

Dialectal variation and perceptual dialectology: a case of study in the Western Piedmont (Italy)

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The purpose of my PhD project is to describe four dialects - two Piemontese ones and two Occitan ones - spoken in the area of the Western Piedmont (Italy), according to the traditional geolinguistic and descriptive approach, on the one hand, and to the more recent, perceptual dialectological approach, on the other hand (Preston, 1989, 1999; Cini & Regis, 2000; Telmon, 2000; Iannàccaro, 2002; Léonard, 2003; Long & Preston, 2003).

For this poster session, I will focus on two dialects of the area, a Piemontese (gallo-italic) one, an Occitan (gallo-romain) one and their vocalic systems. Especially, I will show and compare two groups of descriptive data. The first one, made up in a historical (diachronical) perspective by analysing two important collections of dialectological and lexical data, for instance the Linguistical Atlas of Italy (Atlante Linguistico Italiano, ALI) and the Linguistical and Ethnographical Atlas of Western Piedmont (Atlante Linguistico ed Etnografico del Piemonte Occidentale, ALEPO). The second group, constructed with acoustical data I gathered in the field, with a sociophonetical approach and surveys (Di Paolo & Yaeger-Dror, 2011). In this way, I selected 6 informants per locality (3 men and 3 women) between 3 age ranges (18-30, 40-55, over 70 years old). Because of the work in progress, I will only present the data I already analysed.

The particularity of my study is to make an inventory of stressed and unstressed vowels per variety, by considering historical, geographical and social reasons which have an impact to the structure and the dynamics of linguistic variation in the area. Moreover, these varieties do not have benefited yet of a recent and detailed acoustical description: I simply propose to do a vowel inventory.

In my thesis, all these descriptive data (objective ones) are compared and confronted with some perceptual data (subjective ones), in order to see if the speakers' representations of the linguistic environment in which they evolve and live - especially, perception of phonetical differences between dialects and perception of dialectal boundaries - are similar or different than their phonetical and linguistical realisations (Telmon, 2000; Dell'Aquila & Iannàccaro, 2001; Iannàccaro, 2002; Léonard, 2003).

Finally, this poster show with some examples, how traditional descriptive dialectology could benefit from a confrontation with other theoretical and methodological approaches stemming from contiguous linguistic disciplines and domains (sociophonetics and perceptual dialectology), in order to examine and to understand the specific dynamics of linguistic variation of dialects.