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Congruence in Contact-induced Language Change

Language Families, Typological Resemblance,
and Perceived Similarity

Edited by
Juliane Besters-Dilger, Cynthia Dermarkar,
Stefan Pfänder and Achim Rabus

De Gruyter
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VII
Avoiding typological affinity: “negative borrowing” as a strategy of Corsican norm finding

1. Introduction

Corsican is a relatively new Romance language and is therefore still in the process of norm finding and elaboration. The formation of a standard differs from “ordinary” dialectal change in that it involves a social interaction with at least partially conscious proposals and acceptances. Grammarians, school teachers, writers, editors, etc., make choices and a larger, more or less educated public adopts or declines the recommended forms. Obviously, proposals do not come out of the blue. When writers and educators try to fill a lacuna or decide on a variation, they normally refer to the model of a more elaborated language (astiban language in the sense of Kloss 1967), especially of the language they are used to employing in formal speech. Hence, for centuries Latin was the favorite “quarry” while establishing the

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1 I propose “norm finding” as a more general concept in the sense of “corpus planning” that implies language policy as an activity of an authoritative group (cf. Hornberger 2006).

2 Elaboration is taken as the English translation of the term astiban coined by Kloss in the 1960s to describe a process of norm finding that leads to recognized standard language. The term development proposed by Kloss himself (Kloss 1967) will not be used because it implies comparison and evaluation, and the notion of one language being better than the other. This is not the case, although different degrees of elaboration do make linguistic varieties more or less suitable for usage in formal domains (legislation, judiciary, religion, science, etc.) (cf. Hymes 1992). In opposition to Hornberger’s framework on language policy and language planning (Hornberger 2006), I shall deny the clear-cut difference between two aspects of language planning: codification of language form and elaboration of language function. Function and form are entangled to the extent to which new domains require a higher differentiated lexicon and a more complex syntax. Hence, the term elaboration refers to both. It describes a process of forming new linguistic items and structures (a new “code”) in order to cope with new linguistic functions.

3 Proposals in norm finding processes do not only come from political institutions, but from educated speakers and writers who care about the language varieties they use and intervene deliberately in their elaboration (Kailuweit 1998). As Kastatik (1996) points out, to some extent the speakers become linguists in the process of language planning.

4 Posner (1996: 141–149) refers to the subjective, “accusative and infinitive” and the negation as three examples of modern uses of Romance languages “that might not have survived without the buttress of Latinate grammar” (141).

5 In the centralized national state of France, French is the language of broadwinning. However, many Corsicans perceive the French dominance over the island, which dates back to the late 18th century, as the result of a colonization process. Traditionally, Italian was the cultured language for Corsicans, but its prestige was impaired as a result of Mussolini’s occupation of the island during WW2.

6 See Thomason this volume and references therein.

quently observed aspect of performing distinctiveness by producing or avoiding certain features in everyday communication.

I shall call “negative borrowing” a strategy that in a process of anbau weighs the dialectal variation in the light of a model language and opts for employing or further elaborating the local form that is the most dissimilar in comparison to the model. The concept is partly inspired by Jerger’s claim that the same language—French for Corsican—can be a positive model on a constructional level and a negative model on a level of linguistic expression (Jerger 2004: 235). On a constructional level, the model language provides a checklist of linguistic items that must be dealt with in the anbau process. On a level of linguistic expression, the specific solutions of the model language are excluded in order to keep the language in the process of elaboration dissimilar to the model. The concept of “negative borrowing” collates the two aspects, but it primarily refers to a specific strategy in the process of elaboration.

In fact, a word or construction of the model language can function as a kind of linguistic eraser: local expressions that are perceived as too similar to the model are erased. A paradigmatic example in the field of lexicography is the polemic discussion about the Catalan word for ship. Barca, homonymous with the Spanish form, was the current word for ship in spoken Catalan until the 1980s. Although linguists proved that barca had been used in Catalan for centuries and that it was incorporated into the language in a time when the ending -a for a masculine singular still fitted into the morphological system, the form was considered intolerable in public discourse due to the Spanish parallelism. At school, pupils were taught that the correct Catalan expression is naus, a word that sounded old-fashioned and pretentious to most adult speakers. As a result of successful school teaching, by 1990 it seemed anachronistic that some linguistically “tolerant” journalists were defending barca (Tubau 1990; Kailuweit 2002). Burca had been erased from standard Catalan by “negative borrowing”.

It must be pointed out that “negative borrowing” is not just a new term for the old phenomenon of linguistic purism. In the case of “negative borrowing”, the proper language is not an ideal that has reached its level of perfection in the past and is now in danger due to foreign influences. On the contrary, the proper language aspires to a level of elaboration that a model language has already achieved. In order to reach this level, the model lan-

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8 By the way, the term barca was perfectly integrated in a Catalan word family: too burca (“boat”), embarcador (“wharf”), embarcació (“watercraft”), embarcar-se (“to embark”).

Avoiding typological affinity

language is a permanent guide, but the specific solutions for the language in the process of elaboration must be as dissimilar to the model as possible.9

“Negative borrowing” can also have another effect, as we will see in the following sections. By comparing the linguistic inventory of the language in the process of elaboration to that of the model language, every form or construction suitable for formal use, but absent in the model language is a feature to be considered and further elaborated: the core grammar of the language in the process of elaboration is defined not by internal aspects, but in comparison with the model language—its lacunae and dissimilarities.

Hence, after a short outline describing the historical situation that led to the differentiation of Corsican as an aushau language (section 2), I shall analyze non-specialist oriented, normative discourse concerning the elaboration of Corsican today (section 3). I shall illustrate the fact that many terms of the Corsican written varieties are designed to avoid obvious parallels not only with French, but also with Italian. The hypothesis that I aim to prove will be that Corsican norm finding is highly influenced by “negative borrowing” to assure—according to Marcelli’s ([1983] 2003) theory of linguistic marking (section 4) —the status of Corsican as an independent language.

9 An anonymous reviewer interprets the term “negative borrowing” strategy as indicating the social distinctiveness between one group and another. He claims that the phenomenon itself is well attested, and is neither novel nor restricted to the case study presented here. I only partly agree with this view. The motivation of “negative borrowing” is of course to perform distinctiveness, but this motivation leads to considerable structural changes in the formal varieties of the diasystem (in the sense of Coseriu 1974 and Berruto 2004). The same reviewer asserts that “Corsican, whether thought of as a language or as a variety of a language, is a full linguistic system, and has been there for around two hundred years, at least”. This is obviously not the case. “Corsican” has never been one full linguistic system, but a cluster of dialects with Tuscan as an umbrella language (Dachsprache in the sense of Kloss). Becoming a language of its own is not only a question of social status or prestige as one might suggest defending a concept of variation and style that neglects the diachronic organization of a historical language (cf. Eckert/Rickford 2001). In the case of Corsican, it entails the elaboration of new varieties with a lexicon and syntax suitable to substitute Tuscan in representative functions.

10 In this chapter, “non-specialist linguistics” will be used in a broader sense and not as euphemistic synonym of “folk linguistics”. I will consider as non-specialist oriented linguistic discourse any linguistic discourse that is directed to a broader public in order to inform and entertain the addresses or even influence their linguistic practice. The addressees of non-specialist linguistic discourse could be non-specialists or experts as far as their scientific education is concerned. Especially when I refer to the writings of Corsican (sociolinguists as instances of non-specialist oriented linguistic discourse, I do not cast doubt on their expertise, but only highlight the fact that they intend to reach a non-expert audience.
Nevertheless, the ausbau of Corsican seems to be restricted by the requirements of its function as a compensatory language, a function that also facilitates the “negative borrowing” strategy (section 5).

2. Historical background: ausbau as a criterion of linguistic independence

The initial statement that Corsican is a relatively new Romance language needs further explanation. The island was dominated by the Roman Republic from 237 BC on. As Giacomo-Marcelli (1988: 822) points out, latinity was complete and ran parallel with Sardinia and Southern Italy due to both a common substrate and similar social conditions, especially the settlement of retired soldiers from the Naples and Messina regions.

Judging by the absence of linguistic and metalinguistic indicators, during the Middle Ages the Latin in Corsica did not develop into an independent Romance language. The island was ruled by Pisa, causing the Neolatin spoken varieties to be overlaid with dominant Tuscan elements. From 1282, Corsica belonged to the Genoese who continued to use the Tuscan-centered written variety of Italian in prestige domains. As in many other parts of the Italian speaking territory, the local dialect formed a continuum with the language of Dante and Boccaccio: the more formal a situation, the higher the necessity to adapt to the prestige variety. Therefore, the Corsican language was considered a Tuscan dialect from the beginnings of Romance linguistics (Diez 1836: 82), a classification that has been challenged only in the last few decades.

The criteria with which we classify Romance languages are heterogeneous. When Diez differentiated between the national languages French, Spanish and Portuguese, Italian, the language of culture, Provençal (Occitan), the language of the medieval poetry of the troubadours, and also Walachian (Romanian) in his work *Grammatik der romanischen Sprachen*, he applied *avait la lettre* the two criteria that had been established by Kloss in the 1960s: languages can distinguish themselves from one another either by their immanent distance (*abstand*) or by their level of elaboration (*ausbau*) (Kloss 1967). Distance appears as both an external and horizontal criterion that bundles and separates primary varieties – *genolets* in my terminology (Kailuweit 1997: 18–24). In this way, Walachian was primarily a language of distance in Diez’s day and age, a cluster of Romance varieties in a Slavic, Germanic, Hungarian, Albanian, Turkish and Greek surrounding. In contrast, the other five languages correspond to the criterion of *ausbau* which is, to some extent, internal and vertical. National languages they possess a norm – a representative *genolet* in my terminology (Kailuweit 1997: 18–24) which is applied in the state apparatus and taught in schools. Before the language reaches national status, the written culture (especially literature, such as in the case of Italy) is the main point of orientation towards which a language area is able to develop. Provençal (Occitan) has achieved the status of an independent language thanks to the prestige of medieval literature which generally, however, does not form part of the accepted corpus of orientation for modern usage.

The examples show that the grammatical constitution of a language is media-oriented from the very beginning, seeing as it surpasses the linguistic immediacy, the so-called face-to-face level. The use of the media does not only, however, exceed the horizon of day-to-day communication, but at the same time corresponds to a functional extension and structural elaboration. The grammatical, mediatized variety adopts functions that are non-existent in geneolectal day-to-day communication and does so with the help of a level of formalization that demands reflection and additional study. Potential social mobility is so strongly linked to the acquisition of the standard variety of a (national) language community because the access to the standard is generally socially selective (Bourdieu 1982).

On the base of these preliminary thoughts it becomes clear that the assumption of further Romance languages in French, Spanish or Italian territory is precarious. These languages can hardly be considered languages of *abstand*, due to the fundamental typological similarities and the imprecise dialectal borders. The level of *ausbau* is therefore decisive, as is the speakers’ acceptance. In the case of Corsican, the process of *ausbau* is still under way (Goebel 1988; Jerger 2004; Farrenkopf 2011). In *ausbau* processes, one usually differentiates between *corpus planning* and *status planning* (Kloss 1969; Hornberger 2006). The elaboration of the corpus consists not only of an intermediary transcription, in which the day-to-day speech is transported into writing, but also in the adoption of foreign models of formal speech. The status, on the other hand, is a result of the usage of the elaborated items in prestigious forms of media.

It is no coincidence that the beginning of the systematic elaboration of the Corsican written culture dates back to the late 19th century, when French replaced Italian in the areas of written language. When Corsica was purchased by the French crown in 1764 and fully incorporated into France in 1796, the influence of written Italian faded away. However, it was only at the end of the 19th century that French became a reasonably well-known and commonly used language in all written domains, thanks to Jules Ferry’s education policy. Interestingly, the first systematic attempts to establish Corsican as an independent (written) language date from the same time (Blackwood 2008: 11–37, Adrey 2009: 160–176). Cut off from Italy for political reasons and thus, in Kloss’ (1967) words, having lost its “umbrella language”,
spoken Corsican seemed to be too different to be considered a spoken variety of French. Therefore, standard French never acquired the status of a natural means of formal expression for native speakers of Corsican varieties. Nonetheless, throughout the 20th century, spoken French spread at the expense of Corsican, giving birth to a process of language shift that threatens the future of the Corsican varieties in their function as mother tongues. Today, the majority of Corsicans classify their genolectic competence as French, but it is difficult to estimate how many Corsicans still master the Corsican language as a genolect. Going by the 1999 statistics of the Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE) 11 a mere 6–10% of all Corsican genolect speakers born before 1965 passed on this competence to their children (retransmission habituelle). Thus, the number of Corsican genolect speakers has been decreasing by a factor of 10. Nonetheless, the same study proves an increasing degree of occasional transmission (transmission occasionnelle) that reaches 65% for the parents’ generation born in 1965.

In my opinion, the transmission occasionnelle must be interpreted in the light of a tendency that at first view seems to contrast paradoxically with the reduction of linguistic competence in the genolectic area: despite a loss of genolect speakers, Corsican has been developing linguistically for several decades. It is used in various kinds of texts, from literature to scientific prose, but does not compete with French in any more than a symbolic way.

Due to the fact that Corsican itself occupies grammatical domains, a diglossic dimension arises. In the light of Ferguson’s (1959) classical examples – Swiss German, Modern Arabic, Haitian Creole, among others – I wish to redefine diglossia as a hierarchical language contact situation whose relative stability is conspicuous, given that the B-language could potentially insert itself into the functions of the A-language. Based on this claim, in the field of Catalan sociolinguistics a theory has been developed that diglossia is in fact not of long-term stability, but ends with the replacement of the B-language by the A-language or with the so-called normalization of the B-language and the reduction of the A-language (language conflict) (Aracil 1986: 25). The aim of corpus and status planning would therefore not be bilingualism, i.e. balanced competence of both languages in the whole linguistic community, but the reacquisition of monolingualism in the B-language. It is evident that in this case, state independence is a necessary condition but indeed not a sufficient one, as the current status of Gaelic in the Republic of Ireland proves.


Corsica did not have the chance to become an independent state, which would have enabled Corsican to function as the official language. During the short phases of independence in the 18th century (1736 and 1755–69) there was an identity defining discourse (cf. Vergé-Franceschi 1996), but it did not result in a lasting promotion of linguistic independence, mainly due to the language thinking that dominated in the period of Enlightenment: in the century of universalism the individual language played no significant role in the identity-forming processes. Just as the Catalans considered the universal language Spanish a means of expression of their cultural independence (Kailuweit 1997: 206–210), the referential language Italian and the universal language French were available to the Corsicans as possible cultured languages.

It was not only the loss of linguistic competence in the Italian grammatical, but also the dominant linguistic attitudes in the 19th century that connected the articulation of cultural independence to the use of the mother tongue, i.e. to the genolectic competence. The absence of political independence and the economic underdevelopment that caused the emigration of a considerable proportion of the population – during the first half of the 20th century, Corsica was one of the most thinly populated regions in Europe – prevented Corsican from becoming a fully elaborated language used in all domains of literacy. The nationalist French linguistic ideology and its realization in language policy (Kailuweit 1997; Schiffman 2002) also played a role in this aspect. The propagation of French monolingualism that made its native competence a condition for participating in both economy and society, resulted in the decreased transmission of Corsican genolectal competence, as demonstrated in the INSEE study. In addition, after the fascist occupation of the island during the Second World War reintegration into Iphontology was definitely out of the question. The only way of maintaining the local dialect seemed to be to convert it into a written language and to teach it at school. 12 As far as norm finding for this new language is concerned, “negative borrowing” as a strategy comes into play to avoid similarities with both French and Italian and to guarantee the symbolic independence of the Corsican grammatical system.

To sum up this section: Based on Kloss’ criteria of abstan and anothors, Corsican achieved the status of an independent Romance language in a time span ranging from the late 19th century to post-WWII. Thus, one can observe a paradox that goes back to this period and that is gradually increasing due to the intensification of Corsican lessons at school and the possibilities

12 Corsican is taught to a percentage of pupils that is higher than for any other minority language in France (Comiti 2005: 69–79; Farrenkopf 2011: 110–117).
offered by the new forms of media: the elaboration and spread of grammatical competence is accompanied by a loss of genoclectal competence. The question therefore remains as to what degree this particular situation influences the strategies underlying borrowing, transfer and copying processes that are at work in the formation of a elaborated variety of Corsican. This variety would symbolically represent the still existing dialectal cluster and assure the survival of Corsican at least as a second language learned at school.

3. Non-specialist orientated discourse

In his study on linguistic attitudes, Ulrich Farrenkopf reports on his own experiences with what I would like to call “negative borrowing” in this chapter. He reports that in a Corsican class he assisted at the Lycée Gioacante de Casabianca, the teacher advised his pupils to use *munda* instead of *invis* (‘he/she sends’) and *d’ogni loco* instead of *doppertutu* (‘everywhere’). Farrenkopf points out that all the forms are currently used. With regard to the first two words, the teacher recommended a form that is a homophone in standard Italian but non-existent in French and in the case of the last two, he recommended a form that also differs from standard Italian (Farrenkopf 2011: 80).13

The reported cases can obviously not be considered representative, although they may illustrate a more generalized attitude. Therefore, in this section I shall have a more systematic look at different manifestations of non-specialist orientated discourse, i.e. works that are directed toward a broader audience and that, intentionally or non-intentionally, have a certain impact on the readers’ linguistic attitudes and behavior. As we will see, even though the reviewed texts by no means advocate directly for “negative borrowing”, they nevertheless prepare the ground for this phenomenon.

According to the foreword by Jacques Fusina, Jean-Marie Comiti, sociolinguist of the Corsican university at Corte, aims his essay *La langue corse entre chien et loup* (2005) at a broad audience. Comiti starts with the hypothesis of an early Corsican linguistic identity as the perception of a special flavor in the local Latin.14 He then comments on the formation of Romance languages and highlights the sound changes that Corsican shares with Portuguese and Catalan (2005: 21–24). In the course of the essay he tackles the question of Tuscanization in order to unmask the widespread belief of a Tuscan-Corsican linguistic unity as a myth that conceals the Corsican monolingualism until the French dominance.15 The essay does not present a large quantity of linguistic data, but one detail is especially interesting in the context of “negative borrowing”. Comiti describes a tendency of Corsican to reduce the number of nominal classes from four – like in standard Italian – to two. Hence, instead of the masculine and feminine with the ending -e – *paes, paie, nome, fine, mar; corte, croce, pelle;* we find the masculine forms *pau, *paie, *paie, *nome, *fine, *mar* and the feminine forms *corte, croce, dell* (Comiti 2005: 116). Comiti does not directly suggest the use of these forms that are – as he points out – more or less accepted, but he raises the question as to whether we are dealing with a normal morphological change or with unacceptable “monstrosities”. He concludes that changes are inevitable for every living language and that the people have the right to establish the solution they perceive as functional (Comiti 2005: 116).16

Jean Chiorboli17 *Le corse pour le nuls* (2010) is aimed not only at short-term tourists, but also at those who have taken up their first or secondary residence on the island. These people are invited to learn some Corsican to communicate with their new neighbors and/or colleagues (Chiorboli 2010: 3–4). In his short introduction into the history of Corsican, Chiorboli insists on the linguistic independence of the island in spite of the impact (more or less profound) by all the languages of foreign rulers.18 Nonetheless, he ad-

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13 The current form of standard Italian is *doppertutu*. *In ogni lungo* exists as an alternative.

14 “Considérons que le peuple corse a progressivement imprimé au latin une ‘corseité’ qui préside à son autonomie linguistique et lui confère son caractère propre. Cette nouvelle identité se constitue autour d’une matrice linguistique latine ayant subi très tôt les influences d’un substrat prélatin, d’une part, et ayant intégré, d’autre part, les éléments germaniques introduits par les grandes invasions qui n’ont pas épargné la Corse. D’autres influences viendront s’ajouter à la suite, notamment

15 “On considère alors le corse comme une variante locale du toscan en forgeant l’idée qu’il n’y avait dans l’île qu’une seule langue qui pouvait se décliner sous une forme savante, “haute”, et une forme populaire, “basse”. C’est ainsi qu’un fantasmatique monolinguisme toscan est né dans l’imaginaire collectif et que le monolinguisme corse, qui avait vécu comme une réalité linguistique incontestable, parfois dégradante, a été occulté, escamoté, évacué telle une tare que la conscience linguistique collective a tâché aux oubliettes” (Comiti 2005: 31).

16 “Les mutations linguistiques sont le lot de toute langue vivante dont l’évolution est inévitable. C’est peut-être le dictum populaire (qui véhicule toute la sagesse du monde) qui semble répondre le plus efficacement à la question: *a pratica vinci a grammatica* (l’usage vient à bout de la grammaire)” (Comiti 2005: 117).

17 Jean Chiorboli is professor for Corsican Language and Humanities at the University of Corsica (Corte).

18 “… l’influence plus ou moins profonde du latin de Rome, des divers parlers italiens (notamment toscan et sarde) puis du français s’exerce sûr île, sans jamais
mits that Corsican remains a part of Italo-Romance even though the island is integrated into the French speaking sphere of communication. In his short grammar we find a couple of potential examples for "negative borrowing". One candidate would be the names of the week in a phonetically more southern form and without the ending -di ('day') that we find in French and standard Italian (lun, mar, mer, etc.; French: lundi, mardi, mercredi, etc.; Italian: lunedì, martedì, mercoledì, etc.) (Chiorboli 2010: 96). As another candidate for "negative borrowing", I would like to mention the paraphrase of obligation ci volle à + infinitive (Chiorboli 2010: 62). If Corsican allows for variation (ci volle à, bisognar, etc.), Chiorboli mentions just one form that has no functional parallel in standard Italian.

Jean-Marie Arrighi – a school inspector for Corsican language teaching – also addresses his Histoire de la langue corse (2002) to a broad audience that is not restricted to Corsica. While discussing the relation of Corsican and Italian he tells a "joke": Corsican is not an Italian dialect, but Italian should be considered a Corsican dialect, since Corsican is closer to Latin. He goes on to concede that Corsican incontrovertibly belongs to the Italo-Romance group, although its place in this group is debatable. Some pages later he insists on the similarity of Tuscan, Corsican and the North of Sardinia. In the Middle Ages, the three regions are supposed to have formed a linguistic unity. Hence, Corsican could claim the same heritage as Tuscan and, in fact, has conserved part of this heritage that standard Italian has already lost, as some lexical and morphological examples prove. One example is the main-

gonommer entièrement des caractères linguistiques spécifiques forgés au cours d'une évolution plurimillénaire’ (Chiorboli 2010: 10).

19 "Si la Corse […] reste dans l'aire linguistique de l'ensemble italo-roman, où elle a longtemps évolué, elle a cependant complètement basculé dans le champ de communication français" (Chiorboli 2010: 10).


21 "Cet ouvrage a d’abord pour but d’apporter au grand public – corse ou non – une information minimale, aussi objective que possible, sur les étapes historiques qui ont conduit à l’élaboration de la langue corse" (Arrighi 2002: 9).

22 "Le grand avocat corse Moro-Giatteri, à la question d’un journaliste ‘le corse est-il un dialecte italien?’ réplique ‘c’est le contraire, c’est l’italien qui est un dialecte du corse, puisque le corse, c’est le latin’. Au délà de la boutade, c’est aussi une évidence qu’il énonçait" (Arrighi 2002: 35).

23 "À l’intérieur de ces langues romanes, le corse […] se situe indiscutablement dans le groupe dit ‘italo-roman’. Il y a débat cependant sur sa place à l’intérieur de ce groupe" (Arrighi 2002: 36–37).

24 "Durant la période médiévale, on doit considérer que l’ensemble Toscane–Corse–Nord de la Sardaigne constitue linguistiquement un tout" (Arrighi 2002: 43).

Avoiding typological affinity that has been substituted by oni in standard Italian. This form is also mentioned by Giacomo-Marcellesi (1988: 823) as a typical Corsican marker, but one restricted to southern varieties. Thus, presenting this marker as Corsican tont cour is a gesture that erases variation by "negative borrowing".

Arrighi concludes by adding some examples of -u at the end of words instead of Tuscan -o and of the prepositional accusative in medieval Tuscan texts from the island that illustrate the regional linguistic flavor. Even though these phenomena are not restricted to Corsica – as he points out – in their totality they make Corsican stand out. In addition, although the markers may not mean the same to the specialists, they represent a highly important symbolic treasury for the inhabitants of the island. This last comment is especially interesting. It highlights the fact that what we might call the core grammar of Corsican is not determined by the linguistic system itself, but by a set of features representing dissimilarities with the model languages. We shall find this argumentation more explicitly in an expert-oriented discourse by Marcellesi that we shall analyze in the next section.

In this section I shall comment briefly on a more systematic study that was undertaken by Christian Jerger in 2004. In his dissertation, Jerger analyzes 30 Corsican dictionaries published between 1905 and 1999 (Jerger 2004: 80–82). These dictionaries oscillate between a descriptive and prescriptive claim. Hence, they can be considered instances of non-specialist oriented discourse in that one of their objectives, albeit not the primary objective, is to function as handbooks of reference for the formal use of Cor-
sician. Jerger points out that as far as the explicit comment of French and Italian loan words is concerned, the reviewed dictionaries reveal a rather neutral attitude towards Italian loan words, whereas in the older editions and also in some of the newer ones, French borrowings are stigmatized (Jerger 2004: 180–183).

In the field of neologisms, Jerger (2004: 201–203) observes a strong tendency to adopt forms of standard Italian, partly with smaller phonetic and morphological modifications (anapȩstic, aeromántico, aritmetica, anegazión). Corsican forms that avoid both the French and the Italian form — e.g. Corsican aberramento, French aberration, Italian aberrazione — are relatively rare (Jerger 2004: 204). Detailed scrutiny of the use of the morphemes -ita versus -ita for nomina agentis and -ibile/ibile versus -ivole for adjectives of "disposition" shows a tendency towards the learned suffix -ita in the first case and of the inherited form -ivole in the second. While the use of -ita does not differ from the standard Italian solution, -ivole is no longer productive in the model language (Jerger 2004: 230–236). Therefore, the choice of traditional -ivole instead of the learned suffixes -ibil/iibile can be considered a case of "negative borrowing" in the sense of the present study.

4. Markers of "Corsicaness"

In an academic article first published in 1983, Jean-Baptiste Marcellesi develops a theory of linguistic marking as a central strategy to construct and maintain linguistic identity. A linguistic identity marker is a feature that is considered representative when identifying a certain language or variety. Marcellesi points out that markers need not be central features as far as the linguistic system as a whole is concerned. In addition — and this is especially important in the context of a theory of "negative borrowing" — the markers are not even necessarily the only forms for a certain function that are consistent with the normal usage. It is entirely sufficient for them to be perceived as symbolically representative.

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To retrack the question of Corsican linguistic identity, Marcellesi starts with an anecdote. He quotes a Catalan linguist and militant who defended the close relationship of Corsican and Italian at a conference in 1981, stating that the slogan libertà per i nostri fratelli incarcati that he had read on the city walls of Ajaccio was identical to one on the city walls of Florence. Marcellesi comments that on the one hand, the example proves the ineffectiveness of the attempts of those who try to attest that Corsican differs greatly from Italian and is even closer to Portuguese from a linguistic point of view. On the other hand, the similarity of a certain construction does not prove anything with regard to sociolinguistic perception.

What is really important for the perception of linguistic identity is the specific and to some extent arbitrary catalog of markers that stand for the linguistic community.

Marcellesi ([1983] 2003: 212–215) goes on to list seven canonical markers of "Corsicaness": the ending -a which corresponds to the standard Italian -a, the palatalized /t/ and /d/, the sandhi, the vowel raising of /e/ and /o/ to [i] and [u] when the tone of a derivative form changes to another syllable, the article, the compound future and the prepositional accusative. In the main part of his article, Marcellesi ([1983] 2003: 218–234) deals with two other markers, Corsican exclamatory and subordinate structures that are dissimilar to their French and standard Italian counterparts. In between the two parts, we find some highly interesting considerations concerning the status and function of identity markers in the context of language teaching. He starts this section with the remark that students who haven't learned a local
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In the last section of this chapter, I will cast light on the relation between “negative borrowing” and what I wish to call the compensatory function of language maintenance (Kailuweit in print). The concept of compensation I refer to falls back on the “compensation theory” (Ritter 1961; Lübke 1977; Marquard 1978). The works of the German philosopher Joachim Ritter and

5. “Negative borrowing” and compensation

markers is open and there will not be significant variation for all markers. Even so, I would like to raise the hypothesis (which further research will either confirm or confuse) that linguistic markers of Corsican identity which compete with other dialectal and sociolectal forms are the best candidates for “negative borrowing”.

If a form or construction is accepted as a marker of “Corsicanness”, then in the long run, varying forms will be erased that are more similar to the model languages. Variation in the field of linguistic features that are less salient as markers of identity must be more stable and allow for forms that are similar to the model languages.

35 “En effet dés qu’on est en situation d’enseigner la langue à des gens qui ne la parlent pas et qu’on n’est pas dans une situation privilégiée [unité dialectale dans un village par exemple], il n’est pas facile d’échapper au problème (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 216).”

36 “Une langue aura son autonomie quand la communauté qui la parle aura ses instances normalisatrices propres, c’est une chose, et que ces instances normalisatrices sont reconnues par la masse parlante” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 216).

37 “Mais cette autonomie peut fort bien n’être que factice: C’est le cas quand les instances normalisatrices de la communauté reproduisent explicitement ou implicitement, consciemment ou inconsciemment, un modèle extérieur à la communauté” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 216–217).


40 “Contrairement à ce que pourrait faire croire cette première série, l’écart maximum ne va pas toujours conduire aux variétés sudistes [...] tout autant que la règle d’intégration non critique, la règle de l’écart maximum a ses impasses et ses absurdités” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 218).

41 “C’est pourquoi nous pensons que la normalisation doit être éminemment critique et de ce fait prendre soigneusement en compte les indicateurs de consité” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 218).
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undoubtedly implies a particular value judgment, which I do not wish to confer upon (individual) Corsican dialects. Regardless of value judgments, if one considers preservation as primarily compensatory, it seems more understandable that it will not amount to a standard debate in the form of a question della lingua, but rather to an explicit and conscious process (to greater or lesser extent) of “negative borrowing”.

The effect it has on grammolectalization is limited precisely because it is symbolic. If one does not wish to challenge the identitarity status of Corsican, the efforts at grammolectalization can remain partial. These partial efforts thus offer a point of reference that transcends the practice of everyday life for the construction of a “diffuse solidary community” in which partial grammolectal competence can be punctually retrieved in order to compensate for identity loss.

I would once again like to stress that such a compensatory practice appears to me to be just as legitimate as the effort to reverse language substitution processes. Ultimately, it is a necessary outcome of the modernization process, as demonstrated by the compensation theory with regard to the humanities. In this respect, describing language practice as compensation does not mean that this practice is perceived as inauthentic, but as an alternative way to maintain dialects and minority languages. The question as to how compensatory language maintenance influences the relationship between a minority language and a national language in the long run, and whether or not it can prevent extinction, will not be brought up here. It is clear, however, that as long as compensatory practice is a societal concern, the minority language will not become extinct, even if the competence of speakers does develop from a genolectal to a (limited) grammolectal one.

In this context, it is important to take into consideration that compensation entails a practice that is necessarily cost-intensive, even if it seems cheaper in comparison to full-fledged “normalization” or the Reverse Language Shift program. It is not only the case that the production of linguistic presence in the public realm (labeling) and school instruction cost tax dollars, but compensation also demands a varying, but not insignificant input of time and money from the individual. Many Corsicans are clearly willing to provide these resources. Should things remain this way, there is hope that Corsican will persist at least as a compensational language. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether the daily routine of compensatory practice amounts to

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41 Attending facultative language courses at public schools or private institutions, buying teaching material and media products in Corsican or participating in Corsican social networks on the web, etc.
cognitive dissonance, since the nature of the relationship between one linguistic strategy leading to identity by means of integration and another that aims to achieve identity by means of "negative borrowing" remains unclear.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to prove that perceived similarities play an important role in the development of what one could call a sociolinguistic core grammar of Corsican. Similarities are important in a negative sense in that forms that are too similar to the model languages (French and Italian) tend to be excluded from the core grammar and substituted by forms that are more dissimilar. Nonetheless, what we have considered a feature in the process of elaboration is dictated by the model languages — by French in particular — that provide the textbooks and linguistic manuals on which the norm finding process is based. I have called this phenomenon "negative borrowing"; while structural patterns are taken from the model language, similarities must be avoided at the level of expression. One can observe two strategies that aim to guarantee a Corsican linguistic identity. The first only opposes French forms and tolerates similarities to standard Italian, the second consequently opts for solutions that are less dissimilar to both model languages. Jéger (2004: 318) highlights the contradiction between the two strategies and states that the first strategy remains dominant. Taking into account Marcellisì's (1983, 2003) theory of identity markers, one could pose the hypothesis that the more accepted an identity marker is, the higher the probability that it will become a good candidate for consequence "negative borrowing" if it competes with other dialectal or sociolectal forms, excluding similarities with both French and standard Italian. "Negative borrowing" may lead to a certain disharmony in the internal linguistic system (combination of forms stemming from different dialectal traditions). To take these risks seems to be more worthwhile in a context of linguistic compensation, in which the developing language does not function as the only language or as the dominant one in all domains, but rather as an important symbol for the speaker community that marks the identity and the community in times of inevitable nationalization, Europeanization and globalization. I would like to once again insist on the fact that I consider "negative borrowing" a perfectly legitimate strategy of norm finding. It is up to the Corsican speaker community to either accept or reject the proposed forms. The (foreign) linguist must describe, but not judge the strategies employed by Corsican language activists.

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