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Language and Identity in Multilingual Mediterranean Settings

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Language and Identity in Multilingual Mediterranean Settings

Challenges for Historical Sociolinguistics

Edited by
Piera Molinelli

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Seven Italian Research Units took part in the Project at the Universities of Bergamo, Cagliari, Pescara, Pisa, Roma Sapienza, Siena Stranieri and Viterbo. This research group was made up of more than fifty people who worked together fruitfully for three years. Preliminary data and results have been presented by different project members at six international conferences or workshops organized by different research units and held in Cagliari (April 2014), Pescara (May 2014), Siena (June 2014), Rome (September 2014), Como (October 2014), and Pisa (February 2015). A seventh conference held in Bergamo (September 28–30, 2015) concluded our project: some papers presented on that occasion are collected in the present volume.

Besides these four books and the two special issues of journals, the research achievements of this project also include the creation of four corpora for the purposes of historical sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies, which are freely available on the project's electronic archive at www.mediling.eu.

I owe my gratitude to our international research partners and distinguished scholars who have taken part in various conferences and seminars: Peter Auer, Kate Beeching, James Clackson, Florian Coulmas, Jesus de la Villa, Gerd Haverling, Mark Janse, Marco Mancini, Gabriella Mazzon, Mario Squartini, Heikki Solin.

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17 The Mediterranean Community of Practices between Speaking and Writing in Early Modern Documents

1 Introduction¹

The present study deals with the evidence of the linguistic behaviour of writers having multiple competence in different languages and graphic norms in Early Modern Mediterranean documents. Our aim is to investigate the linguistic variation in Early Modern Mediterranean documents written in a multi-faceted Italian and transcribed according to flexible writing criteria, especially when oral expressions were involved (Turchetta, this volume).

In oral and written inter-ethnic communication along the Mediterranean coasts in Modern times, a continuum of Italo-Romance varieties was used with a vehicular function beyond national borders (Minervini 1996); it was referred to as ‘Colonial Italian’ (Borg 1996), ‘Mediterranean Italian’, ‘Italian as lingua franca’² (Cremona 1998), ‘Levant Italian’ which was used for diplomatic and commercial purposes (Bruni 1999), or ‘Italian as contact variety’, resulting in Mediterranean cross-cultural communication (Mori 2016).

The presence of multiple varieties of Italian (the so called *italiani altri*, Banfi 2014), linguistic interference from other languages, and L2 markers characterize Early Modern diplomatic documents (such as official letters, capitulation documents and treaties) as well as commercial and private letters within the Ottoman Empire and in North Africa (Baglioni 2010).

¹ Though the study was jointly conceived by the three authors, the sections were written as follows: L. Mori (Sections 1–2), M. Di Salvo (Section 3), C. Muru (Sections 4–5). This research is part of the PRIN Project ‘Linguistic representations of identity. Sociolinguistic models and Historical Linguistics’ (PRIN2010, prot. 2010HXPFF2_001, <http://www.mediling.eu/>). We thank Emanuele Banfi, Pierluigi Cuzzolin, Gianguido Manzelli, Piera Molinelli, Barbara Turchetta and Federica Venier for their suggestions provided during the oral presentation of this work at the convention held in Bergamo on September 28th and 29th 2015.

² The melee between the so-called Lingua Franca (see Venier 2012) and Italian as lingua franca is dealt in Mori (2016).

Literature shows the presence of Tuscan variants in the language of overseas missions together with diverging traits of Venetian, Sicilian, and Neapolitan origin (Bruni 2002) confirming the multi-faceted nature of the linguistic code in use in the Mediterranean Community of Practices as described in Turchetta (2016).

In order to highlight the evidence of multilingual repertoires in Eastern Mediterranean writings (16th–18th centuries) that attest a political and commercial relationship between Venice and the Ottoman Empire, the *Mediterranean Community of Practices* (MediCoP) corpus was put together in the State Archives of Venice³.

The MediCoP corpus comprises commercial recordings, transactions, diplomatic documents and private letters written by multilingual speakers writing in ‘Italian’ with different degrees of language competence and linguistic repertoires at their disposal. In fact, in pre-unification Italy it is possible to find evidence of a priority, even exclusiveness, of contact with the oral language, as well as evidence of the importance of a pragmatic dimension (Testa 2014). Therefore, both an endogenous multilingualism (because of concomitant traits of different varieties of Italian) and an exogenous multilingualism (due to the repertoire of non-native speakers of Italian) featuring the linguistic repertoires of Italian used by merchants, court clerks and sovereigns, have shaped Early Modern writings.

In this paper a sub-corpus⁴ of the MediCoP has been selected and 54 texts (originals and translations) belonging to the following collections are investigated in search of cues of spoken language related to the shifting from phonetic dimension(s) to graphic representation(s):

- 1) *Archivi Propri Ambasciatori Egitto Unico* (AAEU, Personal Archives of Egyptian Ambassadors): 32 texts (15th century)
- 2) *Documenti Greci* (DG, Greek Documents): 2 texts (first half of the 16th century and the 18th century)
- 3) *Lettere e Scritture Turchesche* (LST, “Turkish” letters and writings): 15 texts (second half of the 16th century)
- 4) *Documenti Armeni* (DA, Armenian Documents): 4 texts (end of the 17th century)

The corpus-based analysis is conducted on the above-mentioned representative samples comprising texts from over a four century time-span and ranging from commercial letters (AAEU, DG, LST), pleas and promises of a financial nature (DA, DG, LST), as well as private and political letters (LST).

³ See essays by Di Salvo, Mori, Muru, Turchetta and Zinzi in Di Salvo & Muru (eds.) (2016).

⁴ For detailed references to the sub-corpus here considered see Mori (2016).

In the following sections, the phonetic-graphic interface will be discussed as follows: presence of speech-driven cues in writing (Section 2) as well as graphic inconsistency and fluidity due to the lack of a unique code of reference (Sections 3–4).

2 Speech-driven graphic variation

Mori (2016) focused on the description of the Italo-Romance based-continuum in use in Modern Mediterranean cross-cultural communication by non-native speakers/writers of Italian (exogenous multilingualism) aiming at different target varieties of Italian, not necessarily the Tuscan one, and native speakers/writers of different Italo-Romance varieties (endogenous multilingualism).

The proposed label “Modern Mediterranean Contact Italian” is an attempt to take into consideration contact dynamics developed within a community of pragma-linguistic practices aimed at political and commercial activities (see Mori 2016).

Data presented by Mori were interpreted according to two main guidelines particularly relevant in language contact situations: a) interference at different levels (both lexical and structural) and b) L2 markers of linguistic development. Therefore contact-induced outputs due to interference from the writers’ L1 (especially Spanish) were outlined together with evidence of L2 acquisition processes related to structural, typological and cognitive principles.

In accordance with the framework proposed in the above-mentioned research study, current focus will be on speech-driven cues, proving the priority of oral interaction and pragmatic needs in a multilingual setting where concomitant linguistic and cultural models related to different Italo-Romance varieties were simultaneously in use.

In this respect, it is interesting to take into consideration the relevant presence of graphic accents on monosyllabic words. In fact, in the entire sub-corpus examined here there is a widespread use of the graphic accent on *à*⁵ ‘at’ and *mà* ‘but’ without any evident reason for alternation between graphically accented and unaccented variants. This seems to be due to a mere inconsistency in graphic representation, which is quite common in texts written in Italian

5 In DA_1149 doc II and DA_1149 doc III, the accented variant *à* (‘at’) is the only type attested, while in DA_1150 doc I, *à* is the variant preferred (83% compared with *a*). As for the variant *mà* (‘but’), there are no examples in either DG or AAEU, whilst in LST there is 1 occurrence out of 5 (LST 3-4 doc VI) and in DA 4 occurrences of the accented variant out of 6.

varieties within the context of the Mediterranean Community of Practices where polymorphism and variation in writing were fostered (Turchetta, this volume).

Nonetheless, data analysis has revealed a peculiar use of a graphic accent on monosyllabic words, which could convey phonetic-phonological information rather than being a sign of unstable and fluctuating writing. For instance, it is worth noting the consistent presence of the graphic accent in the DA collection, as far as the item *hò*⁶ ('I have') is concerned:

- (1) a. *hò spedito* ('I sent')
- b. *hò incassati* ('I boxed them')
- c. *hò* ('I have got')
- d. *hò potuto fare* ('I could do')
- e. *hò fatto* ('I did')

This could be a graphic strategy to underline specific phonetic-phonological properties and, in this specific case, it could be considered as a way to represent the quality of the mid back vowel perceived, and consequently produced, as open according to the dominant phonological systems of writers, either native speakers of a certain Italo-Romance variety of Italian or non-native speakers of L2 Italian.

The same evidence is attested to for *è* (it. *e*, 'and'), but in this case it could be interpreted either as a graphic marker signalling a phonetic-phonological value (similarly to that observed for *hò*) or have another speech-driven explanation: the Italian conjunction *e* ('and') is rendered with the grapheme *è* when followed by a consonant in the initial position undergoing a lengthening process. This graphic variant might be related to the phenomenon known as "syntactic doubling"⁷ occurring not only as an effect of rhythmic conditions (namely avoiding the adjacency of two lexical stresses),⁸ but also after monosyllabic prepositions and conjunctions which are normally considered unstressed⁹. According to works by Marotta, the former are due to a regular prosodically induced phenom-

⁶ Selected examples from DA_1149_doc II and DA_1150_doc I.

⁷ For an accurate description of *status questionis* in an historical perspective, see Loporcaro (1997).

⁸ According to Marotta (1983–1986: 37) "the occurrence of RS [*raddoppiamento sintattico*, syntactic doubling] would be determined not only by the final stress in the first word (as has often been recognized), but also by initial stress in the second word".

enon (also referred to as “prosodic doubling”), whilst the latter are irregular and morphologically induced since they occur only in the presence of a given set of morphological items, namely prepositions, auxiliaries and conjunctions.

In these documents from the DA collection, namely letters of a financial nature, the Italian conjunction *e* is rendered through the variants *è* or *et*¹⁰, according to the following regular trend of distribution (confirmed by 92% of tokens): *et* → /_V; *è* → /_C. That is to say, when the following word begins with a vowel the preferred variant is the more conservative *et* such as:¹¹

- (2) a. @ Roma, **et** altre spese (‘in Rome, **and** other expenses’)
- b. **et** Anco del sig(n)ore Giacomo Mio fratello (‘**and** also of my brother Sir James’)
- c. **et** Io sò che fa Negotio (‘**and** I know he does business’)

Whereas when the following word starts with a consonant the dominant variant is *è*:¹²

- (3) a. **È** da livorno (‘**and** from Livorno’)
- b. **è** sono Numerati (‘**and** they are numbered’)
- c. **è** due Cassete (‘**and** two boxes’)
- d. **è** suo nipote (‘**and** his nephew’)
- e. promissione **è** preghiere (‘promises **and** pleas’)

As pointed out by Marotta (1983–1986: 35) “RS (*raddoppiamento sintattico*, syntactic doubling) does not occur in all varieties of Italian; it is typical of Tuscan and, in different contexts, of the Italian spoken in the central and southern regions, while in the North it is not found at all.” Therefore, the interpretation of

⁹ Although Marotta (1983–1986: 36) refers to a longer duration of these segments that could reveal their rhythmic prominence “since duration is generally assumed to be the main cue for stress in Italian, the longer duration in monosyllables causing RS would therefore indicate a rhythmic prominence” (Marotta 1983–1986: 36). Her experimental data proved that the initial consonant is longer, being affected by the RS phenomenon, when followed by a stressed vowel, rather than by an unstressed one.

¹⁰ *Et* is the most widespread variant in other collections of the sub-corpus here examined. More precisely, in LST it is the exclusive variant while in DG it alternates equally with the innovative variant *e*, without any clear cause but simply as further evidence of graphic variation along with an ongoing process of graphic codification.

¹¹ Selected examples from DA_1149_doc III and DA_1150_doc I.

¹² Selected examples from DA_1149_doc I, DA_1149_doc III.

this graphic cue in terms of syntactic doubling might be related to the geographic variety of pre-unification (mainly spoken) Italian assumed as reference in these Early Modern Mediterranean letters.

3 The graphic manifestation of voicing and devoicing

Another way of exploring the relationship between speaking and writing consists of looking at those phonetic (oral) phenomena related to the interference among different varieties which emerge also in writing: it seems to be the case with the voicing and the devoicing of stops as specific features of the Venetian dialect (Cortelazzo 1979–1987; Stussi 1995). Their presence could be an indicator of interference from it (Turchetta, this volume).

As Tomasin argues (2013a), the presence of the voiceless /k/, and /t/ is one of the main differences between Standard Italian (Tuscan-based) and the Venetian variety. Devoicing affected only ‘*erudite* words’ as an effect of the maintenance of the voiceless stops of Latin origin was also well attested in the Venetian variety: see, for example, Venetian forms such as *patron* (it. *padrone*, ‘master’), *secreto* (it. *segreto*, ‘secret’), well documented also in the Medieval era. Stussi (1965), for example, described this process in the production of some 13th century Venetian documents, while studies by Tomasin (2013a) gave some evidence of the same phenomenon in the Modern Age.

As for the voicing of stops, previous studies on Italian dialects from the 16th and 17th century show that this process mainly affected the stops in an intervocalic position: some examples are *amigo* ‘it. amico’ (‘friend’), *fadiche* ‘it. fatiche’ (‘efforts’), which were both reported by Tomasin (2010) as outputs in the Venetian dialect. In the period considered here, voicing is present in the Venetian dialect, as Tomasin (2013a) and Sanga (1990) state when discussing the so-called *Lombard language*. Rohlfs ([1949] 1966) also reports this feature among those of Northern Italian dialects: /t/ can give rise to /d/ or /ð/ and the consonant is generally represented in writing as *dh*.

As Stussi summarised (1995: 24): “the voiced stops too (frequently overlapping with the original voiceless stops later voiced) become spirant and then silent [...] The more complex situation is that of the dental stops. Here the ‘natural’ sequence [t] > [d, ð] > 0 has undergone various changes over time going through stops and restorations, resulting at times in today’s rather incoherent systems.” [Translated by Di Salvo].

For the velar stop, instead, Rohlfs (1966) reports that /k/, when voiced, provides a unique result /g/ and does not mention the possible grapheme /ch/ which, as *dh* for the phoneme /d/ or /ð/, could indicate /g/ or /ɣ/.

The instability of the phonetic rendering of stops can be taken as an indication of the interference of the Venetian dialect, and, consequently, of the influence of speech in writing by Mediterranean writers.

From a quantitative perspective, the analysis conducted on the MediCoP sub-corpus (Section 1) has shown a high presence of Venetian (as opposed to Tuscan) voicing and devoicing in those documents written by Venetian writers, such as many of those from the AAUE collection or by dragomans and professional translators such as some from the LST collection. Furthermore, it is not surprising that only very few cases of both voicing and devoicing are found in the DG and DA collections, which contain more recent documents: previous studies (Di Salvo 2016) show the importance of the diachronic variation in the loss of Venetian features and the greater usage of the Tuscan variants, as already discussed.

From a qualitative perspective, data on voicing confirm that this phonetic feature mainly affects stops in the intervocalic position (92.3% of all tokens). Some examples are: *veludo*, It. *velluto* ('velvet', AAUE, XVII, XVIII, XIX), *segondo*, It. *secondo* ('second', AAUE XXIII), *marcado*, It. *mercato* ('market', LST_1 I), *fradello*, It. *fratello* ('brother', LST_1 V). In some of these examples, other features of the Venetian dialect emerge: the consonant degemination in forms such as *veludo*, the removal of *-e* at the end of the word, when *-e* is preceded by *-l-*, *-r-*, *-n-*, in forms such as *ambassador*, It. *ambasciatore* ('ambassador' AAUE VII, XIV, XVI, XXIV), *commendador*, It. *commendatore* ('potbelly' AAUE VI, VII). As far as the voicing feature is concerned, the use of /d/ and /g/ instead of /t/ and /k/ and also the graphic usage of *ch*, *dh* and *th* were analysed. These data show the absence of the use of *dh* and *th* on one hand, and the major presence of <ch+o/a/u> on the other: it is possible to suppose that, according to the use of the grapheme *dh* or *th* to indicate /d/ or /ð/ (Rohlfs 1966), the grapheme *ch* could indicate /k/, /g/ or /ɣ/.

This digraph was found in 102 items (92 in AAUE and 10 in LST), mainly in documents from the 15th and 16th centuries, where a higher percentage of Venetian features, lasting well into the second half of the 16th century, is found: *manchato*, It. *mancato* ('missed', AAUE V), *alchuno*, It. *alcuno* ('someone' AAUE III, XXIV), *turcho*, It. *turco* ('Turkish', AAUE XXVI, LST 3–4_XI).

Because the grapheme frequently appears in those lexical items often characterized such as *alcuno*, it seems possible that *ch* could be used to indicate a voiced sound: more investigation on this topic is needed.

As far as devoicing is concerned, these results confirmed the position summarised by Tomasin (2013a): the tendency towards devoicing in Venetian is not correlated with the phonological context since 56.1% of items are followed by a consonant and 43.9% of them are in intervocalic position; devoicing is also correlated with the lexical type, as it occurs in lexemes such as *loco/luoco*, It. *luogo* ‘place’; *patron(e)*, It. *padrone* ‘master’; *patre*, It. *padre* ‘father’, all these are erudite words where the voiceless stops are due to the Latin origin of the lexical type. These lexical items also show the presence of further linguistic features typical of the Venetian variety, such as the fall of *-e* in final position after *-n* in *patron*, and the lack of the diphthong *-uo-* in *loco/lochi*. These Venetian features co-exist with other ones¹³ such as:

- the treatment of the palatal consonants (see section 4) in forms such as *zorno* It. *giorno* ‘day’, *zonto* It. *giunto* ‘arrived’, *rezever* It. *ricevere* ‘to receive’, *zonzer* It. *giungere* ‘to arrive’;
- the lack of the Tuscan metaphonetic diphthong, i.e. *zonto* It. *giunto*, *zonzer* It. *giungere*, *loco/lochi* It. *luogo/luoghi*;
- the removal of *-e* when in the final position and preceded by *-l-*, *-r-*, *-n-* in examples such *navicar* It. *navigare* ‘to sail’, and the already mentioned *patron*, etc.;
- the use of *el* instead of *il* for the masculine and singular determiner;
- the use of *-emo* in the present tense of verbs in all conjugations (instead of the Tuscan variant *-iamo*).

All these features suggest that the different percentage of the voiced/voiceless items is evidence of a major influence of the oral Venetian variety on writing, which appears to be open to dialectal and register variations within the Mediterranean Community of Practices (Turchetta, this volume).

4 Graphic alternation

In this section attention is given to graphic alternation and allography which can be found in the selected sub-corpus. On one hand, the aim is to highlight the predominance of speaking on the writing system where there is the prevalence of Northern Italian varieties, in particular the Venetian one¹⁴. On the other

¹³ A quantitative study of the distribution of these linguistic features is given in Di Salvo (2016).

¹⁴ This tendency is also confirmed in the analysis of the more extended corpus MediCoP (see Di Salvo and Muru 2016), as well as in Baglioni (2016).

hand, the aim is to show the widespread inconsistency in graphic representation in texts written in Italian varieties within the context of the Mediterranean Community of Practices (Turchetta, this volume) where polymorphism and variation in writing were widespread.

Considering that the sub-corpus is representative of different text types (translations, diplomatic, commercial and private letters), the graphic alternation¹⁵ was analysed taking into account *who* the writer was, *where* and *why* the document had been written and its content. All in order to understand if the graphic alternation corresponded, to a lesser or greater degree, to the functionality of the document (see Di Salvo 2016).

Special attention was paid to the graphic rendering of fricatives and affricates, according to the characteristics of the Venetian language (Stussi 1965; Alinei 1984; Tomasin 2010 and 2013b; Zamboni 1979). For this reason, two dictionaries of the Venetian language were used: Contarini (1852) and Boerio (1867).

The first case concerns the alternation found in the AAAEU diplomatic-commercial texts. This register belonged to Pietro Diedo (15th cent.) and contains letters signed by different senders, and copied by at least three different writers¹⁶. The following examples show the alternation of the graphemes <z> e <ç>:

(4) a.	doc II (03) ¹⁷	[1] <i>viazo</i>	'travel'	[dz], [ðz] or [z]
	doc VIII (10)	[26] <i>viaço</i>		
b.	doc III (03-04)	[24] <i>rezever</i>	'to receive'	[ts], [θs] or [s]
	doc VIII (10)	[34] <i>recever</i>		
c.	doc III (03-04)	[26] <i>zorno</i> ¹⁸	'day'	[dz], [ðz] or [z]
	doc XXX (30)	[8] <i>giorno</i>		
d.	doc VII (9-10)	[4] <i>zonzendo</i>	'to arrive'	[dz], [ðz] or [z]
	doc IX (11)	[16] <i>zonçendo</i>		

¹⁵ For a discussion on confusion between the graphematic level and both the phonetic or phonological level, see Mion (this volume).

¹⁶ Renzo Iacobucci ('La Sapienza' Roma, Italy), who worked on the transcription of the whole document, informed us that at least three different hands can be recognised within the register.

¹⁷ The number in brackets refers to the numeration of the images within MediCoP.

¹⁸ In Boerio (1867: 821c) we find: *ZORNO* (with soft z) s.m. It. *Giorno* 'day' where the 'soft z' corresponds to [dz].

e.	doc XXIV (21, 22, 23)	[14] <i>zonzer</i> ¹⁹		
	doc VIII (10-11)	[25] (10) <i>zonçer</i>		
	doc IX (09)	[16] <i>çonçer</i>		
f.	doc X (11-12)	[22] <i>dispiazuto</i>	‘to be sorry’	[ts], [θs] or [s]
	doc XII (12)	[15] <i>despiaçuto</i>		
g.	doc XV (15-16)	[10] <i>senza</i>	‘without’	[ts], [θs] or [s]
		[31] <i>sença</i>		
h.	doc XXI (20)	[5] <i>mezo</i>	‘half’	[dz], [ðz] or [z]
	doc XXVIII (29)	[27] <i>meço</i>		
i.	doc XXIII (20)	[27] <i>formazi</i> ²⁰	‘cheese’	[dz], [ðz] or [z]
	doc XXIII (20)	[25] <i>formaçi</i>		
l.	doc V (06, 07)	[8] <i>forzo</i>	‘I force’	[ts], [θs] or [s]
	doc IX (11)	[9] <i>forço</i>		
m.	doc XXIV (21)	[33] <i>pezo</i>	‘worst’	[dz], [ðz] or [z]
	doc XXII (20)	[12] <i>peço</i>	‘piece’	[ts], [θs] or [s(s)]

According to Zamboni (1979: 22) “the archaic phase /č, ġ/ typical of the Tuscan variety and in part of the Lombard and Ladin languages, was brought in Old Venetian to /ts, dz/ or rather to /tθ, dð/, interdental affricates, from which derive the interdental phonemes /θ, ð/ which still characterise the Venetian spoken nowadays in central and northern rural areas; here the opposition between /θ/ and /s/ is still evident as in *θénto* ‘one hundred’ (*tsénto* in a more refined version) against *sénto* ‘(I) hear’, while the Venetian language had completely lost, since the early 1800s, the distinction between /s/ and /ts/ or at least a strong sibilant”²¹. Hence, as shown by the examples, the two alternative graphemes <z> e <ç> are used for the rendering of both voiced and voiceless consonants. In examples (a-l) this alternation could be interpreted as a phenomenon of allography²² (see Turchetta, this volume), while in example (m) these two graphemes represent a phonological distinction. In particular, the two graphemes <z> and <ç> might represent:

¹⁹ In Boerio (1867: 821a) we find: *ZONZER* (with soft z) v. to It. *Giungere, Arrivare* ‘to arrive’.

²⁰ In Boerio (1867: 282b) this is considered an old form of *formagio* ‘cheese’.

²¹ Translated by Muru.

²² Where each allograph is considered as the graphemic variation of the written rendering of the same sound.

- a) the Venetian alveolar²³ affricate²⁴ [ts] and [dz]²⁵ (Zamboni 1979: 22) rendered in Tuscan as voiceless and voiced post alveolar affricate before a medium-high front vowel;
- b) the Venetian alveolar fricative corresponding to the Tuscan voiceless alveolar affricate.

Although a phonematic value has been assigned to the graphemes analysed on the basis of the existing bibliography, which describes both the phonological and the graphic rendering of the writers in Venetian, it is important to remember the social and cultural situation in which these documents were written, which was characterised by the presence of multiple varieties of Italian (*italiani altri*, Banfi 2014) and convergence phenomena, as well as linguistic interference from other languages. Therefore, the phonemic correspondence should be taken as a relative one, especially within those documents whose writers were in or belonged to the Levant.

When looking for the same phenomena within LST documents (16th century), the same graphic alternation is found, both within documents by a single writer or in texts by different authors. Within the two folders of this collection, two documents have shown to be particularly interesting. The first one²⁶ is a translation of a political-diplomatic text dated to 1561 written by Haydar Bassa²⁷, Sanzacco di Chersego where the word *Bassa* is the Italianised version of *Pascià*, that is, the Turkish rendering of Hersek Oğlu Pasa, and Chersego is Herzegovin (Schweickard 2012). The second one²⁸ is a plea written by Doctor Salamòn Natan Aschanasi in favor of his nephew²⁹. In both these documents³⁰ the grapheme <ç>

23 The same is an interdental fricative in the dialects of the Padua, Vicenza and Plesano areas. According to Zamboni (1974: 36) this is understood to be ‘central’ Veneto. According to Zamboni (1974: 9) the Veneto dialects can be divided into: 1) ‘lagoon’ Venetian, 2) central Venetian, 3) western Venetian, 4) the dialects spoken in the Treviso, Feltre and Belluno areas, and 5) the ‘Ladin’ dialect of Veneto.

24 Regarded as a pan-northern trait, the assibilation of the palatal affricates leads to [tsento] and [dzente] in Old Venetian and to [sento] and [zente] in Modern Venetian, again by assibilation (Castellani 1952, Rohlfs 1966).

25 According to what Zamboni (1979: 22) states, we could assign the following phonetic values [dz], [ðz] or [z] and [ts] [θs] or [s] to the grapheme <z> and <ç> as indicated next to each given example (4a–m).

26 Folder 1 LST doc I (MediCoP 01-02).

27 This term could in fact relate to either the title of Duke or the territory.

28 Folder 3_4 LST doc XII (MediCoP 12).

29 For further details about this document and its writer refer to Mori (2016).

30 In this context we are not giving all the occurrences either of the described trait or of the specific linguistic features of this whole document.

is found in alternation both with <zz> and <c> within the same document (5.a) and among different writers (5.b) as shown by the following examples:

(5)

Folder 1 doc I (01–05)

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| a. [25] amorevoleça | doc I (01) | [05] amorevolezza | doc I (02) | ‘amorousness’ | [ts] or [ss] |
| b. [20] felizze | doc I (01) | [20] felice | doc IV (06) | ‘happy’ | [ts] |
| c. [12] apiaçer | doc I (01) | [–] piacere | doc V (10) | ‘to like’ | [ts] |
| d. [30] fazzendo | doc I (01) | [2] facendo | doc IV (08) | ‘doing’ | [ts] |

Folder 3_4

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|------|
| e. [17] felice | doc XII (12) | [8] felice | doc I (01) | ‘happy’ | [ts] |
| f. [19] felicemente | doc XII (13) | [2] felicemente | doc I (01) | ‘happily’ | [ts] |

The following examples are taken from the DA collection, commercial letters from the 17th century where, once again, allography is found within the same document or among different ones. In particular, in a letter written in Madrid and sent to Mr Bernardo Bonina in Venice in 1699 the alternations between *Casse/Chasse* [N, cases], *cassette/casete* [N, cases]; *casseta/casetta* [N, case] and Venetian traits like *doi* [numb, two], *spechi* [N, mirrors], *donzene* [N, dozen] are found.

(6) DA_1149 doc I (01)

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|
| [2] <i>n(umer)</i> -6- Cass-e | <i>speech-i</i> | AND | [5]6- Chass-e |
| number NUM cases-F.PL | mirror-M.PL | | NUM cases-F.PL |
| ‘number six cases of mirrors’ | | | ‘six cases’ |
| [2] <i>in</i> Cas-et-e | <i>n°</i> 6 [...] | AND | [2] <i>doi</i> Cas-et-e |
| PREP cases-dim-F.PL | number NUM [...] | | NUM.two cases-dim-F.PL |
| ‘in cases (there are) number 6’ [...] | | | ‘(in) two cases’ |
| [3] Cass-ett ³¹ | <i>con fogli-@</i> [...] | AND | [6] <i>p(er)</i> Cas-et-a |
| case-dim-F.SG | with leaf-F.SG [...] | | PREP case-dim-F.SG |
| ‘case with leaf’ [...] | | | ‘per case’ |

³¹ The symbol @ seems to be found in Visigoth writing from the 8th–12th century. However @ was also used by Italian, Venetian or Florentine merchants in order to express a unity of measure, the ‘amphora’. For further details refer to <http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/lingua-italiana/consulenza-linguistica/domande-risposte/significato-origine-simbolo-denominato-comun>. We would like to thank Renzo Iacobucci (‘La Sapienza’ Roma, Italy) for these suggestions.

- [7] /entrov-ai/ sono n° 8 /don(ze)n-e/
 find-PASS.1SG be-PRES.3PLU number NUM dozen-PLU
 'I found to be eight dozens'

Considering that in the DG collection there are only two documents, namely a letter from Bailo Antonio Trevisan (1703) and one from Petrus Zeno (1531), one of which dates back to the very beginning of the 18th century, apart from the presence of Venetian lexemes like *Doi*,³² *zonto*, *fiol*, *lassai*³³, the lack of graphic alternation is not surprising.

Therefore from the examples presented thus far it emerges that the graphic alternation seems to be a widespread practice in the analysed sub-corpus especially in those documents written by writers who were not Venetians or who were in areas outside the Italian peninsula. As Baglioni states (2016: 133) in these areas the Venetian variety was the language of commercial relationships as well as the language used by the administration of the colonies. Consequently, the *who* and *where* these texts were composed seems to be determinant in the occurrence of graphic alternation and allography, while the *why* (typology of text) seems not to be relevant as far as the speaking-writing relation is concerned.

The writing system within these documents is evidently characterised by a phonetic status which is neither rigid nor consistently applied, as both the graphic level and the phonetic level cross and the graphic level supports the phonetic one.

As Mancini asserts (1994: 7–8), orality filters through the documents of the spoken language representing a transmission channel of writing itself. In this context, writing holds a strictly pragmatic value for the transmission of the message. As a consequence, the graphic instability in writing, which does not conform to a specific reference model, reflects the complexity of the contacts that characterised the Mediterranean at the time where writers with different cultural, social and linguistic backgrounds shared the same pragma-linguistic practices.

5 Conclusions

The cases herewith presented, and further analysed in essays by Di Salvo, Mori and Muru (in Di Salvo and Muru 2016), show that the traits which can be observed in the MediCoP documents are void of any systematic sociolinguistic motivation.

³² DG doc I (MediCoP 01) [10].

³³ DG doc II (MediCoP 02) [07], [10], [12].

As already discussed elsewhere (Mori 2016, Muru 2016, Turchetta 2016), the communicative needs of the writers of the Mediterranean area prevail. Among writers with multiple competences in different languages, a continuum of Italo-Romance varieties used with a vehicular function beyond the Italian borders (see Baglioni 2016) is confirmed by the documents of the MediCoP. The Mediterranean speakers/writers are representative of an aggregation of individuals who developed a set of shared pragma-linguistic practices where the predominance of oral upon writing, led by pragma-communicative needs, is evident. Within this scenario, the Venetian variety, along with the Genoese one, played a special role due to its primary diffusion both in commercial and administrative settings. When looked at in a diachronic perspective, the selected sub-corpus shows that the predominance of the Venetian variety diminished during the 17th century allowing the spreading of the Tuscan variety, especially within diplomatic and administrative settings (Di Salvo 2016).

In this scenario, the most suitable model to be applied for the interpretation of the linguistic variation observable in the texts of MediCoP seems to be that of the community of practices as proposed by Turchetta (2016)³⁴. The community of practices, a social aggregation of individuals characterised by common behaviour because of shared practices, seems to explain the linguistic heterogeneity and fluidity as it allows us to understand the social space negotiated by the people of the Modern Mediterranean.

Indeed, as Drusteler (2012: 47) notes: “early modern Mediterranean composite polities necessarily embraced practices [...] of linguistic pragmatism that made no attempt to efface these linguistic differences or to impose any form of monolingual homogeneity on their empires”. Consequently, the writing system, which emerges from the documents, is not one-dimensional and isomorphic toward the language (Mancini 2014) but rather pluridimensional.

Consequently, speech-driven graphic variation (Section 2), the graphic manifestation of voicing and devoicing of stops (Section 3), and graphic alternation (Section 4) discussed here, can be interpreted as evidence of the polymorphism which characterized the Italian peninsula in Early Modern Times and, to a greater extent, the multilingual Mediterranean area where pragmatic needs prevailed above any writing convention.

In conclusion, the linguistic variation in Modern Mediterranean writings is related to shared practices for which there is no stable reference model. Therefore the use of a writing form, more or less close to one Romance variety (e.g. Tuscan or Venetian), should not be regarded as a matter of identity but should rather be interpreted in the framework of inter-ethnic communication.

³⁴ The ‘community of practice’ was initially devised by Lave e Wenger (1991). See also Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002) and Wenger (1998).

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