



Partitives in Piedmontese: a preliminary overview

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Piedmontese

The term *Piedmontese* may refer to:

- (a) a group of varieties spoken in the central part of Piedmont
- (b) a regional koine developed, as of the 18th century, from the variety of Turin

Piedmontese is a *middle language* (Muljačić 1997a, 1997b, 2011 [2000]): High with respect to local dialect varieties, Low with respect to the official standard language (= *double overlapping diglossia* [Fasold 1984: 45])

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The role of Italian and French

1560/1561: two edicts issued by Emmanuel Philbert state that Italian and French were to replace Latin in all of the administrative documents in the Duchy of Savoy: Italian in the cisalpine territories (except the Aosta Valley), French in the transalpine areas

French, however, remained the preferred language of the Piedmontese aristocracy until the second half of the 19th century
In the 18th century, italiano ('Italian') was synonymous of straniero ('stranger') (Clivio 1984: 270)

Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803) had to surround himself with Tuscan servants, in order to get acquainted with Italian words of daily use (Marazzini 1984: 198)

In 1835, Camillo Benso of Cavour admitted that «la langue italienne m'est restée jusqu'à présent tout à fait étrangère» (Cavour 1962: 189)

The role of Italian and French

All these things considered, why was Italian elected as the model language for the codification of Piedmontese, rather than French?

First, while French was attached to the recurring political and military menace of France, Italian was an institutional (and thus neutral) language, established as such by the duke of Savoy

Second, «the basic source of prestige is **scarsity**» (Joseph 1985: 39): it follows that Italian was probably reputed more prestigious than French, the former being far less common than the latter

The role of Italian and French

According to Clivio (1976 [1972]: 104), French helped Piedmontese contain the superposition of Italian: «as long as French remained a commonly used language of culture in Piedmont [...], Piedmontese was able to retain its Western Romance character much better than after French died out and only Italian was left as a cultural language»

After the decline of French, «Piedmontese was left entirely open to the Eastern Romance influence of Italian» (Clivio 1976 [1972]: 105)

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Piedmontese, Italian and French: a phonetic comparison

	(vulgar) Latin	“genuine” Pied. form	Italianized Pied. form	French equivalent	Italian equivalent
Reintroduction reintroduction of voiceless alveolar plosives in intervocalic position plus the etymologically preceding unstressed vowel	a) *fratellu ‘brother’ b) vitùlu ‘calf’	a) frel b) vel	a) fratèl (Capello 1814) b) vitèl (Capello 1814)	a) frère, [frɛ:ʀ] b) veau, [vo]	a) fratello b) vitello
affrication of voiceless alveolar fricatives	a) cīrcūlu ‘circle’ b) civīle ‘civil’	a) serv, [sɛrv] b) sivìl, [si'vil]	a) cercc, [tʃertʃ] (Pipino 1783) b) civil, [tʃi'vil] (Capello 1814)	a) cercle, [sɛ:ʀkl] b) civil, [si'vil]	a) cērchio, [tʃerkjo] b) civile, [tʃi'vi:le]
breaking of consonant clusters by the reintroduction of a protonic vowel	a) de mane ‘in the morning’ b) [libèlla ‘little scales’]	a) dman b) livlé	a) dumàn (Zalli 1815) b) livelé (livelà, Sant’Albino 1859)	a) demain, [də'mɛ̃] b) niveler, [niv'le]	a) domani b) livellare

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Piedmontese, Italian and French: a dynamic repertoire

	18 th -19 th centuries		First half of the 20 th century	Second half of the 20 th century (and beyond)
High	Italian	French	Italian +	Italian +
Medium	↑ Piedmontese koine		↑ Piedmontese koine	--- (Piedmontese koine)
Low	↑ Local varieties of Piedmontese		↑ Local varieties of Piedmontese	--- ↑ Local varieties of Piedmontese

Partitives in Piedmontese: a preliminary overview

A diachronic sketch

We draw on the results of recent studies (see e.g. Bonato 2003, Ricca 2008, Berizzi/Zanini 2011, Miola 2014), and rely in particular on data from Bonato (2004)

XII–XIII centuries

- partitives with singular mass nouns:

(1) *So compaignun no bevrà d'aiva clara*

“his comrade won't drink clear water”

(*Sermoni subalpini*: VIII, 156 [Clivio/Danesi 1974: XXII])

- zero marking with plural countable nouns:

(2) *E fan semblant de pentirse e fan ∅ almosne*

“they pretend to feel sorry, and give alms”

(*Sermoni subalpini*: III, 69-70 [Clivio/Danesi 1974: XVI])

Partitives in Piedmontese: a preliminary overview

A diachronic sketch

XVI century

- partitives with singular mass nouns;
- partitives with specific plural countable nouns (rarely):

(3) *Biatrix m'ha fag d'i scriz*

“Beatrice made writings for me”

(*Alione*: 410)

- partitives with non-specific plural countable nouns:

(4) *c'havran el man? Ø Begl guant de està, e d'invern del mittaine*

“what will the hands wear? nice gloves in summer, and muffs in winter”

(*Alione*: 40)

→ the use of partitives alternate with zero marking

→ articulated forms are more frequent than unarticulated (*ëd/dë*)

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A diachronic sketch

XVII-XVIII centuries

- the use of partitives considerably increases,

but it still alternates with zero marking:

(5) *tröva 'l moud d' dschiavé con d' ciav e Ø lime fauze*

“he finds a way to unlock the door by means of falsified keys and files”

(*Canson*: II, 84-85 [Clivio 1974: 38])

- articulated forms still alternate with unarticulated forms (*ëd/dë*),

but the use of the latter gets stronger

(especially in the XVIII century)

However, there is no evidence about Turinese usage until the XVII century, the texts of the previous centuries witness the use of peripheral dialects only

Partitives in Piedmontese: a preliminary overview

A diachronic sketch

XIX century

- unarticulated forms stabilize with both singular mass nouns and plural countable nouns
- articulated forms occur seldom if ever, and zero marking tends to disappear

Piedmontese undergoes codification: a set of linguistic features comes to constitute the standard norm; among these are unarticulated partitives; see e.g. Aly-Belfàdel (1933: 278), Brero/Bertodatti (1988: 27), Villata (2000: 233)

XX century

- unarticulated forms occur almost obligatorily in written texts

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A diachronic sketch

Has French exerted an influence on regional koine features diverging from Italian?

As for partitives in French, see e.g.

(6) *comme de petits boutiquiers*

(Proust, *Recherche*, I, 325; quoted in Grevisse/Goosse 2008: 747)

(7) *ce puits, dont nous buvons souvent de l'eau*

(Carlier/Melis 2006: 456)

→ the use of unarticulated forms in French seems to be less constrained "dans le Midi" (Grevisse/Goosse 2008: 747)

Partitives in Piedmontese: a preliminary overview

Contemporary everyday speech

- unarticulated forms do alternate with both articulated forms and zero marking; a *corpus* of spontaneous speech data (Bonato 2004) shows that:
- singular mass nouns are always preceded by partitives; the latter almost always occur in unarticulated form (Berizzi/Zanini 2011 elicitate bare singular mass nouns by a translation test)
 - plural countable nouns sometimes are preceded by partitives, sometimes occur with zero marking;
 - specific countable nouns: almost always preceded by unarticulated forms (zero marked only rarely)
 - non-specific countable nouns: unarticulated forms alternate with articulated forms.

Partitives in Piedmontese: a preliminary overview

Contemporary everyday speech

→ zero marking and articulated forms occur where the presence of partitives is optional in standard Italian (cf. Renzi 2001: 374ff.)

(8) *j'è dij spetaco a Lisandria*
“there are shows in Alessandria”

(9) *na madamin [...] che la prepara 'd frità, Ø marmelade*
“a lady who prepares omelettes, jams”

(10) *'sta strà sì a j'era tüta sternìa con dle lòse*
“this street was all cobbled with paving stones”

(Bonato 2004: 186-187)

(Northern varieties of Italian, including that spoken in Piedmont, generally display articulated forms in these contexts)

Partitives in Piedmontese: a preliminary overview

Geographical distribution of zero marking and articulated forms



		∅	articul. f.
S1	<i>Torino</i>	-	-
S2	<i>Torino</i>	21,42%	-
S3	<i>Collegno (TO)</i>	7,69%	7,69%
S4	<i>Pinerolo (TO)</i>	-	-
S5	<i>Ivrea (TO)</i>	-	-
S6	<i>Ivrea (TO)</i>	14,28%	-
S7	<i>Biella</i>	25,80%	20,96%
S8	<i>Alessandria</i>	26,38%	30,55%
S9	<i>Cuneo</i>	52,38%	4,76%

Bonato's (2004) spontaneous speech corpus

Partitives in Piedmontese: a preliminary overview

Geographical distribution of zero marking and articulated forms

- In everyday speech, Turinese is more consistent with the XIX century norm than peripheral dialects, which behave similarly as in earlier stages of development
- peripheral dialects behave closer to Italian, especially with respect to non-specific countable nouns (but what variety of Italian is referred to?)

How may language contact interplay with language-internal motivations?

Italian may exert influence over dialect (i.c. Turinese?) in that it *revitalise* a behaviour that was widespread until the XIX century

Or it may *reinforce* a behaviour that has persisted in dialect (i.c. peripheral dialects?) over the centuries

Geographical distribution of zero marking and articulated forms

With special regard to peripheral dialects, it may be assumed that everyday speech has always differed to some extent from written texts (i.e. zero marking, unarticulated and articulated forms have always presumptively coexisted)

Moreover:

(11) *Mi seu d'avèj a fé / con **dla** gent dëgordià*

“I know I have to do with skilled people”

(F. Comino, *Èl Cant dël fàun*, 1973, Cuneo [Brero 1983: 312])

(12) *Traversa **Ø** riaj, **Ø** bialere e **Ø** lame*

“it passes through streams, canals, and springs”

(J. Calleri, *La queste del Saynt Graal*, 1960s, Biella [Brero 1983: 322])

The influence of Italian over peripheral dialects may also reflect the loss of importance of the regional koine

Concluding remarks

Language contact may revitalise or reinforce a behavior that is subject to language-internal motivations

- How and to what extent are contact-induced changes affected by the type of linguistic repertoire?
(diglossia vs. dilalia)
- What is exactly the role played by the source language?
(model for codification, language for daily use, etc.)
- What varieties of the recipient language are affected by language contact?
(regional koine, everyday speech, etc.)
- How are contact-induced changes affected by linguistic vs. social dominance (cf. Van Coetsem 2000, Winford 2008)?
(mechanism of change vs. diffusion of change)

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