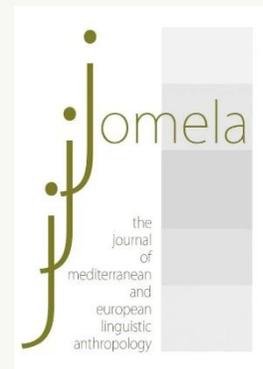


The Power of National Identity at the Grapho-Phonological Level: A Case in Italian

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Abstract

Western European nationalism in the modern era, which developed the ideal of the nation-state, was based on two key concepts: language standardization and monolingualism. However, relationships between language and national identity are too rigid and anachronistic, and should be modified to be more suitable for contemporary transnational fluidity. Citing work in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, this study focuses attention on interrelations between written and spoken language, specifically at grapho-phonological levels. This paper investigates elements of a specific language: the phoneme of palatal lateral approximant and its related graphemes in standard Italian. We examine, through historical-linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives, the diachronic, diatopic and diastratic features that, during the formation, standardization and massification language processes, led these target elements to cross boundaries: passing the non-symbolic to symbolic threshold; becoming standard and prestigious identity markers of Italian. The findings show that national languages and identities are not disappearing, but with global identity and language, new and more flexible boundaries are being created, appropriating faster and more layered inter- and intralinguistic communication.

Keywords: *Language ideologies, Italian phonology, identity marker, linguistic boundaries, transnational fluidity.*

1. Introduction

The changing idea of social identity has interested the most diverse fields of human knowledge, including linguistics. Especially since the 1990s, the interaction with language has been deepened with an increasing amount of studies (for sociolinguistics research see for example Fishman and Garcia, 2010; for linguistic anthropology Schieffelin et al., 1998; for applied linguistics Darvin and Norton, 2015). Although the concept of identity has been defined in a multitude of ways depending on the type of research, we can report the one that describe this complex term in a deliberately broad and open-ended way: "identity is the social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005: 286). Bucholtz and Hall also pointed out that "language, as a fundamental resource for cultural production, is hence also a fundamental resource for identity production" (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004: 382).

The creation of stable and normalized identities and languages that characterize specific groups of individuals is based on a continuous distinction with identities and languages that belong to other groups, or to the same people communities but in previous eras or in different spaces. In rising identity and linguistic boundaries with other groups of individuals, it is necessary to emblemize a whole language or just one or some linguistic elements to become indexes of the speaker's social identity (Milroy, 2000). These linguistic identity markers, as the boundaries related to them, can change over time according to ideological needs, take on infinite forms, or quickly be linked to any kind of political ideology (cf. Oakes, 2001). They can be part of any level of language, and they form the core around which the idea of a nation-state's standard language can be built.

In the current era, language ideologies and identities based on "bounded, separate, discrete and/or autonomous units" (Hüppauf, 2004: 12) are too rigid and are not compatible with the transnational fluidity of a globalized and digital world. It is therefore necessary to start conceiving new types of identity markers and boundaries, both within a group of individuals and across language communities.

This paper examines the process of emblemization of Italian national identity through specific phonological and orthographic elements of the national standard language: the palatal lateral approximant phoneme /ʎ/ and the related complex graphemes (i.e. composed by more than one letter) <gli> and <gl> used in Italian.

Through a phonetic, phonological, and orthographic description of the target elements, as well as through an in-depth examination of their path of formation, standardization, and massification, we aim to examine the complex relationship between language ideologies and national identity at the grapho-phonological level.

An innovative factor of this article, little explored in previous studies of language ideologies concerning specific national identity markers, is the consideration of the interrelationship between written and spoken language. Specifically, while in recent decades there have been several studies of language ideologies at the phonological (e.g. see Dyer, 2007) and orthographic levels (e.g. see Jaffe et al., 2012), little has been done to deepen research on identity markers that encompasses their intertwined relationship.

Specifically, we examine the diachronic, diastratic and diatopic variables of both the sound and the graphic signs of the palatal lateral in Italian, as well as their acquisition processes in both L1 and L2 contexts.

This paper aims to investigate the possibility that the palatal lateral may have symbolized the ideal of national identity within the phonological and spelling systems of standard Italian.

Moreover, this study wants to understand if also at the grapho-phonological level old concepts of national language and identity markers and boundaries are changing in favor of a greater ideological flexibility, more appropriate for the current globalized era.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: in the second section, the relevant role of national identity in the process of language standardization is described, with particular attention to the Italian case. In sections 3 and 4 the main features of target phoneme and graphemes are reported. In section 5 we examine the main changes occurred in the last decades in the relationship between standard Italian and the closest related languages, such as Latin and the other Italian-Romance varieties. In the last section we discuss the results, and we draw some conclusions.

2. Language and National Identity

The relationship between language and national identity has gone through various phases in the diachronic course of Western thought. In medieval Europe, language was not yet a social barrier (Guglielmi, 2020), while in the modern era it was included with the concepts of land and nation in the ideological triad on which the Western nation-states were founded (Connor, 1993). In fact in the Golden Age of 19th-century European nationalism, language assumed a leading role in the construction of the ideal of nation, supplanting the primacy of religion (cf. Guglielmi, 2020).¹

The ideological debate of the modern era on the link between the concepts of language, identity and nation is varied and complex. Nevertheless, it can be remarked that it was mainly based on the ethnic/civic dichotomy (Kohn, 1944) and carried out by two currents of Western thought: the different approaches proposed by primordialists and instrumentalists.² The primordialist thesis, embedded in the German Romanticism, sees language as a natural, primordial characteristic that derives from an ethnicity that unites speakers prior to nationalism

(Geertz, 1973; Isaacs, 1975). As the classical Greek philosopher Epicurus had already theorized, language boundaries appear to coincide with ethnic boundaries. According to the Greek philosopher, then followed by the primordialists in the modern age, the diversity between us and them concerns language, and at the same time mind and body (Joseph, 2004). Instead for instrumentalists, based on the French Enlightenment, language is a non-coercive social force underlying the will to join or not. As one of the leading exponents of this current points out in 1882 "[...] language invites people to unite, but does not force them to do so" (Renan, 1990 [1882]: 16). For instrumentalists, language is a powerful means of inclusion and assimilation used by the dominant classes to unite across an entire community of individuals (Gellner, 1983; Anderson, 1991; Hobsbawn, 1992).

The power wielded by the elite of European societies, who at the beginning of the modern age started to aspire to the construction of normalized national identities, was based on the regulation of language, culture and territory. The link between these three factors would legitimize and make invariable the idea of the nation-state, and would also justify any kind of its defense, whether economic, political or military (cf. Foucault, 2004 [1978]; Rojo, 2016). Thus, from the beginning the ideal of a national identity was strongly linked to language, specifically to the ideologies of monolingualism and language standardization (cf. Rojo, 2016). In fact, these two language ideologies formed the conceptual basis of the link between national identity and language developed in European nation-states in the modern era, and were reproduced and spread throughout the world in the 19th and 20th centuries (Rojo, 2016; Hobsbawn, 1992).

Monolingualism remained an essential factor of the nation-state concept until only a few decades ago (e.g. Blommaert and Verschueren, 1992). On the one hand, this ideology led to greater social cohesion and interaction within the social group. On the other hand, it has increasingly been seen as an impositive form of domination incompatible with many concepts of Western ideology of democracy, such as the defense of linguistic minorities, the struggle against social discrimination and the extinction of languages and cultures (Bordieu, 1991; Heller, 2003; Rojo 2016).

The normalization process of a dominant national language is also one of the main points by the social elite for exercising the power (Bordieu, 1991). In the language standardization process, a single linguistic variety and its group of speakers are chosen as the most 'authentic' identity core to imitate from the others and on which to base an imagined national unity (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983).³ Then, the educational system plays a vital role in the preservation and dissemination of the national standard language. During this repeated process, it resists to linguistic innovations, and it promotes the social hierarchy based on the ideal that if the people use the standard language as best as they can, they will be considered smarter and will have a better chance of excelling in society, unlike non-standard speakers (Joseph, 2016).

It is important for the purposes of this specific study on the Italian case to point out that the modern concept of national language was born in Italy at the time of Dante Alighieri, in the 14th century (Joseph, 2004). It is interesting to think that this ideology developed in a group of individuals who would have to wait many centuries before achieving the actual proclamation of a nation-state and the massified use of the national language (Joseph, 2004).

However, as suggested by some scholars (Joseph, 2004; Marazzini and Petralli, 2015), it was precisely the lack of national unity that drove the literates and intellectuals of the many Italian courts to debate over time on how to create a common language and consider it an essential symbolic representation of Italian culture and identity unity and existence. It can also be noted that, according to the ethnic/civic dichotomy, 19th-century Italian nationalism can be defined as ethnic because it used language to ethnically delimit the ideal nation (Guglielmi, 2018). The Italian language, standardized in the 17th century and accepted as the sole language of the Italian Kingdom's reunification in 1861, was an aristocratic language confined to the few until the massification occurred just in the '50 of the 20th century. In other words, pre-unification Italian has been defined as an unpopular language, an elitist cultural language with a marked propensity for artistic production (Marazzini and Petralli, 2015).

3. The palatal lateral approximant in Italian

3.1. *Phonemes*

The target phoneme of this study is the palatal lateral approximant /ʎ/. It is one of the seven new Romance consonants institutionalized last and added in the Italian phonological system (Presutti, 2021). Moreover, it shares the subgroup of lateral consonants with the alveolar /l/. In Maddieson's world phonemic classification (1984), based on frequency and salience, only 15 of the 317 analyzed languages also have the palatal lateral in their phonetic system. Thus, the palatal lateral presents an extremely high phonological markedness⁴ among world languages (Maddieson 1984), which is higher than the other lateral used in Italian (cf. Ladefoged et Maddieson, 1996). The American linguist argues that the exclusion of one sound rather than another in the phonological system of a language is related to the concept of phonetic similarity and salience within the system. However, while it is true that intrasystemic phonetic distance is roughly constant, it is also true that in some cases two opposing phonemes may share the same articulatory point or modality, as in the case of the two lateral phonemes in Italian. In standard Italian, the palatal lateral is always pronounced by gemination in postvocalic position, except with the article and the pronoun *gli*. From both an acoustic and articulatory point of view, it can be easily misunderstood, by natives and others, with other sounds present in the Italian phonetic panorama such as the yod and the phonemic groups /lj/ and /llj/ (Bladon and

Carbonaro 1978; Oliveira et al. 2016). If compared with other consonants, the lateral phonemes are more difficult to produce (and to hear, according to the quantal theory by Stevens, 19895). Thus, they appear later or do not appear at all in the distinctive phonetic process that is the basis of the phonological system of each language (cf. Jakobson, 1968 [1941]).

It is relevant to consider as well a study on Italian phonological system learning process conducted by Tresoldi et al. (2018) with 694 children aged 3-7 years and coming from different Italian regions. According to the research results showed in Table 1, the Italian palatal lateral is one of the last consonantal phonemes to be learnt and mastered during phonological learning of the mother tongue. Particularly, an Italian native child achieves to master it only at 6-7 years, instead of 3-4 years for most of the other consonants.

	Customary production (≥ 50 %)	Acquisition (≥ 75 %)	Mastery (≥ 90 %)
[p]			≤ 3 ; 0
[t]			≤ 3 ; 0
[m]			≤ 3 ; 0
[n]			≤ 3 ; 0
[b]		≤ 3 ; 0	3 ; 6
[l]		≤ 3 ; 0	3 ; 6
[k]		3 ; 6	4 ; 0
[d]		≤ 3 ; 0	4 ; 0
[f]		≤ 3 ; 0	4 ; 0
[v]	3 ; 6	4 ; 0	4 ; 6
[g]	≤ 3 ; 0	4 ; 0	4 ; 6
[ŋ]	3 ; 6	4 ; 0	5 ; 6
[dʒ]	≤ 3 ; 0	4 ; 0	5 ; 6
[ʃ]	≤ 3 ; 0	4 ; 6	5 ; 6
[tʃ]	≤ 3 ; 0	4 ; 0	6 ; 0
[r]	4 ; 0	4 ; 6	6 ; 0
[z]	≤ 3 ; 0	3 ; 6	6 ; 6
[ts]		6 ; 0	6 ; 6
[dz]	3 ; 6	5 ; 6	7 ; 0
[ʎ]	5 ; 0	6 ; 0	7 ; 0
[s]	≤ 3 ; 0	5 ; 6	7 ; 6

Table 1. Average age of production, acquisition and mastery of Italian consonants by Italian L1 subjects (years; months) (Tresoldi et al., 2018). The palatal lateral is the penultimate mastered consonant.

3.2. Graphemes

The graphic representation of /ʎ/ is complex and heterographic (cf. Table 2). It is composed by

more than one letter of the alphabet and it is represented by a digraph or a trigraph, depending on the following vowel: it is <gl> if followed by the vowel /i/ or <gli> if followed by the vowels /a, o, e/. Moreover, the complex graphemes <gl> and <gli> are also heterophonemic, because they represent the palatal lateral and also the consonantal group /gl/ in some Latinisms added over time in the Italian vocabulary (cf. Table 2). Because of its orthographic complexity, the palatal lateral spelling is among the most common spelling mistakes made by native children and illiterates in Italian (Dardano, 1993; Maraschio, 1993).

<gli> for /ʎ:/			<gl> for /ʎ:/	
<i>foglia</i> 'leaf'	<i>foglie</i> 'leaves'	<i>foglio</i> 'sheet'	<i>fogli</i> 'sheets'	
Latinism with <gl> for /gl/				
<i>gladiatore</i> 'gladiator'	<i>negletto</i> 'neglected'	<i>glicine</i> 'wisteria'	<i>globo</i> 'globe'	<i>glucosio</i> 'glucose'

Table 2. Graphic correspondence of /ʎ:/ and /gl/ in contemporary Italian.

Figure 1 presents the index of an Italian L2 textbook (Guastalla and Naddeo, 2010) targeted to beginner adult non-native speakers. It can exemplify more clearly how Italian palatal lateral acquisition, even in L2 contexts, becomes more difficult than for other Italian grapho-phonemes.

► indice

comunicazione	grammatica	lessico	testi scritti e <i>orali</i>	cultura
unità 0 come ti chiami? pagina 11				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chiedere e dire il nome Le espressioni <i>Che significa?</i>, <i>Come si scrive?</i>, <i>Come scusa?</i> Le operazioni aritmetiche Salutare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> L'alfabeto I numeri da 1 a 30 Il verbo <i>chiamarsi</i> (io, tu, lui/ lei) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I nomi propri I saluti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>I saluti</i> 🍷 <i>L'alfabeto</i> 🍷 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modi per salutarsi Nomi propri più diffusi
unità 1 di dove sei? pagina 18				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chiedere e dire la provenienza e la destinazione 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I verbi <i>andare e essere</i> (io, tu, lui/ lei) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Le espressioni <i>grazie, prego, scusa</i> Stazione e aeroporto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scritte in luoghi pubblici <i>Annunci alla stazione</i> 🍷 <i>Dialogo in treno</i> 🍷 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Città italiane Fare conoscenza
unità 2 mi dai il tuo numero? pagina 23				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chiedere e dare il numero di telefono Chiedere l'età 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Il verbo <i>avere</i> (io, tu, lui/ lei) I numeri da 0 a 100 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dati anagrafici 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Dialogo in treno</i> 🍷 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scambiare i dati anagrafici
unità 3 tutti in piazza! pagina 26				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aprire una telefonata Concordare il luogo di un appuntamento L'espressione <i>Come si dice in italiano...?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I nomi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luoghi della città 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volantino <i>Dialogo in treno</i> 🍷 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecologia Città italiane
► Storia a fumetti Episodio 1 pagina 30				
► Fonetica I suoni [k] e [g] / I suoni [g] e [dʒ] pagina 32				

unità 9 al bar					pagina 69
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salutare in modo informale e formale • Richiamare l'attenzione di qualcuno in modo informale e formale • Chiedere e dire il prezzo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gli articoli indeterminativi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cibi e bevande al bar • Tipi di acqua 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogo al bar • Menù 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andare al bar 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Storia a fumetti Episodio 3 ▶ Fonetica I suoni [sk] e [ʃ] / Le doppie 					pagina 74 pagina 76
unità 10 la mia giornata					pagina 78
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dire a che ora si fa una cosa • Dire in che momento della giornata si fa una cosa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I verbi riflessivi • Anche / Neanche • Gli articoli con i giorni della settimana • I possessivi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Azioni quotidiane • Gli avverbi di frequenza • I giorni della settimana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fumetto umoristico • Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Il bagno in Italia 	
unità 11 in famiglia					pagina 84
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parlare della propria famiglia • Esprimere accordo o disaccordo • Fare una proposta e accettare • Incoraggiare • Introdurre un nuovo discorso 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gli aggettivi possessivi e i nomi di parentela • C'è / Ci sono • I numeri dopo 1.000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nomi di parentela • Oggetti personali 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogo a casa • Lettere ad un giornale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La famiglia italiana 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Storia a fumetti Episodio 4 ▶ Fonetica I suoni [ʎ] e [ɲ] / Le doppie 					pagina 90 pagina 92

Figure 1. Parts of the index of the Italian L2 textbook *Domani 1* (Guastalla and Naddeo, 2010), from unites 0 to 3 and from unit 9 to 11. The acquisition of palatal lateral phoneme and graphemes is present at Unit 11, at the bottom of the 2nd part where it is written 'Fonetica: I suoni [ʎ] and [ɲ]'.⁷

We do not wish to discuss in this paper the difficulties associated with learning phonology starting from the spelling.⁶ It is important in this study to note how phonemes represented by complex graphemes are avoided in the first learning stages, and they are only proposed later. As shown in Figure 1, the phonological learning order follows a precise hierarchy: in the beginning, it seeks the grapheme-phoneme correspondence consistency with the alphabet acquisition, and then it follows word frequency and phonological markedness parameters for the remaining phonemes represented by digraphs and trigraphs, notably in unit 3, 9 and 11, on which the learners will finally find the palatal lateral grapho-phoneme (Presutti, 2021). Thus, there is a great possibility that this extensive and confusing segmentation of grapho-phonological elements leads the Italian L2 teacher not to introduce the palatal lateral (or to do it several units later) because not present in the alphabet.⁷

4. Diachronic, diastratic and diatopic features

The phoneme /ʎ/ is absent in Latin, but present in other official Romance phonological systems, though it is spelled differently.⁸ It is derived mainly from the typical Romance articulatory phenomenon of the palatalization of 'consonant plus yod': this phoneme was developed by the Latin /lj/ as in *FAMĪLIĀ* > It. /fa'miʎ:a/ <famiglia> 'family', *FĪLIŪ* > It. /'fiʎ:o/ <figlio> 'son', *FŌLIĀ* > It. /'fɔʎ:a/ <foglia> 'leaf' (cf. Tekavčić, 1974; Genot, 1998; Patota, 2007).⁹

Before the standardized version of the 17th century, the palatal lateral was represented in Italian by a high number of graphemes (some of them reported in Table 3, Presutti, 2019). This multigraphism in the first centuries of Italian spelling was caused by a marked regionalism and by a variegated contribution of other Romance languages, especially French, Provençal and Spanish (Mancini, 1993; Maraschio, 1993; Cornagliotti, 1988).

 <i>molie</i>	<lli> <i>mollie</i>	<gl> <i>mogle</i>	<gl> <i>molgle</i>	<lg> <i>molge</i>
<lgi> <i>molgie</i>	<lgli> <i>molglie</i>	<ll> <i>mullere</i>	<lh> <i>mulhere</i>	<lhy> <i>molhye</i>

Table 3. Graphemes of the pre-standardized period of vernacular Italian representing the palatal lateral in the word <molgie> 'wife'.

The complex orthographic feature of the palatal lateral did not allow its inclusion in the Italian alphabet, as happened for all the new Romance consonants. The choice of graphically representing a new phoneme with the composition of existing Latin letters was not a casualty but a well-considered choice with a marked etymological motivation: the desire of the Italo-Romance language to affirm its independence from Latin without distancing itself too much from it (Alinei, 1975; Cova et al., 1983). The creation of a completely different grapheme from the Latin alphabet would have distanced Italian from the prestigious Latin and potentially risked the loss of the identity power acquired by its direct relationship with the illustrious ancestor (Alinei, 1975). As a consequence, the power institutions and literary people of the time preferred the use of a fixed combination of Latin letters (digraphs and trigraphs) to a possible substantial graphic innovation for the new Romance consonants, as happened to other Romance languages' orthographies (Presutti, 2021).¹⁰

Some spelling reform attempts in the following centuries, resulting from a phonological rather than an etymological motivation (such as the two examples shown in Figure 2, adapted from Maraschio, 1992; Goidànich, 1910), were not accepted by the national language institutions. Thus, a perfect correspondence between the phoneme /ʎ/ and a simple grapheme was not achieved.

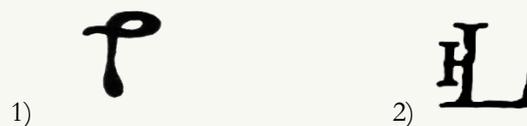


Figure 2. Two monographic alternatives for Italian phoneme /ʎ/ proposed over time by spelling reformers such as (1) Bartoli in 1584 and (2) Goidànich in 1910.

Due to its centuries-old fragmented past and very recent socio-political unity, the Italian linguistic panorama is still highly varied. In fact, it presents a very high number of phonetic differences from north to south, from region to region, sometimes even from town to town. In the specific case of the palatal lateral phoneme, there are many alternative solutions that are entirely derived from the articulatory evolution of Romance pronunciation. The most frequent are /j/, /lj/, /l:j/, /l:/ and /d͡z:/ (cf. Rohlf, 1966; Canepari, 2005).

It can be said that, with rare exceptions, the palatal lateral phonetic solution to the Latin group /lj/ is a specific characteristic of some Tuscan dialects, in particular of the Florentine, which constituted the most influential vernacular and the basis of the Italian language (Maraschio, 1993). The diatopic variants that differed from Florentine underwent a form of constant censorship, sometimes leading to surprising hypercorrections. This happened not only in vernaculars spatially distant from the unified Italian vulgar language (such as the languages in use in the South or in the North of the peninsula), but also in other Tuscan spoken variants not far from Florence.

In the specific case of the laterals, in most of 15th century Tuscany, as well as in the Florentine countryside areas, the population used popular words with the [-ggj-] group, both for derivatives coming from the Latin groups /gl/ but also for /lj/. However, this last combination has undergone a change with the palatal lateral in the spoken language used in the city of Florence (Patota, 2007). Especially in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Florentine vernacular increased its institutional power and was considered the vulgar model to follow throughout all the Italian states. Other terms different from it were censored or grapho-phonologically modified and hypercorrected. As showed in Table 4, alternative possibilities to the palatal solution from the Latin group /lj/ (as the examples 'son', 'leaf' and 'straw' shown on Table 4) were banned because perceived as diastatically inferior. Others instead coming from the Latin group /gl/ were modified as they derived from the group /lj/.¹¹

/lj/	/gl/
FĪLĪŮ > ['fig:jo] <figghio> 'son' (/'fi:l:o/ <figlio>)	TĒG(Ū)LA(M) > ['teg:ja] <teggia> 'saucepan' (hypercorrected in /'te:l:a/ <teglia>)
FŌLĪĀ > ['fɔg:ja] <fogghia> 'leaf' (/'fɔ:l:a/ <foglia>)	*RAG(Ū)LĀRE > [rag'gjare] <ragghiare> 'to bray' (hypercorrected in /ra:l'lare/ <ragliare>)
PĀLĒĀ > ['pag:ja] <pagghia> 'straw' (/'pa:l:a/ <paglia>)	VĪG(Ī)LĀRE > [veg'gjare] <veggiare> 'to watch over' (hypercorrected in /ve:l'lare/ <vegliare>)

Table 4. Vernacular solutions of Latin consonantal groups /gl/ and /lj/ in use in the Florentine countryside. In brackets the normalized solution of the city of Florence.

Furthermore, the phoneme and graphemes of palatal lateral can be considered not only a grapho-phonological symbol of the Florentine vulgar, but also an emblem of the formal register. This second type of attribution and emblemization can be highlighted by two diatopically and diachronically different examples.

The first one concerns a script written around 1527 and studied by Trifone (1988). This is an unusual manuscript in which two linguistic variants of the same speech were written in one single text by two people: a woman called Bellezze accused of witchcraft by the local community in the centre of Italy (in Sabina, a mountainous region not far from Rome); and by Luca Antonio, the notary who had to transcribe the formal version of the same trial. Even if the latter version presents still typical dialectal linguistic phenomena at all language structures, its style strongly differs from the lower register of Bellezze's script. Here I report a small part of the text:

Bellezze's version:

E d(e) quill'altro resto delu mamolo ne *piamo* la coccia e li / udilli, e ce facimo un altro onguento [...]

Luca Antonio's version:

E de quell'altro resto d(e)l / ma(m)molo ne *pigliamo* testa e le budella, e facemole / similm(e)n(te) bollire, e facemone ungue(n)to [...] (Trifone, 1988: 144 - A/B 25; *italics mine*)

On a grapho-phonological point of view, the dialectal central Italian solution with yod, like in the word <piamo> ('we take') at the beginning of the second line, was replaced by the palatal lateral in the higher standardized form of the notary <pigliamo>.

The second example concerns a diary written by leading members of a Lombard noble family called Biffi during five generations, from 1623 to 1778 (Di Passio, 1983). It constitutes a relevant resource which highlight the gradual adaptation of other Italo-Romance spellings to the institutionalized version of Italian, and it shows as well the difficulty to get use to it by all social classes, even the more educated ones. On Table 5 we resume what happened with the diachronic path of the palatal lateral.

1st generation:	2nd generation:	3rd generation:	4th generation:	5th generation:
Giambattista I (n.d. - 1658)	Gianambrogio I (1632 - 1695)	Giambattista II (1669 - 1711)	Ludovico (1711 - 1740)	Giambattista III (1736 - 1807)
<i>filio - fillio</i> <i>molie - mollie</i>	<i>filio</i> <i>molie - moglie</i>	<i>fili - figlio</i> <i>molie - moglie</i>	<i>figlia</i>	<i>figlio</i>
. Great oscillation . The etymological variants and <lli> are the main options	. Great oscillation . The etymological variants and <lli> are still considered the main options	. Great oscillation . Considerable increase in the use of <gli>	. Regular use of <gli>	. Regular use of <gli>

Table 5. Some graphic solutions of the palatal lateral in the diary of the Biffi family for the words <figlio/figlia> 'son/daughter' and <molie> 'wife'.

It goes from a great oscillation in the texts written in the 17th century by the first three generations of authors, until a regular use of the contemporary trigraph <gli>. Moreover, the prevalence in the early written texts of the closest Latin spelling graphemes and <lli> still in the 17th century demonstrates once again the big effort of Italian language to separate from the etymological power of its Latin roots.

5. A renewed relationship among national identity and language

We saw in section 2 how the Italian nationalism of the 19th century can be considered ethnic; how in the long pre-unification period the Italian language was, as the territory, the main symbol of a common identity; how, until the massification of the post-war period in the 1950s and 60s, standard Italian was an elitist and unpopular language.

It is relevant to note how in the current era these three characteristics of the relationship between Italian national identity and language have changed considerably.

Today standard Italian has become the primary language by almost all Italian citizens, even in informal situations previously entrusted to dialect (ISTAT, 2015), and it still constitutes a well recognizable factor of common national identity (Pew Research Center, 2017). However, proficiency in the national language is not the only criterion used by Italian citizens to distinguish a co-national from a foreigner; furthermore, it cannot be considered the sole factor of national identity belonging (Guglielmi, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2017). According to a 2017 survey regarding factors related to Italian nationality analyzed by Guglielmi (2018), it would appear that today's Italian nationalism is no longer ethnic but civic. The average of the more than 3000 Italian citizens interviewed in the research shows how today's concept of Italian identity is based on a mixture of values of nationality but also of citizenship: while the Catholic religion and birth on Italian soil are little considered, the observance of laws and respect for national institutions join the mastery of the standard language as fundamental attributes of 'being Italian' (Guglielmi, 2018).

The increased heterogeneity and complexity in the concept of contemporary nationalism found in recent surveys also highlights the weakening of the monolingual essential feature of 19th- and early 20th-century ideology. In fact, since the 1970s in Europe and in other parts of the world, nationalism no longer rests on an mandatory homogeneous monolingualism, instead it often supports the struggles for the recognition of the linguistic minorities, for indigenous, pidgin and creole languages rights increased in many nations around the world (Taylor, 1993). In the Italian case, this change can already be evidenced by the less exclusive treatment given to the Italian language in the Constitution of the republican state of 1946 (D'Arcangelo, 2003),

compared to the monolingualist campaign adopted by the previous fascist regime.

5.1. Unbounded otherness with Latin and dialects

In the diachronic evolution of the relationship between Italian national identity and language, the boundaries and the distinction that have seen the Italian language opposed to other related linguistic varieties have also changed.

In fact, during the centuries of formation, standardization and massification of standard Italian, every effort was made to limit and contrast the power of the competing languages, in particular Latin and the other Italian-Romance vernaculars. However, once the main objective was achieved, i.e. the affirmation of Italian as a proper and the main, most prestigious language, spoken by citizens of a real nation, the boundaries with Latin and dialects lost strength and intensity. Thus, these languages related to Italian have been officially recognized, both by the political and cultural institutions and by the entire community of speakers, and considered relevant to the Italian language internal vitality.

The relationship that Italian has developed over the centuries with Latin is very deep. According to linguist Serianni, it can be compared to a relationship between a son and a somewhat oppressive mother who wanted to intervene in his life and choices even as an adult (Serianni, 2015). In fact, the Italian language, despite having gained recognition since the 16th as a language to all intents and purposes detached from Latin, has continued to weave relationships with it through a constant and massive introduction of Latinisms even up to the present day (Cova et al., 1983; Ricci, 2020). While in the basic vocabulary of Italian there is a substantial percentage of inherited words, it is also true that in the overall vocabulary, Latinisms constitute by far the main contribution of Latin to Italian (Ricci, 2020). However, throughout the diachronic evolution of the language, its very close relationship with Latin should not be regarded as an obstacle, but rather as an essential enrichment that has affected all levels of the language (Segre, 1963).¹²

In the specific case of the graphemes <gl> and <gli> usually used in Italian for the new Romance phoneme of the palatal lateral, we have already seen in Table 2 how they have also been used for centuries to represent the consonantal group /gl/ in some Latinisms. Therefore, even though they do not coincide with the phonological and orthographic rules of standard Italian and conflict with the graphic solutions used for representing /ʎ/,

these irregular forms were been accepted for expanding the vocabulary of the national language.

If a language considered dead like Latin continues instead to live in the Latinisms coined from time to time and introduced in contemporary Italian, even the decline of dialects experienced from

the national unification to the post-war period (ISTAT, 2015) has been halted for a few decades thanks to a renewed relationship with the standard language (e.g. Grochowska, 2013; Eco, 2011; D'Arcangelo, 2003). The Italian dialects, considered a symbol of illiterates and the lower classes, were seen as an obstacle to standard Italian until the complete massification process achieved in the 1960s. Once the prestige role of the standard language was established, a new relation began with them. They were restarted to be considered by Italian speakers, as the writer Umberto Eco pointed out, 'the languages of the roots' (Eco, 2011). Therefore, it became clear for all parts of the society that dialects have always contributed to the dynamism of the common language, paradoxically constituting, and preserving, the deepest and most authentic Italian identity (D'Arcangelo, 2003). Today it seems that Italian citizens think, using Berruto's words: "now that we can speak Italian, we can also (re)speak dialect" (Berruto, 2002: 48).¹³

Even at the grapho-phonological level, this dialect revival is rising consistently in today's informal language. In phonology, the dialectal options have become part of the regional Italian varieties already since the 1950s (Binazzi, 2012). In spelling, today there is an increased use of dialectal forms in computer-mediated communication. In fact, they are used as alternative spellings to the standard norm in informal written conversations (e.g. Bultinck, 2011). In the specific case of the grapheme-phoneme of the palatal lateral, it is not unusual to come across the use of dialectal varieties, especially the /j/ <j> typical of central Italian variants (cf. Bultinck, 2011).

6. Discussion

In the previous sections we have seen how the Italian palatal lateral phoneme and the two related graphemes conveyed over time, at a grapho-phonological level, the idea of formal and diastatically high elements of the standard language. Their acoustic, articulatory and orthographic complexity seem to have indicated, during the process of standardization and massification of Italian, the effort that non-Italian speakers must make in order to be considered 'authentic Italian citizens' and 'proper Italian speakers'.

The boundaries created over the centuries during the language standardization and mass acquisition processes, served mainly to distinguish spoken and written Italian from Latin and Italo-Romance dialects. Once the primacy of standard Italian as the dominant language of an existing nation-state was achieved, these boundaries loosened. Moreover, the relationships that standard Italian developed with its ancestral language and with other Italo-Romance variants has been highlighted rather than hidden.

Today the new main linguistic otherness of national Italian is with global English (e.g. Marazzini and Petralli, 2015; Hüppauf, 2004). The massive influx of anglicisms into the current Italian language was already defined in the 1980s by the linguist Castellani as *morbus anglicus*

'English illness' (Castellani, 1987). The conviction that the increasing access of anglicisms or pseudo-anglicisms into the national language constitutes a serious threat to national identity concerns not just the Italian case but many others (Hüppauf, 2004).

It cannot be ignored that a transnational global society already exists, and that needs a language to represent itself and to communicate. Moreover, national institutions cannot reproduce the same boundaries used in the previous centuries to create, spread and maintain a national standard language.

Instead, we must accept the existence of a global identity in addition to others already recognized, and which for some decades is changing the internal and the external balance between language and social identities. For example, the phenomenon of globalization has restored value and strength to the identity role of local languages (Hüppauf, 2004) and has consequently contributed to weakening the national monolingualist ideology.

Today we should also be more aware of the constant interlingual exchange, deconstructing the rigid boundaries of outdated nationalist ideologies, and consider previous unbounded or modified boundaries' processes. Just as in our case Latin and Italian should not be considered at the time of their distancing as two compact and typologically different blocks (Cova et al., 1983), the same is true for today's Italian and global English. In addition, it must be highlighted that this constant exchange has often involved more than two languages at the same time, as showed by the emblematic case of Latinisms introduced into Italian after the Renaissance: most of them were indirect borrowings because they came mainly from French first and then from English (cf. Ricci, 2020).

In the specific case of the Italian palatal lateral, we recall that in the past many Latinisms that presented a different grapho-phonemic correspondence were introduced and accepted in standard Italian: in their orthographic representation, the consonantal group /gl/ has been represented by the same complex graphemes <gl> and <gli>. This flexibility in accepting anomalies of the Italian linguistic system is adopted even today with the use of non-standard forms present in anglicisms or pseudo-anglicisms that have been accepted in Italian. An example can be the neologism <googlare> pronounced /gugo'lare/, i.e. the Italian version of 'to google' adapted to the morphology of Italian with the verbal desinence -are (Accademia della Crusca.it, 2016; Treccani.it, 2008). Just as in the past the Latinism <glicine> 'wisteria' was not mispronounced /'Δitʃine/ when encoding <gli>, similarly today Italian speakers pronounce /gugo'lare/ instead of properly reading /gɔ:'glare/, trying to imitate the foreign pronunciation.

Therefore, today individuals are developing a greater grapho-phonemic flexibility, not only based on rules of the national language system. This shows a better predisposition to embrace non-standard pronunciations and orthographies, thus opening up to transnational forms of

communication while maintaining national, and even revitalized local, languages and identities.

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8. Endnotes

¹ However, it should be noted that language has not always been the first undisputed factor in national identity. Sometimes, other attributes, including the religious one, can be more important than language. As in the Irish nationalism pointed out by Smolicz (1981), in which Catholicism constituted the main distinctive factor of the community, as opposed to neighboring groups, rather than the revival of the ancestral language.

² For further study on ethnic/civic dichotomy, see the bibliography reported in Guglielmi (2020).

³ For further details on the concept of authentication, see Bucholtz and Hall (2004).

⁴ Markedness refers to the comparison of two or more linguistic forms. A marked form is a non-elemental or less natural linguistic form, which is contrasted with an unmarked, elemental or neutral form (Nocentini, 2002).

⁵ The notions of ease of articulation and auditory distinctiveness as influences on the phonetic structure of languages were suggested also by Martinet (1964), Lindblom (1990), Lindblom and Maddieson (1988).

⁶ This is still very much the case today in the acquisition of Italian in L1 and L2 contexts. For further details, see Presutti (2019).

⁷ For more information on the secondary role of the grapho-phonological structures in L2 learning processes, see Presutti (2019).

⁸ For example in Spanish is represented by <ll> or <y>, and in Portuguese by the digraph <lh>. In both cases, the duration of the palatal lateral is shorter than it is in Italian. The Spanish palatal lateral presents a great variety of pronunciations within the Spanish state and in Latin America. This linguistic phenomenon is called *yeism* and is well documented by Rost Bagudanch (2017). Concerning French, until a few centuries ago it was pronounced in some parts of France and Switzerland (the so-called *l mouillé*), but was opposed for a long time by scholars and grammarians until its disappearance (for further details, see Bourciez and Bourciez, 1989).

⁹ For exceptions and different causes from palatalization, see also Presutti (2019).

¹⁰ For example, the spelling rules of Italian provided for the already existing Latin letters <h> and <i> the task of performing also a diacritical function, so as to avoid an insertion of new diacritical signs in the alphabet (Maraschio, 1993).

¹¹ Today we can still find cases in the dialects of Northeastern Tuscany that recall the old groups [gl]> [ggj] (Tedeschi, 2004).

¹² The Florentine vernacular, and therefore Italian, is the Romance language that has most frequently grapho-phonologically modified and adapted the Latin borrowings to the vernacular form. For further study, see Migliorini (1962).

¹³ According to Deumert and Vandenbussche "we may argue that the standardization of Italian is changing over from a monocentric selection of features [...] too a relatively polycentric one" (2003: 4-5). For more discussion of the possible polycentricity of Italian, see also Berruto (2011).