

FRANCESCO GOGLIA

University of Exeter

VENETO DIALECT IN THE LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE OF IGBO-NIGERIANS IN PADUA

ABSTRACT

In this article, I will discuss the presence of Veneto dialect in the linguistic repertoire of Igbo-Nigerians living in the city of Padua. The case of Veneto dialect is particularly interesting, as it is one of the most widely spoken Italo-Romance dialects in everyday communication with friends and outsiders. The study analyses interview excerpts in which participants talk about the linguistic repertoire of the Veneto region and their knowledge, use and perception of Veneto dialect. The findings show that participants are aware of the sociolinguistic situation of the Veneto region and make comparisons between the Veneto linguistic repertoire and the one in the Igbo-speaking area in Nigeria. Moreover, participants use the Veneto dialect in communications at work, with Italian friends and elderly people. The use of dialect is not a choice but rather a necessity for effective communication. Participants do not have a positive attitude toward using Veneto dialect, as they still perceive the dialect to be too geographically restricted and prefer to put effort into learning Italian.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sociolinguistic research on immigrant communities in Italy includes many studies of the acquisition of Italian by first-generation immigrants (Bernini and Giacalone Ramat 1990; Giacalone Ramat 2003; Banfi 2003; Goglia 2004; Vietti 2005), the maintenance and shift of immigrant languages (Chini, 2011; Mazzaferro, 2018; Chini and Andorno, 2018) and the use of code-switching involving Italian and immigrant languages in conversation (Guerini, 2006; Berruto, 2009; Goglia, 2011). In contrast, the role of Italo-Romance dialects in the linguistic repertoire of immigrants has not been a primary objective of this research. However, some sociolinguistic studies on specific immigrant communities or immigrants from different countries of origin in various cities have provided insights into immigrants' aware-

ness, perception and use of dialects (Amoruso, 2002; D'Agostino, 2004; Mosca, 2006; Amoruso and Scarpello, 2010; Pugliese and Villa, 2012; Villa, 2014; Vitolo and Maturi, 2017; Mattiello and Della Putta, 2017; Goglia, 2018; Guerini, 2018; Chini and Andorno, 2018).

Most of these studies have provided evidence of immigrants' awareness of the status of dialects in the Italian linguistic repertoire (Mosca, 2006; Amoruso 2002; Pugliese and Villa, 2012; Villa, 2014, Mattiello and Della Putta, 2017; Vitolo and Maturi, 2017; Guerini, 2018) regardless of the geographical area.

Some studies have reported on the negative attitudes that immigrants express towards Italo-Romance dialects. Some immigrants state that they do not want to learn the dialects because of their perceived low prestige; for example, the Ivorian immigrants in Palermo (studied by Amoruso) linked the use of *Palermitano* to lower classes in the historical city centre of Palermo (cf. Pugliese and Villa, 2012; Mattiello and Della Putta, 2017; Guerini, 2018). Dialects are also perceived as secret languages deliberately used by local Italians to exclude or even offend immigrants (D'Agostino, 2004; Amoruso and Scarpello, 2010; Pugliese and Villa, 2012; Guerini, 2018). The geographical restriction of dialects is the main reason some immigrants prioritise the acquisition of Italian (Pugliese and Villa, 2012; Villa, 2014; Guerini, 2018; Goglia, 2015). This is the case, for example, for immigrants who have not settled and are considering re-migration, such as Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants in Palermo (Amoruso and Scarpello, 2010).

Some immigrants have a positive attitude towards the dialects, particularly when they perceive the knowledge of the dialects to be useful. For example, the Tunisians and Moroccans in the study of Amoruso and Scarpello (2010) use dialect in the market in the Palermo historical city centre (cf. D'Agostino, 2004). For them, dialect is as important as Italian because it represents a vital resource for their sales activity. Other studies have also highlighted the link between immigrants' knowledge of dialects and effective interactions with customers in the market or shops. Pugliese and Villa (2012: 194) reported on a Bengali shop owner in Bologna who wanted to learn the Bolognese dialect as a business strategy to interact more effectively with his elderly customers. Mosca (2006: 231) reported a similar attitude about using the Piedmontese dialect from a Senegalese seller in the city of Vercelli.

Positive and negative attitudes towards dialects may also mirror the opposing attitudes of Italians themselves towards dialects. On the one hand, dialects are still perceived as substandard varieties of Italian, lacking prestige and linked to a backward or rural way of life. On the other, they are impor-

tant markers of regional identities and considered worth maintaining, and in some regions, dialects are still widely used in both informal and formal domains despite lacking any official status.

Studies so far have shown that the degree of dialect use by immigrants may vary according to the areas and vitality of dialects, which are less used in the north-western regions (Cuzzolin, 2001; Guerini, 2018) and more used in southern regions (D'Agostino, 2004; Amoruso and Scarpello, 2010). However, social factors should also be included, as immigrants whose jobs involve interactions with middle- and upper-class families have fewer opportunities to learn and speak dialects. This is the case, for example, of Natalia, a Ukrainian carer in Naples, discussed in Mattiello and Della Putta, (2017), and the Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants in Palermo who work as domestic helpers (Amoruso and Scarpello, 2010). On the other hand, immigrants who reside and work in lower-class neighbourhoods use the local dialect more, as with the above-mentioned Moroccans and Tunisians in the Palermo dialect-speaking historical city centre (Amoruso and Scarpello, 2010).

In cities where Italian is the unmarked code, immigrants have little input in dialect, as local Italians tend to speak to them in Italian. According to Guerini (2018), Ghanaians in Bergamo do not receive enough input in *Bergamasco* by local Italians because local Italians speak in Italian to immigrants as they do with all outsiders and regard *Bergamasco* as a we-code of the local community.

Considering the above-mentioned insights on the perception and use of dialects in various immigrant communities and Italian cities, this article discusses how Igbo-Nigerian immigrants in the city of Padua and its surroundings position themselves with respect to the Veneto dialect in semi-structured interviews. In particular, this study focuses on excerpts that reveal the awareness of the linguistic repertoire in the Veneto region and the participants' declared knowledge, use and perception of the Veneto dialect. The North-East of Italy is a particularly relevant context since it is among the regions where dialects are still widely spoken in everyday communication. Although some studies on the contemporary use of Veneto dialect have suggested a more relevant role of this dialect in the linguistic repertoires of immigrants in the Veneto region (cf. Tucciarone, 2004; Santipolo and Tucciarone, 2004; Modena, 2010; Marcato, 2011), a comprehensive empirically based analysis is still lacking. This article aims to fill this gap and complement studies conducted in other regions in order to identify shared and unique trends.

2. NIGERIANS IN THE VENETO REGION

Nigerians were among the earliest of the new immigrant communities in Italy. The first Nigerians arrived in Italy in the 1970s as students and later as economic migrants and through family reunions. Since 2013, the community has doubled, with 103,985 Nigerians legally residing in Italy on 1st January 2018 (La comunità nigeriana in Italia, 2018: 61). The new wave of arrivals also includes asylum seekers. A total of 57.9% of Nigerian immigrants reside in northern Italy, particularly in three regions: Lombardia, Veneto and Emilia-Romagna (La comunità nigeriana in Italia, 2018). The city of Padua in the Veneto region has one of the oldest and largest Nigerian communities in the country, representing the 4th largest immigrant community in the city, as shown in table 1.

Romania	9,333	Bangladesh	1,338
Moldova	4,010	Sri Lanka	897
China	2,872	Ukraine	802
Nigeria	2,622	Tunisia	486
Philippines	1,876	Pakistan	484
Morocco	1,815	India	448
Albania	1,418	Cameroon	441

TABLE 1: The largest immigrant communities by country of origin (source Padovanet, 2018)

Neither the Italian national statistics nor Padua city council statistics provide information on the ethnicity and languages spoken by immigrants. The case of Nigerians is particularly complex, as they are not a homogeneous group. Individuals in this immigrant group may belong to different ethnic, religious and linguistic subgroups. In Padua, Nigerians mainly belong to the Yoruba, Edo and Igbo ethnic groups. The typical linguistic repertoire in Nigeria includes Nigerian English as the high language, Igbo/Yoruba/Hausa and possibly other regional lingua francas as middle functional languages, and Nigerian Pidgin English as the low language. In Padua, Nigerians speak Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin English as lingua francas for interethnic communication with other Nigerians and other English-speaking African immigrants (Goglia 2015; 2018). While some members of the community have now settled in Veneto and obtained Italian citizenship, others either have left or are considering leaving Italy to migrate onward to the UK (Goglia, 2021).

3. THE LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE OF THE VENETO REGION

The number of monolingual dialect speakers in Italy is decreasing, but approximately half of the population speaks both Italian and an Italo-Romance dialect, with passive understanding of the dialect being more widespread (Berruto, 2018). Italian and dialects still co-exist in a situation of dilalia, with Italian as the high language also entering informal domains such as the family domain, in which the dialects were traditionally used (Berruto, 2018). The vitality of dialects varies greatly by region, with greater dialect use either in monolingual mode or mixed with Italian in communication within the family and with friends in the north-eastern and southern regions. In these regions, dialects are widely used outside the family domain in communication with friends (table 2) and even with outsiders (table 3).

	North-Western	North-Eastern	Central	Southern
Only or mainly Italian	63.6	37.9	66.2	31.7
Only or mainly dialect	5.6	20.7	5.6	16.1
Both Italian and dialect	25.3	30.8	24.3	48.9

TABLE 2: Use of Italian and dialects with friends (Istat, 2014)

	North-Western	North-Eastern	Central	Southern
Only or mainly Italian	85.5	66.0	83.4	63.9
Only or mainly dialect	1.4	7.0	2.2	6.8
Both Italian and dialect	11.5	21.4	12.5	27.2

TABLE 3: Use of Italian and dialects with outsiders (Istat, 2014)

The linguistic repertoire of the Veneto region typically includes standard Italian, a regional variety of Italian and Veneto dialect. The term Veneto dialect covers a rather wide range of local varieties that converge to their respective provincial capital city and have a very high degree of mutual comprehensibility. In this region, dialect has a very high degree of vitality and is often the unmarked code in everyday communication in work environments such as public offices, factories, and shops. Immigrants encounter dialect both in the workplace and in their everyday communication with local Italians. They thus face the double challenge of having to learn both Italian and Veneto since, contrary to other regions, in the Veneto region, learning the dialect is not merely an option and a question of effective integration but rather a necessity for effective communication.

4. METHODOLOGY

The data discussed in this chapter are from two corpora of text from semi-structured interviews collected in 2004 and 2016 among Igbo-Nigerians living in the city of Padua and the surrounding areas. The participants, 22 in total, were all first-generation immigrants belonging to the first wave of Nigerian migration to Italy (see section 2). The interviews focused on their immigration experience, life in Italy, perceived use of languages and attitudes towards languages in their linguistic repertoire in Nigeria and Italy. A set of questions concerned the perception and use of Veneto dialect.

These semi-structured interviews were conducted in Italian and audio-recorded, lasted 30 to 60 minutes, and took place either in cafes and Nigerian shops or at the participants' house. Although semi-structured, the interviews were intended to develop into more spontaneous informal conversations on any preferred topic related to the participants' experience of life in Veneto. In the approach in this study, the interview is a type of communicative interaction whose content is locally constructed by both the interviewer and the interviewee (Pavlenko 2007; De Fina and Perrino 2011; De Fina 2011). In this approach, the presence of the interviewer is regarded not as a hindrance to obtaining natural data but rather as participating, together with the interviewee, in co-constructing the content of the communicative interaction. The object of this study is indeed the way participants present their use of languages and reflect on it while interacting with the interviewer. The study participants were generally keen on taking part in the study. My role as an Italian interviewer in this study actually triggered reflections and story telling that otherwise would have remained undetected (cf. De Fina 2011).

5. FINDINGS

In the following sections, based on relevant extracts, we discuss the recurrent themes related to the Italian linguistic repertoire and Veneto dialect. The following four themes were identified: awareness of the sociolinguistic situation of Italy (section 5.1.), knowledge and use of Veneto dialect (section 5.2), knowledge and use of other dialects (5.3), and attitudes towards Veneto dialect (5.4).

5.1. Awareness of the Sociolinguistic Situation of Italy

All participants are aware of the presence of dialects in the Italian linguistic repertoire and understand dialects' sociolinguistic relationship

with Italian. They regard Veneto as a local and lower-status language, similar to the status of the Igbo language in Nigeria that coexists with Nigerian English as a high language (cf. Goglia 2011). In the following extract, participant F states that he has learnt Italian by speaking with people, but then he adds that he can also speak English, Igbo, and some French; in this instance, he does not mention Veneto dialect. He labels the Igbo language *dialetto*. Indeed, this parallelism is appropriate because Igbo is also a language spoken at the regional level in Nigeria and coexists with Nigerian English as high language; similarly, Veneto dialect coexists with Italian, which is both the high and low language in the Veneto region (cf. Goglia, 2018).

- (1) Int: Hai imparato l'italiano parlando con la gente?
F: Io parlato italiano come gente se trovi qualcuno strada così...ma io parlo bastanza inglese, poi mia dialetto di igbo, poi troppo lontano adesso un po' di francese come salutare così, ma non mi ricordo più.
Int: Conosci anche il Pidgin English?
F: Sì, ma però non è bastanza perché non mi piace parlare.
- Int: Did you learn Italian by speaking with people?
F: I spoke Italian like people if I find someone in the street so...but I speak enough English, then my dialect Igbo, then very far way now a bit of French like greeting like this, but I do not remember anymore
Int: Do you know also Pidgin English?
F: Yes, but not enough because I do not like to speak it

Notably, he does not list Nigerian Pidgin English among the languages he can speak. A further question causes him to admit he can speak the language although he does not like it. Participant F is reproducing the Nigerian language ideology that sees Nigerian Pidgin English as the language of uneducated and lower-class people. This ideology is also reproduced in extract (2), in which participant A compares the use of Nigerian Pidgin English and the Neapolitan dialect as low languages that may compromise the use of the high languages, Nigerian English and Italian, respectively. He states that speaking Pidgin *viene a rovinare la lingua* 'spoils the language (English)' in the same way the Neapolitan dialect he had previously acquired may prevent him from speaking Italian. Before arriving in Padua, he had lived a long time in Naples and acquired Neapolitan and regional Italian. He then explains that it is not good to speak Nigerian Pidgin English when a person is required to speak in public. In *addressare the public* 'to address the public', he creates an Italian-like verb by adding the ending *-are* to the English verb *address*, but the hybrid

expression triggers the rest of the collocation in English. Note also the Italian calque *inglese stracciato* ‘ragged English’ from broken English, the English variety spoken by illiterate Nigerians.

(2) Int: Il Pidgin hai detto che non lo sai?

A: Io non so tanto bene il Pidgin, perché non mi piace, perché usando quello modo di parlare cioè ti viene a rovinare la lingua, come me ora no, se fai caso vedi che sto cercando, sto sforzando di parlare italiano, però me entro sempre l’accento napoletano, mi riesco però sto cercando di portare a me stesso nella strada giusto però ci sta sempre [qualcosa] di quello dialetto, quando uno parla quell’inglese stracciato e parla sempre, magari xxx che succede che ti chiamano a parlare o a addressare the public, tu non ci riesco a parlare più bene inglese, li parla quell’inglese stracciato, quindi non sono inglese.

Int: As for Pidgin English, did you say you can speak it?

A: I do not speak it very well, because I do not like it, because using this way of speaking that is it spoils the language, like me now no, if you pay attention you see I am trying, I am making an effort to speak Italian, but I have Neapolitan accent, I try but I am trying to bring myself to the right way, but there is always [something] of that dialect, when someone speaks that torn English and always speaks, maybe xxx it happens that you are called to speak or address the public, you will not be able to speak English well anymore, you speak to them that torn English, so it is not English.

5.2. Knowledge and Use of Veneto Dialect

All the study participants showed some knowledge of Veneto dialect and revealed that they encounter the dialect at work and in everyday life. In contrast to that in other regions, the use of Veneto dialect in the Veneto region remains significant, and the dialect is often the unmarked code in informal and formal contexts. The dialect represents a useful code to communicate effectively in immigrants’ most common professions in the region, such as factory workers, elder care workers, builders, cleaners, and nurses (cf. Tucciarone, 2004; Santipolo and Tucciarone, 2004; Modena, 2010; Marcato, 2011). In such situations, the target language of immigrants would not be Italian but would be either the local dialect or a mixture of Italian and the local dialect. The use of Veneto is not a sign of delay in acquiring Italian or an inability to distinguish between Italian and Veneto but a clear sign that an individual has acquired an unmarked multilingual mode already present in the region.

In the following extract, participant G states that he speaks Italian with his friends, but he also quotes two communicative situations in which Veneto

is used. The first is communication with elderly people who often use only Veneto and, according to G, also teach it to him (*anche mi insegna* ‘also teach me’). He recalls a situation in which an elderly person spoke to him in dialect and asked him in dialect if he had understood and he replied in dialect. He also provides a translation of the quoted interaction in Italian (*hai capito, gli dico che sì ho capito*) to maintain Italian as the language of the interaction. Second, he quotes an instance of communication in his previous job in a factory where the boss used to speak *dialetto con italiano* ‘dialect with Italian’. In this case, he first provides the Italian (*tira via* ‘take out’) and then quotes what the boss used to say, *ciapa, cava via, ciapa* (‘take, take out, take’). Italian and dialect coexist in this communication in the factory, and dialect is the preferred code (cf. Santipolo and Tucciarone, 2004; Modena, 2010).

- (3) Int: Torniamo agli amici italiani, con loro cosa parli?
G: Italiano, mai dialetto, però c’è anche l’anziani che mi parla dialetto e anche mi insegna a parlare dialetto come esempio quando mi pare mi chiede **gheto capio** li rispondo che **go capio**. Hai capito, gli dico che sì ho capito.
Int: Conosci altre parole in dialetto?
G: Sì, conosce del parole del dialetto come...quando lavoravo una ditta vicino di l’altra parte zona Arcella, c’è mio padrone che mi parla sempre dialetto con italiano. Come quando lui vuoi dire tira via, mi dici **ciapa, cava via, ciapa**.
Int: Let’s go back to your Italian friends, with them what do you speak?
G: Italian, never dialect, but there are also the elderly who speak dialect to me and even teach me to speak dialect as, for example, when I think they ask me **have you understood** I answer them that **I have understood**. Have you understood, I tell them that yes I have understood.
Int: Do you know other words in dialect?
G: Yes, I know some words in dialect such as...when I used to work in a factory near the other side of the *Arcella* area, there is my boss that always spoke to me in dialect with Italian. Like when he wanted to say take out, he said **take, take out, take**.

Extract (4) is from the interview with participant B, who was working in a factory at the time of the interview. B is a very outgoing person and, unlike the other participants, has many Italian friends with whom he prefers to speak Italian (*se è possibile* ‘if it is possible’) and English. Similar to participant G, B does not use the dialect in communication with friends. As for the English language, he emphasizes that his Italian friends can also speak English (*sono fortunato che i miei amici parla inglese* ‘I am lucky that my

friends speak English'). Most Nigerians in Italy complain often that their knowledge of English, an international and prestigious language, is not useful in Italy, where Italians are not good at speaking it (Goglia, 2015; Goglia, forth.). B also comments on the difficulty of understanding Veneto dialect, which is a completely different language for him (*quella una cosa diversa per me* 'that is a different thing for me').

- (4) Int: Hai anche amici italiani mi hai detto, con loro parli italiano o dialetto?
B: Ehm, in italiani se è possibile, qualche volta in italiani altre in inglese, perché sono fortunato che i miei amici parla inglese o capisce inglese.
Int: Se qualcuno ti parla in dialetto tu capisci?
B: Dipende cosa ha detto lui, anche dove.
Int: Secondo te è positivo o negativo parlare in dialetto?
B: È bene per loro che capisce, ma male per me perché mai sentito una cosa...quella una cosa diversa per me, non è facile.

Int: You told me you also have Italian friends. With them do you speak Italian or dialect?

B: Ehm, in Italian if it is possible, sometimes in Italian others in English, because I am lucky that my friends speak English or understand English

Int: If someone speaks in dialect, do you understand?

B: It depends on what he said, also where

Int: Do you think it is positive or negative to speak in dialect?

B: It is good for those who understand, but bad for me because I have never heard a thing...that a different thing for me, it is not easy.

Extract (5) is from the same interview with participant B. When asked whether he knows any dialect words, similar to G in (3), B quotes words in dialect (*magna...magnare, vieni magnare* 'eat eat...eating, come to eat') heard in his previous workplace, a restaurant. Both extracts (3) and (5) reveal that the workplace is the main domain in which Veneto is used. B also quotes examples uttered by a friend (*do* 'two' and *sabo* 'Saturday'). Notably, extract B uses the dialect form *spetta* 'wait', which also reveals the presence of dialect forms in his Italian. Although the extract shows exposure to the dialect and some knowledge of it, when asked if he wants to learn Veneto better, he answers negatively, emphasizing that he wants to learn Italian using the calque from English *proprio lingua italiana* 'proper Italian language'.

- (5) Int: Conosci delle parole in dialetto veneto?
B: Quando lavorava in ristorante, loro pronunce mangiare **magna... magnare, vieni a magna.**
Int: Conosci altre parole in dialetto?

B: **Spetta**...ho sentito una volta che mio amico voleva dire una cosa, due qualcosa, ma lui detto **do**, anche sabato lui pronunce **sabo**.

Int: Tu vorresti imparare meglio il dialetto?

B: No io non voglio imparare il dialetto, meglio proprio lingua italiana.

Int: Do you know any words in Veneto dialect?

B: When I was working in a restaurant, they pronounced to **eat eat...eating, come to eat**.

Int: Do you know other words in dialect?

B: **Wait**...once I heard that a friend of mine wanted to say one thing, two something, but he said **two**, also Saturday he pronounced **Saturday**.

Int: Would you like to learn the dialect?

B: No, I do not want to learn the dialect, better proper Italian language

Extract (6) is from the interview with participant H, who joined her husband in Italy 9 years prior to the interview. They live with their three children in a small town in the surroundings of Padua, where they are well integrated. She works occasionally as a cleaner. H claims that she has more Italian friends than *paesani* ‘fellow countrymen’ and that they mostly speak Veneto. Similar to G and B, she has passive knowledge of Veneto (*capisco, però non so parlare* ‘I understand, but I cannot speak’). H, similar to B in extract (4), emphasizes the difficulty of understanding the dialect; she attributes this difficulty to people speaking fast (*quelli che parlano, sai, che parlano in fretta* ‘those who speak, you know, who speak fast’).

(6) Int: Hai amici italiani? Nigeriani?

H: Italiani di più.

Int: Stai con tuoi connazionali?

H: Sì, ho tanti paesani, però non è che siamo amici, io ho più amici italiani che paesani.

Int: Gli amici italiani ti parlano in italiano o in dialetto?

H: Ci sono quelli che parli dialetto, ci sono quelli che parlano italiano, però i più parlano dialetto.

Int: Tu capisci il dialetto?

H: Sì, capisco, però non so parlare, però dipende perché ci sono quelli che parlano, sai, che parlano in fretta, però se lo fa..parlano piano piano capisco tutto

Int: Do you have Italian friends? Nigerian?

H: More Italian

Int: Do you meet you friends from your country?

H: Yes, I have many friends from my country, but it’s not that we are friends, I have more Italian friends than from my country

Int: Your Italian friends do they speak with you in Italian or dialect?

- H: There are those who speak dialect, there are those who speak Italian, but the majority speak dialect.
Int: Do you understand the dialect?
H: Yes, I understand, but I cannot speak, but it depends, because there are those who speak, you know, who speak fast, but if they do...speak slow slow I understand everything

Extracts (3)-(6) show that the participants encounter Veneto dialect in their life in Veneto, either at work or among their network of friends, and in communication with elderly people. This is in contrast with Guerini's (2018) findings on the use of Bergamasco by Ghanaian immigrants in Bergamo (Lombardy region). All extracts show that Italians in the Veneto region speak in Veneto even with immigrants, who need to learn the language. In this case, understanding the dialect in the region is not a choice but rather a necessity to communicate with locals and integrate into the new society. Other studies have shown immigrants' instrumental use of dialects in Italian areas where dialects have high vitality or are useful in particular work activities (cf. Scarpello and Amoruso, 2005; Mosca, 2006; Amoruso and Scarpello, 2010; Villa, 2014).

5.3. Knowledge and Use of other Dialects

The interviews also reveal participants' knowledge of other dialects according to their internal migratory trajectory. The Veneto region is often not the first destination, and immigrants have lived in other Italian cities where they have encountered other local dialects for some time. Participant F arrived in Italy five years prior to the interview, but before settling in Veneto, he had been in other regions. When asked whether he knows Veneto, he uses the phrase in Veneto *torna in drio* 'come back', but then he misunderstands the second question asking for more words in Veneto regarding a question asking for words in other dialects. He then provides an example of a word in Romagnolo, *grana* 'money', together with its Veneto equivalent, *schei*, showing that he is able to distinguish among Italian (*soldi*), Veneto and the dialect he has encountered in his previous migratory steps (cf. Villa, 2014).

- (7) Int: Tu conosci il dialetto?
F: Sì io conosce poco dialetto come **torna in drio** così...
Int: Conosci altre parole in dialetto?
F: Sì, come soldi...**grana**, romagnola dice **grana**, **schei** così.

- Int: Do you know the dialect?
F: Yes I know a little bit of dialect like *come back* like this...
Int: Do you know other words in dialect?

F: Yes, like money...*money*, Romagna people say *money*, *money* like this.

A similar case is that of participant A, who had just arrived in Padua after six years spent in Naples, where he attended high school and felt integrated. This participant's Italian is advanced and shows features of Neapolitan Regional Italian. In extract (8), he states that he speaks Neapolitan and, when asked, provides two examples of idioms in Neapolitan.

- (8) Int: Hai detto che sei stato sei anni a Napoli, conosci il dialetto napoletano?
A: Come, lo parli.
Int: Mi dici qualcosa in napoletano?
A: **Mazz e panella fanno o figlie belle, e cose buone se fanne verè**, cioè è un detto.
Int: Il dialetto Veneto lo conosci?
A: Non ancora, sto cercando di impararlo, qua sono sarà sei mesi, sette mesi.
- Int: Did you say that you have been six years in Naples, do you know Neapolitan dialect?
A: Of course I speak it
Int: Can you tell me anything in Neapolitan?
A: *Beating and bread make your children nice, and the good things can be seen*, which is a saying
Int: Do you know the Veneto dialect?
A: Not yet, I am trying to learn it, I have only been here for six months, seven months

When asked whether he knows Veneto dialect, he expresses a willingness to learn it. This statement contradicts what he said in the interview in extract (2) regarding dialects being an obstacle for the correct acquisition of the Italian language. Here, he expresses a positive attitude towards Veneto dialect; this is very similar to the attitude that Nigerians have towards Nigerian Pidgin English. On the one hand, it is a language associated with the lower classes and lack of education, as exemplified in (2); on the other hand, it is a Nigerian language that speakers are proud of. This dichotomy is also a feature of the relationship between Italian and Veneto in the Italian linguistic repertoire that participant A has observed and allows him to compare Veneto and Nigerian Pidgin English (cf. section 5.1.)

5.4. Attitudes towards Veneto Dialect

Several comments in the interviews highlight the difficulties in understanding and learning Veneto dialect, as shown in extracts (5) and (6). In

extract (10), participant F emphasizes that he finds it difficult to understand the dialect because *loro parli con naso* ‘they speak with their nose’. Interestingly, F refers to the speakers of Veneto dialect as *loro* ‘they’, identifying them as a particular sub-group of speakers in Italy (cf. Guerini, 2018).

- (9) Int: È difficile capire il dialetto?
F: È difficile perché loro parli con naso, non parli cosa senti qualcuno.
Int: Vorresti impararlo meglio?
F: Ehm...secondo me sono più meglio parla italiano ufficiale perché dialetto si tu esci in tua regione andare in altra regione sono problemi.
- Int: Is it difficult to learn the dialect?
F: It is difficult because they speak with their nose, they do speak as you hear Someone.
Int: Would like to learn it better?
F: Ehm...I think it is better to speak official Italian because the dialect if you go out of your region you go to another region you have problems.

In the second part of the same extract, F provides another reason why Igbo-Nigerians express a negative attitude towards the dialect: it is a geographically restricted language. F, similar to B in (5), prefers to learn Italian (*italiano ufficiale* ‘standard Italian’) because Veneto dialect is not useful for wider communication within Italy (cf. Guerini, 2018). The lack of motivation to learning the dialect is also due to immigrants needing to learn from scratch both Italian and the local dialect. Igbo-Nigerians have no previous knowledge of Italian when they arrive in Italy, let alone any knowledge of the Italian dialects. They tend to prefer Italian as a more useful investment for their future in Italy (cf. Arabic-speaking immigrants in Turin, Cuzzolin, 2001; Ivorians in Palermo, Amoroso 2002; Ghanaians in Bergamo, Guerini, 2018). The perception of the difficulty of understanding and learning the dialect increases because immigrants can learn Veneto dialect only in interactions with local Italians, whereas they may join, at least at the beginning, an Italian language class.

The workplace may also consist mostly of co-workers who are also immigrants from different countries. In this situation, Italian is the preferred lingua franca among workers. In the following extract, P, who had been in Italy for 2 years, indicates that many co-workers are immigrants too and that he speaks Italian with the minority of Italians because he does not understand Veneto. He notes *io parli italiano centrale* ‘I speak central Italian’, a calque replicating the label used to refer to the standard variety of Igbo ‘central Igbo’.

- (10) Int: Al lavoro c'è gente che parla italiano?
P: No, perché c'è gente tanti...*ethnic*, come mio igbo, dove io lavorare.
Int: Non ci sono italiani?
P: C'è italiani ma poco.
Int: Con gli italiani parli italiano o dialetto?
P: Con Italian...parlato, parli in Italia, poco Italia [...] non è dialetto perché io non capisci dialetto, io parli italiano centrale.
- Int: At work is there anybody who speak Italian?
P: No, because there are many...*ethnic* groups, like mine Igbo, where I work.
Int: Aren't there any Italians?
P: There are but few.
Int: With Italians do you speak Italian or dialect?
P: With Italians...I speak, I speak Italian, a little Italian [...] it is not dialect because I do not understand the dialect, I speak central Italian

In some cases, participants express negative attitudes towards dialects of other regions that they have been in contact with or have encountered in their internal migration trajectory. In extract (11), participant G comments on the Ferrarese dialect he has encountered because he has friends in Ferrara. He shows a very positive attitude towards the Padua dialect, which, as shown in (3), he knows and uses particularly with elderly people and at work. However, he states that he finds Ferrarese more difficult than the Padua dialect; he defines it as *troppo dura* 'too hard'. Vitolo and Maturi (2017) also found that participants in their study in Salerno held a positive attitude towards the dialect of the region of Campania and a negative attitude towards the dialects of other places.

- (11) Int: Conosci altre parole in dialetto?
G: Sono dialetto di Padova, perché le ferrarese è troppo dura, più di Padova, mi piaci quando sono arrivato in Italia e tutto mio quattro, quasi cinque anni adesso sono stato sempre a Padova e mi piaci con le persone che io mi racconto ogni giorno.
- Int: Do you know words in dialect?
G: They are in Padua dialect, because Ferrarese is too hard, more than Padua, I like when I arrived to Italy and all my four, nearly five years now I have always been in Padua and I like people I meet every day.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has shown that Igbo-Nigerians are aware of the sociolinguistic situation of the Veneto region in which Italian, the national language, coexists with Veneto dialect. They also make comparisons between the Veneto sociolinguistic repertoire and that in Nigeria by labelling the Igbo language *dialetto* and by considering Italian to be the prestigious language they should aim to learn in Italy as Nigerian English is in Nigeria. Furthermore, the participants encounter Veneto at work, with Italian friends and with elderly people. Although not all participants admit to having active knowledge of Veneto, all state that they understand it. In contrast to other situations, such as that of Ivorian and Sri Lankan Tamil immigrants in Palermo (Amoruso and Scarpello, 2010) and Ghanaians in Bergamo (Guerini, 2018), Igbo-Nigerians show that they know and use Veneto. Other studies have highlighted the link between particular jobs and social spaces, such as sales activities in the market in the Palermo historical city centre (D'Agostino, 2004; Amoruso and Scarpello, 2010) or in the city of Vercelli (Mosca, 2006). Our study shows that immigrants' use of Veneto is much more widespread and not limited to any social context. Participants report that local Italians speak in dialects to them both at work and in other domains, in contrast to findings for other regions (Villa, 2014; Guerini, 2018). The availability of input and the vitality of the dialect in key contexts such as work or friendship allows immigrants to learn Veneto and makes it a necessity for effective communication rather than a choice. The interviews also show evidence of knowledge of other dialects according to participants' previous internal migratory trajectories. Awareness of the Italian sociolinguistic situation and the knowledge and use of Veneto are not associated with a positive attitude towards Veneto. Igbo-Nigerians may learn and use the dialect, but they do not find it useful, as it is regarded as too local; hence, they still tend to prefer trying to learn Italian instead. Notably, Igbo-Nigerians who have children tend to teach them Italian and Nigerian English and neglect Igbo and Veneto dialect, as they perceive only the former to be useful for their children's future (see also Goglia, 2015)

This study adds a case study of the Veneto region to the growing literature on immigrants' use and perception of Italo-Romance dialects, but further research is needed to understand the actual use of dialects in everyday interactions. To overcome the limitations of interviews as a way to gather information on the perceived use of dialects, future research should record spontaneous conversations in various contexts, including dialect-speaking fieldworkers.

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