



THE CONCEPT OF DIALECTICISM IN THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The article analyzes dialectisms in modern Italian as a complex, multi-level linguistic phenomenon covering phonetics, lexicon, morphology, and syntax. Dialectisms are viewed not as marginal elements, but as an active component of the language system, providing expressiveness, stylistic richness, and regional identity. The study demonstrates their role in forming regional Italian (italiano regionale), in artistic literature, spoken communication, and mass culture, as well as their evolution in the context of globalization and digital communication. The findings highlight the importance of dialectisms for dialectology, sociolinguistics, and the methodology of teaching Italian as a foreign language, and open perspectives for studying their development in modern media.

Keywords: Dialectisms, Italian language, linguistic variation, Italian regional, dialectology, sociolinguistics, identity, literary text, mass culture, globalization.

Introduction

The Italian language represents one of the most vibrant, multifaceted, and dynamic models of linguistic variation in Europe, largely due to the complex historical, social, cultural, and political factors that characterized Italy's development as a unified state. The long, centuries-long coexistence of the literary language (the Tuscan variant, which became the basis for standard Italian) with numerous regional dialects, which developed in parallel and independently over the centuries, has led to the formation of an extremely complex, multilayered, and rich linguistic system. Within this system, dialectal variations occupy a stable, functionally significant, and deeply rooted position, acting not simply as "deviations" from the norm, but as independent and fully-fledged elements of the linguistic landscape. The dialects of Italy are not only territorial varieties of speech, but also living

testimony to regional identity, historical memory, social differences, and the cultural diversity of the peninsula [De Mauro, Rome, 2011, p. 41]. Dialectisms in the Italian language act not only as elements of territorial speech, but also as powerful expressive means in a wide range of areas of communication: in fiction, they create color, character traits, and the atmosphere of a place; in colloquial communication, they serve as markers of social affiliation, emotional closeness, or distancing; in popular culture, they are used for humor, irony, stylization, and the creation of a recognizable image of a region. Their study allows us not only to describe linguistic variation but also to identify the profound features of the national linguistic picture of the world, regional identity, the dynamics of the interaction of dialects with the pan-Italian norm, as well as the processes taking place in contemporary Italian society—from globalization and language standardization to the revival of interest in local traditions and identity. The dialects of Italy are not a relic of the past, but a living, active, and constantly evolving element of the language that continues to play an important role in everyday communication, literature, cinema, music, and the media [Sobrero, Bari, 2006, p. 58].



In modern Italy, despite the dominance of standard Italian in official life, education, and the media, dialects retain a high degree of vitality, particularly in family and informal communication, within regional communities, and in creative writing. This makes Italian a unique example of "diglossia"—a situation where two parallel

systems coexist: the standard language and regional dialects, each with its own sphere of use and social function. Dialectisms penetrate the literary language, enriching it with expressiveness and stylistic possibilities, while simultaneously being influenced by the standard, leading to constant interaction and mutual enrichment. This state of affairs makes the concept of dialectism key not only to Italian dialectology and sociolinguistics but also to understanding the processes of linguistic variation in general.

The purpose of this article is to examine the concept of dialectism in the Italian language, identifying its main types (lexical, phonetic, morphological, syntactic), functions (characteristic, stylistic, social, emotional), and the role of dialectal elements in the modern Italian linguistic system. The study aims to demonstrate how dialectisms function in different registers of speech, how they interact with the standard language, and how they reflect the country's cultural, social, and historical diversity. This will allow for a better understanding of the mechanisms of maintaining and transforming linguistic identity in the context of a single national language and globalization.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research material was based on the works of Italian and foreign linguists, translated into Russian or presented in Russian-language publications, devoted to the problems of dialectology, sociolinguistics, and the history of the Italian language. The empirical base was formed by data from dialectological descriptions, dictionaries of regional varieties of the Italian language, and examples from fiction. The work employed methods of descriptive and structural analysis, a comparative-historical method, as well as elements of the functional-semantic and sociolinguistic approaches. The integrated use of these methods made it possible to consider dialectisms as a multi-level linguistic phenomenon functioning in various communicative spheres [**Berruto , Turin, 2012, p. 79**]. For the study, key sources were carefully selected and analyzed, including classical and modern works on Italian dialectology. Among these, a special place is occupied by the fundamental works of Italian scholars such as T. De Mauro, A. Sobrero , G. Berruto , and G. Lepski , as well as foreign studies devoted to the variation of the Italian language and its sociolinguistic aspects. These works have provided a wealth of theoretical

and empirical material for understanding the nature of dialectisms and their place in the Italian linguistic system.

The empirical basis of the study includes various sources:

- dialectological descriptions and atlases of Italian dialects, containing lexical, phonetic and morphosyntactic features of regional variants;
- special dialect dictionaries and glossaries recording the vocabulary of various regions of Italy (for example, Lombard, Venetian, Neapolitan, Sicilian and other dialects);
- examples from fiction of different eras and authors, where dialecticisms are used for stylization, characterization of characters, creation of local color and conveying the social environment (from G. Verga to modern writers);
- fragments of colloquial speech collected in sociolinguistic studies and field notes.

All these materials were systematized and classified by dialectic types (lexical, phonetic, morphological, syntactic), by region of origin and by functional areas of use (fiction, everyday speech, media, folklore).

The following methods were used in the work:

- the descriptive method made it possible to record in detail and systematize the forms and types of dialecticisms, their structural features and semantic properties;
- structural analysis was aimed at studying the internal organization of dialectal elements and their place in the general system of the language;
- the comparative-historical method was used to identify the evolution of dialecticisms, their changes over time and the influence of historical processes on their development;
- the functional-semantic approach made it possible to consider how dialecticisms perform different functions (characteristic, stylistic, emotional, social) in various communicative situations;
- the sociolinguistic approach made it possible to analyze dialectisms as markers of social, regional and cultural identity, as well as as a means of social distancing or rapprochement.



The integrated use of these methods enabled a multi-level and comprehensive analysis of dialectisms as a multi-layered linguistic phenomenon operating in various communicative spheres. This approach allowed us not only to describe the formal characteristics of dialectisms but also to elucidate their role in shaping the linguistic worldview, regional identity, and cultural diversity of Italy. The study yielded conclusions that can serve as a basis for further comparative and typological studies of linguistic variation in Romance languages.

RESULTS

An analysis of the scientific literature shows that in Italian linguistics, dialectism is defined as a linguistic unit characteristic of a specific territorial dialect and functioning in the speech of Italian speakers at various levels of the linguistic system—from phonetics to syntax and stylistics. This definition emphasizes that dialectism is not simply a "deviation" from the literary norm, but rather a full-fledged and independent element of linguistic reality, actively used by native speakers depending on the communicative situation, social context, and purpose of the utterance [Lepshi , London, 1998, p. 112]. Dialectisms reflect not only the speaker's territorial affiliation but also their social identity, emotional state, degree of formality in speech, and attitude toward the interlocutor.

In the Italian language, the following main types of dialectisms are distinguished, each of which has its own characteristics and functions:

- phonetic dialectisms reflecting the features of pronunciation and intonation characteristic of a particular region (for example, Venetian softening of consonants

or Sicilian gemination), which makes speech recognizable even without lexical markers;

- lexical dialectisms, including regionally limited words and expressions that are absent or have a different meaning in the literary language (for example, Lombard " mona " instead of " ragazza " or Neapolitan " guaglione " instead of " ragazzo "), and often carry an emotional or stylistic coloring;

- morphological dialectisms associated with variants of word formation, endings or grammatical forms (for example, the use of special diminutive suffixes or archaic forms of verbs in southern dialects);

- syntactic dialectisms that manifest themselves in the specific construction of statements, word order, use of particles or constructions typical for a certain region (for example, frequent use of clitics or infinitive constructions in northern dialects).

It has been established that dialecticisms actively participate in the formation of the so-called regional Italian language (italiano Regionale), which represents an intermediate form between a pure dialect and the literary norm. This language variant arises as a result of the constant interaction between dialect and standard: speakers of dialects, speaking Italian, introduce elements of their native dialect—vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, and syntax—which leads to the emergence of regionally colored varieties of the Italian language. The use of dialectal vocabulary is especially productive in fiction, where it performs a characterological function (creating the image of a character through his speech), an expressive function (enhancing the emotional impact), and an ethnocultural function (emphasizing regional identity and local color). Dialectisms in literature make it possible to convey the atmosphere of a place, the social status of the hero, his origins, and his emotional state, making the text more lively and credible [**Ledgway , Cambridge, 2013, p. 148**]. Moreover, the analysis shows that dialectalisms continue to play an important role in contemporary Italian conversation, particularly in informal situations, among friends, family, or regional communities. They serve as markers of group membership, a means of creating closeness or, conversely, distancing. In popular culture—film, television, music, and advertising—dialectalisms are used for humor, stylization, creating a recognizable image of a region, or emphasizing authenticity. Dialecticisms in Italian remain a vibrant, active, and multifunctional phenomenon that not only

preserves regional diversity but also enriches the common Italian language with new expressive possibilities.

DISCUSSION

The results obtained convincingly confirm the position that dialectisms in the Italian language are not a marginal, secondary, or "residual" phenomenon, as was sometimes believed in the past, when dialects were viewed solely as an obstacle to a single national language. On the contrary, they are an important, full-fledged, and actively functioning component of the Italian linguistic system, reflecting its profound cultural, social, and historical diversity. Dialectisms are not simply "survived" as relics of the past; they live, develop, and even enrich the modern Italian language, introducing expressiveness, color, and stylistic versatility to it. In the context of a single national language, they continue to retain their territorial, social, and emotional significance, acting as a mirror of regional differences, traditions, and identities [**Trudgill , Oxford, 2000, p. 71**]. This is particularly noticeable in contemporary Italy, where, despite the dominance of the standard language in the official sphere, dialects remain alive within families, among friends, in local communities, and in creative arts. Recent research shows that, in the context of globalization, cultural unification, and digital communication, there has been an unexpected and very interesting rise in interest in dialectal speech. Dialectisms are increasingly used in media discourse—in advertising, television, radio, YouTube channels, and podcasts—where they serve to create authenticity, humor, local flavor, and emotional intimacy with the audience. In films and television series (especially neorealist and contemporary Italian cinema), dialects have become an integral part of the characters and the atmosphere of the setting. In online communication—on social media, memes, comments, and chats—dialectisms are used for irony, stylization, the creation of a "personal" language within a group, or to emphasize regional pride. All this testifies to a gradual revision of their social status: if previously dialects were often associated with "ignorance" or "provinciality," today they are increasingly perceived as a valuable cultural resource, a symbol of identity, and even a fashionable element [Auer, Berlin, 2005, p. 95]. The reduction in stigmatization of regional language variants is an important sociolinguistic shift, which shows that Italian society is becoming more tolerant of linguistic diversity.

Dialectisms in Italian serve not only a communicative function (conveying meaning), but also an identity function—they serve as a powerful means of expressing regional identity, cultural memory, historical continuity, and individual linguistic self-awareness. When a person uses dialect words, intonation, or grammatical constructions, they are not simply speaking—they are declaring their identity: "I am from Milan," "I am from Naples," "I am from Sicily," "I am part of this land and this tradition." This is especially noticeable in situations where a person wants to emphasize their identity, create closeness with an interlocutor from the same region, or, conversely, distance themselves from "outsiders." In a globalized world, when many Italians live and work far from their homelands, dialectisms become a way to maintain connection with their roots, family, and cultural heritage. Thus, dialectisms are not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a sociocultural marker that helps Italians maintain their uniqueness within a unified national and European space.

Overall, the study's results emphasize that dialectal variations remain a vibrant and dynamic element of the Italian language. Rather than disappearing under the pressure of a standard, they adapt, penetrate new spheres, and even acquire new value in the age of globalization and digital communication. This demonstrates the high vitality of the Italian linguistic tradition and that linguistic diversity is not a weakness, but a strength of Italian culture. Dialectal variations continue to play a vital role in shaping national identity, preserving cultural heritage, and creating an emotionally rich, expressive, and vibrant language. Studying them not only enriches linguistics but also helps us better understand contemporary Italy—a country where past and present, central and regional, standard and variegated continue to coexist harmoniously.

CONCLUSION

The study established that dialectisms in the Italian language represent a complex, multifaceted, and living linguistic phenomenon that encompasses various levels of the language system—from phonetics and vocabulary to morphology and syntax. They are not simply preserved as archaisms or regional peculiarities, but actively participate in everyday communication, artistic creativity, and popular culture, providing the language with functional flexibility, stylistic richness, and emotional expressiveness. Dialectisms play a vital role in shaping the national linguistic



picture of the world, allowing native speakers to convey not only meaning but also nuances of identity, regional affiliation, social status, and emotional attitudes. It is precisely thanks to dialectisms that the Italian language remains so multifaceted, vibrant, and close to the real life of Italians, despite the dominance of the standard norm in the official sphere. The study of dialectisms is essential not only for theoretical linguistics but also for practical disciplines. It makes an important contribution to the development of dialectology, helping to better understand the structure and evolution of Italian dialects. In sociolinguistics—exploring the mechanisms of linguistic identity, social distancing, and group affiliation; and in the methodology of teaching Italian as a foreign language, where knowledge of dialectalisms allows students to delve deeper into the linguistic reality of Italy, avoid stereotypes, and better navigate the spoken language of different regions. Dialectalisms help us understand why Italians, even those fluent in standard Italian, often switch to dialect within family circles or with friends—this is not an "incorrectness," but a natural way to express intimacy and authenticity.

Prospects for further research lie in analyzing the functioning of dialectal elements in modern forms of communication—social media, blogs, podcasts, YouTube, and TikTok, where dialects are actively reviving and gaining new popularity. Of particular interest is the influence of the digital environment on dialectalisms: how they adapt to short formats, emojis, memes, and global content, how their status is changing in the eyes of young people, and how they interact with the standard language in an increasingly unified world. Another promising area is studying the influence of dialectalisms on the linguistic norm: the extent to which they permeate the literary language, the media, and official speech, and how this influences the perception of "correct" Italian in society. These questions will help understand how the Italian language continues to evolve in the era of globalization while preserving its regional richness and cultural diversity.

Overall, dialectal variations are not a weakness of the Italian language, but rather its greatest asset. They make speech vibrant, emotional, and lively, allowing Italians to remain true to themselves in any situation and maintain a connection to their roots, even living far from their native region. Studying this phenomenon not only enriches linguistics but also helps us better understand modern Italy—a country where past and present, center and periphery, standard and variation continue to coexist harmoniously, creating a unique linguistic space.

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