

**Vincenzo Ferrara. *Dialettismi Italiani nei Lessici Bilingui*. Roma:**

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The aim of Ferrara's book is to provide readers and translators with a detailed dictionary of Italian dialectal, regional, and local expressions, and idioms. In the introduction, the author describes the genesis, aim of the study, and research methodology. He outlines the structure of the book, lists the abbreviations used throughout his work and provides the bibliography of the monolingual and bilingual dictionaries analysed. Ferrara's introduction situates his work critically between lexicography and the vast area of study of Italian dialectology. As Ferrara rightly states in his introduction (Note 1, pg. 9), there is a difference between dialectal expressions and regional expressions, but it is not as slight as he maintains. In order to make that understandable for an English-speaking audience I will have to refer to Cavallaro,<sup>1</sup> who has cautioned us that "the term *dialect* in the Italian context differs significantly from the definition normally given to *dialect* within an English context. In English dialectology, the term *dialect* is traditionally synonymous with *language variety*. In the Italian context it is used to refer to Italo-Romance dialects, which are *not* varieties of Italian. An example of such a variety would be *Italiano regionale* (Regional Italian, Berruto 1987<sup>2</sup>)."<sup>3</sup> The Italian dialects are autonomous linguistic systems, and in many cases they are not mutually intelligible. The matter is further complicated by something that is also acknowledged by Ferrara, i.e. that the term "Region" does not necessarily coincide with one of the 20 administrative districts (or regions) of Italy, but rather to linguistic regions, areas that can vary in dimensions, density and

number of speakers of a specific local variant"(lvi). Thus, what Ferrara refers to as *regionalismo* (regionalism) is an expression to be found in a variety of Italian, whereas a *dialettismo* (dialectal expression) comes from one of the Italian dialects, i.e. linguistic systems which evolved from Latin (and not from Italian).

In chapter one, after making some (very brief) observations on the translation of dialectal expressions, Ferrara offers a classification and a synoptic vision of these expressions, and then aggregates the lexical entries in semantic areas. In the same chapter, he provides the reader with the outcome of his analysis of the presence (or absence) of dialectal expressions in bilingual dictionaries. Ferrara's lexicographical analysis is painstaking.

The real core of the book is chapter two (49–276) where, after the alphabetical list of the regional expressions examined, Ferrara provides a detailed account of how these regional expressions were translated in the bilingual dictionaries.

In the appendix, the author provides a list of regional and dialectal expression with the diatopic references, where traceable.

Moving on to a critical appraisal of some major points, I want to make some general remarks: The use Ferrara makes of his sources is sensible and very systematic. In his introduction Ferrara describes the criteria used for the selection of the entries, and such criteria are consistent all throughout his work. However, he seems not to have done any dialectological field-work of his own. This might not be a problem if the declared intent of the book was a comparative analysis of the dialectal and regional expressions found in the bilingual dictionaries he analysed. As a purely lexicographical tool, Ferrara's dictionary is incredibly meticulous. But Ferrara's declared intent seems different; he writes: "[T]his study aims to be a tool of analysis of those dialectal expression[s] which have been ignored *tout court*, or neglected . . . The rich and varied lexical corpus selected comes from *today's language*, and is made of 290 dialectal expressions."<sup>4</sup> In the introduction, the author claims that the 290 dialectal expressions are "taken from a list of 1000 regional expressions that . . . is provided at the end of the book" (11, my translation). The criteria of inclusion/exclusion of the lexical entries are well-outlined; however, since the author hasn't done any dialectological field-work, he is totally reliant on the huge amount of dictionaries consulted (approximately 65), i.e. on other authors' research, which may, or may not, be up-to-date. There might be (and in fact there certainly are) many more regional and dialectal expressions that found their way into Italian, and are excluded both from Ferrara's dictionary, and possibly from the dictionaries he consulted. Not having carried out any fieldwork himself, his work is bound to be incomplete. Some entries are incomplete because the author does not provide a

list of variants, whether local or not. An example is the word *tamarro* (257): here the author provides a list of English and German bilingual dictionaries where the item is to be found, and a detailed list of possible translation into English and German, respectively. However, he does not provide a list of alternatives, such as *tarro* or *zarro* (the first is a very popular word, and is technically an abbreviation of *tamarro*. It was made even more popular by a 1996 hit by Italian rappers “Articolo 31” named “Funkytarro.” *Zarro* is an entry in the online urban dictionary<sup>5</sup> and is also dealt with by linguist Edgar Radkte in *La Lingua dei Giovani* (1993).<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere the author provides less common options in a lexical entry, such as for the word *bacheròzzo*, where he reports the following alternatives: *bacheròzzolo*, *bacaròzzo*, *bacaròzzolo*, *bagaròzzo*, *bagheròzzo*. Another example is the entry *marchettaro* (204): the word is from the area of Rome,<sup>7</sup> and is translated as *male prostitute* or *bum-boy*. More recently a word with the same pronunciation but with a different spelling has started to be used to describe people working in the marketing sector. The word spelled as *markettaro* (same pronunciation) is more likely a calque from the English *marketer*, but it is sometimes used ironically to refer to marketers, exploiting the natural association of the Italian speaker with *marchettaro*, and male prostitution. Whether there is an actual link between the neologism *markettaro* and the Roman word *marchettaro* I do not know, but given that some people ironically consider it as a variant of *marchettaro* to be used in a specific context, I think it could be worth a mention.

Secondly, there seems to be some sort of censorship. Some dialectal and regional expressions related to the semantics of sex are not to be found. An example is the word *trombare*: originally in Tuscany the word meant “to move liquids,” and is now used with the connotation of “to have sex” (again in Tuscany, *il trombaio*, the noun derived from the verb, is the plumber; and in the Milanese dialect the word for plumber is *il trumbée*, which clearly shares the same root). The lexical item *trombare* is not an entry in Ferrara’s dictionary, despite being a very common term. In the list of monolingual dictionaries consulted, the author mentions the *Vocabolario Treccani*;<sup>8</sup> however, in the online version the entry is present.<sup>9</sup>

Thirdly, in chapter one the author reflects on the translation of regional expressions and claims that, if possible, it would be better to translate an idiomatic expression with just one word, even if only partially correspondent. He then states that it is not advisable to use a gloss (i.e. either a footnote or an entry in a glossary), and that in novel translation, it would be good practice to first explain the lexical item with a gloss, and then to provide the reader with just one translated item. From the perspective of Translation Studies, I argue that such evaluation should be made on a case-by-case basis, and generalisations on such a broad and debated topic cannot be made in a two-

page introduction to a list of lexical items.

All these critical remarks aside, Ferrara's text, to his credit, attempts the massive task of providing the reader and the translator with a thorough dictionary of Italian dialectal, regional, and local expressions and idioms. Ferrara's dictionary can be a useful tool for both the lay reader and the translator alike.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> F. Cavallaro, *Transgenerational Language Shift: From Sicilian and Italian to Australian English* (Melbourne: The Italian Australian Institute, La Trobe University, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Gaetano Berruto, *Sociolinguistica dell'italiano contemporaneo* (Roma: La Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> R. Benatti, and A.T. Tarantini, "The Evaluation of Italian Dialects by Second and Third-Generation Italian Migrants in Australia" (paper presentation at the 7th LASC Annual Roundtable, *How cultural context shapes the production and (mis)interpretation of language*, Monash University, November 19–20, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Ferrara, cover jacket to *Dialettismi Italiani*. My translation and my emphasis.

<sup>5</sup> *Urban Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Zarro" by user Smack77, published August 12, 2009, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Zarro>.

<sup>6</sup> E. Radtke, *La lingua dei giovani* (Tübingen: Narr, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> I will not get into the debate of whether *Romanesco* is a regional variety or a dialect, since it goes beyond the scope of the present article.

<sup>8</sup> A. Duro, *Il Vocabolario Treccani*, vol. 5 (1985; repr. Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> *Vocabolario Treccani*, s.v. "Trombare," accessed January 19, 2016, <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/tag/trombare/>.