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## THE QUESTIONE DELLA LINGUA AS AN IMPEDIMENT TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE HISTORY\*

The reader is asked to imagine an introductory linguistics/history of the language course for graduate students in Spanish which also happens to include several students completing their degrees in Italian. One of the topics covered during the semester is one that frequently provokes considerable interest among students in such courses (a noteworthy phenomenon since literature students generally tend to find linguistic/philological material tedious): normative versus descriptive approaches to language. The interest, the occasionally heated controversy, lies in the fact that one has to disabuse students of the commonly held belief that normative studies of language (i.e. what some think speakers of a given language should say or is correct to say) have little to do with what people actually do say. The study of the latter, descriptive language study, is, properly speaking, linguistics. Normative rules, or prescriptions, are not properly part of linguistics at all, at least not in this century's definition of the term. Moreover, while normative statements about language(s) may be of historical interest for all sorts of other reasons, they tend to have little effect on the actual histories of specific languages.

After initial disbelief and some lingering doubts on the part of the occasional student, acceptance of the basic principles sets in. Upon examination of the *Appendix Probi*, the students not only accept the clear distinction between normative and descriptive but begin to delight in the charming paradox of finding the evidence for real changes in real languages emerging in the do-not-say column of that typical schoolmaster/grammarian<sup>1</sup>. Then the final "Yes, but" emerges from the most proficient of the students, the one who has actually taken to the work in linguistics as more than a mere requirement, and, as it happens, is just finishing her dissertation in Italian. All of this is well and good, she notes, it all makes perfect sense for Spanish or English or other languages; but there is one exception to the general rule, Italian, since in Italy, of course there was the *questione della lingua*. And everyone knows that the *questione* in fact determined what "Italian" was to be and came to be.

I offer this only partially fictionalized account by way of introduction because it seems to be reasonably representative of the kind of confusion of obvious and elementary linguistic principles that takes place the minute the *questione della lingua* enters the picture. In fact, the *questione*, which represents the major or only exposure to "linguistics" most Italianists have, is certainly not fully enlightening on linguistic issues. Well towards the end of the century in which linguistics established itself as a science separate from literary studies the *questione della lingua* actually plays a key role in keeping historical linguistics in Italian much as it was before the divorce between the study of language and the study of literary

stylistics took place. Twenty five years after Robert Hall wrote his scathing indictment of Crocean or "Idealist" Romance linguistics (i.e. non- or anti-scientific linguistics), many of its characteristics remain with us in Italian. In his uncompromising *Idealism in Romance Linguistics* Hall noted: "When Crocean idealism has finished with linguistics, linguistics itself is finished as a separate discipline, and a linguist without an interesting aesthetics has no place left to go. Croce removes the study of language from the fields both of logic and of the sciences, and identifies it with history, literary criticism, and art criticism." (Hall 1963: 35) Although Hall is not, in that particular study, addressing the problems presented and/or created by the *questione*, and especially by its study by Italianists, his comments here are clearly apposite. It seems possible to me, moreover, that there is a distinct causal connection between the *questione* itself and the particularly fervid idealism of Italianists, but before discussing that hypothesis it is necessary to outline the salient features of "linguistic" thought as they are generally present, usually implicitly and at times explicitly, in discussions and studies of the *questione*.

Perhaps the most general and elementary misconception evoked, symbolized and perpetuated by the *questione* is the assumption that *language* means *written* language, primarily literature. It is not because most Italianists are Derrideans that they cling to such a pre-Saussurian notion but rather because the whole existence of the *questione* appears to support that long-outdated notion: The crucial difference between spoken language (language) and its written representation (derivative and secondary in Saussurian terms) is rarely apparent in the context of modern discussions of the *questione*, in great measure because of the strongly Crocean tenor of this branch of "linguistics". Modern discussions or presentations of the *questione*, in other words, ignore rather than refute the principle of the primacy of speech, which alone is properly called language, over its written form.<sup>2</sup> This refusal of one of the most fundamental principles of linguistic thought is inextricably tied to one of the other major misconceptions implicit in the *questione*, namely that normative attitudes (what given individuals say a language should be) are a real and significant part of the history of languages, of how they evolve. Since most of the primary *questione* documents address, at least at the surface level, the desirable or "correct" forms of the written language, the interdependence of the two tenets is obvious. Thus all too many people whose principle or only exposure to "linguistics" in Italian is the *questione*, labor under the dual misapprehensions that spoken and written languages are more or less the same thing (or, perhaps worse, that the written form is the "real" thing), and that the centuries-long discussion of what Italian *ought* to be is more or less a discussion of *the history* of the Italian language. Thus, standard histories of Italian in use today are strikingly more literary, i.e., based almost exclusively on the changes in linguistic patterns in writers, than are the histories of other languages, including those of French, Spanish and English, to name only those with which I am familiar.<sup>3</sup> They also repeatedly focus, not surprisingly, on the *questione* itself and the many influential writers from Dante to Pasolini who have pronounced on the subject, thus making the *questione* itself appear to be, implicitly or explicitly, a central agent in the process of the development of Italian. The net result is that the unsuspecting reader student is quite likely to come out of the experience believing that, unlike any other European language (or any other natural language for that matter), Italian was and is a language decided on and arrived at by discussion and debate among the Italian intelligentsia.

While these are the two major or "guiding" misconceptions about language on which so much of the discussion about the Italian language seem to rest, there are several others, subsidiary and interrelated, which are of considerable interest and importance: the "grammar" is what grammar books or grammarians say it is or should be, and that this is the

property that distinguishes "real languages" (such as "Italian") from mere "dialects" (which have no grammar), that certain linguistic forms are superior to or purer than others, the latter characterised by errors, etc. It is one of many paradoxes surrounding the *questione* that it is precisely in a context purportedly linguistic that notions such as these, which would be universally rejected by linguists as naive, erroneous, or worse, are in fact perpetuated. And while it is impossible (and should be unnecessary) in a paper of this scope to detail the refutations of all of the above fallacies (this would in fact amount to an entire elementary course in linguistics!) certain points here warrant further scrutiny.

The nature of the difference between what is commonly referred to as a dialect, almost invariably in (pejorative) juxtaposition to a language, is of course a particularly vexing one in the Italian sphere. The very existence of what we call the *questione della lingua* was and is dependent on the fact of the Italian dialects, which continue to be the native language(s) of a significant portion of the population of Italy. Thus, the supposed inferiority of a "dialect" vis à vis a standard "language", and other related prejudices, are far more than interesting academic, historical questions for Italianists, and their refutation that much more critical. There is, of course, no *linguistic* difference between what are vulgarly differentiated as language and dialect; the differences are social and historical and invariably accidental, i.e., not tied to any intrinsic linguistic worth (such as grammaticality, "purity", "correctness" and so forth.) Pithy statements on the subject by several linguists seem to me to shed much light on the subject: the difference between a language and a dialect, as per Paul Lloyd, is that a language is a dialect with an army. (In the case of Italian, or of other languages emerging in the latter 20th century that might be modified to something like "a language is a dialect with better p.r. than other dialects.") At the outset of a course on dialectology, William Labov, generally regarded as the father of sociolinguistics, threw out all existing definitions of language and dialect by observing, as he put it, that in France a dialect is something to be stamped out whereas in Italy a dialect is what you speak.<sup>4</sup>

Closely related to this issue, at times indistinguishable from it, is the question of "error" or (its opposite, supposedly) "purity" in language. These are of special interest because they bring to the fore primary issues in historical linguistics. The secondary *questione* literature, as I suggested above, perpetuates the notion, since we accept the documents and writers of the *questione* as major players in the historical development of Italian, that language change comes or is *set* from above, that language *is*, ultimately, what a certain group of people (invariably the intellectual/ social/political elite) say it is. In fact, while there has been a lively debate among linguists in this century on the purported teleology of language in the area of historical developments, no linguist I know of would maintain that significant linguistic change is ever *consciously set from above*. The most recent and by far most extensive studies ever done of language change in progress, conducted by Labov have shown that the tendency is quite the contrary that linguistic change tends to originate *from below* (i.e., from less-educated, non-élite, even marginalized, segments of the population) and from there move upwards through the sociolinguistic hierarchy.

Labov's studies, of course, strongly support what a more discriminating reading of purists' writings on language over the centuries reveal: that the pleas and exhortations for the linguistically (and of course, politically and socially) "pure" and "correct" to resist the onslaught and corruption of the *vulgo* are overwhelmingly in vain. This is, in the final analysis, self-evident as well as inevitable, and it is difficult to muster sympathy for those who worry and rant and rave about the "corruption" or "decline" or lack of "correctness" of the speech of other people. After all, those of us who are Romanists are studying and

sanctifying languages that are quite corrupt forms of Latin and unspeakably corrupt forms of proto-Indo-European; borrowings from other languages are barbarisms when they are first introduced but elite, canonized forms years later.<sup>5</sup> And, in the long run, no ranting and raving whether it is Bembo's or Safire's has much of any effect. To sum up, while all "errors", i.e., deviations from an existing norm, may not become universal features of the language and thus end up as a subsequent generation's norm or "pure form", the obverse is certainly true: all changes in language were once, by definition, error.

Thus, while it may be appropriate for those who appoint themselves as linguistic/cultural guardians of the past to believe in such notions as purity, it is manifestly inappropriate for those who believe themselves to be investigators/teachers to do so and to pass them on to future generations.<sup>6</sup> It is, for example, dangerous to accept the evidence of many, perhaps most grammar books in any straightforward fashion: by their very nature they are much more likely to be normative than descriptive, although there are some important exceptions to this generalization to which I will return. The problem in 19th and 20th century *questione*-related studies is that they assume or ratify the notion that grammar books (i.e., logically, grammarians,) generate grammars of languages (or the correct grammar of a language), and that they are the necessary tools for (native) speakers to learn how to speak (as well as to read and write) "correctly". Clearly, this very popular misapprehension is derivative of the assumptions about linguistic "authority" just rejected: "correct" usage is established by those who know and others must learn it from their examples.

Grammar books, again with few exceptions, do not necessarily accurately represent (let alone generate) natural languages but rather idealized, "cleaned up" forms of those languages and, except when, like the *Appendix Probi*, they explicitly point out common "errors", they may obscure more than enlighten us as to the real forms of a spoken language at a given moment or over a period of time. From a linguistic (rather than a social) point of view a grammar is of use exclusively for the person wishing to learn a "foreign" or secondary language, i.e., one whose grammar they cannot learn naturally, i.e. by growing up with it. Or, in a diglossic situation such as Italy's, they serve to teach the grammar of a written language which is not the "correct" version of what the native speaker controls but a different language altogether.<sup>7</sup> For grammar (real grammar, not the ability to articulate it, which is a wholly different phenomenon) is the set of (ever-changing) rules that the community of native speakers has sub-consciously adopted that allow them to communicate with each other. It is not a "merc" metaphor that we call our first languages "mother tongues". Once again, our a-linguistic assumptions about the *questione* lead us to several critical misunderstandings about the history of Italian: that the normative grammars produced over the centuries in aid of one or another point of view in the *questione* are adequate descriptions of Italian at that time and (presumably, although it is a circular argument) that the community used these grammars to learn the Italian they actually spoke.

Many of these rudimentary but necessary linguistic principles can, paradoxically, be perceived in some of the *primary* documents of the *questione*, which often reveal a startling degree of "modern" sophistication in these matters.<sup>8</sup> They do not necessarily reflect, in other words, the kind of naïveté or ignorance of linguistic fundamentals contemporary discussions of the *questione* all too often do. In the *De vulgari eloquentia*, for example, Dante makes a number of these basic issues quite clear: he distinguishes between a mother tongue, learned naturally, and a *grammatica*, an artificial language which exists for literary/rhetorical purposes and has to be learned. It is noteworthy that his assertion that Latin (as he knew it, codified in grammar books and in literary documents) was never a *real* language but rather an artificial common written language, an assertion that is occasionally dismissed as naïve

or ignorant on his part, actually reflects a vision of linguistic reality not far from the one many Romance linguists have arrived at in recent years.<sup>9</sup> And part of Dante's reasoning in this view of the relationship between *grammatica* and real, "mother" tongues is that all *natural* (living) languages change continually and without exception (whereas Latin was frozen, i.e., artificial and dead).

Giorgio Bartoli, whose *Degli elementi del parlar toscano* was published in Florence in 1584, insists repeatedly that writing merely *records* the sounds which are the real vehicle of language. No less a believer in the primacy of speech over writing (and the necessary adaptation of the latter to the former) was Trissino, whose attempts to reform Italian orthography are well known (although they failed). Leon Battista Alberti, wearing a grammarian's hat, (in the *Regole della volgar lingua fiorentina*) not only insists that his grammar is compiled from *usage* (description) rather than being normative but, refining Dante's historical argument considerably, asserts that such was *originally* the case with Greek and Latin (before they were frozen by grammarians). One of the most charming and telling statements on these issues is to be found in Benedetto Varchi's *Ercolano*, worth citing in full:

Cesare: Perchè si deve dire Greci, plurale di Greco, e non Grechi?

Varchi: Perchè in Firenze è una via, la quale si chiama da tutti Borgo de 'Greci, non de' Grechi.

Cesare: E non avete alcuna ragione migliore di cotesta?

Varchi: Nessuna altra, non che migliore: ma sappiate, che niuna può essere migliore di questa.

Cesare: O perchè?

Varchi: Perchè le lingue cosistono, come s'è detto, nello uso di chi le favella.<sup>10</sup>

It is most unfortunate that the *questione della lingua* has been misconstrued in such critical ways: it has been taken *at face value*, i.e., assumed to constitute part of the strictly linguistic history of the Italian language rather than as the (intellectual) history of thought on language in Italy. We have mistaken as descriptive linguistic documents what are either normative or theoretical language tracts. In doing so, we are often in danger of missing some of the most important and real points that the *questione* makes, and a series of intriguing paradoxes arises. The first paradox, of course, and this reflects how little real impact the *questione* had on the development of Italian, is that it is Italy's notorious linguistic *disunity* that not only engendered the *questione* but that has nourished it and kept it alive century after century, to a considerable extent to this day. Indeed, a *questione della lingua* can only exist, in any vigorous form, as long as there continues to exist the lack of linguistic hegemony that it addresses and seeks to correct. There would be no *questione* and very limited study, one can safely wager, if Dante's and Machiavelli's and Bembo's dicta about what the national language of Italy should be had, in fact, been heeded and, somehow, been put into effect. Not even Dante could reconcile theory with practice (or desired norm with linguistic reality) and Machiavelli's resuscitating him to confront him with this discrepancy between theory and practice makes the point quite strikingly. It is perhaps necessary to emphasize here that the effect of the opinions of the writers in the *questione* had on developments in Italian *literary* style is an entirely different issue and one that must be analyzed on its own terms, precisely because a written language, and above all a literary language, is such a

different entity from a spoken language. And even in this sphere, one might well want to argue that the ultimate triumph of a Tuscan-based dialect as the literary language of the peninsula was due much more to the impact of the *Commedias* of Florentines than to the *De vulgari*.

It is odd that, in the face of what may be one of the richest bodies of pre-modern writing on language Italianists have so often dealt with the *questione* in such a primitive (from a linguistic point of view) fashion, using it to perpetuate many of the fallacies of language I have outlined above. Not that harboring such delusions about the nature of language(s) is unique (far from it): if it were there would be no John Simons campaigning to restore English to its former supposedly "purer" state, there would be no column by William Safire in the magazine section of every week's Sunday *New York Times*, there would be, God forbid, no *académie française*.<sup>11</sup> But whereas in a few courses on the history of the French or English languages taught in this country these people and institutions are given any but the most cursory attention in passing (and then, appropriately, as examples of normative attitudes) the *questione*, implicitly or explicitly as language history *per se*, is given center stage within the academic community of *italianisti*. And, as I noted before, we study it forgetting the lesson implicit in its very first document, the *De vulgari*, or rather the lesson to be drawn from reading the *Commedia*, written, of course, in Dante's *lingua madre* and not, as Dante the normative grammarian would have had it, in an abstract language that did not in fact exist. And those written documents, in any case, are principally parts of literary and stylistic history.

Many of Italianists' misapprehensions in this regard are similar or identical to those that caused Hall to take Crocean "linguistics" so severely to task: "Furthermore, Croce and the idealists register a retrogression, even with respect to Vico, in treating language as an almost exclusively individual phenomenon. Now, of course, language exists in individuals, as a set of habits which each individual possesses (an idiolect); but it is simply not accurate to state or imply, as Croce does, that each individual creates his language and his linguistic expression for himself...." (Hall 1963: 34). While Hall is not specifically addressing the *questione*, his comments shed considerable light, for the belief in the historical linguistic reality of the *questione* is rooted in the extension of the Crocean assumption about the power of the creative individual. The *questione*, from that perspective, is a discussion among individuals who, collectively, can dictate the course of language change much as each individual within that group can dictate his own linguistic system.

It is not farfetched, perhaps to make an explicit connection between the pervasive influence of the *questione* and the persistence of "idealism" in Italian historical linguistic studies. (Hall, who has written on both subjects lucidly has not, to the best of my knowledge, made such a connection.) Not only is the major theoretical base (regarding the linguistic supremacy of the individual) the same, but it is also remarkable to note that of the five figures identified by Hall as the "Leaders" of the idealistic movement, three were Italians (and thus immersed in the *questione* culturally): Croce (in Vico's shadow), Bartoli and Bertoni. The other two, Karl Vossler and especially Leo Spitzer had considerable involvement in Italian as well as in other Romance studies. And while in French and Spanish there are today (i.e. twenty five years after Hall's scathing indictment) relatively few "idealists" left, the same can scarcely be said for Italian, where Migliorini's *Storia della lingua*, certainly better entitled *Storia della lingua letteraria italiana* is still not only used in "history of the language" courses, but where there are few, if any, other viable options.

Where does all of this leave us, then, and what legitimate intellectual purposes are served if we do reject the premise that the *questione* is the story of how Italian was "established"?

Firstly, as I have noted above, what the *questione*, and the attraction it has had for many of Italy's finest minds, do reflect quite clearly is what is betrayed by the linguistic issues that in many ways became metaphors: the lack of political, national unity. Language, of course, is perhaps the most powerful of all symbols for a community and, by extension, the lack of a common language the clearest indicator and even cause of political disunity and consequent strife. Language is, for a number of different reasons, the ultimate emblem and marker of racial, social class, and other differences. What, after all, better evokes the often bitter or violent long-standing problems within communities and countries than to mention Black English or the French of the Quebecois or, more recently, Spanish in the states of California and Florida?<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, the relationship between linguistic divisions and political or ethnic or social divisions is an extremely complex one which in great measure scholars in sociolinguistics are just starting to address, and the *questione*, studied from that perspective, provides an extraordinarily rich body of evidence and material to work with. By focusing not on the utopic aspects of the *questione* and its documents, as we have done in the past, but rather on the subtext, the linguistic fragmentation that engendered it and is intricately tied to it, the history of the Italian language could be one of the premiere areas of research on at least some of the many issues that make sociolinguistics one of the most exciting and productive areas of linguistics in this half of the twentieth century rather than, as is now too often the case, a backwater of outdated and often theoretically ill-informed "philology". Currently "hot" issues such as the power (or lack thereof) of the normative discourse and the institutional power of a standardized language, as well as older theoretical issues such as the social direction of language change, how standardization takes hold (or does not), why some "errors" become "grammatical" (and others do not), could find no more fertile territory than Italy's paradoxical richness of written assertions of linguistic unity and concomitant wealth of linguistic variation.

There are still other important questions that have been addressed from time to time but all too often with the sorts of misapprehensions about linguistic fundamentals I have criticized here, and they too would profit from a theoretical reorientation. At the forefront of these is certainly the question of what effect a written standard does have on the spoken language, what effect, in other words, a normative grammar can have on the real grammar of spoken language(s), how and when, for example, spelling and writing and literature do and did influence developments not in the "standard" language but in the "dialects", the native languages of groups that became bilingual. It would be interesting to explore, in this context, the extent to which such effects are comparable, or greater or lesser, than the parallel ones in more strongly standardized language areas. Another obvious area for reexploration is one of interest not necessarily as a linguistic issue but more as one in literary theory: the effects of linguistic theory on writers of literature, particularly those, Dante, Machiavelli, Manzoni, to name but a few, who were engaged in both the theoretical and the artistic enterprise. Italy, once again, indisputably offers the greatest number of such cases, and the potential wealth of insights, most of them theoretical, has been much diminished by approaching the question without as strong a grasp on linguistic theory as seems to me to be required.

Finally, and for some most importantly, there are indications, emerging from the work of a handful of scholars, that many of the most important theoretical tenets on language and its nature which are considered "modern" are in fact to be found quite well articulated in the writings of many Italians so concerned with the *questione*, particularly those of the *Cinquecento*, but certainly also including Dante. The history of linguistics or linguistic thought

is a relatively new discipline, whose birth is easily traceable to the interest sparked by Chomsky's assertions of theoretical filiations with Cartesian thought and the linguistics of Port Royal.<sup>13</sup> It is increasingly evident, thanks to the work of scholars such as Hall, Izzo, and Ward, that a central and critical chapter in the history of linguistic thought in Europe is to be found in the writers on the *questione*, not because they believed that they were really able to determine or establish what Italian was but, in some ways quite the contrary, because studied from a less simplistic perspective, their writings reflect all too clearly that the language question was far too complex, and from a normative point of view too intractable, for such efforts to really succeed. To study the Italian *questione della lingua* from that perspective would be to contribute substantially to the very far-reaching inquiry into how thought on the nature of language has evolved in Western philosophy.

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## NOTES

\*A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the AATS meetings in April of 1987. I am indebted to Nancy Dersoff, Herbert Izzo, Deanna Sherneck and Giuseppe Mazzotta for their criticisms and suggestions.

1. The *Appendix Probi*, a 3rd century document, is a schoolmaster's list of linguistic do's and don'ts, a list probably compiled (although there has been some discussion about this) to correct very common mistakes students were making in Latin. As such, because of the *don't's* list, it is a gold mine of linguistic evidence for that period of evolution from Latin to Romance, since it is the common errors being corrected by the teacher that reflect what is really happening in the language and which reflect the direction or specific changes that would result in the Romance languages. For a fuller discussion and numerous examples see Elcock 1960: 28-34.

2. I am referring to the Derridean construct of a primary written text to which spoken languages are secondary. For fuller discussions see, among many currently available, Culler 1982 and Leitch 1983. This is a suggestion rich in possibilities in literary discourse and with admirable antecedents in kabbalistic writing, but apt to be rejected as a theory of linguistic development *per se*.

3. For a rapid overview of the state of affairs in histories of the Spanish language, to take that example, see the back-to-back reviews of two recent books on the subject, Nuessel 1987 and Hartman 1987, which also discuss some of the many other such manuals and histories produced in the last several years, most if not all of which are quite sophisticated from a theoretical linguistic point of view.

4. For a lucid exposition of this, as well as other basics in linguistic change, see Lloyd 1987, especially the chapter "On Sound Change". The clear lack of any linguistic basis for differentiating a language from a dialect is apparent if one considers it from a hypothetical anthropological-linguistic point of view: if one were to transcribe and analyze standard Italian as spoken by some native informant(s) and do the same with any of the Italian dialects, there would be no linguistic features that would emerge from such a "blind" analysis that would tell someone not familiar with the specifics of historical reality which one was the language and which the dialect. Ground breaking work in sociolinguistics can be found in the classic Labov 1972; those interested only in its relevance to historical linguistics should see Chapter 7 "On the Mechanism of Linguistic Change."

5. Chavez 1987, a brief article in the *Times* entitled "Struggling to Keep Spanish Pure" gives a charming example of this principle: the "language authority" interviewed decries the use of "carpeta" (to mean rug or carpet) in modern Spanish "because Spanish already has a word for it — alfombra." It is unclear to this reader whether the authority is aware of the exquisite irony of the example he has chosen since "alfombra" is all too clearly an Arabic borrowing and undoubtedly at one time considered a barbarism much as "carpeta" is seen today.

6. See William Safire's "On Language" column of March 1, 1981, for a brief description of the kinds of confusions that have come to exist between the role of a linguist, a scholar and/or teacher who is interested in linguistic reality, and whatever it is that one wants to call those who want to promote or establish certain norms. A key text in the dispute and ensuing confusion was certainly Merriam Webster's Third International which decided (and it was certainly not the first) to "go descriptive", seeing that as a dictionary's primary role, and thus include items such as "ain't", indisputably part of linguistic reality. Many took, and take, this as an expression of what is desirable or acceptable rather than a mere description of fact: the standard joke that circulated for some years after the publication of this "revolutionary" tome was that upon calling Merriam Webster's and asking to speak to

someone not there at the time, a caller was told by the secretary, "Sorry, he ain't here." The joke is perhaps on the person that assumed that those compiling the dictionary did not know the difference between saying "ain't" and saying "isn't" and thus assuming a dictionary should not include the former.

7. The classic article on diglossia is still Ferguson 1959. Although the case Ferguson examines is that of Arabic, where one language is written and a variety of related languages are the spoken norms, the parallels to both the historical situation in Romance before the codification of the vernacular standards and to Italy until the present are striking.

8. The bulk of work in this area has been done by two scholars, Hall (1936, 1939, 1942), and Izzo (1976 a and b, 1982, 1984) and also, most recently, by Ward 1986.

9. See Pulgram 1975, Wright 1976, and Lloyd 1979 for lucid discussions of the question, but more difficult than it would first appear to be, of just what what written/standardized Latin vis à vis what was being spoken.

10. This passage, and other aspects of Varchi's quite "modern" linguistic theories, are discussed in considerable detail in Izzo 1976a.

11. See one of the few even-handed discussions of the history and actual state of linguistic "purist" activism in Nunberg 1983.

12. The obverse can also be true: where strong political and/or religious unity is overriding linguistic differences may disappear from sight. Thus, in the Arabic-speaking world the thorny question of dialects and their purported inferiority vis à vis the standard does not arise (although linguistic differences are as great as they are among the Italian dialects) and in Spain, where dialectal differences are as old and as deep as in the Italian peninsula, it is only in the case where political separation is an important historical issue that the "language question" comes to the fore.

13. The primary text is Chomsky 1966. Two clear general expositions of the controversy and fertile research provoked by Chomsky are Aarsleff 1970 and 1971.

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