, even though it is clear that the Italian community regard Standard Italian as their most prestigious variety. Italian has the status of a national and literary language. Hence its covert prestige within the Italian community is high and there is evidence of Italian having acquired covert prestige among second, third, and later generation Italo-Australians (Rubino 2002; Migliorino 2000), although it has not been enough
to arrest the community’s shift to English. It is important to point out that not all minority languages are regarded equally as inferior: historically, in Australia, French and German have been held in high esteem and were the default foreign languages taught at secondary school. More recently, following subsequent waves of economic success, Japanese, Indonesian, and Mandarin have also seen a rise in their status within Australia. Therefore, just as within the Italian community there exists a prestige ladder of Italian varieties, so within the general Australian community there exists another prestige ladder made up of the different languages spoken within it.

Given the complex linguistics dynamics outlined above, it is not surprising that the Italo-Australian community has seen considerable shift away from all Italian varieties to the use of English.

5. Language shift in the Italian community

Many factors have impacted on the use of community languages in Australia (for a more detailed discussion on the factors supporting or opposing language shift, see Cavallaro 2005, 2010). The schooling obtained in Australia has also contributed in a major way toward the decrease in the use of the languages other than English in this country (Clyne 1982). Schooling in Australia is mainly imparted in English except for those students who choose to study another language as a school subject. So the fact that children of Italian background are not schooled in their mother tongue is a major contributing factor to their shifting to the use of English only. The issue of schooling will be taken up again later in this article.

Italian (in all its varieties) and Italian dialects in Australia are being replaced by English more rapidly than the community’s strong demographic (both in numbers and, in many cases, concentration) situation would suggest (Bettoni 1985a, 1985b, 1989; Bettoni and Gibbons 1988). The large demographic base presented at the beginning of this article is not ensuring the promotion of Italian language maintenance. This shift in language use is not uncommon when different languages come into contact, and in many different parts of the world more prestigious varieties are being preferred by speech communities in place of the traditional language (Fasold 1984; Fishman et al. 1985; Gal 1979; Ogechi 2003; Mugambi 2002; Cavallaro and Serwe 2010).

All research points to the fact that the second and subsequent generations in Australia of Italian descent speak less and less Italian and dialect. As far as the dialects are concerned, their weakening position in the community is no surprise as even in Italy their position has been undermined by popular, regional, and Standard Italian, although more recent data seem to point toward a stabilization in the use of dialects in certain domains, such as family (Lepschy 2002),
and maybe even a slight strengthening of dialect use with colleagues and friends (Tosi 2008). Italian migrants in Australia have also had to undergo a process of “Italianization” due to the exposure to and mixing with people from different regions of Italy (De Mauro 1970; Turchetta 2005). What this has meant is that through communicating with other Italo-Australians from different dialect backgrounds, many have acquired a working knowledge of a variety of “Italian.” Gibbons and Ashcroft (1995) also found that many within the Italian community do not seem to regard dialects as part of an Italo-Australian identity. This is especially true for many of the newer generations. Most of the migrants are, by nature, upwardly mobile and since most people migrated to Australia to build a better life for themselves and their family, they are therefore aware of the higher prestige of Standard Italian and English (Bettoni and Gibbons 1988).

A number of researchers have proposed differing reasons for the Italian community’s shift to English in Australia. Through an analysis of census data, Clyne (1987) posits that two very important factors aiding the shift are the high rate of exogamy in the second generation and the low rate of literacy in the first. Bettoni and Gibbons (1988) propose the fact that very few first-generation Italians speak Standard Italian as a strong factor aiding the shift, as well as being a community linguistically fragmented by its many different regional or popular varieties.

When second generation Italo-Australian children approach school age they show great variation in their linguistic repertoire and in their proficiency in the language(s) they speak. This proficiency can be defined according to what their mother tongue is:

1. their parents’ dialect; or
2. popular or regional Italian if (a) their parents speak different dialects, or (b) if the area they live in has many speakers of different dialects; or
3. Standard Italian if the parents have made the effort of providing the input; \(^4\) or
4. a form of multilingualism, \(^5\) where individuals speak any mixture of the languages in 1–3 above with the addition of English (cf. Bettoni 1985a).

Even though these children live in an English-speaking society and they have been exposed to the English language at an early age, for most of them their first real usage of English is in the classroom or, for those not of school age yet, when older siblings start attending school and bring English into the home (Bettoni 1986). Importantly, for many of these children going to school also brings their first active exposure to Standard Italian (for those few who attend Italian classes), and they find themselves in the interesting situation that their “Italian” background offers no guarantee that they will cope successfully with learning Standard Italian, which, considering the differences between the
dialects and Italian discussed earlier, for them could be a foreign language (Smolicz and Secombe 1986; Ware 1981; see also Walker 2003 on the Italians in Stanthorpe). So, functionally it can be argued that, upon entering the school system, these children are acquiring literacy in two second languages. When third or subsequent generation kids approach school age, the linguistic landscape is a lot less complex. These kids are almost exclusively monolingual in English and are just as likely to take up Mandarin or Japanese at school as they are Italian.

While the number of Italo-Australians has grown, thanks to the expansion of the Australian-born generations, the high rate of language shift to English means that the number of “Italian” speakers does not reflect the actual number of Italo-Australians living in Australia. Since large-scale Italian immigration stopped in the late 1970s, when the first generation parents die and their offspring grow older, the number of people using Italian is drastically reduced (Bettoni 1989; Clyne 1982, 1985; Pauwels 1988). In recent times the small numbers of Italian migrants have been mainly professionals and middle class; and these newer migrants are also much better versed in Standard Italian than the traditional waves of migrant laborers. One important aspect of these migrants coming into Australia is that because they usually do not have any strong connections to any established Italo-Romance dialect, they have been able to contribute more widely to a general Italian identity in Australia (Baldassar 2005). Italian is used in Australia mainly by older parents of the first generation and by young children in the second generation. The second generation then only uses the language when interacting with their older family members and friends. In contrast to the first generation, then, language shift in the second generation increases with age. That is, it increases markedly when children leave home in their twenties and dramatically when their parents die. This is true of all immigrant groups in Australia; they all show a higher use of their language among the older members of the first generation, a lower use among the members of the second generation (Clyne 1991), and almost none with members of subsequent generations.

Italian is still the most widely used minority language in Australia and, as we can see from Table 4, Italian is the language other than English with the largest number of speakers in all states except New South Wales (fourth), Queensland (second), Tasmania (second), and Northern Territory (third).

However, a comparison of census figures (see Table 5) from 1976, 1986, 1991, and 2006 shows a drop in the home use figures for Italian; from 444,672 in 1976 to 415,765 in 1986; and then a slight increase to 418,804 in 1991. As Table 5 shows and as discussed in Section 3, since 1991 there has been a steady drop in the number of Italian speakers.

According to Clyne (1988) the apparent decrease in number of Italian speakers between 1976 and 1986 can be attributed to the difference in the
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>AUS*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>87,296</td>
<td>133,327</td>
<td>22,032</td>
<td>32,897</td>
<td>35,818</td>
<td>1,352</td>
<td>742</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Greek</td>
<td>86,158</td>
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<td>10,994</td>
<td>5,020</td>
<td>25,897</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>2,481</td>
<td>2,571</td>
<td>252,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>129,604</td>
<td>66,855</td>
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<td>16,049</td>
<td>7,923</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>2,881</td>
<td>244,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic#</td>
<td>164,986</td>
<td>55,926</td>
<td>7,285</td>
<td>7,698</td>
<td>5,422</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>1,391</td>
<td>243,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>100,595</td>
<td>64,377</td>
<td>24,445</td>
<td>16,551</td>
<td>8,955</td>
<td>1,167</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>3,635</td>
<td>220,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>74,588</td>
<td>72,161</td>
<td>17,145</td>
<td>13,243</td>
<td>13,763</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>3,065</td>
<td>194,858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>49,557</td>
<td>24,505</td>
<td>11,297</td>
<td>5,723</td>
<td>3,442</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>2,488</td>
<td>97,998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>22,108</td>
<td>19,604</td>
<td>14,741</td>
<td>7,213</td>
<td>7,958</td>
<td>1,553</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>1,806</td>
<td>75,634</td>
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<tr>
<td>Macedonian</td>
<td>28,940</td>
<td>30,772</td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>5,667</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>67,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>23,605</td>
<td>22,958</td>
<td>4,358</td>
<td>6,090</td>
<td>3,753</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,527</td>
<td>63,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>15,497</td>
<td>17,785</td>
<td>4,996</td>
<td>6,099</td>
<td>6,917</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>53,390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*, includes other Australian territories; #, includes Lebanese.

### Table 5. Speakers of Italian by state and territory 1976–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>AUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976*</td>
<td>124,422</td>
<td>182,864</td>
<td>31,746</td>
<td>46,775</td>
<td>50,901</td>
<td>2,298</td>
<td>1,378</td>
<td>4,288</td>
<td>444,672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986#</td>
<td>113,203</td>
<td>178,097</td>
<td>26,115</td>
<td>43,590</td>
<td>48,179</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>1,040</td>
<td>3,951</td>
<td>415,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991#</td>
<td>113,818</td>
<td>179,324</td>
<td>26,947</td>
<td>42,995</td>
<td>48,810</td>
<td>1,788</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>4,162</td>
<td>418,804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006#</td>
<td>87,296</td>
<td>133,327</td>
<td>22,032</td>
<td>32,897</td>
<td>35,818</td>
<td>1,352</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>3,426</td>
<td>316,893</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*, regular users; #, home users.

wording of the census question: in 1976 the emphasis was on “language used regularly,” while in 1986 it was on “language spoken at home.” This distinction in the census question is important due to the significant rate of exogamy in the Italian community and the fact that “home language” does not account for the high use of Italian with relatives and friends, as shown by the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1983 Language Survey, which showed that 81.9% of Italo-Australians used Italian at home and 96% used Italian with friends and relatives outside of their homes (Clyne 1988).

Home use also excludes those people who speak more than one language, but may not speak certain languages at home. These people, instead, would do so with colleagues and other members of their extended family. Examples of such speakers of Italian would be either Egyptians or Libyans who would have learned Italian because of the Italian involvement in North Africa in recent history. It is more than likely that these people would not have Italian as a home language nor would they pass it on to the next generation, but may have the opportunity to speak Italian with their work colleagues or friends. The greater number reported in 1976 can also be attributed to the self-reporting of children from monolingual English-speaking backgrounds learning Italian at school.

6. The study

In this article, preliminary results of a large study (Cavallaro 2010) are presented. The language choice of second-generation Sicilian-Italians was investigated in the domains where the three languages that make up the linguistic repertoire of the Italian community in Australia are most likely to be used. That is:

– in the home (nuclear and extended) domain; and
– in the transactional domain.

7. Participants

The target group for this study was second-generation trilingual Italo-Australians. That is, the participants had to have been exposed to the three varieties that make up an Italo-Australian’s linguistic repertoire. Since the researcher is Sicilian by background, the group chosen was the Sicilian-Australians. The degree of competence in the three codes was not an issue, as the lack of competence in any of the three codes would in itself be an indication of the state of the language within that the group under investigation.

For the study presented in this article, two second-generation Sicilian-Italians couples participated in the study (Table 6).
Robert and Laura

Laura was born in Australia and was 32 years old at the time this study was conducted. Her mother migrated to Australia from Sicily when she was nine years old and her father when he was eighteen. She has two older sisters. She has completed her teaching diploma and she teaches in the area of social studies in a primary school.

Robert was born in Australia and was 30 years old when he took part in this study. His mother migrated to Australia from Sicily when she was seven years old and his father when he was fifteen. Robert has two younger brothers and one younger sister. He did not finish his high school education and now is a self-employed concreter.

Robert and Laura have two children: Jennifer, four years old, and Dora, three years old. Jennifer had started going to primary school and had started attending Italian classes at her school.

They live in the suburb of Five Dock in the municipality of Drummoyne, which has about 5,000 Italian speakers living there. This made it the fifth largest concentration of Italian speakers in New South Wales and the fourth largest in Sydney itself in 1996 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). Robert and Laura are members of a Sicilian social club, which they only frequent on special festivities. They also used to go to meetings of other Italian social clubs, but recently have stopped attending because they find it increasingly difficult to go out with two children.

Their network of friends shows that they interact mainly with people of non-Anglo backgrounds. They reported having very few friends who are Anglo-Australian and none of them are in the circle of really close friends. Their primary network is made up of people from a Sicilian background or from other Italian regions.

Due to the nature of his work, Robert’s network of work-related associates is quite extensive. His colleagues are mainly of Sicilian and other Italian backgrounds. However, the people he deals with are not restricted to Italians. For example, at the time these data were being collected he was negotiating a contract with one of the major petrol distributors with which he had had dealings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couple no. 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Sicilian</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Sicilian</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couple no. 2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rod</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Sicilian</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Sicilian</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the past. Laura’s work in a primary school meant that her work network was not as extensive as Robert’s. Her school does have a few teachers of Italian background and even the principal at the time this research was taking place was of Italian background.

The interesting aspect to Robert’s and Laura’s background is that their parents (especially their mothers) migrated to Australia at a very young age. The young age of both their mothers at the time when they migrated to Australia would, therefore, indicate a strong English language presence at home.

7.2. Rod and Jane

Rod and Jane were born in Australia of Sicilian parents. Jane was 33 years old and Rod 37 at the time this study was carried out. Their parents all migrated to Australia from Sicily when they were in their early twenties. Jane has one twin sister. Jane has completed her high school education and works as a bank clerk. Rod has one younger brother. Rod did not finish his high school education and now is a sales consultant.

Rod and Jane have two daughters: Sandra, 8 years old, and Lorna, 5 years old. Sandra has been going to primary school for a few years and has been attending Italian classes at her school.

They live in the suburb of Concord in the municipality of Concord, which has about 3,000 Italian speakers. This made Concord the twelfth largest concentration of Italian speakers in New South Wales and the ninth largest in Sydney in 1996 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). Rod and Jane are members of a Sicilian social club, which they only frequent for special festivities. Before marrying and in the first few years after their marriage, they also used to go to social engagements at other Italian social clubs. However, because of family commitments they recently have stopped attending.

An analysis of their social network shows that their acquaintances are either of Italian or Sicilian backgrounds and that the few acquaintances who are Anglo-Australian are not really close. At work, Rod has only one colleague of an Italian background, while Jane has six. However, Jane works in a very large and busy office where she speaks only English and she does not have the time to socialize with her Italian colleagues.

Due to the nature of his work, Rod’s network of work-related associates is very limited and the people he deals with are mainly of an Anglo-Australian background. Jane’s network of friends is very small. She has very few friends and does not socialize with any of the six colleagues who are of Italian background. Rod and Jane are very close to another second-generation Sicilian couple with whom they go out often.
Their parents have not had any formal education, which indicates that within the family a Sicilian dialect would have been the dominant language. Rod and Jane, then, would have grown up in an environment where a Sicilian variety would have been spoken. They also report having studied some Italian at secondary school.

8. Methodology

The couples were recorded at dinner with their children and at family get-togethers. In these family gatherings there usually were present the children, the parents-in-law, and the couples’ siblings. As far as the actual recording is concerned, the procedure was that everyone was told that the conversations would be recorded. However, they were not told when the tape recorder would be switched on. With their respective families, Jane and Laura were instructed to switch on the tape recorder a few minutes before everyone came to the table or to do so without drawing too much attention to it. They then left the tape recorder nearby, usually on a shelf near enough the table to make the recording possible but not obvious enough for it to be continuously noticed. The tape recorder was then allowed to run until the tape finished, in which case the machine switched itself off automatically. A recording of about 45 minutes was obtained for each gathering (see Cavallaro [2003, 2010] for more details).

For the transactional domain, instead, the researcher used participant observation. The researcher accompanied the participants while they did their weekly shopping for Italian goods. A strategy was devised to minimize the effect the presence of the researcher might have on the language of the participants. Firstly it was decided that the participant observation would be done after the researcher and the participants had met a few times. This was to make sure that the participants had become accustomed to the researcher. As it turned out, by the time this task was carried out with each couple, a certain familiarization had developed between all the parties. Secondly, the participants and the researcher usually met before each shopping trip and socialized over breakfast or a cup of coffee at the participants’ houses or in a local Italian café. It was found that by getting together before the shopping began the participants became used to having another person around. To make sure that the participants did not feel they were constantly being scrutinized, all note taking was done immediately after each interaction and away from the participants.

All dealings between the researcher and both couples were in English. Only on occasions was an Italian or Sicilian word spoken. The researcher was conscious at all times that his presence could influence the participants’ choice of language(s) and therefore affect the data collected. It is the researcher’s firm belief that none of the participants changed their way of speaking because of
his presence or of any influence he might have had coming into their home. Their willingness to participate in the study stemmed from their understanding of the importance of the research. They are also very friendly and outgoing and were very keen to help.

9. Results

9.1. Language used at home

Both couples were recorded at home on separate occasions, with their daughters during the evening meal (see Table 7).

Table 7. Interlocutors at home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Robert and Laura</th>
<th>Rod and Jane</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dora</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorna</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At home with their children, very little Italian/Sicilian is used. The base language in this domain seems to be English. In all, 44 different interactions were recorded and not one of them was totally in either Sicilian or Italian. Only 47 single-word utterances, 12 two-word utterances, four incidences of more than two words, and only five full sentences were in either Italian or Sicilian. The languages other than English used by all the families are broken down in Tables 8–11.

Table 8 shows only two single word utterances in Sicilian: the word *piselle* (‘peas’); and an expletive by Robert. While the word *piselle* is very similar to the Italian *piselli*, it is also close to the Sicilian *puselle* (or *pusella*) the main difference being in the pronunciation of the geminate [ll], which in Sicilian is often a retroflex. In this instance the pronunciation was neither a full retroflex nor the Standard Italian dental-lateral. Clyne (p.c.) has suggested it may be a “compromise” form due to the convergence of Italian and Sicilian in the Australian context. The actual words used are fewer than the tables suggest. Of the twelve words recorded in by Rod and Jane, *fave* (‘broadbeans’) was uttered five times, *cotolette* (‘cutlets/schnitzels’) three times, and *farfallette* (‘little butterflies’ — a type of pasta) twice. This means that the number of distinct
words actually used was only six. For Robert and Laura, the total number is actually 18 as the words *giallo* (‘yellow’) and *bella* (‘beautiful’) were each repeated seven times.

Table 9 shows that Sicilian was used only four times out of the eight two-word utterances, but always in conjunction with an Italian word. For example, one utterance (example [1] below) included the same Sicilian word, *piselle* (‘peas’), discussed in the previous paragraph, preceded by the Italian preposition *con* (‘with’) (see the Appendix for the transcription conventions):

(1) Interaction B12

Jane:  *pasta con che cosa?*  
‘pasta with what?’

Sandra:  hum hum

Jane:  Sandra what?

Sandra:  hum *con* hum *piselle*  
‘hum with hum peas’

The same word is found in one of the utterances of more than three words. This indicates that *piselle* has become the term for ‘peas’ in this family. To further emphasize the relatively small use of both Italian and Sicilian, the utterances by the father and the two children were the same two words. That is, the father wished them *buon appetito* (‘good appetite’) and the girls replied in kind. This brings the actual number of two-word utterances down to only three different ones.
Table 10 shows that four utterances of more than two words were produced during the meal at Rod and Jane’s house. None were recorded by Robert and Laura. This is distinct from full sentences in that they do not contain a verb and in most cases they were a series of nouns strung together. Two of these utterances came at the end of English phrases, as shown in (2) and (3).

Table 10.  *Utterances of more than two words, Rod and Jane*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Rod</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Sandra</th>
<th>Lorna</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sicilian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian/Sicilian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) Interaction B12 (Italian only)
Jane: Lorna look what’s for dinner *cotolette e pasta!*
     ‘schnitzels and pasta’

(3) Interaction B12 (Italian and Sicilian)
Jane: do you like *pasta e piselle e fave?*
     ‘pasta and peas and broad beans?’

These two examples have not been treated as transfers into English sentences because they are lexical terms which, undoubtedly, the family uses to identify the food items. These could possibly be explained as lexical transfers (or borrowings) (see Section 9.2). The Italian/Sicilian mixing in this case is due to the word *piselle* (‘peas’) discussed above.

Table 11 indicates that there were only five full sentences uttered throughout the two meals. Interestingly one was by Sandra, Rod and Jane’s eldest daughter, who asked her mother to speak Italian (example [4]).
Sicilian-Italians in Australia

Table 11.  *Full sentences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Robert</th>
<th>Laura</th>
<th>Dora</th>
<th>Jenny</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sicilian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sicilian/Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rod and Jane**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rod</th>
<th>Jane</th>
<th>Sandra</th>
<th>Lorna</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sicilian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/Italian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* All sets of more than two words that contained a verb and communicated a meaning, question, or a statement were regarded as a full sentence.

(4) Interaction B12

Jane:  talking and we’ve forgotten
Rod:  what?
Jane:  to get the glasses
Sandra:  *parla it . . . hum italiana*
  ‘speak . . . hum Italian’ (note: grammatically incorrect, but not due to any Sicilian interference)
Rod:  Lorna do you want some cheese?

The request is ignored by everyone and the conversation continued as if Sandra had never said anything.

One other was produced by Robert when he asked his wife for the time:

(5) Interaction A10

Laura:  (to Robert) What’s happening to *Pina*? Did you see her dove?
Robert:  Yep
Laura:  How is she. All right?
Robert:  Yes, good. She’s gotta get another wisdom tooth out
Laura:  Oh luck. The pain she’s going to have. Poor thing
Robert:  *Che ora è?*
  ‘What time is it?’
Laura:  Seven thirty

One of the other sentences was uttered by Jane and is an obvious case of switching from English to Italian, without an apparent reason for switching:
(6) Interaction B15
Jane: listen Lorna we’ve got to be at Monica’s, at quarter to seven which I don’t think we’re going to get there, can we hurry up? Just get one cotoletta (‘schnitzel’)
Rod: just one at a time and blow
Jane: and blow on it. If you blow it si fa freddo subito ‘it cools quickly’

(The interaction continued in English)

The last two were spoken by Robert and Laura:

(7) Interaction A16
(After a long pause, start of a new interaction)
Robert: (to Laura) e Diana como va al lavoro? ‘and Diana (Lt. pronunciation) how is she doing at work?’
Laura: Good. I think the [?] came by and got her but I told her not to come in
Robert: Yea but how is she going to how is she going to work? With what car?
Laura: (to Robert) I don’t know. (To Dora) mangia tutta la mela. Please. No!

‘eat all the apple’
Dora: I don’t want to
Laura: Well she’s not going to grow up to be healthy and strong
Jenny: I will

If we look at the total columns in Tables 8–11 we can see that Sicilian is almost nonexistent in this domain. Italian has a very small presence and English is, overwhelmingly, the dominant language.

9.1.1. Discussion. Tables 8–11 show that Jane and Laura used more Italian and Sicilian than their husbands and children. It is interesting to note that Sandra used more Italian and Sicilian than the father.

Most of the single-word utterances were names of food items. For example, Jane and Rod’s interaction (example [8]) is the one which contains most of the non-English utterances:

(8) Interaction B12
Jane: Lorna look what’s for dinner cotolette e pasta! ‘schnitzels and pasta’
Rod: come on Lorna!
Sandra: oh it’s nice! Wow
Jane: there’s a little bit more if anybody wants it. What’s this *pasta* (It. pronunciation) with Sandra?

Sandra: hum

Jane: *pasta con con cosa?*
‘pasta with with what?’

Sandra: hum hum

Jane: Sandra what?

Sandra: hum con hum *piselle*
‘with peas’

Jane: and *cos’altro?*
‘what else?’

Sandra: hum

Jane: *pasta e piselle e*
‘pasta and peas and’

Sandra: *fave!*
‘broad beans!’

Jane: *fave* right?
‘broad beans right?’

Sandra: yap

Jane: do you like *pasta e piselle e fave?*
‘pasta and peas and broad beans?’

Sandra: *sì*
‘yes’

Jane: //good girl!//

Lorna: \n\nnooo\nI don’t like *fave*

Jane: //there’s no *fave* in yours//

Rod: \n\nno there’s no *fave* \n\nin yours it’s all *piselle* (‘peas’) look there’s one little one I’ll take it out

Lorna: take all of them out

Jane: (to Sandra) *cotolette cotolette*
‘schnitzels schnitzels’

As we can see, most of the Italian and Sicilian used has something to do with food. This is not to say that during the meal the only topics of conversations were about food. In other interactions during the meal topics like the weather, other relatives, school, and a birthday party for one of the teachers at Sandra’s school were discussed; all in English.

Example (9) shows the contexts of the other full sentence recorded. It also shows that there is no obvious reason for the switching.
(9) Interaction B15
Lorna: is it hot?
Rod: you take it from the edge and you blow on it!
Lorna: ouch! Even from the edge it’s hot!/
Rod: \\you’re silly\\ I told you, you take it from the edge and blow! Don’t cry!
Jane: Lorna just try! //Always try!\
Rod: \\otherwise you wont\\ have any dinner tonight. What’s so hard about that? Look! Just
Jane: you know that farfallette get cold quickly. Farfallette ‘little butterflies’
Lorna: there’s fave (‘broad beans’) there!
Rod: don’t worry about that! Just keep them . . .
Jane: listen Lorna we’ve got to be at Monica’s, at quarter to seven which I don’t think we’re going to get there, can we hurry up? Just get one cotoletta ‘schnitzel’
Rod: just one at a time and blow
Jane: and blow on it. If you blow it si fa freddo subito ‘cools quickly’

Example (10) shows the contexts of two of the full sentences recorded by Robert and Laura.

(10) Interaction A16
Robert: (to Laura) e Diana como va al lavoro? ‘and Diana how is she doing at work?’
Laura: Good. I think the [?] came by and got her but I told her not to come in
Robert: Yea but how is she going to how is she going to work? With what car?
Laura: I don’t know. (To Dora) mangia tutta la mela. Please. No! ‘eat all the apple’
Dora: I don’t want to
Laura: Well she’s not going to grow up to be healthy and strong
Jenny: I will
Laura: And then when we’re going to see Bananas in Pyjamas on Sunday she’s not coming. Sorry
Dora: Yea
Laura: No!
Dora: Yea!
Laura: Going to take you to nonna (‘grandmother’) Rosa
Dora: Yea!
Jenny: Mummy I can’t . . . . my photo. Can’t find it
Table 12. *Interlocutors in the extended family*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Robert’s parents’ house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dora</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jane’s family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.2. *Language used in the extended family*

The data for this section were collected during a family get-together at Jane and Rod’s house; and during a family dinner at Robert’s parents’ house. On both occasions a 25-minute recording was obtained.

The people that were present at these get-togethers are listed in Table 12. This table also displays details pertaining to the interlocutors’ relationship to the participants and their background.

Even at home with their parents and relatives Robert, Laura, Rod, and Jane spoke very little Italian or Sicilian. This indicates that even with their extended family their base language is still English.

Table 13 indicates that in this situation only Sandra uttered any single non-English words. They were actually the same Italian word, *nonna* (‘grandmother’) repeated at different times during the get-together:

(11) Interaction B9

Jane: who’s coming later?
Rod: might walk up to that park
Lorna: yeah
Sandra: not that one over the you know the one the yellow and green one?
Rod: the nice one up here
Sandra: yeah because that’s all windy isn’t it *nonna*?

‘grandmother’
Table 13. Single words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Robert</th>
<th>Laura</th>
<th>Maria</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Stefan</th>
<th>Lou</th>
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Jane’s family

<table>
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<th>Lucia</th>
<th>Sandra</th>
<th>Lorna</th>
<th>Jackie</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

English/Italian MIX = *ringe* (‘ring’), *weekenda* (‘weekend’), *girafrenda* (‘girlfriend’), *insurizzata* (‘insured’).

Note that the actual number of Italian words (types) used was only 11. The number 20 includes all repetitions.
(12) Interaction B10
Rod: I saw you last night walking fast with Lorna
Sandra: In the red car?
Jacquie: Did you walk from where?
Sandra: I said to nonna I tell you it’s daddy’s car but you said oh no!
[ . . . ]
Sandra: E nonna said that must be Winston
‘And grandmother’

While in Robert’s parents’ house more single Italian words than Sicilian were recorded.

Table 14 shows that, again, it was only Sandra who was noted to speak any non-English two-word utterances. This can be seen in example (12) reported above. It involved the uttering of the word nonna yet again. No one else uttered any single- or two-word combinations in anything but English.

Table 15 shows that in this situation the only people recorded speaking in Italian and Sicilian were the first-generation family members and the participating couples.

In Robert’s family gathering the range of mixing was not extensive. In this situation, Robert’s and Laura’s Italian and Sicilian sentences range from being:

A. Totally in Sicilian:
(13) Interaction A30
Robert: (to Dora) What’s wrong bella? (to Clara) Cosa, annu mangiate?
‘What did they eat?’

The word cosa here can be both Italian and Sicilian. However, I am treating it as being the same as the rest of the sentence. This seems to make more sense, since to remain within one code is probably the unmarked choice.

B. Italian with Sicilian transference:
(14) Interaction A25
Laura: ammeno era pulito però. He didn’t break anything, he
‘at least he was clean though. . .’
moved my pot plants nicely to the side.

C. Italian with English transference:
(15) Interaction A7
Robert: eh? Ma che come back! [?] don’t have to pay?
‘eh? But what (what do you mean)’

D. Sicilian with Italian transference:
(16) Interaction A5
Robert: u patri figlio spiritu santu e così sia
‘the father son holy spirit Amen’
Table 14. Two-word utterances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Robert</th>
<th>Laura</th>
<th>Maria</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>Stefan</th>
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<table>
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Table 15. *Full sentences*

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<table>
<thead>
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</tbody>
</table>
E. English with Sicilian transference:

(17) Interaction A5
Laura: come on Dora veni a mangià
“come on Dora come and eat”

This is probably better explained as a switch from English to Sicilian, probably to fulfill an expressive or emotive function. However, because “Dora veni a mangià” can be classified as a complete sentence, in Table 15 it has been listed as a Sicilian sentence.

Table 15 also shows that Rod was the person that spoke more Italian and Sicilian than anyone else. Rod uttered 19 of the 33 full sentences while Lucia accounts for 13 of them. Jane spoke only one sentence in Italian and she did not speak any Sicilian or mixing at all:

(18) Interaction B4
Jane: (to Lucia) ma io lo faccio dopo
“but I’ll do it after (later)”

The table also indicates that the sentences in this situation fall into seven categories:

1. Totally in Italian:

(19) Interaction B10
Lucia: Sì ma noi abbiamo tagliato per la strada del prete
“Yes but we cut through the priest’s street”

2. Totally in Sicilian:

(20) Interaction B5
Lucia: comu si chiama?
“what is her name?”

3. Italian with Sicilian transference:

(21) Interaction B10
Rod: It was only up the road e io non sapevù . . . ma tu avevi dettu forse
“and I didn’t know but you said perhaps
che vedevù a Ross ma . . . no, non sapevù
that I would see Ross but . . . no, I didn’t know’

4. Sicilian with English transference:
The transference is not limited to lexical items only. The first example is an example of lexical transference or maybe even a case of nonce borrowing. The second is an example of transference at the clause or sentence levels.

(22) Interaction B10
Lucia: E io ho dettu ma chi è ne stu car?
“And I said but who is it in this “car”?”
(23) Interaction B49
Jane: *Ma pecché non vai? L’hai già fatto e andare* works! *Allora* what’s the problem?
‘But why don’t you go? You’ve done it before and going works! Then what’s the problem?’

5. English with Italian transference:
(24) Interaction B10
Lucia: Yeah e dopo . . .
‘and after . . .’

I have treated this as a full sentence because I believe that Lucia was about to finish the sentence until she was interrupted.

6. Sicilian with English and Italian transference:
(25) Interaction B12
Rod: *Sì, però tutti li jobs cianno il suo problema non è vero?*
‘Yes, but all/every job has its problem, isn’t it true?’

7. Italian with Sicilian and English transference:
(26) Interaction B10
Rod: *Allora io ho fermatu a video a shoppe a prendere du video e ho*
‘So I stopped at the video shop to get two videos
*detto adesso vado avanti a vedere a quale distanza sono, no?*
and I said now I’ll go (further) ahead to see how far they are, no?’

9.2.1. *Main interlocutors.* The data in Tables 13–15 seem to indicate that with Robert’s family Sicilian is spoken more than Italian. The reverse seems to be the case with Jane’s family, where more Italian is spoken. In Robert’s family gathering there are more single Italian words (20) spoken than Sicilian ones (4). However, Sicilian comes out ahead in the two-word utterances with 4 compared to only 2 Italian ones, and in the full sentences Sicilian really dominates: 21 out of the 35 non-English sentences were uttered totally in Sicilian. In Jane’s family gathering, the 17 Italian sentences are more than four times the number of Sicilian sentences.

As Tables 13–15 also show, the person who spoke the most Italian and Sicilian at Jane’s family gathering was Rod. It is also interesting to note that there were very few instances of single- or two-word utterances.

The main reason for the Italian and Sicilian used is without a doubt Lucia. She did not get involved in many of the interactions, but all Italian and Sicilian used was either directed at her or uttered when she was a participant in the
conversation. Lucia’s role as the catalyst for Italian and Sicilian is proven by the fact that when everyone else speaks to each other directly they do not use any Italian or Sicilian.

At Robert’s family get-together the person who spoke the most Italian and Sicilian was Maria, Robert’s mother. She uttered 21 out of the 35 full sentences. Next were her husband, Robert, and Laura with only four sentences each. Maria also uttered 10 out of the 28 single words; Laura and Robert were next with only four and five words, respectively. Maria also dominated the two-word utterances with three out of the seven recorded; Robert followed with two.

The main producer and receiver of Sicilian and Italian is without a doubt Maria. Even so, her base language was English. Her husband, Sam, also does not say much in Italian or Sicilian. Most of what Robert and Laura say in Italian and Sicilian is to accommodate for Maria’s presence. This is proven by the fact that most of the Italian and Sicilian spoken throughout the get-together was in conversations involving Maria. Even when one of Robert’s Sicilian sentences is directed at Clara, we notice that Maria was involved in his previous conversation, and I believe that he was still accommodating for her presence. Laura’s non-English sentences were all uttered in the course of speaking to the whole group except for one sentence, which she directed at her daughter, Dora. However, even this sentence was uttered in the middle of a conversation involving the whole group. This indicates that Laura was also accommodating for Maria’s presence whenever she addressed the group. The other fact that points to the important role Maria plays in the production, or choice, of Italian and Sicilian is the fact that when the siblings speak to each other directly they rarely use anything but English.

9.2.2. The role of first-generation relatives. In examples (27) and (28) we see how the use of both Italian and Sicilian is centered around Lucia, even when the children are involved.

(27) Interaction B5
The conversation is about a wedding of a family friend sometime in the near future. Sandra says that she has to get her hair cut for the wedding. Rod and Jane discuss it with her in English and then:
Sandra: I’m going to wear it (the hair) up
Lucia: ce la porti a quella comu si chiama?
‘You bring her to what is her name?’
Sandra: Lucy
Lucia: comu si chiama?
‘what is her name?’
Sandra: Lucy
Lucia: *comu si chiama?*  
‘what is her name?’

Sandra: Rosetta?

Jane: Lucy!

Sandra: Lucy

Lucia: *comu si chiama?*  
‘what is her name?’

Sandra: Lucia

Lucia: Luciana!

Jane: if she had her hair permed if she . . .

Rod: is hum the neighbour up the road from Nick is the daughter going to be a flower girl is she?

---

(28)  Interaction B10

Rod: I saw you last night walking fast with Lorna

Sandra: In the red car?

Jacquie: Did you walk from where?

Sandra: I said to *nonna* I tell you it’s daddy’s car but you said oh no!

Lucia: *E io ho dettu ma chi è?*  
‘And I said but who is it?’

Rod: It was only up the road *e io non sapevu . . . ma tu avevi dettu forse*  
‘and I didn’t know . . . but you said perhaps

*che vedevu a Ross ma . . . no, non sapevu*  
that I would see Ross but . . . no, I didn’t know’

Sandra: *E nonna* said that must be Winston  
‘And grandmother . . .’

Rod: You know whose car that is? You know that Maria Garcia? You know Bianca’s mum?

Sandra: Yeah

Rod: That was her car

Lucia: *E io ho dettu ma chi è ne stu car?*  
‘And I said but who is it in this “car”?’

---

In (27) and (28) above we see how the grandmother used only Italian/Sicilian when the grandchildren were around. On the other hand Robert’s mother, Maria, in (29) and (30) below, switched to English when addressing her grandchildren.

---

(29)  Interaction A10

Maria: *Dora? Na pulpetta?*  
‘Dora? [Do you want] a meatball?’

Laura: by the time I got to the door
Maria: good girl Dora //tantu pasta//
       ‘so much pasta’
Laura: //another two// or three minutes had passed because I got all my stuff
       out of the boot I then walked up they’d run and then when I realized
       //I went around the back//
Maria: (to Jenny) //voi nautra pulpetta? Ahh?//
       ‘do you want another meatball?’
[ . . . ]
Jenny: I don’t want any more because I had a all’ovetto (‘an egg’) before. I
don’t want any more
Laura: that’s okay
Maria: [?] you had one before
[ . . . ]
Maria: if they catch him you’ll have to go to court. I’m going to [??] will we?
       Aspetta (‘wait’) (to Jenny)
Jenny you have to already
[ . . . ]

(30)  Interaction A11
Maria: (to Laura) //ascuta, vidi che chissu è pulitu. Mettici ca.//
       ‘listen, can’t you see that this one is clean. Put it here’
Dora: (loudly) Nonna (‘grandmother’) Maria I ate two strawberries, you
       know that?
Maria: oh wow! You like strawberries now?
Dora: yeah! I ate one at school now I ate one at home
Maria: good girl!
[ . . . ]
Jenny: I don’t want any of this
Maria: eat that up!
Jenny: yuck!
Maria: what do you mean yuck?
Jenny: yuck! [??] awful. Yuck!

9.3.  Language used in the transactional domain

These results were obtained through participant observation of a shopping trip
with Rod and Jane to a shopping center in Concord, Sydney; and a shopping
trip with Robert and Laura to a shopping center in Haberfield, also in Sydney.
Concord has a small shopping center which lines the two sides of a wide street
for about two blocks. In this line of shops there are a number of retailers which
supply Italian goods and are owned or run by people of Italian background.
Haberfield is one of the more obviously Italian suburbs of Sydney. It has a wide street with one other street crossing it and both streets are lined by businesses such as delicatessens, butchers, bakeries, and fruiterers. The majority of these businesses are owned/run by people of Italian background. Haberfield, with Leichhardt, is a favorite place for Italians to shop on the southern side of Sydney.

The shopping trips took place on two separate Saturday mornings. The researcher and the participants had had a number of meetings before and the participants had become used to the researcher’s presence. On two separate Saturday mornings, the researcher met each participating couple at the participants’ house and socialized over a cup of coffee. Then they proceeded to the shopping trips. Like in all the other meetings the researcher was careful not to initiate any conversations and only followed what linguistic leads were given by the participants so as not to set any linguistic patterns. All notes taken during the participant observation were written without attracting the attention of the participants.

The first two columns of the tables in this section indicate the interlocutors and the language used by them as observed by the researcher. The last three columns show the age, Italian background, and place of birth of the interlocutors as known by the participants. In choosing a language the participants would be reacting to their knowledge of the interlocutors’ background. It was, therefore, not important to accurately determine the “real” status of the interlocutors. The participants met and interacted with over twenty people while shopping. In this report, though, only the interactions with people of Italian background are reported.

Table 16. Interlocutors at the delicatessen

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Language used by person</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Italian background</th>
<th>Place of birth</th>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Abruzzese</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>A2 Deli owner (male)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
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<td>Non-Sicilian</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 Deli worker (male)</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>Calabrese</td>
<td>Italy</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<th>Language used by person</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Italian background</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>English at first, then Italian</td>
<td>45–60</td>
<td>Non-Sicilian</td>
<td>Italy</td>
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<tr>
<td>B2 Deli owner (male)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>55–60</td>
<td>Non-Sicilian</td>
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</table>
9.3.1. Language used in a delicatessen. The participants were observed in two delicatessens owned and run by people of Italian background. These delicatessens are where the participants normally do their “Italian” shopping; that is, for Italian-style small goods or foodstuff imported from Italy. On both occasions the shops were not very busy.

English was the base language with the interlocutor A1 for both Robert and Laura. Robert kept his interaction with her to small talk. That is, he greeted her and thanked her when the transactions were over; and this was done in English. Laura who did the actual buying used mainly transactional language as would be used in a delicatessen. She asked for certain items, some things she wanted weighed and some sliced. She spoke mainly in English, except for the few sentences reported below.

(31) Laura: I’d like some cheese quello rotondo
       ‘the round one’
Can I have some ham? That one. E’buono?
       ‘Is it good?’
Grazie, arrivederci
       ‘Thank you, good bye’
(This was initiated by Laura, but the sales person replied in English)

These three sentences were uttered at different stages of an interaction that lasted about five minutes and comprised 12–13 sentences in all.

Interlocutors A2 and A3 were busy serving other customers when Robert and Laura came into the shop. When interlocutors A2 and A3 had finished serving they came over to Robert and Laura and they all chatted together for a couple of minutes on general things like the business, the family, and the weather. Both these men have been in Australia for over 25 years. They conducted all conversations in Italian. Laura used only Italian when speaking to them. Robert used Sicilian in the greetings:

(32) Robert: Comu va? Stamu bene
       ‘How is it going? We are well’

For the remainder of the conversation he used Italian. Robert’s use of Sicilian with a person from Calabria is due to the fact that the two dialects are very similar.

When queried, after coming out of the delicatessen, Laura and Robert told the researcher that they know those two men very well, and are normally served by them. As discussed above, Robert and Laura have been going to this delicatessen for a number of years and have, therefore, developed a certain relationship with the owners of the deli that is not purely professional.
When Rod and Jane entered the delicatessen there were only two or three other customers being served by two people behind the counter. They waited about five minutes for a shop assistant to become available. The person who served them was a woman around 45 years old (Table 16). By this time there was only one other woman in her forties in the shop being served by a man in his fifties. The conversation between these two was in Italian. Rod pointed him out as the owner of the shop.

With interlocutor B1 English was the base language for both Jane and Rod. Jane kept her interaction with her to simply greetings. That is, she greeted her when she first started to serve them and thanked her they were leaving; and this was done in English. Rod who did the actual buying started in English. However, he then realized that it was a woman he knew (and knew as being Italian) and started mixing some Italian in his utterances. He used mainly transactional language as is typical in a delicatessen. He asked for certain items, their weight, etc.

(33) Rod:  
*Un po’ di mortadella, six slices, very thin please*  
‘a bit of mortadella . . .’  
The cheese *è buono?*  
‘is it good?’  
*Quanti?*  
‘How much is it?’  
Grazie, arrivederci.  
‘Thank you, good bye’

The interaction lasted about five minutes and comprised 10–15 sentences in all. However, by the time Rod realized who the woman was they were near the end of the transactions. This meant that very little of the transaction was actually done in Italian.

Interlocutor B2 was busy serving one other customer while Rod and Jane were being served. When Rod and Jane were leaving, Rod called out to the owner and greeted him in Italian and the man replied in Italian as well:

(34) Rod:  
*buongiorno ci vediamo ah?*  
‘good day we’ll see you’  
Interlocutor B2:  
*salve, arrivederci*  
‘hello goodbye’

In answer to a query by the researcher outside the delicatessen, Jane and Rod said that they have been shopping at that delicatessen for a number of years; however, they never really got to know the workers there very well.

9.3.2. **Language used in the fruit shop.** The fruit shop in Concord is owned and run by people from an Italian background. It is a self-service arrangement
so that Rod and Jane did not need to interact with any of the shop keepers until it was time to pay (Table 17).

At the checkout they recognized that one of the women was a non-Sicilian Italian woman they usually deal with at this shop. However, they did not choose to use her checkout, but chose instead the checkout with the shortest queue. As they were leaving the shop, they called out their greetings to the Italian woman in English, to which the woman also replied in English.

(35) Rod: hello
Jane: how are you?
Interlocutor B7: hello, well thank you

9.3.3. *Language used in the bakery.* This bakery is owned and run by people from an Italian background and it is where Robert and Laura normally buy their Italian-style bread. Robert did not go inside the bakery; Laura did the buying in this shop. There were at least 10–15 people being served or waiting to be served when Laura walked in. There were about three or four women working behind the counter and when Laura had waited about five minutes the youngest woman shop assistant came to serve her (Table 18).

The language used was English without any transferences or switching. When queried about why she did not order in Italian Laura said that, even though she knew the woman to be of Italian background, she only interacted with her in English because she did not know her very well. Laura also added that, if the worker had started in Italian, then she would have answered in

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**Table 17. Interlocutors in the fruit shop**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interlocutor</th>
<th>Language used by person</th>
<th>As known by the participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Italian background</th>
<th>Place of birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B7 Worker (female)</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>30–35</td>
<td>Non-Sicilian</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 18. Interlocutors in the bakery**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Language used by person</th>
<th>As known by the participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Italian background</th>
<th>Place of birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A17 Worker (female)</td>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Non-Sicilian</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Italian. As it was, she said she just followed the linguistic cue given by the shop assistant, which was English.

10. Summary

10.1. At home

The discussions above on the amount of Italian and Sicilian and the sample interactions highlight that for both families there is very little Italian and Sicilian spoken at home. The Italian/Sicilian that is used seems to be stock names for food items and traditional phrases (cf. *buon appetito*) which are used and reused without any obvious code-switching mechanism. This is in line with other studies that have shown that even when proficiency is not very high, participants have shown significant levels of pragmatic competence and a substantial vocabulary, in Italian and/or the dialect, in things like greetings, apologies, and other everyday expressions (Bierbach and Birken-Silverman 2000, 2008; Birken-Silverman 2004; Franceschini 1998, 2001; Rubino 2000).

Both couples do demonstrate a positive attitude toward Italian. This can be seen in the example (8) for Rod and Jane where they elicit the Italian names for the ingredients in the pasta dish; as well as Robert’s obvious attempt to teach the daughters some Italian (example 36).

(36) Interaction A25

Robert  (mockingly) The hair yellow. And how do you say in italiano (‘Italian’) yellow? *Giallo* (‘yellow’)! Say *giallo* (‘yellow’)!

Dora   *Giallo* (‘yellow’)

Robert  Good girl

In this environment, then, Italian does seem to be regarded in a positive way. However, there is not enough of it spoken to have a real learning or maintenance effect on the children. Sicilian, on the other hand, seems to be totally out of favor.

The home domain does not seem to be conducive to the successful maintenance of either Italian or Sicilian. This is in agreement with their statements in a follow-up interview where both couples said that Sicilian cannot be maintained, and that they cannot teach Italian to their children because their Italian is not as good as that spoken by their own parents. They also said that their children have a better chance of learning it at school or out in the community. One cannot question their commitment purely from this set of data. However, what we can plainly see from these data is that the children are not exposed to enough Italian or Sicilian for the home domain to be a positive learning environment.
The recordings showed that there was a lot more Italian and Sicilian spoken with older members of the families. This increased use of Italian and Sicilian is due to the first generation being present and participating in the conversations. However, we saw how the presence of first-generation Italo-Australians was not enough to enable the younger speakers to use less English. The second-generation family members only used Italian and Sicilian to include or directly address the older members of the families, not to communicate among themselves. As reported above, the first-generation members of the family spoke more Italian and Sicilian than anyone else. Their presence also contributed to eliciting much more Italian and Sicilian from the participating couples. However, while Robert, Laura, Rod, and Jane used more Italian and/or Sicilian in this domain than at home alone with their children, the instances of these languages are still significantly less than the overall amount of English spoken.

As far as the language maintenance aspects of this domain are concerned, we must say that, just like the home domain, in this situation there is not enough Italian or Sicilian spoken to effectively stop the shift of the family away from both Italian and Sicilian. The main factor that point to this is the modest active involvement on the part of the young children in the non-English interactions. This means that these children receive very little input in either Italian or Sicilian and the amount of Italian and Sicilian that they are actually exposed to does not seem sufficient for the maintenance of these languages. It is also noticeable that Robert’s mother, Maria, a fluent speaker of Sicilian and Italian, chose to speak in English to her grandchild (example [30]). The children normally stay away from any sort of input in their parents’ mother tongues. In this case, when they do come into contact with the person in their family with a high proficiency in both Italian and Sicilian, it is quite telling that she switches to English (example [29]). It is obvious that this would have negative implications as far as the value of these interactions and this domain for the successful maintenance of Italian and Sicilian.

It is interesting to note that both couples used substantially more Italian and Sicilian in the get-togethers with both sides of the family than they did at home with only their children. However, this use was purely as a means of easing communication with the older members of the family and did not play a role in transmitting the languages to their own children.

When queried, both couples said that these were typical shopping trips for them, including the way they interacted with the shopkeepers.
In all, there was not a lot of interacting done in this domain. Very little of any of the three languages was used. All transactional interactions were very short and were limited to transactional language. The exception was the time both Robert and Laura engaged in sustained conversations with people they have known for a while, in the delicatessen. It is also interesting to note that their daughters, who had come along, never interacted with any of the shopkeepers and that the language used among the family members and with the researcher was always and only English.

The very small amount of Italian and Sicilian spoken in this domain seems to point to the fact that this domain is not conducive to an effective maintenance of either codes; especially due to the fact that the children (the third generation) normally do not get involved, or are not present in situations, when Italian and Sicilian are spoken.

The data in this study do show the second generation to be effectively trilingual. All of the four participants in this study, when called upon on, exhibited varying levels of proficiency in Sicilian and Italian; while their proficiency in English is not in question. When needed they all demonstrated that they could converse in both Sicilian and Italian. However, what is questioned is the lack of input in these languages for the third generation. The Italian community in Australia is now well into this third generation and this study seems to show that the exposure to the Italian varieties these young Italo-Australians have been getting is minimal. The data are not all doom and gloom. The young children that took part in this study showed an adequate passive knowledge of both Italian (cf. example [8]) and Sicilian (cf. example [27]). This means that some language skills are being passed on. The question is whether these passive skills will translate in effective language skills later in life.

11. Conclusion

This article has served to provide a description of the linguistic repertoire and language shift of the Italian community in Australia. The census data and the data from the experimental study presented in this profile also make it clear that there are no grounds for optimism on the maintenance of either Italian or any of the Italian regional varieties in Australia. The data point to the fact that shift to English has already occurred in the second and subsequent generations. However, these generations still shows signs of being trilingual; as seen in example (27), which shows that one of the grandchildren understood her grandmother when she spoke in Sicilian (see also similar reports in Bettoni and Rubino 1996; Rubino 2000, 2002, 2004; Cavallaro 2006, 2010). These signs of passive knowledge of a dialect and the fact that these children are learning
Italian at school, however, do not alter the fact that their working language is English.

Arresting or reversing this noticeable shift may be beyond the community’s capability now. More research and resources should be directed to the setting up of more effective language programs in preschool, primary, and secondary school levels. While there are positive signs from the newer migrant communities (for example, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Somali), the young generations of children of non-English-speaking background in Australia have not been maintaining the community languages very well. The fact that school brings about such a marked shift away from the community language has not been properly addressed by the education systems in Australia and, as Cavallaro (2010) proposes, is an indictment of the school’s language programs. The problem lies in the fact that mainstream language programs are not designed for the maintenance of immigrant community languages. The result is that there are fewer and fewer children in the classroom who speak a community language as an L1. This situation can only lead to a decrease in language proficiency standards in the classroom. For years now the language skills of children from non-English-speaking background have been allowed to languish. These same children are then taught their community language as a second or foreign language at school (Gatt-Rutter and Cavallaro 1991). Unfortunately, students attending these second language programs are not achieving very high standards of proficiency. The exceptions seem to be the students attending content-based and immersion-type programs (see Clyne [1986] for a discussion of the Bayswater South program and Berthold [1989] for the Benowa High School, in Queensland).8 More recently, a very positive development has been the establishment of two schools offering bilingual programs. These are the Italian Bilingual School in Leichhardt in NSW (www.ibs.nsw.edu.au) and the International Grammar School in Ultimo, also in NSW (www.igssyd.nsw.edu.au). At the Italian Bilingual School, science and technology, human society and environment, creative and practical arts are taught solely in Italian alongside Italian language classes. English, mathematics, personal development, health and physical education are taught in English. The languages offered at the International Grammar School are French, German, Italian, and Japanese. Up to 80 minutes of daily class time are dedicated to language classes and core subjects of the school curriculum are also integrated in the selected language.

The discouraging LM results in the United States (Veltman 1984; Fishman et al. 1985; Hakuta 1986) and in the Australian schools (cf. above) where pressure from the dominant language and culture has frustrated attempts to maintain the language of the first-generation immigrants, and the more positive ones from Canada (Swain and Lapkin 1986) and Europe (Baetens Beardsmore 1993), point to the fact that at present effective language maintenance is not being achieved by the Australian school system. Nor are the three undergradu-
ate years at university enough to bring students to a native-like standard in the language. If nothing is done to improve the situation, then it promotes a cycle of underprepared students who in turn become language teachers. The present research highlights the fact that parents and grandparents lack the necessary knowledge of how to bring up their children bilingually. Immigrant communities need immediate access to information regarding the benefits of bilingualism, and it should be stressed to the parents that acquiring a language other than English does in no way jeopardize the children’s acquisition of English. The research evidence is conclusive that transgenerational language shift among immigrant communities is almost inevitable (Veltman 1984; Fishman et al. 1985; Hakuta 1986; O’Bryan et al. 1976; Wardhaugh 1983). However, as pointed out by Cavallaro (2005), so is the research evidence on why community languages should be maintained. More research should be aimed at developing practical, effective, and achievable strategies to halt or, where possible, reverse the language shift experienced by speakers of community languages in Australia. As far as Italian is concerned, it could still play an active role in the community for some time to come. Being the standard and national language of Italy means that it enjoys a relatively high status in the community and it is regarded as the language of wider use — both socially and politically when compared to the restricted use of vernaculars like Sicilian. Together with the fact that Italian dialects are perceived by Italo-Australians as being less important means that, in the Australian context, these dialects are unlikely to survive into the third generation and beyond.

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**Appendix: Transcription conventions**

Note: in all transcriptions, italics denote Italian; bold italics denote Sicilian; the letters before the interaction number denote the couple whose interaction was recorded: “A” means Robert and Laura, “B” means it came from Rod and Jane’s recordings.

- // // and \ \ Denote overlapping speech
- (note) Author’s notes
- (?) Unclear word in English; two question marks denote two unclear words
- [ . . . ] Denotes long tract of the conversation totally in English
- jobs Underlining denotes words spoken with an English pronunciation
Notes


2. In this article the term “dialect” is used to refer to “Italo-Romance dialects” and is significantly different to the definition normally given to “dialect” within an English context. In English dialectology the term “dialect” is traditionally synonymous with “language variety.” That is, a language is typically composed of a number of dialects that differ grammatically, phonologically, and lexically from each other and are associated with a particular geographical area. On the contrary, Italo-Romance dialects are not varieties of Italian. An example of such a variety would be *Italiano regionale* (Regional Italian). The Italian dialects are autonomous linguistic systems spoken in Italy and in many cases are not mutually intelligible.

3. Leoni (1990: 87) has suggested that “Australitalian” is actually based on *italiano popolare*, which is a variety of Italian spoken exclusively by those individuals who have one of the Italo-Romance dialects as their mother tongue and it is different from spontaneous, colloquial varieties of Italian.

4. The number of speakers of Standard Italian in the first generation is very small. Most migrants came from rural areas and had very little formal education and would have had a dialect as their first language (Rubino 2006).

5. Multilingualism here refers to the situation where a child has been brought up speaking more than one code (in contrast to bilingualism where the child is brought up speaking two languages).

6. The names of the participants have been changed to protect anonymity. However, the pseudonyms used reflect the participants’ choice of either English-sounding names (e.g., Robert instead of the Italian, Roberto) or the fact that they pronounced their names in an anglicized way (e.g., [lo:ra] instead of the Italian [laura]).

7. English/Italian MIX indicates English roots to which Italian grammatical morphemes have been added.

8. Content-based programs do have limitations. However, the results are comparatively good (see Clyne 1991).

References


Cavallaro, Francesco. 2010. Transgenerational language shift: From Sicilian and Italian to Australian English. Melbourne: The Italian Australian Institute, La Trobe University.


