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Language Realities and Policies in Italy: Multifaceted, Multilevel, Asymmetric

Elisabeth Alber

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This project has been implemented with the support of the following institutions:

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Suggested citation for this publication:
Elisabeth Alber, Language Realities and Policies in Italy: Multifaceted, Multilevel, Asymmetric (Forum of Federations, Occasional Paper Series, 2022).

LANGUAGE POLICY IN FEDERAL AND DEVOLVED COUNTRIES
Project Overview

Language is a highly significant marker of individual and collective identities. It often provides an impulse for national or community affirmation and claims to self-government. Provisions to recognize and accommodate linguistic differences can be particularly salient in federations, many of which have highly diverse populations. Indeed, in quite a few cases linguistic diversity was one of the key reasons why federalism was central to a country's founding framework or the result of its constitutional evolution.

Several federal countries have designated more than one language as official (or national) languages in the federal constitution and/or legislation. In turn, the constituent units (states, provinces, etc.) may accord a similar status to one or more languages. The different designations are not merely symbolic: they usually require or lead to policies, programs and other measures to govern language use. In some nonfederal states where more than one language is spoken, a measure of authority over language policy has sometimes been devolved to regional governments (or the equivalent).

Language rules, including for service provision, are frequently an important dimension of policy sectors that are exclusively or largely the responsibility of constituent unit governments. One such sector is education. In various countries, there are calls for teaching to be given not only in officially recognized languages but also in others that are spoken by minorities that are fearful about the future of their language. Indigenous peoples in particular have concerns about the viability of their languages, many of which have a long history of suppression.

In some countries, language policies are well established and are largely uncontested. In others, the policies and/or their application are controversial – even divisive. This may be true not only in newer federations and devolved systems but also in those with a longer history. Because of their links to identity and culture (among other factors), languages can be – indeed, quite often are – a potent basis for political mobilization.

Even when political dynamics are not highly charged, pressures to change or reform language policies and programs are not uncommon. Some demands are fundamental (e.g. additional or stronger constitutional protection), while others are more administrative or technical. In light of their salience to citizens and their relevance in a range of sectors, it is not surprising that language policies are debated, reviewed and (at least in certain cases) modified.

Although there are a number of individual case studies, particularly covering countries where language has been a flash point for political division, there is a lack of comparative research. Moreover, existing comparative studies often focus on western Europe and North America. As more countries have adopted federal or devolved structures in recent decades, there is a need to expand the scope of research on language policies in plurilingual contexts.

The focus of this project is on language policy (broadly interpreted) in a range of countries that are federations or have a significantly devolved structure of government. It aims to take a holistic perspective on language policy and its place within governance arrangements. In addition to providing an overview of the country's demography, constitutional recognitions and protections, and language laws and policies, in order to encourage comparison authors were asked to address a common set of questions:

A. What potential changes to the regulation of language – constitutional, legislative, administrative – have been proposed or are currently being debated?
B. What are the pressures and who are the main actors behind the proposed changes?
C. Which have received the most attention and/or seem the most feasible?

We hope that the authors' responses to these questions will inform public discussion and understanding in their own countries as well as in others where similar issues are on the agenda.

This project was developed following an initial discussion with Felix Knüpling, Vice-President (Programs) of the Forum of Federations. To provide expert advice, we created an editorial team comprised of the following: Elisabeth Alber (Institute for Comparative Federalism, Eurac Research), Linda Cardinal (Université de l'Ontario français) and Asha Sarangi (Jawaharlal Nehru University). The editorial team commented on the initial outline of the program and provided suggestions for potential authors. We were fortunate to attract leading scholars from a range of disciplines. At least one member of the editorial team reviewed and provided comments on the initial version of each paper.

Felix and I are indebted to Elisabeth, Linda and Asha for their excellent cooperation throughout the process. I would also like to express my appreciation to the authors of the country papers for agreeing to join the project and for their responsiveness to comments on their draft papers. We are grateful to Francesca Worrall for copy editing this paper. Finally, a big "thank you" to the Forum of Federations staff who administered the project and prepared the papers for publication: Olakunle Adeniran, John Light, Deanna Senko, George Stairs and Asma Zribi.

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Forum of Federations

Language Realities and Policies in Italy: Multifaceted, Multilevel, Asymmetric

Elisabeth Alber

ITALIAN REGIONS

Introduction

Italy is a regional state that blends unitary and federal features. Twenty regions are the main players at the subnational level. Different types of local government (mainly metropolitan cities, provinces, and municipalities) also form part of the system of asymmetric regionalism, which includes five regions that have a special status and 15 ordinary regions (Arban, Martinico and Palermo 2021).

Of the five special regions, three – Aosta Valley, South Tyrol-Trentino and Friuli Venezia Giulia – owe their special status to the presence of historical and territorially concentrated linguistic minorities. In the aftermath of the Second World War, political elites in these northern border regions negotiated the institutionalization of multilingual systems with the national government. This led to the creation of subnational language regimes that put languages other than Italian, the official language throughout the country, on par either in the entire special region or in parts of it. Compared with ordinary regions, these special regions enjoy quasi-federal relations with the national government. Italy's asymmetric regional system thus combines moderate regionalism in most regions with quasi-federal traits in some special regions, and the effective use of regional minority languages in the public sphere very much depends on the regional and local contexts.

This paper has three aims. First, it explains how languages other than Italian are constitutionally entrenched and where and how they are used in the public sphere. Second, it presents demolinguistic data and situates Italy's language policies in the context of the development of the country's asymmetric regionalism. Third, it briefly discusses challenges regarding immigrant languages, multilingual education and gender-inclusive language.

The paper begins by explaining Italy's regional and local systems and the implications for their language policies. It then presents demolinguistic data and a map of Italy's linguistic diversity. After describing the expansion of Italian as the official state language, the paper discusses the legislation and practices for the protection and the use of languages regarding two groups of historical minorities: those scattered throughout the country and those in the northern special regions. Finally, there is a brief discussion of the challenges that affect language policymaking at any level of government.

The paper argues that Italy's language policymaking – largely uncontested – is necessarily multilevel and asymmetric. It should, however, be developed more systematically to better enable Italy to regulate its multifaceted language realities and encourage plurilingualism (the ability to use multiple languages and switch easily in communication and interaction).

The Powers of Regions and Local Governments

The powers of special regions, including the functioning of the subnational multilingual systems, are, in the main, spelled out in their basic laws. While these basic laws vary from one special region to another, they all consist of the special statute of autonomy and its implementing legislation. In contrast to ordinary regions, the basic laws of special regions have constitutional status and special amendment procedures, so they are not easily amendable against the will of the region.

Ordinary regions adopt their statutes with a special regional law. For the most part, these statutes regulate the form of government and the basic principles of the region's organization and functioning. The powers of ordinary regions are enshrined in the Italian Constitution. Article 117(2) lists powers falling within the exclusive competence of the state (the national level of government); article 117(3)

enumerates powers shared by the state and the regions (includes education, health protection and co-ordination of public finance); and article 117(4) assigns residual powers to the regions. In the shared areas, the Constitution vests legislative powers in the regions, with the national parliament laying down the fundamental principles governing these powers.

Hence, the Constitution vests the special regions with a different scope of autonomy and procedural guarantees compared with those of ordinary regions. In reality, however, the 20 regions have used their powers in their own ways, depending on their political regional cultures and financial relations. Special regions are not financed in the same way that ordinary ones are. Their financing systems also vary from one special region to another and are bilaterally negotiated with the national government, based on the share of state taxes referable to the territory (ranging from about 25 to almost 90 percent). Ordinary regions, instead, greatly depend on transfers from the centre. Some ordinary regions, however, have greater fiscal capacities than some special regions (Alber and Valdesalici forthcoming).

Local governments have no legislative powers, and, except for those in the northern special regions, their structures, powers and funding are defined by national and regional legislation, with the national parliament taking precedence (Alber, Valdesalici and Klotz forthcoming).

Regional and local governments are part of a complex system of intergovernmental relations that is underutilized and dysfunctional. A consultative, multilateral system of executive conferences was introduced to compensate for the fact that Italy's second chamber does not function as a typical federal upper chamber. It does not represent subnational entities, and all attempts to turn it into a regional chamber have so far failed. Therefore, and given the financial relations between the levels of government, subnational entities favour bilateral relations with the national government.

Indeed, bilateral relations have been crucial for safeguarding and enhancing the scope of regional autonomy. Unlike ordinary regions (created only in 1970), special regions (created either in 1948, when the Constitution entered into force, or shortly thereafter) have so-called joint commissions. The functioning and the relevance of these commissions, tasked with the implementation of each special region's autonomy, varies significantly from one special region to another. Those whose autonomy is rooted in the protection of different identities (notably the rights of linguistic minorities) have made wider use of their joint commission and bilateral relations – not least because representatives of ethnic minority parties sometimes tip the scales in national parliamentary votes (Alessi and Palermo 2022).

All this makes Italy a highly decentralized system with, in part, quasi-federal relations between some special regions and the national government. In such a system, asymmetry is the rule for governing pluralisms of various kinds and in language policymaking. Leaving aside Italian, which is the uncontested official language, three sets of language policies can be identified.

First, there are language policies for the historical linguistic minorities in the northern special regions. The basic laws of the Aosta Valley, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Trentino-South Tyrol lay down the essentials of their multilingual systems — the co-officiality of French in Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste, of Slovene in parts of Friuli Venezia Giulia, and of German and, in part, Ladin, in the autonomous province of Bolzano/Bozen (South Tyrol). The latter, along with the neighbouring predominantly Italian-speaking autonomous province of Trento (Trentino), form the special region Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol (Trentino-South Tyrol).

Second, there are language policies for the historical linguistic minorities that are scattered throughout the country and thus fall under different regional legislation. National framework law no. 482/1999 implements article 6 of the Constitution: "The Republic takes appropriate measures to safeguard linguistic minorities." This legislation identifies 12 minorities and includes details as to the use of their languages at the local level. In short, their languages are recognized and can be used in the public sphere if local authorities, in conformity with regional legislation, take action.

Third, there are language policies for speakers of Italo-Romance dialects. These dialects, native to the areas in which they are spoken, predate Italian as the official state language and are of great relevance for subnational community life. The exact number of these dialects (or languages – a matter of some controversy) cannot be determined. Examples are Venetian, Piedmontese and Lombard. Italo-Romance dialects are increasingly recognized and protected by regional laws as a part of the regional cultural heritage and for social cohesion. As these dialects do not have official status, this paper does not expand further on this point.
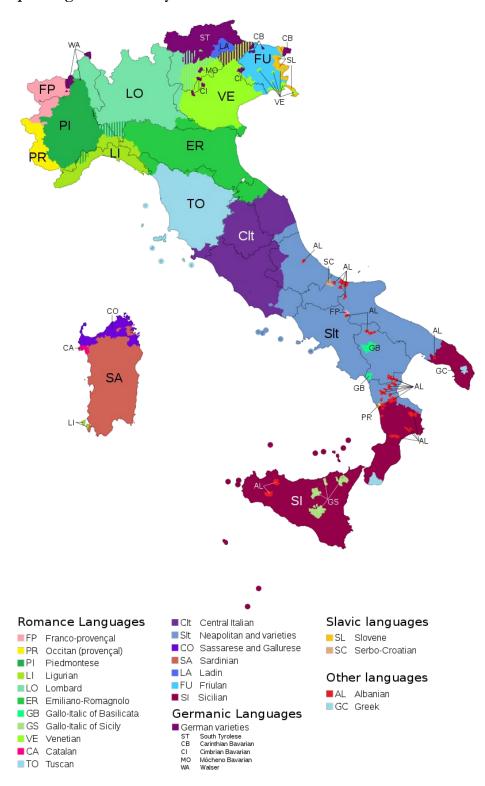
Demography and Language Realities

Language use

As of 2021, the total resident population of Italy (302,073 km^2) was 59 million (ISTAT 2021). The largest number of people — about one-sixth of the population — lives in the northern region of Lombardy. Lazio, in the centre, and Campania, in the south, are the second and third most populous regions. Between 2010 and 2020 the proportion of foreign legal residents significantly increased, from around 6 percent to almost 9 percent, with the northern regions having the largest foreign population. Romanians represented the largest foreign population, and Albanians and Moroccans followed.

Reliable data on language use is scarce, and Italy does not collect it in the census. Based on the data that were so far collected (ISTAT 2015), it is estimated that:

- 45.9 percent of the population aged six and older (about 26 million) primarily use Italian in their households and 32.2 percent use both Italian and a dialect.
- At work, most people aged 15 and over use only Italian (77.5 percent), while 15.8 percent use Italian and a dialect (this 2015 ISTAT survey was the first time data on the language primarily used in the context of work activity was collected).
- The use of languages other than Italian, or of one of the historical minority languages and dialects, has increased significantly in recent times, especially among those aged 25 to 34 (from 8.4 percent in 2006 to 12.1 percent in 2015).
- The percentage of those who declare themselves to be of foreign mother tongue increased from 4.1 percent in 2006 to 9.6 percent in 2015.
- 92.3 percent of native speakers of a foreign language know one or more additional languages, compared with 56.6 percent of Italian speakers: among the former, Italian ranks first and among the latter English ranks first.
- English, French and Spanish are the three languages more widely spoken by persons who know one or more foreign languages. The level of knowledge of foreign languages is, however, very modest when compared with other European countries. This is a challenge on the labour supply side and requires attention in the education system (Gazzola and Mazzacani 2019).

Figure 1: Map of linguistic diversity

Source: Mikima, "Linguistic map of Italy," Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 4.0. *https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/* *https://creativecommons.org/*

Speakers of nationally recognized languages

Three issues must be noted. First, the data reported here are estimates. The calculations rest on sources that refer to various years within the last decade. Second, the effective use of regional minority languages varies according to their share in the area and their degree of influence within the sociopolitical system of the area. Their status depends on the region's political culture and on local policy. Whether linguistic minorities enjoy the protection of kin-states also affects the use and status of a minority language (kin-states are entities that border or are close to the country where their kin-groups reside; kin-groups are people who share and maintain strong ethnocultural and linguistic bonds). Third, if one compares this data with data from the 1996 Euromosaic Report (European Commission 1996), it seems that the number of speakers belonging to recognized language groups has been decreasing (see also Van Jeught 2016, 65-69). Thus, the following argument holds true: The development of Italian in the past 160 years has caused a shift from local, historical languages to Italian (see, for example, Coluzzi 2009).

Table 1: Speakers of nationally recognized languages and regions where the languages are spoken

Languages	Number of speakers	Regions (SR=special region, OR=ordinary region)
Germanic[1]		
▪ Cimbrian	1,000	Trentino (SR),[2] Veneto (OR)
▪ Fersentalerisch/Mòcheno/ Bersntolarisch	1,500	Trentino (SR)[2]
▪ German	380,000	South Tyrol (SR):[2] co-officiality Italian/German; Ladin is also to some extent official.
▪ Languages of Walser[3] communities (Titsch and Töitschu)	1,000	Aosta Valley (SR)
▪ Sauriano/Zahrisch, Sappadino/Plodarisch, Timavese/Tischbongarisch, Kanaltalerisch/Windisch	2,500	Friuli Venezia Giulia (SR)
Ladin[4]	30,000	South Tyrol-Trentino (SR),[2] Veneto (OR)
French	125,000 (total population of Aosta Valley)	Aosta Valley (SR): co-officiality Italian/French. No data available on speakers' effective bilingualism.
Occitan	100,000	Piedmont, Liguria and Calabria (OR)
Franco-Provençal/ patois/Arpitan	15,000	Piedmont and Apulia (OR)
Friulian/Furlan	610,000[5]	Friuli Venezia Giulia (SR); Veneto (OR)
Slovene	100,000	Friuli Venezia Giulia (SR)
Greek/Griko	12,000	Calabria and Apulia (OR)

Croatian	2,400	Molise (OR): Molise-Croatians enjoy relations with their kin-state, Croatia, for protection and financial support of their language.
Albanian/Arbëresh	100,000	Abruzzo, Campania, Molise, Basilicata, Puglia, and Calabria (OR); Sicilia (SR)
Sardinian	1,000 000	Sardinia (SR)
Catalan	18,000-20,000	Sardinia (SR)

Sources: Author's calculations based on Einheitskomitee der historischen deutschen Sprachinseln in Italien (2022); Regione Autonoma Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol (2022); ARLeF (2011); Foundation Émile Chanoux (2003); Regis (2012); and Šimičić and Škevin Rajko (2020).

Notes:

[1] The term Germanic is used (not German) to include the Austrian-Bavarian dialects that are spoken in parts of Trentino, Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia.

[2] Trentino and South Tyrol are the geographical names of two autonomous Italian provinces that together form one out of five special regions. Administratively, Trentino is called the autonomous province of Trento, and South Tyrol is called the autonomous province of Bolzano/Bozen.

[3] The ordinary region of Piedmont is also home to Walser communities.

[4] Ladin, a Rhaeto-Romance language, has five idioms: Maréo/Badiot (Val Badia valley, South Tyrol), Gherdëina (Val Gardena valley, South Tyrol), Fascian (Val di Fassa valley, Trentino), Anpezan (Ampezzo, Veneto), and Fodom (Livinallongo, Veneto).

[5] At present, 600,000 Friulian speakers live in the provinces of Gorizia, Pordenone and Udine. Of these, 420,000 speak it regularly and 180,000 only occasionally. This represents over 60 percent of the population of the three provinces. If the province of Trieste is included, Friulian speakers account for almost half of the total population of the Friuli Venezia Giulia region.

Immigrant languages

The number of immigrant languages and their use varies greatly from one area to another. Chinese and Romanian have been present for quite some time. As in other European countries, the tendency in Italy has been to ignore immigrant languages, both officially and unofficially. They are often viewed as a source of conflict rather than a valuable source of language diversity (Guerini 2011, 121-122). Of course, English is the great exception.

The "Nativization" of Italian

In the years after the unification of Italy in 1861, Italo-Romance languages were the prevalent means of communication. Italian was very little used (Robustelli 2018, 170). It is estimated that about 160,000 people spoke Italian, and they were dispersed in a mass of 20 million individuals speaking Italo-Romance languages (De Mauro 1970, 43). "Making the Italians" (Hom 2013) remained a difficult task after the conquest of Rome in 1870. The central authorities did not manage to homogenize local governments by means of strict regulations (Alber and Trettel 2018, 134-135). The purist approach in language policy under fascism (1922 to 1945) — the prescriptive practice of recognizing Italian as being purer and of intrinsically higher quality — also failed to eradicate Italy's language realities.

After the Second World War, measures promoting political unification contributed to the further expansion of Italian. Examples include the increase in the level of education and industrialization, and the rise of mass media. From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, this resulted in "Italian-dialect bilingualism or multilingualism" (Alfonzetti 2017, 242) and culminated, at the beginning of 2000, in the "nativization of Italian" (Voghera 2005, 304). Thus, the Italian language, for the first time in its history, became *the* mother tongue for most Italian citizens.

In the 1990s, the debate on the merits of the use of Italo-Romance dialects (Lunati, Balthazar and Freitas 2015, 132-35) and regional minority languages intensified. There were three reasons for this. First, the role of regional and local governments was strengthened, with a series of changes to their constitutional foundation between 1990 and 2001 (Palermo 2021; Alber, Valdesalici and Klotz forthcoming). Second, the Northern League emerged as a northern territorial political party that valued Italo-Romance dialects (Guerini 2011, 112-113). In addition, since the late 1970s, the approach to national school language policy has changed from "replacive to additive": teaching staff and school authorities have been increasingly encouraged to regard Italo-Romance dialects as communicative resources (Guerini 2011, 120; Robustelli 2018, 172-173). Third, two supranational soft-law measures were adopted by the Council of Europe, Europe's leading human rights organization with 46 member states, of which 27 are members of the European Union. These were the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML, adopted in 1992, in force since 1998) and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM, adopted in 1994, in force since 1998). Italy ratified the FCNM, but it did not ratify the ECRML for two reasons: fear – unjustified – of incurring significant costs to guarantee the linguistic rights it provided for, and unwillingness to extend the scope of application to the Roma and Sinti languages (Beqiraj 2016, 14-15).

All these developments not only drew renewed attention to Italy's multifaceted language realities, but they also led to the implementation of article 6 of the Constitution ("The Republic takes appropriate measures to safeguard linguistic minorities") with law no. 482/1999. In recognizing 12 historical linguistic minorities, this put an end to the widely held myth of Italy's linguistic homogeneity.

Legal Framework and Practice

National level

Constitutional provisions
The Constitution of 1948 does not mention Italian as the official state language. Many attempts to constitutionalize the status of Italian have failed, for political-identarian reasons (Franchini 2012). As of June 2022, constitutional and ordinary legislation and rulings of the Constitutional Court have filled this void. For example, article 99 of the basic law of South Tyrol's autonomy reads that "… the German language is made equal to the Italian language, which is the official language of the state…," while article 38 of the basic law of Aosta Valley establishes that French is on par with Italian, thus assuming that Italian is the official state language. In ordinary legislation, many codes affirm the official status of the Italian language (for example, article 122 of the code for civil procedure, and article 109 of the code for criminal procedure). So does national law no. 482/1999, which implements article 6 of the Constitution with a delay of more than 50 years. Hence, for many decades, the protection of linguistic minorities and the development of regional and local language policies were hindered by the de facto limitation to only the language groups recognized within the northern special regions, whereas the principle expressed in article 6 of the Constitution applies to all historical communities that have sociolinguistic differences that justify their protection (Pizzorusso 1980, 36).

Of course, as with other constitutions, the Italian Constitution contains clauses on nondiscrimination and freedom of expression. Article 3(1) affirms the principle of formal equality and prohibits any form of discrimination based on language. No less important, the article provides for the active intervention of public authorities to allow everyone to exercise their rights and fully participate in the life of the community according to the principle of substantial equality. Article 21(1) affirms that freedom of verbal (and nonverbal) expression, not only in Italian but in any language, is a right of all.

<u>Legislation on measures to safeguard linguistic minorities</u>
Law no. 482/1999 provides for the protection of the language and culture of speakers belonging to 12 historical linguistic minorities: Albanian, Catalan, German, Greek, Slovene, Croatian, French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan and Sardinian. The selection of these languages to the exclusion of others, such as Sicilian, Neapolitan and Venetian, has been a matter of some controversy.

Formally, all 12 groups are supposed to benefit from specific measures regarding the use of their languages in a wide range of fields, including local politics and administration, education, communication, radio, press and TV public service. In practice, not all of these historical linguistic minorities are given the same consideration. Political contexts and scarce financial resources count.

Law no. 482/1999 is a framework law. This means that the specific measures must be enforced by the local government, in conformity with regional legislation and only in the area in which the minority language has historically been in use. Another limit to the use of languages other than Italian under this scheme rests in the fact that only acts in Italian are legal, and that simultaneous translation in Italian must be provided upon request if (and this seems to happen rarely) the minority language is used by local authorities.

Assessing the real impact of this law is an arduous task. There is no legal obligation to report on its implementation. Studies from 2008 show that the effective use of historical minority languages greatly varies from one place to another, and that their use is rather limited (Toso 2008). Data from 2015 show that the law applies in 1,076 municipalities (13 percent of all municipalities, approximately 4 million persons or 7 percent of the overall population [Council of Europe 2016, 9]). These data, however, do not give details regarding the exact scope in which a historical minority language is in use.

The law does not apply to Romani-speaking communities, although Romani speakers have been present since the early modern age and 50 percent of Roma and Sinti living in Italy hold Italian citizenship (Scala 2020). As of 2019, they make up less than 0.3 percent of the total population (between 130,000 and 170,000 persons), the lowest percentage in Europe (Sacred Heart Catholic University 2022). The exclusion of Romani-speaking communities from the law is rooted in their misrepresentation as nomads, which most are not (Extraordinary Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights 2011). Of course, the elaboration of a policy for Romani speakers is complex: Roma and Sinti groups speak many different dialects that do not share ethnic-linguistic origins, and they – especially Sinti – often speak Italian as their first language. But it is evident that the political will to elaborate a policy is not there.

Special northern regions

The basic laws of the special regions Trentino-South Tyrol, Aosta Valley, and Friuli Venezia Giulia regulate their language regimes, that is, the co-officiality of languages other than Italian in all or parts of these regions. It is important to recall that, unlike in any other regions, most powers of Trentino-South Tyrol are vested with the two autonomous provinces of Bolzano/Bozen (South Tyrol) and Trento (Trentino), which, taken together, form this special region.

<u>Autonomous province Bolzano/Bozen (South Tyrol)</u>
South Tyrol*,* the northern-most Italian territory (7,398 km²), has 533,715 inhabitants (ASTAT 2021) and borders Austria to the east and north and Switzerland to the west. Once part of the Austro-

Hungarian empire, South Tyrol, with its German-speaking majority, was annexed to Italy in 1919, and under fascism underwent a harsh Italianization policy. In the aftermath of the Second World War, negotiations at different levels of government led to a peaceful settlement of the South Tyrolean question (Alber 2017). A complex power-sharing system, grounded in the institutionalization of South Tyrol's major autochthonous language groups – German and Italian speakers (69.4 and 26.1 percent, respectively), and Ladin speakers (4.5 percent) – regulates the co-habitation of the inhabitants of this border area (2011 census; see ASTAT 2012).

South Tyrol is tied to Trentino by the special region's basic law, as substantially amended in 1972 when the Second Autonomy Statute (ASt) entered into force. Although South Tyrol and Trentino form one special region, they have different political systems. The ASt includes three sets of provisions. One applies to the predominantly Italian-speaking Trentino; the autonomous province of Trento protects its numerically few speakers belonging to the historical linguistic minorities the Ladins, the Mòcheni and the Cimbrians through provincial law no. 6/2008 (Penasa 2014). The second one applies to trilingual South Tyrol. Finally, a minor set of provisions applies to the autonomous region itself, which holds very few competences, most importantly the right to initiate an amendment to the ASt. The composition of the regional government must reflect the proportional distribution of the German and Italian language groups in the regional parliament, and the regional parliament, a sort of condominium organ, is composed of the members (35 each) of the provincial parliaments of Trento and Bolzano/Bozen.

South Tyrol's divided governance system is, unlike Trentino's system, based on a complex power-sharing system that slowly changed from a model of dissociative conflict resolution into a model of associative conflict resolution (Pallaver 2014). The model is based on elements of corporate consociationalism such as cultural autonomy and group rights (Alber 2021). The political system functions according to the logic of the separation and forced cooperation of its two main language groups, German and Italian, with special rules that apply to the third and smallest language group, Ladin. The ethnic quota system is the institutional manifestation of South Tyrol's power-sharing system. A declaration of belonging to or affiliation with one of the three language groups is instrumental for its functioning. The quota system (flexibly) applies to the entire public sphere.

On the use of languages, the following are the cornerstones of South Tyrol's system (Alber and Palermo 2012):

- Everybody can use Italian or German in relations with the public administration, the judiciary and the private companies that provide public services. The use of Italian and German thus follows the personal principle and makes all of South Tyrol bilingual.
- Trilingualism is in use in the Ladin valleys. The use of Ladin thus follows the territorial principle. The two variants of the Ladin language — Maréo/Badiot (Val Badia valley) and Gherdëina (Val Gardena valley) — can also be used outside the valleys whenever Ladin interests are at stake.
- Public administration has an obligation to use the language of the applicant and to reply in the same language. Hence, civil servants must be bi/trilingual. This is guaranteed through an exam or evidence of proficiency organized by the provincial authorities. When actions are started by public authorities, the correspondence or action must be carried out in the language presumed to be the mother tongue of the addressee. Written documents directed to the public must be bi/trilingual.
- In education (Alber and Trettel 2018, 150-154), the German and Italian language groups run their own programs from nursery to secondary school. They provide mother-tongue education,

and the teaching of second languages is obligatory. In schools under the responsibility of the Ladin language group, a trilingual approach based on the principle of teaching language parity is in place: Italian and German are taught and used as vehicular – auxiliary/link – languages, as is, in part, Ladin. This means that in the Ladin school system there is no right to mother tongue education. In higher education, multilingualism — German, Italian and English — is the rule. In the main, this applies to the Free University of Bolzano/Bozen and research centres such as Eurac Research.

All in all, South Tyrol's power-sharing system and its regime of bi/trilingualism have worked well. The key to success is that South Tyrol first negotiated procedural guarantees of its autonomy, and then it negotiated the establishment of its bi/trilingual system. It took from 1972 to 1992 to fully implement the ASt (the South Tyrolean question was formally closed in 1992 when Austria, South Tyrol's kin-state, handed the deed of discharge over to the UN Secretary-General). As for the establishment of the bi/trilingual regime, expert bodies ensured the development of German terminology that refers to Italian legal institutes, and continuous training of personnel (Chiocchetti 2021). All the requirements on language use are also enforced through strict legal remedies available to individuals and groups in the case of an alleged violation of (group) rights. Such guarantees include the right to challenge the rules on the composition of the ordinary and administrative judiciary and the decisions of nonadmission to schools on the grounds of insufficient language skills (school registration is based on the principle of the free choice of parents).

<u>Autonomous region Aosta Valley</u>
The Aosta Valley, the smallest of all the Italian regions (3,263 km²), has almost 125,000 inhabitants and borders France and Switzerland. It is home to Italian, French and Franco-Provençal speakers, as well as the Walser population, who speak Germanic languages. Article 38(1) of its basic law makes Italian and French co-official and thus ascribes to these two languages a privileged position (Louvin and Alessi 2020, 172). All public acts must be drafted in one or the other language (except for rulings, which must be drafted in Italian), and civil servants must also speak French. Article 40 refers to the Walser community and guarantees the teaching of German in municipalities with German-speaking populations. Franco-Provençal is not mentioned in the basic law (and is regarded as a language with a subordinate social status [Puolato 2006, 356]). The guarantees for French and German (Walser) speakers are constitutionally entrenched, given the special region's wide powers. The guarantees for Franco-Provençal speakers, instead, are recognized by national law no. 482/1999. This does not, however, prevent the Aosta Valley from adopting other measures in support of Franco-Provençal, such as the funding of cultural activities.

The Aosta Valley model is defined as a "restorative-promotional" model which, since 1948, has aimed at creating the conditions for French to be widely used alongside Italian (Louvin and Alessi 2020, 172). The model is, however, based on a conceptual simplification that did not consider the complex sociolinguistic reality of the region (Louvin and Alessi 2020, 170). This reality was the result of many factors, including the Italianization policies during fascism and huge internal migratory flows from other regions to the Aosta Valley. Data from the most recent available language survey (Fondation Émile Chanoux 2001) show that most of the population values the French language, but many consider it a corollary issue. The incentive of the bilingualism allowance has had only limited effects in making the Aosta region truly bilingual (unlike in South Tyrol for the German and Italian language).

The education system cannot significantly contribute to increasing the use of the French language. It is based on the principle of contextual bilingual teaching (not mother-tongue instruction); in other words,

equal teaching of Italian and French and the possibility of using the latter as a vehicular language. Under this model, in Aosta, where no sharp societal distinction among language groups is observable, the use of the Italian language prevails. Among other reasons, this is because Italian is the main socialization language, and innovative approaches to multilingual education are underdeveloped (Louvin and Alessi 2020, 174). As well, broadcasting and print media are unbalanced in favour of Italian (unlike in South Tyrol for German). In sum, in Aosta Valley there is a strong discrepancy between the language reality of Italian and the complex safeguards derived from national and regional legislation.

Autonomous region Friuli Venezia Giulia

Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG) borders Slovenia and Austria and is home to Slavic, Friulian and Germanic speakers. Its basic law does not contain any provisions regarding linguistic minorities. Unlike South Tyrol and Aosta Valley, FVG began to develop legislation for the protection of its linguistic minorities only recently, after the national government vested it with functions in the field of safeguarding the language and culture of the historical linguistic minorities on its territory (with legislative decree no. 223/2002, an implementation decree to the FVG basic law). Before that, minority issues were, in part, included in regional policymaking in the field of cultural heritage, and in a series of regional laws that provided finances to organizations of linguistic minorities. Since 2007, regional laws have laid down the rules that apply to each linguistic minority in a more systematic manner. They also provide for regional conferences as an opportunity for exchange among the speakers of the various languages, regional and other authorities, and experts. Such conferences are organized once every five years, and always within the first 24 months of the beginning of a legislature.

A regional authority (Agjenzie regjonâl pe lenghe furlane, ARLeF) plays an active role regarding the Friulian language. In the past, regional law no. 15/1996, reiterated by national law no. 482/1999, only provided for the *possibility* of using Friulian [Cisilino 2016]). Then, regional law no. 29/2007 prescribed the *obligatory* use of Friulian by public administration, to be applied throughout the whole region. This was declared constitutionally unlawful in 2009 (ruling no. 159/2009 of the Constitutional Court; see ARLeF [2022]). Requiring that all regional offices reply (and write) to citizens in Friulian was at odds with law no. 482/1999, which restricts the use of the minority language to the municipalities where speakers of regional minority languages reside.

In education, where territorially relevant, Friulian and German are incorporated into school programs for a limited number of hours, whereas Slovene has the status of a language of instruction along with a separate school system. The protection of the Slovene minority in the provinces of Trieste and Gorizia in FVG derives from a complex pattern of international agreements and national as well as regional legislation, and Slovene is used in public administration, toponomy, education and media (Gaggero 2012).

In total, the FVG body of law on the protection of linguistic minorities does not explicitly grant official language status to the protected minority languages. It is argued, however, that in FVG minority languages have acquired a status comparable with that of an official language (Vidau 2013, 41). This is because of their visible presence and effective use in public administration. In particular, language plans in FVG require entities to set up their own specific language policy plans whenever they intend to obtain funds for bilingual operation.

New Challenges

Immigrant languages

No national policy on immigrant languages is yet in place. Municipalities have, however, started to regulate some issues, for example, those concerning the placing of shop signs (Barni and Bagna 2008, 301-302), through protocols between the municipality and representatives of language communities.

The presence of foreign students increased significantly between 2000 and 2013 (Ibrido and Marchese 2020, 30). Despite this trend, no systematic answer has been found yet to the question of whether (and how) languages spoken by immigrant communities are to be considered an added value, and thus also to be considered in the didactics of education. A lack of teacher training and awareness concerning the linguistic repertoires of most immigrant communities and the functional differentiation of their languages persists (Guerini 2011, 122). In other words, knowledge regarding the set of skills immigrant communities have of one or more languages and the use they make of them is scarce. This negatively affects the education system and integration policies.

Content language integrated learning

The national Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) introduced content language integrated learning (CLIL – the teaching of a nonlinguistic subject in a foreign or second language) for upper secondary education in 2010 (MIUR 2010). There are two CLIL models: teaching in a regional minority language alongside Italian, and teaching in a foreign European language alongside Italian. Large immigrant nonEuropean foreign languages such as Arabic or Chinese, in part taught in upper secondary schools, have not been considered. While language ideologies may be a reason for this choice, it is also due to important factors such as the low proficiency of students in these languages compared with the highly demanding cognitive goals of subject content teaching at the secondary school level, as well as the difficulty of organizing team-teaching and collaboration between content teachers and language teachers.

Although teachers face many challenges with regard to CLIL implementation (Di Martino and Di Sabato 2012), the MIUR and stakeholders hope that its introduction will reduce unemployment among persons aged 20 to 34 by increasing their employment skills (Leone 2015, 46, 51). Of course CLIL is not the only means to increasing plurilingualism, but it is considered a revolution and as finally falling in line with the majority of European countries that have experimented with it for a long time (Cinganotto 2016, 384).

Gender-inclusive language

Discussions of sexism in language use are increasingly common in political and social debates. The revival of discourses on gender-inclusive language, launched by Sabatini (1986), goes hand in hand with the increase of women in top positions in management, academia and politics. There are nevertheless significant differences between the north and the south, and Italy does not perform well compared to the other EU countries (European Institute for Gender Equality 2021). In recent years, public authorities have elaborated language guides or used the one from the *Accademia della Crusca*, an expert institution in Florence that since 1583 has been influential in the field of Italian linguistics (Robustelli 2012). Overall, the issue of gender-inclusive language largely remains a niche topic. More attention and studies are needed to properly address the issue from a wider perspective and to link the use of gender-inclusive language with persisting problems such as sexism and discrimination (Cavagnoli and Dragotto 2021).

Conclusion

This paper advanced our understanding of Italy's language realities and policies in three ways. First, it showed how multifaceted Italy's language realities are within and across its subnational entities. Out of 20 regions, 14 are home to nationally recognized linguistic minorities that are firmly rooted in political history and social reality. If one also takes into account Italo-Romance languages/dialects, in part recognized by regional legislation, Italy boasts the greatest diversity of regional minority languages and dialects in Western Europe. The country is also home to a linguistic minority – German speakers in South Tyrol – that is among the best protected minorities worldwide. In more recent years, increased migration has also contributed to Italy's already rich and varied language realities.

Second, the paper described how languages other than Italian are now constitutionally entrenched, recognized and protected. But Italy's language realities have long been unacknowledged. Only with the approval of law no. 482/1999 were the 12 historical linguistic minorities at last recognized and details as to the protection of their languages defined. Before that, for historical reasons predating the 1948 Constitution, only three languages – French in the Aosta Valley, German in the autonomous province of Bolzano/Bozen and Slovene in FVG – were safeguarded by special measures.

Third, the paper examined the practical implications of the late recognition of languages other than Italian. It explained how languages other than Italian are assigned co-officiality at subnational level, and how such multilingual regimes function. Three lessons can be learned from this. First, the effective use of a regional minority language depends on societal and political contexts. Second, any multilingual regime needs constant monitoring and adaptation. Third, decentralization and quasi-federal governance are suitable ways to successfully institutionalize multilingual regimes.

Of course, this type of governance has created asymmetries. But, under certain conditions, such asymmetries favour policy innovations that can be emulated elsewhere or scaled up. South Tyrol is an example of this. It is vested with primary powers in the area of vocational training and hence was able to develop a work-based-learning apprenticeship system (dual education) that traditionally was not found in the school-based apprenticeship system in the rest of Italy. The national government did take notice of this system because of South Tyrol's low youth unemployment rate, which is seen as a positive effect of the dual education system. The experiences of South Tyrol and Trentino with the introduction of CLIL from the primary school level is another example in this regard.

In sum, Italy's language policymaking, which is constitutionally entrenched in a system that falls between a fully fledged federation and a unitary state, is largely uncontested. Italian is the official state language for the country as a whole, and the use of certain historical languages other than Italian has been regulated. However, to take full account of Italy's language realities and to increase plurilingualism, language policies must be elaborated and coordinated more systematically within and across the various levels of government.

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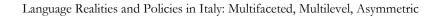
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Cover design by Olakunle Adeniran