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English Use in Italian Contexts: A Digital Ethnographic Study of Language Ideological Discourses

Antonella Gazzardi
University of South Florida

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English Use in Italian Contexts:
A Digital Ethnographic Study of Language Ideological Discourses

by

Antonella Gazzardi

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of World Languages
College of Arts & Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Camilla Vásquez, Ph.D.
Wei Zhu, Ph.D.
Brandon Tullock, Ph.D.
Amanda Huensch, Ph.D.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents: to my late dad, Angelo Gazzardi, and to my mom, Agnese Garavaglia, who inspired this long, fulfilling journey, and who have supported me unconditionally all along.

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ABSTRACT

Language ideologies are systems of beliefs about languages. Naturalized as “common sense,” they are widespread and significantly influence social, discursive, and linguistic practices. Language ideologies are expressed and circulated in a wide range of media formats, including social media, where lay people and experts alike share their opinions and beliefs. One “language problem” they debate about is the use of English in otherwise Italian contexts that is (mostly) deemed unnecessary (referred to as *Italenglish*). By applying a citizen sociolinguistic lens (Rymes & Leone, 2014), and by adding an ethnographic component to the critical discourse analysis of digital data (Fairclough, 2013), this dissertation contributes to shed light on the multiplicity of language ideologies (Kroskrity, 2010) that are circulated online about *Italenglish*, exploiting the connectivity and participatory culture that social media afford (Rymes & Leone, 2014). The study explores both linguistic practices and language about language use (Woolard, 2008), produced by groups engaged in the *Italenglish* debate.

To investigate the latter, my dissertation was designed as a longitudinal observation and an in-depth analysis of social interactions on three social media platforms: YouTube comments on a 2015 TED Talk on *Italenglish*; posts on a Facebook page devoted to defending Italian from Anglicization; and emails to *Italians*, an online forum in the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. To these data analyses, an important ethnographic dimension was added, i.e., interviews with public figures and key individuals from each context: Annamaria Testa, author of the TED Talk, Facebook group moderator Giuseppina Solinas, and *Italians* moderator Beppe Severgnini.

This study joins the relatively limited conversation on language ideologies in digital spaces. It shows that some specific code-mixing practices are condemned more than others, i.e., they are stigmatized more because they seem to index lack of knowledge of English, thus pointing at potential linguistic insecurity. On the one hand, the study also reveals that there are more language ideological similarities than differences between experts and lay people in the online discourse. On the other, it draws attention to the benefit of an ethnographic dimension of language ideological research, since interviews allowed for a more enhanced understanding of experts' sociolinguistic sophistication. Lastly, this study identifies three language ideologies that are, to the best of my knowledge, unique. These ideologies are: inferiority complex ideology; complaint ideology; and obfuscation ideology. These also tend to co-occur with statements implying linguistic insecurity, which seems characteristic of the digital platform users in this study.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Annamaria Testa, a communication expert who defines herself a “blogger,” a “copy-writer,” and a “saggista” (“essayist”) on her website, stood in front of an Italian audience speaking from a prestigious TED Talk stage, pleading with her audience to defend the beauty of the Italian language from the “rising tide” of a “provincial, unjustified, [and] often unclear mixture of Italian and English words.” Emphasizing Italians’ apparent provincialism that allegedly affects all ages, social classes, and professions alike, she called it a “short-circuit between two languages” and nothing less than “contamination”: something that too often happens out of “laziness or distraction or conformism.” She called it “second-rate wink[ing]” done to “sound modern,” and she claimed that this is not only “unnecessary” and “pointless,” but it is also threatening the “most romantic language in the world,” whose “evocative, musical” words should be “defended [and] preserved.” She supported her argument with a few exemplifying episodes. One consisted in showing several Italian advertisements of food and wine-related events, asking rhetorically: “Why do we use Anglicisms like *food* and *wine* instead of *cibo* and *vino* when advertising an event or a product, in Milan, Tuscany, and Sicily alike?”.

Even more puzzling, she implied, is that when Americans need to advertise “Italian Wine Week” at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City, they use the word *vino* and not *wine*, and that “fancy restaurants” in the same city have Italian names with the word *vino* in it. What she implied with this point is twofold: first of all, that some sort of respect for the language, (or for the product “Italian wine” at least), would justify the use of the word *vino*. More important, and

something she would reiterate three years later in one of her blog articles, is her claim that Italian is used for its appeal and for its evocative power too. She would later say that “in the United States ... all that wants to be perceived as attractive, tasteful, fashionable, elegant (and pricey), is given Italian names (or names that are meant to sound Italian)” (Testa, 2018). She would also add that this happens because Americans are “seduced by our language” (Testa, 2018). So it would seem that linguistic behaviors are not neutral, and standards are not univocal, nor universally applicable: Italian seduces foreigners by virtue of its beauty and makes everything instantly sound “attractive” and “elegant,” yet in contrast, Testa argues that Italians are provincial and lazy, guilty of “linguistic shabbiness” if they use English to sound cool and modern (Testa, 2018), or to make something sound less threatening.

In fact, Testa made another point in her TED Talk: that giving something an unnecessary English name is also often done by the government to coat a bitter pill. For example, with financial measures that are likely to be unpopular and be met with resistance, which was the case of the 2014 controversial labor market reform named *Jobs Act*. As she presented this example, she pointed out that the pronunciation of the phrase by TV newscasters, *Giobàtt*, is “something that does not exist in nature.” However, as some commentators on her video later pointed out, she used the word *speaker* to address these individuals, instead of any of the Italian words she could have used, i.e., *conduttore* or *mezzobusto* or *telecronista*. A foreign word is not needed to fill a lexical gap here, nor is it preferable for concision reasons to its Italian counterparts, so, to some it would seem that, perhaps unwittingly, Testa herself engages in the very same habit she is denouncing: a “pointless” and “unjustified” use of Anglicisms. Additionally, she used the word *speaker* meaning *broadcaster*, *reporter*, *anchorperson*, which is a case of semantic shift, more precisely of semantic narrowing (Onysko & Winter-Froemel, 2011), i.e., the use of a foreign

word that is not used the same way by L1 speakers. It could be argued that she fell victim to the same “collapse” of Italian and English she calls “senseless.” In other words, Testa was critiquing certain linguistic practices but engaging in them at the same time, arguably without realizing it. This TED Talk was uploaded on YouTube shortly after it was held in Milan, in 2015, and it has received over 1,100 comments in the last seven years. In fact, to this day (December 2022), people continue to comment on it, which tells us that the topic is still very current, and that the debate is as lively as ever. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, the vast majority of YouTubers agrees with Testa and her beliefs about language, while a minority points out contradictions like the one just described, questions her authority in the matter on different grounds, and/or counters her claims by appealing to basic sociolinguistic facts such as language change and language globalization.

This narrative vignette exemplifies several underlying language ideological tensions, which many people seem to be unaware of. Very common in discourses such as Testa’s and in YouTube users’ comments is the (mistaken) belief that Italians are the only ones engaged in this battle with English, while other people love their language, their identity, and their country more than Italians do. In other words, a common sentiment is that *Itanglese (Italenglish)* is a deplorable hybridization with English that only happens to the Italian language, or, at the very least, to no other language as much as it does to Italian. In reality, this kind of sensitivity to the supposed contamination of languages with English is not only widespread, well beyond Italian borders, but also quite long-standing. For example, the French have been discussing the hybridization of their own language into what is called *Français* for decades, and the Spanish have been calling the spread of English “a plague” since the 1950s (Mallo, 1954; Phillips, 2007; Schmidt & Diemer, 2015). Likewise, Greek linguists have been complaining about Greek being

deluged by English terms, despite the longevity, the lexical richness, and the prestigious history of their language, and, more in particular, they have been complaining about what is called *Greenglish*, i.e., Greek written with English letters, introduced with the arrival of the internet (Smith, 2021). *Greenglish* as an “unofficial e-language” emerged relatively recently, and it is similarly seen as a “deplored phenomenon” that has “sparked alarm,” and that has only been growing faster because of the Covid-19 pandemic and its related English vocabulary (Smith, 2021).

Debates about language contamination in Italy have, for decades, involved academics and lay people; they are currently being played out in the mass media and on social media; and they seem to be rooted in two fundamental cultural beliefs. One is the need to uphold linguistic purity on the one hand, which tends to overlook both the sociolinguistic complexity of Italian and the inevitability of language change, while feeding on the fear of losing one’s national linguistic identity. The other is the belief in one’s own linguistic exceptionalism, understood as a sort of innate, ancestral linguistic beauty and wholesomeness that the use of foreign words can only scar.

My interests in this phenomenon are twofold. I am Italian and am therefore involved in the debate, but more importantly, I am a sociolinguist who understands this phenomenon as part of late-modern globalization, and my training has enabled me to identify the tensions at play when non-linguists discuss this kind of linguistic issues. Put differently, my interest in this topic is fueled by my subjective involvement as a multilingual speaker of Italian and English, whose etic perspective as a sociolinguist adds to my emic perspective as an Italian. The former allows me to see things from a different point of view from people without any sociolinguistic training. It enables me to detect underlying conflicts that may go unnoticed to in-group members. An etic

perspective, i.e., that of an “[outsider] to the culture who use[s] [her] own criteria to explain the others’ culture” (Moran, 2001, p. 80), adds to the emic one of a member of a larger community: L1 speakers of Italian who were born and raised in Italy.

The liveliness of the ongoing public debate revolving around this kind of supposed language problem have led me to investigate online discourses tied to language ideologies. In particular, I will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What instances of English language use are Italian internet users complaining about (e.g., false loans versus direct ones)? In which social contexts do they occur, and what categories of people are using language that way?
 - 1a. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?
2. Who is doing the complaining about uncalled-for uses of English? Are they experts or lay people?
 - 2a. How do both experts and lay people establish their language authority when discussing these matters? What kind of language do they use when trying to demonstrate/perform their expertise?
 - 2b. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?
3. What language ideologies are revealed by the online discourse about uses of English in predominantly Italian contexts? What, if any, counter discourses (i.e. sociolinguistic facts/arguments) are raised by users about these same issues?
 - 3a. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?
 - 3b. Are there any differences in this regard between experts and lay people?

To attempt to answer these questions, this study was designed as an online ethnography: a sustained, long-term, direct observation and in-depth examination of “the culture and social

interactions of particular group[s]” in their “natural setting” (Lichtman, 2013, p. 72). The groups in question comprise public figures and lay people engaged in the English-in-Italian debate on social platforms that are fully or partially devoted to it, and my goal is to “understand their behavior” and its underlying meanings in “terms of a larger context”(Lichtman, 2013, p. 75). What Guba and Lincoln (1982) call “persistent observation” is necessary to gain a “high degree of acquaintance with and understanding of pervasive qualities and salient characteristics” (p. 247) of a particular group, of which a “thick description” is provided, i.e., enough information about its context, to provide “experience of it” (p. 248).

The aforementioned natural settings where data are for this study were collected are social media platforms: 1) YouTube, with comments on the TED Talk by Testa, including the Talk itself; 2) a Facebook page devoted to the preservation of the Italian language from Anglicization, and 3) a blog/forum in the online version of the most prestigious Italian newspaper (the *Corriere della Sera*), called *Italians*. These are loci of ideological activities, each one with different affordances, where the aforementioned “language problem” is debated, and where participants’ comments support or contradict more or less widespread language ideologies. This ethnographic work was carried out taking multiple steps. First, a twelve-month period (March 2020 -2021) of data collection in the form of participant observation field notes on all three platforms involved noticing trends and patterns, while making hypotheses about different language ideologies, apparent paradoxes, and authority claim strategies. Alongside, and for the same period of time, a collection of multimodal data (TED Talk video and transcript, comments, posts, emails, etc.) that more or less explicitly address the latter: e.g., TED Talk commentators claiming it was about time somebody finally talked about Italian endangerment, ignoring the global picture as well as the longevity of the worldwide debate.

The latter data underwent an analysis from a critical perspective, since the focus of the study is not just on language per se, but on language in use, and on other social factors, i.e., power relations, ideologies, authority claims, social identities, etc. (Fairclough, 2013). More specifically, this study focuses on how certain discourse features and structures can be used to influence people's minds, their knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies, and eventually their actions (van Dijk, 2015). In fact, recipients of public discourse tend to accept the knowledge and opinions of people they perceive as authoritative and trustworthy in a given context (van Dijk, 2015), when they themselves may lack the knowledge needed to challenge the discourse they are exposed to (van Dijk, 2015). For example, lay people may seek the opinion of a well-known journalist on English usages, in the case of Severgnini, the moderator of the blog/forum *Italians*, one of the three data sources. In fact, Severgnini works for a prestigious newspaper, he spent years as a columnist for the *Economist* first and the *New York Times* afterwards, and he has held “a parallel career in Italian and English ... for the last thirty years” (Severgnini). In other words, the focus in this study is on discourses that are “actively used by individuals in their conscious engagement with ideology, experience, and social organization” (Fowler, 1981, p.199): discourses that reflect and shape social order on the one hand, and individual interactions with society on the other (Jaworski & Coupland, 2014).

These discourses are generated and circulated not only by language experts and/or professionals, but also by regular people, since people in general are quite aware of the way they and others speak (Rymes, 2010), and they engage in sociolinguistic exploration whenever they share information about the social meaning of language. When they do so, for example on social media debating the (over)use of English and *Italenglish*, they are doing what Rymes and Leone (2014) refer to as “citizen sociolinguistics.” Hence, the study also applies a citizen

sociolinguistic lens that is essential to understand the role of new media in sociolinguistic inquiries, including the issue of “connectivity and participatory culture” and, as importantly, the need for a new sociolinguistic methodology that comprises and engages in the “social demands and affordances of massive mobility and connectivity” in the 21st century (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 27). For example, conscious of their communicative repertoires, and claiming enough authority to do so, lay people comment on English use in otherwise Italian contexts and interact with each other, reply to each other, offer opinions and counter discourses etc., displaying a large amount of impressions about language, and spreading their ideologies and beliefs on Facebook or YouTube or *Italians*, i.e., discourses that are equally valid that are circulated in a way that a few decades ago was impossible.

Lastly, after analyzing the discourse data, I conducted interviews with key individuals from the three online communities, such as platform moderators or public speakers. I conducted “empathic” and “non-adversarial” (Roulston, 2010a, p. 19) semi-structured interviews, with a limited set of questions on which our conversation built quite freely (see Appendix B for questions). In the present study, interviews were used to have language experts, either self-appointed or appointed by others, reflect critically on their ideologies and beliefs, while discussing patterns of linguistic and ideological behavior, expanding on what data collected on digital platforms (e.g., YouTube comments, Facebook posts, emails to *Italians*, etc.) managed to tell. These language experts are: the author of the TED Talk and communication expert Annamaria Testa; the moderator of the Facebook page “*Viva l’Italiano, Abbasso l’Itanglese*” (Hooray for Italian, Down with Italenglish), Giuseppina Solinas; and the aforementioned moderator of *Italians*, journalist Beppe Severgnini. This way, naturally occurring discourse produced online is supplemented with additional data elicited from the discourse producers

themselves. To yield a picture as broad as possible, such triangulation of sources is key: a “variety of data sources,” “different perspectives,” and “different methods” that need to be “pitted against one another to cross-check data and interpretation” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). Interviews are also vital to establish internal validity: the verisimilitude between the data of inquiry and the phenomena they represent (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Since language ideologies are realities in people’s minds, “idiosyncratic constructions that vary from individual to individual” and to different degrees, it is advisable that researchers ask people “whether their realities have been represented,” or interpreted, “appropriately” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 246).

Language ideologies have been vastly researched since the early 90s, and researchers have investigated underlying tensions of different kinds, both offline and online, as the following Chapter Two will show. The study observes language ideologies in metalinguistic discourses about English in Italian on social media, involving both lay people and public figures like communication experts and journalists, by tapping into data afforded by different platforms, with different dynamics, and with different participants, which will be described in Chapter Three. The study, however, more specifically teases out the various language ideologies that are produced, reproduced, and circulated online by language experts and by lay people alike. Furthermore, it focuses not only on underlying language ideologies, the awareness measure of which varies across platforms and across categories of people, but it also investigates sociolinguistic counter discourses, differently supported by more or less explicit authority claims, highlighting what is arguably unique to the English-in-Italian controversy.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I first broadly introduce the notion of language ideology and describe its development into its own area of inquiry, to then attempt an exhaustive definition of what it is and does. Next, I address language ideology-related constructs and methodological approaches. Subsequently, I delve into research literature on language ideologies, focusing on ideologies examined both in the traditional and digital media. Afterwards, I first describe online ethnography, since the present study combines an ethnographic perspective with critical discourse analysis, and then I focus on an ethnographic approach in language ideology research more specifically.

Language Ideology: The Beginning

Language ideology is a “troublesome concept” (Woolard, 1992, p. 236) that scholars have been trying to define for over a century across disciplines, changing presuppositions and perspectives. Language ideology used to be considered relevant only from a language structure point of view, discussed only within the scope of maintenance or loss of specific language varieties, if it wasn’t outright dismissed as an “unfortunate distractor from primary and thus “‘real’ linguistic data” (Woolard, 1992, p. 239). In other words, “in the anthropological study of language” (Woolard, 1992, p. 239), the general feeling was that any metalinguistic discussions were not really linguistic topics worthy of analytic attention. Linguistics in the Bloomfieldian tradition framed language ideology as a “detour of little relevance to the explanation of the

structure of ‘normal’ language,” assuming that language ideology had little significant – if not pernicious – effect on speech forms (Bloomfield, 1933, in Woolard, 1998, p. 11).

However, over time, the social context of communication became regarded as an increasingly important, necessary aspect of linguistic analysis, so discussions of language ideology gradually became “central to accounts of language produced from various perspectives” (Woolard, 1992, p. 240). Relatively recently, scholars have thus moved away from understanding it as what Woolard (1992) called an epiphenomenon, i.e. a secondary symptom, or a byproduct of linguistic practices that arises from a process without casually influencing it, which seemed to be the shared understanding in the first half of the 20th century. Quite antithetically, in the last four decades, scholars have been considering language ideologies a crucial link between “social structures and forms of talk” (Woolard, 1992, p. 235) rather than a negligible overlay of responses to language (Boas, 1911; Bloomfield, 1944). This is why linguistic anthropologists have been empirically examining language ideologies more than before (Woolard, 1992). The generally shared starting point has been the premise that language ideology “stands in dialectical relation with, and thus significantly *influences* social, discursive, and linguistic practices” (Woolard, 1992, p. 235, emphasis added). Besides analyzing strictly linguistic data, in contrast to the structuralist tradition, it has become apparent to many researchers that it is also important for language ideology inquiry to explore “the nature and purpose of communication” (Silverstein, 1987, in Woolard, 1992, p. 235). For example, analyses of processes of linguistic standardization (Milroy & Milroy, 1985) or studies of language politics (Silverstein, 1987) investigated the content and structure of language ideologies “not as the background to the investigation but as a central topic” (Woolard, 1992, p. 240).

Defining Language Ideology

The first attempt to “give form to an area of inquiry” (Woolard, 1992, p. 235) and to “give it some coordination” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 56) dates back to the 1980s. That is when language ideologies emerged as a subfield with roots in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, as an umbrella term (Woolard, 1992) encompassing prior concepts concerned with cultural conceptions of the nature of language. Up to then, what we now call the language ideology umbrella comprised a plethora of studies that asked different questions about language: Silverstein’s *linguistic ideology* (1979, 1985), Kroch and Small’s (1978) *grammatical ideology*, and Joseph & Taylor’s (1990) *ideology of language*, as well as *ideologies of standardization* (Milroy & Milroy, 1985) and *purist ideology* (Hill & Hill, 1980), later discussed more in detail. However, despite the differences among these areas of inquiry, they all revolved around the “cultural conceptions of the nature of language” (Woolard, 1992, p. 236), investigated under the guise of metalinguistics, folk linguistics, attitudes, beliefs, norms, stigmatization, prestige, hegemony, or standards, among others. When the need arose of coordination “under whatever name” (Woolard, 1992, p. 236), of a bridge between work on language structure and language politics, and between linguistic and social theory, the term ‘ideology’ was chosen as the “umbrella among which to gather” (Woolard, 1992, p. 236) for different reasons. It had been turning up with increasing frequency by the early ‘90s, as the abovementioned research studies confirm, and researchers adopted it because, despite intellectual divides, it underscores the “social origin of thought” in almost all its uses (Eagelton, 1991, in Woolard, 1992, p. 237). For all those who contributed to the growth of this subdiscipline, the hope was that “framing linguistic ideology as an area of inquiry would allow all the nodes to be connected and all the

links to be examined” (Woolard, 2008, p. 436): between linguistic form, ideologies of forms in use, to social forms, and the other way around (Woolard, 2008).

Before addressing the areas of overlap and differences between language ideology and other similar constructs, it is necessary to address different definitions and operationalizations of language ideology itself, which may overlap and differ as well. Also, it is useful to name some recurring features of “ideology” in general, that is, of “widely shared beliefs and assumptions about the world” (Milroy, 2014, p. 244) that are very much applicable to language ideology in particular, as scholars’ definitions of the latter will show. These are: 1) Ideology is conceptual. It is “derived from and rooted in” the interests of a particular social position (Woolard, 1992, p. 237), though these are often depicted as being universal. 2) It can have a negative connotation of “distortion ... or rationalization” (p. 238). 3) It is tightly connected to social power and its legitimization.

The topic of language ideology is a “much needed bridge between linguistic and social theory” relating micro phenomena like everyday communication to macro realities like power dynamics and socioeconomic inequality, “confronting macrosocial constraints of language behavior” (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994, p. 72). A grasp of linguistic ideology is fundamental to understanding social life and the meaning of people’s interactions with language (Woolard, 2008), and studies on language ideology range from approaching it as unconscious and implicit to approaching it as an at least partially, if not fully, conscious behavior (Woolard, 1992).

Gal and Irvine’s (1995) work on language ideology, for example, builds on the work of earlier generations of sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists like Gumperz and Hymes (1964, 1972), who shifted their focus on the up-to-then “much neglected problem of the social embeddedness of language” (p. 970). Building on the latter, Gal and Irvine (1995) investigate the

social construction of linguistic contrast directly tied to, and dependent on, the beliefs about social and linguistic difference “held by socially positioned speakers” (p. 970) specifically. Thus, Gal and Irvine (1995) point at the ideological aspects of linguistic differentiation: participants in power mold their understanding of the nature and differences among linguistic varieties on specific ideas, and “map these understandings onto people, events, and activities, that are significant to them” (p. 970). Gal and Irvine (1995) call these conceptual framings “*ideologies*” because they “are suffused with political and moral issues” tied to a specific sociolinguistic reality, and because they “are subject to the interests of their bearers’ social position” (p. 970, emphasis in original). For example, groups of people in power decide what variety of a language must be the standard, the supposed correct and better one, and those who speak different varieties, because they speak them, are considered less educated, hence socially inferior, which has repercussions on the social resources they have access to, and consequently reinforces the former groups’ gatekeeping power.

There is therefore a link between linguistic forms and the social groups who use them, to the point that linguistic forms *index* social groups: utilizing specific linguistic forms indexes one’s social identity and the activities he or she engages in. Indexicality refers to the fact that certain linguistic items, or even whole languages, are associated with certain social characteristics, so that an accent, a phrase, or a variety of language can be taken to index smartness or lack of education, superiority or inferiority, foreignness or standardness. In this sense, “no utterance is ever neutral: on the contrary, it always indexes some characteristic of the speaker” (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p.236). Also, indexicality is highly dependent on context, and it varies with it. In fact, “indexical links are created in the context of already available models of what meanings are possible, and what kinds of forms can index them” (Johnstone,

2016, p. 633). For instance, in the presence of two linguistic variants, people often hear one as ‘correct’ and the other as ‘incorrect’ (Johnstone, 2016), depending on context: for example, in a UK-based grammar school, standard American English is likely to be perceived differently than in an American context where the prevalent variety is African-American English (AAE). These linguistic indices are thus often rationalized, “creating language ideologies that [aim] to explain the source and meaning of [those] linguistic differences” (Gal & Irvine, 1995, p. 973). People’s ideologies about language are the direct result of this rationalizing process: ideologies situate linguistic phenomena as “evidence for ... the systematic behavioral, aesthetic, affective, and moral contrasts among the social groups indexed” (Gal & Irvine, 1995, p. 973). As such, ideologies come loaded with the political interests of those who situate them (Irvine, 1989), as the aforementioned example of standard versus non-standard variety and power hierarchies illustrates.

It is important to point out the difference between rationalizing linguistic differences, which process ideologies underlie (e.g., one speaks a specific way because of his or her social extraction), and the extreme resistance of ideologies themselves to rationale debate (Milroy, 2014). The beliefs and assumptions that constitute ideologies are “treated as if they were obvious facts, [as if they were] common sense” (Milroy, 2014, p. 244) that is never questioned and does not need to be explained. It must also be added that ideologies of this kind are never, so to say, accidental, but serve the agenda of dominant groups by “misinterpretation” of “non-dominant” ones (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 64). In other words, dominant groups depict non-dominant group varieties as ‘less than’ the “abstracted, homogeneous language” imposed by institutions and spoken primarily by the upper middle class (Lippi-Green, 1997, p. 64), a conjectural variety whose supposed objective superiority is taken for granted.

Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) understand language ideology along the same lines as Gal and Irvine (1995): they define it as the link between “social structures and forms of talk” (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994p. 55), emphasizing that ideologies of language are socially and linguistically significant because they are not just about language. Echoing Gal and Irvine (1995), Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) claim that such ideologies “envision and enact links of language to group and personal identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and epistemology” (p. 55-6). A lot hinges on language ideology, which plays an active, central role in everyday life: the role specific groups believe language plays in their social experiences, social groups’ cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, and the moral and political interests all of the latter is imbued with (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994). If ideologies link language varieties to social groups, they also create boundaries among those varieties (and groups): so language boundaries are not natural but at least partially depending on human practices. Likewise, the interpretation and rationalization, not to mention the exaggeration, of certain linguistic practices creates the linguistic differentiations Gal and Irvine (1995) talk about: not a natural phenomenon, but one depending on socio-political forces. For example, in a Southern Hungarian village, until at least World War II, there existed a local dichotomy between two categories of families, craftsmen and farmers, whose forms of address, phonology, and syntax were as different and depended directly on what category people belonged to (Gal and Irvine, 1995). These linguistic varieties were emblematic of the underlying cultural and social distinction between these two groups, which was “recursively projected onto individuals and situations within each group in the village” (Gal and Irvine, 1995, p. 977): not a natural phenomenon, but a speech style expected from and performed by a member of each category.

Kroskrity's (2010, 2019) definition of language ideologies follows what Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) as well as Gal and Irvine (1995) argued. According to Kroskrity (2010), language ideologies are "beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use, which often index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation-states" (p. 192). He however points out that it is important to recognize the multiplicity of language ideologies, their being representative of a collective order: hence, the use of the plural form, *ideologies*, instead of the singular *ideology*. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) use ideology and ideologies interchangeably, instead, arguing that "the fit of terms to distinctive perspectives is not perfect" (p. 56), while Gal and Irvine (1995) prefer to stick to the singular form.

More in detail, Kroskrity (2010) adds that language ideology is a "cluster concept, consisting of a number of divergent dimensions," layers of significance that partially overlap, but need to be distinguished in order to analyze language ideologies as "beliefs about language" (Kroskrity 2010, p. 195). One is positionality. Language ideologies represent a view of language and discourse shaped in the "interest of a specific cultural or social group" (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 195), whose members' notions of what is "true" and "morally good" about language and discourse are tied to political-economic interests, besides being rooted in social experience (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 195). Such social experience is never homogeneously distributed throughout polities (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 197), a point that ties into the second dimension too, discussed next. These members' notions are the backbone of attempts to use language as a means to protect and promote those interests, besides legitimizing them (Kroskrity, 2010). This proposition clashes against the myth of the "disinterested language user" (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 195) or the possibility of "unpositioned linguistic knowledge" (Kroskrity, 2019, p. 98).

The second is multiplicity. Language ideologies are “conceived as multiple because of the plurality of social divisions” such as gender, class, and generations etc., “within socio-cultural groups” (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 197). Looking at language ideologies as naturally multiple shifts our attention to their potential conflict (Kroskrity, 2004, p. 503), and to the contention and contestation they can become object of, since they are context-bound attempts to rationalize language use (Kroskrity, 2010). The clash among divergent ideological perspectives on language can, of course, result in a variety of outcomes (Kroskrity, 2004). Thus, it becomes a challenge to understand the historical processes set in motion by specific groups to have their ideologies become the taken-for-granted “hegemonic forces of cultural life for a larger society” (Blommaert, 1999, in Kroskrity, 2004, p. 503). On the other hand, multiplicity is also key when applied to the study of the internal diversity that drives language change (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 197).

The third dimension is awareness. As Kroskrity (2010) explains, “members may display varying degrees of awareness of local language ideologies” (p. 198). Silverstein (1979) was the first to emphasize that linguists need to recognize speakers’ (at least) partial awareness of their language practices, their varying degrees of consciousness “of their own rule-guided activities” (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 198). While both language ideology and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA, discussed later) attempt to connect language with power and social inequality, only language ideology emphasizes awareness (Kroskrity, 2019). In addition, scholarship on language ideology differentiates itself from CDA in other ways, i.e., the recognition of the multiplicity of ideologies and the use of ethnographic methods. The theoretical notion of language ideologies problematizes people’s awareness in two ways: their awareness of their language practice, as well as their eco-political “positionality in shaping their beliefs ... and evaluations of linguistic

forms and discursive practices” (2019, p. 96). Awareness is also the keystone of a powerful, less neutral definition of ideology, according to which the concept of language ideology “is the final *rejection* of an *innocent*, behavioral account of language” (Coupland & Jarowski, 2004, in Kroskrity, 2019, p. 102, emphasis added): the recognition that common people rationalize their language, they attend to their way of speaking, and when they do so, they take the first step towards changing it (Kroskrity, 2019).

These dimensions can be exemplified utilizing data for this study, whose purpose is to explore the ideologies and attitudes of Italian public figures, who work with language without being linguists, towards the pervasive use of English in Italian, as well as lay people’s reactions to those ideologies and discourse. For instance, as the opening vignette shows, data indicate that some of the aforementioned “language workers” take it upon themselves to determine what is “true” and “morally good” about language and its preservation (Kroskrity, 2010, p. 195), based on their day-to-day experience with the supposed (over)use of English in the Italian media. In doing so, they arguably promote the interests of those who work with Italian language like they do, while voicing their apparent distaste for what they seem to perceive as subordination both to the superpower of English and to the cultural and economic power of the Anglophone world (positionality). These attitudes clash with the reality of the increasingly widespread, and likely unstoppable, use of English in multiple realms. The latter points to multiple language ideologies and very different degrees of resistance to, or acceptance, of this phenomenon (multiplicity). Additionally, it must be pointed out that these language professionals may at times blame their own colleagues too (journalists), not just lay people in general, because of their abundant use of English, distancing themselves from the apparent shortcomings of others. Language workers’ outspokenness in this sense juxtaposes itself to others’ intentional (over)use of English, which

suggests different degrees of awareness “of their own rule-guided activities”(Kroskrity, 2010, p. 198), which ranges from discursive to practical.

Because language ideologies are rooted in social practices and interests in this sense, it is legitimate to ask whose interests they serve, taking the shape that they do in a given context. It is also legitimate to ask if and how they cause problems to those whose interests they do not serve – if they do not directly antagonize them. To analyze this last point, it is necessary to introduce language standardization ideology. Public approbation of standard language varieties and criticism towards non-standardness are commonplace, as it is the belief that “there is one and only one correct form of language” (Milroy, 2014, p. 235), and that the standardization process cleanses it of all impurities brought in by (unnecessary) variation, practices that Cameron (2012) refers to as “verbal hygiene”. In reality, this supposedly correct form of language is the one enforced by dominant groups whose needs and interests it promotes, at the expense of marginalized ones (Lippi-Green, 1997).

In other words, the language of the least politically and socially powerful social groups is branded as bad or sloppy. Such “legitimized discrimination” of non-standard varieties “provides a useful resource to gatekeepers who wish to restrict access to goods and influence” (Milroy, 2014, p. 245). The media, the courts, and the educational system promote standard language ideology, while at the same time hinging on it (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). This way, they perpetuate the idea that those who do not speak correctly, i.e. those who do not speak the standard variety of a language, are uneducated or ignorant, be they African Americans in the US or the working class in the UK. This is another way of denying marginalized social groups the chance to climb the social ladder controlled by dominant groups, who supposedly speak ‘the right way.’ What is probably most telling, as far as accepting standard language ideology as an

obvious fact, is that such discrimination on linguistic grounds is more or less publicly acceptable and accepted, whereas the analogous ethnic or racial discrimination is not (Milroy, 2014; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994).

To complicate matters even further, besides the (artificial) conflict between standard versus non-standard language, there is the issue of “the political *belonging* of a linguistic form ... [which] is not directly readable from linguistic practice” (Woolard, 2021, p. 16, emphasis added), but it must be understood in terms of the cultural and social realms it operates in at a given historical moment (Woolard, 2021). This kind of observation has been made in response to purist discourses, which “negatively sanction the perceived influence of other languages” on a given form of language that is supposedly “authentic and original” (Woolard, 2021, p. 16-17). These are purist ideology tenets that scholars were already familiar with, when they joined efforts to give life to a coordinated area of inquiry revolving around language ideology/ies at the start of the ‘90s (Woolard, 1992). Linguistic purism is often perceived as guarding the ethnolinguistic border between languages and between linguistic groups (Woolard, 2021). But in reality, research shows that purist discourses are withheld by members of a linguistic community against members of the same community, “in contention for control over cultural and material resources” yet again (Woolard, 2021, p. 17).

Linguistic purism is exemplified by the mission and work of language academies like the *Académie Française* (AF), the *Real Academia Española* (RAE), and the *Accademia della Crusca* (AdC), in France, Spain, and Italy respectively. The RAE, for example, is often seen as defending the authentic and original (Castilian) Spanish language against English-speaking imperialism: but at another level it is directed by one segment of peninsular Spanish elites (i.e., elites in Spain) against other segments (e.g., bilingual speakers in the US), ideally banned from

the linguistic community because of the way they speak, i.e. by their stigmatized varieties of post-colonial Spanish (Woolard, 2021). The Italian AdC seems to be fighting the same battle against English imperialism: but its members target mainly Italians who (over)use English, so members of their same community, whose linguistic boundaries they are trying to protect.

Woolard (2021) adds that purification can lead to reducing linguistic resources and to the loss of a language's registers, as they are de-authenticated by experts as contaminated. This way, against their supposedly best intentions, "purist ideologies can trigger the loss of the language that they seemingly mean to protect" (Woolard, 2021, p. 17).

A focus on ideologies allows us to relate micro phenomena like everyday communication actions to "political economic considerations of power and social inequality, to confront macrosocial constraints of language behavior, and to connect discourse with lived experiences" (Woolard, 1998, p. 27). For example, the daily, pervasive use of English in the Italian media brings about not only discourses revolving around English linguistic imperialism, but also debates about a supposed psychological subjection to the economic power of the Anglo-American world. Through the lens of language ideology, it is possible to explore the links forged between language varieties and social groups, and to see how they are themselves shaped by semiotic and social processes, while having consequences on linguistic and social life: all the nodes are thus connected and all the links are thus examined (Woolard, 2008).

Language Ideology-Related Constructs

As discussed earlier, by the time an effort was made to create an area of inquiry focusing on language ideology in the early '90s, the "cultural conceptions of the nature of language" (Woolard, 1992, p. 236) had been investigated under the guise of norms, prestige, hegemony, stigmatization, or standards among others. 'Linguistic' rather than 'language' ideology has

sometimes been used since then as a label, to emphasize the focus on formal linguistic structures rather than on representations of a collective order (Woolard, 1992, p. 235), since ‘language’ arguably calls more attention to the dimension of cognition that is socially-situated and experientially-derived (Woolard, 1992) rather than on the ‘form’, i.e. on actual linguistic facts. Additionally, other language ideology-related constructs have been utilized to research the same, or closely related, issues explored by language ideology scholarship. Also, sometimes ‘language ideology’ is utilized as an overarching label under which other constructs are listed, e.g., attitudes, so that sometimes those constructs and language ideology seem to be used rather interchangeably.

Attitudes and Beliefs

In general, language ideology and attitudes tend to be considered different things, since by ideology we have a tendency to mean a collective way of seeing things that makes sense on a large(r) scale, while attitudes are generally more individual outlooks on things, matters of singular preferences in regards to a specific issue or behavior. As anticipated, language ideology and attitudes are sometimes used seemingly interchangeably, but a closer reading of some definitions shows that, in fact, language ideologies are seen as “the sum,” so to say, of attitudes and beliefs. Put differently, language ideologies are more generalized ways of thinking, acting, and feeling, in this case as far as language-related issues, while attitudes are properties of individuals that seem always pointed at a more definite, particular object.

In her detailed explanation of language ideology issues and approaches, Woolard (1992) seems to use ‘language ideology,’ ‘beliefs,’ and ‘attitudes’ rather conjointly, while Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) define ‘language ideology’ as the “grounding of language beliefs” (p. 59). Kroskrity (2010, 2019) argues that language ideologies are “beliefs, feelings, and conceptions

about language” (2019, p. 95), so ‘beliefs’ and ‘conceptions’ are the components of language ideologies, a definition that echoes Woolard and Schieffelin’s (1994). Rather than using ‘beliefs’ or ‘attitudes’, Irvine (1989) defines language ideology as the “cultural or subcultural *system* of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, with their burden of moral and political interests” (p. 255, emphasis added). In this case as well, ideology is considered the ‘summation’ of those ideas.

Just like research on language ideology has been growing for the last few decades in fields like linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, the same can be said for research on “attitudes to language variation” specifically, across disciplines, to the point that “language attitude studies are now at the core of social psychology of language” (Giles & Billings, 2004, p. 202). In this area of inquiry, language attitudes are defined as the way in which “speaker’s language choices shape others’ impressions of them, impacting decision making processes in an array of critical social and applied arenas” (Giles & Billings, 2004, p. 187). The cornerstone of empirical studies on language attitudes, carried out between the 1960s and the 2000s, appears to be the very idea of social judgment, or better the “intersection between language, communication, and social judgement” (Giles & Billings, 2004, p. 188). The effect of language on social judgement is considered a crucial component of uncovering the “*communication process*” (Giles & Billings, 2004, p. 188, emphasis in the original), to the point that language attitudes are further explained as “a process of person perception” (p. 188).

But if social psychology of language treats these linguistic phenomena as if they were a matter of individual perception, linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics see them as a social process that links language issues to larger socio-political structures. Whereas social psychology has focused more on attitudes, the latter disciplines have engaged in a macro-discourse about the

collective social interests at stake, which is why different constructs have emerged from different research traditions. The present study frames language ideology in the linguistic anthropological and sociolinguistic sense: a system of ideas (Irvine, 1989), the crucial link between social structures and forms of talk (Woolard, 1992), or the mediating one between social structure and linguistic form (Woolard, 2008).

Metalinguistics

Metalinguistic activity is mostly reflexive activity that has to do with the appropriate use of language in a given context, i.e. it is intrinsically metapragmatic, as it involves “meta-level calculations regarding the pragmatics of the speech exchange” (Mertz & Ivoel, 2009, p. 254). The latter concept is a feature that metalinguistics has in common with language ideology, particularly with Errington’s (1985) pragmatic salience construct, i.e., speakers’ awareness of the social significance of different linguistic forms, which are linguistic mediators of social relations (Woolard, 2008). But language ideology goes deeper, so to say, while metalinguistics seems more limited because it neglects more subtle, behavior-oriented dimensions, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

If metalinguistics is the study of language and its relationship with other cultural behaviors, then it only partially overlaps with language ideology/ies construct/s, because it lacks the more focused ‘form and practice’ component of the latter. Additionally, language ideology studies can help explain linguistic form (Woolard, 2008) to a different degree: linguistic behaviors may be explained by investigating the ideology behind them, and a corollary to this is that “sociolinguistic change ... can grow from speakers’ consciousness and strategic performative use of specific linguistic forms” (Woolard, 2008, p. 438). Put it in a different way, language users are not passive; they “socially interpret the details of linguistic form” and attend

to them consequently, so that language ideology can motivate and direct not only language use but specific “linguistic changes” as well (Woolard, 2008, p. 438). For example, if the deliberate diphthongization of a vowel is socially motivated and means to distinguish between one’s membership in a community from foreignness, like in Labov’s 1963 Martha’s Vineyard study, when that social motivation fades, then internal linguistic change is no longer “dammed by [external] social forces,” and “further changes [affect] the patterning of the vowel,” now socially unconstrained, responding to linguistic conditions more widely shared (Woolard, 2008, p. 439-40).

Linguistic ideologies were conceived of as “embedded in material practice as much as in mental phenomena and explicit metalinguistic discourse” (Woolard, 2008, p. 437). Language ideology is “read” by researchers from a double point of view: from actual practice, and from speakers’ metalinguistic responses (Kroskrity, 2019), where actual practice is just as fundamental as responses. For example, Testa’s linguistic performance on the TED Talk stage is just as crucial as YouTubers’ responses to it. Recently, some linguistic anthropologists have been worrying about what seems to be a growing trend: an understanding of ideology primarily, if not only, as metalinguistic discourse, to the detriment of “attention to linguistic form and practice” (Woolard, 2008, p. 437) as exemplified by the aforementioned Labov’s study. The fear is that language ideology could drift towards a sole focus on discourses about language, rather than a joint one on linguistic practice as well. Put differently, the shared concern is that language ideology could flatten into a one-dimensional area of research, rather than keeping its three-dimensional focus on linguistic form, social use, and reflections on forms in use (Woolard, 2008). On the other hand, Woolard (2008) points out that Silverstein’s (2003) theory of orders of indexicality and Irvine and Gal’s (2000) iconization construct are, according to her, but two of

the numerous theoretical concepts of linguistic ideology that “help keep the reciprocal effects of linguistic ideology and form in focus” (Woolard, 2008, p. 437). In other words, these concepts, exemplified below, successfully manage to keep the balance between discourses about language on the one hand, and linguistic practice on the other.

Silverstein’s (2003) orders of indexicality refer to actors’ registering sociolinguistic associations (or indexical relations: e.g. class, gender, ethnicity) upon noticing, at the pre-ideological level of association (first order indexicality), “in the flow of social life and talk” (Woolard, 2008, p. 437), to then rationalize, naturalize, and ideologize (second level indexicality) the associations that they have registered (Woolard, 2008). For example, when French speakers address someone with a formal *Vous* instead of an informal *Tu*, they index the need to show deference to that person at first order of indexicality. When people rationalize or ideologize someone’s way of talking based, for example, on his or her heavy New York accent (Cutler, 2019), and think of attributes like lack of education or an easygoing nature indexed by that very accent, they rationalize at the second level of indexicality. Similarly, Irvine and Gal’s (2000) iconization refers to social actors’ treating linguistic signs as the natural realization of “images of the inherent nature of speakers”: in other words, speakers are taken to be the equivalent of “the way they sound, e.g., ... lazy, harsh, rational etc.” (Woolard, 2008, p. 437). Linguistic anthropologists have been cautioning against taking an excessively metalinguistic turn in language ideology that is fully engaged in discourses about language but that has lost sight of the “linguistic fact[s] of form” (Woolard, 2008, p. 437) like these. According to Woolard (2008), a return to a closer conversation with sociolinguistics would allow linguistic anthropology to remedy the problem, and create a newly found balance: between understanding the “social life and the full meaning of people’s interaction with language” and the “evolution of linguistic

structure as well” (p. 436), a commitment I share to consider actual linguistic facts, i.e., the form, as well as the discourses about them.

Citizen Sociolinguistics

A new media-based branch of sociolinguistics, citizen sociolinguistics (CSL) differs from language ideology per se, although there are overlapping aspects between the two. It also positions itself closer to addressing attitudes specifically, in that it concerns the evaluation of specific cases of language performance. Before getting to specific examples of this, it is however necessary to understand not only what this new methodology is, but also why we need it. It is equally important to highlight the main differences between CSL and folk linguistics, which will be discussed later in this section.

CSL is a relatively new approach that revolves around two basic facts: on the one hand, people have many different ways of speaking, and on the other, they tend to be well aware of the ways they and other people speak. In other words, they are aware of their and other people’s communicative repertoires (Rymes, 2010) without needing to be trained linguists. So when readers of a leading newspaper take a quiz to find out what dialect of a language they speak (*The New York Times*, 2013), and then they comment on the results on its website, they “share information about language and its social meaning” (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 26) from their own point of view.

When they publicly participate in this kind of sociolinguistic exploration, they are being citizen sociolinguists, that is “people who use their senses and intelligence to understand the world and language around them” (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 26): CSL is the study of those understandings. More in detail, doing CSL means exploring how features of language are perceived by language users themselves, how they “mark people socially,” and how avoiding

them or rejecting them “foregrounds class division” (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 27). To be precise, any person with or without sociolinguistic training can be a citizen sociolinguist: it suffices that he or she comments on the way language is being used. That the person in question is a professional sociolinguist does not mean that her citizen sociolinguistic work is better than, superior to, or more relevant than that of a layperson (Rymes & Leone, 2014). This is simply a relatively new way of “collecting and thinking about sociolinguistic data” (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 26).

The reasons for a new methodology that focuses on new media and on the observations of (mainly) lay people are multifold. These are: the need to understand what is considered language knowledge, and the related issue of language authenticity, not to mention the generalizability of these parameters; the need to understand the role of new media “in our sociolinguistic pursuits” including the issue of “connectivity and participatory culture” and, perhaps most importantly, the need for a new “sociolinguistic methodology that accounts for and partake of the social demands and affordances of massive mobility and connectivity” in the 21st century (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 27). The participatory nature of the platforms selected for this study as well as the massive connectivity they differently afford are what motivates their choice.

Regarding authenticity, the *New York Times* dialect quiz is based on the assumption that unmonitored speech exists: that speech that is intrinsically authentic, a “gut way of speaking” so to say, truly is out there, and that authenticity of language is objectively recognizable “rather than being socially situated” (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 27). Upholding this belief means not only upholding unmonitored speech as the most – if not the only – valuable object of inquiry, but it also means overlooking, or dismissing, other important language data: “the talk about talk” (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 29).

As far as massive mobility, connectivity, and participatory culture, we are currently able to observe and collect a vast amount of impressions about language thanks to internet-circulated social media. Since “the internet fosters social networks and newly diverse communicative strategies” (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 29), traditional sociolinguistic methods seem to need updating. Non-mobility and lack of language awareness are the exceptions rather than the rule, nowadays, and methodologies relying on them cannot capture massively relevant aspects of modern communication (Rymes & Leone, 2014). People, in fact, participate in the vast networks of language they are exposed to, “sharing, refining, and recirculating information” (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 30), thus acquiring an awareness of language diversity (Svendsen, 2018) that was hitherto unknown.

It is clear that crucial to this methodology is the inclusion of an emic, or insider’s, perspective when interpreting language in social life (Leone, 2014; Rymes, 2014; Svendsen 2018). This emic point of view underlying a citizen sociolinguistic approach echoes the tenets of folk linguistics, according to which the “empirical accuracy” of what people say about their linguistic knowledge and practice “is irrelevant” (Svendsen, 2018, p. 141). However, the difference between the two is that CSL presupposes “a trust of the provided data and knowledge of the citizen scientists”: this is its precondition, which makes citizen sociolinguistic knowledge pertinent to scientific research (Svendsen 2018, p. 141). On the contrary, folks linguistics sees citizen knowledge as merely a “window into ontology and ideology” (Svendsen, 2018, p. 141): this is the substantial difference between “*doing* sociolinguistic research” and the “metalinguistic comments” of folks linguistics (p. 141, emphasis in the original).

There are different components of CSL: engagement with language in use on the one hand, and attending to its socio-cultural features in discourses about that language on the other

(Rymes & Leone, 2014), which makes it a close relative of language ideology. In other words, potentially, CSL satisfies Woolard's – and others' – desideratum, in that it considers both language in use and metalinguistics. The fundamental difference between CSL and language ideology would be, to say it with Rymes and Leone (2014), that any person with or without sociolinguistic training can be a citizen sociolinguist. CSL relies exactly on what traditional sociolinguistic methodology has apparently overlooked: speakers' own awareness of their language and their conscious effort to manipulate it, which has often been disregarded in favor of the interpretations of their researchers (Rymes & Leone, 2014). With CSL methodology, comments by everyday language users on the way language is being used are presupposed trustful, (Svendsen 2018), and so is their linguistic sophistication, which has for decades been overlooked (Rymes & Leone, 2014). In sum, it is a new methodology conceived to meet the needs of a networked society who is aware of language use and whose communicative modes have dramatically changed and multiplied.

An example of citizen-sociolinguistic approach is Leone's (2014) analysis of a controversial case of Roman dialect usage, addressed on YouTube and on Facebook by citizen sociolinguists, that ties into the clash between the hegemonic ideology of standard language versus non-standard language. The study (Leone, 2014) not only exemplifies the "social value people put on language," or better on a local dialect, turned into metacommentary (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p. 29), but it also shows how CSL focuses on specific linguistic performance. It also exemplifies how CSL is the engagement of non-professionals doing sociolinguistic research (Svendsen, 2018) in an instance where the object of debate is the Roman dialect, or better a sub-variety of it. This analysis draws on social media users' metacommentary, as well as their recontextualization of a TV interview with two young women from the Roman province who,

interviewed by a newscast speaking standard Italian, reply speaking their local dialect (Leone, 2014).

Rather than focusing on static features of the Roman dialect, Leone's (2014) study analyzes the different ways citizen sociolinguists position themselves towards the linguistic features characteristic of these young women's way of speaking, and it explores the social value social media users ascribe to it. It must be noted that these linguistic elements are seen by commentators as "second order indices of particular types of Romanness" (Leone, 2014, p.86), not all Romanness: they ideologize and/or rationalize one's way of talking, and they attribute qualities to speakers that are indexed by that very way of talking. The Roman accent is in fact variably assessed depending on one's social position and linguistic experience, as the reactions to the girls' interview show.

Some citizen sociolinguists commenting on the interview define their "unorthodox way of speaking" as "naive, endearing, or simply amusing" (Leone, 2014, p.86), and some point out how a northern dialect would never have had such a bad treatment, which implies some kind of hierarchy of dialects depending on geographic provenance. Others point out that their use of *Romanaccio* (a pejorative name for the Roman dialect) is cause of 'moral panic' and "symptomatic" not only of Italy's but of Rome's decline too (Leone, 2014, p.86). In fact, it is not the Roman dialect in general that is being attacked, in this case, but the specific provincial, supposedly low-class repertoire of the two girls, defined by the city mayor as "lowlifes" because of the way they speak. Their repertoire, in turn, labels the two girls themselves as "rednecks," another word used by the mayor in "an attempt to defend his city's reputation" (Leone, 2014, p. 83), echoing Irvine and Gal's (2000) concept of iconization, while tying into the concept of language ideology multiplicity due to the plurality of social divisions, such as class (Kroskrity,

2010). On yet another level, other citizen sociolinguists take pride in their Roman dialect and constantly negotiate its validity against those who claim that it is “‘coarse’, ‘vulgar’ or otherwise illegitimate” (Leone, 2014, p. 101), and try to defend the girls’ way of speaking, which attests to the multiplicity of language ideologies.

Another important point needs to be made here. As Leone’s (2014) study exemplifies, what we can learn through CSL is “the nuanced value that people put on *certain* ways of speaking” (Rymes & Leone, 2014, p.39, emphasis added): not dialect in general, at times not even Roman dialect in general, but these girls’ own repertoire. CSL focuses on the individual, rather than the social, more specifically on “individuals’ highly diverse communicative repertoires,” and in doing so, it reproduces the “process of social evaluation of *certain* linguistic forms”(Rymes & Leone, 2014, p.39, emphasis added), like those used by the two girls from the Roman province. What is under fire in Leone’s (2014) study is the *specific* communicative repertoire of the two girls, however rooted in the hegemonic ideology of standard language over non-standardness (Leone, 2014) at a secondary level.

As the comparisons in these subsections have hopefully managed to show, different labels are used to describe specific approaches to language, or foci. These may differ from language ideology in one or more aspects, and to different degrees. This is the case with language ideology and metalinguistics, for example, or language ideology and citizen sociolinguistics, or CSL and folk linguistics. My study draws on CSL approach more than folk linguistics, granting lay people the same authority as professionals when it comes to language meta-commentary on single cases of language performance, as far as the “overuse” of English in Italian.

Language Ideology, Discourse Analysis, and Critical Discourse Studies

Discourse analysis (DA) is an umbrella term that encompasses different approaches to the study of patterns of discourse, across texts and sociocultural contexts, which change depending on the different domains of life people participate in (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002), and it hinges on the presupposition that the way we use language is both a reflection of our social reality, and the construction of that reality at the same time (Gee, 1999). To investigate language ideology-related discourse and counter discourses, this study goes beyond a description of the workings of language, which is what Discourse Analysis (DA) in general performs, to engage instead with the social phenomena under scrutiny, which is what Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) does (Kharbach, 2020). CDA is a discourse analytical approach that studies issues of power and inequality, and how social power is “enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2015, p. 465). It brings the “critical tradition of social analysis into language studies” and contributes a critical focus on relations between “discourse and other social elements (power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities, and so forth)” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 9). CD analysts take an explicit position “to understand, expose, and ultimately challenge” social phenomena of different kinds (van Dijk, 2015, p. 465), since evaluation and critique are necessary parts of critical social science, as it is its “emphasis upon existing social realities as humanly produced constraints” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 10).

Language use and discourse belong to the micro-level of social order, while power, authority, and ideology belong to the macro-level of analysis (van Dijk, 2015): CDA is meant to “bridge the gap between micro (agency, interactional) and macro (structural, institutional, organizational) approaches” (van Dijk, 2015, p. 468). In everyday interaction, the micro and macro level are intertwined to form a unified whole (van Dijk, 2015), so CDA investigates the

way specific discourse structures are regularly used to exercise some sort of power, keeping in mind that access to those forms of discourses is itself a power resource (van Dijk, 1996). For example, discourses can be used to influence people's knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies, to then indirectly control some of their actions (van Dijk, 2015). In fact, groups that control social resources like "knowledge, information, and culture, or indeed various forms of public discourse and communication," like journalists and spokespeople, acquire this (at least potentially) persuasive power, rooted in knowledge or authority (van Dijk, 2015, p. 469). This power may be exercised in the "myriad of taken-for-granted actions [and social domains] of everyday life," and therefore go unnoticed by the addressees of those discourses, who, to different degrees, can "resist, accept, condone, collude, or comply with, or legitimate such power, or even find it 'natural'" (van Dijk, 2015, p. 469).

Most people are in fact more or less passive targets of public text or talk, used by "authorities ... to simply tell them what (not) to believe and what (not) to do" (van Dijk, 2015, p. 470), "what knowledge or opinions they should (not) have" and what social actions may, or must, be triggered by discourse (van Dijk, 2015, p. 471). Likewise, a *Corriere* journalist like Severgnini or Testa from a TED stage exercises the power that comes with the authority their profession gives them, and that is reinforced by the context of the communicative event (van Dijk, 2015), to influence their readers and listeners when commenting on the use of English in Italian: e.g., avoid using English when you have an Italian word for it, as it is not only a sign of "linguistic sloppiness" but it also turns language into an "ugly" hybrid (Severgnini). Some recipients of such messages may accept the "beliefs, knowledge, and opinions" of people they perceive as "authoritative, trustworthy, or credible" in a given context (van Dijk, 2015), especially when "they may not have the knowledge and beliefs needed to challenge the discourse

or information they are exposed to” (van Dijk, 2015, p. 473). Discourse structures may very well influence the mental models of recipients and even manipulate their beliefs (van Dijk, 2015; Wodak, 1987).

According to van Dijk (2015), one common misunderstanding is that CDA is a special method of doing DA, while in reality there is no such method, since in CDA “all methods of the cross-discipline of discourse studies ... as well as relevant methods in the humanities and social sciences may be used” (van Dijk, 2015, p. 466). Also, this approach to socio-discursive phenomena has recently taken a broadening turn to Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) (Martínez Guillem & Toula, 2018), a more general term that some researchers in the field prefer (van Dijk, 2015): to emphasize that many methods and approaches may be used in the critical studies of texts (van Dijk, 2015); that such studies are cross-disciplinary (Bartesaghi & Pantelides, 2018), and that a “critical *perspective* may be found in all areas of discourse studies” (van Dijk, 2015, p. 466, emphasis in the original); and to emphasize that this analytical practice (van Dijk, 2015) has pushed towards unexplored sites of research, e.g., beyond CDA initial emphasis on elite Western political texts exclusively (Martínez Guillem & Toula, 2018). It must be noted that the well-known CDA term is nevertheless still used by researchers (van Dijk, 2015), and that sometimes they seem to be used interchangeably. A CDS/CDA approach has been used to investigate, among others, how phrasing the news on different channels differently impacts the viewers (Hassan, 2018), how the representation of ideologically conflicting ideas is biased in the Western media (Shojaei et al., 2013), and, along similar lines to this study’s focus on authority claims, how expertise in language debates is constantly enacted and contested through discourse in the media, as well as in educational settings (Milani, 2007).

Research Literature on Language Ideology

Language in the Media

The media are “deeply imbricated in relations of power and ideology” (Johnson & Milani, 2010, p. 5), since the representation of any issue for mass audience consumption has implications for the way in which it is understood (Cameron, 2007). Consequently, it is no surprise that research on the relationship between language ideology and the media has been particularly prolific in the last few decades. The power of the media is a highly complex phenomenon that requires “textual, ethnographic, and social deconstruction” (Johnson & Milani, 2010, p. 5), since the mass mediation of texts happens through specific practices and abides to specific politics. In other words, the media, “constrained by particular economic and political imperatives” open up “discursive spaces” where a public voice is given to a variety of social actors with high social, cultural, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), who compete with each other at “staking claims regarding what counts as legitimate knowledge in the domain of language” (Blommaert, 1999, in Milani & Johnson, 2010, p. 5).

To say that the mass media give voice to the powerful would be an oversimplification, though, in the 21st century, since most humans have been increasingly given the opportunity to give their view on particular issues, and the emergence of web 2.0 technologies has opened up discursive spaces to individuals and groups who did not have access to public media forums before (Milani & Johnson, 2010). By choosing in particular ways, “*all* media producers have the potential to rescale social, cultural, and symbolic capital” and “reshuffle authority and expertise on particular issues” in the “production of newsworthiness in the name of information and public knowledge” under particular economic and political conditions (Milani & Johnson, 2010, p. 6, emphasis in the original). According to Milani and Johnson (2010), it is nevertheless important

to point out that the media have vested interests in both building and blurring the boundaries between categories like ‘expert/lay’ (Androutsopoulos, 2010; Bachmann, 2010; Paffey, 2010) information/entertainment (Georgiou, 2010; Johnson et al., 2010), ‘public/private’ (Fairclough, 1995; Davis, 2010), and ‘news/marketing’ (Gazzardi & Vásquez, 2020). Understanding the dynamics at work in both constructing and obfuscating these binary oppositions becomes “a crucial empirical goal if we want to grasp the relationships between language ideologies and media discourse” (Tommasi & Johnson, 2010, p. 6), keeping in mind that *how* we receive the news, and through which medium, is a key part of the message itself (Cotter, 2015, emphasis added). The scope of the media is so extensive and so globally situated it is no surprise it has been the object of academic scrutiny across disciplines.

Language in the Traditional Media

Before exploring language ideology and digital/social media, however, attention should be paid to the prolific literature on ideology in the traditional media: broadcast and print institutions and outlets “reporting, interpreting, and conveying [any kind of] news about the world around us” (Cotter, 2015, p. 795). Empirical studies have looked at language use and representation on television with a focus on broadcasting constraints (Bachmann, 2010; Georgiou, 2010) as well as at the debate on racialized language on television (Blackledge, 2010; Davies, 2010) and at the linguistic representation of ethnicity, not just on the internet but also on the radio and in the national press (Androutsopoulos, 2010). Both the broadcast media and the national press have been investigated to determine their role as gatekeepers in defining what counts as proper, or standard, language (Moschonas & Spitz-Müller, 2010; Paffey, 2010), while newspaper headlines have been explored to uncover the power-related hidden ideological meaning of news headlines (Taiwo, 2007).

Just like television, newspapers have been the focus of academic inquiry quite often since, in the majority of democratic nation-states, newspapers tend to reach a large readership. The scale of production and dissemination of newspaper discourse is what gives the press a particularly central role as a site of ideological diffusion (Paffey, 2010). Newspaper texts function ideologically at a social level because “journalists’ writings” do not simply report “facts about interesting events within that society” (Paffey, 2010, p. 45). Journalists first decide what is noteworthy for their readers (and patrons), and then they decide how to present it, in terms of allocated space and section titles under which the article should be categorized (Paffey, 2010). Similarly crucial decisions are made about how news should be “framed, described, interpreted, and delivered” to a readership that is both subject to shifting cultural values and contributes to generate them (Paffey, 2010, p. 45). It is inevitable that ideological foundations would permeate the news-producing process, ideologies that “are not personal but social, institutional, or political” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 22). All this is relevant to my study since one of the primary language experts I interviewed is a journalist.

For example, Paffey’s (2010) study focuses on the exposure of “ideological representation of the Spanish language in the press” (p. 51). It utilizes a corpus of Spanish newspaper texts from *El País* and *ABC* that relate to language debates in which the *Real Academia Española* (RAE) is either a contributing voice or the object of dispute. Based on the Italian (*Accademia della Crusca*) and the French model (*Académie Française*, RAF), and sharing the same purist effort, the RAE has sought to purify Castilian Spanish of all errors brought about by “ignorance, careless habits, neglect, and too much [socially undesirable] liberty to innovate” (Paffey, 2010, p. 48), utilizing print media to spread its policy. As findings of my study show, both Italian experts and lay people also voice their opinion on the recent, to Severgnini “more

elastic,” positions of the *Accademia della Crusca* on loanwords, at times comparing the stance of the *Accademia* to the that of the RAE and of the RAF: but while experts discuss those positions rather neutrally, lay people do so quite negatively.

Paffey (2010) analyzes the connoted meaning of texts by exploring the “ideological assumptions which construct certain representation of language” (p. 51): texts turn out to encode decisions about the “way in which the standardization of Castilian Spanish is ... presented by the *Accademia* to the ... reading public” (Paffey, 2010, p. 51). Results show that there is a conscious effort on the *Accademia* part to maintain its leadership in Spanish language matters, and to appear as the natural commentator and authority on debates regarding Spanish, not only in Spain but in the Spanish-speaking world in general. Media texts are constantly produced as reliable, legitimized “facts” about language. Also, the majority of language-related content represents the RAE as the guardian of the language, while reinforcing its authority and validating its discourse as prestigious and worthy of print space. Finally, the Spanish language is represented as a diverse but fundamentally unitary commodity that may be exported but that is ultimately owned by Spain (Paffey, 2010). Likewise, though the use of Italian abroad is looked at positively, as a sign of esteem and love of it (Testa, 2015), antithetically to the use of English in Italian, Italians consider themselves the owners of the language, and therefore the only ones who have the right and power to determine what ‘proper Italian’ is, as well as the duty to defend it from foreign contamination.

It must be also noted that a substantial body of literature exists that deals with ideology issues indirectly. Abundant research on the use of English in advertising and online newspaper discourse investigates the supposed encroachment of English into other languages worldwide. Though ideology may not be the cornerstone of this research, it is nevertheless called upon (e.g.,

Androutsopoulos, 2013; Baumgardner, 2006; Baumgardner & Brown, 2012; Bhatia, 1992; Friedrich, 2019; Gazzardi & Vásquez, 2020; Kelly-Holmes, 2000; Lee, 2019). For example, Gazzardi and Vásquez (2020) describe the conscious and consistent pragmatic use of English in the Italian media. In specific domains like fashion and technology, English is often preferred to Italian to exploit its advertising power, rooted in its ability to index cosmopolitanism and modernity, which results in hybridity of genres, specifically of journalistic discourse and product advertising.

In their article, Gazzardi and Vásquez (2020) mention linguistic purism and its unconditional condemnation of any instance of English usage that is not justified by necessity (i.e., by the absence of a semantic equivalent in the receiving language). They also touch upon the shared idea that the supposed invasion of loanwords would result in the decay, if not the death, of the Italian language. Clearly, the latter positions are anchored to language ideologies of endangerment, which “concern beliefs about a range of ways in which the status or future of a language is jeopardized” (Vessey, 2021, p. 2) as well as to intrinsic language ideologies, i.e. ideologies focusing on the inherent value of a language and its identity (Vessey, 2021). However, even if the latter are called upon, they remain in the background of research that focuses on the pragmatic use of English in a hybridized genre: *where* and *why* it is used are in the foreground, not the century-long ideological debate.

Language in the Digital Media

Computer-mediated discourse (CMD) is the communication produced when people interact by transmitting messages via networked or mobile computers, defined broadly to comprise any digital communication device (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015). The study of CMD is a specialization within computer mediated communication (CMC), “distinguished by its

focus on language use and by its use of methods like discourse analysis to address that focus” (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015, p. 127). Language scholars took serious notice of CMC in the early ‘90s – which also saw the dawn of language ideology as a coordinated area of inquiry – and since then, they have been researching CMD “at an accelerated rate, broadening the scope of inquiry and generating an ever-growing list of published resources” (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015, p. 127). Indeed, it has expanded so much that “it is no longer possible to summarize all its findings” (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 201, p. 128) in a limited review of literature, although it is possible to point out the different areas of inquiry research has been focusing on, as discussed in the following paragraphs, as well as instances when language ideological debates are brought up.

In fact, within CMD and CMC, language ideologies have been investigated in a variety of media outlets. Studies of social media-based discourse represent the proverbial gold mine of data in this sense, but of course language used by social media consumers has not always been analyzed through the lens of language ideologies. On the other hand, since the spread of the internet, the language of newspapers and magazines (and of their end-users) has been examined in CMC contexts against a backdrop of language ideologies as well. Furthermore, relatively new areas of inquiry have caught the interest of scholars of CMC and language ideologies recently, like the language of online gaming and gamers (Ensslin, 2011).

All mainstream media – those created for and consumed by sizable and heterogeneous audiences worldwide, more and more so in the time of web 2.0 technologies – are “key arenas for the production and the reproduction of language ideology,” an assumption that is in turn “a meeting point of sociolinguistics, language ideology research, and media discourse studies” (Androutsopoulos, 2010, p. 182). Researchers at the borders of these fields all concur that

mainstream media discourses have the potential power to mold their audiences' language ideology, that is their "beliefs or feelings about languages as used in their social worlds" (Androutsopoulos, 2010, p. 182-3). Language ideological work takes place in a wide range of media formats (Androutsopoulos, 2010), and the language sources involved in this kind of work vary as much as media formats do: to name just a few, comments on *YouTube* videos (Aslan & Vásquez, 2018; Cutler, 2019; Hachimi, 2013; Lee and Su, 2019; Leone, 2014); comments on an online opinion column (Squires, 2010); game textuality (Ensslin, 2010); interactive websites (Johnson et al., 2010; Lindemann & Moran, 2017; Subtirelu, 2015; Wiese, 2015), blogs (Rymes, 2018), and social media users (Androutsopoulos, 2001, 2015; James, 2016).

For example, Lee and Su (2019) investigate how local identities in Taiwan are constructed through discourse, and "how language ideologies concerning Chinese and English are manifested in the process in online discussions" (p. 1). Dynamics of identity construction are investigated utilizing a verbal confrontation as the object of an animated online debate: a local Taiwanese driver is verbally attacked by an American-born Taiwanese passenger, whose nationality, ethnicity, and controversial linguistic competence feed a heated identity debate online. This way, social media become an important site for ideological contestation, identity construction, and cultural negotiation (Chun & Walters, 2011). Viewers of the video construct the American-born Taiwanese as an outgroup member through specific pronoun usage and identity labels, while his presumed competence in English or Chinese plays a critical role in de-authenticating him as a 'real' American or a 'real' Taiwanese, with language ideologies displayed throughout this whole process of identity construction.

The kind of questions asked can have quite a lot in common across formats and populations. It is common to ask what kind of key linguistic features are used to illustrate,

exemplify, and stereotype languages based on ideological principles and axioms (Androutsopoulos, 2010), or to ask the way in which the ideologization of a language changes or not, across and within media genres (Androutsopoulos, 2010), or if other sociolinguistic variables come into play (Kendall & Tannen, 2015). Alternatively, questions asked can be very specific, and investigating specific semiotic processes, like iconization (Androutsopoulos, 2010) or orders of indexicality (Cutler, 2019), or enregisterment (Squires, 2010; Cutler, 2019), i.e., processes whereby the forms and value of a register “become differentiable from the rest of language ... for a given populations of speakers” (Agha, 2007, p. 168).

Media discourse is a key force in the ideologization of varieties of language (Androutsopoulos, 2010). What the majority of studies on language ideology seem to conclude, be they investigating how language or language varieties are represented in traditional media or digital ones, is that there is always some sort of inevitable tension, and often a quite sharp juxtaposition between language varieties. For example, there is always friction, and a hierarchical relationship, between the language of recent immigrant groups and the standard variety (Androutsopoulos, 2010), between a Received Pronunciation accent and a North-American one (Ensslin, 2010), between Castilian Spanish, and the Spanish spoken outside of Spain (Paffey, 2010), between the language repertoires of a Taiwanese native and of an American-born Taiwanese (Lee and Su, 2019), or between utterances that do not mix codes and those that do (Paffey, 2010). The latter juxtaposition is at the core of this study, where social media users discursively assign attributes and ascribe identities to other Italians, based on their English usage in otherwise Italian contexts, and, in doing so, they create hierarchies.

The coexistence of all of these is never easy. One of the components of the equation always turns out to be perceived as better, superior, or at least normal, while the other is

invariably bad, and certainly abnormal. Depending on context, the non-standard option is inevitably deemed incorrect, lazy, polluted, uneducated, coarse, or even downright criminal (Androutsopoulos, 2010; Leone, 2014; Paffey, 2010). The conclusions of most studies present this kind of dichotomy without fail: standardness, nativeness, and purity are perceived as a natural, intrinsically good trinomial (Androutsopoulos, 2010), while any deviation from those is an anomaly. Whether those who pass this judgement are aware of this bias or not does not really make a difference: the status quo is that there is a right way of expressing oneself, and any nonconformity is wrong. On the other hand, it must be pointed out that attitudes are not always homogeneous, and that there may be counter discourses. Previously stigmatized varieties may suddenly become valorized for indexical associations that may have shifted at some point, as in the case of the Brooklyn New York accent, as described in a study on YouTube comments by Cutler (2019).

The aforementioned tensions, however, mirror reality. It is no news that deviation from standards is often looked down upon as a bad thing, especially when it comes from ‘outside’: from a lower, unsettled social class; from immigrants; from a different culture; or from a language whose global spread is branded as linguistic imperialism. Therefore, when scholarship describes this hierarchical order, this well-rooted unbalance, it describes an ideological picture that people accept as reality and which they are complicit in normalizing and reinforcing.

In order to contribute to this body of work, the present study adds to the literature in analyzing such discourses in three different digital contexts. In addition, this study contributes to the scholarship on language ideologies in the digital media not only by including an ethnographic component to the critical discourse analysis of data. It also adds a focus on claims that are arguably peculiar to the “overuse” of English in Italian specifically.

On the one hand, for example, in her TED Talk (described in Chapter One), Testa describes the use of English in Italian as a symptom of lack of love and respect for one's language, and of an inferiority complex towards another language and culture. At the same time, she seems to praise the use of Italian by speakers of English, particularly Americans in her examples, as a sign of esteem and love for its supposed beauty (Testa, 2015). Her argument applies to these two languages and their speakers specifically, whereas Americans use Italian because they are "seduced by [it]" (Testa, 2018), while Italians are "second rate [winkers]" (Testa, 2015) at a language they deem cooler, if not superior. It is not clear why, if the latter is a case of language contamination, the former is not. On the other hand, YouTube commentators emphasize how the use of code-switching as a marketing strategy relies on the different connotations of specific languages. Italian and English have different connotative powers (e.g., respectively, tradition and authenticity versus modernity and cosmopolitanism), which explains, or even justifies, their different exploitations for different marketing reasons both in American and Italian advertising.

Research does not seem to have looked extensively into language-specific ideological tensions like these in digital spaces yet. Additionally, it does not seem to have looked closely at contexts where it is not just the purity of a language that is supposedly at stake. What is also at risk is the identity of a language that is perceived as "[superior] to English" (YouTube) for "the beautiful things it evokes" (Severgnini; Testa), which would justify the use of Italian in English contexts but disqualify the opposite. The study also compares how these peculiar tensions are differently displayed on different digital platforms, whose affordances and communities are as diverse, despite two of them sharing the participatory culture of social media (Facebook and YouTube).

In the present study, I explore heterogeneity in this sense, which is where Kroskrity's (2010, 2016, 2019) multiplicity dimension comes into play. In other words, I explore the multiple competing discourses displayed in the same space/s. When there is an additional underlying perspective on language usage and ideology, it should be unveiled, just as apparent contradictions should be brought to attention, to be unmasked.

Online Ethnographies and Metalinguistic Discourses

Because the present study adopts an ethnographic perspective combined with micro-analyses of digital discourse, I now turn to discussing relevant research which has used ethnographic methods to investigate a range of metalinguistic discourses. Social media represent a rich source of data for linguist ethnographers, among other scholars. Research tended to focus first on specific sites like chat rooms or multi-user domains (Carter, 2004; Kendall, 1998), and later on specific communities or social networks, from MySpace (boyd, 2006), to Facebook (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Georgalou, 2015, 2016), to Twitter (Wesely, 2013), and Instagram (Kudaibergenova, 2019). These kind of data sources have advantages but challenges as well, e.g., the fast development of technology, the simultaneousness of internet access, both in terms of services used and places (Beneito-Montagut, 2011), the ambiguity/uncertainty of participant identities (Marshall, 2010), or privacy issues (Georgalou, 2015). "Ethnography in this dynamic arena eventually necessitates a 'technologized' researcher," who needs to both "speed-up" to keep up with her "fast-moving objects of analysis, and to 'slow-down' to understand them properly" (Beneito-Montagut, 2011, p. 720). One last limitation with "ethnographies of the internet" (Beneito-Montagut, 2011, p. 720), or online ethnographies (OE), is that, initially, OE took advantage mainly of the written text, giving an over-emphasis to the textual aspects (Mann and Stewart, 2000; Murdock and Pink, 2005; Pauwels, 2005). However, more recently,

researchers have been looking into the multimodal kinds of data afforded by web 2.0, like sounds, videos, pictures, emojis, etc., and have engaged with OE utilizing a “variety of disciplinary paradigms and approaches,” paying more “justice to the complexity of ... CMC” (Beneito-Montagut, 2011, p.731). In other words, OE also has been striving for a more multimodal kind of approach.

When a “sociolinguistic approach at CMC takes online communities and discourse as its starting point, rather than the medium, ... ethnography seems an indispensable part of it” (Androutsopoulos, 2006, p.423). CMC studies have relied heavily on ethnographic approaches to investigate internet cultures, to reconstruct how online communities take shape from an emic perspective, i.e., that of community members (Moran, 2001), and to “chart the dynamic unfolding of online activities in relation to offline events” (Androutsopoulos, 2006, p.423-4). Roughly around the same time that researchers began taking serious notice of CMC, scholars began conducting digital ethnographies as well. An ethnographic approach is in line with the shift of focus from medium to its users because it emphasizes the local and situated character of internet processes (Androutsopoulos, 2006). It is only natural that the birth of digital ethnography, otherwise called online ethnography or virtual ethnography interchangeably (Androutsopoulos, 2006), cyber ethnography (Ward, 1999), or netnography (Kozinets, 2015), should coincide with the advent of the internet in the ‘90s (Hart, 2017). It is necessary to define what an OE does, before moving on to its affordances and challenges, and to the description of three studies which, in their approach, most inform the present study.

Like ethnographies, OEs approach culture as something that is “produced and reproduced through [virtual] social interaction” (Hart, 2017, p. 2). They can: study a single online community, like that of Starbucks baristas ranting about supposedly stupid customers (Manning,

2008); carry out a cross-cultural assessment of multiple virtual communities, like comparing the language used on several online public forums (Hanna & De Nooy, 2009); or examine online/offline communities, against the assumption that calling this kind of work ‘virtual’ ethnography creates a dichotomy between virtual and real life (Beneito-Montagut, 2011; Keating & Mirus, 2003; Miller & Slater, 2000; Varis, 2015). Examples are Keating and Mirus’s (2003) study of how computer-mediated video communication impacts deaf users’ daily language practices, or Beneito-Montagut’s (2011) study of participants’ online/offline intercultural communication interactions and emotion expression practices.

Online ethnographers develop research questions, not hypotheses. They ask, for example, how people engage in particular social activities online; they inquire about the significance of virtual activities and relationships; or they conduct “close analyses of participant situated activities” in order to unveil “larger cultural norms and/or intercultural communication processes” (Hart, 2017, p. 3). Online communities offer “new opportunities for researchers to study new types of culture-building and culture-sharing groups” (Kulavuz-Onal & Vásquez, 2013, p. 1), which of course demands an adaptation of ethnographic fieldwork. In fact, while digital ethnographers seek to capture large amounts of rich, complex data in these new contexts, they must keep in mind that online content and communities may be impermanent (Hart, 2017) highly fluid and fragmented spaces (Caliandro, 2018), much more so than non-virtual ones.

Lastly, like all ethnographers, ethnographers of digital spaces (Varis, 2015) must operate ethically, which in many cases means having an institutional review board (IRB) inspect a proposal that grants proceeding with the study, contingent with having sound measures for securing informed consent (Hart, 2017). However, ethics for ethnographers goes far beyond IRB approval. When classic 20th century ethical principles (i.e., core ideas about respect for persons,

practice, and beneficence) “got translated into regulations,” like the ones adopted by ethics research boards all over the world, “they lost much of their ability to allow scientists to make decisions on their own” (Markham, 2021). Moreover, the operationalization of these classic principles by IRBs (i.e., human subjects, informed consent, privacy protection, vulnerability, and risk/benefit ratio,) “are [further] complicated” in CMC research contexts (Markham, 2021). Specifically, these regulations seem arguably reductive when it comes to ethnographers and the internet, i.e., to the “digitally saturated research contexts” ethnographers may work in at present, since these regulations were invented for bio-medical research settings (Markham, 2021).

In fact, as early as in the 90s, ethnographers and anthropologists were “quick to note that it [is] complicated to determine what is a human subject ... what is consent, what is informed consent, and how to get it” in contexts “that are characterized by global networks of anonymous participants” (Markham, 2021). Moreover, ethnographers wondered if we “should get informed consent” to begin with, since it is almost impossible to protect privacy in such contexts (Markham, 2021). Because of all this, and to “work beyond regulatory ethical models,” it becomes crucial to shift the ethnographer’s perspective “from regulation [error]-driven approaches to context and process-driven approaches,” and to “build reflexivity into research practice” (Markham, 2021). This shift in approach takes ethics from an “abstract, moral position right down to the ground, in the daily practice of making active decisions” in the ethnographic research process, each of which has an “ethical component” (Markham, 2021). In other words, it turns “ethics [into] method” (Markham, 2021).

To begin with, the assumption that, online, everything is fair game needs to be taken with a grain of salt, in fact, as it will be further discussed in Chapter Three. OE has been often treated as a synonym of observation, ignoring the “polyphonic, heterogeneous nature of social media”

in which ethnographers, or netnographers (Kozinets, 2015) are actively “listening,” besides being “looking” (Winter & Lavis, 2020, p.55). They do not simply observe, but they “*participate in* online places” (Winter & Lavis, 2020, p.55, emphasis in the original) by virtue of logging in, and though they may not be active and let others know they are there, they are, nevertheless, *present* (Kulavuz-Onal & Vásquez, 2013, emphasis in original). As such, “they need to make an additional effort in order to be visible to the community by interacting with others,” thus getting involved in the activities of the community (Kulavuz-Onal & Vásquez, 2013, p. 229). Hence, they should be accountable for living, as much as possible, with the people they study, for more or less directly engaging with them, and for recording that engagement (Marshall, 2010). In the present study, my own role is that of a participant observer on all platforms, and I have interacted only once with one of prolific Facebook group member as far as possible Italian translations, ironically enough, of the acronym ‘Ph.D.’.¹

Online Ethnography and Ideology

Within the breadth of studies on social media, OE, and language ideology, for space constraint reasons, I will focus here on three studies that partially align with and inform my proposed focus of inquiry, media of study, and approach and methodology. First, I will discuss an OE approach to language mixing on Facebook that touches upon language ideology and social media practice changes (Androutsopoulos, 2015), as well as OE-based discourse analysis that discusses matters of identity construction on Facebook via multimodal strategies (Georgalou, 2015). Lastly, I will pay particular attention to research that explores indexicality, attributes, and

¹ The exchange was ideological in nature, since according to the person I interacted with, using *Ph.D.* in Italian instead of *dottore* is unmotivated, and the use of the English acronym would be sparked only by the need to show off and sound even more educated. But *Ph.D.* and *dottore* are not synonyms like he maintained: anyone with a Bachelor’s Degree is a *dottore* in Italy. The title is awarded upon B.A. graduation. Also, it must be noted that, when making fun of this English acronym, this person used eye-spelling (*pieicdi*), discussed later.

language attitudes through a metalinguistic/metapragmatic analysis of comments on YouTube (Cutler, 2019), whose approach has much in common with mine.

Work on code-switching in particular and multilingualism in general recently witnessed a shift of focus from linguistic systems to multilingual speakers and practices, alongside “a critical view of language as an ideological construct,” and a move towards a more fluid and flexible understanding of the “connections between language, ethnicity, and place” (Androutsopoulos, 2015, p.186). Based on these premises and using an OE approach, Androutsopoulos (2015) investigates how multilingual language users of different ethnicities creatively manipulate language resources on Facebook, rejecting a one-to-one relationship among language, ethnicity, and nation. Utilizing field data as well as group interviews, Androutsopoulos (2015) describes how, in their online discursive practices, participants translanguage across all modalities of language, dis-aligning with the ‘double-lingualism’ norm that prescribes separation of languages, but embracing polylingualism, i.e. utilizing whatever linguistic resources at their disposal to ensure successful communication. Their semi-public communication is “jointly produced and consumed by networked individuals with some degree of shared histories, experiences, and linguistic repertoires” (Androutsopoulos, 2015, p.190). An OE approach allowed Androutsopoulos (2015) to combine “systematic observation of online activities, collection of linguistic analysis of screen data, and data elicited through direct contact with users” (p. 185), i.e. triangulation, which allows a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study that would not have been possible, or as thorough, otherwise. Like Androutsopoulos (2015), I adopted a screen-based and a user-based perspective, in not only studying texts but also by interviewing some of the producers of those texts.

Adopting a similar OE approach that combines ethnography with discourse analysis, Georgalou's (2016) monography explores identity construction on Facebook. Though her analytic primary focus is on users' notions about privacy online, Georgalou (2016) nevertheless touches upon users' "creativity and criticality in combining ... linguistic signals and textual practices to manage their privacy and hence their identity" (p.40), which is not just presented but managed online, and it changes based on the audience. Georgalou (2016) provides a rich ethnographic description (comments, statuses, photos, as well as interviews) of five Greek participants' use of the social medium and analyzes their self-presentation dynamics on Facebook. Georgalou (2016) also collected field data and conducted interviews, which confirmed that her participants share personal and social criteria on what to leave and what to delete, and they skillfully and consciously manipulate language(s) as they use the platform to their advantage to present themselves through specific linguistic practices, while being simultaneously critical of others' strategies of self-presentation and identity management. The reason why Georgalou (2016) combines discourse analysis and OE is to restore balance between representation and management of identity and linguistics. Scholarship on the topic of online self-representation tends to "[shun] linguistics almost entirely" at times, looking at the issue from the perspective of "media, information and cultural studies, and sociology" (p. 41). That is why a "discourse-centered online ethnography" is the necessary approach, "to combine [OE] with close discourse analysis" (Georgalou, 2016, p. 41), which puts language analysis back at the center of the investigation. Discourse-centered OE merges the "systematic, longitudinal, and repeated observation of online discourse" with "direct engagement" with "the producers of that specific online discourse," which is therefore "complementary with the textual analysis of online data" (Georgalou, 2016, p. 44). This study adopts the same approach, systematic observation of online

discourse and mediated direct engagement with their producers: to allow a more thorough and comprehensive understanding of language ideology dynamics at work in the discourse revolving around the use of English in Italian.

Additionally, and more specifically related to the critical discourse analysis of online comments on language variation, Cutler's (2019) study also serves as a model for delving into the analysis of shifting language attitudes and of "how people position themselves in relationship to certain ways of talking" (p. 1). Cutler's (2019) research on language ideologies focuses in fact on online spaces "as sites where the social meaning of language varieties and variation is negotiated" (Cutler, 2019, p. 5). Her work explores how the dialect that she calls "metropolitan New York City English" is characterized in four YouTube videos, and what kind of stances people take up towards this dialect in their "metapragmatic comments and written orthographic performances" (Cutler, 2019, p. 2), which at the same time reveal language attitudes and ideologies. Viewers' orthographic performances consist in "eye-dialectical, deliberate misspellings" of words based on that accent, which become implicit comments on pronunciation defects (Cutler, 2019). These are representations of linguistic features that violate standardized speech norms, and that are consequently stigmatized (Cutler, 2019, p. 2).

In other words, these performances contain ideological stances that underlie the social meanings attached to certain forms of talk (Cutler, 2019). The aforementioned features become iconic of those speakers and invite inferences about them, "as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence" (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 37) and thus "[come] to be socially recognized as indexical of a certain set of speaker attributes" (Cutler, 2019, p.1). Focusing on user comments responding to these YouTube videos, Cutler's (2019) study explores how viewers align themselves with respect to the New York accent, understood

broadly in lay terms of phonological but also lexical and syntactic variants, and “what character traits and social meanings they attach to this way of talking” (p. 2). The study therefore aims to uncover the indexical relevance of these performances and representations, while at the same time investigating how YouTube contributes to “shaping and disseminating language attitudes towards dialects ... and accents” (Cutler, 2019, p. 3), which shows the multiplicity of language ideologies yet again.

Cutler’s (2019) findings show that those videos generated a high percentage of comments where people expressed positive or negative affective stance toward the NY accent (easy-going and sexy versus lazy or uneducated) and metalinguistic or metapragmatic content (what are its features, what it connotes, and what it denotes). Only in a portion of those comments did they overtly express language attitudes (Cutler, 2019) towards this specific way of speaking. Instead, Cutler (2019) found that more frequent were “metapragmatic characterizations” of people who speak a certain way, which is the result of enregisterment: a process that transforms a particular type of speech “into widely recognized indices of speaker attributes” (Cutler, 2019, p. 10). In other words, a dialect, register, or accent steers people, in this case viewers, towards “images of personhood” (Agha, 2006, p. 233).

Like the YouTubers in Cutler’s (2019) research, the social media users in the present study engage in the same aforementioned metapragmatic characterization of people who overuse English and/or use English badly, eye-spelling and orthographic performances included. The shaping and [dissemination] of language attitudes (Cutler, 2019) does not revolve around a dialect or accent but around what is deemed excessive, unjustified, or inaccurate code-mixing of English and Italian, targeting both phonological, lexical, and syntactic aspects of it the same way YouTubers did in Cutler’s (2019) study. In the eyes of social media users, these code-mixing

practices become “indices of speaker attributes” (Cutler, 2019, p. 10) the same way the metropolitan New York City English attached attributes to its speakers . In other words, abundant code-mixing assigns specific character traits to people who engage in this practice, whose “inherent nature or essence” is displayed by the way they speak (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 37).

In sum, by applying a citizen sociolinguistic lens, and by adding an ethnographic component to the critical discourse analysis of digital data, the goal of this study is to contribute to shed light on the multiplicity of language ideologies that are produced, reproduced, and circulated online by language experts and by lay people alike, highlighting what is arguably unique to the English-in-Italian controversy. As I will further discuss in Chapter Three, five of these ideologies were derived from literature, while another three emerged from data analyses. The ideologies that originated in the literature are: national language ideology and monolingualism ideology (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998; Blommaert, 2011; Fishman, 1972; Vessey, 2016; Woolard, 1992), linguistic purity ideology (Hill & Hill, 1980, 1986; Hill, 1985) intrinsically beautiful language ideology (Robichaud & De Schutter, 2012; Vessey, 2021); and endangerment ideology (Sallabank, 2013; Vessey, 2021). Ideologies that emerged from data analyses, and that to the best of my knowledge seem to be unique, are: inferiority complex ideology, obfuscation ideology, and complaint ideology.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods that I used to conduct the study. First, I describe the purpose of the study, its design, and its research questions. Secondly, I introduce the three different platforms chosen as data sources, and the criteria of data collection, explaining the rationale behind these choices. This is followed by a more detailed description of the different data these platforms afford, with a few examples of data. Subsequently, I explain the rationale behind the need to interview key figures, what kind of interviews I conducted, and the reasons motivating my approach. Lastly, I discuss ethical considerations, the centrality of reflexivity and subjectivity in qualitative research, as well as the applicability and limitations of the study.

Study Purpose and Design

The study investigates various uses of English by the same Italian professionals who publicly address such practices, as well as how those actual discursive and metadiscursive practices align with, or clash with, lay people's reactions to them. In other words, this study investigates the metalinguistic discourses that (Italian) non-linguists engage in (i.e., citizen sociolinguists), a population that includes non-linguist communication professionals (e.g., journalists and PR spokespeople) as well as lay people in general, in order to explore the language ideologies that underlie their espoused claims about language use in digital spaces. Adopting a citizen socio-linguistic approach involves analyzing not just ideologies: my analysis also considers social indexicalities, besides metalinguistic discourse. The primary data collected consist of a number of mass media and digital media texts: blog posts, social media posts, TED

Talk – along with the online comments responding to them. Beyond discourse analysis (micro-analyses of a sample of media texts) and many hours of participant-observation (i.e., field notes about these texts, detected patterns, and related online interactions), interviews were conducted with key moderators and public figures associated with each of the three platforms: Annamaria Testa, Giuseppina Solinas, and Beppe Severgnini.

Researchers approach data with research questions they mean to address, while carrying a series of epistemological assumptions about how knowledge is produced (Mann, 2011; Roulston, 2010a). The purpose of this study, like any other qualitative study, is not to determine “one singular and absolute truth” but to bring forward “the relative plausibility of an interpretation” (Roulston, 2010a, p. 202). In the present study, I offer an interpretation of the language ideologies and attitudes behind online and offline language practices and discourses. But in order to assess this relative plausibility, it is necessary to compare it with “other specific and potentially plausible alternative interpretations” (Roulston, 2010a, p. 202). Thus, the interviews conducted offer “an appropriate means to elicit data that [inform] understandings of the meanings” participants themselves make “of their [own] lived experiences” (Roulston, 2010a, p. 203).

In qualitative inquiry, many have debated about how researchers should support the validity of their work, i.e. “the truth, the trustworthiness or accuracy of their claims” (Roulston, 2010a, p. 201). To “carry the validation with them” (Roulston, 2010a, p. 202), interviews must be carefully designed, keeping in mind that interviews must be seen as an “interactional object” (Roulston, 2010a, p. 203). For interview-elicited data to be of quality, i.e. valid, what questions are asked and how they are asked is vital. It is necessary to ask questions in ways that are understood by participants (Roulston, 2010a), wording them so that they do not lead participants’

answers. It is advisable to go from generic to specific, to elicit spontaneous, relevant, rich answers from the interviewee (Roulston, 2010a): the shorter the questions, the longer the answers, the better (Klave, 1996, in Roulston, 2010a). Lastly, it is necessary to ask clarification of meanings, and to verify interpretations of the subjects' answers in the course of the interview itself (Klave, 1996, in Roulston, 2010a). For further details about interview design and assessment of interview quality, see Appendix A: Roulston's modified design and assessment guidelines (2010a).

Research Questions

English use in otherwise Italian contexts is deemed excessive and unnecessary more often than not, i.e., English would be “overused” without justification, which is the reason why people tend to complain about it in different digital contexts. This study addresses this frequent use of English by Italians and identifies the qualities assigned to those speakers, which are reinforced and reiterated with each digital comment on those uses, by different groups of people, and utilizing diverse media. People's different stances unveil multiple language ideologies as well as very different degrees of resistance to, or acceptance (Kroskrity, 2010) and explanation of English widespread use.

The primary data analyzed are posts and comments collected from three different online platforms, in that data from multiple sources yield a more comprehensive picture of the major phenomenon under scrutiny (i.e., language ideological metadiscourse): 1. TED Talk and YouTube; 2. A Facebook group; 3. A blorum (blog/forum) called *Italians*. More in detail, my data comprise: 1. YouTube comments on the video of a TED Talk by communication expert Annamaria Testa, who addresses English uses in Italian, including the TED Talk itself; 2. A Facebook page called “*Viva l'italiano, Abbasso l'itanglese*” (Hooray for Italian, Down with

Italenglish), where people comment on the same issue; 3. The blog-forum *Italians*, devoted, among others, to gathering the experiences of migrated Italians, in the popular Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, where at times letters to the moderator address the same trend. The critical discourse analysis of these texts was supplemented by interviews with the author of the TED Talk uploaded to YouTube, communication expert Annamaria Testa, the moderator of the Facebook group, Giuseppina Solinas, and the moderator of *Italians*, journalist Beppe Severgnini. To carry out this analysis aimed at uncovering hidden ideologies, the present study aims to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What instances of English language use are Italian internet users complaining about (e.g., false loans versus direct ones)? In which social contexts do they occur, and what categories of people are using language that way?

1a: Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

RQ2: Who is doing the complaining about uncalled-for uses of English? Are they experts or lay people?

2a. How do both experts and lay people establish their language authority when discussing these matters? What kind of language do they use when trying to demonstrate/perform their expertise?

2b. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

RQ3: What language ideologies are revealed by the online discourse about uses of English in predominantly Italian contexts? What, if any, counter discourses (i.e. basic sociolinguistic facts/arguments) are raised by users about these same issues?

3a. Are there any differences in this regard across the different online platforms?

3b. Are there any differences in this regard between experts and lay people?

In order to address RQ1, I first identified each instance of overuse/uncalled-for use of English commented upon on all platforms, to identify the “complained about.” Next, I classified these examples as direct loans v. false or hybrid loans and semantic extension/narrowing, in line with language ideology’s three-dimensional focus on linguistic form, social use, and reflections on forms in use (Woolard, 2008), i.e., a focus both on linguistic practices and on discourses about language. I verified the latter loan classifications by utilizing both an Italian and an Anglophone monolingual dictionary, as well as a bilingual one (i.e., Treccani, Merriam-Webster, and Wordreference). I utilized the same dictionaries to validate whether an equally concise or short enough² Italian alternative exists.³ “No Italian equivalent” applies to English loans when much lengthier phrases are necessary to render the same idea.⁴ Next, I identified which social actors the “overuse”/uncalled-for use of English is attributed to, e.g., politicians and the Government, mass media, marketers and advertisers, etc.. Lastly, I compared results across all platforms.

In order to address RQ2, I first identified whether the writer of comments on items identified in RQ1 is an expert or a lay person. “Expertise” definition is double fold: it refers both to one’s profession entirely revolving around language, e.g., an advertiser, a translator, a journalist, as well as to one’s role of platform moderator. Next, I identified in what ways s/he established her/his expertise and authority: Table on p. 81 presents a taxonomy of both definitions and examples of expertise/authority claims. These categories were derived inductively from multiple readings and multiple rounds of data coding. Lastly, I compared results across all platforms.

² One to three words.

³ Since concision and straightforwardness are recurring arguments used to justify English use.

⁴ It must be pointed out that a lower syllable count may be a valid argument as well to justify the use of English instead of Italian, whose words tend to be multisyllabic more often than in English.

In order to address RQ3, I paid careful attention to specific word choice: Table 3 on p. 83 presents a taxonomy of language ideology definitions, key words, and examples. I first labelled each piece of data/ text segment with the corresponding language ideology, or corresponding counter discourse, i.e., basic sociolinguistic facts like language change and language globalization. Lastly, I compared those findings across different platforms, and which language ideologies and counter discourses are most prevalent among experts versus lay people.

Data Sources

I now turn to the reasons why these three specific digital sites were selected, followed by a more detailed description of the three platforms and criteria of data collection. These descriptions include examples I have noted during my ongoing participant-observation of these platforms, which began in March 2020.

A few criteria were used for choosing these digital sites. First and foremost, I wanted to collect data that were interactive: posts, emails, and links have to be open to people's replies, comments, opinions, and objections, in order to feed an ongoing discussion on evolving language ideologies and attitudes (Cutler, 2019). Second, I wanted to include media that feature contributions produced by lay people in order to allow for a citizen sociolinguistics approach (Rymes, 2014; Leone, 2014). Third, I believe that collecting data from a few different digital contexts offers more diversity in perspectives than simply collecting from only one digital space. I am interested in studying the attitudes of people with different language repertoires, histories, experiences, and identities (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Georgalou, 2015), and with different investments (Georgalou, 2016) in language ideologies. Lastly, these platforms have a moderator or an author that I could interview, in order to integrate the discourse analysis of data with (at least some of the) producers of those discourses. In-person interviews, carried out by many

online ethnography scholars (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Beneito-Montagut, 2011; Georgalou, 2015; Keating & Mirus, 2003; Miller & Slater, 2000; Schrooten, 2012) were not possible for logistical reasons: the researcher resides in the United States, while two interviewees live in Italy, and one lives in the United Kingdom. In the case of Testa and Severgnini, these interviews were carried out virtually, on Zoom and Microsoft Teams respectively. In the case of Solinas, interview answers were written and emailed to me.

TED Talk and YouTube

The first platform I utilized is YouTube, and specifically I analyzed both the 2015 TED Talk by Annamaria Testa uploaded there (organized by *Ted x Milano*, with the subtitle *Italia, Patria della Bellezza*, i.e., Italy, Homeland of Beauty) and the comments (N = 66) it has received. Testa is a copy-editor, communication expert, and blog and book author, as well as a contributor to the *Incipit* webpage of the *Accademia della Crusca*, a page devoted to cataloging foreignisms/neologisms in Italian. She is also a passionate activist against the excessive Anglicization of Italian, which she has discussed more than once on her blog: *Nuovo e Utile, Teorie e Pratiche della Creativita* (New and Useful, Creativity Theories and Practices). Although her talk is in Italian, designed for an Italian audience, the TED Talk title is in English: *From Bello to Biútiful: What is Happening to our Italian Language?*

This video and its associated online comments were chosen as a source of data for this project for several reasons. First of all, it was chosen because of the diversity of its metalinguistic comments. Secondly, I observed that other, similar video presentations by Italians on YouTube addressing the same subject did not receive as many comments as Testa's. For example, the satirical short YouTube videos by Giorgio Comaschi,⁵ an Italian comedian/journalist who mocks

⁵ Links to his videos were posted by Facebook group members: this is how I found out about them.

uses of English in the Italian mass media, have received a rather limited number of comments on average. Though comments on these videos seem to align with the relative majority of those on Testa's TED Talk, they do not seem to grow in number with time. Instead, Testa's TED Talk has received a steady flow of comments since its initial posting in 2015, i.e., it seems to have reached a much wider audience, not only Italians but also foreign admirers of the Italian language, in some cases multilingual users. The majority of comments dates back from mid-2015 to mid-2020. By the start of data analysis, October 23rd, 2021, there were 1103 comments on Testa's 2015 TED Talk.

The nineteen-minute TED Talk has a rather ironic – and playful – tone at times, which is exemplified, for instance, by the eye-dialect transcription of *beautiful* (*biùtiful*) as well as that of a rhetorical question Testa asked her audience, a phonetic transcription based on Italian phonetic inventory (Figure 3.1) arguably to tease Italians' English pronunciation, who believe to master English while perhaps they often do not. Figure 3.2 exemplifies comments that align with Testa against English overuse. In a prototypical example of a heated comment against English overuse that aligns with Testa's argument, this user, who identifies as "Italian Heart" wrote: "Defend the Italian language! Abolish all English phonemes from our language! What's the sense in saying *weekend* instead of *fine settimana*? These days, even *lockdown* instead of *blocco*, *serrata*, *chiusura*? Too bad more than 4000 words have entered our dictionary! We should write to newspapers and TV stations and all mass media to vigorously demand they get rid of all Anglo-American phonemes!".



Figure 3.1
 Example of eye-spelling/orthographic performance: “Do we still speak Italian?”

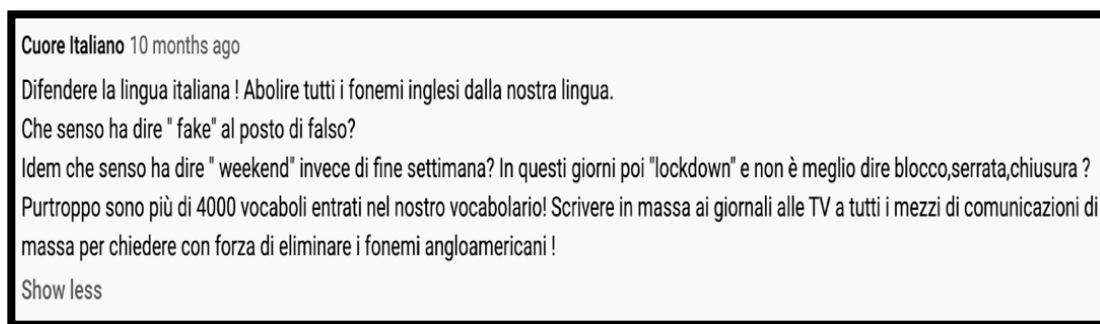


Figure 3.2
 Example of TED Talk comment.

Facebook

The second platform chosen is the Facebook page called “*Viva l’Italiano, Abbasso l’Itanglese*” (Hurray for Italian, Down with *Italenglish*) was created in 2012. Formerly called “*NO! All’Anglicizzazione della Lingua Italiana*” (NO! To the Anglicization of the Italian Language), the page welcomes new threads by group members who document the everyday use of English in otherwise Italian contexts: be they headlines of newspapers, commercials and advertising, academic announcements, or government policies and bills, etc.. In other words, any context is fair game where the use of English is deemed unnecessary and therefore invasive, i.e.,

detrimental to the mother language, Italian. Group members initiate these threads and comment on existing ones, often by posting more examples in a given context. Anyone can have access to the group, based upon the moderator's permission. The moderator, Giuseppina Solinas, is an Italian currently residing in the UK.

It is interesting to point out that when I started collecting fieldnotes in March 2020, the group counted circa 200 members. A year later, in March 2021, the number had doubled, with over 400 members. By the start of data analysis and discussion, March 2022, the group counted almost 1,650 members. These suddenly growing numbers show not only that the debate continues, more heated than ever, but also that people feel more and more strongly about the encroachment of English into Italian.

The page offers several links to other platforms (e.g., “*Let’s say it in Italian*” by the lexicographer Antonio Zoppetti); a plethora of non-academic articles on the subject (e.g., by newspaper or magazine journalists); and links to YouTube video channels dealing with the same issue (e.g., the aforementioned Giorgio Comaschi’s channel satirizing uses of English in the Italian media). All of this linked material also receives comments from group members, though to different degrees. For example, the use of English in academia was a hot topic for years, in Italy, and posts dealing with this issue received a relatively large number of comments. Likewise, the Covid-19 pandemic has had evident linguistic repercussions, because of the Covid-related English vocabulary and numerous direct and false loans that have largely, and readily, been adopted by the government and the media (e.g. *smart working* to refer to working from home; *lockdown*, *droplets* etc.). During the data collection period, these Covid-19-related English loanword threads were also very popular, as far as comment numbers, although their popularity diminished after the first few pandemic months of widespread linguistic outrage

(Figure 3.3). On this Facebook page, I consider “a large number of comments” to be any post with over twenty comments, based on average comment numbers observed. In fact, posts seem to range between three to ten comments on average. Lastly, some group members seem to be more active than others, with at least two posts per week. What many group members engage in, however, is the need to bring English words to attention: not just to propose an autochthone alternative, but also to directly comment on their introduction into Italian to begin with (e.g., the already mentioned *smart working*).

There are a few other Facebook groups devoted to the supposed overuse of English and how it is contaminating Italian, but they deal with the issue to different degrees of seriousness and/or commitment, and their members are generally much less productive. Thus, this Facebook group was selected because of its liveliness, its fecundity, and its informality. (The latter is why the interactive forum *Cruscate*, named after the *Accademia della Crusca*, was considered but rejected, since its content is very academic and utilizes metalanguage that proves challenging to the average non-linguist).

Figure 3.3 provides an example of a typical Facebook post in “*Viva l’Italiano*,” grouped under one of the Topics where members’ posts are collected. In it, the moderator Giuseppina Solinas shared a link to an article first published in the newspaper *La Nazione* in 2015, whose title reads “*Brand and concept? Enough now. ‘No English. We are Italian.’*”

Italians

The third platform utilized in this study is the blog/forum *Italians*, a daily feature of the online version of the popular newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, moderated by journalist Beppe Severgnini, author of several books (e.g., *An Italian in London*; *An Italian in the US*; *English:*

Semi-serious Lessons), written over a span of thirty years, based on his own experiences of having lived and worked abroad.

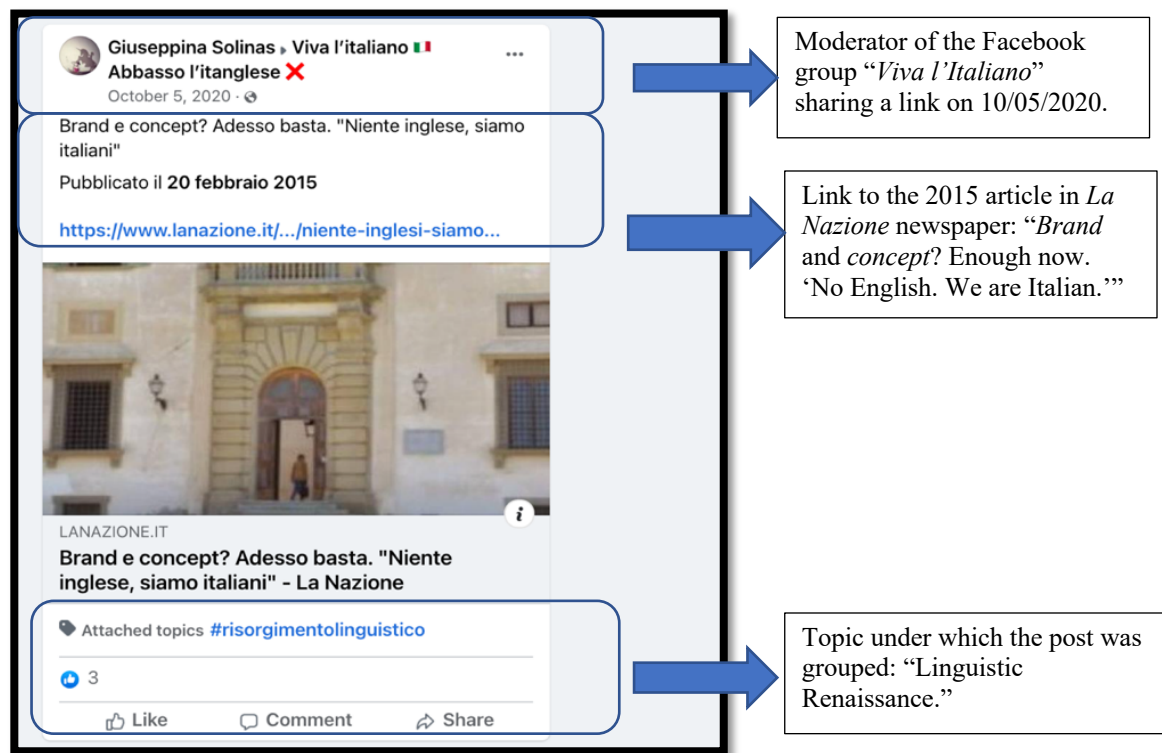


Figure 3.3
Example of Facebook post (05/10/20)

Much older than the nevertheless already ten-year-old Facebook group, the by-now twenty-five year-old blog/forum was created in 1998 as a participatory digital space, to give voice to the experiences of Italians residing abroad. In Severgnini’s own words, the blog is by now a “digital antique,” but it was created to be “the first little house for the *Corriere* readers scattered in the world.” Nowadays, five emails from readers are published daily on the blorum, and from my observations, it appears that the majority of emails is actually sent by Italians residing in Italy. Most emails typically comment on a variety of current events, domestic and otherwise, not necessarily dealing with life abroad. However, a portion of emails regularly address the latter, (i.e., cultural difference between countries and lifestyles), as well as linguistic

issues, often tied to uses of English in Italian contexts specifically. Additionally to the five emails, Severgnini himself contributes occasionally with his own editorial blog post: not on a regular basis, but when he feels the need to address a particular topic, usually related to current events or issues of various kinds. At times, he also replies to individual emails attaching links to his past articles and editorials. For example, at the peak of the pandemic, he replied to an email discussing the English-in-Italian issue by attaching an earlier editorial he had written for the same newspaper, about pandemic-related Anglicisms.⁶ Figure 3.4 shows *Italians* interface: Severgnini cartoon at the top; underneath, an anonymized letter from an *Italians* reader about the differences between the Finnish and the Italian school system and pedagogical policies, followed by Severgnini's reply. I chose to include data from the *Italians* blog/forum because of its different constraints and affordances from the Facebook page: emails are not guaranteed publication, unlike Facebook posts, and in order to be published they must be filtered and chosen by journalists, Severgnini and his collaborators. (Also, they are not guaranteed a reply by Severgnini even when they do get published). On top of this, email writers' texts tend to be more formal than on other digital platforms like YouTube or Facebook (because they are writing to the most prestigious Italian newspaper). In this way, the emails published on the blorum are a genre that is more akin to "letters to the editor" than a typical short, informal post generally found on other social media like Facebook. Although emails mocking English uses in Italian do come in from time to time, the tone of authors of emails to *Italians* is nevertheless less casual and easygoing than on other social media, and emails generally retain the formality of editorial letter writing, an older genre that is also more persuasive in nature.

⁶ "I Goffi Inutili Anglicismi della Pandemia" (The Clumsy, Useless Anglicisms of the Pandemic).



Figure 3.4
Italians interface

Additionally, most authors of emails which get posted to the blog/forum seem to orient to a specific, objective authority in language matters: Severgnini's, because of his profession and because of his professional past abroad (in the UK and the US, where he was a columnist for different newspapers). In contrast, on Facebook, there is not an orientation to one fixed language authority. Based on my observations, Facebook group members ask questions to and address all other members in the group: not specifically the moderator Solinas. So it is safe to assume that Solinas is considered at the same level of other group members, as far as language expertise, despite the edge that residing in the UK may give her.

Figure 3.5 exemplifies an email sent to *Italians* discussing the abundance of English loans and addressing Severgnini directly.

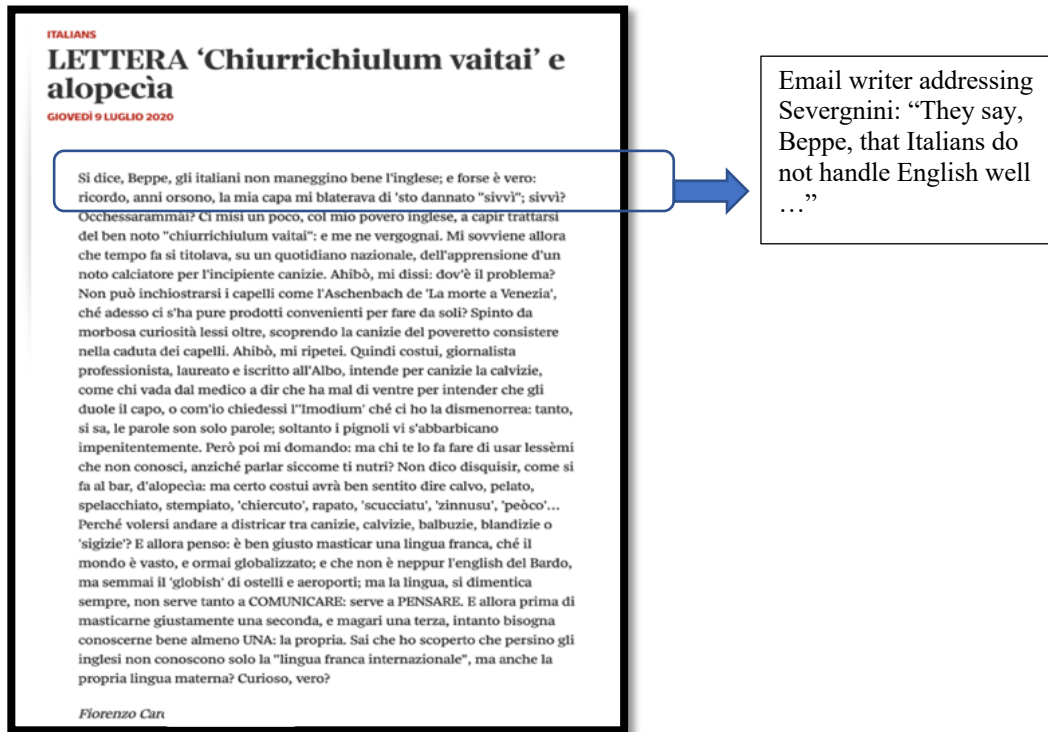


Figure 3.5
Example of email to *Italians* (07/09/2020)

Data Collection Procedure and Collection Criteria

My participant observation for this study on all three platforms began in March 2020. For a year, I took screenshots and field notes from these sites about patterns and trends I noticed, and these were recorded in a research log; my notes served as the basis for observations about the three digital contexts that are the sites for my data collection. I collected these data from March 1st, 2020 to March 31st, 2021. All verbal data, from all three platforms, were copied to separate Word documents for analytic purposes.

TED Talk/YouTube Data

As far as Testa's TED Talk, I first analyzed the talk itself (video transcript) and carried out a multimodal analysis of the video. It is important to point out that different text segments, operationalized as portions of the talk transcript, were utilized when relevant to different research questions. For example, some segments involved attempts to establish her authority, i.e., expertise claims, and others included references to language ideologies. From both transcript and video, I identified specific instances of English (over)use people complain about, and social contexts where these happen (RQ1), claims of expertise (RQ2), and language ideology-related claims and sociolinguistic counter discourses (RQ3). Next, I focused on the comments of YouTube users responding to the TED Talk, and on replies⁷ to those comments, identifying the same instances and claims.

By the start of data analysis, (October 23rd, 2021), there were 1103 comments on Testa's 2015 TED Talk. Comments were collected in reverse chronological order. To keep the dataset parallel with Facebook and *Italians*, only comments posted until March 31st, 2021 were collected. Because YouTube comments that are over one-year-old no longer specify the month of posting but are only time-posted as "one year ago" or "two years ago," I included all posts from 2020. In other words, YouTube data include all posts from 2020 and posts from January to March 2021. I only analyzed comments in languages that were intelligible to me (i.e., in Italian, English, French, Spanish, and German).

It is also important to point out that the number of texts analyzed varies depending on the research question at hand, and that criteria of inclusion are always discussed at the beginning of each research question discussion, in each of the next Chapters: Four, Five, and Six. For

⁷ Roughly, 1/5 of comments received replies. Among these, typically comments average 1 to 2 replies, though there are exceptions: e.g., one comment that called Testa "hypocritical" has 8 replies.

example, when answering RQ1, I included YouTubers' comments that addressed specific instances of English use⁸ in Italian contexts Testa had already commented on, while I did not include comments that only quoted her verbatim or were simply amused remarks, for a total of twenty-seven (N = 27) comments. When answering RQ2, I only included comments for analysis that implicitly or explicitly tried to establish some form of authority in language matters. Generically related statements not trying to show any expertise in that sense were not included, for a total of fifty-nine (N = 59) texts.⁹ When answering RQ3, I did not include texts that were too generic for analysis, where no specific underlying language ideologies could be identified, or where uses of English were only deemed "ridiculous" without further elaborating on what that meant. Comments whose stance was unclear¹⁰ and only indirectly related¹¹ were not included either. A total of fifty-four texts (N = 54) were analyzed in relation to RQ3.

Facebook Data

I collected and analyzed Facebook texts posted between March 2020 and March 2021, as well as members' comments on them, regardless of being by the moderator or regular members. Specifically, and for feasibility' s sake, I chose to collect not all texts posted in the aforementioned solar year, but only those that the administrator chose to group together under six different content-related subgroups, called 'Topics': six content-related "virtual shelves" where posts can be clustered together, and whose access tabs are on the group homepage (Figure 3.6 and 3.7). The moderator at times added the same post to multiple Topics, which means that

⁸ Two instances of borrowing from other languages have not been counted in reference to RQ1: *Movida*; *garage*. Likewise, hybrids that have been deliberately created as mottoes/puns were not analyzed in reference to RQ1: *RoMe & You*; *I AMsterdam*; *I feel sLOVEnia*; *Be Berlin*.

⁹ Example of generic claims without language expertise/authority: "Awesome initiative. We need to use our beautiful language" or "I speak English and I love Italian. Please don't contaminate your beautiful language!"

¹⁰ Example of unclear stance: "Everybody knows the reason behind this."

¹¹ Example of indirectly related comment: "Another thing to ban is this ridiculous proliferation of [Italian] acronyms. I think with DAD [Didattica A Distanza, i.e., teaching remotely] we have reached the bottom."

the same text would appear multiple times. Since in two Topics out of six I could only find data I had already gathered, I ended up collecting posts from four Topics out of six. The virtual “content boxes” posts are grouped in have rather creative names. The four I collected data from are: “Dillo in Italiano” (Say it in Italian), “Risorgimento Linguistico” (Linguistic Renaissance), “L’italianoviva” (Long Live Italian), and “Dumbcopying,” the latter name probably an attempt to mock false loans. I could not find new data in “4 in Pagella” (F on the Report Card) and “Attivisti dell’Italiano” (Italian Activists). It is important to emphasize that Testa’s TED Talk and YouTube data were analyzed separately, while Facebook posts and comments on them were analyzed at the same time. Besides the different temporal relationship between data (the TED Talk was given in 2015 and uploaded onto YouTube the same year, and comments on it have been posted afterwards and since), the nature of the texts is different.

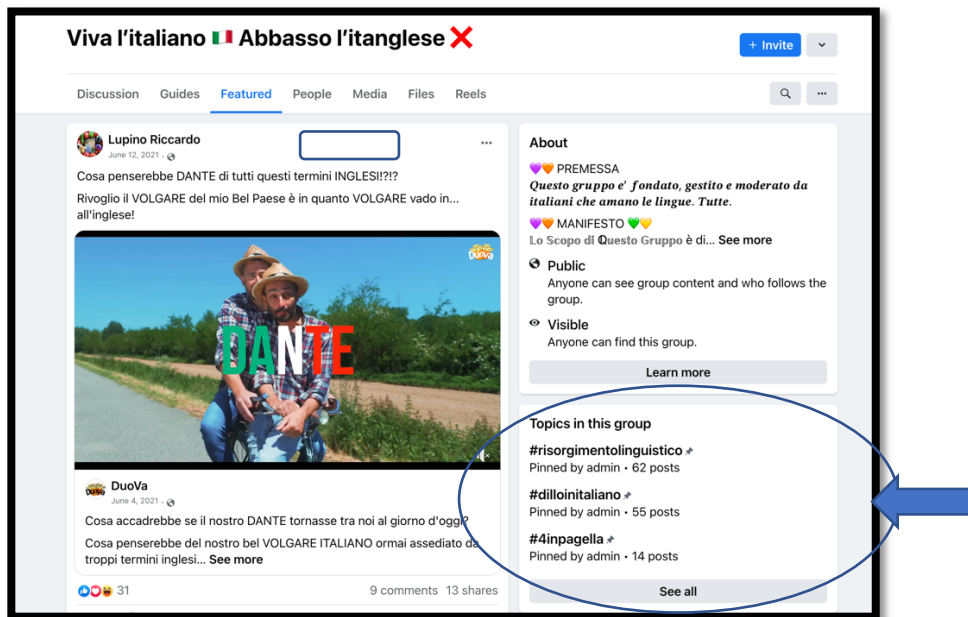


Figure 3.6
Topic tabs on the Facebook group homepage.

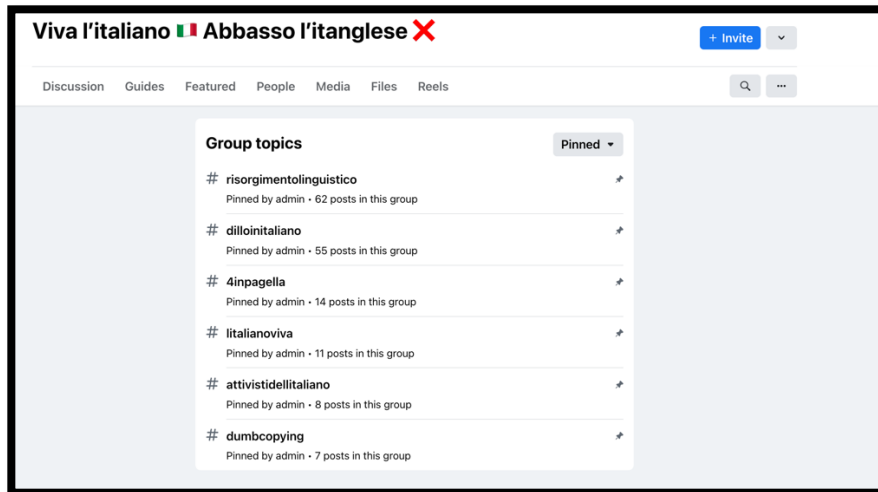


Figure 3.7

Six topic tabs. Members can click on them to access content, i.e., all posts grouped under them.

In other words, the TED Talk is a long, non-interactive video, as opposed to the short, written texts on YouTube (N = 66) and Facebook (N = 89), which can also turn into threads.

Also, in consideration of feasibility and data reduction needs, only direct comments on a Facebook post were taken into consideration: replies to comments and replies to replies were not, since they also tend to be quite redundant when making a point.¹² From these Facebook texts (N = 89), I identified specific instances of English use and accountable social actors (RQ1), authority claims (RQ2), and language ideology-related claims and sociolinguistic counter discourses (RQ3).

It is once again important to note that the number of texts varies depending on the research question at hand. For example, when answering RQ1, posts that simply ask or suggest Italian alternatives for widespread English loans were ignored, as well as their comments, which left me with a total of seventy-three posts (N = 73).¹³ When answering RQ2, comments on those

¹² For example, Solinas's replies to the same member who insists on the difference in meaning between *coming out* and *outing*, which she repeatedly challenges with a number of examples.

¹³ For example, Solinas asking how to translate *account* and *community* in technology discourse.

posts were included instead, since those often show attempts to establish one's authority in linguistic matters. Also, to answer RQ2, only comments that implicitly or explicitly try to establish some form of authority in the matter have been selected for analysis.¹⁴ All these resulted in a total of forty-nine (N = 49) texts analyzed under RQ2. When answering RQ3, only posts and direct comments on posts were included that were more or less explicitly language ideology-related or counter discourse-related, including comments on posts suggesting Italian alternatives to English. Vague comments that would not point to any of the coded language ideologies in the taxonomy were left out,¹⁵ for a total of forty-four (N = 44) texts.

Italians Data

Consistently with YouTube and Facebook datasets, I searched the *Italians* archive in the *Corriere della Sera* website for emails sent between March 1st, 2020 and March 31st, 2021, using the keyword “inglese” (English) first, and using the keyword “Covid” afterwards, the latter because the debate about the use of English loans rather than existing Italian counterparts was particularly lively at the beginning of the pandemic (e.g., *lockdown*, *droplets*, etc.).¹⁶ In general, emails that mentioned the English language but that did not touch upon any linguistic and/or language ideology-related issues were not considered.¹⁷ The first search yielded twelve (N = 12) emails; the second search yielded nine (N = 9) additional emails, for a total of twenty-one (N = 21) emails, both with (N = 10) and without (N = 11) reply by moderator Beppe Severgnini. In

¹⁴ Example of comment without any attempt to establish authority: “Poor Italian and poor English!”

¹⁵ Example of generically/vaguely ideological comment: “Even ‘antipurists and Anglicists’ are getting fed up. They say. Maybe I can see a small light at the end of the tunnel. Tunnel? Tunnel!!!”.

¹⁶ *Italians* readers took notice of English (or English-sounding) Covid 19-related vocabulary in particular in all sorts of contexts. For example, between April 22nd and April 26th, 2020, when it was clear that the Covid 19-related English vocabulary had been readily embraced by Italian institutions and media, four emails were posted on the blog in the span of only one week, commenting on this phenomenon.

¹⁷ For example, one email utilized the term ‘smart working’ but without commenting on its (false) English loan nature in any way, while another mixed Italian and English talking about Covid, but without making any comments of linguistic nor ideological nature.

these, I identified specific instances of English use, social actors, and social contexts (RQ1), authority and expertise claims (RQ2), and language ideology-related claims and sociolinguistic counter discourses (RQ3).

Yet again, the number of emails and replies taken into consideration for analysis depends on the research question at hand, though in the case of *Italians*, these numeric variations are minimal. For example, one letter – and its reply – complaining about the unnecessary use of complex, artificial-sounding words in Italian, i.e., what is called “unnecessary Italicisms,” was not taken into consideration for RQ2 and RQ3 since it only briefly mentioned applauding Severgnini’s supposed battle against Anglicisms, but the topic is Italian, not *Italenglish*. When answering RQ3, one email was not considered since the *Italian* accuses Italian academic research (not the *language* per se, nor its speakers) to be inferior to Anglophone research: these claims do not fall under any of the eight detected language ideologies introduced at the end of Chapter Two (p. 56). Lastly, when answering RQ2 and RQ3, it is crucial to point out that different excerpts of emails were analyzed depending on the RQ at hand, for feasibility’s sake again (the same way Testa’s TED Talk transcript was divided into segments, some of which were utilized for RQ2 analysis, and others for RQ3). Emails are often quite lengthy in fact: in some email excerpts, people try to establish their authority; in others, they imply different ideologies; in others yet, they mention counter discourses.

Interview Data

Once all screen-based data analysis was completed, I contacted the following individuals and asked them to participate in semi-structured interviews, which, in ethnographic research, follow the analysis of participant observation data and help researchers learn more about particular practices. I contacted Annamaria Testa (author of the TED Talk), Giuseppina Solinas

(Facebook group moderator), and Beppe Severgnini (moderator of *Italians*). I interviewed Severgnini in mid-October 2022 via Microsoft Teams, and Testa in late November 2022 via Zoom. Solinas politely declined to meet virtually to conduct her interview, defining herself a “very private person,” and she asked that the interview questions be emailed to her, which she answered in writing. Both the email exchange and the interview in writing happened in early October 2022.

I developed interview questions based on my screen-based findings (for question sets, see Appendix B), following the phases for interview research design (see Appendix A) illustrated by Roulston (2010a). Ethnographic interviewing, whose purpose is to understand how people “use language and make meaning of events and objects”(Roulston, 2010b, p. 13), “relies” in fact “on the researcher’s ongoing analysis of data generated via ... observations [and] participation in the research settings” (Roulston, 2010b, p. 12). In ethnographic studies, interview questions are often generated from information already gathered, from what a researcher has already “observed and experienced during fieldwork”(Roulston, 2010b, p. 14), and thus they are used to “verify or disconfirm hypotheses generated from data analysis”(Roulston, 2010b, p. 13). For example, by interviewing Testa, I could check whether her stance indeed changes when commenting on different kinds of loans (over)use, i.e., false and hybrid loans versus direct ones. This way, the researcher systematically checks her own understanding of pre-existing data and refines ongoing analyses and interpretations (Roulston, 2010b). For the present study, my purpose in interviewing the key figures associated with these digital sites was to gain further understanding of their awareness of language ideologies (Silverstein, 1979), reflected in their discourses, and to check if their answers corroborated or not my own understanding of those, based on data analysis.

It is important to point out that I conducted pilot interviews with two Italian colleagues, whom I interviewed in Italian to test the validity of the questions as well as their wording, before my in-person interviews with key figures linked to platforms. Pilot interviews were important since they revealed that the original opening question was clearly leading, while others required clearer, or less technical, wording, i.e., devoid of sociolinguistic jargon. After revisions, the final draft of interview questions started with broad, more generic questions, the first of which tailored to each expert, i.e., as previously pointed out, the TED Talk author as well as the Facebook and blog/forum moderators. It is necessary to reiterate that “expert” is operationalized in two different ways, as previously defined on p. 61: “expert” refers both to one’s profession entirely revolving around language, (e.g., an advertiser like Testa, or a translator, or a journalist like Severgnini, etc.), as well as to one’s role of platform moderator (Solinas).

In the two virtual interviews, experts’ answers not only spontaneously addressed other yet-to-be-asked questions on my list, but they also generated unplanned questions in each case, which resulted in a long conversation with both Severgnini and Testa, respectively 51 and 65 minutes, recorded and later transcribed. The email exchange with Solinas instead yielded a much more limited amount of data. Each interview was analyzed to answer the three different research questions. In some excerpts, interviewees discussed specific instances of English use, accountable social actors, and different social contexts where these happen (RQ1). In others, they more or less explicitly discussed where their authority and expertise in language matters derives from (RQ2). In others yet, they made language ideology-related claims, and/or mentioned sociolinguistic counter discourses (RQ3), the latter more or less explicitly once again. Table 1 summarizes study design and criteria of data collection.

Table 1: *Study design and data collection criteria*

TED Talk/YouTube	Facebook	<i>Italians</i>
TED Talk (2015) by Annamaria Testa about <i>Italenglish</i> : Multimodal analysis of transcript and video.	Facebook group (2012) devoted to preserving Italian from Anglicization.	Blog/forum <i>Italians</i> (1998) in the newspaper <i>Corriere della Sera</i> .
Discourse analysis of digital texts: YouTube comments responding to it (2020 – 21). Comments: 66 total.	Discourse analysis of digital texts: Group members’ posts (2020 – 21). Posts: 89 total.	Discourse analysis of digital texts: Emails to <i>Italians</i> and Severgnini’s replies (2020 – 21). Emails: 21 total. Replies: 10 total.
Interview with TED Talk author and communication expert Annamaria Testa (2022).	Interview with group moderator Giuseppina Solinas (2022).	Interview with blog moderator and journalist Beppe Severgnini (2022).

Data Analysis Procedures

As presented on p. 61, the steps I took to answer RQ1 are the following:

Step 1: I identified each instance of overuse/uncalled-for use of English commented upon on all platforms, to identify the “complained about.”

Step 2: I classified these examples as direct loans v. false or hybrid loans and semantic extension/narrowing, in line with language ideology’s three-dimensional focus on linguistic form, social use, and reflections on forms in use (Woolard, 2008), i.e., a focus on linguistic practices besides discourses about language. I verified the latter classifications by utilizing both an Italian and an Anglophone monolingual dictionary, as well as a bilingual one (i.e., Treccani, Merriam-Webster, and Wordreference).

Step 3: I utilized the same dictionaries to validate whether an equally concise or short enough¹⁸ Italian alternative exists.¹⁹ “No Italian equivalent” applies to English loans when lengthier phrases are necessary to render the same idea.²⁰

¹⁸ One to three words.

¹⁹ Since concision and straightforwardness are recurring arguments used to justify English use.

²⁰ It must be pointed out that a lower syllable count may be an equally valid argument to justify the use of English instead of Italian, whose words tend to be multisyllabic more often than in English.

Step 4: I identified which social actors the overuse/uncalled-for use of English is attributed to, e.g., politicians and the Government, mass media, advertisers, etc..

Step 5: I compared results across all platforms.

The steps that I took to answer RQ2 are the following:

Step 1: I identified whether the writer of comments on items identified in RQ1 is an expert or a lay person.

Step 2: I identified in what ways s/he established her/his expertise and authority. Table 2 presents a taxonomy of both definitions and examples of expertise/authority claims: these categories were derived inductively from multiple readings of data and multiple coding rounds.

Step 3: I compared results across all platforms.

The steps I took to answer RQ3 are the following:

Step 1: I paid careful attention to specific word choice. Table 3 presents a taxonomy of language ideology definitions, key words, and examples.

Step 2: I compared those findings across different platforms.

Step 3: I compared which language ideologies and counter discourses are most prevalent among experts versus lay people.

Table 2: *Authority-establishing strategy taxonomy and examples*

How to establish one’s authority and definitions	Examples
<p>Language experience</p> <p>I.e., additional information about one’s experience with foreign language, (e.g., having lived or studied abroad, having a language degree, or using a foreign language at work, or having witnessed code-switching between other languages, etc.); or one’s awareness of and commenting on what the <i>Accademia della Crusca</i> is (not) doing about foreignisms in Italian.</p>	<p>“I am a French teacher and translator, and I’ve lived in a linguistically varied context for years.” <i>Italians</i></p> <p>“In the last thirty years, [I have] had a parallel career in English and Italian.” <i>Severgnini Interview</i></p> <p>“I am a native speaker of Spanish and in my country many people use English words instead of native ones.” <i>YouTube</i></p>

Table 2 (Continued)

How to establish one’s authority and definitions	Examples
<p>“Common sense”</p> <p>I.e., presenting information as if it were just that, objective facts that do not require any further explanation nor evidence, which naturalizes ideologies.</p>	<p>“You learn English and Spanish out of necessity. Italian out of love.” <i>YouTube</i></p> <p>“English substituting Italian is in reality due to an irresistible tendency to linguistic self-colonization, which the media not only reflect but also powerfully contribute to reinforce.” <i>Italians</i></p> <p>“Let’s make Italian and English collapse senselessly! We don’t like that, and the Anglophones don’t like that either.” <i>TED Talk</i></p>
<p>Linguistic expertise</p> <p>I.e., being a language professional on the one hand (e.g., a journalist, a translator, an advertiser)²¹ or, on the other, proving one’s expertise by using technical jargon or any marked, more formal language choices, (e.g., use of subjunctive and/or less common/erudite/archaic vocabulary), as well as discussions of faulty/lacking translations, word usages, pronunciation, and grammar in general, etc..</p>	<p>“When our politicians launched the ‘Voluntary Disclosure,’ they said, “we need to push the ‘Voluntary.’” They didn’t say, “we need to push the ‘Disclosure.’” because they haven’t yet understood that English puts the flipping adjectival before [a noun]! So it was ‘the Voluntary.’ And this testifies to the fact that whoever uses these English [phrases] does not know English well.” <i>Testa Interview</i></p> <p>“So the English use ‘accessories’ which is an Italian calque while we instead use a false Anglicism.” <i>Facebook</i></p> <p>“What does it take to make [journalists] understand that ‘recovery found’ is not the same as ‘recovery fund’?” <i>Italians</i></p>
<p>Sociolinguistic knowledge</p> <p>I.e., more or less explicit references to, for example, language change and language globalization.</p>	<p>“And so I think, it is very good to speak a lingua franca, since the world is big, and by now globalized.” <i>Italians</i></p> <p>“Result of globalization.” <i>YouTube</i></p> <p>“It is the first time that two empires, the British and the American one, [have] succeeded each other in history and speak the same language.” <i>Severgnini Interview</i></p>

²¹ Professional linguistic expertise is very rarely applicable in all datasets, and it refers to one’s profession entirely revolving around language, not just using some foreign language at/for work: e.g., an advertiser, a translator, a journalist.

Table 2 (Continued)

How to establish one's authority and definitions	Examples
<p>Cultural knowledge</p> <p>I.e., references to literature, and/or reference to key figures in Italian and Anglophone cultures in connection with language.</p>	<p>“[Dante] coined the Italian language, the same language we have been mistreating and maiming.” <i>Italians</i></p> <p>“Dante just rolled over in his grave.” <i>YouTube</i></p> <p>“The unforgotten Andrea Camilleri talked about the importance of keeping Italian alive, avoiding an excess of Anglicisms.” <i>Facebook</i></p>

Table 3: *Language ideology taxonomy and examples*

Language ideology	Definition and key words	Examples
<p>Linguistic purity</p>	<p>The belief that foreignisms pollute the mother language, which should be cleansed of them.</p> <p>Key words: piaga, purificare; inquinare; imbastardire, ibrido, autentico, etc..</p> <p>Key word translation: plague, cleanse, pollute, bastardize, hybrid, authentic, etc..</p>	<p>“There should be a system of filters against linguistic pollution, instead.” <i>(Facebook)</i></p> <p>“Excellent! We have the same problem in Greece! We need to cleanse our languages from English.” <i>(YouTube)</i></p>
<p>Endangerment</p>	<p>The belief that foreign loans threaten the survival of the mother language.</p> <p>Key words: pericolo; morte; lotta/lottare; uccidere; bistrattare/azzoppare; violentare; colonizzare, etc..</p> <p>Key word translation: danger, death, fighting, killing, maiming, raping, colonizing, etc..</p>	<p>“[With these practices] you kill a language in two generations’ time.” <i>(Facebook)</i></p> <p>“We have the same problem in Spain. We should join our efforts to defend our Romance languages.” <i>(YouTube)</i></p>

Table 3 (Continued)

Language ideology	Definition and key words	Examples
Intrinsically beautiful language	<p>The belief that languages have an intrinsic aesthetic value that transcends their utilitarian purposes.</p> <p>Key words: bella/bellissima; magnifica; armoniosa; sensuale; iridescente; evocativa; musicale; vibrante; piacere/piacevole; emozionante, etc..</p> <p>Key word translation: beautiful, magnificent, harmonious, sensual, iridescent, evocative, musical, vibrating, pleasant, emotion-evoking, etc..</p>	<p>“This poor language of ours, originally so beautiful ...is being turned into an unaesthetic linguistic salad.” <i>(Italians)</i></p> <p>“This language, so loved, so [musical] for ears that are not Italian, so linked to pleasant things such as great music, fashion, [some kinds of] cinema, food, design, this magnificent language that has remained ... always identical to itself over 700 years.” <i>(Testa interview)</i></p>
National language	<p>The belief in the equation between one national identity and the use of one national language; appealing to one people’s history and cultural roots, and the belief that using a foreign code implies a lack of love for one’s country.</p> <p>What distinguishes this from monolingualism is ‘why’ we need to use Italian, or Italian only, while the latter is just more of a prescriptive dogma, though to different degrees.</p> <p>Key words: amore/amare; rispetto; tradire; vergognarsi, etc..</p> <p>Key word translation: love, respect, betray, shame, etc.; references to Italian culture and heritage.</p>	<p>“I find it repugnant and absurd that Italy, crib of culture, accepts and boasts, even with pride, such nonsense and tyranny like pseudo progress (which instead is regress away from us) with modernization and globalization that only want to be homologation, depriving peoples of their being.” <i>(YouTube)</i></p> <p>“This year we have the 700th anniversary of Dante’s death. It should be worth celebrating it in deeds rather than words. He coined the Italian language ...” <i>(Italians)</i></p>

Table 3 (Continued)

Language ideology	Definition and key words	Examples
Inferiority complex	<p>The belief that a foreign code is used because it is perceived as better, cooler, superior, more modern, more cosmopolitan etc., and this is meant to reflect on the person who uses it.</p> <p>Key words: esibizionismo; accattivante; figo; cosmopolita; moda; migliore; più figo; superiore; moderno; abbellire; inferiore; provinciale; meno di, etc..</p> <p>Key word translation: exhibitionism; cool; cosmopolitan; trendy, fashionable, better, cooler, superior, more modern, embellishing, inferior, provincial²², lesser, etc..</p>	<p>“Yet, every day, either out of laziness, distraction, conformism, because it sounds modern, because we are provincial, we make use of a lot of unnecessary English words, ... plainly secondary and pointless [words].” (<i>TED Talk</i>)</p> <p>“I get mad at English when [its use] makes no sense, has no justification, and is just a show of vanity, fashion, or unjustified inferiority, then I snap!” (<i>Severgnini interview</i>)</p>
Monolingualism	<p>On the one hand, the more extreme prescriptive belief we need to use one language at the time and that all foreignisms should be translated; on the other, the more lenient belief that foreignisms should be used only when strictly necessary/inevitable.</p> <p>Key words: uso eccessivo; abuso; non necessario; inutile, accessorio, etc..</p> <p>Key word translation: overuse, abuse (not as in a violent act but meaning ‘overuse’), unnecessary, useless; optional, etc..</p>	<p>“Well said. Those who really speak several languages never mix them, or at least they try not to.” (<i>YouTube</i>)</p> <p>“I avoid slipping English words into [Italian], as you may have noticed. Unless it is necessary: if everybody says ‘smart working,’ I won’t be the snobbish guy [who does not].” (<i>Italians</i>)</p>

²² “Provincial”: (pejorative) which is proper, typical, characteristic of the province, i.e., of peripheral and minor centers, with reference to a real or presumed economic, social and cultural backwardness of small towns and villages with respect to big cities. Provincial mentality: provincial ways, habits, always in a reductive sense; a person who shows that he has a narrow mentality, petty-bourgeois habits, bad taste considered typical of provincial people. Naïve. In art history: “provincial delay,” delay with which peripheral environments incorporate and reproduce artistic forms and models developed in the most important cultural centers (Treccani).

Table 3 (Continued)

Language ideology	Definition and key words	Examples
Obfuscation	<p>The belief that foreign codes are used to hide something, sugar-coat bitter pills, or trick/deceive people, by those who have the power to do so.</p> <p>Key words: fregatura; nascondere; fraintendere; privo di significato; oscuro; incerto; non democratico, etc..</p> <p>Key word translation: scam, hide, mis/understand, meaningless, obscure, unclear, un/democratic, etc..</p>	<p>“Only in Italy is teleworking called ‘smart working’: perhaps because it sounds better, and it better hides a scam.” <i>(Italians)</i></p> <p>“English expressions that tend to hide something irritate me. And politics, for example, has used many of them. Politics is a specialist in this.” <i>(Severgnini interview)</i></p>
Complaint	<p>The belief that a language has its own fixed structure/rules/lexicon/pronunciation that cannot be altered/adapted when adopted by speakers of another.</p> <p>Key words: falso, erroneo; sbagliato; scorretto; inventato; improprio, etc..</p> <p>Key word translation: false, erroneous, wrong, incorrect, mistaken, invented, misused, improper, etc..</p>	<p>“Don’t worry. Keep ‘footing’ – no Anglophone would understand you.” <i>(YouTube)</i></p> <p>“Can anyone explain to Mattarella and co. that ‘cashback’ does not mean ‘refund’ (besides being a useless Anglicism)?” <i>(Facebook)</i></p>

Lastly, it is as crucial to point out that coding for all three RQs required several rounds. RQ1 coding relied on discrete, pre-established categories (e.g., direct loans v. false loans) whose assignment was double-checked by a bilingual linguist, native speaker of English. At times, data required category re-assignment, resolved through discussion. RQ2 and RQ3 necessitated multiple rounds of re-coding, also double-checked by the same linguist. Both RQs 2 and 3 required a more inductive process, i.e., “incomplete” working lists of both authority claim

strategies and ideologies were complemented by emergent categories identified in the data. New categories were added after discussion, and data were recoded three times. Table 4 summarizes data analysis procedures, i.e., each step per research question, as well as the number of examples, texts, etc. per research question.

Table 4: *Data analysis procedures*

RQ1: The “complained about”	RQ2: Expertise claims	RQ3: Language ideologies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of each instance of overuse/uncalled-for use of English. 2. Classification of loan categories: direct/false/hybrid; semantic changes. 3. Identification of social actors deemed responsible. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of whether the writer of comments on items identified in RQ1 is an expert or a lay person. 2. In what ways s/he established her/his expertise and authority (Table 2). 3. Differences across platforms. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language ideologies: Attention to word choice (Table 3). 2. Presence of counter discourses. 3. Differences across platforms and experts v. lay people.
TED Talk: 32 examples of English use. YouTube: 27 examples of English use.	TED Talk: 34 script segments. YouTube: 59 texts.	TED Talk: 23 script segments.. YouTube: 54 texts.
Facebook: 90 examples of English use.	Facebook: 49 texts.	Facebook: 44 texts.
<i>Italians</i> : 100 examples of English use.	<i>Italians</i> : 29 email/reply excerpts.	<i>Italians</i> : 24 email/reply excerpts.

Ethics

Upon checking with the USF IRB board, institutional approval was deemed unnecessary for the interview data in my study. However, this did not eliminate the need for ethical considerations as discussed earlier on pp. 49-50: while social media affordances make collection of data easier, subjects are sometimes unaware of being monitored, and researchers must decide whether to “inform subjects of their presence, methods, and analysis” (Vitak et al., 2016, p. 942). When it comes to naturally-occurring digital data that are publicly available and their utilization,

ethical decision-making remains a challenge, and decisions and strategies as far as ethical concerns appear to vary substantially (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021; Zimmer, 2010), across and within disciplines. This study carries out a critical discourse analysis of social media and internet-based discussions, i.e., an analysis of online data that are publicly available. The specific issue faced by discourse analysts is that the method relies on verbatim quotations, which are “inevitable in discourse analysis publications” (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021, p. 2). The problem is that verbatim data from digital contexts are traceable by anyone, as opposed to verbatim quotations from non-digital ones.

The Association of Internet Research (AoIR), among other organizations, has attempted to create ethical rules that apply to a variety of online contexts, but the diversity of online landscapes is “immense and ever-changing,” so the many possible approaches to ethical guidelines leave room for many interpretations (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021, p. 2). In the case of this study, discussion of ethics encompasses various concerns, including “the public/private distinction, anonymity ... searchability/retrievability ... of data”(Stommel & de Rijk, 2021). The distinction between public and private data lies at their core: one’s “awareness of posting things publicly is not the same as consenting with research” (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021, p. 3). So even if an online space is public, researchers should “consider what is disclosed *to whom* in a particular environment”(Stommel & de Rijk, 2021, p. 3, emphasis added), and that people tend “not to expect to be observed by strangers” (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021, p. 12), nor do they expect their content to be used outside the context where it was produced (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021, p. 3).

This said, in this study, on the one hand anonymization of data did not make sense when, for example, comments on English-in-Italian use come from public figures: like Beppe Severgnini, who is often a guest on political talk shows, besides writing for the *Corriere*; or

Annamaria Testa, who is also often interviewed on TV, works with the *Accademia della Crusca*, and writes articles for different publications. On the other hand, I anonymized YouTube commentators, Facebook group members, and *Italians* writers by utilizing initials or acronyms of their usernames. In the case of *Italians*, it must be noted that Severgnini believes in signing one's email with one's real name, i.e. taking responsibility for what one says. Additionally, authors of these emails are likely to expect their content to be used outside the context it was produced for (Stommel & de Rijk, 2021): they are in fact invited to share their e-address for possible interaction with readers of *Italians*. However, all *Italians* but the moderator were anonymized. All data were copied and pasted into Word documents and translated into English, and data were also often excerpted for analysis as relevant to different research questions (as mentioned on p. 77, each RQ addressed different aspects of data). As far as wide dissemination of data and issues of accountability (Lichtmann, 2013), anonymization and the relative harmlessness of the topic at hand seemed to satisfy ethical concerns.

Subjectivity, Reflexivity, Limitations, and Applicability

Qualitative research is considered “fluid and ever changing”: in a word, “dynamic” (Lichtman, 2013, p. 17). This means not only that there is not one particular way of doing things, or one right way of doing them, but also that often qualitative researchers pose new kinds of questions while exploring new ways of answering them, or they may identify new questions while attempting to answer others, as they move from specific to the general, to develop themes in an inductive way (Lichtman, 2013; Mann, 2011). Likewise, qualitative research is nonlinear and iterative, i.e. it can have multiple beginning points and take unexpected turns, while “studying things as they exist” in their natural settings (Lichtman, 2013, p. 20). Additionally, the qualitative researcher is aware that the world she observes is bound to be mediated through her

and through her views on a given topic, and that her identity inevitably influences the research process (Benson, 2012; Fenge et al., 2019; Lichtman, 2013). Since the qualitative researcher occupies this pivotal, self-aware role, “striving for objectivity by reducing bias” (Lichtman, 2013, p. 21) is no real issue for much of qualitative research – and the present study is no exception. Objectivity is considered a fundamental assumption in traditional, positivist, more quantitatively oriented research where researchers remain outside “the system” (Lichtman, 2013, p. 158) of what is being studied, but qualitative studies acknowledge the role of the researcher as that of “the filter through which data are organized,” which renders striving for objectivity, simply, impossible (Lichtman, 2013, p. 159).

Not only subjectivity, but also reflexivity has much to do with the role of the self in qualitative work. Reflexivity is a “process of self-examination primarily informed” by research “practice and process, and by the role of the researcher” herself (Lichtman, 2013, p. 165). By acknowledging the role of the self, the researcher thinks about how she, her beliefs, and her assumptions, affect various aspects of a study, especially interpretations of meanings (Benson, 2012; Fenge et al., 2019; Kharbach, 2020; Lichtman, 2013; Mann, 2011). Because this makes biases apparent, subjectivity and reflexivity are arguably a strength rather than a limitation of the study. In this kind of inquiry, in fact, the burden of objectivity is “removed from the inquirer and placed on the data” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247).

For example, because I believed I disagreed on almost all Testa said in her TED Talk, I also thought that, in her interview, she would be placing herself very much at the extreme end of an imaginary continuum of more or less permissiveness towards the use of English loans in Italian, based on my impressions of her TED Talk. However, I tried to create interview questions that were open and, hopefully, not leading: exactly because I was aware of my own biases, and

the impression she made on me from the stage. Given the dynamic, non-linear, and co-constructed character of this kind of research (Mann, 2011), our semi-structured interview not only generated questions and answers that I had not considered before, but it also showed me how faulty my generalizations of her language ideology-related claims had been. She was not the prescriptivist I had originally thought: quite the opposite, she only meant – and intends – to promote a sensible, more justified use of foreign loans, “[not] to expunge English.” She placed herself very much in the middle in the debate (just as Severgnini does), supporting her claims with valid examples, and the hypocrisy some YouTube users accused her of, or the double-standards I thought she unwittingly held, were simply not there. Nevertheless, my interview with Testa did not affect my labelling of her language-ideology claims in her TED Talk, since the latter was not only completed a year before the interview took place, but it was also rendered systematic and consistent through meticulous attention to specific word choice, and numerous rounds of coding. However, the interview data required me to revise the wording of my own *discussion*, which I had to revise and hedge based on the findings in her interview.

The latter discovery is also an example of how qualitative research is emergent in design, i.e. adapting to findings and possible new ideas that may arise while conducting it, so that “changes are built in with conscious intent” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). On the one hand, as previously mentioned, RQ2 and RQ3 required multiple rounds of coding and re-coding, because new awareness of different authority claim strategies or of different language ideologies emerged over time: when new findings arose, I had to review and recode all my datasets again.

On the other hand, emergent design also “prevents an exact replication of a study in any event” since following inquirers may “choose a different path from the same data,” so that “dependability” of research as a criterion is understood as “stability” after “discounting such

unpredictable” but “rational and logical changes” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 247). In terms of applicability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), the present study identified ideologies around *Itanglese* that future research may look into, to see whether they overlap with, or differ from, common discourses about *Franglais* and *Spanglish*, for example. Or, more specifically, future research may investigate conflicts discovered in this context that overlap or differ in other languages and cultures, Romance or not. Adopting the same lens, perhaps further research may shed light on how these are further produced and circulated by those who are unanimously considered language experts and by citizen sociolinguists alike in digital spaces.

CHAPTER FOUR: TED TALK/YOUTUBE

This chapter is organized into three sections: 1. Analysis of Annamaria Testa's TED Talk. 2. Analysis of YouTube data. 3. Analysis of Testa's interview. All analyses are further organized by research questions.

Annamaria Testa's TED Talk

In her 2015 TED Talk, Annamaria Testa pled with her Italian audience to defend the beauty of their Italian language from the "rising tide" of a "provincial, unjustified, [and] often unclear mixture of Italian and English words." She not only called it a "short-circuit between two languages" but also a form of "contamination" taking place out of "laziness or distraction or conformism." She claimed that this is not only "unnecessary" and "pointless," but it is also threatening what Thomas Mann had called "the language of angels," whose "evocative, musical" words should be "defended [and] preserved." She supported her argument with a few examples first, and then she presented her online petition created to "sensitize" people about the issue, whose "incredible, transversal response" supposedly contributed to further prove her point. Before turning to YouTubers' comments on it, I first analyze the contents of Testa's video.

Multimodal Analysis and Discussion

Research Question 1.

In order to discover what specific instances of unnecessary English (over)use people are complaining about, what social actors people attribute the latter to, and if there are differences across different platforms, I pose the following question:

What instances of English language use are Italian internet users complaining about (e.g., false loans versus direct ones)? In which social contexts do they occur, and what categories of people are using language that way?

1a: Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

To answer RQ1, I first divided the loans Testa utilizes as examples in direct, false, hybrid, etc. I then identified the categories of people she considers to be the most prolific users of English borrowings. I first discuss both loan categories and accountable social actors, to then address whether her attitude changes when commenting on specific loans rather than others, e.g., whether she is more critical towards false loans rather than direct ones. In doing all of the latter, I discuss how she uses multimodality (i.e., both verbal and non-verbal resources) to further reinforce her claims.

Findings.

Out of the thirty-two (N = 32) examples of English usage Testa mentions in her nineteen minute TED Talk, the vast majority of them (N = 26) consists of direct loans, i.e., English words that have been incorporated into Italian morphosyntax without any semantic change (narrowing or extension), and without morphosyntactic hybridization. I utilized both Italian and Anglophone monolingual dictionaries (i.e., Treccani, Merriam-Webster), and a bilingual one (i.e., Wordreference), to verify that all of the latter qualify as such, as well as to validate whether an equally concise Italian alternative exists.²³ Concision is a relevant feature of these alternatives because it is one of the recurring arguments frequent users of English loanwords rely on to justify this practice. In each of those twenty-six (N = 26) instances, the Italian replacement is as

²³ One to three words.

concise as the English word/phrase.²⁴ For example, *glam* (T6)²⁵ can be easily and as concisely replaced with *affascinante* or *seducente*; *fall-winter* (T7) with *autunno-inverno*, and *curvy* (T8) with *formoso* or *prosperoso*. These are all literal translations of the English words Testa used as examples of unnecessary English use.

Of the remaining six (N = 6) instances of English use, only *Jobs Act* (T22) is a false loan, meaning *labor reform*. Two are hybrid forms, i.e., *very bello* (T1) and *displayato* (T32), where *very bello* is a hybrid phrase that modifies an Italian adjective with an English adverb, and *displayato* a morphological hybridization of an English verb to which an Italian past-participle morpheme is attached. The remaining three (N = 3) are cases of semantic change. Two are semantic narrowing, i.e., *look* (T4) to mean carefully studied exterior appearance, in terms of outfit, make-up, and hairstyle (Treccani), and *speaker* (T23) to mean *newscaster* (Wordreference; Treccani). Lastly, one is a semantic extension, i.e. *competitor* (T14),²⁶ to mean *antagonist/rival* in general, outside the business/financial arena (Treccani). It must be noted that Testa herself uses *speaker* instead of its numerous Italian alternatives without even realizing it, which does not go unnoticed to YouTube users.

As far as the categories of people borrowing words from English, according to Testa, the media are deemed by far the most prolific users of English loans (N = 25), followed by individuals from business/finance (N = 12), and advertisers (N = 10). The government is considered accountable only in three (N = 3) cases. This would corroborate what has been concluded by Gazzardi and Vásquez (2020), who analyzed the deliberate and consistent pragmatic use of English in Italian news reporting. In specific domains like fashion, as

²⁴ However, it must be pointed out that these examples contain fewer syllables than their Italian alternatives.

²⁵ I.e., ‘Testa 6.’

²⁶ *Competitor* is used both in commercial contexts and in larger contexts, meaning “rival” in a more general sense.

exemplified above (e.g., *glam*, *fall-winter*, *curvy*), English is frequently used to exploit its advertising power, rooted in its ability to index cosmopolitanism and modernity, which results in genre hybridity: in this case, a hybrid of journalistic discourse and product advertising.

As far as complaining more about certain specific uses of English rather than others, i.e., hybrid/false loans versus direct loans, Testa seems to group them all together rather indiscriminately. When she commented on the use of the false loan *Jobs Act* (T22), she reinforced her criticism by using eye-spelling, ‘Giobàtt’²⁷, but so did she when, mockingly, she exaggerated her Italian accent when saying *food* (T2) or *glam* (T6). Testa also added that the pronunciation *Giobàtt* is something that “does not exist in nature,” while a stunned, perplexed image of Dante Alighieri, considered the father of Italian language and literature,²⁸ appears on screen behind her, looking at the phrase *Jobs Act* with a question mark next to it, reinforcing the language ideological content of her message (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1.
A perplexed Dante questioning the use of Jobs Act.

²⁷ Eye-spelling is a mocking, heavy Italianization of pronunciation that reproduces defective spellings (Agha, 2007) and an “orthographic performance” that “plays on folk-stereotypes” in a “metapragmatic commentary” (Cutler, 2019, p.2) about, in this case, supposedly non-proficient Italian speakers of English.

²⁸ Dante Alighieri’s 14th century narrative poem *La Divina Commedia* is a pre-eminent work in Italian literature, considered not only the greatest by many, but also the most influential in elevating (Tuscan/Florentine) Italian to a language in its own right, i.e., no longer considered inferior to Latin.

It is interesting to notice that it is in this specific section of her speech that she used the unwarranted semantic narrowing *speaker* without realizing it, when saying that Italian newscasters “are forced to say *Giobàtt*”:

“Abbiamo una legge dello statto che si chiama *Jobs Act*, e vi assicuro che il fatto che si chiami *Jobs Act*, non l’ha resa più simpatica. Infatti ha obbligato gli *speaker* del telegiornale a dire *Giobàtt* che è una roba che non esiste in natura.”

[We have a State law named *Jobs Act*, and let me assure you, its name, *Jobs Act*, didn’t make it any nicer. In fact, it forced TV *speakers* to say *Giobbàtt*, which is something that does not exist in nature.]

It was not clear, at the time of analysis, whether she was implying that newscasters are trying to accommodate their audience by pronouncing it *Giobàtt*, or that they are not proficient English speakers. However, in her interview, on the one hand she used a few examples of the poor English pronunciation that distinguishes many Italians. On the other, she volunteered that she once declined an in-person interview with the BBC, opting for one in writing, exactly because of her own faulty pronunciation, which she defined “terrible” more than once.

In conclusion, in her TED Talk, Testa discusses the invasion of English loans in Italian by utilizing mainly direct loans as examples, but she seems to be equally bothered by hybrid phrases and false loans as by direct ones. In fact, her use of eye-spelling and of an exaggerated accent applies to false loans like *Jobs Act* (T22) as well as to perfectly grammatical sentences like “*Do we still speak Italian?*” (TT9), a rhetorical question she asked her audience and which was also eye-spelled on screen. Likewise, her rather ironic tone applies to direct loans *glam* (T6) and *wine* (T2) the same way it does to the hybrid phrase *Very bello* (T1). In other words, she makes no distinction between loan categories. The examples she utilized show that the media,

people in business/finance, and advertisers are mainly held accountable for the use of English loanwords that could be avoided, given the existence of suitable, as concise alternatives in Italian much more often than not.

Research Question 1 – Interview with Annamaria Testa.

In order to “verify or disconfirm hypotheses generated from data analysis”(Roulston, 2010b, p. 13), in ethnographic studies, researchers check their own understanding of pre-existing data and refine ongoing analyses and interpretations (Roulston, 2010b) through the use of interviews, whose questions are generated from what the researcher has already “observed and experienced during fieldwork”(Roulston, 2010b, p. 14). In order to check my understanding of Annamaria Testa’s stance on unwarranted uses of different loan categories, and of social actors deemed accountable for the latter, I interviewed her via Zoom in late November 2022, an interview that lasted 65 minutes. It was a semi-structured interview with a limited question set (see Appendix B for interview questions), on which our conversation built quite freely. In fact, at times she answered questions that were further down on my list and that I did not need to ask, while sparking others with her observations along the way.

The first question I asked Testa was how her TED Talk idea was born, this defense of Italian from *Italenglish* in this medium. Defining herself “sensitive to language uses” but not “phobic about English,” she started by saying that, in her professional world of advertising and communication, she is surrounded by marketing people who use English on a regular basis, but that at some point she started noticing that “the use of English terms was growing excessively, even unnecessary ones.” What “irritated” her at some point was that people, back in 2014, started using hybrid phrases like *ti faccio una call* (literally: I’ll make you a call, i.e., I will call you), instead of saying *ti chiamo* or *ti telefono*, which, she pointed out, are both paradoxically more

concise than the aforementioned hybrid phrase. She added that those were pre-Zoom days, where “calls” were just made on a phone: so “what on earth is it, *ti faccio una call?* Is it better than *telefonata?*”. She thought it was worth pondering what was happening more. She then published a post on her blog, *Nuovo e Utile*, with a list “of 300 English words that are used more or less commonly, and that have excellent and equally common Italian equivalents.” She remarked that her blog posts, “when the topic proves interesting,” average 1,500 – 2,000 reshares, but her “English Words We Could Happily Do Without” totaled 49,500: “it [was] a lot. An [enormity].” From there a chain reaction started of online petitions, TV and newspaper interviews, etc., which landed her on the TED stage.

That her concern was about unnecessary direct loans, as well as hybrid expressions, as well as entire phrases that appear meaningless, was confirmed throughout the interview, while she pointed out that “English is essential to know, but those who know English do not mix words; they do not speak in a strange mixture of Italian and English.” It is important to emphasize the frequency of her rhetorical questions when she discussed different loanwords, her always ironic tone while making well-supported claims, and her witty, at times exasperated word choice. On the one hand, all of the latter confirms how invested she is in the debate, which mirrors the person on stage. On the other, during my interview with her, not only what she said but also how she said it depicted a much more “in the middle” kind of stance, than what came across from the stage. In her interview, Testa appeared much less intransigent, and much more open to (justified) English uses than in her TED Talk. In other words, she is a person who never meant to “eliminate English – God forbid!” but who simply asks that it is used sensibly:

“English is often used because it is so little understood, that is, one does not get that that one word in English has a correspondent in Italian, and one does not take the time to think that *meeting* and *riunione* are the same thing.”

While explaining that she joined the *Accademia della Crusca* “ which launched the *Incipit* group ... to monitor and oppose as far as possible the advent of English neologisms,” she went on discussing how, nevertheless, in specific contexts, some English loans have just completely supplanted the Italian equivalent and have therefore *become* necessary: out of everyday use, and not because they filled a semantic gap, a specific point Beppe Severgnini would make as well. These loans were not needed, and yet it has become unavoidable to use them for intelligibility’s sake. This is what Testa implied when asked if she ever realized she may sometime mix languages accidentally:

“It happens to me when I have to use my professional jargon because if I say *fammi un bozzetto* (make me a sketch), if I say to an art director *fammi un bozzetto* – *art director* is the graphic designer in advertising – if I say *bozzetto* she looks at me widening her eyes and as if I had come out of a time hole. You say, *fammi un rough*. Then we even Italianize it and we say, *mi fai un raffino*.²⁹”

The latter Italianization of *rough* into *raffino*, on which Testa did not comment any further positively nor negatively, confirms what Gazzardi and Vásquez (2020) concluded in their analysis of pragmatic uses of English in Italian news reporting. “If Italian adopts, it is English that adapts ... in the sense of preserving Italian morphosyntax” (p. 12): *-ino* is an Italian diminutive suffix attached to *rough* that automatically turns it into a hybrid loan, i.e., *raffino*. Furthermore, it could be added that “by borrowing from English, but bending it to its own rules”

²⁹ I.e., ‘a small/quick rough.’

like in this case, “Italian is indeed changing,” but while showing signs of “linguistic [creativity]” and “vitality” rather than of “irreversible decay” that would lead it to its “eventual death” (Gazzardi & Vásquez, 2020, p. 12). (As far as the latter points, i.e., decay and death of a language, it must be pointed out that specific language ideologies in Testa’s interview excerpts will be discussed under RQ3).

Testa then discussed a few “advertisements in the *Corriere* or in *Repubblica*”³⁰ which are “full of random English words; they are written in Italian but are full of haphazard English phrases”:

“MasterCard, final sentence, which in advertising jargon is called *claim*: “*Fare la differenza insieme* (making a difference together) – *priceless*.” In your opinion, how many Italians know what *priceless* means? ... I have a bilingual son who tears his hair out every time he hears things that are out of this world. What the hell does that mean? New Skoda Fabia, and here the ultimate appeal is “*Color your different*” – not *color your difference* or *color yourself different* – no: *color your different*, which I suspect is just nonsense. What the hell does it mean, can you tell me? ... Or A2A, which is carrying out a worthy awareness-raising campaign on television, raising awareness of energy saving, but it concludes by defining itself as “*A2A – life company*.” The point is that they often end with an English statement that is totally nonsensical, out of context, but in English it sounds better.”

What Testa was saying here is arguably the opposite of what she implied before, i.e., the introduction of loans that have become indispensable, like *rough* has in her professional jargon. In advertisements, Italian and English are often mixed not only abundantly and unnecessarily,

³⁰ Another prestigious Italian newspaper.

but also senselessly and ungrammatically. Hybrid phrases are created deliberately to catch one's attention, in a way that may make the message obscure to many, while bending English grammar rules without having a reason to (e.g., *color your different*), just to make the message "more sparkling" by utilizing English rather randomly and "nonsensically." She reiterated the latter point by discussing uses of English in official documents by the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR), no less, which uses unnecessary direct loans that have an Italian equivalent (i.e., *tasks*) or direct loans that would sound obscure to most Italians, and should therefore be substituted by a different Italian phrase entirely in order to be intelligible (i.e., *job shadowing*):

"And they talked about *tasks* and I don't know what else ... there were quite a bit of teachers who got really mad ... I think I have talked about it ... Here it is: "Anglo-Pedagoguese - the Strange Language of the Ministry of Education." That is, at a certain point they talk about *job shadowing* ... And in a document addressed to lower and upper secondary school teachers, and I believe that, in turn, they are among the categories that know English the least. So let's inflict *job shadowing* on them then! So here ... Certainly it is easy to blame advertising or even marketing, but if the Ministry of Education can't even understand what it is describing – because the one who writes *job shadowing* hasn't understood what *job shadowing* is and hasn't understood what it means [to begin with]!"

Her argument here is no longer about hybrid phrases in advertisements, but about direct loans that institutions use yet again unnecessarily, obfuscating the message as well. In other words, she condemned the overuse of different loan categories by different social actors as equally unexplainable.³¹ She also gave an example of another direct loan that has apparently completely

³¹ As far as meaning embellishment or obfuscation, once again it must be pointed out that that specific language ideologies in Testa's interview excerpts will be discussed under RQ3.

supplanted the Italian equivalent when used with a specific meaning, i.e., *green* meaning *environmentalist*, a substitution that is once more incomprehensible to her:

“Another thing that drives me crazy is the use of the word *green*. *Green* companies and *green* everything. Let’s say *verde* and *ambientalista*! I don't understand why English *green* can be environmentalist and Italian *verde* can't. And therefore the Coldiretti,³² which is gentlemen with a tractor, rolled up sleeves, and country boots, is *green*. Why on earth?”

As far as social actors accountable for this overuse, it must be noted that she cited advertisements in the newspaper because she indicated she had taken “a couple of notes for our meeting,” not knowing what I wanted to ask her. In other words, she looked for examples of *Italenglish* in the newspapers (*Corriere* and *Repubblica*) to prepare for the interview, to have something at hand to discuss, but her intention was not to point an accusing finger specifically at what, in the end, is her own professional category. In fact, when I followed up with my experience with advertisements that mix English and Italian abundantly and daily in the *Corriere*, she remarked that while advertisers are an easy scapegoat, it should be more worrisome that institutions and politicians do the same, instead:

“Yes, but let’s not take it out on advertising ... picking on advertising is hiding behind a finger. We have state laws that use English words – that have English names – what the heck! Certainly advertising is venial, also because at least it does not count much, but laws of the State are a serious matter.”

³² Coldiretti (National Confederation of Direct Cultivators): the largest association representing Italian agriculture.

That is, some social actors' actions have more serious consequences than others', as far as the overuse of a foreign code that is not only uncalled for but also hindering meaning comprehension.

Additionally, she pointed out that it is true that people overuse English within Italian especially in Milan, like the Facebook group moderator Solinas also remarked in her interview (discussed in Chapter Five). When I asked why, she did so while revealing other major social actors, e.g., marketing, finance, and indeed advertising, which are as accountable for this as Rome-based political institutions are:

“Yes, yes – certain professional fields that speak English too much are rooted in Milan. Advertising is in Milan, marketing is largely in Milan, many multinational headquarters are in Milan. So that kind of jargon is very, very widespread here ... But, I mean, the MIUR is in Rome, the politicians are in Rome, the Parliament is in Rome. The big public companies are in Rome, and they too speak this way. That is, if it was just a hustler's nonsense, it would be irrelevant after all. Finance ... the entire economic sphere speaks in English.”

Here, she therefore reiterated her aforementioned claim that linguistic practices have different consequences depending on the social actors engaging in them. The point is not what kind of loans these actors choose to use (e.g., a false loan like *Jobs Act* or a direct one like *job shadowing*) i.e., what specific linguistic forms are used, but rather what their social role is and what kind of power they have.

In conclusion, in her interview, Testa confirmed she seems bothered both by direct loans like *priceless* and *job shadowing*, and by hybrid phrases like *color your different* alike, because the bottom line is always the crucial issue of unintelligible uses of English, whether they are

unintelligible to some, most, or possibly all Italians. It must however be pointed out that hybrid phrases seem to bother her slightly more, which her numerous rhetorical questions and ironic remarks betray while discussing those: because of their often unexplainable use (e.g., *ti faccio una call*), because of their frequent ungrammatical nature (e.g., *color your different*), and because of their meaning ambiguity to most (e.g., *Fare la differenza insieme – priceless*).

Interestingly, as far as social actors responsible for all these “linguistic transgressions,” she placed much of the blame for unintelligibility more on institutions than she did on advertisers, the opposite of what she did in her TED Talk. However, she pointed out that other professions with hubs in Milan are equally accountable, e.g., marketing and finance, which she also emphasized on the TED stage. Additionally, not only because she defined herself as “not phobic about English” and she recognized that “English is essential,” but also because of how she said what she did, she came across as much more moderate about the English-in-Italian debate than she did on stage. Her point was simply that some English uses are unavoidable, i.e., necessary and therefore justified, but too many do not seem justifiable at all.

Research Question 2.

In order to find out what categories of people are complaining about English overuse, i.e., experts or lay people,³³ how they establish their authority in language matters, and if there are differences across different platforms, I pose the following question:

Who is doing the complaining about uncalled-for uses of English? Are they experts or lay people?

³³ “Expertise” definition is double fold: it refers both to one’s profession entirely revolving around language, e.g., an advertiser, a translator, a journalist, as well as to one’s role of platform moderator.

2a. How do both experts and lay people establish their language authority when discussing these matters? What kind of language do they use when trying to demonstrate/perform their expertise?

2b. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

To answer RQ2, I first discuss the ways Testa established her authority, with several examples taken from segments of her TED Talk. Then, I briefly discuss how she once again relied on multimodality to reinforce her claims. Lastly, I focus on the kind of language she chose, i.e., a language that was accessible to her audience, in line with her argument.

Findings.

Testa qualifies as a language professional because she is a communication expert, she has collaborated with the *Accademia della Crusca* on several occasions, she has taught at university level, and she has written articles and books on creative writing and communication, besides being involved in other numerous communication-related initiatives. In her TED Talk, she established her authority on linguistic matters in three ways. Either she appealed to common sense (N = 27), i.e., supposedly “obvious” facts that do not need further justification; or she referred to her linguistic expertise (N = 11), i.e., being a language professional on the one hand³⁴ or, on the other, proving her expertise by discussing faulty translations, word usages, pronunciation etc.. Alternatively, she relied on cultural knowledge (N = 4), i.e., she referred to key figures in Italian and Anglophone cultures in connection with language. In eight cases (N = 8), there are multiple strategies to establish her expertise in the same text segment.

³⁴ ‘Professional’ linguistic expertise is very rarely applicable in all datasets, and it refers to one’s profession entirely revolving around language: e.g., an advertiser, a translator, a journalist.

Out of 34 TT³⁵ examples, perhaps surprisingly, most of her claims (N = 27) were supported by common sense, rather than by her professional background. That is, she reinforced her argument through what is presented as obvious facts, which are framed as though not requiring any further authoritative backup, nor any further explanation. For instance, in example 1 (TT2), as she was introducing her TED Talk, she said:

1. Vi parlerò della marea montante dell'*Itanglese*, la mescolanza provinciale, immotivata, spesso oscura di parole italiane e inglesi che... sta diventando comune.

[I will talk to you about the rising tide of *Italenglish*, the provincial, unjustified, often unclear mixture of Italian and English words, which ... has become quite common.]

In example 2 (TT26), as she was about to conclude, she added:

2. Quindi il mio appello è teniamoci stretto l'italiano. Adoperare parole italiane aiuta a farsi capire da tutti, ed è un fatto di democrazia, farsi capire è un fatto di democrazia.

[So my plea to you all is, let's hold on to our Italian language. Italian words help you to be easily understood by all, and that's democracy, because being understood is democracy.]

She often relied on discussing the subject this way, i.e., as a simple matter of fact that does not require any further proof. That English has increasingly been mixed with Italian in several contexts of everyday life is presented as common knowledge (example 1), just like it is common sense to say that expressing oneself in a way that is intelligible, i.e., devoid of foreign words, is a matter of democracy (example 2). However, her claims were at times less objective than others. For example, when she said that these code-mixing practices are “often unclear,” her claim was rather objective, in that some uses of English, by the media or by the government, are not

³⁵ I.e., ‘Testa Transcript 1.’

immediately intelligible to the whole population, or at least not to all and not to the same degree. However, when she deemed these code-mixing practices as “provincial,”³⁶ she was passing an arguably more subjective judgment.

As anticipated, she also established her authority by referring to her professional linguistic expertise. However, those instances are significantly less numerous (N =11) than her appeals to “common sense.” In example 3 (TT20), when introducing her petition “Dillo in italiano” (Say it in Italian), she says:

3. Mi sono detta che dovevo fare qualcosa, comunicare è il mio mestiere, ho in mente due-tre processi che possono essere efficaci ... coi ragazzi dell’ufficio, per mettere in piedi una iniziativa in rete per fare sensibilizzazione su questo problema ... gratis...

Semplicemente mettendo un po’ di competenza di comunicazione dell’ufficio, e un po’ di energia.

[I told myself I had to do something. Communication is what I do, I know some effective tools, and I thought ... with colleagues from the office, to set up an online project to sensitize people on the matter, without spending a cent. All it took was a little competence, the competence of our team, and vitality.]

Here, she pointed out she has the competence to “do something,” as well as the help of her team of experts to set up such an initiative, where people from all over the world were asked to sign a petition to safeguard Italian from the invasion of English loans. To reinforce her authority, in example 4 (TT21), she added:

³⁶ “Provincial”: (pejorative) which is proper, typical, characteristic of the province, i.e., of peripheral and minor centers, with reference to a real or presumed economic, social and cultural backwardness of small towns and villages with respect to big cities. Provincial mentality: provincial ways, habits, always in a reductive sense; a person who shows that he has a narrow mentality, petty-bourgeois habits, bad taste considered typical of provincial people. Naïve. (Treccani).

4. Era rivolta principalmente alla *Accademia della Crusca* perché diventasse protagonista di questa campagna di sensibilizzazione.

[It was addressed firstly to the *Accademia della Crusca*, asking it to become the protagonist of this sensitizing campaign.]

In this example, Testa is saying that her initiative aimed at getting the highest institution in Italy involved, whose mission has been to safeguard the purity of the language since 1583. In other words, she was not only saying she knew whose help she needed, but she was also saying she was in the position to appeal to them, implicitly reminding her audience she had the resume to do so, and that she had been working with them for years, thereby constructing herself as an insider.

Also, several points in her Talk included instances of establishing one's authority through linguistic expertise based not only on presenting herself as a language professional, which she is, but also on discussions of faulty uses of English: inaccurate translations, word usages, pronunciation etc.. She relied on multimodality as well to discuss examples of the latter. For instance, in example 5, the scarce competence in English Italians are generally associated with, i.e., "we as a country do not know English," was exemplified by an image on screen that said it all. It was a picture of a doctor's prescription where *pacemaker* is spelled *pey smecker*, i.e., a phonetic transcription of a direct loan based on Italian phonetic inventory:

5. La cosa è curiosa perché più di un italiano su due non spiaccica una parola d'inglese ... non sappiamo l'inglese, ... come Paese, e si vede!

[That's funny because more than half of Italians doesn't speak a word of English ... We as a country do not know English , and you can tell!]

Additionally, in other cases, she relied on the cultural patrimony she shared with her audience to support her claims (N = 4), i.e., on cultural knowledge. For instance, in example 6

(TT31), when she described what she called “the peculiarities” of Italian, she backed up her point with an image of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Vitruvian Man* on the screen behind her, a powerful symbol of that patrimony that did not need any explanation. As she was about to conclude, she quoted Leonardo himself,³⁷ as the *Vitruvian Man* appeared on screen:

6. Leonardo definiva se stesso “homo senza litterae” perché scriveva in Volgare cioè in italiano.

[Leonardo used to call himself “Homo senza litterae”³⁸ because he wrote in Vulgar³⁹ language, that is to say, in Italian.]

The implication was that if an extraordinary man like Leonardo used Italian, then so should we. With the *Vitruvian Man* still on display, in example 7 (TT32), she added:

7. La struttura, l’iridescenza della nostra lingua italiana ci aiuta a esprimere la nostra creatività. Se rinunciamo a esprimerci nella nostra lingua, rinunciamo a esprimere una delle peculiarità, flessuosità, e potenzialità della nostra specifica creatività italiana, che ha radici nella sua lingua madre.

[The structure, form, and iridescence of Italian language have always helped us to express our creativity. If we give up expressing ourselves in our language, we give up one of the peculiarities, the gracefulness, the magnificent potential of our unique Italian creativity, which takes root in its mother tongue.]

Leonardo was not the only historical, intrinsically authoritative figure and part of the Italian cultural patrimony she relied on, to reinforce the ideological roots of her argument on the one

³⁷ Example 6 is an example of cultural knowledge and linguistic expertise overlapping: not everybody can quote Leonardo verbatim, but arguably anyone who has been through the Italian education system has knowledge of at least some of his work, as well as of what “Vulgar” means.

³⁸ “Man without letters,” i.e., without a formal education in classical humanities.

³⁹ Developed from Vulgar Latin.

hand, and to back up her own authority on the other. As mentioned earlier, she made numerous references to Dante. When she introduced her petition “Say it in Italian,” the petition logo appeared on screen, under the petition name: a stylized version of Dante’s iconic profile – in red, white, and green, i.e., the colors of the Italian flag – wearing a laurel wreath, symbolizing glory and erudition, to give the petition itself stature and legitimacy, i.e., authority.



Figure 4.2
Petition logo and example of subscription.

Lastly, it must be noted that Testa did not turn to metalanguage of any kind to establish her authority. She chose her words carefully, especially when describing the peculiarities of Italian specifically, at the beginning of her Talk (“musical,” “evocative,” “rich,” “full of history, vibrations, emotion,”) as well as at the end (“the iridescence of our language” and its “gracefulness”), but she did not try to prove her linguistic expertise by using technical jargon, nor erudite or abstract, theoretical language. As a matter of fact, she did quite the opposite. She just said, “communication is what I do,” without further elaborating on it, simply describing the effects the petition sorted. It could be argued that she avoided linguistic metalanguage for audience design, to make sense and to “walk the walk” of her Talk, which example 8 (TT30)

sums up. Here, she utilized a popular Italian saying⁴⁰ to single out those who use English when they could avoid it, implying they do so just to show off. The saying in fact implies that deliberately choosing marked words to try to sound educated and sophisticated, or cool, sorts the opposite effect:

8. ... Chi parla come mangia parla meglio.

[... Those who speak like they eat, speak better.]

Likewise, she did not need to embellish her language to prove her authority: on the one hand, because she was arguably confident she did not need to, and on the other, because she likely did not want to contradict the point she was making. In fact, she kept her rather ironic and down-to-earth tone all along: e.g., when she pointed out “you do not need to call Pippo, Franco, and Gennaro a *business unit* (T21),” i.e., you do not need to embellish what people do by giving it an English name, because “you know that [in the end] the *business unit* is still Pippo, Franco, and Gennaro.”

In conclusion, in her TED Talk, Testa established her authority in three ways: mainly by appealing to common sense firmly rooted in shared ideologies, to a lesser degree by relying on her linguistic expertise, and in a few instances to shared cultural knowledge. Her argument was characterized by careful word choice, at times with sensory appeal, and a rather consistently ironic tone, but it avoided technical jargon and specialist language, in line with one the points she was trying to make: being clear and intelligible.

Research Question 2 – Interview with Annamaria Testa.

Annamaria Testa’s profession revolves around “advertising and communication.” She is part of the *Accademia della Crusca*’s group *Incipit*, of which she is “the only non-academic

⁴⁰ “Speak like you eat” is a rather sarcastic suggestion to those who use refined and/or less common vocabulary in an attempt to show off, arguably their education and/or social status.

member” and which “[monitors] and [opposes], as far as possible, the advent of English neologisms.” In addition, she has a blog, *Nuovo e Utile*, where she often discusses linguistic matters. As such, she qualifies as an expert on language-related matters.

During her interview, she established her authority in different ways. First of all, she did so through her professional linguistic expertise, when she recollected the path that led her from her blog post to a TED Talk stage, with a series of initiatives she and her team put together “at no cost.” First, her blog post “English Words We Could Happily Do Without” totaled 49,500 reshares. Then, an online petition was set up on Facebook, “Say it in Italian,” which “[grew] quickly and exponentially, reaching 70,000 signatures, not just in Italy, but in Argentina, in Brazil, in China, in Australia,” and which was “an appeal to the institutions and to the *Accademia della Crusca*” to deal with the issue of English overuse. Afterwards, she was interviewed by newspaper and TV journalists, both in Italy and in the UK. All of this led her to a TED Talk stage. However, notwithstanding all this work, in her interview she took the time to emphasize that she is just “a private citizen”:

“I am not a linguist: I am not entitled to deal officially with linguistic issues ... I am one who deals with communication and advertising. I’m a private citizen. I’m not in the institutions: there are a lot of people ... and a lot of institutions who get paid to look after our poor Italian – should they wait for me [to do something]?”

However, her job does revolve around language, and another instance of authority grounded in professional linguistic expertise was her description of a project she is rather proud of, since she managed to create a slogan for *Altagamma*⁴¹ that is intelligible on an international level, despite being in Italian:

⁴¹ Foundation that gathers high-end Italian cultural and creative companies, recognized globally as authentic ambassadors of Italian style.

“The little slogan under the name *Altagamma*, which is the association that brings together all the producers of high-end Italian goods, from Zegna to Campari to Ferrari. All these very famous brands are in *Altagamma*, and I managed to convince them to use Italian words, by doing a long search and looking for assonants in Italian, English and French ... Here is the claim under *Altagamma*: “*Creatività e Cultura Italiana*” (Italian creativity and culture). *Creatività* on the other hand works in French and in English. It works in a lot of other Romance languages. Everyone understands *cultura*, and therefore with “*Creatività e Cultura Italiana*” we managed to put a *claim*, or, another English word, a *baseline* ... in any case a definition in Italian that was understandable in most countries of the world. And this job was complicated, because I [had to choose between] I think fifty/sixty terms: it was a lot of work, but I’m happy with this job. And so [you see], it can be done!”

In other words, she is a “language worker” that made an effort to represent Italian excellence through the language it speaks.

It is important to reiterate that another aspect of “linguistic expertise” authority-claim strategy corresponds to grounding one’s authority in the awareness of uses of English that are faulty as well: inaccurate translations, word usages, pronunciation, and grammar in general. In the latter respect, and pointing the finger at politicians once again, Testa mentioned the controversial law called *Stepchild Adoption* for example, which she claimed “is something that every Italian-speaker pronounces badly and only sort of spitting [it].” The latter comment echoes her rather ironic one on newscasters’ pronunciation of *Jobs Act*, another law the Italian

Parliament chose an English name for. Also, she pointed out how paradoxical it is, and actually called it an “abomination,” that Italians pronounce Latin words the English way:

“It’s something that makes me suffer ... and here I am being a little snobbish: there’s those who say *un buon media* (a good media) [/media/], or rather *un buon media* [/midia/]. In general, Latin has been lost and they say it in English and use it – use *media* [as if it were] singular. Which is quite an abomination, in short. If we used Italian, even without knowing that we are [in fact] using Latin, singular *medium* and plural *media*, it would be simple. We would be even able to pronounce it with less effort, but there is no way.”

As often, Testa also relied on common sense to establish her authority in the matter. As already mentioned in RQ1 discussion, she asked quite a lot of rhetorical questions when challenging the use of direct, false, and hybrid loans alike that hinder meaning understanding, implying not only the plain uselessness but also the clear silliness of such practices. Another example of appealing to common sense is her discussion of *wine* and *food*, also touched upon in her TED Talk:

“For example, at a certain point, in order to promote Italian food abroad, a small brand was created that was called “*Italian taste*”: but, why? I traveled around a lot, I found *cibo* (food) and *vino* (wine) on the signs of shops in Shanghai and Auckland ... Why do we have to say “*Italian taste*” and *wine* and *food*?”

She reiterated the same point when she added that though “we are not [hunting witches],” we should use English sensibly, not “[nonsensically]”:

“I would subscribe to the introduction of the petition that I wrote in 2015 word for word, that is, saying that you need to know English – we are not doing a witch hunt. Let’s keep

toast. Let's keep *mouse* because we didn't call it *raton* or *souris* like the [Spanish] and the French did, and that's fine, but let's avoid talking nonsense, and [let's] try to understand what we're saying, and try to make ourselves understood. The position always remains the same. I think I have abundantly [advocated] this – more than abundantly.”

When mentioning “nonsense,” Testa was yet again referring to false/hybrid or bad/incorrect uses of English, discussed under RQ1. (It must be pointed out that underlying language ideology claims in excerpts like this are discussed under RQ3).

Lastly, though very briefly, she relied on cultural knowledge too to support her authority in language matters. She could not avoid mentioning Dante while commenting on the resilience of modern Italian, which we are however “mistreating.” While discussing the history of Italian, she made an interesting comparison between a language that is much younger, i.e., English, which carries a connotation of modernity on the one hand (Androutsopoulos, 2013; Baumgardner, 2006; Baumgardner & Brown, 2012; Bhatia, 1992; Friedrich, 2019; Gazzardi & Vásquez, 2020; Kelly-Holmes, 2000; Lee, 2019), and Italian, much older, which carries a connotation of tradition (Kohler & Perrino, 2017) on the other:

“This magnificent language that has remained ... always identical to itself for over seven hundred years, so that today we speak an Italian [that is] not too different from Dante's. Which for example the Anglo-Saxons cannot say about Shakespeare, even though Shakespeare is much more recent ... Italian is a strong and appreciated and bright component of our identity: it is not clear why we have to mistreat it this way.”

In conclusion, to establish her authority, Testa relied mainly on linguistic expertise and common sense, confirming TED Talk findings. An Italian-language professional, she went into detail describing her initiatives to preserve Italian. She also reiterated Italians often misuse not

just their native language but English too, another point she also made on stage. Furthermore, she relied on common sense when emphasizing the uselessness as well as the silliness of (bad) English overuse when it is not necessary. Lastly, Testa did not root her expertise in her additional experience with language, except only briefly mentioning she is surrounded by marketing people who use English a lot.

Research Question 3.

In order to unveil underlying language ideologies and possible counter discourses, i.e., basic sociolinguistic facts, and to compare findings among experts and lay people and across platforms, I pose the following question:

What language ideologies are revealed by the online discourse about uses of English in predominantly Italian contexts? What, if any, counter discourses (i.e. sociolinguistic facts/arguments) are raised by users about these same issues?

3a. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

3b. Are there any differences in this regard between experts and laypeople?

Criteria of Inclusion.

First of all, it is important to point out that I did not utilize all thirty-four (N = 34) transcript segments that were analyzed for RQ2, to answer ideology-related RQ3. This is because some of those did not imply any language ideology-related claim ascribable to the language ideologies coded in the taxonomy (Table 3). For example, some segments (TT2 and TT3) are just about foreign universities across the world utilizing Latin Mottoes, or others (TT15) only bluntly claim that roughly half of the Italian population does not know English at all, without explicit examples or evidence. As a result, only twenty-three (N = 23) texts are relevant to RQ3, out of thirty-four (N = 34) total.

To answer RQ3, I paid very close attention to specific language use and word choice (i.e., key words) to identify different language ideologies (see Table 3 on p. 83 for examples). I first give an overview of ideology frequency, from the most prevalent to the least. This is followed with a discussion of specific examples of each ideology, while also discussing what these reveal in terms of the most immediate threats English seems to pose to Italian, in Testa's opinion. In doing so, I look at which specific linguistic choices she relied on to support her arguments, or small 'd' discourse (Gee, 1999), to unpack discourse at an ideological level, the big 'D' discourse that is always "language *plus* other stuff" (Gee, 1999, p. 34, emphasis in the original).

Findings.

In the set of twenty-three (N = 23) segments, each identified language ideology exemplified in the taxonomy (Table 3) occurs two or more times, with the exception of linguistic purity. The most common are national language ideology and monolingualism, which both occurred nine (N = 9) times. A national language ideology is the belief in the equation between one national identity and the use of one national language, as well as the appeal to one people's history and culture, and the belief that using a foreign code implies a lack of love and respect for one's country. This corresponds to a 19th century Herderian ideology according to which "language coincided entirely with culture, and this duo defined the essential identity of a 'people'" (Blommaert, 2011, p. 244). This "blueprint for the Modernist state" developed with the birth of numerous monolingual and monocultural nation-states in the 19th century, or "[*manufactured*] monolingual-monocultural nations," among which Italy, built "on 'order', and on the avoidance or reduction of ambivalence, plurality and mixing" (Blommaert, 2011, p. 244, emphasis in the original). A monolingualism ideology is, on the one hand, the more extreme prescriptive belief people should only use one language at the time, and that all foreignisms

should be translated; on the other, the more lenient belief that foreignisms should be used only when strictly inevitable. What distinguishes national language ideology from monolingualism is that in the former case people explain the *reasons* why we need to use Italian, e.g., because it is part of one's identity. Monolingualism is instead either just a prescriptive dogma, i.e., all foreign words must be translated without exception, or a rule that allows only for few exceptions, i.e., English should only be used when no Italian counterpart is available. In other words, monolingualism as a rule typically does not need to be justified further.

Next, obfuscation and beautiful language ideologies both occurred four ($N = 4$) times. Obfuscation ideology refers to the belief that a foreign code is used to hide something and/or to trick somebody. Beautiful language ideology refers to the belief that a language has an intrinsic aesthetic value that transcends its instrumental purposes (Vessey, 2021). Finally, instances of endangerment, inferiority complex, and complaint ideologies each occurred three ($N = 3$) times. Endangerment ideology is the belief that foreign loans threaten the survival of the mother language. Inferiority complex ideology is the belief that English is used because it is perceived as better, superior, more modern and cosmopolitan, and this is meant to reflect on the person who uses it. Complaint ideology is the belief that each language has its own fixed rules, lexicon, and pronunciation that cannot be altered when adopted by speakers of another language. Cases of alterations or adaptations are perceived, and often made fun of, as sloppy trespassing non-native speakers should avoid, while objective mistakes are condemned, and often likewise mocked, as simply using a language the wrong way. Lastly, only one instance ($N = 1$) of linguistic purity appears in the dataset, or the belief that foreignisms pollute the mother language, which should be cleansed of them.

In several texts, specifically in nine cases (N = 9), there are instances of multiple language ideologies. For example, within one segment (TI1),⁴² Testa made several points: she mentioned the “beauty of our language” and listed a string of adjectives that explain how exactly Italian specifically is beautiful (i.e., beautiful language ideology); she mentioned how it is “full of history” that “needs to be perceived anew” (i.e., national language ideology); and, she pointed out that it needs to be “defended and preserved” (i.e., endangerment ideology). The presence of numerous ideologies within one single text segment shows that these are not only complex but also interrelated ideas.

National Language Ideology.

The predominance of national language ideology shows that Testa perceives the loss of an Italian national identity as a major issue, which the use of the national code would help prevent, and that a progressive drifting away from Italian history, culture, and heritage is also a major problem. A prototypical example of this ideology is the statement she concluded her TED Talk with. Example 1 (TI34) best summarizes the main motivation behind her worries, her activism, and her initiatives:

1. Perché l'italiano siamo noi, con la nostra identità, le nostre radici, la nostra storia, la nostra apertura verso il mondo che passa dalle nostre parole.

[Because the Italian language is us [Italians], with our identity, our roots, our history, our openness to the world which comes [across] through our words.]

She also introduced the latter statement by urging her audience to “take our language into the world because it represents us.” Other examples of national language ideology occurred earlier. In example 2 (TI5), after having shown the Latin mottoes of several foreign universities (e.g., in

⁴² I.e., ‘Testa, Ideology, 1.’

the US, Europe, and Africa) as well as cities (e.g., London) or regions (e.g., Queensland, AU), Testa showed a screenshot of Rome while saying:

2. Se c'è un posto dove un motto latino ci poteva stare, è questa, eccolo. La culla del latino.

[If there's one place in the world where a Latin motto could have made sense, it's this one. Here. The crib of Latin.]

She then proceeded to show what was instead happening in the “the crib of Latin.” On screen, she showed the slogan for the touristic promotion of Rome, which is a pun in English, “*RoMe & You.*” By emphasizing this only apparent contradiction, she however showed she was missing the point of “*RoMe & You.*” Latin mottoes, which are not legible to most people, are used by universities because of what Latin indexes in the US, in Australia, etc.: because it was the language of scholarship and academia for many centuries, besides of governance and law. In the same way, English is used to advertise Rome because of what indexes *in Rome*: its foreignness makes it stand out on the one hand, and on the other, it is used to reach an international audience for tourism promotion purposes. In other words, Testa's reasoning in this case appears rather flawed. In example 3 (TI7), she further emphasized the apparent paradox, and the threat Italian culture seems to be under, by showing what the Ministry of Cultural Heritage chose as its own slogan in 2015: a hybrid of English and Italian. While “*Very bello*” appears on screen behind her, she asked a rhetorical question meaning, “What on earth is going on here?”:

3. Vogliamo dare un'occhiata al portale turistico appena lanciato dal Ministero dei Beni Culturali: “*Very Bello*” ... Pronto?

[Let's take a look at the touristic portal of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage: “*Very Bello*” ... Hello?]

In the remaining instances of national language ideology, Testa did one of the following: she referred to the Italian cultural patrimony and emphatically argued that foreigners study Italian for what it evokes, i.e., art, history, fashion, cuisine, the opera, and Dante – “certainly not for business” (TI10); she argued that “our unique Italian creativity” can only express itself through the national language (TI32); and she urged her audience, on the one hand, to “hold on to our Italian language” (TI26) and “take [it] back with pride and awareness” (TI24), and, on the other, to promote Italian and “sell it, spend it” in the world (TI28).

Monolingualism Ideology.

Because monolingualism ideology is as frequent (N = 9), it appears that Testa’s belief in the need to use one language at the time is as strong as her concern for the well-being of Italian identity and heritage. The aforementioned TI7 in example 3 is a case of ideologies overlapping (national language and monolingualism): the puzzled tone of her “Hello?” after showing the slogan “*Very bello*” implies it is unclear why languages are mixed this way when there is no apparent need to, especially when it is the Ministry of Cultural Heritage that does so. After showing the slogan, she in fact argued that it would have made much more sense to use either *molto bello* or *very beautiful*, instead of mixing two languages. In this respect, it is interesting to notice that she did not argue that the only alternative should have been *molto bello*, but that *very beautiful* could have been a viable choice too. This reinforces the core point of monolingualism that, put simply, codes in general should not be mixed when it is unnecessary and avoidable. It is not a matter of hierarchies between languages, which are of course artificial (Marello, 2020). This is presented as common sense. She reiterated the same point right afterwards, in example 4 (TI8), another instance of monolingualism ideology where what stands out is “[senseless] collapse”:

4. Collassiamo italiano e inglese in maniera del tutto insensata! Non piace a noi, non piace neanche agli anglofoni.

[Let's make Italian and English collapse senselessly! We don't like that, and Anglophones don't like that either.]

Moreover, in example 5 (TI29), Testa implied that code-mixing is something reasonably avoidable if one knows her languages well. In other words, she seemed to imply that code-mixing is something done by people who do not really know languages, or “non-legitimate” language users, rather than a natural practice in multilingual people, which arguably reinforces the flawed analogy between these practices and broken language (Tagg, 2015):

5. E sapere più lingue è bellissimo, togliamoci ogni dubbio! ... Ma chi sa le lingue le usa una alla volta.

[Knowing more languages, let's make this clear, is beautiful! ... But those who do, speak them one at a time.]

In other examples of monolingualism ideology, Testa reiterated the apparently “senseless collapse” of the two codes, supporting her argument with various examples of use in context. For example, she wondered why we eat *food* and drink *wine*, not *cibo* or *vino*, in “Lucca, Cernobbio, Catania, Milan” (TI12), while code-mixing advertisements of food-related events in those cities appear on screen behind her. Alternatively, she wondered why an Italian commercial for a car is almost entirely in English except for two words only (TI14), while the same does not happen in the corresponding advertisement in French and Spanish, all of which are shown on screen for comparison. The implication is always that there is no need for this whatsoever, and that speakers of other languages behave differently, which echoes the rhetorical question she asked at the very beginning: “And one wonders, why?”.

Beautiful Language Ideology.

There are four (N = 4) instances of beautiful language ideology, i.e., the belief in the inherent aesthetic value of a code, where Testa carefully chose her adjectives to describe the innate nature of Italian. Example 6 (TI1) is prototypical in this sense:

6. Le parole della nostra lingua sono straordinarie, sonore, evocative, ricche, piene di storia, di emozione ... e di bellezza del nostro linguaggio che va difesa, preservata, va capita nuovamente, vi parlerò.

[The words of our language are extraordinary; they are musical, evocative, rich, full of history, vibrations, emotion ... About the beauty of our language and about the fact that such beauty is to be defended, preserved, perceived anew, I will tell you.]

To open her TED Talk about the assault of English words in Italian, Testa chose a list of powerful descriptors, some of which with sensory appeal (“musical,” “full of vibrations”), to describe how Italian is “extraordinary.” In doing so, she implied not simply a juxtaposition but, apparently, also a sort of hierarchy between the two codes, unlike she did with her *very beautiful* argument (example 3). Apparently, in fact, it can be inferred that English words are *not* as “musical, evocative” and “full of history” and “emotion” as Italian words are, which would put Italian a step above English, at least as far as its supposed beauty. The beauty of the language is also highlighted in example 7 (TI10) as the reason why it is widely studied in the world. Since knowing Italian would not make one more competitive job-wise, which would translate in zero “economic” power of the language, people must be studying it because they are fascinated by its beauty, implied both in Italian being “the most romantic” language and in people just “[loving] it,” and because they are fascinated by the richness of the culture and history behind it:

7. La lingua più romantica del mondo ... secondo 320 linguisti anglosassoni. La quarta più studiata al mondo, e non lo studiano per fare affari. Lo studiano perché lo amano! Per la cucina, per la moda, per l'opera, per l'arte, la storia, per Dante!

[The most romantic language in the world ... according to 320 Anglo-Saxon linguists. The fourth most-studied language in the world, and nobody studies Italian for business! They study it because they love it! For the cuisine, the fashion, the opera, the art, the history, for Dante!]

On the one hand, the claim that “nobody studies Italian for business” is arguably quite hyperbolic, a broad generalization for which no evidence is presented. Interestingly, she contradicted this very claim in her interview, where she pointed out that, for example, Italian is the official language of the Church, and not Latin, and that museum directors from all over the world study in Italy, making Italian the Lingua Franca of their professional category. On the other hand, that Italian is the “most romantic language in the world” is presented as a plain fact once again, legitimized by 320 linguists saying so: not just experts of some sort, but linguists, and not just linguists, but Anglo-Saxon ones. After this appeal to somebody else’s authority, whose credentials apparently speak for themselves, she then reinforced her point by calling upon another master of language use, one whose judgment can be seemingly relied upon because of such mastery: Thomas Mann, a pillar of German literature who was notoriously in love with Italy, who called Italian “the language of angels” (TI11).

Obfuscation Ideology.

Obfuscation ideology also appears four (N = 4) times. This would indicate Testa does not deem meaning obfuscation as worrisome as the apparent lack of protection of one’s cultural heritage. However, in example 8 (TI26), Testa’s word choice seems to indicate this is a well-

rooted belief of hers nonetheless. In fact, being intelligible to all, she said, is a simple but crucial matter of democracy:

8. Adoperare parole italiane aiuta a farsi capire da tutti, ed è un fatto di democrazia, farsi capire è un fatto di democrazia.

[Using Italian words helps you to be easily understood by all, and that's democracy, because making yourself understood is a matter of democracy.]

She reiterated the same idea right afterwards, in example 9 (TI27), when she added that institutions should give the example, i.e., what they say and do should be clear to all citizens:

9. Non ci vogliono regole e divieti, ci vogliono buoni esempi. Bisogna chiedere alle istituzioni di dare il buon esempio.

[There's no need for rules; there's no need for bans. We need good examples, and we need to ask all institutions to be good examples.]

It is interesting to notice that she implied that it is not a matter of “[banning]” foreign words out of principle, but a matter of pure common sense: everyone should be able to understand what a law is or means. In fact, in example 10 (TI18), the labor reform *Jobs Act* is used once again to exemplify how the government possibly tried to sugarcoat a bitter pill by giving a foreign name to a likely unwelcome labor reform, though apparently failing to do so:

10. Noi abbiamo una legge dello stato che si chiama *Jobs Act*, e vi assicuro che il fatto che si chiami *Jobs Act* non l'ha resa più simpatica.

[We have a state law called *Jobs Act*, and let me assure you, that it was named *Jobs Act* didn't make it any nicer.]

Endangerment Ideology.

As far as the belief that foreignisms threaten the survival of the mother language, there are three (N = 3) instances of this ideology in the TED Talk. This kind of ideology often relies on metaphors of fighting, i.e., a battle, if not a war, is being fought between languages. In example 11 (TI33), Testa uses a rather strong word, “shattered,” to describe the threat posed to a language whose linguistic texture is not “strong and solid” enough to resist the assault of another language, which the hypothetical construction implies. She anthropomorphized the language, making it a living creature, not “strong” enough to resist what she called a “loss of meaning”:

11. Se il nostro tessuto linguistico è forte, certo possiamo accogliere qualche parola straniera, ma in un tessuto non esploso per la perdita di significati, causata da un uso eccessivo di parole straniere.

[If our linguistic texture is strong and solid, of course we can welcome a few foreign words; but we must do it within a texture that is not shattered and worn out by the loss of meaning, caused by an excess of [misused] foreign words.]

In the two other examples of endangerment ideology, she reiterated that the mother language needs to be “defended and preserved” (TI1), which pushed her to “do something ... to sensitize the people on the matter” (TI20), “the matter” being that the Italian language is apparently under siege.

Inferiority Complex Ideology.

There are also three (N = 3) cases of inferiority complex ideology, where Testa resorted to the same word choice to support her claim. In example 12 (TI16), a case of both inferiority complex and monolingualism ideologies, she built her argument by discussing, on the one hand, the connotation English seems to have as opposed to Italian, i.e., “more modern,” and on the

other, she denounced the “provincialism” Italians show, a concept she reiterated more than once. It is important to point out that “provincial” does not simply denote a geographical location, but it can be a modifier with rather complex connotative meanings, in Italian. According to the second definition in Treccani, it is a “pejorative” adjective that describes “which is proper, typical, characteristic of the province, i.e., of peripheral and minor centers, with reference to a real or presumed economic, social, and cultural backwardness of small towns and villages with respect to big cities.” Moreover, “provincial mentality” refers to “provincial ways [and] habits, always in a reductive sense,” and to a “person who shows that he has a narrow mentality, petty-bourgeois habits, [and] bad taste considered typical of provincial people.” In light of this definition, it is clear why Testa chose this word, and how it clearly points to Italians’ supposed inferiority complex in front of a “more modern” language:

1. Eppure tutti i giorni, per pigrizia, distrazione, conformismo, perché ci sembra moderno, perché siamo provinciali, usiamo una quantità di parole inglesi non necessarie ... puramente accessorie e inutili.

[Yet, every day, either out of laziness, distraction, conformism, because it sounds modern, because we are provincial, we make use of a lot of unnecessary English words ... plainly secondary and pointless [words].]

In this instance of inferiority complex ideology, she listed all the reasons that motivate the “pointless” use of English, mixing some whose negative connotation is mild (e.g., “distraction”) with others whose negative connotation is arguably stronger (e.g., “laziness” and “conformism”). That she pointed out how this happens “every day” only reinforces the stubbornness of such bad behavior. In the other two examples of this ideology, she reiterated Italians’ provincialism (TI2)

and went on to call it “second-rate [winking]” at a language that is supposedly perceived as better.

Complaint Ideology.

There are also three cases (N = 3) of complaint ideology, or the belief that a language has its own fixed structure, lexicon, and pronunciation that cannot be altered or adapted when adopted by speakers of another language. Once again, in example 13 (TI19), *Jobs Act* was called upon, when Testa commented on the less-than-acceptable Italianized pronunciation TV anchormen are well-known for, and when, as mentioned earlier on p. 95, she unwittingly used *speaker* instead of *conduttore* or *mezzobusto*, which did not go unnoticed to many YouTube users:

1. Ha obbligato gli *speaker* del telegiornale a dire *Giobàtt*, che è una roba che non esiste in natura.

[It forced anchormen to say *Giobàtt* [eye-spelling for *Jobs Act*], which is a thing that does not exist in nature.]

The aforementioned TI33 segment in example 11 also implies questionable uses of the foreign idiom, when Testa claimed that an excess of English words causes “meaning loss.” Different is the point she later made in her interview, when discussing *rough* and *raffino* as examples of advertising professional jargon that has become impossible not to use in Italian. In the latter case, the message would become unintelligible if Italian counterparts were used, instead.

Linguistic Purity Ideology.

Lastly, there is only one case (N = 1) of linguistic purity ideology, where, once again, attention to specific word choice allowed me to distinguish between the latter and endangerment.

In example 14 (TI6),⁴³ Testa used “contamination ... between two languages” besides “short-circuit,” which aligns with the metaphor of linguistic (un)cleanliness due to one language polluting another (as opposed to metaphors of danger, fighting, and death, among others, ascribable to endangerment ideology instead):

1. Non sappiamo nemmeno come pronunciarlo ... cos'è questo ammiccamento di bassa lega, questa contaminazione, questo corto circuito tra due lingue che toglie senso a ciascuna? ... E uno si chiede, ma perché?

[We don't even know how to pronounce it ... What is this second-rate wink? What is this contamination, this short-circuit between two languages, which deprives both of any meaning? ... And one wonders, why?]

In conclusion, of all codified language ideologies present in Testa's TED Talk, those that appear the most are monolingualism and national language ideologies. This shows that her main concerns are twofold. On the one hand, she argued the need to use one code at the time, and that doing otherwise is “senseless” unless it is unavoidable. On the other, she urged that something be done to safeguard Italian identity and heritage, i.e., she voiced the more complex underlying cultural and historical reasons why one should use Italian. In other words, she emphasized the need to “hold on to” one people's history and culture through safeguarding their language.

Next, most frequent were beautiful language and obfuscation ideologies. Testa made several arguments about the importance of preserving a language she deemed intrinsically beautiful, arguing it is the reason why so many foreigners study it, together with the culture and history it evokes, implying it has zero “economic” power worldwide (i.e., “nobody studies Italian for business”), the latter a broad, unsupported generalization she would in fact contradict in her

⁴³ It must be noted that TI6, in its entirety, is a case of multiple ideologies in one segment: linguistic purity, inferiority complex, and complaint ideologies.

interview. Additionally, she repeatedly emphasized how clarity of communication and intelligible messages are a matter of democracy that institutions should be accountable for. This means she thinks institutions are not doing their duty properly when it comes to communication, and that people should be more aware of the gravity and repercussions of this issue, i.e., of the government deliberately hiding things from a people, or at least sugarcoating the pill for them.

Research Question 3 – Interview with Annamaria Testa.

Throughout our interview, it was rather clear that the recurring underlying language ideologies in Testa’s statements were national language, (lenient) monolingualism, obfuscation, and complaint ideologies, followed by slightly less frequent beautiful language and inferiority complex ideologies too. In terms of counter discourse, she implied language change and globalization while briefly touching upon code-switching as a marketing strategy too.

National Language Ideology.

Testa defined herself as a patriot and a person that “is rooting for her country,” and supporting one’s country means supporting its language. A concept Testa insisted on is that of the “soft power” of a language. Inextricably intertwined with a people’s identity, a language has the “soft power” to promote a country’s credibility and reputation abroad:

“[I am] a fan of our nation ... I’m rooting for our country, and I believe that patriotism doesn’t necessarily have to be right-wing. Indeed I believe that patriotism cannot be left to the Right. And then there is the whole matter of *soft power*: Italian is a much loved language in the world, very popular in the world ...”

A concept she came back to and explained further, in a longer segment where national language and beautiful language ideologies overlap:

“Here is this magnificent language [which] is also a factor of international prestige ... it can be a *soft power* factor ... In Italian we can translate it with *potere morbido*, and it is the power of conviction and persuasion that States have and which goes beyond economic power and military power. There are also issues of prestige, credibility, and reputation that go [beyond the latter]. And which are connected with the image and identity that States have to foreigners. Italian is a strong and appreciated and bright component of our identity: it is not clear why we have to mistreat it in this way.”

Additionally, she talked about how Canadian students reacted when she explained the *Italenglish* phenomenon to them. Her word choice clearly implied how such practices show a lack of love and respect for one’s language, a “national sloppiness towards [one’s own language]” Canadians “would never [show],” despite being a bilingual country. This claim of theirs (“they would never show” is reported speech) is rather problematic for two reasons, however. First of all, exactly because Canada is a bilingual country, this assertion does not sound very realistic. Secondly, it is common knowledge that people often code-switch without even realizing it. Interestingly, further commenting on Canadian students, Testa closed her statement calling upon another internationally acclaimed staple of Italian culture, i.e., food:

“And they were amazed at the national sloppiness towards Italian – amazed. [And] they were all bilingual people. The French student who was studying Italian and who knew English perfectly said, “I would never dream of mixing [languages] this horrendous way, when I speak French, [or] English.” ... C’mon – it’s like putting ketchup on pasta! You just don’t do it!”

The parallel is clear. Testa utilized a metaphor to compare two different ways of mistreating one’s heritage. “Ketchup on pasta” is a common image used to mock foreigners’ supposed

inability to handle Italian cuisine properly. So, just as one should not abuse the quintessential Italian dish by dressing it with a condiment that has nothing to do with it, one should not disrespect her national language by peppering it with foreign words whose use has no justification. As previously pointed out, however, the claim to “never [mix] languages this horrendous way” arguably betrays the limited awareness of people who are likely to code-mix without even being aware they are doing it.

Monolingualism Ideology.

As previously discussed under RQ1, Testa puts herself “in the middle” on an imaginary continuum between keeping codes separate at all times, and using loanwords indiscriminately:

“We cannot expect to expunge English from our world. However, we can expect to use enough Italian [words] when we speak Italian, if [it is not possible to do so] entirely. Then we find words like *post* which are words that have rightfully entered [our] dictionary, [but] we have to try to [speak] English decently to understand each other [and] the rest of the world.”

The issue is twofold here. On the one hand, one should try to use as much Italian as possible, when in fact speaking Italian. On the other, one should make an effort to speak an English that is intelligible, which refers back to her previous discussion of “nonsensical” use of English in advertising, and of deliberate use of ambiguous English loanwords by institutions, which is more “serious,” i.e., worrisome. In fact, when further discussing her online petition “Say it in Italian,” she added that her initiative was born out of “communication sensitivity,” but that she did not mean to impose anything “from above.” In other words, it was not an “ex-cathedra” attempt to veto English, nor did she launch it “in a haughty or complaining way.” In fact, she listed words

that do not have an Italian counterpart, like the abovementioned *post*, and which are therefore unavoidable:

“For example, we do not have a word for *link* nor a word for *mouse*. We don’t have a word for *online* and *offline* because no one has thought of it, and *online* is not *in rete* (networked), nor is it *connesso* (connected).”

As discussed earlier, Testa had commented on loanwords that have become necessary in her professional jargon like *rough* and *art director*, while here, she conceded that the use of mainstream words like *link* and *online* is likewise inevitable, i.e., legitimate, which confirms her positioning herself “in the middle” in the debate about *Italenglish*. In other words, she is not a prescriptivist that demands that all foreignisms be translated at all cost, but just an advocate of sensible use of loanwords.

Complaint Ideology.

In her interview, Testa remarked rather often on how Italians tend to mispronounce English, just as she did in her TED Talk, e.g., with *Jobs Act*. It is once again politicians who are often deemed accountable to introduce unnecessary English phrases that most people cannot pronounce. When she mentioned the controversial law called *Stepchild Adoption*, she claimed that the phrase “is something that every Italian-speaker pronounces badly and only sort of spitting [it].” The generalization that “every Italian speaker” pronounces this phrase badly, together with her insisting on how challenging English pronunciation is to Italians in general, herself included, seems to betray some sort of national linguistic insecurity. In other words, bad English pronunciation would show the world how poorly Italians know English. However, pronunciation is not the only issue when it comes to “bad English.” While commenting on Italian advertising jargon, where some English words have become customary, in her interview, Testa

also complained about morphosyntactic hybridity, which makes it lexically intelligible to an Italian insider only:

“Another thing that drives me crazy ... [with] ads, [we] already use [the English words] *headline*, i.e. the title, and *body copy*, i.e., the text, the written parts. At the agency there are copywriters and art directors that say, “ho scritto una *head* che spacca” (I wrote a cracking *head*). Not “a cracking *headline*,” so [they are actually saying,] “I wrote a *head*” – not a text. And “ho scritto una bella *body*” (I wrote a nice *body*). Not “a nice *copy*” – “I wrote a nice *body*!”

In other words, these hybrid phrases follow Italian syntactic rules where the modifier usually follows and is therefore dropped for concision, just like *social media* is commonly clipped into *i social* and a *talent show* into *il talent*. So *line* and *copy* are treated like modifiers and get dropped: hence, “I wrote a *head*” and “I wrote a *body*.” Advertisers are not the only ones guilty of hybridizing phrases like this, i.e., in a way that, as Testa implied, would not really make sense to a native English speaker. Yet again, it is politicians and institutions that tend to do the same, with laws they give English names to:

“On the other hand, when our politicians launched the *Voluntary Disclosure*, they said, “we need to push the *Voluntary*.” They didn’t say, “we need to push the *Disclosure*” because they haven’t yet understood that English puts the flipping adjectival before [a noun]! So it was the *Voluntary*. And this testifies to the fact that whoever uses these English [phrases] does not know English well.”

This time, it is morphosyntactic hybridity rather than pronunciation, but the issue is the same, i.e., national linguistic insecurity. Clipping English in a way a native speaker would never do would show the world how poorly Italians handle the language.

Obfuscation Ideology.

Throughout her interview, Testa touched upon the crucial intertwining between comprehensibility and democracy more than once: “There is the [need for] maintenance of Italian as a fact of democracy. And of understanding ... being understandable as a pact of civilization and democracy.” She expanded on the latter point quite in detail in the long following segment, which is also a case of obfuscation and inferiority complex ideologies overlapping. The “shinier” quality of English is emphasized while arguing again that politicians and institutions are those who often adopt a communication strategy that is the opposite of “[transparent]”:

“I know how impossible it is for someone with a higher education level to imagine the difficulty of someone who has a lower [level of it]. People who find it hard to read, write and understand Italian, so let’s throw in two-hundred English terms so that the mission becomes impossible! So from a certain point [of view], my position is in the name of transparency, democracy, civilization, of understanding each other well as a factor for uniting communities, right? This also applies to political speech. How many [legislative] operations, how many taxes, how much weird stuff we’ve made shiny – making it shiny through English terminology?”

Besides politicians, the media and finance also contribute to the obfuscation of meaning that English use can cause:

“And the *spread*: why don’t we say *il divario*? [We say] that the spread between German and Italian bonds grew. What does one with a middle school-level education understand?”

Beautiful Language Ideology.

Testa argued the innate beauty of the language is directly tied to the beautiful things it evokes, while calling it “musical,” both of which she did in her TED Talk too, and these are some of the reasons why foreigners love it:

“This language, so loved, so [musical] for ears that are not Italian, so linked to pleasant things such as great music, fashion, [some kinds of] cinema, food, design, this magnificent language that has remained ... always identical to itself over seven hundred years, so that today we speak an Italian [that is] not too different from Dante’s. Which for example the Anglo-Saxons cannot say about Shakespeare, even though Shakespeare is much more recent ...”

That Italian has stayed almost identical to itself for so long, i.e., it is resilient and stable, is implicitly presented as source of pride, i.e., another good quality Italian can boast while contemporary English cannot. It cannot be assumed Testa implied any form of competition in this sense, but she did juxtapose the two languages in this sense. A form of competition for linguistic prestige was more clearly implied, instead, when Testa reiterated later that Italian is now “the language of food” having replaced French, besides having “always been the language of music,” as well:

“I travel [a lot] and I get shocked, no, it makes me laugh a bit because in Italy we say *wine* and *food* and in New York they say *vino* and they say *pasta* and *cibo* ... All worldwide cuisine speaks Italian by now ...in culinary jargon, [Italian] has widely replaced French. We [Italians] are the only ones who use English for wine and food, and this is a bit silly ...”

Notoriously, it is a widespread belief among most of the French as well as most of Italians that their cuisine is the best in the world. To this competition, Testa seems to add another one, i.e., for the title of worldwide language of food. At the same time, she discussed not only the paradox of using English in Italian to speak of a staple component of Italian culture, but also the paradox of using English when, allegedly, the rest of the world uses Italian to speak about food.

Lastly, Testa did not neglect to praise Italian utilitarian purposes as well:

“It is the language of the [Roman Catholic] Church. Because the official documents are not in Latin: they are in Italian. For example, Italian is also the Lingua Franca of all museum directors in the world. [Each of them] boasts of having studied in Italy, and therefore when an American museum director and a Finnish museum director meet at an international meeting in Tokyo or Hong Kong, they speak Italian.”

Interestingly, in this excerpt, on the one hand Testa seems to contradict what she stated on the TED stage, i.e., that “nobody learns Italian for business.” On the other, she argues for the worldliness of Italian, thus indicating that Italian has quite some economic power, the opposite of what she implied on stage.

Inferiority Complex Ideology.

According to Testa, Italians often turn to English as if it were a “magical spell” that has the power to open the gates of exclusive clubs. In other words, English works like a pass into some gatekept “circles” because of its “modern, cosmopolitan” connotation, i.e., because it is “cooler”:

“English is often used because it seems more modern and cosmopolitan. Often it is done out of laziness; often it is done out of habit; to get credit in the circles that use this type of

jargon, so if one deals with marketing and does not [use phrases like] *logiche funnel* (funnel logic) – because *funnel* sounds a lot cooler than *imbuto*, right?”

Additionally, Italians use English because of the aforementioned embellishing power it has, making something look automatically more “important”:

“One other thing, shall we take a look at the professional definitions that a bunch of poor kids come up with on LinkedIn? There are invented professions, but in my opinion they [themselves] don’t even know the meaning of what they are writing ... These definitions are really far-fetched, and I understand that there is a desire to make yourself sound important when you have little or no work experience ...”

Or, because English allows us to say something we would be “ashamed” to say in Italian, an interesting concomitance of inferiority complex and obfuscation-driven English use, that dignifies and disguises at the same time:

“I mentioned *creator* before. Goodness, I have always found it embarrassing to be defined as an advertising *creativa* (creative) myself. But *creator*? For making videos on TikTok? And perhaps we would be ashamed to say it in Italian, to say “lui è un creatore” (he is a creator): [instead], *creator* is allowed to pass.”

Counter Discourses.

What I labelled counter discourses, I consider to be basic sociolinguistic facts that most sociolinguists would agree on (Blommaert, 2010; Marelllo, 2020; Pulcini, Furiassi, & Rodríguez-González, 2012; Tagg, 2015; Vessey, 2021; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, 2021; Woolard, 2008). This sociolinguistic facts include, language variation, i.e., that there is variation in language among speakers of any living language, which is a natural, normal phenomenon; language change, i.e., that all languages inevitably change over time, and this change is once again just

natural; that all languages borrow from other languages, nowadays especially from English, etc. (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021); language globalization, i.e., that currently linguistic resources are extremely mobile, and the concomitant “patterns of multilingual language use” are “less predictable” and “more complex” (Blommaert, 2010, p.5) than they may have been in the past.

Language change and globalization were never explicitly mentioned by Testa, but her awareness of both was clearly implied in some of her remarks. Language change was implied by Testa several times: e.g., when she argued that using some English loans is inevitable because they have filled semantic gaps and have therefore “rightfully entered [our] dictionary”; and when she argued that some English words in specific professional contexts and jargon have simply *become* inevitable.

Language globalization is implied as well in a few claims she made, for example:

“We cannot expect to expunge English from our world ... [but] we have to try to [speak] English decently to understand each other and the rest of the world.”

In conclusion, national language, (lenient) monolingualism, obfuscation, and complaint prove the most frequently underlying ideologies in Testa’s claims, broadly in line with ideology-related findings in her TED Talk. Endangerment in the sense of a realistic, concrete threat to Italian survival is nowhere to be found within Testa’s answers. Arguably, the opposite is the case. In fact, she seemed to imply the contrary when she claimed that Italian has remained “always identical to itself for over seven hundred years, so today we speak an Italian not too different from that of Dante.” Lenient monolingualism ideology is prominent in Testa’s interview, in the sense of a permissive but sensible use of necessary loanwords. What I call “sensible use” ties both into complaint ideology and her overall distaste for “bad” hybridized English, and into obfuscation ideology and her concern for deliberately and unnecessarily

ambiguous messages from the institutions. Language change and globalization-related claims are scattered throughout Testa's interview, the former perhaps more than the latter, with a brief reference to code-switching for marketing purposes as well.

In other words, Testa is not worried about the survival of the Italian language, but she is concerned with the preservation of the culture, heritage, and roots of a country she "is rooting for," defining herself "patriotic," a country whose language is intertwined with its people's identity. Aware of language globalization, she accepts common uses of English when it is (e.g., *link, online, offline* etc.) or has become (*rough, art director*, etc.) unavoidable, provided that English is used clearly, and, as far as possible, correctly, keeping linguistic creativity to a minimum. Finally, she is concerned with the deliberate message-meaning obfuscation that crucial social actors like the government are accountable for, a mystification people seem not to be aware enough of, while they should be.

YouTube

Since Testa's TED Talk was uploaded on YouTube, in 2015, it has received a relatively steady flow of comments, mostly between 2015 and 2020. Specifically, by the start of YouTube data analysis, October 23rd, 2021, there were 1103 comments posted in response to Testa's 2015 TED Talk. By the time of final revisions, December 2022, there were 1149. For the past seven years, YouTubers have been commenting both on the *Italenglish* phenomenon Testa denounces, as well as on Testa's own claims. They either align with her arguments, rooted in language ideologies, or they question her authority, or they offer counter discourses to rebut her claims, i.e., basic sociolinguistic facts like language globalization and language change.

Discussion

Research Question 1.

What instances of English language use are Italian internet users complaining about (e.g., false loans versus direct ones)? In which social contexts do they occur, and what categories of people are using language that way?

1a: Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

To answer RQ1, I first identified the loans YouTubers utilize, including those already addressed by Testa, as either direct, false, or hybrid loans, and cases of semantic narrowing or extension. I then identified the categories of people who are deemed most prolific users of these borrowings. Afterwards, I discuss whether YouTube users' attitude changes when commenting on the specific types of loans, or whether they make no distinction. Throughout the discussion, I compare YouTube results to Testa's TED Talk results as well. Because posts are primarily text-based and do not exploit visuals like Testa TED Talk does, I do not address multimodality in this section.

Findings.

Out of twenty-seven (N = 27) English loans that YouTubers discuss as either unnecessary or inevitable, a crucial differentiation discussed later, sixteen (N = 16) are direct loans, four (N = 4) are hybrids, three (N = 3) are cases of semantic narrowing, three (N = 3) are false loans, and one (N = 1) is a case of semantic extension. The majority (N = 16) are direct loans, i.e., English words that have been incorporated into Italian morphosyntax without any semantic narrowing or extension, and without morphosyntactic hybridization. Once again, I utilized both Anglophone and Italian monolingual and bilingual dictionaries to verify that all of the latter qualify as such, i.e., Merriam-Webster, Treccani, and Wordreference. I used all of the latter to also validate

whether an equally concise Italian alternative exists,⁴⁴ since concision is one of the strongest arguments users of English loanwords propose to justify this practice. In fifteen (N = 15) out of sixteen (N = 16) instances, the Italian replacement is as concise as the English word/phrase. YT1⁴⁵ (*enoteca* for *wine bar*) is the only outlier, since the Italian alternative is more concise than the English loan.

Of the remaining eleven (N = 11) English use instances, only *jolly* (YT17) is a semantic extension, meaning a person or device that can carry out several/different tasks, while there are three cases of semantic narrowing. These are: *flipper* (YT14), an established loan to mean *pinball machine*; *water* (YT16) a clipping for *water closet*; and *speaker* (YT21) to mean *newscaster*, (the latter a case of uncalled-for use of English Testa herself stumbles into without realizing it), since the Italian alternatives (*mezzobusto*, *conduttore*, *presentatore*) are as concise. Three (N = 3) instances of English use are false loans: *smart working* (YT6)⁴⁶ to mean working remotely/online, which also is another example of how Italian alternatives can be more concise than English (i.e., *telelavoro*); *Autogrill* (YT15), a proper noun and a tradename for an Italian-based, multinational catering company; and *footing* (YT22), an established false loan that means alternating running and marching. Lastly, four (N = 4) instances of English use are hybrids. They are either cases of mixing English/Italian morphosyntax, like the already discussed *very bello* (YT23), or *triggera* (YT25), where English is turned into a hybrid verb by attaching an Italian morpheme to it. Alternatively, they are blends of English words like *Greeklish* (YT26) and *Spanglish* (YT27). Within these categories, five (N = 5) instances of English usage are not

⁴⁴ One to three words.

⁴⁵ I.e., ‘YouTube, I.’

⁴⁶ It must be noted that Treccani labels *smart working* as a pseudo-anglicism, i.e. a false loan, explained as flexible working conditions of which working remotely, i.e. online, is but one component (first documented in the media in 2010). On the other hand, the *Accademia della Crusca* deemed *telelavoro* (*teleworking*) and *smart working* synonyms back in 2016, so there is no general agreement on this phrase. As importantly, *smart working* was already in use in pre-Covid 19 days.

directly and/or concisely translatable in Italian. Interestingly, none of them is a case of semantic narrowing. They are either false (e.g., *footing*) or hybrid loans (the by-now established *Spanglish*), or loans affected by semantic extension (*jolly*).

As far as the categories of people borrowing these words from English, once again the majority (N = 16) is indirectly attributed to the media. For example, when a YouTuber argues that the “situation has only got worse with the various *lockdown*, *green*, *location* ... it’s endless bombarding,” it is safe to infer that the “bombarding” is done by the mass media. When another remarks that “then came the pandemic, and down with *lockdown*, *droplet*, *smart working* ... etc., [it is] worse than before,” the situation was made “worse” by TV and newspapers that readily adopted Covid-19-related direct and false loans alike, making those mainstream in no time. The media are followed by advertisers (N = 9), the government (N = 6), the general public (N = 5),⁴⁷ and business/finance/business owners (N = 4). Only one (N = 1) hybrid loan can be attributed directly to technology jargon: *triggera* (YT25).⁴⁸ Additionally, it must be noted that either the media and advertisers or the media and the government overlap quite often (N = 12), with two cases of each of the latter overlapping with business and finance. It seems safe to assume that many members of this public may tend to see the media and advertisers as one and the same thing, more often than not.

As far as complaining more about certain uses of English rather than others, i.e., hybrid or false loans versus direct loans, YouTubers seem to group them all together rather indiscriminately, just like Testa does. This would be expected from lay people who, for the most part, are not even aware of these distinctions. On the one hand, however, false loans do seem to

⁴⁷ I.e., examples of long-time established loans people have been using for decades.

⁴⁸ In electronics, the verb ‘trigger’ is used for remote control signals (Treccani). However, this YouTuber is turning the English noun into a hybrid verb (English meaning with Italian morphology), meaning *provoking/bothering*, i.e., how it is more commonly used.

produce the most puzzled reactions, and there are cases of accentuated irony when discussing false loans like *smart working* (YT21) and *footing* (YT22). In one instance, among a list of direct loans, only *smart working* is followed by a question mark in parentheses, which reminds of the question mark placed next to *Jobs Act* by a puzzled Dante, in Testa’s Talk. In another, *footing* is used to mockingly exemplify how Italians use words that look and sound English without being such,⁴⁹ words that are therefore unintelligible to native English speakers themselves: “Don’t worry. Keep *footing* – no Anglophone would understand you.” On the other hand, the unnecessary introduction of many direct loans,⁵⁰ due to the Covid-19 pandemic is also denounced, like in the previously discussed comment:

“Poi è arrivata la pandemia e giù di *lockdown* (chiusura), *droplet* (gocciolina), *smart working* (che in inglese non significa telelavoro bensì *lavoro agile o duttile*), *cluster* (focolaio), *device* (dispositivo) ecc. Peggio di prima.”

[Then came the pandemic and down with *lockdown* (chiusura), *droplet* (gocciolina), *smart working* (which in English does not mean *teleworking* but *agile* or *ductile* work), *cluster* (focolaio), *device* (dispositivo) etc.. Worse than before.]

The hardly translatable colloquialism “e giù di,” i.e., a phrase that metaphorically suggests “hammering something,” evokes a war-like image, or alternatively a deluge, as if Italian were being bombarded or flooded by unnecessary English loans. A similar metaphor (“bombardamento continuo,” i.e., endless bombardment that is “impossible to bear”) is explicitly used in another previously mentioned comment to address exactly the same issue. Also, another

⁴⁹ At least not with that meaning specifically: mixing jogging and marching.

⁵⁰ It must be noted that this list by YTC40 does include *smart working*, but the remaining four words are all direct loans.

YouTuber ironically doubts Italians' ability to spell basic direct loans like *location* (YT8) and *weekend* (YT10) correctly as well, in a statement that is implicitly but heavily ideology-loaded.

In conclusion, YouTubers discuss the encroachment of English loans into Italian by utilizing mainly direct loans as examples, but they seem to be especially troubled by false loans, as their irony (and the sporadic attempt at correction) suggest. Testa appeared to do the same in her TED Talk, though in her interview she emphasized the bottom-line issue of intelligibility as the real problem, more than the kind of loan used itself. Among YouTubers, irony is slightly more detectable when commenting on false loans. However, YouTube users use effective metaphorical language to comment on direct loans as well: e.g., the media “bombarding” their audience with “*lockdown, green, and location.*” The examples YouTubers utilize confirm that they more or less indirectly attribute these uses mostly to the media, to advertisers, and to the government, and at times to all three of them. Testa attributed such uses to the media and advertisers too, though recognizing that people working in business and finance were to be held accountable for the (over)proliferation of English words as well. She reiterated the latter point in her interview, where however she repeatedly pointed the finger at institutions and the Government as the more “worrisome” actor. Lastly, some examples in the YouTube dataset must be attributed to the general public, rather than more specific actors, since these are long-time, well-established English loans, be they direct loans like *film* (YT24), false loans like *footing* (YT22), or semantic extensions like *jolly* (YT17) .

Research Question 2.

Who is doing the complaining about uncalled-for uses of English? Are they experts or lay people?

2a. How do both experts and lay people establish their language authority when discussing these matters? What kind of language do they use when trying to demonstrate/perform their expertise?

2b. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

To answer RQ2, I first established if there are language professionals and experts among YouTube commentators. Here, I discuss the ways YouTubers establish their authority, with several examples, focusing on the kind of language they chose. I also discuss how these strategies are used differently to either establish one's authority, or to undermine Testa's in language matters, or to try to weaken the authority claim of other YouTubers besides Testa's.

Criteria of Inclusion.

First of all, the total number of posts analyzed to answer RQ2 is lower ($N = 59$) than the total number of posts and replies included in the dataset ($N = 66$). This is because only comments that implicitly or explicitly try to establish some form of authority in the matter were relevant to this analysis. In fact, in a few comments ($N = 7$), people either generally say that they agree with Testa, or comment with a more or less funny remark, or make generically related statements but without trying to show any expertise in language matters.⁵¹

Findings.

The first thing that is important to point out is that none of the YouTube users in the dataset likely qualifies as a professional expert or language professional. In fact, no one mentions nor implies having a profession that revolves around language use (e.g., a translator, or an advertiser, or a journalist, etc.). In the fifty-nine ($N = 59$) examples where YouTubers do try to

⁵¹ E.g.: "Awesome initiative. We need to use our beautiful language," or "I speak English and I love Italian. Please don't contaminate your beautiful language!". The ideological content of these will be discussed under RQ3.

establish their authority, directly or indirectly, they did so in different ways. First of all, more than half of them (N = 34) appealed to common sense, i.e., they presented information as if it were just obvious facts, which naturalizes ideologies, making common sense the most frequent strategy to support one's claims among YouTube users. Alternatively, they often referred to their linguistic expertise (N = 21): they used technical jargon or marked language choices (e.g., use of subjunctive or more formal syntax, and/or less common or erudite vocabulary); or they relied on discussions of faulty/inaccurate translations, word usages, and grammar in general. Some YouTubers use technical jargon correctly, e.g., when they mentioned the whole category of "arbitrary calques" they "have been fighting," while others misuse it, e.g., they mentioned "phonemes" when in fact what they meant was lexicon, the latter a rare case of hypercorrection, i.e., a person is trying to show she knows linguistic technical jargon while in fact she uses metalanguage incorrectly. It must also be noted that, in line with the more informal register used on social media, YouTubers very rarely resorted to subjunctive, or used erudite/refined vocabulary.

The next most frequent strategy YouTube users utilized to establish their expertise is drawing on their language experience (N = 13), i.e., they gave additional information about their experience with foreign language/s: e.g., living or studying abroad; having a language degree; using English at/for work; witnessing code-switching in other languages, etc. All of the latter is indirectly interactional work that clearly positions the identity of the writer. In only three cases (N = 3) did they try to appear authoritative by making sociolinguistic arguments, and/or by mentioning sociolinguistic constructs. For example, some discussed the difference between standard Italian and regional varieties, or standard Italian as a Lingua Franca, which was imposed by institutions in the 19th century, to "*manufacture*" a monolingual nation "out of what

was, invariably, a very multilingual and multicultural complex” (Blommaert, 2011, p. 244, emphasis in the original). Lastly, they appealed to cultural knowledge in only three comments (N = 3), e.g., mentioning Dante “rolling over in his grave” because of, it was implied, excessive English use within Italian. It must be noted that, in this dataset as well, multiple strategies often appear in the same comment (N = 15).

Additionally, YouTubers tried to establish their authority while taking up different stances, some more explicit than others. They either supported Testa’s arguments, or they challenged them, or they stated what they considered objective facts in a rather neutral way. Likewise, while trying to establish their authority, some of them also tried to undermine Testa’s. Lastly, YouTubers attempted to do all of the latter making different linguistic choices: e.g., more or less assertive, more or less emotional, or rather impersonal.

As far as appealing to common sense, the most frequent strategy to support one’s authority in language matters (N = 34), many YouTubers discussed the English-in-Italian issue to positively evaluate Testa’s arguments and emphatically align with her, as with example 1 (YTC11),⁵² where this person chose strong modifiers like “repugnant” and “absurd” to describe the issue:

1. Trovo ripugnante e assurdo che l’Italia, “patria della cultura,” accetta e sfoggia, anche con orgoglio, tali idiozie e soprusi di uno “pseudo” progresso ...

[I find it repugnant and absurd that Italy, “crib of culture,” accepts and boasts, even with pride, such nonsense and tyranny like pseudo progress ...]

Additionally, assertions like example 2 (YTC13) offer an apparently self-explanatory truth, framed as common sense that cannot be challenged: a fact everybody is aware of. This YouTuber

⁵² I.e., ‘YouTube Comment, 1.’

aligned with Testa's conclusion that Italian is studied for its supposed innate beauty, rather than for utilitarian purposes. It is a declarative assertion without mitigation nor modality, leaving no room for any other interpretation:

2. L'Inglese e lo Spagnolo si imparano per necessità, l'Italiano si impara per amore.

[One learns English and Spanish out of necessity. Italian out of love.]

Otherwise, some YouTube users were confrontational when taking their distance from Testa's argument, like in example 3 (YTC23), where Testa herself was accused to be the "provincial" one:

3. Video inutile e basato su principi, neanche troppo mascherati, di sciovinismo spicciolo che è davvero il marchio di fabbrica di questo "provincialismo" che la signora Testa denuncia. Se non riesce a capire che dire *very bello*, nel contesto in cui è usato, funziona molto meglio di *molto bello* o *very beautiful* o ci è, o ci fa. Penso la seconda e questo è ancora più fastidioso.

[Useless video based on narrow principles of chauvinism that are not even well hidden, which is really the trademark of that "provincialism" Ms. Testa denounces. If she can't understand that saying *very bello* in that context works much better than *molto bello* or *very beautiful*, she either is dumb or she plays dumb. I think the latter, which bothers me even more.]

As far as linguistic expertise (N = 21), it too could be used as a resource to either support Testa's claims or to undermine it, and in more than one way. One is to point out her faulty use of an Italian word, *spiacciare* instead of *spicciare* (*to squash* instead of *to utter*), a verb she misused twice in the Talk. Example 4 (YTC3) interestingly pointed to that faulty verb use while indirectly supporting one of Testa's claims, i.e., "Italian is a beautiful language." However, this

Youtuber ended up undermining Testa's authority nevertheless. Example 5 (YTC17) instead denounced that mistake without further remarks, as if that one little word alone damaged Testa's authority irreparably:

4. L'italiano è una lingua bellissima dove ogni parola ha un senso ben preciso... quindi

12.13 per esempio è *spicciato* non *spiacciato*.

[Italian is a beautiful language where every word has a specific meaning ... so for example at min. 12.13 it's *spicciato*, not *spiacciato*.]

5. Ma si dice *spicciare* una parola non *spiacciare*.

[But you say 'spicciare una parola' not 'spiacciare.']

Another strategy of using one's linguistic expertise to undermine Testa's authority is to draw attention to her uncalled-for use of *speaker* rather than its Italian alternatives, like in example 6 (YTC20). That *speaker* "slips out" implies that she herself is unaware of her own reliance on Anglicisms:

6. Il bello è che le scappa *speaker* del telegiornale ...

[The best part is that newscast *speaker* slips out in her talk ...]

The latter two comments on faulty Italian use and unnecessary use of English (*spiacciare* and *speaker*) are mentioned three times in this dataset. (However, going back further in time in YouTube comments, both of these "verbal missteps" were brought to people's attention much more often, from 2015 through 2019).

Metalanguage and linguistic jargon were used to claim authority too, yet again to either bolster Testa's argument, as with example 7 (YTC10), or to contradict it, as with example 8 (YTC30). Example 7 is an instance of linguistic jargon use with "calques," while example 8

implies that not only does this YouTuber know the difference between a true cognate and a false one, but also that Testa does not:

7. ... Personalmente, sto combattendo una battaglia contro i calchi arbitrari ... non mollerò mai.

[... Personally, I've been fighting against arbitrary calques ... I will never give up.]

8. Non è la marina, sono i marines (*marine* non è *navy*).

[It's not the Navy – it's the Marines (*marine* does not mean *navy*).]

As far as technical language, some YouTubers supporting Testa's points tried to establish their authority in ways that fell short at times. For example, the author of example 9 (YTC50) misused “phonemes” since what she really meant was “lexis”: this has the opposite effect of what was probably sought for, since this case of jargon misuse undermined the YouTuber's authority, though clearly only if read by someone who is aware of the difference:

9. Difendere la lingua italiana! Abolire tutti i fonemi inglesi dalla nostra lingua. Che senso ha dire *fake* al posto di *falso*? Idem che senso ha dire *weekend* invece di *fine settimana*? ...

[Defend the Italian language! Rid our language of all English phonemes! What's the point of saying *fake* instead of *falso*? Same for *weekend* instead of *fine settimana*? ...]

Lastly, and peculiarly, some users tried to undermine Testa's authority by pointing out her supposed faulty – and, more importantly, in their opinion implicitly avoidable – pronunciation of /r/. According to them, that she speaks with the so-called “French /r/,”⁵³ also

⁵³ Referring to a different place of articulation of /r/ typical of French, rather than that typical of Italian. The “French” /r/ is also commonly called “limp” /r/, which is pejorative in that it implies either a defective pronunciation, or a deliberate, snobbish imitation of Parisian pronunciation (Treccani). A few YouTube users seemed to imply Testa does it on purpose, and/or that she could easily avoid it, which, to them, supposedly undermines the soundness of her claims.

pejoratively called “limp /r/,” contradicted her whole speech. Because it is called “French,” and because in their opinion it is avoidable, i.e., a choice rather than a speech impairment, it undermined her arguments completely. In example 10 (YTC58), the YouTuber even used eye-spelling for “French /r/, substituting /r/ with /v/: ‘evve moscia dei fvancesi.’ In example 11 (YTC59), the use of upper case worsens the accusation since it reads as if the comment were screamed to the addressee, rather than just spoken to, a comment on a (very debatable) faulty use of Italian that supposedly denies Testa the right to “[lecture] others”:

10. Certo che una che fa tutto sto discorso parlando con la *evve moscia dei fvancesi* è da ridere.

[That she goes on about this with her *French limp ‘r’* is laughable.]

11. QUESTA SIGNORA PARLA DI PAROLE STORPIATE, E LEI NON SA NEANCHE PRONUNCIARE CORRETTAMENTE L'ITALIANO, LA “R” IN ITALIANO NON HA ANCORA IMPARATO A PRONUNCIARLA. VOLERE E’ POTERE. FACCIA UNA SFORZO SIGNORA. POI MAGARI TORNI A DARE LEZIONE.

[This lady talks about mangled words and she can’t even pronounce Italian correctly. She hasn’t learned how to pronounce the Italian ‘r’ yet. Where there’s a will, there’s a way. Make an effort, madam. Then maybe you can go back to lecturing others.]

As far as claims of language experience (N = 13), YouTubers’ authority is rooted in personal circumstances: e.g., their Italian nationality should be enough reason to believe what they claim, and so should be their bilingual status and their proficiency in both languages. The latter can be both used as arguments validating one’s authority either while supporting Testa’s claims, like in examples 12 (YTC2) and 13 (YTC10), or while challenging them, like in example

14 (YTC9). In example 12, the YouTuber implies that code-switching is acceptable when done in speech, but not in writing, i.e., context makes a difference:

12. Sono inglese ma parlo molto bene l'italiano dopo aver vissuto in Sicilia per più di sei anni. Quando sono con un mio amico inglese che parla anche lui un ottimo italiano, spesso immischiamo delle parole italiane nella nostra conversazione inglese, perché è divertente.... Ma è un conto farlo fra amici, e un altro riempire la pubblicità e legalese di parole inglesi.

[I'm English but I speak Italian very well, after having lived in Sicily for more than six years. When I'm with my English friend, who also speaks excellent Italian, we often mix Italian words with English, because it's fun ... but one thing is to do it among friends, another is to fill ads and legal jargon with English words.]

In example 13, this other YouTuber implies instead that code-switching is perfectly avoidable, regardless of context, perhaps ignoring that many people code-mix without even realizing it, just as Testa did when she used *speaker*:

13. Io vivo all'estero da quasi venti anni. Sempre parlato solo italiano quando devo e bene...

[I've been living abroad for almost twenty years. I've only been speaking Italian when I have had to, and well ...]

In example 14, this other YouTuber validates his opinion and challenges Testa's by means of his nationality:

14. Non sono d'accordo, e lo dico da italiano. A parte che esistono un infinità di prestiti linguistici utilizzati normalmente dagli italiani ...

[I don't agree and I say it as an Italian. Let's not forget there's an endless number of loanwords normally used by Italians ...]

YouTube users utilized the same factual experience to distance themselves from Testa's claims rather neutrally, as with example 15 (YTC19), where the YouTuber challenged Testa's evaluations of code-switching practices as if they happened only, or mostly, in Italian.

Alternatively, YouTube users could be slightly more confrontational, as with example 16 (YTC6). Both are however implying that code-mixing is not only a widespread but also normal phenomenon, happening in exactly the same contexts abroad:

15. The same thing that happens to we Spanish speakers when we mix English with Spanish ...

16. Annamaria da brava comunicatrice porta tutto il pubblico a pendere dalle sue labbra portando solo gli esclusivi esempi a sostegno della sua causa e omettendo ciò che non le serve ... E degli altri enti e campagne stranieri che usano l'inglese, non ne parla? (I AMsterdam, I feel sLOVEnia, be Berlin ecc. ...) ...

[Annamaria, the good communication expert she is, has all the audience hang off her words using only examples that serve her cause but omitting all that does not ... What about all other foreign institutions that use English – she does not mention them? (I AMsterdam, I feel sLOVEnia, be Berlin etc.) ...]

Alternatively, fewer YouTubers distanced themselves from Testa's claims and challenged them by mentioning basic sociolinguistic facts ($N = 3$), like standard Italian as a Lingua Franca supplanting regional varieties. A few others appealed to cultural knowledge to either align with her or, like in example 17 (YTC9), to challenge her. Here, the reference is to Mussolini and the fascist-inspired attempt to cleanse Italian of all foreignisms in the 1920-40s:

17. ... E ricordiamo chi in passato voleva forzare ad utilizzare le parole italiane al posto di quelle inglesi.

[... And let's not forget who in the past wanted to force people to use Italian words instead of English ones.]

Finally, some YouTubers not only tried to challenge Testa's authority while establishing theirs, but they also challenged the authority of other YouTube users. Interestingly, they sometimes did so using a typical Italian syntactic construction: at the beginning of a statement or question, the adversative conjunction "ma" (but) reinforces the sense of opposition to, or distancing from, what was said by someone else. The aforementioned example 5 is one of such syntactic constructions that emphasizes distancing from Testa's language (mis)use. Example 18 (YTC13b) is a reply to example 2, disputing what stated there, i.e., that Italian is learned out of love, not necessity, unlike English and Spanish. In 18, the rhetorical questions challenging the other YouTuber's authority are reinforced by the adversative conjunction:

5. Ma si dice *spicciare una parola non spiacciare*.

[But you say *spicciare una parola not spiacciare*.]

18. Lo spagnolo? Per necessità? Ma dove?

[Spanish? Out of necessity? But where?]

In conclusion, lay people posting on YouTube tried to establish their authority mostly by resorting to common sense, or to their linguistic expertise, or to their additional language experience. They did so while supporting Testa's argument, or while opposing it, respectively reinforcing or undermining her own authority as well at the same time. They resorted to what are perceived as objective facts, or their knowledge of English, or their awareness of similar linguistic phenomena elsewhere to align with her or to contradict her. Specifically within

linguistic expertise, to undermine Testa's authority and reinforce theirs, as well as their often diverging opinions, YouTubers also criticized her own use of Italian, her unnecessary use of an English loan, her misunderstanding of a false cognate, and the supposed contradiction between her pronunciation of /r/ and the point she was trying to make. In general, YouTubers rarely utilized linguistic jargon, whether correctly or not, as it would be expected by lay people who simply happened to watch a video on YouTube.⁵⁴ They also almost never utilize subjunctive or more erudite Italian vocabulary, in line with the more colloquial register typical of social media. Lastly, though mostly addressing Testa's talk itself, they also sometimes replied to each other, reinforcing their opposition to someone else's claims by using adversative conjunctions in a typically Italian syntactic construction.

In other words, YouTubers' stance on the English-in-Italian issue is quite heterogeneous, clearly not necessarily aligning with the expert. The common denominator, however, is that, when supporting or challenging Testa's claims or other YouTubers', the vast majority of lay people (N = 59 comments out of 66) nevertheless tries to establish one's authority somehow. YouTube users feel the need to validate their claim with evidence that they know what they are talking about, even if establishing one's authority can only be achieved by undermining another's, e.g., by passing (faulty) judgment on Testa's speech impairment. The bottom line is that they need to substantiate their rightful stance in the debate, primarily by relying on what is presented as common sense, i.e., supposedly obvious facts that do not need any additional explanation.

⁵⁴ As far as RQ2, the difference between lay people on YouTube and Facebook group members will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Research Question 3.

What language ideologies are revealed by the online discourse about uses of English in predominantly Italian contexts? What, if any, counter discourses (i.e. sociolinguistic facts/arguments) are raised by users about these same issues?

3a. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

3b. Are there any differences in this regard between experts and laypeople?

To answer RQ3, through careful word choice analysis, I first labelled all ideologies (described in Table 3 on p. 83). Then I identified counter discourses brought forward by YouTubers, i.e., basic sociolinguistic facts, or universal principles sociolinguists agree on. Some examples are: that there is variation in language among speakers, which is a natural, normal phenomenon; that living languages inevitably change over time, and this change is just natural; that all languages borrow from other languages, nowadays especially from English (Wardough & Fuller, 2021); that in the age of language globalization, linguistic resources are extremely mobile, and patterns of multilingual language use are not only unpredictable but also more complex than in the past (Blommaert, 2010).

Here, I explain criteria of data inclusion first. Then, I give an overview of the frequency of ideologies invoked, from the most prevalent to the least, to then discuss them, comparing my results with Testa's TED Talk RQ3 results. Next, I discuss counter discourses, with several examples. In doing both, I pay attention to two levels of discourse. I look at which specific linguistic resources people used to make their arguments, or 'small d' discourse (Gee, 1999), to unveil discourse at an ideological level, i.e., the 'big D' discourse (Gee, 1999). In other words, 'big D' discourse refers to discourse as a form of social practice in which language choice plays a crucial role (Cameron & Panovic, 2014). For example, both Testa and YouTubers discuss how

Italian language, culture, and heritage are supposedly in danger because of English linguistic imperialism, and that the former is being colonized by the latter ('big D' discourse), but YouTubers' lexical choices have more negative connotations than Testa's ('small d' discourse). So, according to YouTubers, Italian is being "humiliated," "raped and bastardized" by English, rather than being only "interfered with" like Testa argues. Before I exemplify instances of different ideologies among YouTube comments, I show an overview of the frequency of ideologies both in Testa's TED Talk and in YouTubers' comments in Table 5 below, whose differences and/or similarities I refer to when I then proceed to discuss discourses in the YouTube dataset specifically.

Criteria of Inclusion.

Out of sixty-six (N = 66) initial YouTube segments, fifty-four (N = 54) present instances of language ideology or counter discourses. I did not code the remaining ones for RQ3 and language ideologies for two reasons: either because they were too generic and no specific underlying language ideologies could be identified, or because people deemed the use of English "ridiculous" without further elaborating on what that means. In other words, I could not tell with relative certainty whether "ridiculous" refers to overuse (i.e., monolingualism ideology), erroneous use (i.e., complaint ideology), obscure meaning (i.e., obfuscation ideology), or whether it refers to using a code that is deemed more modern/better/superior (i.e., inferiority complex ideology).⁵⁵

⁵⁵ For example: "I absolutely agree with her! Considering we are last in Europe as far as mastery of English, we often are a bit ridiculous with Anglicisms."

Findings.

Out of the 54 texts, forty-two (N = 42) texts include instances of underlying language ideologies. Each identified language ideology exemplified in the taxonomy (Table 3) occurs two or more times, except the ideology of obfuscation, which appears just once (N = 1). Before breaking them down further, it must be noted that some YouTube comments (N = 16) received multiple codes, since multiple ideologies can be included in a single comment, which indicates that these are complex, interrelated notions. The most recurring ideologies are: the ideology of monolingualism (N = 15), i.e., the belief that we either need to use one language at the time and that all foreignisms should be translated, or that we should use English only when strictly unavoidable. Second most frequent is endangerment ideology (N = 13), i.e., the belief that foreign loans threaten the survival of the mother language. National language ideology is also common (N = 12), i.e., the belief in the equation between one national identity and the use of one national language, the appeal to one people's cultural roots, and the belief that using a foreign code implies a lack of love for one's country. What distinguishes national language ideology from monolingualism are the more specific, more complex, often culture-tied reasons for why we need to use Italian only, while monolingualism is a prescriptive dogma that does not need further explanation or justification.

Less frequent are: beautiful language ideology (N = 6), i.e., the belief that languages have an intrinsic aesthetic value that transcends their utilitarian purposes; inferiority complex ideology (N = 5), i.e., the belief that any deviation from Italian betrays an inferiority complex and that a foreign code is used because it is perceived as better, superior, more modern etc., which is meant to reflect on the person who uses it; linguistic purity ideology (N = 4), i.e., the belief that foreignisms pollute the mother language, and that the latter should be cleansed of them; and

complaint ideology (N = 3), i.e., the belief that a language has its own fixed structure, lexicon, and pronunciation that cannot be altered or adapted when adopted by speakers of another language. More specifically, cases of alterations or adaptations are often scorned as clumsy uses of a language that non-native speakers should avoid, while objective mistakes are often mocked as simply using a language the wrong way. Obfuscation ideology appears only once (N = 1), i.e., the belief that a foreign language is used to deceive people and/or to coat a bitter pill by those who have the power to do so.

Counter discourses offered by YouTube users appear in twelve (N = 12) out of 54 texts. Language globalization appears the most (N = 10), i.e. the awareness that, because of increased mobility, language contact increases as well, which in turns causes language mixing, a natural sociolinguistic fact happening in all living languages (Wardaugh & Fuller, 2021). Language change is next (N = 4), while recognizing code-switching as a marketing strategy (Baumgardner, 2006; Baumgardner & Brown, 2012; Bhatia, 1992; Friedrich, 2019; Gazzardi & Vásquez, 2020; Kelly-Holmes, 2000; Lee, 2019), more than an uncalled-for use of foreignisms, appears only slightly less (N = 3). There are five (N = 5) cases of where multiple counter discourses appear in the same text.

Table 5: *Comparing frequencies of language ideologies in TED Talk and YouTube datasets*

Language ideologies	Testa's Talk frequency: out of 23 segments	YouTube comment frequency: out of 42 segments	Testa's Talk percentages	YouTube percentages ⁵⁶
National language	9	12	39%	29%
Monolingualism	9	15	39%	35%
Obfuscation	4	1	17%	2%
Beautiful language	4	6	17%	14%
Endangerment	3	14	13%	33%
Inferiority complex	3	5	13%	12%
Complaint	3	3	13%	7%
Linguistic purity	1	4	4%	10%

⁵⁶ It must be reiterated that multiple language ideologies appear in sixteen (N = 16) texts. In Testa's TED Talk dataset, they do so in nine (N = 9) segments.

Monolingualism Ideology.

Since monolingualism ideology is the most frequent among YouTubers (N = 15) as well as in Testa's Talk (N = 9), it appears YouTube users share her belief that one needs to use one language at the time. Example 1 (YTI16)⁵⁷ is one of emotionally invested language use when condemning the "random" overuse of English in otherwise Italian contexts, which betrays "ignorance of both languages." Example 2 (YTI10) and 3 (YTI42) additionally represent a strongly rooted belief that goes hand in hand with monolingualism ideology: that code-switching can easily be avoided, and therefore it should be. In other words, it is not a natural practice among bilinguals. In fact, lay people tend to understand code-switching practices based on the faulty assumption that language systems are separate, isolated from each other in the mind of the bi- or multilingual speaker (Tagg, 2015). This is juxtaposed to what researchers, i.e., experts, have been arguing, i.e., that linguistic repertoires are not water-tight containers, and that multilingual speakers utilize all languages in their repertoire the same way a monolingual speaker uses her one language, drawing on different registers and styles, and switching back and forth (Tagg, 2015). Thus, code-switching is currently regarded by linguists as a matter of a more complex, fluid usage of language in which speakers use resources in their idiolect without necessarily making conscious, deliberate choices (Otheguy et al., 2015; Tagg, 2015).

YouTube users, however, seem to imply that code-switching is a synonym of broken language, a sign of "ignorance of both languages" as stated in example 1, and a practice that "those who really speak several languages" never engage in, as remarked in example 3. It remains unclear, however, how it would be possible to quantify how "well" one speaks a language or another, i.e., what it means to "*really* speak several languages," as this YouTuber

⁵⁷ I.e., 'YouTube, Ideology, Comment 16.'

argued. In examples 1 to 3, YouTube users suggested that mastery of languages, of one's mother tongue and of foreign languages, would neutralize code-switching at all times:

1. Odio profondamente con tutto me stesso tutti quelli che inseriscono parole inglesi a caso nelle frasi. Questo dimostra ignoranza sia nell'italiano che nell'inglese.

[I hate with every fiber of my being all those who insert English words into Italian phrases at random. This shows ignorance of both languages.]

2. Io vivo all'estero da quasi venti anni. Sempre parlato solo italiano quando devo e bene ...

[I've been living abroad for almost twenty years. I've only been speaking Italian when I have had to, and well ...]

3. Brava, chi veramente parla più lingue , non le mescola mai o almeno cerca di non farlo.

[Well said. Those who really speak several languages never mix them, or at least they try not to.]

Other instances of monolingualism ideology just stated the need to use Italian only, that English loans in Italian are just “too many,” to the point of making one “sick,” and that it is “[pointless]” to mix languages without needing to. When making such comments, YouTubers also often listed several examples of English borrowings that have no reason to occur so frequently. In this respect, YouTube users also often pointed out how the Covid-19 pandemic only made things “worse” because of the introduction of unnecessary direct loans.

On the one hand, it must be pointed out that, unlike many YouTubers, in her Talk, Testa proved partially open to the use of some foreign words: she said that “of course we can welcome a few foreign words” provided that “our linguistic texture is strong and solid” (TI33). Hers was

willingness to compromise, or an opening to foreign loans to a certain degree, which does not seem to be shared by most YouTubers, who in fact often insisted more strongly that languages be kept separate. On the other hand, it must be noted that Testa probably implied welcoming loans that are necessary, i.e., that fill a linguistic gap or are used for concision reasons. In fact, most English examples she used to support her claims against *Italenglish* were direct English loans that have an as-concise counterpart in Italian. These are the same kind of loans most YouTubers mentioned to support their own argument against mixing languages as well. In this sense, therefore, lay people align with the expert in this dataset.

Endangerment Ideology.

Endangerment ideology is the second most frequent ideology in YouTubers' comments (N = 14). In Testa's TED Talk, endangerment is the third most frequent (N = 3) with monolingualism occurring three times more often than endangerment (N = 9). It therefore appears that the belief that foreign loans threaten the well-being, if not the very existence, of the mother language is much more strongly rooted in lay people's minds than in the language expert's, or at least that it is perceived as a more immediate danger. Example 4 (YTI18), almost paradoxically left directly in English, shows how metaphors of death were often utilized by YouTubers to support their argument that a colonizing language threatens another in the worst possible way: "Italian is dying." Example 4 also creates an interesting but arguably inaccurate equation between the "enforcement" of standard Italian at the birth of the nation state (Blommaert, 2011), because of which "regional [varieties] ... are dying," and the widespread use of English in Italian, which would have the same consequences on standard Italian itself. Example 5 (YTI48), presented it as a political problem, where the excessive internationalism of left-wing parties straight out "humiliated" and "sold out the country" to capitalism. That is, what

was implied is that “the country” was sold out to the economic hegemony of the Anglophone world, a done deed that is presented as irreversible, and that also suggests links between language use and economic factors. In example 6 (YTI51), a YouTuber claimed that an American “feeling cool” because he or she uses *vino* in otherwise English contexts is typical of a linguistic “colonizer.” It is interesting to point out that this person argued that if an American borrows an Italian word to feel “cool,” it is only “natural”:

4. Unpopular opinion: Italian language has been imposed with force on the other regional languages, which are dying right now due to this enforcement ... So I’m happy that Italian language is dying in favor of English...
5. Mi fa sorridere il video poiché se ad oggi siamo umiliati e privi della nostra identità storica è proprio grazie alle nostre illuminate “Sinistre Internazionaliste” che da 30 anni a questa parte hanno abbracciato il capitale Finanziario e svenduto il paese ...
[It makes me smile, this video, since if we are humiliated and deprived of our historical identity at present, it is thanks to “internationalist left-wing parties” that have embraced capitalism for the last 30 years and sold out the country ...]
6. L’americano che dice VINO, al contrario, si sente COOL, da colonizzatore. È naturale e per certi versi forse anche giusto, ma vale la pena rifletterci.
[An American that says VINO, on the contrary, feels COOL, like a colonizer. It’s natural, and in a sense maybe fair too, but it should make us ponder.]

Additionally, example 7 (YTI46) clearly spelled out that the problem is in the mentality of the people, who are “provincial” in the sense that they accept the rather passive role of a linguistic colony. The YouTuber however added that indigenous linguistic alternatives exist, and that it is possible to just use them, therefore implying that it is a matter of deliberate choices.

Likewise, another YouTuber's call to action, "defend the Italian language!" (YTI50), clearly implied that Italian is in danger, and that something can, and therefore must, be done. So did another YouTuber in example 8 (YTI56), albeit less directly, i.e. without an imperative order:

7. Provinciale? Forse sí, nel senso di "mentalità da colonia" ... A Roma non serve neppure cercare tanto il motto. Scegli tra "città eterna," "caput mundi." Non sei originale, non ne hai bisogno.

[Provincial? Maybe yes, meaning "mentality of a colony." ... Rome does not need to look for a motto, really. Pick between "eternal city," "caput mundi." No need to try to be innovative.⁵⁸]

8. ...La lingua va preservata ad ogni costo.

[... One's language needs to be protected at all costs.]

While another YouTuber's comment (YTI49) talked about the "decline" of a language that gets "raped" by an apparently "inferior" one, a rather violent metaphor that did not really imply whether it is a reversible linguistic trend or not, it seems that example 7 and 8 are among the few that align with Testa's plea to "hold on to our Italian language" (TT26), and to her commitment to "sensitize the people on the matter" (TT20), both implying that there is hope, and that something can and should be done. In other words, these are exceptions to the overall discourse, i.e., marked ideological positions, since most YouTubers directly or indirectly argued that this linguistic colonization is unstoppable and irreversible, or that it is a by-now completed process as example 5 argues. That is, the "sell out" already took place. In sum, comments that mention or imply an ideology of endangerment focus on whether it is still evitable, or at least reversible, or

⁵⁸ In reference to "*RoMe & You.*"

not, with most of them leaning towards a negative answer, unlike Testa. To most YouTubers, colonization seems a process that cannot be overturned.

National Language Ideology.

The relatively high frequency of national language ideology in both datasets shows that YouTubers agree with Testa, aligning with her in believing that a progressive drifting away from Italian culture and heritage is a sign of cultural decline, which the use of the national code would help prevent. In Testa’s Talk, this is the most frequent ideology together with monolingualism. Among YouTube comments, it is third most frequent, but immediately behind the first two. In other words, YouTubers perceive the loss of an Italian national identity as a major issue as well, albeit not the main one.

Example 9 (YTI11) is a prototypical example of this problem, and once again an example of emotionally invested language with word choices such as “repugnant” to describe a “tyranny” against “Italy, crib of culture.” Example 9 also implies that there are economic forces underlying specific language uses, as pointed out with the aforementioned example 5 as well. Example 10 (YTI49),⁵⁹ previously briefly mentioned, is an example of borderline hyperbolic word choices, describing how a language, “the essence and soul of a country,” gets “raped” and “bastardized” by an apparently “inferior” one:

9. Trovo ripugnante e assurdo che l’Italia, “patria della cultura,” accetta e sfoggia, anche con orgoglio, tali idiozie e soprusi di uno “pseudo” progresso, (che ci ha invece portati al “regresso” di noi stessi), con una modernizzazione e globalizzazione che vuole solo ed esclusivamente la “omologazione” generale privando i popoli del proprio essere.

⁵⁹ YTI49 is an instance of 4 ideologies overlapping: national language, endangerment, linguistic purity, and beautiful language.

[I find it repugnant and absurd that Italy, “crib of culture,” accepts and boasts, even with pride, such nonsense and tyranny as if it were “pseudo” progress (which instead is regress away from us) with modernization and globalization that only wants to be “homologation,” depriving peoples of their essence.]

10. Da 10 anni che anche io dico la stessa cosa, la lingua rappresenta l'essenza e l'anima di una nazione, quando viene violentata e imbastardita da una lingua mi dispiace dirlo inferiore, nella fonetica , nell'articolazione, è un chiaro segno di declino.

[I've been saying the same for 10 years. A language is the essence and soul of a country. When it gets raped and bastardized by another language that is, I'm sorry to say, inferior in phonetics, articulation, then it's a clear sign of decline.]

Other instances of national language ideology aligning with Testa's claim often showed a sort of matter-of-fact evaluation of reality, i.e., an equation between using English and the refusal of one's own culture, but they did in a less emotionally charged manner.

Beautiful Language Ideology.

YouTubers seem to share Testa's belief in the innate, apparently unquestionable beauty of Italian that would make it automatically superior to English, but neither they nor she seem to consider this the strongest argument against *Italenglish*. Instances of beautiful language ideology both on YouTube (N = 6) and in the TED Talk (N = 4) are fewer. Nevertheless, some YouTube users implied the supposed intrinsic aesthetic superiority of Italian to English: if mixing the two codes “[spoils]” Italian, as it is argued in example 12 (YTI34), it arguably means that English is inferior to it. The following examples 11 to 14 show that many YouTubers agreed on the claim that the supposed intrinsic beauty of “our magnificent language” (YTI37) is the reason why people learn it “out of love” (YTI13), but without providing any evidence to support their claim:

11. L’Inglese e lo Spagnolo si imparano per necessità, l’Italiano si impara per amore.

[You learn English and Spanish out of necessity. Italian out of love.]

12. ... Gli italiani ... vanno a rovinare la lingua italiana con una manciata di parole inglesi di qua e di là.

[... Italians ... end up spoiling their language with a handful of English words here and there.]

13. Iniziativa stupenda. Dobbiamo usare la nostra magnifica lingua.

[Wonderful initiative. We must use our magnificent language.]

14. Io parlo spagnolo e sto imparando l’italiano perché penso che sia la lingua più bella del mondo. Non posso credere che lo inquinino con l’inglese.

[I speak Spanish and I’m learning Italian because I think it’s the most beautiful language in the world. I can’t believe they are polluting it with English.]

This is where the main difference lies between Testa’s claims and YouTubers’ about the innate beauty of Italian. In the few segments where Testa asserted the inherent beauty of her native language, she utilized a series of adjectives to support her claim: she did not just say that “the words of our language are extraordinary,” but she elaborated on why/how, i.e., “they are musical, evocative, rich, full of history, vibrations, emotion” (TI1), clarifying what YouTubers often only imply. Clearly, however, these are not with linguistic “facts” but her own elaboration or evaluation of what she means by “extraordinary,” as well as ideological constructions. She also supported her claims through the authority of “320 Anglo-Saxon linguists”⁶⁰ who think Italian is the “most romantic language in the world” (TT10), and through that of literary figures the caliber of Thomas Mann, who claimed Italian is the “language of angels” (TI11). Lastly, she

⁶⁰ It is interesting to notice that she mentioned “Anglo-Saxon” linguists specifically here, as authorities that can supposedly support her claim by virtue of birthright.

also reiterated what example 11 points out, i.e., that one studies Italian “out of love.” However, she offered further supporting evidence. She argued that Italian is the “4th most-studied language in the world” but “nobody studies Italian for business”: rather, people study it “because they love it! For the cuisine, the fashion, the Opera, the art, the history, for Dante!” (TI10).

In sum, YouTubers and Testa agree that Italian is an intrinsically beautiful language, but rarely did lay people try to explain this, while Testa made more of an effort in this sense, drawing upon her own rich vocabulary. Lastly, she never asserted that English is an inferior language, unlike example 10, nor did she imply that Italian culture is superior, as some YouTubers did within different ideologically-motivated claims.

Inferiority Complex Ideology.

YouTubers mention inferiority complex slightly more often than Testa does (N = 5 compared to N = 3). Specifically, YouTubers mention a sense of “shame” and a lack of self-respect that cause Italians to always look up to Americans (e.g., example 15, YTI43), and feeling “inferior” to Americans, while interestingly pointing out that it should be the opposite, for some – yet again unspecified – reason (e.g., example 16, YTI45):

15. È perché gli Italiani hanno sempre voluto essere americani ... Molti si vergognano di quello che sono e in più, più della metà dello stato neanche parla bene l'italiano.

[It's because Italians have always wanted to be American ... Many are ashamed of what they are, and on top of that more than half of the nation does not even speak Italian well.]

16. Il fatto è che ci sentiamo inferiori rispetto agli americani (quando gli americani hanno solo da imparare da noi) e importiamo tutto ciò che è americano. Inclusa la loro cultura.

[The point is that we feel inferior to Americans (when they only have to learn from us) and everything we import is American. Their culture included.]

Inferiority complex ideology instances seem to be rather homogenous, as well as in line with Testa's stance: the emphasis is always on the behavior of a people that borrows another people's language because they feel inferior to its speakers, for some rarely explained reason. One thing that interestingly sets lay people apart from Testa is that YouTube users insist on Italians' sense of inferiority to "America" and "Americans" specifically. Testa, instead, addressed the whole "Anglophone" world in her argument. Her juxtaposition was much broader and, it could be argued, linguistically sound, since the issue at hand is not Italian getting mixed with American English specifically, but with English in general. YouTube users' insisting on America specifically may depend on how vastly influential contemporary American pop culture is perceived to be, besides on America, i.e., the US, being an economic superpower. Testa's use of a linguistically broader label, "Anglophone," may be further explained with her better understanding of the difference between a language and its varieties. Investigating this, however, is beyond the scope of this study.

Linguistic Purity Ideology.

Linguistic purity ideology appears four (N = 4) times in the dataset versus one time (N = 1) in the TED talk. Previously analyzed YouTube posts are instances of this ideology as well: example 10 is one, whose claim about the "[bastardization]" of language exemplifies linguistic purity ideology; and so is example 14, where the YouTube user claimed that English is "polluting" Italian in a way that s/he "can't believe." The following are the remaining linguistic purity ideology-driven examples in the dataset (YTI5 and YTI25 respectively):

17. I speak English and I love Italian. Please don't contaminate your beautiful language!!

18. Excellent!! On a le même problème en Grec aussi. On a besoin de purifier nos langues d'anglais. Vive l'Italie, le pays de Garibaldi, de Verdi, de Vinci, de Scarlatti, de Vivaldi, de Clementi, de Benedetto Marcello, de Puccini, de Dante, de Pétrarque et l'Italie de la renaissance. Salutations de Chypre!!!

[Excellent!! We have the same problem in Greek! We need to cleanse our languages from English ... Hurray for Italy, the country of Garibaldi, Verdi, Da Vinci, Scarlatti, Vivaldi, Clementi, Benedetto Marcello, Puccini, Dante, Petrarch, and Renaissance Italy. Greetings from Cyprus!!!]

One thing that these all seem to have in common is the use of emphasis and hyperbole: either through word choice (e.g., “bastardize,” and pollution that is simply hard to believe), or the vast use of exclamation points, as well as the use of rhetorical questions. Testa’s mention of linguistic purity was characterized by a more self-restrained tone: even if she said that the “texture” of the language risks being “shattered” and “worn out” by excessive English borrowing (TI33), her word choice was arguably less dramatic compared to “[bastardization]” and “[rape]” of a language.

In sum, as far as linguistic purity, YouTubers seem to have zero tolerance for unnecessary loans that “pollute” and “contaminate” the language, and they make it clear that it is a heartfelt issue through emphatic word choice and punctuation use, while Testa tries to drive her point home in a less emotional way, a different way of showing how the issue nevertheless touches her. Lastly, in her interview she explained that she is open to occasional use of foreign words when necessary, while YouTubers mostly imply they refuse any such use.

Complaint Ideology.

The belief that a language has its own fixed rules as far as syntax, lexicon, and pronunciation, which cannot be altered/adapted when adopted by speakers of another, appears three times (N = 3) in the dataset. Example 19 (YTI21) is prototypical in this sense, where the YouTuber mentioned the false loan *footing*, i.e., a mix of running and marching, a loanword no native speaker would ever understand with this specific meaning:

19. Non vi preoccupate. Fate *footing*, nessun anglofono vi capirebbe.

[Don't worry. Keep *footing* – no Anglophone would understand you.]

Another example of complaint ideology, is when a YouTuber argued that, having been colonized, Italians “[mock]” Americans (YTI52), i.e., Italians use English but do so badly, in a way that is not further explained. Lastly, in example 20 (YTI18), another Youtuber implied a supposedly general limited ability to spell English correctly that would distinguish Italians specifically:

20. Quando sento *location* o *weekend* mi piacerebbe vedere come verrebbe scritto da chi le pronuncia.

[When I hear *location* or *weekend*, I'd like to see how people who use them, spell them.]

In sum, within instances of complaint ideology, YouTube users complain about different aspects of English misuse, or what is perceived as sloppy manipulation: their examples encompass vocabulary and pronunciation, as well as a not better specified “mocking,” i.e., bad use of English. Testa also mentioned “misused foreign words” (TI33) where “misusing” was not further clarified, but she gave two more specific examples where pronunciation was either mangled (*Giobàtt*, TI19) or arguably impossible (“*RoMe & You*,” TI16).

Obfuscation Ideology.

The threat of obfuscation, i.e., that a foreign code is used to trick/deceive people, seems not to be of great concern to lay people. The corresponding ideology appears only once (N = 1) in YouTube comments, as opposed to four times (N = 4) in the TED Talk, with Testa insisting more on the connection between message clarity, intelligibility, and democracy. As the sole instance in the YouTube dataset, (also a case of obfuscation and monolingualism ideologies in the same comment), example 21 (YTI36) confirms that a lack of clarity due to foreign word use is perceived as a lesser threat:

21. Per non parlare degli annunci di lavoro! Persino chi è laureato in lingua inglese a volte ha difficoltà a capire quale sia la posizione ricercata! Cerchiamo di conoscere bene la nostra lingua (cosa sempre più rara) e poi dedichiamoci a quelle straniere. Ma utilizziamole quando effettivamente servono.

[Not to mention job ads! Even one who has a degree in English has a hard time deciphering what job is being advertised. Let's try to know our language well (a rarer and rarer thing) and foreign ones only afterwards. But let's use them when we actually need them.]

This YouTuber pointed the finger at job recruiters that make it hard to understand what type of position they are looking for, while Testa tied ideology of obfuscation to politics and democracy in three cases out of four. First, she implied that giving a labor reform an English name, and a false loan on top of that, was a failed attempt to sugarcoat the bitter pill, because the linguistic smokescreen did not manage to “make it any nicer” (TI18). Later she reiterated that “Italian words help [one] to be easily understood by all, and that's democracy, because being understood is democracy” (TT26), and in this sense “we need to ask all institutions to be good examples”

(TI27). However, when it comes to deliberate obfuscation, both the expert and lay people seem to blame institutional gatekeepers, though in different domains. In sum, YouTubers seem to perceive deliberate obfuscation as the least dangerous threat, compared to other previously mentioned dangers. In this, they do not align with Testa.

Counter Discourses: Language Globalization.

As far as counter discourses offered by YouTubers, as previously mentioned, language globalization appears the most frequently (N = 10). Language change is next (N = 4).

Recognizing code-switching as a deliberate marketing strategy, more than an unnecessary use of foreignisms, appears only slightly less (N = 3).

With ten (N = 10) instances, the counter discourse of language globalization appears to be the sociolinguistic fact lay people are most aware of, and they use it to dispute the ideological-motivated claims Testa made, while challenging how she presented her argument. Language globalization is the direct result of modern-day increased mobility, leading to increased language contact and, consequently, increased multilingualism in different spaces, where different people communicate drawing on their truncated repertoires of various linguistic systems (Blommaert, 2010). Examples 22 (YTI16) and 23 (YTI23) are prototypical detailed examples of how some YouTubers try to undermine Testa's claims and support their own counter argument with language globalization-related evidence. Though lengthy, it is necessary to reproduce them in their entirety here, to show how some lay people rooted their counter discourses in empirical facts, while pointing out that Testa was using specific examples and contexts while deliberately ignoring others:

22. Annamaria da brava comunicatrice porta tutto il pubblico a pendere dalle sue labbra portando solo gli esclusivi esempi a sostegno della sua causa e omettendo ciò che non

le serve (anche le università italiane portano motti latini). E degli altri enti e campagne stranieri che usano l'inglese non ne parla? *I AMsterdam, I feel sLOVEnia, be Berlin* ecc.), senza contare i ristoranti italiani a New York che (ovviamente) portano nomi italiani (come d'altronde i ristoranti giapponesi portano nomi giapponesi) confrontati a piccoli eventi di *food & wine* cittadini. E così si potrebbe continuare con tutti gli altri esempi e confronti strumentalizzati e generalizzati portati ad esclusivo sostegno della sua tesi.

[Annamaria, the good communication expert she is, has all the audience hang off her words using only examples that serve her cause but omitting all that do not (Italian universities have Latin mottoes too). What about all other foreign institutions that use English – she does not mention them? (*I AMsterdam, I feel sLOVEnia, be Berlin* etc.) Not to mention that (obviously) Italian restaurants in New York have Italian names (just like Japanese restaurants have Japanese names), compared to small local *food & wine* events. And we could go on with all other examples that she generalizes and instrumentalizes exclusively to support her own thesis.]

23. Video inutile e basato su principi - neanche troppo mascherati - di sciovinismo spicciolo che è davvero il marchio di fabbrica di questo “provincialismo” che la signora Testa denuncia. Se non riesce a capire che dire *very bello*, nel contesto in cui è usato, funziona molto meglio di *molto bello* o *very beautiful* o ci è, o ci fa. Penso la seconda e questo è ancora più fastidioso.

[Useless video based on narrow principles of chauvinism that are not even well-hidden, which is really the trademark of that “provincialism” Ms. Testa denounces. If she can't understand that saying *very bello* in that context works much better than *molto bello* or

very beautiful, she either is dumb or she plays dumb. I think the latter, which bothers me even more.]

It is important to notice that in example 23, the YouTuber used a marked word to describe what is the root of Testa's principles: "chauvinism," not just nationalism but a more extreme cause, i.e. "exclusive, passionate, and often fanatical nationalism that turns into an a-priori rejection of the values and rights of other peoples and countries" (Treccani), or a "strong, *unthinking* devotion to one's country ... or a cause" (Wordreference, emphasis added). Furthermore, in example 23, the YouTube user added that Testa's chauvinism is the trademark of the provincialism she denounced to begin with, thus not only challenging an important part of her argument, but also turning Testa's own line of reasoning against her. This same marked word, "chauvinism," is used again in example 24 (in English on YouTube), where the YouTuber reiterated that Testa is conveniently using specific examples that support her argument while ignoring others that could undermine it, just like the previous person in example 23:

24. Languages evolve ... let them be free. She's cherry-picking examples only for Italian chauvinism.

Other counter discourses of language globalization, unlike these, simply state the obvious, i.e., that mixing codes is just the result of it, or that there just is "no running away from it" since "speaking English is inevitable" (YTI44).

In sum, one third of the posts hinging on language globalization counter discourse tried to dismantle Testa's claims with evidence, while pointing out that the facts she herself used to bolster her case are distorted and deliberately partial. Otherwise, YouTubers were more general, simply stating that language globalization is the cause of code-mixing, either implying or asserting that it is an inevitable, irreversible process.

Language Change.

There are four (N = 4) instances of counter discourse revolving around language change and its naturalness, i.e., the inevitability of a sociolinguistic phenomenon that occurs in every natural language (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021), and the second most frequent sociolinguistic fact some YouTubers show awareness of. Language change, in fact, can be not only internally but also externally motivated: the latter is the kind of change YouTubers are implicitly, and perhaps unconsciously, referring to. This is in fact the kind of change that is brought about by language contact, i.e., change that happens through borrowing from other varieties or languages, “usually in the form of loanwords,” and change is at least temporarily distinguishable from changes that come about internally (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p. 32). It can be argued that it is this distinguishability and newness that exposes language change as a deviation from what used to be the norm, i.e., something to frown upon because unfamiliar, perceived as wrong.

Example 24 is also one of language change counter discourse, where the YouTuber implied that is a useless effort to try to stop something that is natural and cannot be prevented, since languages are “free” and we should “let them be” so. This is however a complex, multifaceted issue. In fact, while that languages are free is on the one hand true, on the other, we need to keep in mind the many efforts in terms of language planning and language policy application worldwide, as well as the work of Academies that are trying to control the evolution of language. So, while these changes are natural, normal phenomena, the sociolinguistic reality is such that there also are a variety of governmental activities nevertheless intervening and trying to control linguistic evolution somehow. But exactly because these phenomena are natural and inevitable, i.e., “variation is *inherent* to language ... and to all languages” (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021, p. 32, emphasis added), institutions like the aforementioned national academies are

“essentially in a no-win situation, always trying ‘to fix’ the consequences of changes that they cannot prevent, and continually being compelled to issue new pronouncements on linguistic matters” (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021, p. 32).

Example 25 (YTI22) is a case of language change argument with the YouTuber implying that language change is not only natural but historical:

25. Intervento strappa applausi da una publicista professionista ... L’italiano è la lingua che ha accolto di più le parole germaniche di tutte le lingue neolatine ed una delle lingue più accoglienti verso le parole straniere!!!

[Applause-soliciting talk by a professional publicist ... Italian is the language that welcomed Germanic words the most, of all other Romance languages, and it’s one of the most welcoming towards foreign words!!!]

In other words, change through loanwords has always happened, even if it may have gone unnoticed to most lay people. Consequently, it may be added, it will not stop happening now just because people have started noticing it, which may be happening faster and faster in our hyperconnected world. In example 26 (YTI14), another YouTuber additionally implied that language change is not only natural but necessary, since English loans can fill linguistic gaps in Italian, a marked remark in a dataset where most YouTubers tend to focus on the lack of necessity of (most) foreign loans:

26. Considerare anche che comunque ci sono molte parole inglesi che proprio in italiano non ci sono.

[Consider however that there are a lot of English words that just do not exist in Italian.]

Finally, in example 27 (YTI14), another YouTube user anthropomorphized language, “a living thing” that “needs room to breathe.” What is interesting to notice here is that this person not only

syntactically juxtaposed her love for Italian to language change, implying that, nevertheless, change may damage Italian. She herself also code-switched while making this point, mixing Italian, English, and, spelling-wise, Spanish too. It may be argued that this YouTuber was claiming a specific position towards the issue at hand by doing the very thing others complained about:

27. Amo italiano. Ma penso que it's okay for language to change. I grew up mixing different languages, I thought it was fun. Language is a living thing, it needs room to breathe. Beautiful things can come out of the exploration.

[I love Italian but I think that it's okay for language to change. I grew up mixing different languages, I thought it was fun. Language is a living thing, it needs room to breathe. Beautiful things can come out of the exploration.]

In sum, YouTubers pointed out that language change is natural, inevitable, and historical, if not necessary. Though it may come at some not-better-specified cost according to one of them, most YouTubers that mentioned or implied it, seem to feel neutral towards it. The latter stance aligns with sociolinguistic theory, according to which language change is a natural, inevitable, and universal process associated with any living languages.

Code-Switching as a Marketing Strategy.

While language globalization and language change are broad sociolinguistic facts, the last counter discourse appearing in the dataset revolves around specific uses of language in a specific context: code-switching as a marketing strategy. In the last two decades, research has shown that this purposeful marketing strategy occurs across languages worldwide, mixing the local language not just with English but with other languages too. The insertion of a foreign code is not only an attention-getter but also adds a further appeal and evocative power to the message, which varies

depending on the foreign language chosen. For example, it can be a sense of internationalism, cosmopolitanism, and modernity in the case of English (Androutsopoulos, 2013; Baumgardner, 2006; Baumgardner & Brown, 2012; Bhatia, 1992; Friedrich, 2019; Gazzardi & Vásquez, 2020; Kelly-Holmes, 2000; Lee, 2019), or a sense of sophistication in the case of French (Blommaert, 2010), or, as Testa herself pointed out in her blog, a sense of “[elegance, attractiveness, taste, fashion, elegance (and priciness)]” in the case of Italian (Testa, 2018). In the YouTube dataset, code-switching discussed as an intentional marketing strategy designed to attract attention, as opposed to an unjustifiable use of foreignisms, appears three times (N = 3).

While being both instances of language globalization ideology as well, as previously argued, examples 28 (YTI16) and 29 (YTI23) are also cases of ideologies tied to code-switching as a marketing strategy, as these excerpts below show:

28. [... What about all other foreign institutions that use English – she does not mention them? (*I AMsterdam, I feel sLOVEnia, be Berlin* etc.) Not to mention that (obviously) Italian restaurants in NYC have Italian names (just like Japanese restaurants have Japanese names) ...]

29. [... If she can't understand that saying *very bello* in that context works much better than *molto bello* or *very beautiful*, she is either dumb or she plays dumb. I think the latter, which bothers me even more.]

So is example 30 (YTI57), which is the only one that explicitly mentioned “marketing.” In fact, while examples 28 and 29 only imply that mixing codes in different linguistic contexts is a deliberate promotional and advertising strategy, in example 30, it is clearly spelled out that the use of Italian in otherwise English contexts is motivated by the same reasons behind the use of English within Italian: a foreign code is always marked, no matter what language it is used

within, and thus, it inevitably catches one's attention. Also, different languages have different connotations: so if English is used within Italian because it conveys modernity and cosmopolitanism, the same happens within Dutch,⁶¹ Slovenian, and German. Likewise, Italian is used by US-based restaurants and in food and beverage-related events for parallel, strategical marketing reasons: because it conveys a sense, or the illusion, of authenticity (Jurafsky, 2014; Kohler & Perrino, 2017; Maegaard & Karrebaek, 2019). In other words, it sells food and wine better, two of the "excellencies"⁶² Italy is known for:

30. Il motivo per cui in Italia si usano parole inglesi e in USA parole italiane è perché fa figo (soprattutto nel marketing) utilizzare termini di un'altra lingua, che bene o male sono un'eccezione, e perciò attirano l'attenzione. In particolare, usare l'italiano all'estero nel settore ristorazione, ammira l'occhio al consumatore dandogli l'impressione di un gusto italiano genuino, cosa che non avrebbero chiamando il locale *Wine* e non *vino*.

[The reason why you use English words in Italy and they use Italian ones in the US is that a different code makes [the message] sound cool (especially in marketing), since it catches one's attention. In particular, using Italian in the food & beverage business abroad winks at the customer, making him feel he is experiencing the authentic Italian taste, which they could not pull off calling a place *Wine* instead of *vino*.]

It could therefore be as argued that those Italian words are not borrowed by English users out of love, or respect, or for the beauty of the language, but because they target a specific audience of customers, who are probably inclined to pay more in return for authenticity (Halawa & Parasecoli, 2019; Jurafsky, 2014).

⁶¹ "I AMsterdam" is mentioned by two YouTubers.

⁶² Testa's own words in her TED Talk.

In sum, YouTubers whose counter discourses revolve around code-switching as a marketing strategy are very aware that use of foreign codes in these contexts is purposeful, not a sign of provincialism. This is a reality that applies transversally to language use in marketing worldwide (Blommaert, 2010), and to support their claim, these YouTubers offered real-world examples in other languages and contexts. For example, “*RoMe&You*” is a slogan that addresses a vast international audience of potential tourists that “caput mundi” (head of the world) or “città eterna” (eternal city⁶³) could not. Likewise, ‘*I feel sLOVEnia*’ markets the country more successfully – and globally – than an exclusively Slovenian slogan would. Lastly, some YouTubers seem to agree that using double standards to condemn the same practice in one language while applauding it in another is convenient, biased, and not logically sound.

In conclusion, on the one hand, Testa mainly rooted her claims in ideologies of national language and monolingualism, and though YouTubers aligned with her in this sense, they also heavily drew on discourses of endangerment, deeming linguistic colonization an equally serious threat to their native language. On the other hand, YouTube users seemed to consider meaning obfuscation the least worrying linguistic issue, which Testa heavily emphasized in her interview instead. Lastly, relatively often, YouTubers offered counter discourses that show awareness of basic sociolinguistic facts as well, offering real-life proof to support their claims, while trying to undermine Testa’s.

⁶³This is how the Italian media habitually refer to Rome. “Caput mundi” is Latin and dates back to the Roman Empire.

CHAPTER FIVE: FACEBOOK

The Facebook group “*Viva l’italiano. Abbasso l’itanglese*” (Hurray for Italian, Down with *Italenglish*), moderated by its initiator Giuseppina Solinas, is devoted to commenting on and possibly contrasting the overuse of unnecessary English in otherwise Italian contexts, to defend the mother tongue from Anglicization. Anyone can become a member of the group and contribute to the discussion, based upon the moderator’s permission. It is interesting to point out that when I started collecting fieldnotes in March 2020, the group comprised circa 200 members. The number doubled by March 2021, with over 400 members, while it reached almost 1,650 members by March 2022. Like the ongoing thread of comments on Testa’s TED Talk on YouTube showed (2015 – present), these suddenly growing numbers also confirm that this debate continues to the present day, with more people engaging in online groups dedicated to the issue.

Analysis and Discussion

Research Question 1

What instances of English language use are Italian internet users complaining about (e.g., false loans versus direct ones)? In which social contexts do they occur, and what categories of people are using language that way?

1a: Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

To answer RQ1, I identified which posts were relevant to answer RQ1 (see earlier discussion of Facebook Topics in Chapter Three, p. 73). Then, I grouped all loan examples

together, regardless of the Topic they were discussed under. Loans that were mentioned more than once like *lockdown* were only counted once. Next, I divided the loans into categories (direct, false, hybrid, etc.), to then establish whether a direct concise Italian equivalent is available.⁶⁴ Afterwards, I identified the social actors to whom these uses are explicitly or implicitly attributed.

Here, I first discuss criteria of data inclusion. Then, I discuss loanword categories and social actors, to then address whether Facebook users' attitude changes when commenting on specific loans rather than others. Lastly, I compare results across different platforms. (Because Facebook posts are primarily text-based – just like YouTube comments – I do not address multimodality).

Criteria of Inclusion.

Group members' posts are grouped under different Topics: six of them in total. The same posts are at times grouped under different Topics, which causes overlapping. Therefore, I ended up collecting posts⁶⁵ from four of them out of six, since in the remaining two Topics I could only find data I had already collected. These Topics are: “Dillo in Italiano” (Say it in Italian), “Risorgimento Linguistico” (Linguistic Renaissance), “L’italianoviva” (Long live Italian), and “Dumbcopying.”

Under Topic A (“Dillo in Italiano”), I collected a total of fifty-six (N = 56) posts. As far as RQ1, thirteen (N = 13) posts were ignored since they only asked or suggested translations of loanwords, which left me with a total of forty-three (N = 43) for RQ1 analysis. It must be noted that instances of English use people comment on, between posts and comments, exceed one per post under Topic A, which is why the number of English loans analyzed here is higher (N = 56, a

⁶⁴ One to three words.

⁶⁵ Posted between March 1st, 2020, and March 31st, 2021.

coincidence that has nothing to do with the initial total posts number) than the total number of posts utilized for RQ1 (N = 43).

Under Topic B (“Risorgimento Linguistico”), I collected a total of thirty (N = 30) posts, and only one post (N = 1) was ignored for RQ1 analysis, since it only asked for a loanword translation, which left me with a total of twenty-nine (N = 29) posts. It must be also noted that, under Topic B, some posts comment on hybrid language without mentioning specific instances of English loan use, which is why the number of English loans analyzed here is lower (N = 23) than the total number of posts analyzed for RQ1 (N = 29). Under Topic C (“L’Italianoviva”), I collected two (N = 2) posts, but both of them only offered translations or commented on language without specific instances of English loan use, so none of these was utilized for RQ1 analysis. Under Topic D, (“Dumbcopying”) I collected only one (N = 1) post, with however multiple instances of English borrowing (N = 11).

Findings.

Out of the ninety (N = 90) total instances of English use that Facebook group members commented upon, the vast majority (N = 80) is direct loans, i.e., English words that have been incorporated into Italian morphosyntax without any semantic narrowing/extension nor morphosyntactic hybridization. As previously pointed out, I utilized both Anglophone and Italian dictionaries to verify that all of the latter qualify as direct loans (i.e. Merriam-Webster, Treccani, and Wordreference,) as well as to validate whether an equally concise Italian alternative exists,⁶⁶ since concision is one of the strongest arguments English loanword users bring forward to warrant this practice.

⁶⁶ One to three words.

“No Italian equivalent” applies to English loans when much lengthier phrases are necessary to render the same idea according to these dictionaries, though the latter do not always agree in this respect. For example, for *coming out* (FBTA6),⁶⁷ Wordreference offers *il rivelarsi*, *il dichiararsi* (to declare oneself) as first translation, adding “omosessualità” (homosexuality) underneath in parentheses, to further specify to which context the “declaration” applies. This arguably shows that *to declare oneself* is not entirely adequate, i.e., too broad since it can be used in different situations. The second option Wordreference offers is in fact the unmodified English loan itself, *coming out*. Treccani uses instead a lengthier phrase that specifies the sexual orientation context: “dichiarazione pubblica della propria omosessualità” (public declaration of one’s homosexuality), which is far wordier than *coming out* and therefore justifies labelling the latter as having no Italian equivalent.⁶⁸ Out of eighty (N = 80) direct loans, roughly a third of them (N = 26) has been categorized as having no succinct Italian equivalent.

The second largest category, much smaller than direct loans, is that of loans that underwent some semantic shift, for a total of ten (N = 10) instances of either semantic extension (N = 5) and narrowing (N = 5). It must be additionally noted that semantic shifts overlap with direct loans at times (N = 8). For example, *editor* (FBTB6) is a direct loan that may be used with its original meaning, or with the extended meaning of *publisher*: it was not possible to establish whether the former or the latter applies in the Facebook post in question, since not enough context was given.

⁶⁷ I.e., ‘Facebook, Topic A, comment 6.’

⁶⁸ A Facebook group member offers *dichiararsi* (to declare oneself) as a viable translation too, but the same objection applies: the verb could be used in different contexts and does not imply any reference to sexual orientation. Alternatively, another Facebook group member offers *auto dichiarazione di omosessualità* (self-declaring one’s homosexuality) which is however twice the word count of the English loan.

As far as hybrids, only four (N = 4) appear in the dataset. On the one hand, *triggerare* (to trigger, FBTA1) and *spolierare* (to spoil, FBTA2) show the morphological hybridization of English verbs where the Italian 1st conjugation infinitive morpheme *-are* is attached. On the other, the dataset comprises two hybrid phrases, i.e., *Milano Digital Week* (FBTA17) and *patto di coaching* (coaching agreement, FBTA53). The meaning of the latter is quite uncertain since it refers to pedagogical policies of a specific school. Lastly, only three (N = 3) false loans appear in the dataset, i.e., *smart working* (FBTA40) and *smartwork* (FBTB3, working remotely,), and *summerlife* (FBTA38). *Summerlife* is also a case of false loan overlapping with semantic narrowing, since it refers to youth summer activities traditionally organized by the parish, normally called *oratorio estivo*.

As far as social actors deemed responsible for the supposed overuse of English, Facebook users more or less indirectly attribute this practice mostly to the media (N = 60), followed by business/finance (N = 39), the government (N = 15), the general public (N = 14),⁶⁹ and advertisers (N = 10). Two cases remain unspecified: *easy* (FBTD9), since it is applicable to countless contexts, and *welcome drink* (FBTD11), since it is common practice to offer one to incoming guests at vacation resorts but also at all sorts of social events in general. However, it must be noted that, often, multiple categories of people are blamed for English overuse (N = 42): mainly the media and people in business/finance at the same time, and at times the government too.

As concerns complaining more about certain uses of English rather than others, e.g., false loans versus direct loans, most Facebook group members seem to group them all together quite indiscriminately, just like Testa and YouTubers. Some Facebook group members are rather

⁶⁹ I.e., examples of long-time established loans people have been using for decades.

neutral when bringing those uses to people's attention, while others are mockingly ironic, using emotionally-charged language and/or metaphors to show their aggravation. In general, there seems to be no clear-cut relationship between loan type (direct, false, hybrid loans, and semantic shifts) and their stance. For example, some people show negative stances towards unnecessary direct loans abundantly introduced at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, e.g., *lockdown* (FBTA13), since these have adequate Italian counterparts. However, at times, irony is accentuated when group members mock false loans introduced for the same reason and at the same time, e.g., *smart working* (FBTA40), since those have not only viable Italian alternatives as well, but they are also made-up phrases that only look/sound English. Accentuated irony marks comments on hybrid loans (e.g., *Milano Digital Week*, FBTA17; *patto di coaching*, FBTA53) as well, at times deemed incomprehensible.

In other words, people show different attitudes and use different strategies when sharing their (mostly negative) evaluation of English use. In example 1, a reply to a post that re-shared an advertisement where Italian is abundantly mixed with English direct loans, group moderator Solinas slightly mocked such code-mixing practices:

1. Un campione di *itanglese* esemplare. Fa un baffo pure all'Esperanto.

[An exemplary sample of *Italenglish*. Even Esperanto has got nothing on it.]

In example 2, mentioning *digital event* (FBTA5), a direct loan among those in the aforementioned advertisement, another Facebook user ironically addressed the lacking economy of form of the English loan:

2. Vuoi mettere tutte le vocali risparmiate? *Digital(e) Event(o)*. Alla fine dell'anno son soldoni, eh!

[Wanna compare how many vowels you'd save? *Digital(e) Event(o)*. By the end of the year, it's a lot of money, isn't it!]

In example 3, when commenting on *Milano Digital Week* (FBTA17), a hybrid loan, a Facebook user chose emotionally-charged language:

3. Avviso agli utenti. Questo potrebbe rovinarvi la domenica ... il loro uso pazzesco dell'idioma creolo ...

[Warning, group members. This could spoil your Sunday ... their insane use of the creole idiom ...]

To which, another group member replied ironically in example 4:

4. Queste cose si pubblicano solo il lunedì. Mai la domenica. Mai.

[You should post things like this on Mondays only. Never on Sundays. Never.]

When mentioning another rather obscure hybrid loan, *patto di coaching* (FBTA53), in example 5, another Facebook user utilized irony and a metaphoric hyperbole, and he implied the impossibility of translating it:

5. ... Mi è venuta l'orticaria. Ho promesso avrei cercato di tradurlo. Qualcuno mi aiuta? ...

[...[When I read it], I broke out in hives. I promised I would try to translate it. Can anyone help me? ...]

Differently, in example 6, when commenting on *summerlife* (FBTA38), an arguably rather extreme case of semantic narrowing, another group member concluded:

6. Non è nemmeno *itanglese*. È proprio solo tutto inglese. Che pena.

[It's not even *Italenglish*. It's all really only English. How painful.]

However, as previously pointed out, there are numerous cases of Facebook users reporting these practices rather neutrally, as with example 7, where the group member just

pointed out instances of code-mixing (*fact checking*, FBTA15, and *headlines*, FBTA16) without really commenting on it, as if it were self-explanatory, like the ellipses seem to suggest:

7. Su RaiNews⁷⁰ è in onda il programma in cui fanno il *fact checking* delle notizie ...

Seguono le *headlines* ...

[On RaiNews, they are broadcasting a show where they do news *fact checking* ...

Followed by the *headlines*...]

Likewise, in example 8, the Facebook user simply made the case for the direct translation of *email* (FBTA22), without irony nor judgments, although this is likely to be just a provocation, since it is improbable that this person will utilize *epistola* instead of *email* in real life, compromising intelligibility:

8. *Epistola* è ormai diventato obsoleto nella lingua italiana, da ora in poi chainerò gli *email* *epistole*. D'altronde sono lettere, lettere digitali.

[*Epistola* (letter) has by now become obsolete in Italian. From now on, I will call *emails* *epistole*. After all, they are letters, digital letters.]

In conclusion, Facebook group members discuss the encroachment of English loans into Italian by commenting mainly on direct loans, but they seem to be as aggravated by hybrid words and phrases, false loans, and semantic shifts alike, the same way Testa and YouTubers appear to be. The examples Facebook users utilized show that they indirectly attribute these uses mostly to the media, to business/finance, and to the government, often to all three of them, which mirrors both Testa's and YouTube users' attribution of accountability. In some instances, examples Facebook users discussed must be attributed to the general public since these are long-

⁷⁰ It is interesting to notice that the hybrid name of the Italian TV channel, *RaiNews*, is not between quotes, unlike the other two English loans are in the original post ("Rai" is the Italian acronym for "Radiotelevisione Italiana" i.e., "Italian Radio-television").

time, well-established English loans, like *tunnel* (FBTB4) and *turnover* (FBTD6). Lastly, Facebook group members can either be neutral when discussing English loans in Italian contexts, or they can use emotionally-charged language to show their irritation: but they choose any of these strategies when negatively commenting on direct, false, hybrid loans, and semantic shifts alike. Their irony seems only slightly accentuated when mocking false and hybrid loans, at times.

RQ1 – Interview with Giuseppina Solinas.

Giuseppina Solinas is the moderator of the Facebook group devoted to defend Italian from Anglicization. She politely declined to meet virtually to conduct her interview, defining herself a “very private person,” and she asked that the interview questions be emailed to her, to which she answered in writing (for interview questions, see Appendixes B). Both the email exchange and the interview happened in early October 2022.

According to Solinas, *Italenglish* is “unfortunately very widespread.” When asked who is more likely to engage in this code-mixing practice, i.e., who the responsible social actors are, she stated that both Italians in Italy in general are, who “exaggerate for various reasons,” as well as the “institutions” and “communication channels,”⁷¹ i.e., the media, emphasizing that “in Italy it is a real scourge/it is really trendy,” which also mirrors findings on YouTube and Facebook, in this sense. She also pointed out that particularly prone to this are “Italians abroad in English-speaking countries who unfortunately ... do it without thinking about it, as they speak and hear English every day, and then mix them without realizing it,” parenthetically adding that “[she] was the first until [she] became aware of it.” That people code-mix without even realizing it most of the times is a fact that tends to elude non-linguists more often than not. Later in the interview, she

⁷¹ She chose to call them *canali di comunicazione* instead of *i media*.

also added that she often caught herself mixing the two codes, but that, since she created the group, she has been “more careful about it”: so she seemed to concede that her “[awareness]” of mixing languages does not automatically mean she stopped doing it. Interestingly, she went on saying that she is sure she has often mixed English and Italian without realizing it, but that when people talk about it on Facebook, they become more aware of it and “do it less,” adding that “it is an insidious phenomenon,” where “insidious” was underlined. So, on the one hand, her recognizing that people code-mix undermines the misconception, popular among non-linguists, that code-mixing is perfectly avoidable, since one has to be “more careful” not to do it. On the other, that it is an “insidious phenomenon” feeds the equally widespread assumption that code-mixing is a synonym of broken language.

As far as online contexts where the latter apparent danger lies, she indicated that “the spread of social channels,”⁷² i.e., social media, was “a major concomitant factor” that “accelerated the spread” of code-mixing practices, since “now people write and read without knowing which country the other is in.” So she seemed to imply that language contact and language globalization are inevitable in our hyperconnected world. When I asked if there are cases when she finds mixing the two is inevitable, she indicated that “yes, of course sometimes it happens, a small percentage of foreignisms from different languages is normal and even healthy for the Italian language as in all languages,” adding however that “the problem of *Italenglish* lies in the excessive number of Anglicisms.”

Interestingly, when asked about which uses of English irritate her more than others, if any, she confirmed the findings on both platforms as well as Testa’s TED Talk. First, she mentioned “all English phrases that have no reason to exist because the term already exists in

⁷² She chose to call them *canali sociali* instead of *social media*.

Italian,” i.e., those direct loans that YouTubers, Facebook group members, and Testa alike most frequently use as examples, to support their claim that using English is often unnecessary. Second, she added that “English expression[s] used and given a meaning valid only in Italy” get particularly under her skin as well, i.e., those false loans that users of both digital platforms tend to be particularly ironic towards, mocking them, since they are English-sounding phrases that no native speaker would even understand: like the *Jobs Act* Testa went on criticizing for a handful of minutes, with a puzzled Dante on the screen behind her.

In conclusion, Solinas seems to be particularly bothered by the excessive use of both direct loans that have an Italian counterpart, as well as false loans that look and sound English, but whose meaning would be unintelligible to native speakers, the same false loans lay people tend to be more ironic about. The social actors she attributes these uses to are institutions, the media, and the general public alike. Institutions were depicted as the number one culprit by Testa as well in their interview, while she also highlighted the major role of marketing and finance in this respect, besides advertisers, which Solinas did not mention.

Research Question 2

Who is doing the complaining about uncalled-for uses of English? Are they experts or lay people?

2a. How do both experts and lay people establish their language authority when discussing these matters? What kind of language do they use when trying to demonstrate/perform their expertise?

2b. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

To answer RQ2, I first selected posts and comments to be included in RQ2 analysis. Then, I identified whether the post author or post commentator is an expert or a lay person. Next,

I coded for ways s/he established her/his expertise and authority: whether relying on language experience, or on common sense, or on linguistic experience, or on cultural or sociolinguistic knowledge. Here I first discuss criteria of post/comment inclusion. Afterwards, I discuss who qualifies as expert. Then I discuss authority claim strategies with several examples, and while doing so, I compare results from different platforms.

Criteria of Inclusion.

Out of eighty-nine (N = 89) total posts originally collected, shared between March 2020 and March 2021 and grouped in ‘Topics,’ the vast majority have comments, i.e., fifty-seven (N = 57) of them, as opposed to only thirty-two (N = 32 posts) that may have been liked or reshared but not commented on. The number of comments also varied greatly (Table 6). In Topic A, the most commented-on post had a total of twenty-three (N = 23) comments and replies to comments. In Topic B, the most discussed post had a total of forty (N = 40) comments and replies, while the second most commented-on had twenty-one (N = 21). Posts with a minimum of one to two comments apply to both Topics, A and B. There were no comments on the two posts collected from Topic C, but twelve (N = 12) comments on the only post from Topic D.

Table 6: *Comparison of frequencies of comments on posts and replies to comments by Topic*

Topic	Total posts	Maximum number of comments and replies	Minimum number of comments and replies
A	56	23	1
B	30	40	1
C	2	0	0
D	1	12	12

Owing to consideration of feasibility on the one hand, I included only original posts and direct comments on posts where users implicitly or explicitly tried to establish their authority, while I did not consider replies to comments and replies to replies. On the other, replies to comments tend to be quite redundant when making a point, and because my interest with RQ2 is

in authority claims and strategies specifically, replies insisting on the validity of the same Italian alternatives or on in/correct translations of English loans, for example, would not further my analysis.⁷³ Additionally, unlike with RQ1, comments on posts that only ask or offer alternatives to English words were included in RQ2 analysis, even if the post itself was not: because those comments often show attempts to establish one's authority in linguistic matters, unlike the post they reply to.

For example, although I did not include the post that simply asked an autochthone alternative to *product*, I did include comments associated to it. In fact, when a group member wondered what an Italian alternative to *product manager* could be, moderator Solinas did not just offer the sought-for Italian counterpart, in her comment. Rather, she discussed the apparently faulty literal translation of *product* (CA13a)⁷⁴ and of other words as well, both from English into Italian and vice versa (CA13b), which she admitted she had been guilty of too. In so doing, she appealed to her linguistic expertise, while also urging people to use better-suited words and to “think in Italian rather than translating [words] from English” all the time.

Another example of post that was not included is FPA2,⁷⁵ since in it, the group member only implied the supposed futility of using many direct loans in a *Twentieth Italian Energy Summit*-related hybrid advertisement, while resharing it: i.e., no attempt was made to establish one's authority. Two comments on it were included instead (CA2a and CA2b), since those other members grounded their authority, and therefore their competency in the matter, in linguistic expertise: respectively by comparing the hybrid advertisement to Esperanto, and by pointing out that English does not always have an economy-of-form advantage. As a result of inclusion

⁷³ For example, Solinas's replies to the same member who insists on the difference in meaning between *coming out* and *outing*, which she repeatedly challenged with a number of examples.

⁷⁴ I.e., ‘Comment *a* on Post 13 under Topic A.’

⁷⁵ I.e., ‘Facebook Post 2 under Topic A.’

criteria application, this dataset comprises forty-nine (N = 49) instances in which the group moderator as well as other group members try to establish their authority.

Out of these forty-nine (N = 49) authority-claim instances, only two are authored by what I consider language experts. One because he is a state-TV journalist, as his Facebook profile specifies. The other, the UK-resident Solinas, not only because her group moderator role makes her the expert of reference for this dataset, i.e., she is particularly invested in the debate and she created the group. But also because she herself, in her interview, defined herself “a non-professional expert” because of the numerous language she studied (English, French, German, and Arabic), and because of a bachelor’s degree earned in the UK. All other post authors/commentators have been labelled lay people. In fact, most of their Facebook profiles, the only source I could check, did not yield any information about their profession or background: either because access to their “About” tab was not public, or because their “work field” was left empty.

Findings.

Out of forty-nine (N = 49) more or less implied expertise-claim instances, the vast majority of Facebook group members try to establish their authority through linguistic expertise (N = 34),⁷⁶ i.e., using technical jargon/linguistic metalanguage, or any marked language choices (e.g., use of subjunctive and erudite vocabulary), as well as discussions of faulty/inaccurate translations, word usages, and grammar in general. Common sense follows (N = 12), i.e., group members present information as if it were just that, thus naturalizing ideologies. Instances of references to language experience are rarer (N = 6): i.e., people giving additional information

⁷⁶ Professional linguistic expertise is very rarely applicable in all datasets, and it refers to one’s profession entirely revolving around language, not just using some English at work: e.g., an advertiser, a translator, a journalist.

about their experience with foreign language (e.g., having lived or studied abroad, or using English for/at work, or having a language degree, etc.). Being aware of and commenting on what the *Accademia della Crusca* is or is not doing about foreignisms in Italian, which supposedly explains why their claims are authoritative, also falls under additional language experience. Additionally, four (N = 4) instances are examples of cultural knowledge strategy, i.e., referring to Italian or Anglophone culture to make a linguistic argument (e.g., referring to the most representative Italian literary work but also the “birthplace” of modern Italian: Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*). Lastly, there are no cases of authority claims rooted in sociolinguistic knowledge, (e.g., references to sociolinguistic facts and constructs like language change and language globalization, English as a Lingua Franca, etc.). There are cases of multiple strategies to establish one’s authority in a single post/comment (N = 8).

As far as the largest category in the Facebook dataset, linguistic expertise (N = 34), lay people try to establish their authority in a variety of way. Quite often, they point out different “linguistic transgressions”: e.g., the faulty use of an English loan, or its improper translation, or an arbitrary semantic extension, or the paradoxical use of calques, etc.. In example 1(FPA10), Solinas argued that some Italians use some English loans like *kit* in a way that native speakers do not, adding “as you can see” to prove her knowledge of linguistic facts and to support the validity of her claim:

1. KIT. Un anglicismo che in realtà si usa solo in italiano. Come vedete in inglese usano altri termini.

[KIT. An Anglicism that is actually only used in Italian. As you can see, in English you use other terms.]

Often, members of this Facebook group commented on erroneous English usages while sometimes embellishing their posts with more formal language and with subjunctive, besides technical jargon, to further reinforce their authority. It is important to point out that formality and metalanguage are marked, i.e., they stand out from the generally colloquial register typical of social media. Social media are usually at the informal end of the continuum of registers for internet language, which was in fact confirmed by YouTube users' language choices: regularly informal, i.e., generally devoid of subjunctive and/or erudite or archaic vocabulary. In example 2 (CA10a), a comment on the same post, a group member supported Solinas's claim while pointing out that he knows the correct use of English lexis, and that Italians overuse English, a practice he defined "maniacal." Interestingly, he made his comment rather stilted by using a by-now rare and highly formal hypothetical construction: "qualora" plus subjunctive,⁷⁷ i.e., "if/when" followed by subjunctive. In other words, he made a decidedly marked syntactic choice to showcase his mastery of prescriptively polished Italian:

2. Fai bene a mostrarlo. Per carità, *kit* esiste in inglese, ma è evidente la mania di inserire il termine persino qualora gli inglesi non lo adoperino.

[You did well pointing that out. By all means, *kit* exists in English but it is clear it is maniacal to use an English word, even if English-speaking people do not use it.]

In example 3 (CA8b), another group member utilized subjunctive in a syntactic construction where it would be arguably more common to use the future tense instead, and certainly less marked. He opted for "finisca" (i.e., subjunctive) instead of "finirà" (i.e., future tense).

Interestingly enough, this person was arguing *against* demonizing code-switching:

⁷⁷ With both hypothetical and temporal meaning it must always be followed by subjunctive. According to Treccani, this syntactical construction is by now typical of mostly, if not only, highly refined/formal registers.

3. Sogno il giorno in cui deridere gli altri italiani finisca di essere considerato un atto di cultura.

[I dream of the day when mocking other Italians stops being considered proof that [on the contrary] you are educated.]

In example 4 (CA10b), another comment on the same post, another member not only emphasized the paradoxical nature of some loan usages by offering a related example, but he also reinforced his authority claim by using technical jargon, i.e., “calque”:

4. Quindi gli inglesi usano *accessoires*, che è un calco dell'italiano e noi invece usiamo un finto inglesismo.

[So the English use *accessories*, which is a calque of Italian while we instead use a false Anglicism [i.e., *kit*.]

In example 5 (CB10a), Solinas expanded on the latter point by arguing that English word meanings specifically are calqued in Italian, i.e., the signified rather than the signifier, so that false cognates are treated as if they were true cognates. In this specific case, in fact, according to Treccani, *applicare* has six possible different meanings, but with none of them does the verb collocate with “job,” the way *apply* does. The use of upper case and exclamation points only emphasizes Solinas’s annoyance at such habits:

5. Ma non si dice *applicare* – è sbagliato! Si dice FARE DOMANDA.

[But you don’t say *applicare* – it’s wrong! You say [Italian appropriate verb for *to apply to a job*.]

In the second largest category, albeit roughly only a third of linguistic expertise strategy use, common sense (N = 12), both Solinas and other group members present their arguments as obvious facts, which as such are not questionable and do not need to be explained further. In

example 6 (CA14a), commenting on the possible Italian alternatives to *laptop*, she pointed out that the Italian language lacks the creativity necessary to counter English borrowing needs. In example 7 (FPB8), her post bluntly stated that even English-use supporters are getting tired of its overuse, only to make fun of her own use of an established loanword afterwards, *tunnel*:

6. Quello che manca dell'italiano di oggi è l'elasticità che serve per coniare nuovi termini.

[What contemporary Italian lacks is the elasticity to coin new words.]

7. Anche gli “antipuristi e anglisti” si stanno stufando. Dice il tizio. Forse vedo una piccola luce in fondo al tunnel. *Tunnel? Tunnel!!!*

[Even “anti-purists and Anglicists” are getting fed up. They say. Maybe I can see a small light at the end of the tunnel. *Tunnel? Tunnel!!!*]

In example 8 (FPA6), a group member mocked the use of the acronym G.O.A.T,⁷⁸ arguing that it is further proof of a senseless, incompetent use of English that in fact looks ridiculous, which, he implied, is something right before everybody's eyes. He also called these loans “anglo words,” pejoratively meaning “English-sounding,” rather than “English,” to reiterate clumsy, approximate uses of foreign idioms most Italians would be guilty of:

8. Vedete cosa succede quando si utilizza l'anglo a casaccio? La Juventus che dà a Ronaldo una maglietta che dice C.A.P.R.A. Perché devono mettere per forza qualcosa in anglo, anche se il risultato è ridicolo.

[See what happens when you use [something English-sounding] randomly? Juventus that gives Ronaldo a jersey that says [Italian translation of G.O.A.T.] because they feel compelled to use something [English – sounding], even if the outcome is ridiculous.]

⁷⁸ “Greatest Of All Time,” frequently used in sports.

This is also a case of common sense and linguistic expertise overlapping.

As anticipated, the third recurring strategy Facebook group members employ to establish their authority is language experience (N = 6). In almost all of them, group members discuss the *Accademia della Crusca* and its lack of progress in fighting English overuse, while doubting its drive and attacking its submissiveness. In other words, they establish their authority by showing they are quite familiar with the work of the major authority in language matters on Italian soil, which they perceive as inconsistent (example 9, FPB7) or insufficient (example 10, CB7a):

9. Da anni seguo la *Crusca*. E più passa il tempo più sono irritato dal loro doppiopesismo.

[I've been following the *Crusca Academy* for years, and the more time goes by the more their double standards irritate me.]

10. Ma se la *Crusca* per prima dice sia impossibile trovare neologismi autoctoni agli anglicismi, che speranza ha l'italiano di evolvere. Venduti.

[But if the *Crusca Academy* itself says it is impossible to create autochthone neologisms to replace Anglicisms, what hope to survive does Italian have? Traitors.]

In example 11, instead, a group member referred to his experience with other languages (CA7a), while commenting on a post that asked for an Italian alternative to *email*:

11. I Francesi rispettosi usano *courriel*.

[The French respectfully say *courriel*.]

In example 11, this group member pointed out how French does *not* submit to English, unlike Italian. It is interesting to notice that a few YouTubers claimed the opposite point instead, i.e., that different languages (French, Greek, Spanish) are as threatened by English as Italian is.

Lastly, four (N = 4) instances appear of cultural knowledge, two of them being a case of Bakhtinian double-voicing. In example 12 (FPA4), before listing a series of English loanwords, a group member performs outrage taking on the voice of Dante, not only by using Dante's iconic

profile as the user’s profile picture, but also by cussing in a way that only a contemporary Tuscan Italian would (“Maremma⁷⁹ impestata”), and by including references to political views that polarized 14th century Florence, specifically those that Dante openly opposed (“guelfa nera”⁸⁰). With her cussing, she implied that the overuse of foreignisms offends all that Dante’s work did for the Italian language. Specifically, she heatedly attacked the overuse of English by referring to Dante’s 14th century narrative poem *La Divina Commedia*, which gained Tuscan Italian⁸¹ the prestige that contributed to Tuscan being chosen as the standard variety of Italian, centuries later.⁸² The use of upper case and exclamation highlights the user’s frustration, while mentioning the exact number of verses in the *Comedy* emphasizes the enormity of such disrespect for Italian:

12. METTIAMO IN CHIARO UNA COSA, MAREMMA IMPESTATA LADRA E

GUELFA NERA, perchè io non ho scritto 14233 versi per niente!

[Let’s make something clear, black Guelph thieving rotten Maremma, because I did not write 14,233 verses for nothing!]

In example 13 (FPA18), another case of double-voicing, Solinas herself poses as Dante, implicitly denouncing the overuse of English that would render his literary and linguistic efforts useless. She uses Dante’s iconic portrait as the background of the post text itself.

13. Una vita impiegata a scrivere la Commedia ed esaltare la lingua italiana, e c’è gente

che l’ammazza con un paio di frasi. Povero me.

[A lifetime spent writing the Comedy and enhancing the Italian language, and there are people who slay it with just a couple of sentences. Poor me.]

⁷⁹ Maremma: large area in Southern Tuscany.

⁸⁰ The (black) Guelph faction as opposed to the Ghibelline faction: among the latter, Dante.

⁸¹ Tuscan/Florentine Italian was the regional variety Dante wrote in, among other illustrious contemporary writers of his: Francesco Petrarca and Giovanni Boccaccio.

⁸² With the unification of Italy in 1861.

In conclusion, the vast majority of Facebook group members are assumed to be lay people, in the dataset. Among them, the “expert” group moderator, Solinas is nevertheless quite active and vocal, in the group she created.⁸³ Both lay people and the expert try to establish their authority in a variety of way. They do so mainly through linguistic expertise, i.e., by drawing attention to different “linguistic transgressions” like the faulty use of an English loan, or its improper translation, or the proliferation of false cognates, in posts that are often include technical jargon or markedly formal language, language that is typically less common on social media. Alternatively and less often, group members prove their expertise by appealing to common sense, presenting their claims as undeniable, objective facts that do not need to be explained further. Language experience is the third strategy Facebook group members employ to establish their authority, with four cases of content-rich cultural knowledge as well.

These figures only partially mirror RQ2 results of the YouTube dataset analysis, where all users in the dataset were also assumed lay people. On Facebook, linguistic expertise undoubtedly exceeded other strategies used, as members resorted to it almost three times more than they did to common sense, the second most frequent strategy (N = 34 to 12 respectively). On YouTube, the opposite was the case: linguistic expertise was less frequent than common sense there (N = 21 to 34 respectively). So while YouTube users rely more on supposedly unquestionable objective facts to establish their authority in language matters, Facebook group members rely more often on their linguistic expertise: very often by pointing out different faulty uses of English, and in some cases by showcasing their mastery of formal, prescriptive Italian, the latter something YouTube users never seem to do. Common sense is nevertheless a relatively popular strategy in both datasets, and it may be more popular among YouTubers because all of

⁸³ The only other expert, a language professional (a journalist) has only one post in the whole dataset.

them commented on the same “facts,” presented by Testa as such, rather than on different posts and threads.

Importantly, that Facebook users rely on linguistic expertise much more often than YouTubers can be explained by the very nature of the group they choose to become members of, and by its affordances: a group devoted to commenting on language uses, specifically on the encroachment of English into Italian, where many members take the time to comment on the latter repeatedly. In other words, the members of this Facebook group are people interested in discussing language to begin with, not random Facebook users, i.e., language “nerds” eager to express their opinion on the phenomenon. Hence, it would seem only natural that they would establish their authority by showcasing linguistic expertise that validates their claims.

Conversely, YouTubers commenting on the TED Talk are random YouTube users who happened to watch a video uploaded there, a video most of them had likely stumbled into by accident. Hence, they are much less invested in showcasing their linguistic expertise.

Additionally, in both datasets language experience is the third most-used strategy (N = 6 on Facebook; N = 13 on YouTube). Using cultural knowledge to support a linguistic argument is more rare among lay people in both datasets (N = 4 on Facebook; N = 3 on YouTube), as is explicitly mentioning sociolinguistic facts and constructs, which happens only three (N = 3) times on YouTube and never on Facebook.

RQ2 – Interview with Giuseppina Solinas.

Remarkably, what immediately stood out when reading both Solinas’s reply email and her answers was her evident effort not to use any English loan whatsoever. In her email, she chose to use *in rete* instead of the very much established *online*.⁸⁴ In her answers, she translated

⁸⁴ When looking up *online* in Treccani, between dictionary and encyclopedia, the search yields 597 phrases where *online* is a non-translated modifier.

“mass communication media” with the equivalent of “communication channels” and “social media” with the equivalent of “social channels.” This is peculiar because *media*⁸⁵ is a Latin word to begin with, not an English-in-Italian “transgression,” as she surely is aware of, and a word that Treccani lists in the phrase “media sociali.” Hence, it can be argued that Solinas perhaps overdid it. In other words, in relying on linguistic expertise⁸⁶ as a primary strategy to claim authority on the matter, and to show that she “walks the walk,” she bordered on hypercorrection.

Hypercorrection is defined as the erroneous use of a word form, or the erroneous pronunciation of a word, based on a false analogy with a prestigious form. In this case, Solinas seems to have forced the translation of phrases that did not need to be translated, to avoid any use of foreignisms. Linguistic expertise-wise, she also used the Italian equivalent of technical jargon like “neologisms foreignisms ... Anglicisms,” not to mention that she defined the *Accademia della Crusca* “xenophilic.”

Her drawing attention twice to the apparently poor job the *Accademia della Crusca* is doing with the “problem,” especially when compared to the *Académie Française* or the *Real Academia Española*, qualifies instead as language experience.⁸⁷ Later in the interview, as anticipated, she added that the *Accademia* has not just a “passive role” but also a “xenophilic” one:

⁸⁵ When looking up *social* in Treccani, the dictionary shows it entered the dictionary as a neologism in 2012.

⁸⁶ Linguistic expertise-based authority claims have been coded as follows: using technical jargon or any marked language choices (e.g., use of subjunctive and/or less common/erudite vocabulary), as well as discussions of faulty/inaccurate translations, word usages, and grammar in general. Professional linguistic expertise more in particular, very rarely applicable in all datasets, refers to one’s profession entirely revolving around language, e.g., an advertiser, a translator, a journalist.

⁸⁷ Language experience-based authority claims have been coded as follows: additional information about one’s experience with foreign language (e.g., having lived or studied abroad, or using a foreign language in general or English in particular for/at work, or having a language degree, etc.), or one’s awareness of and commenting on what the *Accademia della Crusca* is or is not doing about foreignisms in Italian.

“The French and the Spanish have the official state-subsidized academies that have the task of translating/creating neologisms and inserting them into the common language, so that the population can repeat the autochthonous term, while in Italy this does not exist, so people necessarily wind up repeating Anglicisms.”

With respect to her language experience, she only discussed her additional experience with foreign languages in her reply email, adding that, of course, she utilizes English for work. However, she only did so because I prompted her to, so that I could check to what degree she qualifies as more of an expert than other group members. She did not provide extensive experience to make her claims more authoritative in the interview itself, however.

Additionally, on the one hand, she appealed to common sense when she stated that Italians “exaggerate” mixing the two languages, and that “the problem ... lies in the excessive number of Anglicisms”: as if “exaggeration” and “excess” were obvious, objective facts. On the other, she appealed to sociolinguistic knowledge to establish her expertise too, when she conceded that “language change” is “an absolutely natural fact” and that “the evolution of languages is normal.” She also added that “a small percentage of foreignisms from different languages is normal and even healthy for the Italian language as in all languages”: it would be interesting to investigate how she would propose to quantify “small,” and who gets to do this quantification. Unfortunately, the interview mode did not allow for such a follow-up.

That Solinas relied on linguistic expertise and common sense to establish her authority in language matters only confirms RQ2 results on Facebook, as well as on YouTube and in Testa’s TED Talk and interview. Those are the two consistently most frequently used strategies on digital platforms, as well in Testa’s interview too. Language experience and sociolinguistic knowledge are less frequent in Solinas’s case, like in the Facebook group she created. In other

words, linguistic expertise and ideology-naturalizing common sense prove the most recurring strategies to establish one's authority in language matters, among experts, among lay people alike, and, so far, on all platforms.

Research Question 3

What language ideologies are revealed by the online discourse about uses of English in predominantly Italian contexts? What, if any, counter discourses (i.e. sociolinguistic facts/arguments) are raised by users about these same issues?

3a. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

3b. Are there any differences in this regard between experts and laypeople?

To answer RQ3, I first established criteria of inclusion of posts and comments.

Afterwards, paying careful attention to specific word choice, I labelled each piece of data (Facebook posts and comments) with the corresponding language ideology, or corresponding counter discourse. Here, I first explain criteria of inclusion. Then, I give an overview of ideology frequency as well as of counter discourses brought forward by Facebook group members, i.e., the basic sociolinguistic facts or universal principles sociolinguists agree on (e.g., language change, globalization, etc.). Then, I discuss language ideology discourses first, and counter discourses afterwards, with examples. Lastly, I compare results among platforms, and among lay people and experts.

Criteria of Inclusion.

Owing to consideration of feasibility, to answer RQ3, I included only original posts and direct comments on posts that were clearly language ideology-related or counter discourse-related, while I did not consider replies to comments, nor replies to replies. I included comments on posts that only ask or offer alternatives to English words, like with RQ2. I did not include

posts/comments that only correct direct calques of English in Italian without further commenting on those, nor posts/comments that only explain the exact meaning of an English word without expanding on how or why the latter are erroneously used in Italian. Lastly, I did not include posts/comments that were too vague or generic⁸⁸ and would not point to any of the coded language ideologies in the taxonomy (Table 3).

In coding for language ideologies, I pay attention to two levels of discourse. I look at which specific linguistic resources people are using to make their arguments, or ‘small d’ discourse, to unveil different underlying ideological ‘big D’ discourses (Gee, 1999). In other words, I identify specific word choice (see Table 3, p. 83) that points at different language ideologies. For example, Facebook users discuss how many Italians do not know English well and often use it incorrectly (‘big D’ discourse), but different members utilize different examples and different categories, e.g., false loans, or incorrect pronunciation of direct ones, to support their argument (‘small d’ discourse).

Findings.

Out of forty-four (N = 44) language ideology and counter discourses-related posts and direct comments, there are forty (N = 40) language ideology-related claims, and four (N = 4) instances of counter discourses. As far as language ideologies, the vast majority of claims hinges on monolingualism ideology (N = 21): i.e., the more prescriptive belief we need to use one language at the time, or the more lenient belief that foreignisms should be used only when strictly necessary/inevitable. Complaint ideology and endangerment ideology follow as the second most frequent ideologies (N = 13). Complaint ideology is the belief that a language has its own fixed rules, lexicon, and pronunciation that cannot be altered or adapted when adopted by

⁸⁸ For example: “Even “anti-purists and Anglicists” are getting fed up. They say. Maybe I can see a small light at the end of the tunnel. *Tunnel? Tunnel!!!*”

speakers of another language. Endangerment is the belief that foreign loans threaten the survival of the mother language. National language ideology is the third most frequent (N = 8): i.e., the belief in the equation between one national identity and the use of one national language; the appeal to one people's culture and roots; and the belief that using a foreign code implies a lack of love for one's country. Inferiority complex is the fourth most frequent (N = 4), i.e., the belief that a foreign code is used because it is perceived as better, cooler, superior etc., and this is meant to reflect on the person who uses it. Obfuscation and beautiful language ideologies follow (N = 3): obfuscation ideology is the belief that foreign codes are used to hide something or trick/deceive people; beautiful language ideology is the belief in the intrinsic aesthetic value of a language. Linguistic purity is the least frequent (N = 2), i.e., the belief that foreignisms pollute the mother language. There are many posts with multiple language ideology-related claims (N = 20). There are only four (N = 4) instances of counter discourses offered by Facebook group members. They either imply the inevitability of language change (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021), happening because of necessary borrowing (N = 2), or they mention increased multilingualism in different spaces (Blommaert, 2010), i.e., the reality of language globalization (N = 1), or they discuss the widespread use of code-switching for marketing strategies (N = 1).

Monolingualism Ideology.

The majority of Facebook group members strongly believe in the need to use one language at the time, or to use foreignisms only when inevitable (N = 21), as example 1 and 2⁸⁹ exemplify (FBI4; FDI1),⁹⁰ aligning with both Testa's TED Talk and YouTubers:

1. ... È assurdo che si utilizzino termini inglesi quando esistono da sempre parole italiane per esprimere lo stesso concetto! Si tratta di piaggeria e di moda per far credere di sapere

⁸⁹ Both example 1 and 2 are instances of multiple language ideologies in one post.

⁹⁰ I.e., 'Facebook, Topic B, Ideology example 4.'

l'inglese. Il peggio si raggiunge quando si utilizzano termini che in inglese non esistono come *smartwork*!

[... It is absurd we utilize English words when we've always had Italian words with the same meaning! It is just flattering and trendy to pretend one knows English. We hit rock bottom when we utilize words that do not exist in English like *smartwork*!]

2. Basta con l'Itangese! CAMPAGNA contro l'uso eccessivo ed erroneo di termini inglesi nella lingua italiana.

[Enough with *Italenglish*! CAMPAIGN against the excessive and inaccurate use of English words in Italian.]

Both of these group members are strongly invested in the need to limit the overuse of English words that are unnecessary, as exclamation points and upper case emphasize. They portray a by-now desperate situation (e.g., “rock-bottom”), as well as a war-like scenario (e.g., “campaign against”) that echoes the “bombarding” of Italian mentioned by YouTubers. Both Facebook group members chose adjectives that are negative in denotation (e.g., “excessive” and “absurd”) while discussing how Italians simply “pretend [to know] English,” i.e., they imply the linguistic insecurity Testa often hints at. Example 1 is also a post with multiple ideology-related claims. Besides monolingualism, the user refers to inferiority complex (i.e., “it is flattering and trendy to pretend one knows English”), and complaint ideologies (i.e., “we utilize words that do not exist in English like *smartwork*!”). In example 2, besides monolingualism, there also are claims related to endangerment (i.e., “campaign against”) and complaint ideologies (i.e., “inaccurate use”). In example 3 (FAI12), this other group members is less emotional and more lenient towards English loan use, recognizing that foreignisms cannot be avoided when there are no alternatives, however implying that they should be used only when that is that case:

3. Concordo sul fatto che in alcuni casi non ci siano alternative ma bisognerebbe avere l'accortezza di utilizzare i termini in modo corretto sia nel “parlato” che nello “scritto” ... Se proprio non si può fare a meno di dirlo/scriverlo in inglese, sarebbe auspicabile usarlo con cognizione di causa perché *Goal* non ha lo stesso significato di *Target*. Siete d'accordo?

[I agree that in some cases there are no alternatives, but we should be careful enough and use some terms correctly, in speaking and writing ... if we really can't avoid saying/writing something in English, it'd be advisable to use it knowingly, since *goal* and *target* do not mean the same thing. Do you agree?]

This user claims that loanwords should be used “correctly” and “knowingly,” giving an example of how they often are not (i.e., *target* and *goal*), which makes example 3 an instance of both monolingualism and complaint ideology-related claims. In sum, Facebook group members imply that a more balanced use of Anglicisms is acceptable provided it is justified, which they can express rather emotionally, especially in the case of unjustified false loans (e.g., *smartwork*), or more neutrally.

Complaint Ideology.

As the previous examples also show, Facebook group members are aware of incorrect or inaccurate uses of English, which they are quite vocal about unlike most YouTube users. Additionally, Facebook users either attack these practices quite emphatically (example 1), or they “advise” against them more impartially (example 3). In example 4 (FBI3), the Facebook user is rather ironic when commenting on an erroneous use of *camera* as if it were a true cognate, irony emphasized by the final rhetorical question since every speaker of Italian knows that the Italian word *camera* only means *room*:

4. Fino a una ventina di anni fa ero convinto di possedere una *macchina fotografica*; poi ho scoperto di avere una *fotocamera*. Ma *camera* mi pare che in lingua italiana abbia tutt'altro significato. O no?

[Until 20 years ago I was sure I owned a *macchina fotografica* (camera); then I found out I owned a *photo camera*. But I think *camera* means something totally different in Italian, doesn't it?]

In example 5 (FBI12), another case of both complaint and monolingualism-related claims (i.e., “a useless Anglicism”), this group member used irony again when begging fellow members to explain to authorities that they use another English word incorrectly, i.e., *cashback*:

5. ... Qualcuno vuole anche spiegare a “Mattarella & Co.” che *cashback* non significa nemmeno *rimborso* (oltre all'inutile uso di un anglicismo?)

[Can anyone explain to Mattarella and co. that *cashback* does not mean *refund* (besides being a useless Anglicism?)]⁹¹

In sum, Facebook group members show how invested they are in denouncing the wrong use of English in different ways: at times emotionally, at other times more neutrally, and often ironically. Also, they address different ways in which English is misused, but the vast majority of them discusses specific lexicon misuses, rather than spelling (YouTube), or syntax (Testa's interview), or pronunciation (TED Talk and Testa's interview).

Endangerment Ideology.

Equally frequent as complaint ideology are instances of endangerment ideology (N = 13), the second most frequently recurring ideology among YouTubers as well. Many Facebook group members believe that foreign loans threaten one's mother language, which needs to be defended.

⁹¹ Mattarella is the Italian President; “and co.” meaning the Government.

Anthropomorphizing Italian into a living creature at risk, users' often rely on metaphors of death, destruction, and killing when sharing their beliefs. Example 6 (FAI6) is prototypical, where the Facebook user condemned code-mixing practices and this supposed “[creolization]” of language as “insane,” while implying that, specifically, English is “[killing]” Italian, and quickly:

6. ... chiedere spiegazioni circa il loro uso pazzesco dell'idioma creolo. Così si uccide una lingua in un paio di generazioni.

[... ask explanations about this insane use of the creole idiom. This way you kill a language in a couple of generations' [time].]

In example 7 (FAI20),⁹² this other group member claimed that Anglicisms are downright sentencing Italian “to death,” which is made even worse by his perception of the Anglophone trend as simply “really dumb” and shameful:

7. Tra la vergogna a creare neologismi e questa stupidissima moda di tutto ciò che è anglofono ad oltranza, stiamo assistendo ad una sentenza a morte della lingua italiana.
[Between the shame of creating neologisms and this really dumb trend [of using] everything that is anglophone to the bitter end, we are witnessing how Italian is being sentenced to death].

In example 8 (FCI1), another Facebook user explicitly said that avoiding overusing English is nothing less than a matter of life or death for Italian, which needs in fact to be kept “alive.” Backed by the authority of popular writer Andrea Camilleri, he also suggested a sort of counter colonialism by promoting the use of Italian in European contexts as well, i.e., in the European Union, where Italian is subordinate not to just one but three languages:⁹³

⁹² Another case of multiple ideologies: complaint; monolingualism; endangerment; and inferiority complex.

⁹³ It can be assumed he means in the UE proceedings, where the official procedural languages are English, French, and German.

8. In questa intervista, l'indimenticato Andrea Camilleri parlava dell'importanza di mantenere vitale la lingua italiana evitando l'eccesso di anglicismi e difendendo l'uso a livello europeo e internazionale.

[In this interview, the unforgotten Andrea Camilleri talked about the importance of keeping Italian alive, avoiding an excess of Anglicisms and supporting [using Italian] at a European and international level.]

In sum, Facebook group members are quite emphatic when they discuss the danger posed by Anglicisms, relying on war and death metaphors. However, they express their worry about how English in general is a threat to Italian, without mentioning linguistic colonization explicitly. YouTube users, instead, often openly mentioned linguistic colonization as well as cultural subordination to America specifically.

National Language Ideology.

The relative frequency of national language ideology-related comments (N = 8) shows that some Facebook users perceive the loss of an Italian national identity and a progressive drifting away from Italian culture as real issues, which the use of the national code would help prevent. Example 9 (FBI13) is prototypical of such beliefs:

9. *Brand e concept?* Adesso basta. Niente inglese. Siamo italiani.

[*Brand and concept?* Enough now. No English. We are Italian.]

The declarative at the end is what differentiates comments like these from monolingualism ideology. The point is not the need to use one language at the time per se, but the reason why one needs to do so: because “we are Italian.” In other words, rather than an endorsement of a monolingualism dogma, it is an appeal to one’s national identity and to the preservation of one’s roots that makes it “enough now.” Likewise, in example 10 (FAI10), this Facebook user implied

that to use one's language is a matter of respect for one's culture, not just a prescriptive rule to be imposed out of principle:

10. I Francesi rispettosi usano *courriel*.

[The French respectfully say *courriel*.]⁹⁴

Lastly, in example 11 (FBI5), while commenting on the back-then outgoing Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's unnecessary use of an English word, i.e., *handover*, this group member pointed out that Conte's choice is not just a case of useless code-mixing. Rather, it is equivalent to denying one's roots, arguably made worse by his political status as the fourth highest representative of the Italian people. In fact, "personaggio" is a marked choice: rather than the more common "persona," "personaggio" seems to be used pejoratively with what Treccani lists as its second and third denotation. Although Conte is a public figure, he is not called a "personaggio" in the sense of a prominent public figure (first definition in the dictionary), which would in fact require the qualifier "pubblico" in Italian. Instead, this term is used because he is perceived either as a comic/tragic actor (second definition), or a person who behaves singularly and bizarrely (third):

11. Questo personaggio non è un vero italiano.

[This character is not a real Italian.]

In sum, some Facebook group members agree that drifting away from one's language equals drifting away from one's roots, at times comparing the poor state of Italian to the welfare of other languages. In instances of national language ideology, however, Facebook users seem less emphatic and less emotionally invested than they are when promoting monolingualism, or denouncing the endangerment of Italian.

⁹⁴ French for *email*.

Inferiority Complex Ideology.

Only four instances of inferiority complex ideology (N = 4) suggest that the provincialist⁹⁵ attitude of Italians who use English to sound modern is a lesser concern for Facebook group members. What these posts/comments denounce is not only the silliness of this “trend,” but also the lack of competence of (most) Italians who use English (i.e., linguistic insecurity again), the combination of which is often ridiculed. In the aforementioned example 1 (FBI4), the comment author emphasized not only that Italians use too much English, but also that, in so doing, they pretend to know a language they do not, which is exemplified by the false loan *smartwork*, used just because it is “trendy.” In example 12 (FBI10), this user denounced the “trendy” yet imprecise use of direct English loans instead, i.e., *cashback*. That people seem unaware of its actual meaning is “alarming”:

12. Mi pare di capire che *cashback* sia l'ultimo anglicismo di moda in Italia. La cosa più preoccupante è che si pensa voglia dire *rimborso*, leggo nei vari siti sociali ... [I think *cashback* is the latest trendy Anglicism in Italy. The most alarming thing is that people think it means *refund*, I read on social media ...]

This group member made a point of translating *social media* with *siti sociali*: not only a phrase very few would translate from English by now, but also an inaccurate translation.⁹⁶ That he was talking about imprecise translations to begin with marks it as a case of borderline hypercorrection: i.e., a word form, in this case *siti*, is used incorrectly while trying to prove that a precise translation of all foreignisms is possible (though *media* is Latin, not English). In sum,

⁹⁵ “Provincial”: (pejorative) which is proper, typical, characteristic of the province, i.e., of peripheral and minor centers, with reference to a real or presumed economic, social and cultural backwardness of small towns and villages with respect to big cities. Provincial mentality: provincial ways and habits, always in a reductive sense; a person who shows that he has a narrow mentality, petty-bourgeois habits, bad taste considered typical of provincial people (Treccani).

⁹⁶ “Siti” does not translate “media” nor is it a synonym of the Latin word. “Social” appeared in the Treccani vocabulary as a neologism back in 2012 and is therefore officially a word in the Italian language (Treccani).

Facebook group members rely on examples of faulty uses of English, mainly vocabulary, to show that, though not knowing it, Italians (over)use English because it is perceived as more modern and cooler, which is meant to reflect on the person who uses it.

Obfuscation Ideology.

There are only three (N = 3) instances of obfuscation ideology, i.e., the belief that a foreign idiom is used to deliberately hide things or trick people, usually by those with the power to do it, e.g., the media and politicians. What appears common among these is a mocking tone or downright irritation towards the aforementioned categories of people, when discussing this practice. In example 13 (FBI11), in fact, commenting once again on the improper use of *cashback*, this group member not only pointed the finger at the government, but also claimed it is “always them” who repeatedly “sin” this way when communicating with the public. The use of upper case to indicate the available proper Italian word only emphasizes her irritation:

13. Deriva da un provvedimento governativo (sempre loro a peccare in comunicazione) per incentivare l'utilizzo delle carte di credito. La parola italiana c'è ed è: RISTORNO.

[It is a measure by the government (it's always them who sin, communication-wise) to promote credit card use. There actually is an Italian word for that and it is: *ristorno* (rebate)]

In example 14 (FBI16), the implied culprit are the media, guilty of using an Anglicism, apparently obscure to most, to promote monitoring one's positivity to Covid-19⁹⁷:

14. E cosa sarebbe questo *screening*, di grazia?

[And what would this *screening* mean, pray tell?]

⁹⁷ Across all platforms, people and experts alike often point the finger at the proliferation of mainly direct but also false loans the Covid-19 pandemic triggered.

The expression “di grazia” is a marked archaic phrase corresponding to “pray tell,” much more formal than “per favore” (i.e., please tell), and not one person would use in everyday informal speech, which seems to suggest this person is mocking the media. In sum, while pointing out that useless, often misused foreign words only make the message unintelligible to most people, some Facebook users identify those accountable for this deliberate message obfuscation, identifying those in the institutions and the media (as also seen in RQ1 discussion across all platforms, as well as both in Testa’s and Solinas’s interview).

Beautiful Language Ideology.

Also recurring only three times are instances of beautiful language ideology (N = 3): i.e., the belief in an aesthetic value of a language that transcends its practical function. Members’ posts and comments show the belief that Italian is considered simply beautiful, at times giving further evaluating details like “musical,” “rich,” and “pleasant.” Facebook group members either use a rather neutral tone when urging Italians to use their own language, as example 15 (FAI16) shows, despite the final imperative:

15. Ogni volta che stai per usare una parola in inglese fermati e pensa se puoi esprimere lo stesso concetto in italiano. La nostra lingua è bella. Parliamola!

[Every time you are about to use an English word, stop and check if you can convey the same meaning in Italian. Our language is beautiful. Let’s speak it!]

At other times, members use a more accusatory tone, as example 16 (FAI4)⁹⁸ shows, with more negative words like “devalue,” “sterile,” and “obsolete”:

⁹⁸ Both examples are cases of multiple language ideologies overlapping. FAI16: beautiful language and monolingualism. FAI4: inferiority complex; monolingualism; endangerment; intrinsically beautiful language.

16. Basta con questo provincialismo! Dite in inglese cose che si possono dire in italiano altrettanto bene. Gli anglicismi, limitano e riducono la bellezza e la ricchezza della nostra lingua. La vostra lingua madre è l'italiano, la lingua più dolce e musicale del mondo. Mentre qui si svaluta la lingua italiana come fosse sterile e obsoleta ...

[Enough with this provincialism! You say things in English you could very well say in Italian. Anglicisms reduce the beauty and wealth of our language. Your mother language is Italian, the most pleasant and musical in the world. While here you devalue Italian as if it were sterile and obsolete ...]

In sum, some Facebook group members assert that Italian is beautiful as a matter of fact that does not need any explanation, while others give more detailed evaluations. The tone used when making this claim can be either neutral or more emotionally charged.

Linguistic Purity Ideology.

Linguistic purity, or the belief that foreignisms pollute the mother language, is the least frequent of all (N = 2) ideologies. In example 17 (FBI14), a group member went as far as calling the use of Anglicisms nothing less than a “plague” affecting Italian:

17. ... L’obiettivo di questo progetto è di creare proposte di traduzioni autoctone di tutti quegli anglicismi che infestano la lingua italiana oggi giorno ... [... The goal of this project is to suggest autochthone translations of all those Anglicisms that plague the Italian language nowadays ...]

In example 18 (FBI19)⁹⁹, calling on the *Accademia della Crusca*, the Facebook user called Anglicism uses “obscenities” that the *Accademia* at times allows, becoming [“useless”] as opposed to the *Real Academia Española* (RAE), whose cleansing mission against foreignisms is

⁹⁹ Both examples are once again cases of language ideologies overlapping. FBI14 with monolingualism; FBI19 with endangerment.

deemed more driven. According to this person, the *Crusca* passivity “negates” what good was done by the RAE against linguistic pollution:

18. La *Crusca* cambia posizione dal giorno alla notte e a seconda di chi interviene ... In linea di massima, anni fa avallavano qualsiasi nefandezza col pretesto che non sia possibile intervenire sulla lingua (quindi ammettendo la propria inutilità e negando l’operato di omologhi quali la RAE) ...

[The *Crusca Academy* changes its stance overnight depending on who says what ... In general, years ago they allowed all kind of obscenities with the excuse that it is impossible to intervene as far as language (therefore admitting their uselessness and negating the analogous work by the RAE, for example) ...]

In sum, Facebook users do not consider linguistic purity a major issue, which was also the case with Testa’s TED Talk, but not in the YouTube dataset. However, when they address it, they either suggest possible cures for the “plague,” or they identify who is accountable for it.

In conclusion, confirming what I observed in Testa’s TED Talk, among YouTube users, and in Testa’s interview, Facebook group members are mainly concerned with advocating monolingualism, more or less prescriptively. That these ideology-related claims prove the most frequent on Facebook confirms that lay people¹⁰⁰ perceive monolingualism as the most urgent need. Also very frequent among both Facebook and YouTube users is endangerment ideology, which shows lay people consider Italian in imminent danger, and its survival at realistic risk. What instead differentiates Facebook from YouTube is the frequency of complaint ideology, i.e., how often Facebook group members pointed to the faulty or inaccurate use of Anglicisms by regular people, the media, and the government alike, as opposed to YouTubers. This difference is

¹⁰⁰ It’s important to remember all YouTube commentators as well as the vast majority of Facebook group members are assumed lay people.

probably explained by the name and mission of the Facebook group itself, “*Viva l’Italiano, Abbasso l’Itanglese*”(Hooray for Italian, Down with *Italenglish*). People who choose to become members of this group are arguably “language nerds,” who take the time to point out specific uses of English in everyday life, and to discuss how to void (most of) those. If their battle is against unnecessary English, it makes sense they would point out each single instance of erroneous use of the latter, since it can only reinforce their argument, and it justifies getting rid of words that are not only useless but also used incorrectly. The least frequent language ideologies on both Facebook and YouTube are obfuscation and linguistic purity, which shows that lay people are less concerned about intelligibility issues, and they do not necessarily perceive encroachment as pollution.

In her TED Talk, Testa was as concerned as lay people with the need of promoting monolingualism as far as possible. However, unlike lay people, in her interview she implied she does not consider language endangerment a realistic threat. Additionally unlike lay people, in her interview she insisted on the cruciality of meaning clarity as a matter of democracy, i.e., the major issue of deliberate message obfuscation by those in power, touched upon in her TED Talk as well.

Counter Discourses.

There are only four (N = 4) instances of counter discourses brought up by group members in the dataset: three implying the inevitability of language change (N = 3), and one discussing code-switching as a marketing strategy (N = 1). In the case of language change, in example 19 (FAI21), one group member argued that Italian’s “lack of elasticity” is what renders borrowing inevitable. In fact, if we can’t coin new words, we must borrow from elsewhere whenever new concepts are born:

19. Quello che manca dell'italiano di oggi e' l'elasticità che serve per coniare nuovi termini.

[What contemporary Italian lacks is the elasticity to coin new words.]

In example 20 (FAI8), another member dismissed stubborn attempts at finding Italian alternatives instead, when a literal translation would get rid of the pun only the English acronym can convey.¹⁰¹ This is an instance of descriptive defense of language use, against prescriptively wanting to find an Italian alternative at all costs:

20. Questo tema non trova una discussione valida. *G.O.A.T.* è ed ha un significato inglese e purtroppo non ha un acronimo facilmente leggibile in italiano, a meno che vogliate una maglia con P.G. o qualcosa del genere.

[This is not a valid discussion. *G.O.A.T.* is English and has an English meaning and unfortunately does not have a corresponding Italian acronym that is easily readable, unless you want a jersey that says P.G., or something like it.]

Lastly, in example 21 (FBI7), one group member discussed an Italian brand mixing English and Italian to market its products in Italy as well, implying there are specific reasons for it. Barilla is a pasta brand that calls itself “Italy’s #1 brand of pasta” on the box, thus heavily relying on product authenticity (Kohler & Perrino, 2017). If Barilla however advertises itself in English to the Italian market, with the slogan *Masters of Pasta*, then there must be a valid marketing-related reason, i.e., the brand exploits the connotations that English can convey and Italian cannot:

21. La stessa Barilla utilizza come motto, anche in Italia, “*Masters of Pasta.*”

[Barilla itself uses “*Masters of Pasta*” as a slogan.]

In conclusion, as far as counter discourses, Facebook group members rebut language ideologies mainly by appealing to language change. However, they offer counter discourses quite

¹⁰¹ *Greatest Of All Time*, often used in sports.

less frequently than YouTube users. This may be due to different reasons. On the one hand, YouTube users were just social media users who happened to watch a TED Talk whose claims they agreed or disagreed on, aligning with Testa, or challenging her by offering alternative arguments. Unlike Facebook group members, they did not choose to join a group with a univocal mission. On the other hand, choosing to become a member of a group called “Down with *Italenglish*” is a likely sign that Facebook group members are not concerned with finding a justification for massive borrowing: the point of joining is only to stem a trend the vast majority of them condemns. The goal of the group is simply to limit English loanword use, to some members even to try to eradicate English borrowing altogether, which is in and of itself an impossible reversal of language change.

RQ3 – Interview with Giuseppina Solinas.

Language Ideologies.

Solinas stated that “a small percentage of foreignisms from different languages is normal and even healthy for the Italian language,” which would show she espouses the more lenient end of monolingualism ideology, i.e., the belief that foreignisms should (only) be used when necessary and unavoidable. So when a semantic gap needs to be filled, or for the sake of concision and clarity, then it would be “healthy” for a language to adopt loanwords. However, the instances when she arguably bordered hypercorrection by “over-translating” *media* (like another Facebook group member) as well as *social media* would point to the more prescriptive end, or dogma, of monolingualism ideology, i.e., the belief in the need to translate all foreign words and to keep codes separate at all times.

Solinas also mentioned false loans as one category of English use that she finds particularly annoying, which falls under complaint ideology instead, i.e., the belief that

languages have their own rules, lexicon, and pronunciation that non-native speakers should not be creative with. In fact, false loans that would be unintelligible to a native-speaker are manipulations of English vocabulary, whose words and phrases adopt a new meaning.

Additionally, she made an interesting word choice when she defined the “problem” of code-mixing both as a “scourge” and as a “trend”: these qualify as instances of, respectively, linguistic purity ideology (the belief that foreign words pollute or plague the mother language) and inferiority complex ideology (the belief that English in particular is used because it is perceived as more modern and cooler, which is meant to reflect on the person who chooses to use it). Furthermore, she claimed that “such a hybrid language will lose its authenticity,” which is another linguistic purity ideology-related claim, since “hybrid” is the opposite of “pure,” i.e., an antonym in the dictionary.

She also added that *Italenglish*, the use of English in otherwise Italian contexts, “is like smearing a Raffaello painting.” This simile resembles people’s appeal to icons of Italian culture and literature like Leonardo, Dante, and Manzoni across different platforms, to urge people to reclaim one’s cultural roots and heritage, of which a national language is the expression. This “smearing” also implies that not using one’s national code equals a lack respect for one’s culture. In other words, Solinas implied national language ideology. It could be argued that the reference to a masterpiece of Italian art, a Raffaello painting, also implies beautiful language ideology: the use of English loanwords would “smear” something otherwise beautiful, i.e., the Italian language. Lastly, she called this code-mixing “phenomenon ... insidious,” an adjective that she took the time to underline. As primary meanings of “insidious,” Treccani and Merriam-Webster list “deceitful” or “treacherous,” and “related to an ambush” or “that hides dangers.” These meanings make Solinas’s statement an instance of obfuscation ideology and endangerment

ideology, which only partially aligns with Testa. While Testa heavily emphasized meaning obfuscation as a real issue in her interview, she implied that Italian is not realistically endangered by English.

Counter Discourses.

The only sociolinguistic fact-based counter discourse touched upon by Solinas in her interview is language change. When I asked her opinion about the fact that languages change (a question that I too late realized was rather leading, so one that I did not use in the other interviews),¹⁰² Solinas replied that she thinks it is “an absolutely natural fact,” and that “language evolution is normal.” In another answer, she added that “a small percentage of foreignisms from different languages is normal and even healthy for the Italian language as in all languages.” So language change due to borrowing is not only “natural,” but also “healthy,” i.e., good. However, there were also other instances when she referred to language change, not necessarily in positive terms:

“The French and the Spanish have the official state-subsidized academies that have the task of translating/creating neologisms and inserting them into the common language, so that the population can repeat the autochthonous term, while in Italy this does not exist, so people necessarily wind up repeating Anglicisms.”

Solinas seemed to imply here that language change does not necessarily happen spontaneously. Rather, it is somewhat forced on Italian because the *Accademia della Crusca* is, in her own later words, “passive,” i.e., they make no effort to create alternative neologisms. It could be inferred that she considers language change not always “healthy.” This also echoes, on the one hand, what she herself said in a Facebook comment on the same lack of effort: “But in fact you can tell

¹⁰² Chronologically, Solinas’s interview was the first.

[the *Academy*] lacks motivation. It's obvious" (CA1b). On the other, it aligns with what another Facebook group member pointed out, though making it a language limit rather than making it the *Accademia*'s fault: "... What contemporary Italian lacks is the elasticity to coin new words" (FAI21).

In conclusion, Solinas touched upon all coded language ideologies in her answers, as well as one counter discourse, i.e., language change, to support her arguments. I cannot make a strong case that one ideology is more frequent than another because of the quite limited amount of data the written interview yielded. However, it could be argued that both "ends" of monolingualism ideology she inferred (mandatory translation of all loans versus leniency) would make it stand out slightly more, aligning her stance with that of lay people across platforms. Monolingualism ideology, in fact, constantly proved the most frequent in all datasets: TED Talk, YouTube, and Facebook. Lastly, that Solinas oscillated between the more and less prescriptive ends of monolingualism only partially juxtaposes her stance to Testa's, since, in her interview, Testa implicitly put herself "in the middle" like Severgnini would, i.e., among those who do not try to "expunge English" – "God forbid!" – but simply advocate for a sensible use of it.

Language change references confirm findings on digital platforms and in interviews with experts: lay people and experts alike are aware of it, and they offer it to explain extensive borrowing relatively often. That Solinas seemed to waver between language change normality at first, to then support its healthiness, to then argue how it is being indirectly forced on Italian, however, arguably makes her stance in this respect rather ambiguous.

CHAPTER SIX – ITALIANS

Italians is a blog/forum and a daily feature of the popular newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, moderated by journalist Beppe Severgnini, author of several books about, among others, the life of an Italian abroad (e.g., *An Italian in America*) and books about English use (e.g., *English: Semi-serious Lessons*) written over a span of thirty years. Created in 1998 as a participatory digital space, in Severgnini's own words, *Italians* is by now a "digital antique," but it was created to be "the first little house for the *Corriere* readers scattered around the world."

Relatively often, emails discuss life abroad, cultural as well as everyday-life differences between Italy and other countries, language in general, and English-related linguistic issues in particular. In Severgnini's own words again, *Italians* interest in all the latter can be summarized as follows:

"Those who frequent *Italians* usually have an international mentality, and therefore these themes, the relationship between languages, [linguistic] impositions, linguistic imperialism, linguistic submissiveness, contamination – are [themes] that [interest] them because the average *Italian* knows two or multiple languages, i.e., it's not a site for pheasant hunting enthusiasts, which is interesting stuff though, or for *skateboarders* – an English word for that matter – or a site for bicycle lovers. It is a place where these let's say cross-cultural elements, therefore also linguistic ones, are of great interest."

Research Question 1

What instances of English language use are Italian internet users complaining about (e.g., false loans versus direct ones)? In which social contexts do they occur, and what categories of people are using language that way?

Ia: Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

To answer RQ1, I identified each instance of overuse/uncalled-for use of English commented upon in the twenty-one (N = 21) emails in the dataset and Severgnini's replies. Next, I classified these examples as direct loans, false or hybrid loans, and semantic extension/narrowing. Lastly, I identified which social actors people tend to attribute overuse/uncalled-for use of English to, e.g. politicians, mass media, advertisers, etc.. Here, I first discuss criteria of data inclusion. Afterwards, I discuss types of loans, social actors, and whether *Italians'* attitude changes while commenting on some types more than others. At the same time, I compare results across different platforms.

Criteria of Inclusion

In the dataset, I coded both loans that are deliberately used as examples to discuss the English-in-Italian trend, and loans that are arguably used unwittingly,¹⁰³ though it must be noted the latter are very much an exception. Words that are mentioned more than once like *lockdown* are only counted once. Out of a total of one hundred (N = 100) instances of English use, the vast majority is direct loans (N = 88), i.e., English words that have been incorporated into Italian morphosyntax without any semantic narrowing or extension, nor hybridization. To validate loan category (e.g., direct versus false), and whether an equally concise Italian alternative exists, I utilized both an Anglophone and an Italian monolingual dictionary as well as a bilingual one, to

¹⁰³ For example, an email writer makes a long list of unnecessary English loans that have an Italian counterpart, but while discussing the role of the media, he uses *magazine* instead of *rivista*.

verify that all of the alternatives qualify as “concise/short enough”¹⁰⁴: Merriam-Webster, Treccani, and Wordreference. “No Italian equivalent” applies to English loans when much lengthier phrases are necessary to convey the same idea, though the three dictionaries do not always agree in this respect, albeit rarely (e.g., see following discussion of *slang*).

Findings

Out of eighty-eight (N = 88) direct loans, roughly one fourth of them (N = 20) does not have an equally concise Italian counterpart. For example, to explain *slang* (II5¹⁰⁵), Treccani requires a three-line paragraph and does not label it as a neologism anymore, confirming how established it is. Wordreference, however, translates it with one word only: but the word is *gergo* (jargon). Treccani clearly points out how *slang* and *jargon* are two different things, since the latter implies some form of secrecy that the former does not. Also, in cases of arguably very recently acquired direct loans like *food editor* (II42),¹⁰⁶ the Treccani dictionary does not even offer a possible lengthy translation: the search only yields “no results.” The Treccani encyclopedia, however, offers a multiline explanation of what *food editor*, or *food writer*, means.

False loans (N = 6) and hybrid loans (N = 4) follow direct loans in extremely smaller numbers. On the one hand, *smart working* (II69),¹⁰⁷ i.e., *working remotely*, is an example of a false loan that (repeatedly) appears here as well as in all other datasets (except for Testa’s TED

¹⁰⁴ One to three words.

¹⁰⁵ I.e., ‘*Italians*’; keyword: Inglese; example 5.’

¹⁰⁶ Also called *food writer*: a food writer writes and edits food-related features, articles, and restaurant reviews for print publications or digital media outlets (Enciclopedia Treccani, linked to the dictionary website).

¹⁰⁷ It must be noted that Treccani labels *smart working* as a pseudo-anglicism, i.e. a false loan, explained as flexible working conditions of which working remotely, i.e., online, is but one component (first documented in the media in 2010). On the other hand, the *Accademia della Crusca* deemed *telelavoro* and *smart working* synonyms back in 2016, so there is no general agreement on this phrase. As importantly, *smart working* was already in use in pre-Covid-19 days, though it is widely believed that it was coined because of it, and that Covid-19 media covering made it mainstream.

Talk, for obvious time-related reasons).¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, using *smartlearning* (IC3)¹⁰⁹ is a rather sarcastic provocation by an email writer who suggested using a similar false loan for educational contexts as well. It must be noted that more than one *Italian* deliberately uses the direct loan *smart* (IC1) in his/her argument in juxtaposition to these false loans, i.e., to make fun of them and to point out how in fact they sound anything but smart. Also, Severgnigni himself remarked that calling telecommuting *smart* implies that all other forms of work are not, though he opted for the Italian counterpart *intelligente* (smart) when calling this false loan trend “ridiculous.” These show yet again how debated the use of Covid-related English-sounding loans was, besides the introduction of numerous direct loans, at the start of the pandemic.¹¹⁰

As far as hybrid loans, *reality* (II43) is a case of clipping and a hybrid loan that exemplifies how two-word phrases like *reality show* or *talk show* or *talent show* are clipped, and thus hybridized, by dropping the modified noun while keeping the modifier, in line with Italian rules of syntax. These phrases adapt to Italian syntax where adjectival modification almost always follows the noun instead of preceding it (often in the form of a prepositional phrase), which would be dropped for concision,¹¹¹ just like *social media* became *i social*. It is interesting to notice that the expert of reference in this dataset, Severgnigni, spelled out the whole phrase when talking about a *talent show* (II72) rather than resorting to otherwise common clippings like these. He did so while he pointed out that if he said *concorsi musicali* rather than *talent show* no one would understand what he meant. Hence, he was implying that *talent show* is a loan that has become necessary for immediate intelligibility. *Fare landfall* (IC21) is an example of a

¹⁰⁸ Testa’s TED talk dates back to 2015.

¹⁰⁹ I.e., ‘*Italians*; keyword: Covid; example 3.’

¹¹⁰ It is important to remember that all data belong in a March 2020 – March 2021 timeframe.

¹¹¹ Also see *water* for *water closet* in the YouTube dataset and *utility* for *utility program* in the Facebook one.

differently hybrid phrase that is half Italian and half English: *make* is translated literally with *fare* but the English noun is preferred to its Italian counterpart, i.e., *approdo* (Wordreference).

Lastly, there are only two cases of semantic extension (N = 2), and no instance of semantic narrowing. One of the extensions, *triggerare* (II10), is both a case of extension and a morphologically hybrid loan. Interestingly, this case of extension appears in all datasets except Testa's Talk: meaning *to bother* or *to provoke*, it appears either in the form of the Italianized infinitive, like in this case, or declined in the present tense, confirming how all hybridized verbs adapt to the morphology of 1st-conjugation Italian verbs ending in *-are*.¹¹² The recurrence of this hybrid loan would show how established certain relatively new loans have already become. The other, *flash mob* (IC5) is allegedly used by journalists to mean, in fact, *demonstration/picket*.

As far as complaining more about certain loans rather than others, *Italians* seem to group them all together rather indiscriminately, confirming what was seen in YouTube data and Facebook data as well. However, once again confirming a trend seen on other platforms, email writers seem to be particularly ironic towards false loans. These are not only criticized but openly mocked, because they are manufactured English-looking phrases that no native speaker would understand with that particular meaning, i.e., because they are made up, they are target of accentuated scorn by lay people bothered by loans that are perceived as doubly unnecessary.

Email writers are also borderline aggressive when it comes to unnecessary direct loans, however, especially those introduced with the Covid-19 pandemic. Yet again, *Italians* sometimes described the rising use of English loans as if it were putting Italian under siege: e.g., the title of an email reads, "*Flash mob, lockdown, location & co: enough with it!*", while another reads,

¹¹² Also see II25: *bypassare*.

“The pointless battle against English,” and another, “How do we save ourselves from *Italenglish?*”.

As far as the social actors responsible for the supposed overuse of English, the media are considered by far the first culprit: in sixty cases (N = 60)¹¹³ they are seen as accountable for this, be it by themselves or in collusion with other social actors. The second most accountable social actor is the general public, guilty, so to say, of using mainly established loans like *web* and *slang* (II4 and 5 respectively) uncritically. The government follows (N = 10), then business/finance (N = 8), and technology (N = 2). There are seventeen (N = 17) instances of multiple social actors deemed accountable, mainly the media and general public together (N = 9), or the media and the government (N = 7).

It is important to point out that the gap between the media and all other actors can be explained by the very nature of the platform where people are complaining. *Italians* is a “blog del *Corriere*,” i.e., “a blog in the *Corriere*”: a blog moderated by an experienced, well-known journalist, in the online format of the arguably most prestigious and popular Italian newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera*. Therefore, it is often to vent specifically about the media mis/use of language to a member of the category that people write: one whose past work experiences in the UK and in the US are well known, and one who is known to write about that very matter outside *Italians* as well.

His readers often point the finger at the media very explicitly. For example, when they mock journalists’ mispronunciation of words on TV (*recovery found* instead of *recovery fund*, III6), asking Severgnini how it is even possible that people expected to know English well enough could make mistakes like that, and repeatedly, and on TV, thus contributing to spreading

¹¹³ It must be noted that one email writer makes a quite long list of English loans in one single email, explicitly blaming the media for unnecessary overuse.

and perpetuating erroneous pronunciations. Alternatively, when readers give a list of unnecessary English words journalists overuse on TV and in the newspapers, it is a journalist's comment on the supposed sins of his own category that they ask for, i.e., Severgnini's own opinion about why the media not only "reflect" but also "powerfully contribute to reinforce" this "[colonization]" by English. It seems only natural, therefore, that the vast majority of English uses is directly attributed to the media much more often than to other social actors, on this specific platform.

In conclusion, *Italians* seem to condemn different uses of English in Italian contexts rather indiscriminately, be they direct, false, or hybrid loans, though at times being more ironic or more emotionally invested in the case of false and hybrid ones. The most accountable for English overuse are assumed to be the media, the general public, and the government. Both results broadly confirm what seen on the other digital platforms, as far as instances of English use, categories of people responsible for the latter, and contexts where loanwords are often found.

RQ1 – Interview with Beppe Severgnini

I interviewed Beppe Severgnini in mid-October, 2022, via Microsoft Teams. The interview was 51minute-long, a semi-structured interview with a limited set of questions on which our conversation built quite freely (see Appendix B for question list). Here, I go about answering RQ1 with interview data in two ways. The first is to quote Severgnini directly: both his answer to the shorter equivalent of RQ1, and his references to the same issue elsewhere in the interview. The second is to tease out specific examples of English uses he mentioned throughout the interview, which gives further insight to answer RQ1 in more detail.

Q: "Are there English uses that irritate you more than others?"

A: “English expressions that tend to hide something irritate me. And politics, for example, has used many of them. Politics is a specialist in this ... In general, when politics uses English language it tends to hide something ...”

Severgnini also elaborated upon his own uses of English in Italian:

“I’m not afraid to say *marketing*, because *marketing* cannot be translated, or to say *film*, or to say *mouse* – this thing here [in my hand] – but as soon as there is an alternative, I use it. That is, I am quite resistant to English as a fashion, English as vanity, as exhibitionism, and English as a sign of inferiority complex. There are many other ways, [many] reasons why English sneaks into Italy – these are just the main ones. If I use English it is because there is no alternative, as in the cases I mentioned ...”

When I asked about the conciseness of English as an argument that would justify its use, on which he agreed, he gave a perfect example:

“For example, *jet lag*: I’ve never opposed it, because the translation of *jet lag* is *malessere che segue i lunghi viaggi aerei causato dal cambiamento brusco o rapido di fusi orari* – well, here is a sensational example, so it is clear that English, among the many weapons it uses, that is, let’s say, the induction of an inferiority complex, it makes you feel fashionable – there is also effectiveness. I have never denied it. That is, it is evident that there is also efficacy [among] the reasons why people use English.”

Severgnini also gave different kinds of evidence as to why some expressions are – or rather *become* – inevitable. One is an interesting example of a false loan that was coined in conjunction with the Covid-19 pandemic, i.e., *Green Pass*.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ E-proof of Covid-19 vaccination: for quite a long period of time, it was required for people to access indoor public spaces like restaurants, gyms, etc., between 2021-22.

“It makes me laugh because *Green Pass* is an expression invented in Italy, so much so that when Italians found themselves in the [Anglophone] world saying “yes, but I have my Green Pass,” to say “I have [been vaccinated] and I can ...” – people didn't understand, but what do you do, you start being a know-it-all, and you start – every time they tell you “*Green Pass*, ” [are you supposed to point out that] we invented it, and you say it's really a health pass? *You* become ridiculous, so you shut up and say *Green Pass* [too], period.”

In other words, according to Severgnini, widespread, everyday use of a false loan that was initially perceived as ridiculous turns into necessary. This confirms what he discussed in the *Italians* email dataset: both with a direct loan, *lockdown*, and a false loan, *smart working*. At the start of the pandemic, Severgnini made the same point he stated here, i.e.:

“When I write and speak in Italian, I try to avoid unnecessary Anglicisms. If there is a good equivalent, I use it ... But we all always need to remember that language is a living and collective thing. If *lockdown* were to impose itself ... I will use it too. For now, I try not to” (ICL – 5R).

Needless to say, *lockdown* was soon everywhere in the media. Likewise, always at the start of the pandemic, Severgnini pointed out how *smart working* is a way to call “*remote work*” that “we only [use] in Italy” (ICL3R), and “a ridiculous name that assumes that other forms of work are not intelligent” (ID – CL7R). *Smart working* is one of those false loans lay people tend to be particularly ironic about, as previously pointed out: apparently, the language expert sided with them, emphasizing the “ridiculous” denotation of an English-looking phrase manufactured by the Italian media and intelligible to Italians only. Months into the pandemic, by the time *smart working* had become widely used by everybody everywhere, he reframed his stance, arguably the

same way he did with *Green Pass*: “I avoid slipping English words into [Italian], as you may have noticed. Unless it is necessary: if everybody says *smart working*, I won’t be the snobbish guy [who does not]” (ID – IL8R).

As far as social actors overusing English, evidently Severgnini attributes quite a bit of fault to institutions, i.e., what he called “politics” in general. When I asked to expand on who “the other culprits are,” he added a detailed list. Among others who widely (over)use English are the youth:

“Everyone. The world of – everyone, everyone, there is no environment that is immune, everyone has their reasons. That is, for example, the world of nightlife, of social life, of the youngest who find [English] an element of distinction. It is not, in my opinion, but for many of them it is. And so it’s a fashionable thing: someone wears a red scarf when the year before he used to wear a blue one. Same with English. They don’t even notice, but they think it’s cool, that’s the [reason why] a generation [of] kids [uses English]. ... For the youth, this theme of English in the Italian language is a non-problem, they don’t even know what I’m talking about, they don’t care: they are very utilitarian.”

If on the one hand, utilitarianism motivates the abundant use of English by specific categories of people (e.g., the youth) and in specific contexts (e.g., nightlife), on the other, laziness is also a factor, i.e., it is easier to adopt an English loan than trying to translate it remaining faithful to its meaning:

“In the world of technology, it is a form of laziness: as they keep hearing certain expressions in English, they don’t feel like translating it. It is clear that I do not translate *mouse* because there is no translation. Although the Spanish say *raton* if I’m not mistaken. But I say *schermo* – this thing here – I don’t say *screen*. But I say *screenshot*,

however. In this, he aligns with Testa, who insisted on meaning transparency as a matter of democracy, as well as Solinas. Testa and Solinas also agreed that advertisers and the media have a big role in the phenomenon, while Severgnini's rather broad "everybody" echoes Solinas's "general public" as well.

Research Question 2

Who is doing the complaining about uncalled-for uses of English? Are they experts or lay people?

2a. How do both experts and lay people establish their language authority when discussing these matters? What kind of language do they use when trying to demonstrate/perform their expertise?

2b. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

To answer RQ2, I first identified whether the writer is an expert or a lay person. Next, I identified in what ways s/he established her/his expertise and authority: whether relying on their linguistic expertise, on their additional language experience, on common sense, or on cultural or sociolinguistic knowledge. Here, I discuss criteria of data inclusion first. Next, I identify who qualifies as an expert, to then discuss the different authority claims and strategies writers utilize. Lastly, while doing the latter, I compare results among platforms. Since emails do not use visuals to support one's claims except for one case, I do not address multimodality.

Criteria of Inclusion

To answer RQ2, only emails and replies that implicitly or explicitly try to establish some form of authority in the specific matter have been selected for analysis.¹¹⁵ Between emails to

¹¹⁵ Out of the 21 in the dataset, one email complaining about the unnecessary use of complex, artificial-sounding words in Italian, i.e., what is called "unnecessary Italicisms" (abstract/vague words typical of bureaucratic language, hard to understand for most lay people) was not taken into consideration for RQ2 and RQ3 since it only briefly

Italians and Severgnini's replies, there are twenty-nine (N = 29) email excerpts¹¹⁶ in the dataset where experts and lay people try to establish their authority in this specific language matter, English in otherwise Italian contexts. The expert on this platform is of course Severgnini himself. He is a journalist, a book writer, and public figure to whom his readers write to ask his opinion on the encroachment of English into Italian and, more often than not, why the media themselves seem "to powerfully contribute" to the issue. Two other email writers qualify as "experts," though to a lesser degree than the expert of reference Severgnini: one teacher and translator of French, who claims her professional formation contributes to her stance on the matter; and a staff member of the Council of Ministers who contributed to founding *Europarole*.¹¹⁷ It is therefore safe to conclude that the vast majority of *Italians* email writers in the dataset qualify as lay people (N = 17 out of 20 email writers), just like the vast majority of Facebook group members and all YouTube users in their respective datasets.

It must be pointed out that, out of twenty-nine (N = 29) expertise claims in *Italians*, the majority use multiple strategies to try to establish one's authority (N = 23), more often than not (N = 6). This is likely due to the length and detail of most emails and replies, as opposed to the brevity of most YouTube comments (out of 59 relevant posts, only 15 involve multiple authority claims) and Facebook posts and comments (out of 49 relevant posts, only 8 include multiple claims). In Testa's Talk, a monologue, rarely does she use multiple strategies to establish her authority (N = 8 out of 34 expertise claim-related segments¹¹⁸) as opposed to Severgnini's interaction with his readers (N = 6 cases of multiple authority-claim strategies out of 9 excerpts).

mentions applauding Severgnini's supposed battle against Anglicisms, but the topic is Italian, not *Italenglish*. The reply was not taken into consideration either for the same reason.

¹¹⁶ As operationalized in Chapter Three, p. 77.

¹¹⁷ "The *Europarole* (*Euro words*) section analyzes terms or expressions, mostly in English, used in the EU that are often taken up, and sometimes misrepresented, by the common language and by the Italian media" (politicheeuropee.gov.it).

¹¹⁸ As operationalized in Chapter Three, p. 72.

Findings

Out of twenty-nine (N = 29) more or less direct expertise-claim instances, between twenty emails (N = 20) and nine replies (N = 9) analyzed in light of RQ2, most *Italians* try to establish their authority through common sense (N = 24): i.e., they present information about language matters as if it were just that, “treated as if [such matters] were obvious facts” (Milroy, 2014, p. 244). In other words, language matters are facts that do not need to be explained nor questioned, which naturalizes ideologies. These instances must be further divided in two distinct groups, i.e., lay people and the two other experts in the dataset on the one hand, and Severgnini on the other (see Table 7 for a summary of all frequencies): respectively, eighteen (N = 18) attempts to establish one’s authority through appeal to common sense among email writers, and six (N = 6) in the case of Severgnini.

The same number of users try to establish their authority through linguistic expertise (N = 24): i.e., use of technical jargon or of any marked language choices (e.g., use of subjunctive and/or less common/erudite/archaic vocabulary); as well as discussions of faulty/inaccurate translations, word usages, pronunciation, and grammar in general. These twenty-four instances of authority that is established through linguistic expertise comprise both attempts by lay people and experts (N = 17) and by Severgnini (N = 7). These were the two most common strategies used to establish one’s authority not only by Testa in her TED Talk, but also by YouTube users and Facebook group members. In other words, across all three platforms and regardless of the “expert” or “language person” status, the majority of people try to establish their authority in language matters by utilizing either common sense or linguistic expertise.

The third strategy to establish expertise, much less frequent, is sociolinguistic knowledge: in four cases (N = 4), email writers (N = 2) and Severgnini (N = 2) discuss sociolinguistic

matters more specifically: e.g., language globalization, its historical roots, and English as a Lingua Franca within and outside of the European Union. This sociolinguistic strategy was also adopted by YouTubers (N = 3) to rebut some of Testa's claims, but never by Facebook group members. The fourth strategy for claiming authority is through language experience (N = 3), i.e., giving additional information about one's experience with language, which supposedly explains why their claims are authoritative: e.g., having lived or studied abroad, having a language degree, living in a linguistically diverse context, or having witnessed code-switching in other languages, etc.. Severgnini does not attempt to establish his expertise this way: for example, he never mentioned his years in the UK or in the US in the email dataset. He does, however, refer to his writing books about the use of English in Italian, which falls under professional linguistic expertise¹¹⁹ since he is a language professional.

The least common strategy to claim expertise is through cultural knowledge (N = 3), a strategy also adopted by YouTube users and Facebook members in the same small amount (respectively, N = 3 and N = 4). In the *Italians* dataset, two email writers mention Dante Alighieri and Alessandro Manzoni, authors of literary masterpieces invoked as inspiration to safeguard the language they contributed to shape, enrich, and refine. Another *Italian* juxtaposes instead modern English as a Lingua Franca to Shakespeare's English, implying the lesser quality of the former.

¹¹⁹ Professional linguistic expertise is very rarely applicable in all datasets, and it refers to one's profession entirely revolving around language, not just using some foreign language at work: e.g., an advertiser, a translator, a journalist.

Table 7: Comparing frequencies of strategies to establish one's authority in Italians

How <i>Italians</i> establish their authority	Total occurrences	Laypeople – out of 20 emails	Beppe Severgnini – out of 9 replies	Lay people percentages	Severgnini percentages
Common sense	24	18	6	90%	66%
Linguistic expertise	24	17	7	85%	78%
Sociolinguistic knowledge	4	2	2	10%	22%
Language experience	3	3	0	15%	0%
Cultural knowledge	3	3	0	15%	0%

When trying to establish their authority relying on common sense, one of the two most frequent strategies in the dataset (N = 24 total), lay people and experts express different opinions. The majority condemn the overuse of English; some have a more neutral stance, recognizing both the pros and cons of adopting English loans; and others, a minority, defend the latter as an “enrichment of Italian,” though to various degrees. A prototypical example of language-related common sense, is example 1 (IIL11¹²⁰), where this *Italian* asks a question in a neutral, detached tone:

1. Caro Beppe, una domandina veloce: ma perché l'Unione Europea nei comunicati ufficiali e negli atti ufficiali usa ancora la lingua inglese? Se il Regno Unito non fa più parte della U.E. come mai si usa ufficialmente la lingua di un paese “straniero” ? Grazie della risposta che vorrai darmi.

[Dear Beppe, a quick little question: why does the European Union still use English in its official newsletters and proceedings? If the UK is not part of it anymore, how come do we still officially use the language of a “foreign country”? Thank you in advance.]

¹²⁰ I.e., ‘*Italians*’; keyword: Inglese; Letter 1.’

Severgnini's reply (IIL11R) in example 2 is a lengthier and more detailed example of sociolinguistic-based explanation, where Severgnini makes an indirect statement about English as a Lingua Franca, not "owned" by its native speakers anymore, but now "everybody's language":

2. Molto semplice, caro GP: perché la lingua inglese viene capita da tutti. Era – e rimane – un'indispensabile lingua di lavoro, anche nell'Unione Europea. Farne a meno sarebbe grottesco. L'uscita del Regno Unito dalla UE è un motivo in più per conservare l'inglese come lingua comune. Più che mai è diventata la lingua di tutti. Chi sosteneva che l'uso quotidiano dell'inglese, a Bruxelles e nelle relazioni intra-europee, favorisse Londra, be', ora non ha più nemmeno questo pretesto. Certo, resta l'Irlanda. Ma è– numericamente, politicamente, linguisticamente - una questione ben diversa.

[Very simple, dear GP: because everybody understands English. It was – and is – an indispensable working language, in the UE too. To do without it would be grotesque. The UK leaving the EU is an additional reason to keep using English as the common language. More than ever, it's become everybody's language. Who claimed that the everyday use of English favored London, in Brussels and in inter-European relationships, now does not have even this excuse anymore. Of course, Ireland is still in. But it is – numerically, politically and linguistically – a very different matter.]

In example 3 (ICL4), an *Italian* instead attacked the flooding of English words into Italian emphasizing how the media are the main culprits. He used strong words like "ignorance," "exhibitionism," and "inability to communicate" while describing what he called "useless idiocies." He described what he perceives as an objective reality:

3. Caro Severgnini, la celebrazione del 2 giugno, festa della Repubblica e dell' Unità Nazionale poteva servire da spunto per difendere una delle poche cose che veramente unisce gl'italiani: la lingua. Seguito invece a leggere *flash mob* e l'ormai acquisito *lockdown*, espressioni inglesi introdotte da giornalisti in gara tra loro nel dimostrare ignoranza dell'italiano, sciocco esibizionismo di una lingua inglese che spesso non conoscono e incapacità a comunicare, visto che usano termini incomprensibili ai più ... Potrei continuare a lungo ed invano, ma insisto nella speranza che almeno Lei, notoriamente bilingue, aiuti una volta di più a spezzare una lancia in favore della nostra bella lingua e nel limitare al solo necessario il ricorso a termini stranieri, spesso incomprensibili ai più e comunque con perfetti corrispettivi italiani. Posso pregarla di “incoraggiare” i suoi colleghi a finirla con quelle che non esito a definire inutili imbecillità?

[Dear Severgnini, June 2nd celebration, Day of the Republic and National Unity, could have been used as a prompt to defend one of the few things that really unite Italians: their language. Instead I keep reading the by-now acquired *lockdown*, expressions introduced by journalists who compete with each other to show their ignorance of Italian, silly exhibitionism of an English language they do not know and of their inability to communicate, given they use words most people cannot understand ... I could go on for long and to no avail, but I insist hoping that at least You, notoriously bilingual, help once more defend our beautiful language and limit the use of foreign terms only when they are necessary, which are often incomprehensible to most while however having perfect Italian counterparts. Could I beg you to “encourage” your colleagues to stop with what I do not hesitate to define useless idiocies?]

Another example of a user with this position, adopting a heated tone against uses of English, is also apparent in example 4 (IIL9),¹²¹ where the writer once again emphasized how “shameful” this trend is. Example 4 is also one of linguistic expertise and authority grounded in additional language experience, since the writer pointed out that her authority in the matter derives not only from her profession, i.e., a French teacher and translator, but also from the context in which she lives, i.e., a linguistically diverse one:

4. ... Mi permetto di scriverLe in merito al suo articolo sull'uso delle parole inglesi nella lingua italiana ... La lingua inglese è stupenda e per vari motivo ci convivo ormai da anni. Sono insegnante di francese e traduttrice e vivo fin da piccola in un contesto linguistico vario. Questa mia formazione mi fa apprezzare ancora di più di quanto sia importante mantenere la propria lingua, difenderla e proteggerla ... Ultimamente ho visto questa parola che mi ha fatto drizzare i capelli : la *Home Care Premium* dell'INPS. Non si può sentire né leggere! In inglese non significa nulla. Vorrei sapere chi inventa queste cose, è veramente vergognoso ...

[I take the liberty to write to You regarding your article about English use in Italian ... English is beautiful and for various reasons I've lived with it for years now. I am a French teacher and translator, and I've lived in a linguistically varied context for years. This formation of mine makes me appreciate even more how important it is to keep one's language ... lately I've seen this phrase that made my hair stand on end: the *Home Care Premium* by social security services. You can't stand hearing it nor reading it! In English, it does not mean anything. I'd like to know who comes up with these things, it's really shameful ...]

¹²¹ I.e., '*Italians*'; keyword: Inglese; Letter 1.'

In contrast, example 5 (ICL5) represents a more moderate stance on the inevitability of adopting English words, by implying that languages change. Nevertheless, the writer condemned such uses when non-necessary nor efficient, which is presented as common sense:

5. Caro Bsev ed Italians, mi rendo conto che nel mondo del cosiddetto *business*, l'Inglese stia scalzando inesorabilmente l'Italiano; d'altronde le lingue non possono essere imbrigliate né create a tavolino: la lingua vola libera ed è - entro i limiti della correttezza logica ed espressiva - più l'uso che impone la regola che non viceversa. A me però infastidisce l'utilizzo di anglicismi senza un motivo di efficacia, sintesi e schiettezza ... Alcuni esempi: *day by day* (giorno per giorno non va bene?), per non parlare di *one to one* (nei *Promessi Sposi* troviamo l'altrettanto valido "da solo a solo"), *step by step*, che non mi sembra possa fare concorrenza al nostrano "per gradi" o "grado per grado" che dir si voglia. E così tante altre locuzioni che sento quotidianamente dai miei colleghi rampanti. Ma ciò che davvero – permettetemi – mi indispetta, è il nient'affatto sintetico, dinamico e chiaro *misunderstanding* (qui la parola dimostra in sé il proprio significato - la comprenderà poi il malcapitato ascoltatore?): ben 16 lettere, di cui 11 consonanti, divise in 5 sillabe, per sostituire arrogantemente i nostri: *malinteso* (con lo stesso significato ma con una sillaba in meno), *equivoco*, *quid pro quo* (tre sillabe). ... Non mi sentirei di tradire la mia lingua madre (già, madre...) per una lingua straniera solo perché si dimostra (solo poi in determinati casi) più efficace ...

[Dear Bsev and Italians, I am aware that in the world of so-called business, English is inexorably displacing Italian; on the other hand, languages cannot be harnessed or [prepackaged]: language flies free and is - within the limits of logical and expressive correctness - more the use that the rule imposes than vice versa. But I am annoyed by the

use of Anglicisms without a reason of efficacy, synthesis and frankness ... Some examples: *day by day* (*giorno per giorno* isn't good enough?). Let's talk about *one to one* (in the *Promessi Sposi* we find the equally valid *solo a solo*), *step by step*, which it seems to me cannot compete with our own *per gradi*. And so many other locutions that I hear daily from my rampant colleagues ... But what really - allow me - annoys me, is the not-at-all synthetic, dynamic and clear *misunderstanding* (here the word demonstrates its meaning in itself - will the unfortunate listener then understand it?): 16 letters, of which 11 consonants, divided into 5 syllables, to arrogantly replace ours: *malinteso* (with the same meaning but with one less syllable), *equivoco*, *quid pro quo* (three syllables). ... I would not feel like betraying my mother tongue (yes, mother ...) for a foreign language only because it proves (only in certain cases, I must add) more effective ...]

Example 5 is also a case of establishing one's authority through linguistic expertise, the most common strategy (N = 24), as frequent as common sense. In other words, this writer makes an argument against English loans that are not economic in form nor more efficient, referring to number of syllables.

Example 6 (IIL5) is another instance of supporting one's claims through linguistic expertise. First of all, the writer used eye-spelling to mock other people's Italianized pronunciation of English: *sivvi* for *CV*; *chiurrichiulum vaitai* for *curriculum vitae* (ironically, a Latin phrase). Also, he chose a few rather marked words and phrases in Italian, used quite sarcastically to juxtapose his point to uses of English deemed ridiculous. These are: "mi sovviene" instead of "mi ricordo" ("I remember"), which is literary, refined, and rare (Treccani); "costui" instead of "lui" ("he"), only used in writing (Treccani), and utilized here to distance oneself from the person the writer is talking about; and "siccome" instead of "così come"

(“like”), which is not only literary but also archaic (Treccani). Also, he used *passato remoto* tense (simple past), “misi” and “dissi” instead of *passato prossimo* tense (present perfect) “ho messo” and “ho detto” (“took, said” instead of the more common “have taken, have said”¹²²). *Passato remoto* is typical of formal settings and has been replaced by *passato prossimo* in most informal speech, and in most Italian regions (Accademia della Crusca). Its use here is therefore a deliberate choice of formality. The writer used “Globish” and “Lingua Franca” to ground his expertise in sociolinguistic knowledge as well. Finally, he rooted his authority in cultural knowledge, with the mention of Shakespeare’s English to which ELF is pejoratively juxtaposed:

6. Si dice, Beppe, gli italiani non maneggino bene l’inglese; e forse è vero: ricordo, anni orsono, la mia capa mi blaterava di 'sto dannato *sivvi*; *sivvi*? Occhessarammài? Ci misi un poco, col mio povero inglese, a capir trattarsi del ben noto *chiurrichiulum vaitai*: e me ne vergognai. Mi sovviene allora che tempo fa si titolava, su un quotidiano nazionale, dell'apprensione d’un noto calciatore per l’incipiente canizie. Ahibò, mi dissi: dov’è il problema? ... costui, giornalista professionista, laureato e iscritto all’Albo, intende per canizie la calvizie ... Però poi mi domando: ma chi te lo fa fare di usar lessèmi che non conosci, anziché parlar siccome ti nutri? ... E allora penso: è ben giusto masticar una lingua franca, ché il mondo è vasto, e ormai globalizzato; e che non è neppur l’english del Bardo, ma semmai il ‘globish’ di ostelli e aeroporti; ma la lingua, si dimentica sempre, non serve tanto a COMUNICARE: serve a PENSARE. E allora prima di masticarne giustamente una seconda, e magari una terza, intanto bisogna conoscerne bene almeno UNA: la propria. Sai che ho scoperto che persino gli inglesi non conoscono solo la “lingua franca internazionale”, ma anche la propria lingua materna? Curioso, vero?

¹²² In Italian, present perfect and simple past tense are not (always) used the same way they are in English.

[They say, Beppe, that Italians do not handle English well; and maybe it's true: I recall, years ago, that my boss blathered about this damned *sivvi*; *sivvi*?

What on earth could that be? It took me a while, with my poor English, to understand that she meant the well-known *chiurriciulum vaitai*: and I felt ashamed. It comes to mind then that a while ago, in a national newspaper, the headlines mentioned a famous soccer player's apprehension for his incipient white hair. Darn it, I said to myself: where is the problem? ... This person, a professional journalist, with a degree, in the *Journalist Register*, by white hair he meant alopecia ... But I wonder: but what on earth are you doing this for, using lexemes you do not know, instead of speaking the way you eat? And so I think, it is very good to speak a lingua franca, since the world is big, and by now globalized; and that [language] is not even the Bard's English anymore, but, if at all, it's "Globish" of hostels and airports; but language, we always forget, is necessary to COMMUNICATE and THINK. Therefore, before dabbling a second language, and justly so, and maybe a third, we need to know at least ONE well: one's own. You know I even found out that the English do not only know the "international lingua franca" but even their own mother tongue? Curious, isn't it?]

In example 7 (IIL6), instead, another example of linguistic expertise-rooted authority claim, this *Italian* tried to establish his authority by juxtaposing his knowledge of the pronunciation of common English words to the faulty pronunciation repeatedly displayed by the media, thus undermining their own authority. Also, he used marked vocabulary, "perpetrare," instead of the more common "commettere" ("to commit"), the former literary and more refined (Treccani):

7. Caro Beppe, non so quanto l' argomento possa essere di interesse generale, ma la mia è una vera e propria manifestazione d' insofferenza: è troppo chiederti un intervento per cercare di fermare il massacro di quella lingua? Perpetrato quotidianamente da tanti dei tuoi colleghi? Che cosa ci vuole per far capire loro che *recovery found* non è la stessa cosa di *recovery fund*? Come si può lavorare nell' informazione televisiva ignorando la lingua inglese?

[Dear Beppe, I'm not sure how this could be of general interest, but mine is a real expression of intolerance: is it too much to ask you to intervene to stop the massacre of [English]? Perpetrated daily by many of your colleagues? What does it take to make them understand that *recovery found* is not the same as *recovery fund*? How can you be a journalist on TV when you ignore the English language?]

In example 8 (IIL6R), Severgnini replied to the author of example 7 in a rather humorous way.

Usually, Severgnini provides lengthy explanations. This time, he just used a pun:

8. Il *Recovery* in effetti non è stato ancora *Found*. OK, era una battuta così così ...

[The *Recovery* hasn't indeed been *Found* yet. OK, it was a so-so kind of joke ...]

In example 9, instead, Severgnini relied both on common sense and linguistic expertise to describe, and arguably defend, language use in the Italian media, in response to another reader. His linguistic expertise is evident when he mentions: inevitable direct loans like *talent show*¹²³; the ten rule of English usage he tried to put together for his colleagues (while admitting to breaking those himself); the loss in meaning or misunderstanding that prescriptive, mandatory translations of all loans at all times can mean (i.e., *outside the box*); and the inevitability of code-switching even when one consciously chooses to try to avoid it:

¹²³ Though most lay people use the clipping *talent*, as previously discussed.

9. Grazie per l'attenzione e la meticolosa ricerca, innanzitutto ... Ho anche scritto un libro, quasi trent'anni fa (è ancora in circolazione, anche come audiolibro!), per spiegare che le cinquecento parole d'inglese ormai entrate nella lingua italiana potevano costituire una base per imparare l'inglese ... Quando parlo e scrivo in italiano, evito di infilarci dentro parole inglesi, come forse avete notato. A meno che sia necessario: se tutti dicono *smart working*, non mi metto a fare lo snob. Ma a *endorsement* preferisco *appoggio*, a *trend tendenza*, eccetera. Il vocabolo *vip* lo evito come la peste. Ma se tutti dicono *talent show* io mi metto a scrivere “*concorsi musicali*”? Non capisce nessuno. Veniamo al Corriere. Nel volume “Come si scrive il Corriere della Sera” ... la parte sull'utilizzo dell'inglese è stata affidata a me. Avevo preparato dieci regole, cercando di essere utile ai colleghi. Regole che ho disatteso anch'io, qualche volta! La mia rubrica su 7-Sette, quando lo dirigevo, s'intitolava “*Outside the box.*” *Fuori dalle scatole!* Non sarebbe stata la stessa cosa. Noi giornalisti esageriamo, qualche volta? Onestamente sì, come tanti. Come uscirne? Dovremmo convincerci che l'italiano può essere più efficace, ed è spesso più sensuale, dell'espressione inglese di moda. Sarà una battaglia lunga: però val la pena combatterla, sorridendo (senza leggi, obblighi e imposizioni). Per esempio: io ho scritto *sensuale*, non *sexy*. Ma stavo per farlo!

[Thank you for your attention and your careful research ... I even wrote a book, almost 30 years ago (it's still around, even as an audiobook) to explain that those 500 words that by then had entered Italian could be the basis to learn English ... When I speak and write in Italian, I avoid slipping English words into it, as you may have noticed. Unless it is necessary: if everybody says *smart working*, I won't be the snobbish guy [who does not]. But I prefer *appoggio* to *endorsement*, *tendenza* to *trend*, and so on. The word *VIP* I

avoid it like the plague. But if everybody says *talent show*, should I call them *concorsi musicali*? No one would understand what I mean. Let's get to the Corriere. In the volume "How you write in the Corriere" ... the section on English usage was given to me. I prepared 10 rules, trying to help my colleagues. Rules that I myself broke at times! My feature on "7-Seven" magazine was called "*Outside of the box*" – I could not call it "*Fuori dalle Scatole!*" (literal translation that sounds like the equivalent of *Get out of here!*). It would not have been the same. Do we journalists exaggerate at times? Honestly we do, like many others do. How to end it? We should convince ourselves that Italian can be more efficient, and it's often more *sensuale* (*sexy*) than the trendy English phrase. It will be a long battle but it's worth fighting, with a smile on our face (without laws and impositions). For example, I wrote *sensuale* and not *sexy*, but I was about to!]

In conclusion, the vast majority of *Italians*, (Severgnini included), present their arguments as common sense, as objective facts that do not need any further explanation. In addition, as many ground their authority in linguistic expertise, by drawing attention to different "linguistic transgressions" like the mispronunciation of an English loan by the media, the Anglicization of a Latin phrase pronunciation through eye-spelling, or the senselessness of some false loans. In fewer cases, users index their linguistic expertise through the deliberate use of formal, refined, literary, or archaic, Italian lexicon or syntax. This happens more frequently on *Italians* than it did on Facebook, and it did not appear in the posts of YouTube users. The generally more formal register on *Italians* can be explained by the prestige of the newspaper that houses the forum, by the authority and professional experience of their addressee, Severgnini, and by the formality of newspaper register itself, as opposed to the informality of social media in general. Additionally, while Facebook users are "language nerds" who chose to join a group

created to discuss language uses, YouTube users who commented on Testa's TED Talk are a broader, more heterogeneous public, not as invested in language matters as these Facebook group members are.

Common sense and linguistic expertise are the most frequent strategies used to establish one's authority on all three platforms. Facebook represents a partial exception in the sense that linguistic expertise is almost three times more frequent than common sense (N = 34 and N = 12, respectively). All YouTube users in the dataset are assumed lay people, and the vast majority of Facebook group members and *Italians* too, so linguistic expertise and common sense can be confirmed as favored strategies to establish one's authority in language matters among lay people in general. There are no differences between the latter and experts in this sense, since common sense and linguistic expertise are also the most frequent authority-claiming strategies used by Testa in her TED Talk and Severgnini in his replies.

Additionally, on all platforms, language experience is the third most frequent strategy, though quite detached from the other two (N = 13 on YouTube; N = 6 on Facebook; N = 3 in *Italians*). Neither Severgnini nor Testa ever resort to language experience, coded as explicitly describing any additional experience with foreign language (e.g., having lived or studied abroad, having a language degree, living in a linguistically diverse context, etc.), arguably because they do not need to, thanks to their status. Cultural and sociolinguistic knowledge-related authority claims lie at the bottom of the chart on each platform. However, Severgnini and his lay readers discuss sociolinguistic facts in equal proportions (N = 2 for Severgnini out of 4 total instances), while Testa's TED Talk never relies on sociolinguistic knowledge, as opposed to the few cases (N = 3) where YouTubers rebut her claims exactly by mentioning language globalization and language change.

RQ2 – Interview with Beppe Severgnini

A well-known journalist for the most prestigious newspaper in Italy, the *Corriere della Sera*, Severgnini is also author of several books, lecturer at universities and journalism schools, and a regular guest on TV as a politics expert, besides being the moderator of the blog/forum *Italians* he created in 1998, and the addressee of all emails *Italians* send there. All of this clearly makes him an expert on language matters in general because of his professional linguistic expertise,¹²⁴ especially on English-in-Italian matters. This is the result of a thirty-year long bilingual career as a journalist. The latter further grounds his authority in language experience, a career that “makes [him] proud” and at the same time “makes [him] [particularly] aware that [separate] languages exist”:

“In Italy I don’t know how many ... actually, I do – no one has had a parallel career in Italian and English in the last thirty years, because I worked for years at the *Economist* and years at the *New York Times*, so seven on one side and eight on the other as a columnist, writing. And regularly, I have worked for the BBC, not just as an interviewee. Then I have been in many English-speaking shows – I am telling you this because I have always had a sort of double career, because my profession is linked to language. I would have liked, and I succeeded, to use the two paths ...”

The first question I asked him was about the relative frequency of emails discussing English-in-Italian his readers write to *Italians*, which has caught my attention in the last few years, and what consequently motivated my choosing this forum as the third digital platform for my analysis. This question was meant to be an introduction of our discussion on the one hand, but it also sought an explanation of how an evident connection has developed between

¹²⁴ Professional linguistic expertise more in particular, very rarely applicable in all datasets, refers to one’s profession entirely revolving around language, e.g., an advertiser, a translator, a journalist.

Severgnini, his readers, and the *Italenglish* issue over the last few decades, on the other. In other words, I wanted to understand why he apparently became *the* person to ask such questions, i.e., an authority:

Q: At *Italians*, you publish emails discussing the mixing of Italian and English relatively often. Does that mean it is a heartfelt argument? In other words, is it a representative sample of the population, i.e., you receive a lot of them, or is it you who are particularly interested in the topic and publish all or many of them?

Severgnini reply was lengthy and detailed. He gave several reasons why this long-lasting discussion grew on his forum, and why people write to him specifically about the matter, all of which boils down to one basic fact: “Those who write to me just know that I am very interested in the debate.” More specifically, these reasons are varied.

One is the book he published back in 1992, “*English: Semi-serious lessons*,” a book whose age and longevity attest to his “great interest” in Italians’ “obsession with the English language, back then already.” In it, he suggested to use this “obsession” and the “eight hundred English words [people unwittingly] already used” as an instrument to “seriously learn English,” which confirms a sort of linguistic insecurity issue implied by Testa in her interview, when it comes to Italians in general and their mastery of English.

Another reason for creating *Italians*, was to create a virtual space to bring together “*Corriere* readers scattered around the world”:

“[Readers whose] age pushes [them] to be a little more attentive [about code-mixing], because they are not kids,” and “[they] usually have an international mentality, and therefore these themes, the relationship between languages ... are themes that interest them because the average *Italian* knows two or multiple languages ... It is a place where

these let's say cross-cultural elements, therefore also linguistic ones, are of great interest. [All] these elements do so that, in short, we talk about it quite often.”

Another reason why Severgnini's readers often write to him about this issue, he added, is that *Italians* are aware of his personal life, i.e., the time he lived in England and in the USA, which in turn roots Severgnini's authority in his experience with English.

Also, Severgnini further commented on the fact that code-mixing with English is as common elsewhere (and not just in Italy as many lay people across all three platforms argue): “It is very common in Russia, in Eastern Europe, in Spain – it happens everywhere.” He followed this statement with a historical and sociolinguistic explanation for this:

“It is the first time that two empires, the British and the American one, have succeeded each other in history and speak the same language. So we are talking about a time that has already arrived around two hundred and fifty years in which the culturally, scientifically, and technologically dominant power speaks English. So half [this] time the British, and from the First World War onwards the Americans: that's what we're talking about. It is a very rare case. It is as if after the domination of the Roman Empire, another Rome had arrived, the Visigoths or the Lombards had arrived who [likewise] spoke Latin at home. This is the first reason.”

He called this explanation “so banal [he was] almost ashamed [he had] to say it [again]” since he “wrote about this thirty years ago and [he has to] repeat it every three months.” He then followed with an as-detailed reading of more recent reasons behind language change and language globalization, which further roots his expertise in sociolinguistic knowledge. That once again he called this explanation “very trivial” is arguably an assumption on his part that everyone should know this:

“The second reason is that America in particular is the vector of many important things today, technology [being] the first: we are talking in a place called “*Teams*” right now, it is not called “*Squadre*” ... therefore technologies, biotechnologies, medicine, the whole world of entertainment – *entertainment* in English – therefore ranging from rock music – [rock is] an English word – to cinema, *films* – [another] English word – *social networks* – another English word – all of Latin origin as etymology. This is very trivial, there’s no need to repeat it, but it’s true and it’s here and it’s what’s causing it ... that is, this phenomenon wasn’t led by anyone. It is that each of these phenomena carries with it its own vocabulary.”

Finally, he attributed his sensitivity to linguistic matters as an inherent feature of his job, which makes him particularly aware of language:

“ One is a journalist, a writer, someone who speaks in public, etc., language is not only our working tool, but we have a sensitivity that is similar to that of a painter for colors, a musician for music, or a cook for flavors. That is, it is normal. So that I have a sensitivity that ... when I speak I am very aware of the words I use, the constructions I choose etc., not because I’m [so gifted] – but because it’s my job.”

In sum, Severgnini’s authority in the matter is moored in linguistic expertise, language experience, and sociolinguistic knowledge alike, when it comes to summarizing both historical and contemporary objective facts that led to language globalization and language change. Like him, Testa and Solinas also heavily relied on linguistic expertise as well, but unlike Severgnini, they also appealed to “common sense” frequently. Furthermore, Testa and Solinas rarely appealed to their sociolinguistic knowledge or additional experience with language, unlike Severgnini who frequently referred to his thirty-year-long bilingual career as a journalist.

Research Question 3

What language ideologies are revealed by the online discourse about uses of English in predominantly Italian contexts? What, if any, counter discourses (i.e. sociolinguistic facts/arguments) are raised by users about these same issues?

3a. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

3b. Are there any differences in this regard between experts and laypeople?

To answer RQ3, I labelled different language ideologies or counter discourses in email segments and reply segments, paying close attention to specific word choice. I first discuss criteria of inclusion. Next, I give an overview of the frequency of the eight language ideologies, as well as the frequency of counter discourses, i.e., universal principles all sociolinguists agree on (e.g., language change and globalization). Then, I discuss language ideology discourses first, and counter discourses afterwards, with examples. Finally, I compare which language ideologies and counter discourses are most prevalent across platforms, and among experts versus lay people.

Criteria of Inclusion

To answer RQ3, I pay attention to two levels of discourse: ‘small d’ discourse, i.e., specific language uses, that unveils ‘big D’ discourses, i.e., underlying ideologies (Gee, 1999). For example, *Italians* often discuss how the Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to flooding Italian with more English terms (a ‘big D’ discourse), which the media and institutions have readily adopted. In contrast, an example of ‘small d’ discourse (Gee, 1999) is the way that one writer chooses to describe the encroachment of English in Italian, i.e., violence is being inflicted on Italian by English loans that are “maiming it” to the point that Italian “needs crutches.”

It must be noted that not all emails and/or replies were included in RQ3 analysis. For example, when an Italian discusses the uselessly obscure Italian lexicon typical of bureaucracy, the argument simply does not tie into the English-in-Italian debate and related ideologies. Or, when Severgnini replies to an email with a pun, no ideology can be inferred either. Thus, for RQ3, the dataset consists of twenty-four (N = 24) text excerpts between emails (N = 18) and replies (N = 6), out of the original dataset of twenty-one (N = 21) emails and ten (N = 10) replies.

Findings

The most common ideology is complaint ideology (N = 12), i.e., the belief that a language has its own fixed structure, lexicon, and pronunciation that cannot be altered or adapted when adopted by speakers of another language. Confirming instead a trend already seen on the other two platforms, the second most frequent ideology is that of endangerment (N = 11), i.e., the belief that foreign loans threaten the survival of the mother language. The third most frequent (N = 10) is monolingualism ideology: the belief we need to use one language at the time and all foreignisms should be translated. Slightly less frequent is beautiful language ideology (N = 9), or the belief that a language has an intrinsic aesthetic value that transcends its more utilitarian purposes. Inferiority complex and obfuscation and ideologies follow in close numbers (N = 8 and N = 7): respectively, the belief that a foreign code is used to deceive people and/or to sugarcoat a bitter pill, and the belief that a foreign code is used because it is perceived as better, superior, more modern, etc., and this is meant to reflect on the person who uses it. Less frequent is national language ideology (N = 6): the belief in the equation between one national identity and the use of one national language; the appeal to one people's cultural roots; and the belief that using a foreign code implies a lack of love for one's country. (What distinguishes this from

monolingualism is the more specific, culture and heritage-related reasons why we need to use Italian only, while the monolingualism is just a prescriptive dogma). Linguistic purity only appears in one (N = 1) comment, i.e., the belief that foreignisms pollute the mother language, which should be cleansed of them. Lastly, the majority of users refer to multiple ideologies in a single email (N = 17), which can be explained by the lengthier texts of emails and replies, when compared to much more succinct YouTube comments, and usually more concise Facebook posts and replies.

Frequency-wise, what also stands out in *Italians*, as opposed to the other datasets, seven ideologies out of eight are quite common, with only one, linguistic purity, occurring only one time. It is not the case with TED Talk, YouTube, and Facebook data, where monolingualism, national language, endangerment, and complaint ideologies are clearly dominant.

As far as counter discourses, language change is the most frequent (N = 5), followed by language globalization (N = 3). It is interesting to notice that, in the *Italians* dataset, not only do multiple language ideologies appear in the same post, but also that ideologies co-occur *with* counter discourses within the same email or reply (N = 7). In these cases, in fact, either *Italian* writers or Severgnini himself express language ideology-related claims while offering sociolinguistic counter arguments at the same time. On the one hand, it can be argued that the lengthier nature of these texts allows room for longer explanations and multiple arguments, where *Italians* take their time to plan and write their letter to an expert, in contrast with the succinct comments on social media like YouTube and Facebook, which are more spontaneous and brief. On the other, YouTube users commenting on Testa's TED Talk claims specifically express their opinion in one way *or* the other: either aligning with her, or challenging her. Likewise, it can be assumed that the mission itself of the Facebook group, i.e., trying to rid

Italian of excessive Anglicisms, does not leave room for counter argument attempts. In other words, as discussed under RQ3 in Chapter Five, Facebook group members are not interested in trying to explain or justify why English loans are so pervasive in Italian: group members only attempt to get rid of English loans deemed unnecessary.

Complaint Ideology.

Complaint ideology is the most frequent in the dataset (N = 12), i.e., denouncing the improper/incorrect use of English, be it vocabulary or pronunciation, while at times mocking such uses as well. Example 1 (ID – IL6)¹²⁵ is a prototypical instance of a reader of *Italians* complaining about the “massacre of that language.” In this case, the user refers to a common English mispronunciation in the media:

1. Caro Beppe, non so quanto l’argomento possa essere di interesse generale, ma la mia è una vera e propria manifestazione d’insofferenza: è troppo chiederti un intervento per cercare di fermare il massacro di quella lingua? Perpetrato quotidianamente da tanti dei tuoi colleghi? Che cosa ci vuole per far capire loro che *recovery found* non è la stessa cosa di *recovery fund*? Come si può lavorare nell’informazione televisiva ignorando la lingua inglese?

[Dear Beppe, I’m not sure how this could be of general interest, but mine is real expression of intolerance: is it too much to ask you to intervene to stop the massacre of that language? Perpetrated daily by many of your colleagues? What does it take to make them understand that *recovery found* is not the same as *recovery fund*? How can you be a journalist on TV when you ignore the English language?]

¹²⁵ I.e., ‘ID for Ideology; keyword: Inglese; letter 6.’ Email with one ideology only.

In example 2,¹²⁶ (ID – CL2), another Italian targeted a false loan, i.e., *smart working*. This *Italian* pointed out how these English words, which look and sound English but whose meaning is made up, would hinder communication with native speakers:

2. Utilizziamo una marea di termini in inglesi veramente a sproposito ... Pensate a DiMaio che parla dell'efficacia dello *smart working* con Boris Johnson e magari l'interprete è di nazionalità inglese. Non si capiranno mai, è veramente ridicolo. E poi se i nostri figli non possono andare a scuola e studiano da remoto, come lo chiamiamo, *smartlearning*?
[We use a ridiculous amount of English words inappropriately ... Think of DiMaio¹²⁷ discussing the efficiency of *smart working* with Boris Johnson, and maybe the interpreter is of English nationality. They will never understand each other. It's really ridiculous. And then if our kids cannot go to school and have to study remotely, how do we call it, *smart learning*?]

In sum, in cases of complaint ideology, *Italians* either address specific examples of supposedly misused English lexicon, pointing out the meaninglessness of some creative English-sounding phrases, or they discuss the improper use of English in general, or they emphasized the supposedly unique (mis)treatment English gets only in Italian contexts. In this respect, Severgnini's replies can differ. At times, he concurs some English-like uses (i.e., false loans) are "ridiculous," e.g., *smart working* (ID – CL7R); at other times, he justifies such uses as by-now part of everyday language (e.g., when, many months into the pandemic, he conceded that "if everybody says *smart working*, I won't be the snobbish guy [who does not]").

¹²⁶ Email with one ideology only.

¹²⁷ Former Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Endangerment Ideology.

Perceiving the widespread use of English as a threat to the survival of Italian, endangerment ideology is the second most frequent (N = 11). In example 3, a portion of a long email (ID – IL1) with several ideologies, this *Italian* used metaphors of war, injury, and death when discussing the danger posed to his native language. This writer anthropomorphized Italian. English inflicts so much violence that Italian not only “needs crutches,” but it is moribund, i.e., “well on its way” to die:

3. ... Quella stessa [lingua] che sempre più stiamo bistrattando e azzoppando. Infatti abbiamo deciso che questa povera lingua, così bella in origine, non sia più in grado di stare sulle proprie gambe e abbia bisogno di stampelle per camminare. Ne abbiamo fatto una lingua “chiusa,” non ancora morta del tutto, ma avviata ad esserlo, non più aperta alle novità ...

[... We have been mistreating and maiming [Italian] more and more. In fact we have decided that this poor language, originally so beautiful, cannot stand on its own anymore and needs crutches to walk. We’ve made it a “closed” language, not completely dead yet but well on its way, no longer open to novelties ...]

In the metaphor in example 4 (ID – IL9), this other writer implied that Italian is in fact under siege, and as such it needs to be “defended and protected:

4. ... Vivo fin da piccola in un contesto linguistico vario. Questa mia formazione mi fa apprezzare ancora di più di quanto sia importante mantenere la propria lingua, difenderla e proteggerla ...

[... I've lived in a linguistically varied context for years. This formation of mine makes me appreciate even more how important it is to keep one's language, to defend it and protect it ...]

Example 5 (ID – CL5) echoes a claim already encountered on Facebook: that using another language equals “selling off” one’s own, which is an unforgivable betrayal. This *Italian* did not mention to whom the sell-off would be, but he did imply the same idea. Though he did not explicitly mention linguistic colonization that is ascribable to the superior economic power of the Anglophone world, he did however imply an economic power differential by discussing how the Italian language must succumb to a non-specified “highest bidder.” In this example, Italian is also once again anthropomorphized, but this time in a metaphor of an intimate relationship: a long-time friend is “[sold off],” or a spouse is “[betrayed],” replaced by someone more “effective,” or more attractive, i.e., English. Though the damage is not physical this time, but emotional, Italian still suffers trauma:

5. ... Non mi sentirei di tradire la mia lingua madre (già, madre...) per una lingua straniera solo perché si dimostra (solo poi in determinati casi) più efficace: mi sembrerebbe di tradire un amico d'infanzia, svendendo la mia amicizia al miglior offerente o - peggio - lasciare mia moglie per una donna (che mi appare) più giovane e bella ...

[I would not feel like betraying my mother tongue (yes, mother ...) for a foreign language only because it proves (only in certain cases, I must add) more effective: it would seem to me to betray a childhood friend, selling off my friendship to the highest bidder or - worse - leave my wife for a woman (who appears to me) younger and more beautiful ...]

In sum, *Italians* discuss the danger English supposedly poses to their mother language by often recurring to warlike and combat metaphors, urging everyone to “protect” and “defend” it, lest it “[dies].” Severgnini, on the one hand, often concurs that what is happening is “a long battle worth fighting,” however often downplaying his readers’ alarmed tone, e.g., pointing out how one needs to fight “with a smile on [one’s] face (without laws and impositions)” (ID – IL8R).¹²⁸ On the other, he offers an objective, detailed historical reading of why and how “English has imposed itself” becoming “[dominant],” which is at the root of a “linguistic fight we Italians need to engage in,” including at a European Union level.¹²⁹ He nevertheless concludes that, in the EU context, “English is still favorite” as the “neutral language” it has always been, even more neutral after the UK left the Union (ID – IL2R).

Monolingualism Ideology.

Almost equally frequent (N = 11), monolingualism ideology proves recurrent among *Italians* too, (as it does across platforms). Once again, users seem to oscillate between a more or less lenient stance towards borrowing. In example 6 (ID – IL1), this *Italian* conceded that loanword use is not such a big problem, nevertheless utilizing a metaphor that clearly illustrates how foreign loan use can be otherwise perceived:

6. ... Non considero un peccato mortale l’uso di termini inglesi, ma vorrei che si usassero alla pari anche i termini italiani equivalenti ...

[... I do not consider using English words a deadly sin, but I wish they were used as much as their Italian counterparts ...]

At other times, *Italians* specified exactly when it is not acceptable to use English, like in example 7 (ID – CL5):

¹²⁸ I.e., ‘Ideology; keyword: Inglese; Letter 8 Reply.’

¹²⁹ In the EU, the official languages of proceedings are English, French, and German.

7. ... A me però infastidisce l'utilizzo di anglicismi senza un motivo di efficacia, sintesi e schiettezza ...

[... But I am annoyed by the use of Anglicisms without reason of efficacy, synthesis, and frankness ...]

At other times, as in examples 8 (ID – IL10) and 9 (ID – CL8), *Italians* condemned the unjustified overuse of Anglicisms more emphatically:

8. ... Anche io trovo esagerato e spesso assolutamente non necessario l'utilizzo di parole inglesi al posto del meraviglioso italiano ...

[... I too find excessive and often absolutely unnecessary that we use English words instead of wonderful Italian ...]

In example 9, the tone is highly emotional, which is clear not only by the use of upper case and exclamation points, but also by the use of rather dramatic word choice like “[making] my eyes bleed” or “[it] infuriated me.” Also, the pun in parentheses adds to the drama, i.e., code-mixing *headlines* that made him “bang [his] head against the walls” :

9. ... STOP all'utilizzo improprio di termini inglesi nella lingua italiana! Voi giornalisti siete i primi e principali colpevoli, perfino sul mio amato Corriere, quindi vi prego di considerare una cambio di rotta linguistico, adesso! Non bastavano i *droplet* a farci sanguinare gli occhi , ciò che mi ha fatto infuriare ieri è stato leggere dell'uragano Laura e di come ha *fatto landfall* in Louisiana. (Letto in più testate, quindi ho preso il muro a testate.) ...

[... STOP the improper use of English terms in the Italian language! You journalists are the first and foremost culprits, even in my beloved Corriere, so please consider a linguistic change of course now! The *droplets* weren't enough to make our eyes bleed.

What infuriated me yesterday was reading about Hurricane Laura and how it *made landfall* in Louisiana. (Read in several headlines, so I banged my head against the wall.)
...]

In sum, *Italians* can support the monolingualism cause more or less heatedly, either advocating for a ban of Anglicisms that are not needed in general, or specifying in which cases the latter are tolerable. In his replies, Severgnini very often points out how he himself tries “to avoid useless Anglicisms” as a rule, since “if there is a good equivalent, [he] use[s] it” (ID – CL5R). As already discussed, he nevertheless encourages people to face the issue “with a smile on [one’s] face (without laws and impositions)” (ID – IL8R). He reiterates that “some English expressions are useful, some even necessary” (ID – IL1R), and that, if specific uses of English should impose themselves, he would accept them willingly. But only then would he do so: e.g., “If *lockdown* were to impose itself – to distinguish it from the *isolamento* (isolation) of infectious patients and the *clausura* (seclusion) of nuns – I will use it too. For now, I try not to.” (ID – CL5R).

Beautiful Language Ideology.

The next more frequent ideology is the belief in the aesthetic value of a language (N = 9). These instances can be summarized by pointing out that *Italians* present their mother tongue as simply “beautiful” (e.g., ID – IL2; ID – CL4) or “wonderful” (e.g., ID – IL10), which is why “foreigners love it and want to learn it” (ID – IL9). They never give additional explanation of how their language is supposedly such. The only exception is the case of one *Italian* who made the interesting argument that both Italian *and* English are beautiful, but in different ways. In example 10 (ID – CL6),¹³⁰ the email writer argued that both codes have intrinsic values that make one

¹³⁰ Email with one language ideology only.

more appropriate than the other, depending on contexts. English, for its own innate features, is perfect for “business,” while Italian, for different innate reasons, is perfect for “poetry” and “imagination”:

10. ... Mi auguro di non offendere troppo i puristi e di dar loro una visione *additive-inclusiva*, che esalti la bellezza di entrambe le lingue. Secondo me fa molto bene all’Italiano, in particolare nel *business*, ossia nel cosiddetto mondo del lavoro. L’inglese è diretto, facile, difficile da fraintendere. Soggetto-Verbo-Complemento. È una lingua concreta, armonica, *straight* e dinamica, figlia del fare. L’Italiano è altrettanto armonico, molto più melodioso e articolato e merita un posto tra le lingue maestre di vita, ma nell’area della poesia, del sogno, dell’immaginazione, così come lo merita il Portoghese. Quando la poesia entra nel concreto, nasce il cavillo. A mio avviso l’Inglese deve entrare di più nel nostro uso comune, con tanti termini, perché dona la concretezza e la schiettezza che, la nostra bellissima lingua, ci fa dimenticare ...

[... I hope not to offend purists too much and to give them an *additive-inclusive* vision, which enhances the beauty of both languages. In my opinion [English] is very good for Italian, especially in *business*, that is, in the so-called world of work. English is straightforward, easy, hard to misunderstand. Subject-Verb-Complement. It is a concrete, harmonic, *straight* and dynamic language, the “daughter of doing.” Italian is just as harmonious, much more melodious and articulated and deserves a place among the master languages of life, but in the area of poetry, dreams, imagination, just as Portuguese deserves it. When poetry gets into the concrete, the quibble arises. In my opinion, English must enter more into our common use, with many terms, because it gives the concreteness and frankness that our beautiful language makes us forget ...]

It is only Severgnini, besides the latter *Italian*, that made an effort to explain why Italian is loved, i.e., because, in fact, of the “beautiful things” the language itself evokes: “you love Italian, and you use it only if you love it, together with the beautiful things it evokes (the views, art, music, style, food, wine)” (ID – IL2R).

Inferiority Complex Ideology.

The belief that English is often used because it is perceived as more modern and/or in some way superior is also rather frequent, which is meant to reflect on the person who uses it (N = 8). A false Anglicism, *smart working*, is called upon in example 11, where this other *Italian* argued it is used because it is “more captivating”:

11. In questi giorni si parla molto di *smart working*, ma come spesso accade si prende un termine inglese e si adotta per sostituire una parola di uso comune (*lavoro remoto* o *telelavoro* in questo caso) con un termine più accattivante, anche se il significato poi è diverso ... ora che tanti stanno provando il telelavoro da casa, forse si rendono conto che tanto *smart* non è ...

[These days we talk a lot about *smart working*, but as it often happens we take an English term and adopt it to replace a commonly used word (*lavoro remoto* or *telelavoro* in this case) with a more captivating term, even if the meaning is different ... now that many are trying teleworking from home, perhaps they realize that it is not that *smart* ...]

In example 12 (ID – CL8), the email writer went into more detail, clearly mentioning inferiority and suggesting English may be used for the “sensationalism” Italian cannot deliver, and he rhetorically asked why the same does not apparently happen in other European languages, a recurring argument among those who condemn the use of English in Italian across platforms:

Obfuscation Ideology.

As far as believing foreign codes are used to hide something or deceive someone, a few Italians believe that is often the case (N = 7). Example 13 (ID – IL4)¹³¹ shows how institutions are yet again held accountable for meddling with meaning clarity, when instead “simplification” should be the goal:

13. Caro Beppe, uno spettro si aggira per l’Italia: la semplificazione. ... Per placarne gli insaziabili appetiti lancio, lancio appelli al “legislatore” ... Faccia rispettare la norma costituzionale che prevede l’uso della lingua italiana nei documenti ufficiali del nostro Paese. Ovvero: niente più lingua burocratese né lingua inglese in qualsivoglia legge, decreto e atto pubblico di qualsiasi genere e a qualsiasi livello della Pubblica Amministrazione.

[Dear Beppe, a ghost is hunting Italy: simplification. ... To placate its insatiable appetites, let me launch [an] appeal to the “legislator” ... that s/he makes sure the constitutional norm be respected that dictates the use of Italian in all official documents in our country. That is: no more bureaucratic jargon nor English language in whatsoever law, decree, or public act at any level pf public administration ...]

In example 14 (ID – CL3), it is once again false loans that were accused of being deliberately created to deceive people:

14. Solo in Italia il *teleworking* si chiama *smart working* e forse è perché suona bene e nasconde meglio una fregatura.

[Only in Italy is *teleworking* called *smart working* and maybe it’s because it sounds good and it better hides a scam.]

¹³¹ Email with one language ideology only.

In sum, the idea that institutions, the government, and the media are those responsible for the spread of code-mixing is reiterated in more than one case. Severgnini supports the argument that English use equals message obfuscation while clearly spelling out who is accountable for it. In this sense, he is never afraid to recognize the major role he and his colleagues in the media play, together with the government. For example, in reference to the *Recovery Fund*, an EU financial aid plan, he stated that “when we [the media] do not want to be bothered, we adopt English words,” but “if we used the Italian name, we would make it clear to all – starting with the government – that the plan is meant to help the next generation, not to make those in charge now happy” (ID – IL1R).

National Language Ideology.

The belief in the equation between one’s national identity and the use of one’s national language, and the belief that using a foreign code implies a lack of love for one’s country, is not as common among *Italians* as it is among YouTubers and Facebook users, with only six (N = 6) instances. In example 15 (ID – CL4), this *Italian* created a sort of equation between being an Italian citizen, i.e., part of one nation and of its history, and using the Italian language, “one of the few things that really unite Italians”:

15. Caro Severgnini, la celebrazione del 2 giugno, festa della Repubblica e dell' Unita'

Nazionale poteva servire da spunto per difendere una delle poche cose che veramente unisce gl'italiani: la lingua ...

[Dear Severgnini, June 2nd celebration, Day of the Republic and National Unity could have been used as a prompt to defend one of the few things that really unite Italians: their language ...]

In example 16 (ID – IL1), it is Dante again who was called upon instead, the father of modern Italian who should be celebrated:

16. Caro Beppe, quest’anno ricorre il 700° anniversario della morte di Dante. Varrebbe la pena di celebrarlo nei fatti anziché a parole. Dante ha coniato la lingua italiana ...

[Dear Beppe, this year we have the 700th anniversary of Dante’s death. It should be worth celebrating it in deeds rather than words. He coined the Italian language ...]

In example 17 (ID-CL5), this *Italian* emphasized that it is not just a matter of love for one’s language not to mix it with foreignisms, but he also implied it is one’s duty because of one’s blood ties to it. In fact, this writer utilized another metaphor of an intimate relationship, where Italian was once again anthropomorphized, but this time Italian is not a friend or a spouse, but a mother who has “pampered” her offspring “since childhood,” and who therefore deserves to be loved back:

17. ... Io ritengo che la nostra lingua vada amata: siamo cresciuti con lei ed attraverso di lei siamo stati, fin dall'infanzia, coccolati, consolati, corretti ...

[... I believe that our language should be loved: we grew up with it and through it we have been, since childhood, pampered, comforted, corrected ...]

In sum, *Italians* denounce the scarce attachment their countrymen have for their language and their heritage in different ways: e.g., invoking the celebration of their cultural roots, or emphasizing it is one’s duty to love one’s language as one would a family member. In this dataset, Severgnini himself never mentioned nor implied the equation between the use of one’s native language and the love for one’s country, as well as the disrespect for one’s cultural roots that the use of a foreign code would suggest.

Linguistic Purity Ideology.

Only one instance of linguistic purity is found in this dataset (N = 1), example 18 (ID – IL8R) i.e., the idea that foreignisms pollute the mother tongue:

18. ... Come forse sa, mi sono dedicato molto – anzi moltissimo, forse troppo – all’infiltrazione dell’inglese nella lingua italiana ... Ma suggerivo – al di là delle contaminazioni fisiologiche e a quelle inevitabili – di tenere separate le due lingue ... [As you may know, I devoted a lot of time – maybe too much – to the infiltration of English into Italian ... But I suggested – beyond physiological and inevitable contaminations – to keep these two languages separate ...]

In conclusion, the three most frequent language ideologies underlying *Italians*' emails and Severgnini's replies are complaint, endangerment, and monolingualism, all of which are extremely close in numbers (respectively, N = 12, N = 11, and N = 10). What stands out, compared to previous datasets, is that complaints about different supposed misuses of English are the most common. Among Facebook group members, complaint ideology is the second most frequent but is nevertheless relatively detached from monolingualism (N = 13 to N = 21 respectively). In the TED Talk and among YouTubers, complaint ideology is one of the least frequent instead. Endangerment ideology and the widespread feeling that English poses a threat to Italian survival confirms itself at the top of the frequency table among lay people,¹³² the second most frequent ideology among YouTube users, Facebook group members, and *Italians*. Advocating monolingualism confirms itself among the three most widespread ideologies, i.e., it is perceived as one of the biggest issues by *Italians* too, like by Facebook users, by YouTube

¹³² It's important to remember all YouTube commentators, the vast majority of Facebook group members, and the vast majority of *Italians* are assumed lay people.

users, and in Testa's TED Talk. Lastly, while seven out of eight language ideologies are extremely close in numbers among *Italians*, the only one that is widely detached from the rest is linguistic purity, with only one instance (N = 1). It therefore confirms itself at the bottom of the frequency table, just like in the TED Talk and on Facebook. On YouTube, while not being the least frequent, it still lay among the bottom three.

As far as experts, while endangerment ideology was one of the least frequent ideologies in Testa's TED Talk (N = 3 instances of out 23 segments), it is not the case of Severgnini, whose word choice points at endangerment relatively much more often (N = 3 out of 6 replies). However, it must be noted that he discusses English "dominion" with less dramatic tones than his *Italians*.

Counter Discourses.

The most frequent sociolinguistic fact discussed or implied in *Italians* is language change (N = 5), described both by *Italians* and Severgnini as an objective fact, neither good nor bad but simply unavoidable, since languages are "free." In example 19 (ID – CL5), referring to the email that argues that English and Italian should be used in specific, separate contexts because of their innate features, initially,¹³³ this *Italian* supported the argument, by implying that it is by now unavoidable to use English in Italian business contexts, exactly because languages change and "cannot be harnessed":

19. Caro Bsev ed *Italians*, mi rendo conto che nel mondo del cosiddetto *business*, l'Inglese stia scalzando inesorabilmente l'Italiano; d'altronde le lingue non possono essere imbrigliate né create a tavolino: la lingua vola libera ed è - entro i limiti della correttezza logica ed espressiva - più l'uso che impone la regola che non viceversa ...

¹³³ ID – CL5 is one case of language ideologies and counter discourses in the same email.

[Dear Bsev and *Italians*, I am aware that in the world of so-called *business*, English is inexorably displacing Italian; on the other hand, languages cannot be harnessed or [prepackaged]: language flies free and is – within the limits of logical and expressive correctness – more the use that imposes the rule than vice versa ...]

In his reply in example 20 (ID – CL5R), after pointing out that Italian equivalents should be used whenever available,¹³⁴ Severgnini reiterated that “a language is” however “a living thing” where change can just happen, and loanwords can impose themselves:

20. Io so parlare e scrivere in inglese, e ne vado orgoglioso. Ma quando scrivo e parlo in italiano, cerco di evitare anglicismi inutili. Se esiste un buon equivalente, lo utilizzo (*retrotterra* e non *background*, *contante* e non *cash*, etc.). Ma ricordiamo sempre, tutti, che la lingua è una cosa viva e collettiva. Se *lockdown* si imponesse – per distinguerlo dall'*isolamento* dei malati infettivi e dalla *clausura* delle suore – lo userò anche io. Per ora, cerco di non farlo.

[I can speak and write in English, and I’m proud of it. But when I write and speak in Italian, I try to avoid unnecessary Anglicisms. If there is a good equivalent, I use it (*retrotterra* and not *background*, *contante* and not *cash*, etc.). But we all always need to remember that language is a living and collective thing. If *lockdown* were to impose itself – to distinguish it from the *isolation* of infectious patients and the *seclusion* of nuns – I will use it too. For now, I try not to.]

Before explaining when a language should or should not adopt loanwords,¹³⁵ Severgnini repeated the same concept in example 21 (ID – IL1R), i.e., that languages need to “open up in order to

¹³⁴ ID – CL5R is one case of language ideologies and counter discourses overlapping.

¹³⁵ ID – IL1R is one case of language ideologies and counter discourses overlapping.

stay alive.” However, he added that Italian does it “the wrong way,” i.e., he implied that Italians exaggerate when borrowing English words:

21. È giusto che una lingua si apra, per restare una lingua viva; ma l’italiano lo fa spesso nel mondo sbagliato. È vero che le lingue morte non le molesta nessuno, ma noi talvolta esageriamo ...

[It is right that a language opens up to stay alive; but Italian often does so in the wrong way. It is true that no one bothers dead languages, but we are pushing it at times ...]

The only other counter discourse in the dataset is language globalization (N = 3): the latter was only once touched upon by an *Italian*. Otherwise, it is Severgnini who mentioned or implied it. The only lay person mentioning it does not picture it in entirely positive terms though – quite the opposite. In fact, in example 19 (ID – IL5), this *Italian* argued that “dabbling” a lingua franca is “a good thing”:¹³⁶ he not only chose a pejorative verb to begin with, but also made matters worse by re-labelling English as the “Globish of hostels and airports,” i.e., deprecating the simplification English had to necessarily undergo to become a Lingua Franca:

22. ... E allora penso: È ben giusto masticar una lingua franca, ché il mondo è vasto, e ormai globalizzato; e che non è neppur l’*English* del Bardo, ma semmai il *globish* di ostelli e aeroporti ...

[... And so I think, it is very good to dabble in a lingua franca, since the world is big, and by now globalized; and that [language] is not even the Bard’s *English* anymore, but, if at all, it’s *Globish* of hostels and airports ...]

Not surprisingly, once again Severgnini used more neutral words to describe the phenomenon. In example 20 (ID – IL11R), when asked why English is still the primary official language of the

¹³⁶ ID – IL5 is one case of language ideologies and counter discourses overlapping.

European Union after Brexit, Severgnini replied in placid terms that, by now, “English is” not only an “indispensable working language” but simply “everybody’s language” as well, i.e., a language no longer exclusively owned by its native speakers:

23. ... Perché la lingua inglese viene capita da tutti. Era – e rimane – un’ indispensabile lingua di lavoro, anche nell’Unione Europea. Farne a meno sarebbe grottesco. L’uscita del Regno Unito dalla UE è un motivo in più per conservare l’inglese come lingua comune. Più che mai è diventata la lingua di tutti. Chi sosteneva che l’uso quotidiano dell’inglese, a Bruxelles e nelle relazioni intra-europee, favorisse Londra, be’, ora non ha più nemmeno questo pretesto ...

[... Because everybody understands English. It was, and it is, an indispensable working language, in the UE too. To do without it would be grotesque. The UK leaving the EU is an additional reason to keep using English as the common language. More than ever, it’s become everybody’s language. Who claimed that the everyday use of English favored London, in Brussels and in inter-European relationships, now does not have even this excuse anymore ...]

In conclusion, *Italians* and Severgnini touch upon language change and language globalization counter discourses, and their historical reasons, often intertwining them with underlying language ideologies, apparently trying to understand the complexity of the linguistic scenario by analyzing it from different angles. The affordances of this blog, in fact, allow them room and time for a lengthier, more detailed argument than the other social media do, as previously discussed. Lastly, language change is the only counter discourse, or sociolinguistic fact, present on all three platforms, and it is mentioned by experts and lay people alike. It also is

consistently more frequently invoked than language globalization with the only exception of YouTube data, where the opposite happens.

RQ3 – Interview with Beppe Severgnini.

From the very start of the interview, it was apparent that the two most recurring underlying language ideologies in his statements were inferiority complex and obfuscation ideologies, with other statements attributable to beautiful language and linguistic purity ideologies. When it came to claims ascribable to monolingualism ideology, a consistently prominent one among lay people and across all platforms, if not the most prominent, Severgnini clearly leaned towards the lenient end of it. In fact, he “[lined] up in the middle category.” In other words, Severgnini’s position is that English should be used when is unavoidable, or it *has become* unavoidable, otherwise one should opt for Italian: but without doing like “extremists who exaggerate” in their “intolerant ... crusade” against English use. As far as counter discourses, language change is the most prominent sociolinguistic fact he either mentioned or implied, with a few segments that implied language globalization as well.

Inferiority Complex Ideology.

This is not only one of the most frequent underlying language ideologies in Severgnini’s answers, but crucially also a key concept he himself expressed repeatedly, using exactly the same wording without being prompted. When once again stating that his position on English in Italian is not at all extreme, he went on explaining when it *can* be:

“I get mad at English when [its use] makes no sense, has no justification, and is just a show of vanity, fashion, or unjustified inferiority, then I snap! But in itself, English – long live English – it is half my life. I live it in English.”

This is a concept he reworded time and again: “That is, I am quite resistant to English as fashion, English as vanity, as exhibitionism, and English as a sign of inferiority complex.” He added that English encroachment into other languages is as widespread:

“No, it is widespread. I had the perception that even in Moscow, or in Warsaw, and in Eastern Europe it is very strong; there is a bit of a linguistic inferiority complex, because basically using English expressions seems – it’s cool.”

To this, he also added that this inferiority complex is a typical attitude towards culturally dominant languages:

“Proust, who was a fantastic reader of the society in which he lived, [France in between two centuries], says that in fact France in those years was already prey to this thing, and let’s say that France was the other great cultural empire to begin with. My mom, my mother-in-law, if they sinned about these things it was towards French, not towards English ... “oh, what a *fanné* dress,” “oh, how *délabré* it is,” “oh, how *à la page* you are” ... I seem to hear my mom and my mother-in-law: they spoke like this. It was a bourgeois Italy that toyed with French a bit, more or less for the same reasons.”

It is interesting to notice that Severgnini’s word choice in the latter segment also implies two different language ideologies as well: the “prey” that a language is, i.e., it is endangered; and the language “sin” people commit, arguably, against linguistic purity.

Obfuscation Ideology.

As previously pointed out, when asked what English expressions Severgnini is most irritated by, he implied obfuscation ideology: “English expressions that tend to hide something irritate me. And politics, for example, has used many of them. Politics is a specialist in this.”

Later on, he made a similar remark: “In general, when politics uses English, it tends to be hiding

something.” He then reiterated the same point yet again: “Politics when it uses [English], it [does] above all as a smokescreen, for example.” So, in Severgnini’s opinion, it is not just the link between English use in Italian and obfuscation intentions that is rather clear: who engages in these practices often and why seems clear as well. When I asked about the (in)famous labor reform *Jobs Act*, in a statement where inferiority complex ideology overlaps (i.e., “it seemed to them to be cool”), he commented:

“It is a labor reform – call it Labor Reform then! *Jobs Act* – but it seemed to them to be cool [calling it that way], then they fought like crazy all the same. *Social Card* [is another example]. Now at least, even if it is [still] wrong, they have called it *Reddito di Cittadinanza*.”¹³⁷

He followed up on *Jobs Act* with *Social Card*, another false Anglicism, which seems to confirm that Severgnini may be particularly bothered by this loan category, like many others on all three digital platforms where irony towards the latter is frequent. That institutions utilize false loans to obfuscate the message, i.e., made-up English-looking phrases there was no need of, would make the practice even more bothersome.

Interestingly, when discussing the *Accademia della Crusca* stance on the issue, which “has become quite elastic on the matter,” he briefly mentioned how the situation is exactly antithetical in France, when institutions promoted a rather drastic attempt to translate all English loans “right away.” This is a point that quite closely resembles one made by Solinas, though she went as far as calling the *Accademia* “xenophilic” while comparing it to its French and Spanish counterparts, while Severgnini’s word choice, “elastic,” is hedged, and more neutral:

¹³⁷ I.e., literally, *Citizenship-based Income*.

“[In Italy] there wasn’t the reaction that there was in France right away, including government and politics, against the invasion of English, [their] obsession with translating everything – they try to translate everything.”

Lastly, on the one hand, he used a very interesting example of an unnecessary direct loan whose use is widespread to illustrate how not only institutions and politics use English to hide or sugarcoat, but regular people do so as well. He emphasized how this other power, or “weapon,” of English makes it more successful than Italian in certain contexts:

“That is, to say, “come on, please pay me *cash*,” instead of saying “pay me *in contanti*” ... you really are saying, “I’m a tax evader, pay me *cash* so I don’t pay [taxes] ... saying “pay me *cash*” is more vague and indefinite. Many English expressions are successful for this reason: because they allow you to be less specific.”

On the other hand, he also implied obfuscation can also be used for a different, arguably better reason than to hide something unpleasant. In a statement in which inferiority complex and the “coolness” point were reiterated too, he discussed obfuscation that happens specifically to sugarcoat something, more than to hide it – the reference to Mary Poppins is not a coincidence. This time, the “coating” happens with only good, or at least better, intentions:

“Well, we have *lavoro a distanza*¹³⁸ ... and then *smart working* was really invented. Because it’s cool! Because saying “working from home” would make one depressed, especially at that time, during the [lockdown due to the] pandemic. *Smart working* seemed to color – like Mary Poppins who said, “just a little sugar, and the pill goes down.” Here, the sugar is English, in these cases.”

¹³⁸ I.e., *working remotely*.

This simile between English and sugar echoes a very similar metaphor used by Testa too, yet again within an obfuscation-related point she was making, where English was not “sugar” but had nonetheless the power to make things, if not “[colorful],” at least “shiny”:

“How many [legislative] operations, how many taxes, how much weird stuff we’ve made shiny – making it shiny through English terminology?”

Beautiful Language Ideology.

This is the ideology Severgnini touched upon less frequently, but emphasizing that too much English in Italian is a matter of aesthetics, i.e., too many “useless” English words turn a beautiful language into an ugly one, and one that is “ridiculous” because it becomes a hybrid:

“The point I am making, let’s say, is even an aesthetic matter. That is, Italian full of useless English terms is really bad. It’s ugly. It’s bad to listen to, and it’s bad to read. Here’s my real big objection. It’s ugly and sometimes it’s ridiculous. Why do I have to use an ugly and ridiculous language?”

In a longer segment at the end of the interview, he further expanded upon why mixing codes arbitrarily, without rhyme nor reason, equals linguistic sloppiness, which has “no reason” and is therefore “[irritating]”:

“It is precisely because a language changes [that] people talk and mix, but don’t be sloppy either: awareness of the language you hear and the language you use is very important. Because language is a fundamental part of our life ... I am very aware of this, and therefore a little attention – I used the word “aesthetics” earlier: it is very important. It is exactly like this: respect for the language also means not being sloppy. One goes around and there are occasions when one dresses a little better. The same with language: linguistic sloppiness is as bad as gastronomic sloppiness – people who eat fries and

hamburgers all day. Or people who dress – being able to [dress differently], not a poor fellow who doesn't have [the means] – but if he can, and he dresses in torn clothes, with holes, and that smell – there you go. I see people who talk the way these people dress: they have no reason, and it irritates me, because I have a sensitivity on the subject, and therefore it annoys me. Maybe someone else wouldn't notice, and I pretend not to, but it bothers me.”

Linguistic Purity Ideology.

Severgnini only briefly touched upon linguistic purity explicitly, but it is important to highlight it because the linguistic awareness that ties into linguistic purity is one of the reasons he gave as to why his readers comment on the issue so relatively often, a multilingual readership he characterizes as educated:

“Those who frequent *Italians* usually have an international mentality, and therefore these themes, the relationship between languages, (linguistic) impositions, linguistic imperialism, linguistic submissiveness, contamination, [are] [themes] that interest them because the average *Italian* knows two or multiple languages ... It is a place where these let's say cross-cultural elements, therefore also linguistic ones, are of great interest ... in short, we talk about it quite often.”

Counter Discourses.

Language change is undoubtedly the most frequent sociolinguistic fact Severgnini either openly mentioned or implied. When asked to comment about language change, he pointed out that he finds “it first of all inevitable, and then even beautiful, natural, healthy. That is, no one molests dead languages. Living languages change.” In a previously discussed segment, he reiterated that “it is precisely because languages change [that] people talk and mix [languages].”

In a segment where he implicitly also rebutted endangerment ideology, interestingly one of the most frequent among lay people who are quite vocal about it across all platforms, he discussed natural change that nevertheless will never threaten the survival of Italian. He argued against endangerment using a “vitality” counter argument:

“[If one] says that the problem does not exist, then, [one means] it does not exist in the sense that languages do what they want, [and] Italian has great strength and certainly [will] not disappear because of this.”

As far as language globalization, as already discussed under RQ2, Severgnini indirectly referred to it when he explained contemporary widespread English use in the world: areas like technology, finance, showbusiness, etc. are led by America, which of course speaks its own language, and which necessarily means utilizing English when one deals with technology or show business outside American borders. However, he pointed out that in the case of technology, “not translating [words] is sometimes a form of laziness.”

In conclusion, the language ideologies Severgnini touched upon more often are inferiority complex, obfuscation, and beautiful language, with some implied references to moderate monolingualism ideology when discussing different loans from English, and one brief rebuttal of endangerment. The latter incidentally confirms that when he talked about the “dominion of English” and language colonization, in *Italians*, he meant to give an objective, historical and sociolinguistic reading of reality. He was not implying an actual threat to language survival, like many lay people across platforms instead did, quite explicitly and quite emphatically.

Likewise, Testa seemed to imply that endangerment of Italian is not a realistic threat, she insisted of meaning obfuscation by institutions as a real danger to democracy, and she implied a more lenient position towards monolingualism needs. Unlike Severgnini, she made a few points

that tied into national language ideology and emphasized her complaints about the unintelligibility of some imprecise English uses. Lastly, Solinas made her stance about monolingualism stand out as well, though oscillating between the more and less prescriptive ends of it. She referred to national language ideology too, while also touching upon the issue of meaning obfuscation, and complained about creative uses of English as well. The only ideology she seemed to at least partially espouse that the other two experts did not is endangerment, thus aligning more with lay people than with the two language professionals.

As far as counter discourses, language change and globalization references are to be found throughout Severgnini's interview, the former apparently more explicit than the latter. Solinas discussed language change explicitly as well, though once again showing an ambivalent stance towards what was at times described positively and at times more negatively. Testa also implicitly referred to language change, and more than once. That all three experts discussed language change confirms what seen across platforms and among lay people. In fact, language change is the only sociolinguistic fact lay people always (at least) touched upon: on YouTube, on Facebook, and in *Italians* as well.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings

Research Question 1

What instances of English language use are Italian internet users complaining about (e.g., false loans versus direct ones)? In which social contexts do they occur, and what categories of people are using language that way?

1a: Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

As far as uses of English Italian internet users complain about, and what social actors are deemed accountable, results are quite uniform and consistent across all platforms. Testa's TED Talk, YouTube users, Facebook group members, and *Italians* seem to group direct loans, false, and hybrid loans together rather indiscriminately, but false and hybrid loans get more focus. On the one hand, digital platforms users seem to rely mainly on direct loan examples to discuss their resistance to what they perceive as English overuse (which is natural since direct loans are much more numerous than false and hybrid ones), in the vast majority of cases supporting their argument by pointing out that these loanwords have not filled a semantic gap. In other words, most direct loans are unnecessarily used since a perfectly suitable, as concise Italian counterpart exists. On the other hand, YouTubers, Facebook users, and *Italians* seem are all more ironic and indignant when commenting on false and hybrid loans, which, to them, index scarce knowledge of the language. Even experts express linguistic insecurity about this "bad English," i.e., more

creative uses of English (e.g., *smart working*, *Jobs Act*, *footing*, the *Voluntary*, etc.) elicit stronger disapproval.

The first¹³⁹ expert, Testa, confirmed she is bothered by all unnecessary English uses. In her interview, she emphasized how hybrid phrases that hinder intelligibility irritate her, i.e., what she perceives as “bad English” with an ambiguous meaning “drives [her] crazy.” In both her interview and in her TED Talk, she remarked how the usage of direct loans that have an identically succinct counterpart also annoys her. The second expert, Solinas, indicated that she is equally bothered by “all English phrases that have no reason to exist because the term already exists in Italian,” i.e., direct loans, and by “English expression[s] used and given a meaning valid only in Italy,” i.e., false loans. The third expert, Severgnini, did not point the finger at specific kinds of loans explicitly. He simply argued that direct loans are used because no counterpart is available, or alternatively because of their economy of form, or because “it is cool.” He also added that both direct loans and some false loans become as unavoidable because of widespread everyday use, or alternatively they are used because of the superior power English has to “hide” or “color” something. He made it more of an all-encompassing ideological point from the start: “I am quite resistant to English as a fashion, English as vanity, as exhibitionism, and English as a sign of inferiority complex ... If I use English, it is because there is no alternative.”

As far as social actors deemed accountable for apparent English overuse, and the contexts where this happens, once again results prove quite consistent. Users on TED Talk, YouTube, Facebook, and *Italians* suggest that the media, advertisers, the government, and the general public are roughly equally considered the most accountable for English overuse. The media especially contribute to the spreading of loans. Experts Testa, Solinas, and Severgnini confirm

¹³⁹ “First, second, and third” strictly and only refer to the chronological order in which the corresponding digital platform datasets were coded: TED Talk and YouTube data first; Facebook data afterwards; and *Italians* data last.

these trends, only at times placing more emphasis on business/finance professionals, on technological innovations, and on the youth specifically.

Research Question 2

Who is doing the complaining about uncalled-for uses of English? Are they experts or lay people?

2a. How do both experts and lay people establish their language authority when discussing these matters? What kind of language do they use when trying to demonstrate/perform their expertise?

2b. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

The most recurring strategies lay people in general utilize to try to establish their authority in language matters are once again quite homogenous. It must be reiterated that all YouTube users, and almost all Facebook group members and all *Italians* in the datasets are assumed to be lay people: i.e., they do not mention a profession that revolves entirely around language, e.g., a journalist, an advertiser, a translator etc.. Across all platforms, they mostly demonstrate their expertise by resorting first of all to common sense, and then to linguistic expertise. That is, relying on common sense means that they present information as if it were just obvious facts that do not need to be explained. Relying on one's linguistic expertise means that their authority in language matters is showcased by their use of technical jargon and/or marked language choices, or by their ability to discuss faulty/inaccurate translations, word usages, and grammar in general. That common sense proves the strategy lay people regularly utilize the most only proves how widespread the tendency to naturalize language ideologies is. For example, claims supporting the need, and the supposed ease, to keep codes separate at all time, or presenting Italian as the only language that is so dominated by colonizing English, or reiterating

that foreignisms blatantly spoil the unquestionable, unique beauty of one specific language, are all presented as objective, obvious facts that do not need any evidence nor proof. One's additional experience with language (e.g., living abroad, having a language degree, utilizing English for work, etc.) is another common strategy for claiming authority or language-related expertise.

Linguistic expertise as an authority claim is more frequent than common sense among Facebook group members only, which can be yet again explained by the very nature of the Facebook group, i.e., people must show they have the linguistic knowledge, and therefore the right to speak up, when they question each single overuse or misuse of English, in a group that was specifically created to try to expunge English from Italian. This is further confirmed by the rather formal register Facebook group members often use, which is not typical of social media more generally. The other exception is how relatively often YouTube users rely on additional language experience as well, unlike users of other platforms. This may arguably be explained by the fact that YouTubers comment on a specific TED Talk whose claims they may not align with. Therefore, they try to undermine Testa's authority and rebut her arguments by backing up their claims with their own diverse life experiences.

As far as the three experts associated with the three platforms, Testa most heavily relied on common sense both in her TED Talk and in her interview. In addition, in both, she claimed professional linguistic expertise by describing her jobs in communication and advertising, her collaboration with the *Accademia della Crusca* etc.. Solinas relied on the same two strategies the most in her interview, i.e., common sense and linguistic expertise, perhaps overdoing the latter and bordering hypercorrection with translations into Italian that arguably appeared as "forced" (e.g., *social media*, i.e., *media sociali* in the Treccani dictionary, was translated into *canali*

sociali). Severgnini's interview relied often on professional linguistic expertise, his extensive experience with English, as well as sociolinguistic knowledge to support his authority. Only rarely did he resort to common sense in the sense of supposedly obvious facts that naturalize ideologies, trying instead to offer historical and contemporary facts as much as possible.

Research Question 3

What language ideologies are revealed by the online discourse about uses of English in predominantly Italian contexts? What, if any, counter discourses (i.e., sociolinguistic facts/arguments) are raised by users about these same issues?

3a. Are there any differences in this regard across different online platforms?

3b. Are there any differences in this regard between experts and laypeople?

Language Ideologies.

The underlying language ideology that proves vastly widespread on all platforms is monolingualism ideology: i.e., on the one hand, the more extreme prescriptive belief we need to use one language at the time, and that all foreignisms should be translated; and on the other, the more lenient belief that foreignisms should be used only when strictly necessary and inevitable. The second most frequent among lay people is the endangerment ideology,¹⁴⁰ the belief that foreign loans threaten the survival of the mother language. This shows that people in general want to resist the unnecessary use of English, albeit to different degrees, because they believe it poses a realistic threat to their language well-being.

In Testa's TED Talk and on YouTube, national language ideology is quite frequent: the belief in the equation between one national identity and the use of one national language; the appeal to one people's cultural roots; and the belief that using a foreign code implies a lack of

¹⁴⁰ The second most frequent on all platforms, but not in Testa's TED Talk itself only.

love for one's country. What distinguishes this from monolingualism are the more complex, culturally-dependent reasons why we need to use Italian only, while monolingualism is more of a prescriptive dogma.

Among Facebook group members and among *Italians*, instead, complaint ideology is more frequent than national language, i.e., the belief that a language has its own fixed structure rules, lexicon, and pronunciation that cannot be altered or adapted when adopted by speakers of another language. That complaint ideology is so widespread among Facebook group members and *Italians* alike goes hand in hand with RQ2 results, i.e., with frequently grounding one's authority in linguistic expertise. In fact, Facebook users' apparent knowledge of "correct" English as well as of markedly erudite Italian authorizes them to denounce English misuses. As often, *Italians* take the time to craft more formal, polished emails and ask about (mis)usage-specific questions to their expert of reference, Severgnini, who has had a thirty-year-long bilingual career as a journalist.

As far as experts, the most frequent ideologies underlying Testa's interview statements were national language and (lenient) monolingualism, which perfectly aligns with ideology-related results of her TED Talk analysis. In neither her Talk nor her interview did she share lay people's stance on Italian language endangerment: she only briefly alluded to it on stage, and she implied Italian is not realistically threatened by English in her interview. In her interview, however, she also very much insisted on the necessity of communication clarity as a matter of democracy, often denouncing those accountable for lack of transparency, which ties into obfuscation and complaint ideologies as well. Slightly less frequent in her interview are instances of beautiful language and inferiority complex ideology references too. The latter two, together with obfuscation ideology yet again, prove the most recurrent underlying ones in Severgnini's

interview as well, who also interestingly rebutted lay people's worry about Italian language survival by saying that "Italian has great strength and certainly [will] not disappear because of [English frequent use]." It also must be pointed out that Severgnini constantly referred to monolingualism ideology as well, "[lining] up in the middle category" between prescriptive monolingualism and unbridled loan uses. Just like Testa indicated, he placed himself among those who use English when it is, or has become, unavoidable. Solinas also referred to monolingualism ideology, aligning with her Facebook group members. However, she seemed to oscillate between leniency in words on the one hand, when she said it would be "healthy" for a language to adopt loanwords, and prescriptivism in deeds on the other, when she translated all Anglicisms in her written answers. That another ideology frequently underlying her claims was complaint ideology also aligned with Facebook group results. Solinas also hinted at endangerment, albeit only indirectly and briefly, aligning with most lay people but distancing herself from the two language professionals, Testa and Severgnini.

In sum, monolingualism ideology proves transversally widespread among lay people and experts, and on all platforms, and so does complaining about incorrect, creative, or hybridized uses of English. However, on the one hand, lay people seem also quite worried about the danger posed by English to the very survival of Italian, which they perceive as realistic, while experts tend to dismiss it as an implausible threat. On the other, experts insist more on the issue of obfuscation instead, the more or less deliberate lack of clarity that unnecessary English use often carries with it. Likewise, they also point out the inferiority complex to English that Italians – but not only they – are apparently victims of, which explains English overuse as often. Meaning obfuscation and inferiority issues are mentioned by lay people as well, but, in general, in much

fewer cases than by experts. For most lay people, the issue at hand is neither one of democracy nor one of aesthetics, but apparently one of mere survival.

Counter Discourses.

Language change was the sociolinguistic fact most often referenced on all platforms,¹⁴¹ and among lay people and experts alike. That language change is not only inevitable but also necessary, if not “healthy,” is often implied or, at times, explicitly argued. Only among YouTube users is language globalization referenced, and it is used to challenge Testa’s argument. Among experts, language globalization is relatively often implied by Severgnini in his accurate reading of the history of language globalization, seldom by Testa alongside her lenient monolingualism stance, but never by Solinas. Clearly, the objectivity and inevitability of language change that happens through loanword borrowing is a reality in front of everybody’s eyes, and in their everyday life, and therefore a fact that both lay people and experts alike refer to when trying to explain the controversial, heatedly debated issue of *Italenglish*.

Research Implications, Contributions, and Limitations

Framing language ideology in the sociolinguistic sense, i.e., as the mediating link between social structure and linguistic form (Woolard, 2008), this study contributes to research on language ideologies in digital spaces, which are “sites where the social meaning of language varieties and variation is negotiated” (Cutler, 2019, p. 5). In spite of this, i.e., that language ideologies are widely debated online, research on language ideologies in digital spaces remains relatively unexplored. Few researchers have contributed to this conversation, whether they call it research on language ideologies (Cutler, 2019; Vessey, 2021) or whether they research people’s online discourses utilizing a different frame, i.e., citizen sociolinguistics (Rymes, 2018). Through

¹⁴¹ Except for Testa’s TED Talk.

a critical discourse analysis of online comments on the use of English by Italians, where authority claims are crucial, this study joins the conversation on the effect of language uses on social judgement (Giles & Billings, 2004) in digital spaces, contributing to the field in different ways.

This analysis of online comments on English use by Italians confirms that it is not possible to investigate beliefs about language uses without tying those beliefs to forms in use, i.e., to specific linguistic practices (Woolard, 2008). It is necessary to keep a three-dimensional focus on linguistic form, social use, and reflections on forms in use (Woolard, 2008) to understand people's discourses about language in digital spaces, which reproduce what is already pervasively "out there." The tridimensional approach of this study revealed that the widespread use of some loans like false and hybrid ones provokes more outrage than others like direct loans, i.e., there are different degrees of sensitivity to specific forms in use. Based on these data, such outrage betrays widespread linguistic insecurity as far as Italians' ability to speak proper, correct English, ability that is often perceived as inferior to people of (all) other nationalities. Furthermore, people's indignation further increases when this "bad English" is endorsed by people in power like institutions, politicians, and the media, which betrays a collective inferiority complex towards what is perceived as economic dominance of the Anglophone world, rather often American dominance in particular.

Additionally, confirming the multiplicity of language ideologies (Kroskrity, 2010), the hybrid *Italenglish* resulting from widespread use of unnecessary Anglicisms in general causes different kinds of people to take different ideological stances about it, which revealed further contributions to our knowledge of language ideologies. In fact, linguistic anthropology literature has discussed several language ideologies so far, i.e., monolingualism ideology and national

language ideology (Fishman, 1972; Woolard, 1992; Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998; Blommaert, 2011; Vessey, 2016); endangerment ideology (Sallabank, 2013; Vessey, 2021); linguistic purity ideology (Hill & Hill, 1980; Hill, 1985; Hill & Hill 1986); and intrinsic/instrumental language ideology (Robichaud & De Schutter, 2012; Vessey, 2021). This study identifies three heretofore undetected ones, i.e., language ideologies that are, to the best of my knowledge, unique, or, alternatively, they have not been written about extensively, so that we do not see them repeatedly in the literature. These ideologies are: inferiority complex ideology; complaint ideology; and obfuscation ideology. As mentioned throughout the dissertation, when these appear, they co-occur with statements that potentially reveal linguistic insecurity¹⁴² that, based on the data, seems characteristic of the digital platform users in this study.

A further contribution is that there are substantial language ideological differences between lay people and experts. Ideologies circulated among experts are more moderate, or measured, as opposed to those common among lay people, and experts show a more nuanced understanding of who is using English, when, and why. For example, experts insist on the insidious risk of message obfuscation by institutions (i.e., obfuscation ideology), while denying that English poses a real threat to the survival of Italian (i.e., endangerment ideology), a danger lay people insist on quite emphatically. Experts' comments reveal their sociolinguistic awareness of the historical reasons for the prevalence of English loans. This accounts for why they do not share lay people's concerns with language endangerment. This also highlights the difference between experts and lay people: lay people predictably have a less nuanced understanding of language matters.

¹⁴² E.g., "They haven't yet understood that English puts the flipping adjectival before [a noun]! ... And this testifies to the fact that whoever uses these English [phrases] does not know English well" (Testa's interview).

It was possible to delve into experts' sociolinguistic awareness and different ideological stances through my interviews, rather than through their public pronouncements, which brings me to the important methodological contribution of this study to the field: its ethnographic component, and the additional perspectives it offered. Experts' online content (e.g., Testa's TED Talk and Severgnini's replies to emails) offers perspectives that are arguably oversimplified for a general audience. When experts communicate with the public via media channels, they do not always get into specifics they actually know. In other words, online content offers *one* message. Through interviews, however, I became aware of how quite sociolinguistically sophisticated these non-linguist experts are. Unlike what may transpire in online content, experts know that English use in Italian – as in other languages – is unavoidable, while they take issue with the abundance of it in situations where it is not necessary. Nevertheless, they are also quite aware of the historical and sociolinguistic reasons behind the phenomenon, which is global, unstoppable, and irreversible, three qualities that lay people tend to be unaware of. In other words, experts' messages are quite multifaceted. Their balanced stance, one that is “in the middle” in Severgnini's words, was provided by the ethnographic component of this study, which revealed more complex perspectives that their public pronouncements either did not afford (i.e., Testa's TED Talk) or offered more implicitly and/or succinctly (Severgnini's replies to emails).

In sum, this study adds to the relatively limited literature on language ideologies in digital spaces. It contributes to research in the field by showing that some linguistic practices are condemned more than others. In particular, false and hybrid loans tend to receive more negative evaluation, i.e., they tend to be stigmatized more because they seem to index lack of knowledge of the English language, so those forms are identified to be linked to ideologies related to linguistic insecurity. The study also reveals that there are more similarities than differences

between experts and lay people in the online discourse. However, the ethnographic dimension of this study allows for a more enriched understanding of what experts actually know, because their media messages tend to be oversimplified. Speaking with them revealed their sociolinguistic sophistication, thus drawing attention to the benefit of an ethnographic dimension of language ideological research. Therefore, future language ideological research in digital spaces might consider different ways of triangulating instances of language use, metapragmatic comments on that use, plus more in-depth conversation with the people producing those comments. In the case of interviews, it is recommended that they take place only after online data are analyzed, mirroring the chronological progression of data analyses of this study, to prevent interview results from influencing the analyses of online discourse, i.e., rendering those less objective, which would arguably have been the case otherwise. It is also recommended that interviews avoid the written medium whenever possible, since the data yielded in that case are limited and possibly negatively influenced by the medium itself. In fact, interviewees answering in writing simply move on to the next question on the list, unlike in-person interviewees whose answers generate additional questions, additional thoughts, and more in-depth considerations, which, as crucially, are also more spontaneous.

As far as limitations of the study, one is that interviews were only conducted with the experts, who are public figures, partially due to ethical reasons. Future language ideological research in digital spaces might consider interviews with a broader range of participants. Furthermore, future research might compare English encroachment in other languages and cultures, utilizing more than three digital platforms, and for a longer longitudinal study, to ascertain if the findings of this study are indeed peculiar to Italian/s.

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**APPENDIX A: ROULSTON'S MODIFIED GUIDELINES FOR
DESIGNING/ASSESSING INTERVIEWS**

I. Phases for interview research design in a sociolinguistic perspective (modified from Roulston, 2010a):

- 1) Learn how to ask questions in ways that may be understood by participants based on preliminary fieldwork.
 - a) Investigate the cultural and linguistic norms used in the community.
- 2) Design questions going from generic to specific (see Appendix B).
- 3) Reflexivity in the research process: analysis of interviewing procedures.
- 4) Conceptualize interviews as metacommunicative events (Briggs, 1986).

II. Criteria for judging the quality of an interview (Klave, 1996, in Roulston, 2010a, modified):

- 1) The extent of spontaneous, relevant, specific, rich answers from the interviewee.
 - a) Interviewers ask questions in effective ways to elicit the data required to answer the research questions.
 - b) The shorter the questions, the longer the answers, the better.
- 2) The degree with which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meanings of the relevant aspects of answers.
 - a) The interviewer attempts to verify her interpretations of the subjects' answers in the course of the interview.
- 3) The interview is a story in itself that requires limited extra explanations.

III. Summarized interrelated facets of research to determine quality in relation to qualitative interviewing (Roulston, 2010a, modified):

1. The use of interview data is an appropriate means to inform the research questions posed.
2. Quality has been addressed in research design, conduct, data analysis, and interpretation and representation of research findings.
3. The methods to demonstrate the quality of interpretation and representation of research findings are consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Italian

1. Testa: Come è nata l'idea di questa TED Talk?

Solinas: Cosa ne pensa del fatto che le lingue cambiano?

Severgnini: Su *Italians*, pubblica relativamente spesso email che discutono della commistione tra italiano e inglese. Significa che è una discussione sentita? In altre parole, si tratta di un campione rappresentativo della popolazione, cioè ne arrivano davvero tante, oppure sei tu che sei particolarmente interessato all'argomento e ne pubblichi tutti, o molti?

2. Nel suo (nella sua TED Talk, nel suo gruppo Facebook, su *Italians*) parla molto della mescolanza di italiano e inglese. Quanto pensa che sia diffusa?

3. Perché pensa che sia così diffusa?

4. Chi è più probabile che usi Italenglish/mescoli le due lingue?

5. Crede che gli italiani si dedichino a questo tipo di pratiche più degli spagnoli, dei francesi, ecc.? Perché o perché no?

6. Ha scoperto che ci sono casi in cui è inevitabile mescolare le due lingue?

7. Ci sono espressioni inglesi che davvero la irritano più di altre? Quali e perché?

8. Si è mai accorta/sorpresa a mescolare accidentalmente le due lingue?

9. Crede che potrebbe mai averlo fatto accidentalmente in passato senza nemmeno accorgersene?

10. Qualcos'altro che vorrebbe aggiungere sull'italiano o sull'inglese o sulla mescolanza di italiano e inglese nella stessa conversazione?

English Translation

1. Testa: Where did the idea of this TED Talk about *Italenglish* come from?

Solinas: What do you think about the fact that languages change?

Severgnini: On *Italians*, you publish relatively often emails that discuss the mixing of Italian and English. Does that mean it's a heartfelt argument? In other words, is it a representative sample of the population, i.e. a lot of them about the topic come, or is it you who are particularly interested in the topic and publish all, or many, of them?

2. You talk a lot about the mixing of Italian and English (in your TED Talk, on Facebook, on *Italians*). How widespread do you think it is?
3. Why do you think code-mixing is this widespread?
4. What types of people are most likely to engage in these practices of *Italenglish*?
5. Do you think Italians indulge in these kind of practices more than the Spanish, the French, etc.? Why or why not?
6. Have you found that there are instances in which it's unavoidable to mix the two languages?
7. Are there English expressions that really "get under your skin" more than others? Which ones and why?
8. Have you ever noticed or caught yourself accidentally mixing the two languages?
9. Do you believe that you may ever done accidentally in the past and not even realized it?
10. Anything else you might want to share about Italian or English, or combining Italian and English in the same conversation?