

# Dialetti in diaspora: preservation and loss in Italian New York

Luigi Andriani, Utrecht University

Ross Perlin, Endangered Language Alliance and Columbia University

Daniel Kaufman, Queens College and Endangered Language Alliance

## 1.0 Introduction

For over a century, the New York metropolitan area has constituted one of the largest (if not the largest of all) “Italian-speaking” cities outside of Italy. Over four million immigrants arrived in the United States from Italy between 1880 and 1924, principally via the port of New York – and despite the significant number of *ritornati*<sup>1</sup>, “returnee” immigrants who went back to Italy after several years stay in “L’America”, the new Italian-American community formed in those years in the crucible of the city would come to constitute the largest foreign-born population in the United States for much of the 20th century.

But in what sense has New York been an “Italian-speaking” city? The majority of Italian immigrants who have arrived in New York, especially in that first major wave, were not able to speak, read, or write (standard) Italian. Most, though by no means all, came from the south, where only a fraction of the Italian population, especially during the relevant periods, had any command of the national language.<sup>2</sup> Instead, almost all were speakers of Italo-Romance varieties identified primarily by hometown or local area, popularly known (in Italian) as *dialetti* (lit. dialects). In practice, dialect speakers found various ways to communicate, whether by learning each other’s varieties, using Neapolitan (for historical reasons the high-status language among Southern Italians), or employing a broader southern Italian koine (of which little has been reported) and more recently “a dialectal lingua franca” (Haller 1981) close to Italian.

In this chapter, we argue that the notion of what it means to speak “Italian” has continued to be remarkably elastic in the Italo-Romance microcosm of New York, encompassing a wide array of Italo-Romance languages and intermediate varieties besides the national standard. Drawing on interviews conducted by the Endangered Language Alliance (Kaufman & Perlin 2018) which form part of the project *Microcontact: Language variation and change from the*

---

<sup>1</sup> A figure of 49% is reported for the years 1905-1920 (Gabaccia 2000, 72).

<sup>2</sup> Estimates range from 2.5% (De Mauro 1963: 43) to 10% (Castellani 1982) being Italian speakers in this period, out of a national population of 25 million.

*Italian heritage perspective*,<sup>3</sup> the first half of our contribution (sections 2 and 3) is a brief sociolinguistic profile of Italian New York. We emphasize the linguistic diversity of the Italian diaspora and probe the dynamics faced by smaller speech communities other than the better-known Sicilian and Neapolitan ones.

The second half is a detailed overview of an Italo-Romance variety (from Casamassima near Bari in Puglia) that has been particularly well preserved within a single New York-area family – the first time, to our knowledge, that such a diaspora “bubble” has been described in detail. While it would be going too far to characterize Italian New York as a whole, or even any Italian neighborhood or speech community within it, as a “relic area”, we find that some diaspora speakers continue to speak highly conservative varieties largely abandoned in the homeland. We take a microvariationist approach (cf. Poletto 2012) in which we explore here different aspects of dialect conservatism and innovation across generations, and individuals within the same extended family – with links in the New York area and back in Casamassima.

## 2.0 From Village Chains to National Claims

Despite the overwhelming presence of southern Italians, almost all of Italy's substantial linguistic diversity has at one time or another been represented in the New York City (NYC) area.<sup>4</sup> In the earliest period, “translocal” communities from particular villages, often kinship-based, formed on particular streets. Gabaccia (1984: 60-61) describes Little Italy's Elizabeth Street as “socially fragmented by village chains”. Analyzing distinctive patron saint names in census listings – in other cases, parish records have been used for a similar analysis – she finds significant chains on that single street, all Sicilian, both from more urban Palermo as well as from Marineo (Palermo), Sciacca (Agrigento), Santa Margherita di Belice (Agrigento), and other towns.

To varying extents, this microcosmic pattern of fragmented village chains was reproduced throughout Little Italy and the next generation of neighborhoods, with an important role also played by *padroni* (employment agents) in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and perhaps most significantly Manhattan's East Harlem. By 1920, as many as 25 districts across the city's five

---

<sup>3</sup> See <https://microcontact.sites.uu.nl/project/>

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed (but not comprehensive) list of 27 named varieties from the Italian peninsula spoken in the New York area with community descriptions— from Marchigiano in New Haven, Connecticut to Lucano in Trenton, New Jersey—see the newly released Languages of New York City map (<https://languagemap.nyc>).

boroughs had estimated Italian concentrations of between 2,000 to 100,000 individuals (Wallace 2017). Soon serving this universe was “a galaxy of voluntary organizations” — by one count 110 in 1935 in East Harlem alone, primarily mutual benefit societies (*società*) for individuals from particular regions (Meyer 1989: 114-115).

Less is known about the trajectory of the smaller northern Italian communities, though Ligurians from Chiavari south of Genoa are known to have been numerous among the earlier arrivals in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Binder and Reimers 1996: 136). As early as the 1880s, many northerners were moving out of Little Italy towards Greenwich Village. Southerners followed them there within just a few years. At least one South Village entertainment spot, Ferrando’s Hall, apparently held performances in both northern and southern dialects, as well as advertising in English – but we have no record of the linguistic dynamics between the various communities (Brown 2007: 11). Likewise, on what came to be known (pejoratively) as the “Lung Block” on the Lower East Side, migrant communities from Piacenza in Emilia-Romagna and from other areas in Tuscany and the north lived alongside a diverse mix of southerners, with the local church named St. Joseph’s to be acceptable to all communities (Stefano Morello, p.c.). There and in other cases, many of the *prominenti*, white-collar professionals and community figures with ties to American society, were northerners.

To appreciate the extreme linguistic diversity that must have characterized early 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian New York, it is important to trace lesser-known groups, still extant and organized today after more than a century. Relatively far from the southern Italian communities there was a “Little Friuli” formed on Manhattan’s East Side from around 23rd Street to 37th Street, between 1st and 3rd Avenues, with a clubhouse on 34th Street, in a building which is today an Estonian cultural center.<sup>5</sup> Other groups of “Tyrolese” and “Austrian Italians” settled by the Hudson River, apparently to be close to the piers, where there were also reportedly communities of Neapolitans, Genoese, Turinese, and Milanese (Frasca 2014: 21).

An example of a tight-knit group *within* the “Austrian Italians” were the Nonesi who came to New York from Val di Non, a valley north of Trento in the Dolomite mountains in the far north of Italy, in the early 20th century.<sup>6</sup> Nonesi men found an occupational niche in construction after a few who had broken into the industry brought fellow Nonesi along. As

---

<sup>5</sup> The official website of the Fameè Furlane club, now over 90 years old, is <http://fameefurlane-ny.com>.

<sup>6</sup> Other Nonesi communities in the US formed in places like Hazelton, Pennsylvania and Roxbury, Wyoming, completely breaking the familiar Italian-American mold of settling in cities and suburbs of the Eastern seaboard.

described by one community member, Giovanna Flaim, many Nonesi families moved from the Hudson River pier area to form communities of perhaps a few dozen families each in South Brooklyn, Williamsburg/Greenpoint, and later southwestern Queens. Though these were all “Italian” areas, Flaim describes tension and separation: “We never had much to do with the Italians, because the Italians and the Nones people, the Tyroleans, didn’t see eye to eye. The World War was still going on, they were still holding a grudge. In those days [the Nonesi] thought of themselves as Austrians, not Italians.”

How did all of these village chains, southern as well as northern, ultimately become linked by Italian and Italian-American identities? Italians were not the only immigrant group to undergo a distinctly nation-state-oriented “awakening” in New York. An “Italian” identity began to take hold especially after the First World War and during the Mussolini era in Italy (1920s-30s). *Prominenti* played a leading role. In both form and content, the press likewise contributed to an “ideological shift among immigrants from a more provincial worldview as Neapolitans, Calabrians, and Sicilians to a collective identity as Italians” (Vellon 2014: 22-24). Italian-language radio became a significant factor starting in the 1920s.

Both the New York City public school system and the city’s extensive network of Catholic schools began teaching Italian, at least as a foreign language subject, with a pioneering bilingual, bicultural educational program developed by Leonard Covello (*né* Leonardo Coviello) starting in 1915. Between 1932 and 1936, the number of students enrolled in Italian programs in New York increased by 145%, with the peak recorded in 1938, when 16,000 students were enrolled across the whole metropolitan area (Carnevale 2003: 25-26). Many Italians and Italian-Americans during this period saw Mussolini as a charismatic figure building a “better reputation” for Italians (abroad) that could replace the painfully familiar peasant stereotypes. On the other hand, there were also anti-fascist organizations, such as the Mazzini Society, which also tried to promote Italian but break its connection with fascism. The collective impact of schools, churches, and media outlets in promoting Italianization cannot be underestimated.

### 3.0 ‘Real’ Italians?

With Italy and the United States opposed during the Second World War, anti-Italian sentiment rose, with consequences for the status of both written and taught Italian, as well as the spoken *dialetti*. Carnevale (2003: 14) writes that “the use of the Italian language was

incompatible with being or becoming a loyal American during the war years”, so much so that “Italian-American shops and clubs across the nation had signs placed in their windows declaring ‘No Italian Spoken for the Duration of the War’” (Carnevale 2003: 13).

Even while it was actively fighting the use of Italian, the US government instrumentalized it to infiltrate Italian(-American) volunteer soldiers overseas and strengthen contacts with anti-fascist leaders (Carnevale 2003: 16-17). Of course, fluency in (spoken) Italian was a fundamental criterion in the selection of these soldiers (who were not informed about the objectives of the mission, only that it was “hazardous”), and indeed knowledge of the language turned out to be crucial in their success overseas.

Between 1945 and 1973, half a million Italians immigrated to the US, a much smaller wave when compared to the one from 1880 to 1920, but an impactful one. Some came as refugees thanks to special legislation; others followed after 1965 with the reopening of American immigration policy; all have been described, problematically, as “real Italians” in comparison to previous immigrants poised between local identities and Americanization (Ruberto and Sciorra 2017). Many of the post-war arrivals brought with them a supra-regional Italian variety, while the relevant Italo-Romance heritage languages were only maintained vestigially with older relatives and neighbors. In general, there were few dialect monolinguals among them, with many having gone to school in Italian in Italy and had internalized to varying degrees the language ideologies promoted by the Italian state, often reinforced (if less forcefully) in diaspora. Nowhere was the impact of the post-war arrivals greater than in New York, where communities were re-shaped.

Locally, there was also constant mobility, thanks both to the displacing push of “urban renewal” projects and the pull of outer boroughs, suburbs, and other parts of the US. Important areas of settlement for second- and third-generation Italian-Americans, as well as the post-war migrants, were on the outskirts: Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and numerous suburbs. Even as older communities dissolved, some village chains and associated social organizations, particularly those receiving new infusions of immigrants, were able to transplant themselves, merge, or form in the new, more dispersed communities. Queens, for example, became a center for both the Nonesi and Friulian communities, in addition to multiple Sicilian and Campanian (Cilentano and Irpino) clusters as well as communities with Molisan, Abruzzese, Southern Lazio

(Ciociaro) and Istrioto/Istro-Venetan/Istro-Romanian origins (Perlin *et al.* 2020).<sup>7</sup> As late as the 1960s, some neighborhoods remained *dialetto*-dominant, as attested in poet Nino Provenzano's memories of Sicilian "Knickerbocker Avenue" in Brooklyn.<sup>8</sup> It was in this context that a new Sicilian poetry scene, led by Provenzano and others at Arba Sicula, took root in the city.

Today, fewer than 60,000 people report speaking "Italian" at home in New York City (approx. 8.2m. residents) according to 2010 US Census, representing the highest concentration in the US.<sup>9</sup> (In slightly older survey data, 225,000 speakers were found in the much larger NYC metro area (approx 20m.<sup>10</sup> and approximately 700,000 speakers nationally.) The number who speak the language outside the home, or have more limited or heritage knowledge of "Italian", is likely much higher.<sup>11</sup> For many, the dynamic today is at most a performative, arguably "postvernacular" one (cf. Shandler 2004), where both Italian and a given *dialetto* may persist mainly as echoes in certain registers and contexts (De Fina 2014). Italian is declining faster than any other major language, reflecting a demographic cliff in a rapidly ageing immigrant community. The relative trickle of Italians arriving since the 1970s has consisted mostly of white-collar professionals who are more likely to see themselves as temporary expatriates.

Working with 58 speakers from some 9 different Italian heritage language communities in the New York area, Andriani *et al.* (forthcoming) found near-universal language shift to English-only by the third generation, as well as "Italianization" of the Italo-Romance dialects spoken in New York. In general, those under 70 years old are much less proficient in the *dialetti*, due to far less exposure and use, and there is a tendency to blend with both the koine and English in terms of lexis, phonology, and syntax. Many of those growing up with immigrant parents in New York's post-war Italian neighborhoods were sequential bilinguals, first acquiring either the heritage language or the supra-regional variety, before moving rapidly to English at school and in the streets with peers (Andriani *et al.* to appear). Those relatively few under 40 who have maintained the *dialetti*, mainly from the South, have an "established confusion" about what they

---

<sup>7</sup> When Istria became part of Yugoslavia after the war, as many as 350,000 "Italians" left the region, with a large number settling in New York. Most of these Istrians were speakers of either Istrioto or Istro-Veneto (a Venetan variety) but had exposure to Italian under the Fascist regime (1922-1943).

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7LAE5CRYo>

<sup>9</sup> According to the most recent American Community Survey data (2014-2018).

<sup>10</sup> The 5-year 2009-2013 American Community Survey, with its detailed metro region data.

<sup>11</sup> In 1980, there were still as many as 300,000 Italian speakers in the city, as reported by the census; going back to 1930, when a large number would have spoken forms of Sicilian, Campanian etc. the number was over 450,000.

speak and self-report that they do not know “proper” Italian, but only “dialect”, when what they use is in fact an Italian-American “‘Standard’ Dialectal Italian” (Andriani *et al.* forthcoming).

In New York it was the simultaneous presence of Italian and the different local languages, and to a much lesser degree English, that led to the development of the “dialectal lingua franca” described in Haller (1987) and elsewhere. Besides the lingua franca, Haller proposes a multilingual continuum used by Italian New Yorkers including “Italianized dialect, pidginized American Italian, and archaic dialects” – all of which are “used, besides English, with various degrees of competence, according to generation, time of emigration, and education” (Haller 1987: 396).

To varying degrees among different groups, the *dialetti* live on within families and in tight-knit circles of people from the same town. Naomi Nagy’s research on the Faetar-speaking community in Canada found a surprisingly stable lexicon in the first two generations, despite contact with both Italian and English, but at the same time “no transmission of Faetar to the third generation”, at least in part because no third-generation Faetar community members seem to have two Faetar parents (Nagy 2011). Scattered descriptions have suggested that pockets of Italian New York may be relic areas; as Haller (1997) states, “[A] well known but little researched fact, that among older first generation immigrants one finds archaic elements in their dialect speech which by now have disappeared in Italy due to their contact with Italian, which is instead absent in the US linguistic enclaves.” Repetti (1996) reports a version of this trope from a conference of Italianists: “a young girl from Brooklyn speaks better Neapolitan than the people in Naples.” Some Italian New Yorkers report moments of mutual incomprehension when they visit their hometowns– being teased for speaking the way people did half a century ago. The following is an in-depth look at one such case.

#### 4.0 Case Study: A Casamassimese “Bubble”

In 2016, a member of the Cristantiello family in Jersey City, virtually a neighborhood of New York City, just across the Hudson River in New Jersey, contacted the Endangered Language Alliance to report that her family spoke a language “frozen in time” from Casamassima near Bari in Puglia. ELA researchers were invited to film a family conversation including parents Teresa and Vinnie, and Teresa’s brother Pinuccio, who all speak that conservative variety, and their two

American-born sons Carmine and Enzo (the former, who is older, speaks it well<sup>12</sup> while the latter, who is younger, shows some minor uncertainties), plus their visiting cousin Luca from Casamassima. Both parents and uncle moved to the US in their youth (~1960) and now live in the same house. The resulting 1.5-hour video, transcribed and analyzed with the family's help, constitutes the spontaneous-speech corpus on which the following sections are based. It offers interesting insights into how well a dialect can be preserved (despite decades of contact with English), intergenerational microvariation, and variation between “heritage Casamassimense” and Casamassimense as it is now spoken in Italy (i.e. influenced by Italian, as well as by the dialect of Bari, the nearby urban center). However, not only do we aim to highlight how well the archaic dialect is preserved, but also if any traces of contact, i.e. innovations, with either English or Italian are present, and to what extent.

Although proudly Italian-American, the Cristantiellos are not part of an organized community of Casamassimesi<sup>13</sup> in their area but have long maintained strong ties with their town (visiting frequently and keeping touch via phone and internet with surviving relatives and friends). By their own account they have created a Casamassimense “bubble” among themselves. The family is not used to reading or writing in the language and spoke of it being “untranslatable”, but also had a calendar from the village featuring local proverbs and shared Youtube dialect videos that amused them greatly. When they visit Casamassima, the two sons are told they speak like people who should be in their 70s or 80s (several decades older than they are) and there is a keen awareness of how much the village has changed, becoming in some ways a suburb of Bari. Particularly interesting is the fact that the sons' variety does not differ much from that of the elders.

Some sociolinguistic considerations are in order here. Before emigrating, the two parents had formal education in Italian until 5<sup>th</sup> grade, but, once in New Jersey, they abandoned it in the household and only used it with Italians from other regions in and around Jersey City. At home, they would only use Casamassimense, which is why their children learned the dialect and have some difficulties speaking Italian (Carmine less so than the younger brother, Enzo, even though

---

<sup>12</sup> He states that he learned Casamassimense when his (possibly monolingual) grandparents moved to the US.

<sup>13</sup> However, they claim that, over a century ago, several families of their ancestors from Casamassima moved to Baxter Street, Little Italy, and later relocated to Jersey City, Cleveland, and Niagara Falls. This is confirmed by Macina (2010: 163), where he states that, starting in 1898, migrations to the USA and Argentina have involved the villages of the Barese hinterland, including Casamassima.



Enzo studied Italian for 6 years in high school and college). As their cousin Luca visiting from Italy correctly points out, when Teresa, Pinuccio, and Vinnie grew up, “dialect was the first language, and Italian was their second language,” while now it is exactly the opposite in Casamassima (*sə parlə ménə u casamassəməsə ca parlə Terésə, o ca parlə Pinuccə, o ca parlə Vingénzə* ‘today's Casamassimese is no longer like the one spoken by Teresa, Pinuccio, or Vincenzo’).

Even though he is roughly as old as his cousins and rather fluent in Casamassimese, Luca’s speech constitutes good evidence for his own claim. First of all, he code-switches between Casamassimese and Italian much more often than any of the Cristantiellos, e.g. *l’educazziònə sta influendo sul casamassəməsə mó* ‘now education is having an impact on Casamassimese’, and tends to Italianize many expressions when speaking dialect. For instance, he uses Italian prepositional idioms *vənì in* (vs. *all’*) *Amèrachə*, or Italian syntax, e.g. *mia madrə* (vs. *mammə*) ‘my mom’, or other Italianisms such as *andatə* (vs. *sciutə*); *tràmətə* (It. *tramite*) *Feisbucchə* ‘through Facebook’; *dəfferendemèndə* (vs. *dəfferénde*) ‘differently’; *dəfàttə* (vs. Barese *com’invattə*) ‘in fact’; *rəspétt’a tté* (vs. *comvrónd’a tté*) ‘in comparison to you’.

Moreover, “Italianization” is not the only factor in how Casamassimese as spoken in Casamassima is changing. As the Cristantiellos recognize, there is also the presence of other surrounding communities, especially people from Bari who have moved to Casamassima or who otherwise mix with Casamassimesi now commuting to Bari for work.<sup>14</sup> Luca himself used to commute to the nearby town of Acquaviva and claims that his Casamassimese was (lexically) influenced by the dialect of Acquaviva (for example, using Acquavivese *àinə* instead of Casamassimese *sìnə* for ‘yes’), so the sources of contact are multiple, as opposed to the heritage context, where the learner’s input is reduced and consequently expected to be more homogeneous.

The conversation included a great deal of reminiscence about the deep poverty and difficulty of life in Casamassima and its rural surrounding areas well into the 1950s, as well as elements for which there is much nostalgia: food, community, comedy, and language. The wide range of conversation topics spans daily life (stories on family members, “simple” food and its

---

<sup>14</sup> The influence is from urban Barese, as opposed to the more conservative dialect of *Bari vecchia*, the old historical part of Bari.

preparation, trips to the seaside, work in the countryside, bathing in the main square, making make-shift clothes, among others).

#### 4.1 Lexis

The vocabulary used by the family is highly conservative (cf. Valente 1975: 37-40 for a list) compared to the increasing Italianization attested in Casamassima. This is evident when the older family members describe their work experience in the ‘countryside’, *fórə* (Latin FORAS), i.e. outside (of the village), in rural locations they would reach by ‘cart’, *u trajìne*. They recall archaic agriculture-related terminology, talking about specific tools such as *la rəngéddə* ‘billhook’, or when describing the process of *vəndəlàj’u granə* ‘winnowing the wheat’ with the ‘grain sifter’, *u farnarə*, from which *u rəstuccə* ‘left-over stubble’ would be used by the parents’ uncle to make a pillow on a ‘rock’, *u chiangónə*.

Moreover, we find nearly obsolete terms from the realm of carpentry (Vinnie’s craft), such as *rə frambughhiə* ‘wood shavings’, *la sérrə* ‘saw’, *rə céndrə* ‘nails’; interestingly, the older son uses the obsolete denominal verb *cəndrà* ‘to be nailed (somewhere)’, derived from *céndrə*, in the expression *stéve cəndratə alla pórtə* ‘it was nailed to the door’.

Besides using archaic terms to refer to parts of a village, i.e. *u chiazziəliənə* ‘town square’, *la pəttéché* ‘shop’ and *la stanziónə* (vs. modern *stazziónə*) ‘train station’, they also command a wide range of traditional home-related terms. When referring to parts/areas of the building, they mention *u àschərə* ‘rooftop’ (for which Vinnie provides the modern Italianism *terrazzə*), *u bballaturə* ‘landing’, *la lóggə* ‘balcony’, *u chərtigghiə* ‘(sheep)fold’ and *rə chianghə* ‘(stone) slabs’. They also mention several objects found in the house: *u carəsìəddə* ‘piggy bank’ (an unknown word for Carmine), *la fərsə* ‘fabric tarpaulin’ (used as a room divider), *u pəlvəlàccchiə* ‘dust’, *u priəsə* ‘chamber pot’ and *u rənalə* ‘urinal’, *u bbaciələ* ‘washing tub/tank’ and *rə ramìəre* ‘tin tubs’ (for dirty water). Many of these archaic terms are related to the kitchen: *la cəclatérə* ‘coffee machine/moka’ (originally *cioccolatièra* ‘hot-chocolate maker’), *la ghiaccérə* ‘ice-box (> freezer)’, *u pəgnatiəddə* ‘terracotta pot’ (diminutive form of *la pəgnatə*), *u sənələ* ‘apron’, *la zólə* ‘clay vessel’, *u təmbàgnə* ‘lid’ (originally a barrel lid), as well as referring to traditional ‘peasant’ food, such as *u ppane cuéttə* ‘boiled stale bread’ and *la cialdédde* ‘dressed

stale bread’ (which first needs *u ammuéddā*, ‘water-soaking’), or treats, such as *na catózza*<sup>15</sup> *de panā e nna féddā de mortadèlla* ‘a big piece of bread and a slice of mortadella’.

Another peculiar term they use is *la gratā*<sup>16</sup> (literally ‘grate/grid’) for ‘back’, which would usually be *la sckénā*<sup>17</sup> in the area of Bari (but cf. *m<sup>w</sup>usckā* in Altamura; Loporcaro 1988: 45). Likewise, ‘big toe’ is expressed as *u cappuccā* (literally ‘hood/cap’). Moreover, they use traditional kinship terms such as *cuggināma ggiùstā* ‘my first-degree, parallel<sup>18</sup> female cousin (from the mother side, in this case)’, the original received meaning of *chammārā* ‘wedding godmother’ (for which Vinnie provides the modern term *testamónā*), as well as an oxytonic form (with paragogic syllable *-jā*) of *nonnójā* for ‘grandad’.

They also employ a series of nouns, adverbs, and verbs whose usage is in steep decline, if not completely lost, in the homeland variety. The list of nouns includes: *u bbagugliā* ‘coffin (lit. trunk)’ (rather than the typical Apulo-Barese and pan-southern *tavutā*), *u capaviāndā* ‘ponor (natural geological opening in which water can flow)’, *u tiārachā* ‘dirt, schmutz’, and *u zecheliāddā* ‘washing line’ (diminutive of *la zóchā* ‘rope’); we also find the archaic adjective for ‘Sardinian’, *sardagnulā*. As for the verbs, we find *acciaffā* ‘to catch’, *acāddā* ‘to loaf around’, *addāmārā* ‘to take a long time’, *annuscā* (and past participle: *annuttā*) ‘to bring’, *carrāsciā* ‘to bear (on oneself)/load’, *(j)óngā* ‘to grease’ originally, but here extended to mean ‘to get dirty’ (used in its participial form *angiùtā* ‘greasy/dirty’), *mbónnā* ‘to wet’ (used in its participial form *mbussā* ‘wet’), *ngaldésscā* ‘to warm up’, *nzāmmālā* ‘to gather/save money’, *scasā* ‘move house/place’, *spandā* ‘to wake up’ (originally ‘to become frightened’), *prāquā(ssā)* ‘to be buried’, and *allambā rā capiāddā c’u aciātā* ‘rinsing one’s hair with vinegar’.

In this respect, the family has an interesting debate with their visiting cousin: the latter claims that *spānzā* ‘to soak’ (< *spōnzā* ‘sponge’) is the appropriate verb to use for wiping clean dishes from food, while the family uses *allāccā*, literally ‘to lick’. Carmine, however, correctly

<sup>15</sup> The origin of this word is debatable: Teresa claims that it is a typical Casamassimese word, but it may originate from the shape of a type of turnip, called *rap’a ccat(u)òzzā* in Campania (Cascone 2008: 114), or a traditional charcoal pile, *lu catózza* in Abruzzo.

<sup>16</sup> The *Atlante Italo-Svizzero* reports the type [graða] (AIS, I, 571) for ‘back’ only in Acquafredda (CS), a historical Albanian/Arbëresh enclave in Calabria. Hence, the term might have been brought by Albanians fleeing the Ottomans and settling down in several areas of the South, including Casamassima (Casanova 1940: 20).

<sup>17</sup> Although the authors try to adhere as much as possible to Italian orthography, exceptions are made for: *sck* [ʃk] (vs. *sch* [sk]), *ssc* [ʃʃ] (vs. *sc* [ʃ]), and *ə* [ə]. Moreover, we distinguish mid-vowels by means of graphic accents: *è* [ɛ] vs. *é* [e]; *ò* [ɔ] vs. *ó* [o].

<sup>18</sup> This terminology refers to the gender of the siblings (and their sons) of Ego’s parents. In relation to Ego, ‘parallel cousins’ are either daughters of the mother’s sister(s) or sons of the father’s brother(s), as opposed to ‘cross cousins’.

points out that the *spənzà* is more appropriate for ‘soaking’, e.g. *spənzà rə cìcərə gnùərə* ‘soak black chickpeas in water’, while his cousin mentions the Italianism *métt’a bbàgnə* ‘put in water’ (vs. Casamassimese *métt’a mmuédde* or *spənzà*). At that point, Carmine, Teresa, and Pinuccio tell him that *métt’a bbàgnə* is Italian, and Carmine concludes by commenting: “See how language changes?”.

Some archaic – and now obsolete – expressions can also be found: *u culə chə lla pézza* (sic) ‘cloth to wipe one’s bottom’, *panna junə/zzére* ‘single/no change of clothing’ (as they only owned and wore a few clothes), *cìəndə suénnə* ‘fast asleep’, *c’u llardə o mussə* (literally, ‘with lard on the muzzle’) and *so llardùne* meaning ‘they’re boasters’, and the mysterious *avè perònnə* ‘receive nothing (as a present)’, whose origin is unknown. They also mention names of children’s games which are no longer used, e.g. *u ascònnə* ‘hide-and-seek’, or no longer played: *la mazzə o tàcchələ* ‘stickball’ (literally ‘the stick to the heel’), *u cavaddə də Marcurièllə* ‘Johnny on a pony’, *lə cinghə pétə* ‘five-stone game’.<sup>19</sup>

Several archaic loco-temporal adverbs are employed too: (Lat. POSTCRAS >) *pescà(jə)/pescridde/pəscròdde/pəscrùdde*, namely ‘one/two/three/four days after tomorrow’; *mofalànnə (mó-fa-l’annə)* ‘last year’, *la səman’endrandə* ‘next week’ (vs. the modern *n’anda settəmanə* ‘one more week’ in the very following sentence uttered by Vinnie); *tìəmbə də (vìərnə/fèstə/li)* ‘in times of (winter/celebration/olive-picking)’; *alla staggiònə* ‘in (the) summer’; *tuttə nà vòldə* ‘at once, in one go’; *azzicchə* ‘next to’ (also used as a temporal adjective in *la dìə azzicchə* ‘the next day’); *pəzzing’a(/aqquannə)* ‘until (when)’, and *tannə* ‘then/back in the days’.

No less noteworthy are the typical (multimodal) interjections used by the family: *dallə!* ‘here we go again!’; *mèh!* (< *ménə*) ‘well/come on!’; *nah!* ‘(t)here it/(s)he/etc. is’ (cf. the same particle *na* in modern Greek and other Balkan languages); *óu!* ‘hey!’, *siccə!* ‘who knows?’; and the two pan-southern clicks, the dental [ | ] ‘no/denial’ and the alveolar [ ! ] ‘puzzled/surprised’.

## 4.2 Phonetics and phonology

Together with lexis, phonetics and phonology are the domains in which language, especially in contact, is most prone to change. It is readily apparent that the parents largely preserve an archaic native articulation of Casamassimese, which (thanks to the help of the nearby grandparents) has been passed on to their children, who, in turn, show subtle phonetic attrition of their

<sup>19</sup> Ancient Greek and Roman game ([https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gioco\\_delle\\_cinque\\_pietre](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gioco_delle_cinque_pietre)).

Casamassimense due to American English. Such a tendency is imperceptible in the pronunciation of the older son, while it is slightly more evident in that of the younger son (who was less exposed to the grandparents' speech compared to the older brother). In contrast to their situation, the cousin from Italy displays a more Italianized pronunciation, as he received formal education in Italian and does not employ the dialect as his sole means of communication in his daily life, unlike the Crisantiellos among themselves. The characteristic features in the following discussion tend to be retained in the Casamassimense of all family members, including the cousin's; any exceptions will be highlighted.

As concerns stressed syllables, the Crisantiellos display a wide range of diphthongizations, both conservative and innovative. On the one hand, they retain some phonemic distinctions between (metaphony<sup>20</sup>-induced) diphthongs with retracted accent ([jé] > [iə] in *viəndə* 'wind' vs. non-diphthongized [i] in *vində* 'twenty' (cf. Valente 1975: 17), which tend to be ironed out in modern varieties. On the other hand, they tend to diphthongize high vowels in open syllables: *pr[iə]mə* 'before/earlier/first', *bbar[iə]sə* 'Barese people', *gn[ùə]rə* 'black(-PL)', *p[ùə]rə* 'also/too'. However, the cousin tends to utter monophthongs in the contexts where the Crisantiellos have retained (or extended) diphthongs: *pr[i:]mə*, *bbar[i:]sə*, *gn[ù:]rə*. This tendency is not surprising, as it was already a feature of those Apulo-Barese varieties under the increasing pressure of Italian, with urban Barese being "the most advanced and clearly defined" example thereof (Valente 1975: 16, and references therein; cf. also Loporcaro 1988: 32 for a similar discussion on the diphthong [ài > è] in Altamura).

A typical feature of southeastern Apulo-Barese varieties, featuring the speech of all discussion participants, is the retention of diphthong [wé] (from metaphonetic raising of Latin Ő) in masculine nouns and adjectives, as well as verbs. In Casamassimense this occurs in all contexts, i.e. irrespective of the preceding consonants, as opposed to Barese and neighboring dialects of Casamassimense where [wé] either historically lost the glide /w/ after certain consonants (1-2), retained it after others (3-4), or is on its way to re-monophthongization<sup>21</sup> (5-6).

<sup>20</sup> Metaphony is a process of vowel harmony where the quality of the stressed vowel is conditioned by a following historical unstressed vowel -I or -U, which is now mostly reduced to [ə] in upper-southern Italo-Romance:

BONU > <i>bbuénə</i>	vs.	BONA > <i>bbónə</i>
BONI > <i>bbuénə</i>	vs.	BONE > <i>bbónə</i>

<sup>21</sup> Here we are not dealing with a phonetic evolution from diphthong to monophthong (via stress retraction), i.e. [wé > ùə > ù:], but rather with an instance of substitution of [wé] with [ùə/ù:], already attested in Bari since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and allegedly due to importation from neighboring villages where [ùə/(ù:)] is the sole option available (cf. Manzari 2019: 199-204 for details).

Table 1: loss and retention of diphthong ué/uè in Casamassimese and Barese

Nr	English	Casamassimese	Barese
1	‘big’	<i>gruéssə</i>	<i>grèssə</i>
2	‘long’	<i>luéngħə</i>	<i>lèngħe</i>
3	‘eight’	<i>uétta</i>	<i>uèttə</i>
4	‘(soaking)/soft’	<i>(am)muéddə</i>	<i>(am)muèddə</i>
5	‘good/well’	<i>bbuéne</i>	<i>bbuéne/bbù(ə)nə</i>
6	‘you can’	<i>puétə</i>	<i>puétə/pù(ə)tə</i>

However, Vinnie does utter once the innovative monophthongized form *ammùddə* (cf. 4) to refer to ‘soaking’, and extends [wé] to feminine contexts, most likely due to analogical levelling, e.g. the expression *alla luéngħə* (expected: *lóngħə*) ‘too long time/in the long run’, where a mix with *a lluéngħə* ‘for a long time’ may be hypothesized.

Turning to unstressed syllables, the Cristantiellos show a recurrent tendency of schwa-epenthesis to break consonantal clusters (especially in post-tonic syllables): *alléchar* ‘happy’, *dicémbər* ‘December’, *la majéstər* ‘primary-school teacher’, *paléstər* ‘gym’, *trəcìchəl* ‘tricycle’, *làrəchə* ‘small square’, *na vólətə* ‘one time’, *sólətə* ‘money’. Note that liquids in these contexts are allowed in word-final coda position, whereas other consonants necessarily require a schwa to follow them.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, such schwa-epenthesis, characteristic of archaic varieties, blocks the voicing of post-liquid stops: *largħə*, *vóldə*, *sóldə*. The facts above, however, no longer feature in the cousin’s speech. In this same respect, besides the extremely frequent paragoge or addition of *-jə* to oxytones, paragogic *-nə* (regularly occurring in *sìnə*) is unexpectedly heard once in Vinnie and Teresa’s speech, respectively: *cì-nə* ‘who’ (from the pronoun/wh-element *cə* ‘who/what(/which, residually)’); *né-nə* ‘not even’ (Italianized variant of *nì*, perhaps modelled on sentential negation/adverb *nónə* ‘not/no’). The anomalous status of oxytones in these varieties has been favouring the lexicalization of paragogic *-nə* in Bari and surroundings: *l’auì-nə* (vs. Casamassimese *rə lì*) ‘(the) olives’.

<sup>22</sup> In contrast to schwa-epenthesis, the Cristantiellos simplify post-tonic word-final diphthongs, dropping word-final schwas, in some Italianisms: *la radi(ə)* ‘radio’, *u calendàri(ə)* ‘calendar’, *u negózz(ə)* ‘shop’.

When we look at consonants, it is worth noting that Casamassimense features rhotacized plural articles and object clitic pronouns for both genders, e.g. (*\*li/le*>) *rə* ‘the(-M/F.PL)’,<sup>23</sup> mainly found north of Bari, but in a larger number of contexts (Manzari 2019: 157-158, 226), and residually attested in archaic Casalino, the dialect of the nearby village *U Casalə* (Sammichele), but substituted by non-rhotacized forms in modern Casalino (G. Manzari, p.c.). This feature makes Casamassimense an “outlier” among its surrounding dialects.

The Cristantiellos retain archaic [tʃ] in tonic and pre-tonic syllables, e.g. *və[tʃ]igghia* ‘eve’, *fə[tʃ]énna* ‘running/hastily’, and in the neologism *bbə[tʃ]əcléttə* ‘bicycle’ (vs. Barese *bə[tʃ]əcléttə*), while the palatal sibilant [ʃ] is found in post-tonic syllables: *dé[ʃ]ə* ‘ten’ (cf. the expected *də[tʃ]əséttə* ‘seventeen’), *fà[ʃ]ə* ‘s/he does’. In this respect, the younger son Enzo shows the voiced affrication of [ʃ] to [ddʒ] (always inherently long in southern varieties) in *jó[ddʒ]ə* ‘today’ and *[ddʒ]ənòcchiərə* ‘knees’. This is also found in Barese, where the original *ma[ʃ]ə* ‘May’, for instance, is now Italianized to *ma[ddʒ]ə*. Indeed, similarly to the monophthongization of [wé], this phenomenon is not an active process, but rather a substitution which can only be ascribed to Italian influence in Enzo’s speech, possibly due to those few years of studying Italian.

In clitic clusters, post-nasal consonantal assimilation of N+C<sub>[+voice]</sub> (historically, N+/b v/> [mm] and N+/d/> [nn]) nearly always occurs also across word boundaries, except in the case of N+/v/, when Vinnie utters *nan val’la pén’a mbaràrmələ* ‘for me, it’s not worth learning it’, as opposed to *rə cózzə na mmələna (<vələna) própria* ‘mussels are worth nothing (here)’ in Teresa and Pinuccio’s speech.

In contrast to this, Vinnie’s speech presents some typical (yet innovative) voicing of voiceless stops, /p/ in this case: *[b]əgghiójə la salzizzə*, *[b]əgghiój’u mmìərə* ‘(my dad) took some sausages, some wine’. Likewise, Teresa voices /k/ in *u [g]ombleannə* ‘the birthday’. This voicing is not uncommon in the Apulo-Barese area, where we find Barese *chəstà* ‘to cost’ pronounced as *quandə [g]òstə* ‘how much is it?’.

At the interface between historical phonetics and morphology, all discussion participants show the retention of consonantal lengthening between definite articles and certain masculine nouns to signal mass nouns, e.g. *u ppanə* ‘bread’, *u llardə* ‘lard’, *u llattə* ‘milk’, *u mmìərə* ‘wine’,

---

<sup>23</sup> However, intervocalic (historically preceded by -u-) -l- has been retained in Casamassimense, unlike in the area of Bari, respectively: *màschələ* vs. *màscuə* ‘male’; *lì* vs. *auì* ‘olives’.

*u ffuéchə* ‘fire’ (vs. *u fuéchə* ‘firework’), on par with Bari, Mola, and Polignano, but unlike some of the surrounding villages which have lost it, e.g. Adelfia (Manzari 2019: §8.4).

Two last remarkable pan-southern phonological features, retained by all Cristantiellos, concern vocative formation, formed via deletion of post-tonic syllables, e.g. *ma’!* (<*mammə*) ‘mom!’, and positive imperatives with stressed enclitic clusters, where the stress shifts rightwards onto the first element of the cluster: *va-tti-nnə jind’o liattə dasciùanə* ‘go to bed on an empty stomach!’; *spieghiscia-ngi-llə acquannə faciəv’u bbagnə mménz’o chiazzə, ddà* ‘explain (it) to them when you’d bathe in the square, there’.

### 4.3 Morphology

In the nominal domain, the whole Cristantiello family preserves the plural ending *-ərə* (Latin -ŌRA) with a large number of (non-etymological) referents: *màmmərə* ‘mums’, *attànərə* ‘dads’, *càs(sə)rə* ‘houses’, *cavàddərə* ‘horses’, *chiangònərə* ‘rocks’, *fròttərə* ‘fruits’, *scànòcchiərə* ‘knees’, *pajèsərə* ‘towns’, *pàssərə* ‘steps’, *pèccərə* ‘whims’, *piàttərə* ‘plates’, *sècchiərə* ‘buckets’, *spəndrònərə* ‘sharp-edged rock’, *strònzərə* ‘turds’, *təmbàgnərə* ‘lids’, *vəttàzzərə* ‘manure tanker’. In contrast, -ORA plurals may not exist when etymologically expected: invariable *tìambə* ‘time(s)’ (vs. *\*tèmb(ə)rə* ‘times’ < Latin TĒMPŌRA). Indeed, in many Apulo-Barese varieties, plural forms would either be identical to the singular form, e.g. *piàttə* ‘plate(s)’, *cavàddə* ‘horse(s)’, or show metaphonetic raising of the stressed vowel, e.g. *chiangónə* vs. *chiangunə* ‘stone(s)’. However, historically, when this ending was still productive, its final -A did not trigger the metaphonetic raising of the word-internal stressed vowel, even if the singular was metaphonetic: *strùnzə* vs. *strònzərə* ‘turd(s)’. One last remark on archaic plurals involves the forms *sərùrə-mə* ‘my sisters’, *nəpùtə-mə* ‘my grandsons/nephews’, *filə-mə* ‘my sons’, where the enclitic possessive modifying plural kinship terms is now rare in Apulo-Barese varieties, while the norm today would be the possessive only attaching to a handful of singular referents, e.g. *sórə-mə* ‘my sister’ (see Andriani 2017a: 111 for a list in Barese).

In terms of degree-intensification, Vinnie adopts two strategies: the prefix *stra-* (Latin EXTRA) in the expression *mégghia e stramégghia* ‘way better’, and repetition of the first syllable of the relevant word: *ma-mma-mmà(jə)* ‘never ever’, *pro-ppro-ppro-ppròpria* ‘at all/whatsoever’, *tut-tut-tuttə* ‘completely’.



Turning to gender agreement, we find some archaic features here too: the feminine *na picchə* ‘a little’, now replaced by masculine *nu picchə* in some Apulo-Barese varieties, and *tóttə*, the feminine of *tuttə* ‘all’, which is either in sharp decline or lost in modern Apulo-Barese varieties.

Interestingly, the two sons show some uncertainties with gender assignment (visible on the article), especially with neologisms/Italianisms they do not know or master: *u* (-M.SG) (vs. expected *la* (-F.SG)) *merendianə* ‘snack’, *o* ([<*a+u*] vs. *a la*) *chiazza* ‘to the square’, *u* (vs. *la*) *fodəgrafi* ‘picture/photo’, *u* (vs. *la*) *bborràccə* ‘water bottle’ (intended: ‘cat bowl’), *n’appartaménda gróssə* (-F.SG) (vs. expected *n’appartaméndə gruéssə* (-M.SG)) ‘a big flat (intended: building)’. Similarly, the younger son regularizes the conjugation of verbs with *-e/-i-* thematic vowels by turning these into (productive) *-a-* verbs: *spartàvə u grànə* ‘separate the wheat (from its peel)’, rather than *spartì* ‘to divide’. In this respect, the Italian cousin produces the innovative infinitive *sparəssc-ì* ‘to disappear’, with the *-sc-* root-augment and thematic vowel *-i-* coexisting, rather than appearing as either *sparì* or *sparəsscə*.

Another archaic feature of the Cristantiello’s speech is the retention of 2PL ending *-və* of the past forms: *prime[...]* *ca və nə scivə-və alla scólə, jìrə-v’a mmangiàjə?* ‘before you(-PL)’d go to school, did(n’t) you(-PL) have to eat something?’; *scivə-və tuttə fòrə* ‘you(-PL) all went to the countryside’; *chiddə ca acchiastə-və all’aeropòrtə* ‘those ones you(-PL) found at the airport’. An exceptional case thereof can be seen in *arrəcuérdə-tə-və!* ‘remember!’, where *-və* attaches to the 2SG imperative form *arrəcuérdə-tə* with enclitic *-tə*, rather than appearing in its own 2PL form *arrəchərdàtə-və* ‘you(-PL) remember!’.

This is similar to the 3PL ending *-nə* attaching to 3SG verbs to form the plural, e.g. *fěscə/fěscə-nə* ‘(s)he/they did’, with *fěscə* being an instance of conservative simple past form, as opposed to the innovative one found in Bari *facì* ‘(s)he did’ (vs. conservative 3PL *facèrənə* ‘they did’). It is also worth noting Teresa’s use of *fasciutə*, the regular(ized) past-participle form in *-utə* of *fà* ‘to do/make’ (vs. the usual form *fattə*), appearing once as a causative auxiliary: *m’è ffasciutə spənnə dēcə məlaliərə də bbaccalà* ‘she made me spend 10,000 liras on dry cod’.

One final remark concerns the retention of the indigenous synthetic-future form (with epistemic-modality meaning), appearing once in Teresa’s speech:

(1) *ca cuddə, l’etàja mé tenaràjə*

that that.M the=age my have.FUT.3SG  
 ‘he must be my same age’

Indeed, in central-southern Apulo-Barese the synthetic future has now been replaced by the deontic periphrasis *avé (d)a* ‘have to’ (Andriani, Groothuis & Silvestri 2020: §2; see §4.4 below).

#### 4.4 Syntax

In the nominal domain, we find the typical Apulo-Barese structure formed by definite article and distal demonstrative pronoun (see Andriani 2017a: 131-135), e.g. *aquannə vénə u cuddə mi* ‘when mine comes’, where *u cuddə* ‘the that (one)’, rather than only *cuddə*, substitutes the previously given referent *u combleannə mi* ‘my birthday’. Moreover, the Crisantiellos employ a typical reduplication strategy in which coordinated pronouns receive a restrictive-focus value: *chidd’e cchiddə stónnə* ‘there are only those (same people)’.

As for the organization of clause-internal material, there is evidence of a rich peripheral area for topical information (2a) and foci (2b) in both the sentence-final and left-most positions of the clause, respectively:

- (2) a. *jì, chə Ccàrməna, o telèfəna, na ppàrləchə mà u ndialéttə*  
 I with Carmine to=the phone not speak.1sg never the dialect  
 ‘as for me, with Carmine, on the phone, I never speak the dialect’
- b. *aquannə scévə alla scólə jì, dāsciunə mə nə scévə,*  
 when went.1SG to=the school I fasting me=LOC= left.1SG  
*e ddāsciunə mə nə vənévə*  
 and fasting me=LOC= came.1SG  
 ‘when I used to go to school, I’d leave on an **empty stomach** and come back on an **empty stomach**’

Moreover, the sentence-fronted distal demonstrative *cuddə* ‘that’ is employed to double the discourse-salient material, e.g. *cuddə, sckiətt’u ndialéttə parlammə sèmbə* ‘it’s only the dialect we’d always be speaking’, where *cuddə* introduces the direct object ‘the dialect’.

Still in the clausal domain, the Crisantiellos employ the typical Apulo-Barese irrealis subordinator *angórə*, a reanalysis of the temporal adverb ‘still/yet’, here with the approximative meaning of ‘it may be the case that’ (Andriani 2017b): *mangiatavillə mójə, angórə véna nguacchədunə e ngə am'a dà nu pəzzèttə* ‘eat it now, in case someone comes and we have to offer them a piece’. Moreover, the interjection *dallə!* ‘(t)here we go again!’ followed by complementizer *ca* ‘that’ is employed to convey the repetition of an event: *e Tterésə, dallə ca ér'a ppəlzà* ‘and (of course) it was Teresa who had to clean once again’. We also find another type of reduplication for emphatic purposes; here it involves an entire sentence, whose second “copy” is introduced by *ca* and features the (optional) ellipsis of the nominal constituent: *na stév'u calendari, ca na stévə* ‘there was no calendar, no, there wasn't’.

In the prepositional domain, the older generation shows the overextension of the preposition *a* with inanimate referents in transitive contexts:<sup>24</sup> *pəgghiammə o strunzə e u mannammə* ‘we would shoo **the turd** away’; *a ccazzàj'u granə, jèr'a scì tù a ccazzà chə rrə piətə purə o granə* ‘stamping on wheat, you had to also go stamp on **the wheat** with your feet’; *nnù sémbə sciam'a vvasetə alla Pelósə, c'am'a pəgghia u pésscə* ‘we always go visit **La Pelosa** (placename) to buy fish’. Similarly, the younger son allegedly extends the prepositional accusative to non-specific referents (cf. Andriani 2015 for Barese): *quannə tù ha nzuldàj'a u aldə, mó u fasce sóp'o Facebook?* ‘now, if you have to insult **someone (else)**, do you do it on Facebook?’; *mó, quannə ha nzuldàj'a nn'ald'unə, tù tə miəttə sóp'o Facebook?* ‘now if you have to insult **someone else**, do you go on Facebook?’. However, the predicates ‘to insult’ and ‘to visit’ prototypically require a human referent and might therefore favor the preposition by default, plus the non-specific objects are both pronominal, hence more prone to be *a*-marked. Likewise, the predicate *capì(sscə)* ‘to understand’ may be the reason for the unexpected presence of preposition *a* in Enzo’s sentence *chiddə na ccapiscənə a ccasamassəməsə* ‘they don’t understand **Casamassimese**’.

The preposition *a* is also employed to construct the pan-southern ‘reverse vocative’, where the speaker addresses the interlocutor by invoking oneself (Rohlf's 1925): [reported speech

<sup>24</sup> Here we refrain from calling it Prepositional Accusative, prototypically marking human direct objects, since in some cases it could be considered a(n overextended) locative preposition, as in the archaic expression *bbév'all'acquə* ‘to drink (at the) water’, used in Gravina and Altamura, as well as by the Crisantiellos: *u fiaschə, ca bbìəv'all'acquə*. ‘the flask, to drink **water**’.

These varieties also employ preposition *a* with ‘possessive’ value in the expression ‘to be’+[kin]+to [possessor]: *cussə, però, na mmi jé ffigghi'a mme, ténə la varve* ‘this one, though, is not my son, he’s got a beard’.

of an aunt] *ehi, nàh, a zzià, cussa jè u ləmónə chə lla cioccolatə* ‘hey, here it is, nephew (lit. to auntie), this is lemon with chocolate’. The auntie says *a zzià* to address the nephew, implying something along the lines of ‘(listen) to auntie’.

In the verbal domain, the Crisantiellos retain some typically Apulo-Barese auxiliary structures:

- i) coordinated ‘take and V’ to express mirativity, i.e. that a sudden or unexpected action/event V occurs: *pigghi’e u jàcchiachə* ‘I happen to (lit. take and) find it’;
- ii) the ‘doubly-inflected’ progressive/imperfective and itive periphrases (with auxiliaries *stà* ‘stand’ and *sci* ‘go’, respectively), where finite vs. non-finite present-indicative forms of the second conjunct alternate according to grammatical person. The Crisantiellos use the pattern found in the area of Bari (Andriani 2017a: Chapter 5), where only 2SG and 3SG show the inflected form of the second conjunct, e.g. *tù st’a pparlà d’u inglèsə* ‘you’re talking about English’, *và quacchedunə a ffascə u bbagnə?*<sup>25</sup> ‘does anyone go swimming (there)?’, while the remaining persons and the whole imperfect paradigm display the infinitive: *nù stam’a pparlà chə cchiddə* ‘we’re talking with them’; *mó stònn’a mmangiàjə* ‘now they’re eating’; *mó stév’a pparlà də l’aldə féstə* ‘now he was talking about the other festivals’; *ngə scév’a ajətàjə* ‘he’d go help there’. There is one exception to this, namely when Enzo alternates infinitive and inflected forms of the same lexical verb, respectively: *stév’a ttraməndà* vs. *stév’a ttraméndə* ‘she was looking’.

Another point of interest is perfective auxiliary selection. In many southern varieties, the selection of present-perfect auxiliaries ‘be’ and ‘have’ varies according to grammatical person, rather than the transitive/unaccusative nature of the predicate, as in Italian. The generalized pattern emerging from the Crisantiellos’ speech is presented in Table 2, with one exception discussed below:

Table 2: Present-perfect auxiliary selection

Person	Auxiliary	Transitive:	Unaccusative:	English
		<i>pəgghià</i> ‘to	<i>trasi</i> ‘to enter’	

<sup>25</sup> This is an exceptional case in which the inflected verb surfaces, as intervening constituents within the two verbs of the periphrasis would trigger the use of the infinitive: *na ttə vājə jind’alla pesciənə a ffū na natatə?* ‘don’t you go to the swimming pool to have a swim?’. Note, also, that a default 3SG person form can also surface as an innovative variant of the infinitive in these periphrases: *stam’a mmangià* = *stam’a mmangə* ‘we’re eating’.

		take'		
1SG	<i>so</i>	<i>ppəgghiata</i>	<i>ttrasuta</i>	'be'
2SG	<i>a</i>	<i>pəgghiata</i>	<i>trasuta</i>	'have'
3SG	<i>é/(a)</i>	<i>ppəgghiata</i>	<i>ttrasuta</i>	'be/(have)'
1PL	<i>sìmə</i>	<i>pəgghiata</i>	<i>trasuta</i>	'be'
2PL	<i>sità</i>	<i>pəgghiata</i>	<i>trasuta</i>	'be'
3PL	<i>(v)ónnə</i>	<i>pəgghiata</i>	<i>trasuta</i>	'have' ([v]- drops with reflexives)

The whole family shows a consistent auxiliary-selection pattern, with 'have' surfacing in 2SG and 3PL persons, and 'be' in 1SG and 1PL persons. The 3SG person is more problematic, oscillating between *é* and *a* (where *a* occurs much less than *é*), whereas the 2PL person auxiliary is not attested in the recorded material, but was elicited later. However, Vinnie nearly always selects *égghia* 'I have' in the 1SG, e.g. *égghie nata/sciutə/fattə/spezzatə* 'I was born/went/did/broke', except for a couple of instances where 'be' surfaces only with verb *sci* 'to go': *jì so ssciut'alla scólə pəzzing'alla quində* 'I went to school up to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade'. The selection of 'have' in the 1SG may be considered as the archaic option, rather than the result of attrition with English. In Barese, for instance, *àgghia* 'I have', attested in the 19th and 20th centuries, has now been replaced by *so* 'I am' (Andriani 2018b).

In the pluperfect indicative, we find "free" alternation of auxiliaries 'be' and 'have' due to their morphological blending: *(j)érə* vs. *avérə* 'I(s)he was/had'. Note that *avévə* does exist, but they only use it with the lexical meaning of 'I used to receive': *avévə mazzatə* 'I'd get beaten'. Again, a similar situation is found in Bari, where *(j)évə* vs. *avévə* 'I was/had' are now used interchangeably, irrespective of person and predicate type.

As mentioned in §4.3, 'have to' periphrasis expresses future, deontic, and epistemic modal values. In the present, the sole auxiliary is *avéj'a* 'to have to', e.g. *égghi'a fà səttandòtt'annə* 'I'll be 78 (soon)', *mó hâ pparlà tù* 'now you have to speak', *la Bbefanə l'av'a jèngghia* 'the Befana will fill it up'. However, the imperfect shows the same "free" alternation of the perfective auxiliary form, i.e. *(j)ér'a* vs. *avér'a* 'I(s)he was/had to', which is clearly shown in these three sentences uttered successively: *(chedda ciəndə liərə) nan zapémmə addó l'avèrəm'a spénna. Nan zapémmə addó l'èrəm'a spénna, e nn'avèrəm'a ffaj'u cundə* '(that

hundred liras,) we didn't know what to spend it on. We didn't know how to spend it, and we had to do the math'; *ce jì jér'a vānì mó da Casamàssəmə, la dìà dōppə mə n'ér'a scì arrétə*: 'if I were to come from Casamassima now, the very next day I'd be going back'. The latter example also shows modal harmony, where the hypothetical period features two imperfect indicative forms.

In §4.2 we observed a pan-southern peculiarity concerning stressed enclitic clusters attaching to positive imperatives. Equally peculiar is the typical Apulo-Barese negative imperative, retained by the Crisantiellos, constructed with negation+'be'+gerund: *uaglió, nan zì scènnə cchiùj'a cchessa classə!* 'man, don't go to this (swimming) course any longer!'; *vìanə sùbbəta, na ssi addemeranne!* 'come back soon, don't take too long!'; *na ttə si preoccupannə!* 'don't worry!'. This is the only configuration used by the Crisantiellos, but in the Apulo-Barese area the inflected 'be' auxiliary can be omitted (*na ttə Ø preoccupannə!*), or surfaces as the infinitive of 'go' (*na ttə scì preoccupannə!*), on a par with the Italian type (Rohlf's 1969: 111 claims that this is the most archaic form from which the one featuring 'be' developed).

Another pan-southern feature retained by all Crisantiellos is the transitivization of certain intransitive predicates, witness the relevant accusative clitic. We find instances of psychological verbs, i.e. *pənzà* 'to think' and *crétə* 'to believe', doubled by accusative clitics, rather than oblique ones: *jì la pənzəchə sèmbə all'Itagliə* 'I always think about Italy'; *na u crétə ca mammə s'arrəchərdavə aquannə nù jérəm'a ffà u gobleannə, na u crétə* 'I don't think mom would remember when our birthdays were, I don't think so'. Likewise, Carmine uses the unaccusative verb *trasi* 'to enter' transitively, or, rather, in its causative variant: *na stév'u pərtónə gruèssə ca ttrasiəv'u trajianə jində?* 'wasn't there a big gate through which you put the cart inside?'.

While we surprisingly find no evidence of contact with English in the Casamassimese syntax of the two sons, we do come across some instances of English-to-Casamassimese L1 attrition in the father's speech. Consider the sentence *alləccà e spənzà sò ddù dafferèndə parólə, nan zó?* "'alləccà" and "spənzà" are two different words, aren't they?'. Here we find two cases of attrition: the prenominal adjective *dafferèndə* 'different', where the norm would be the post-nominal position (except for a closed class of evaluative adjectives; see Andriani 2018a for Barese) and even Italian would have *due parole differenti*; and the tag-question *nan zó?* 'aren't they?', a calque from English, impossible in either Italian or Casamassimese. Indeed, the only

(lexicalized) tag-question to ask for confirmation in Barese would be *jè (o nonn jè)?* ‘is it (or isn’t it)?’, but never the one uttered by Vinnie. Moreover, Vinnie also shows uncertainties with the middle voice and reflexives, possibly due to the influence of ‘to call/be called’: *na cchiamə cchiùjə Little Italy, chiamə Chinatown* ‘it’s no longer called Little Italy, it’s called Chinatown’. Here, we would expect a reflexive pronoun, e.g. *se chiamə*, literally ‘it calls **itself**’, both in Apulo-Barese and Italian.

## 5. Conclusion

The Cristantiello family, a Casamassimese-speaking “bubble” preserving in the New York area six decades later features mostly lost in the home area, is a remarkable but by no means completely isolated case among Italians or even more broadly. Even if transmission seems highly unlikely to extend to the third generation, the two US-born brothers have to different degrees proudly and purposely retained their parents’ already conservative variety, despite exposure to English, Italian, Barese, and “new” Casamassimese. The analysis above of the family’s lexical, phonetic and phonological, morphological, and syntactic retentions (and occasional innovations) is indicative both of the documentary value that diaspora research can have, especially if focused on natural open-ended conversation, and of the ways that the “well known but little researched fact” of archaic survivals in diaspora can be substantiated and probed further.

Re-focusing research while it is still possible away from the familiar poles of assimilation (to the new host country norm, in this case the US) and Italianization, and away from the larger and better-known communities, may lead not only to new insights about particular varieties but to a fuller understanding of the fate of Italo-Romance linguistic diversity in the diaspora. The ongoing story of “Italian” in New York, not to mention other major diaspora centers, is incomplete without a deeper accounting of those speakers who emigrated “just in time” to sidestep ever-accelerating 20th century Italianization and became, unwittingly, linguistic “relic areas” in themselves.

## References

Andriani, Luigi. 2015. Semantic and syntactic properties of the prepositional accusative in Barese. *Linguistica Atlantica* 34(2). 61-78.

Andriani, Luigi. 2017a. *The Syntax of the Dialect of Bari*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge dissertation.

Andriani, Luigi. 2017b. The modal value of ancora/angórə in Barese. In Adina Dragomirescu, Alexandru Nicolae, Camelia Stan & Rodica Zafiu (eds.), *Sintaxa ca mod de a fi. Omagiu doamnei profesoare Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, la aniversare*, 21–28. Bucharest: Editura Universității din București.

Andriani, Luigi. 2018a. Adjectival positions in Barese: Prenominal exceptions to the postnominal rule. In Roberta D’Alessandro & Diego Pescarini (eds.), *Advances in Italian Dialectology*, 214–252. Leiden: Brill.

Andriani, Luigi. 2018b. Instability and language change: A parametric approach to Barese auxiliary selection. In Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, Rodica Zafiu, Adina Dragomirescu, Alexandru Nicolae & Irina Nicula (eds.), *Romance Syntax. Comparative and Diachronic Perspectives*, 363–399. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Andriani, Luigi, Kim Groothuis & Giuseppina Silvestri. 2020. Pathways of grammaticalisation in southern Italo-Romance. *Probus* 32(2), 327–366.

Andriani, Luigi, Jan Casalicchio, Francesco Ciconte, Roberta D’Alessandro, Alberto Frasson, Brechje van Osch, Luana Sorgini & Silvia Terenghi. to appear. Documenting Italo-Romance minority languages in the Americas. Problems and tentative solutions. In Matt Coler & Andrew Nevins (eds.), *Contemporary research in minority and diaspora languages of Europe*. Berlin: Language Science Press.

Binder, Frederick & David Reimers. 1996. *All the Nations Under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Brown, Mary Elizabeth. 2007. *The Italians of the South Village*. New York: Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.

Carnevale, Nancy. 2003. “No Italian spoken for the duration of the war”: Language, Italian-American identity, and cultural pluralism in the World War II years. *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22(3): 3–33.

Casanova, E. 1940. Le colonie allogene dell’Italia meridionale e della Sicilia. *Genus*, 4(3/4): 1–31.

Castellani, Arrigo. 1982. Quanti erano gl’italofoni nel 1861? *Studi linguistici italiani* 8. 3–26.

De Fina, Anna. 2014. Language and identities in US communities of Italian origins. *Forum Italicum* 48: 253–267.

De Mauro, Tullio. 1963. *Storia linguistica dell’Italia unita*. Bari: Laterza.



Endangered Language Alliance. 2017. “The Old Father and the Modern Son”, Published at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7LAEd5CRYo>. Recorded on January 21, 2017.

Endangered Language Alliance. 2016. “A Conversation in Casamassimese”, Published at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHC24LNX9Ro>. Recorded on December 16, 2016.

Endangered Language Alliance. 2012. “Nones”. Published at <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLcXFPx-z7B0oG6YU3s3GxRE5HrPMfFzFp>. Recorded on May 16, 2012.

Frasca, Simona. 2014. *Italian Birds of Passage: The Diaspora of Neapolitan Musicians in New York*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Gabaccia, Donna R. 2000. *Italy's Many Diasporas*. London: UCL Press.

Gabaccia, Donna R. 1984. *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change among Italian Immigrants, 1880–1930*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Haller, Hermann 1981. “Between Standard Italian and Creole: An interim report on language patterns in an Italian-American community”, *Word* 32(3). 181–191.

Haller, Hermann 1987. Italian speech varieties in the United States and the Italian-American lingua franca. *Italica* 64(3). 393–409.

Haller, Herman 1997. Italian. In Joshua A. Fishman & Ofelia Garcia (eds.), *The Multilingual Apple: Languages in New York City*, 119–142. Berlin-New York: Mouton De Gruyter..

Kaufman, Daniel & Ross Perlin. 2018. Language documentation in diaspora communities. In Kenneth L. Rehg & Lyle Campbell (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Endangered Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Loporcaro, Michele. 1988. *Grammatica storica del dialetto di Altamura*. Pisa: Giardini.

Macina, Raffaele. 2010. *La Puglia dall'Unità d'Italia al Fascismo*. Modugno, BA: Nuovi Orientamenti.

Manzari, Giovanni. 2019. *Microdiatopia periurbana. Variazione fonetica e altri aspetti strutturali di sei dialetti dell'entroterra barese*. Alessandria: dell'Orso.

Meyer, Gerald. 1989. *Vito Marcantonio: Radical Politician 1902-1954* (SUNY Series in American Labor History). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Nagy, Naomi. 2011. Lexical change and language contact: Faetar in Italy and Canada. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15(3). 366–382.

Perlin, Ross, Daniel Kaufman, Jason Lampel, Maya Daurio, Mark Turin, Sienna Craig (eds.). 2020. *Languages of New York City (digital version)*. New York: Endangered Language Alliance. <http://language-map.nyc>, Accessed on 2021-04-15.

Poletto, Cecilia. 2012. Contrastive linguistics and micro-variation: The role of dialectology. In Matthias Hüning & Barbara Schlücker (eds.), *Contrastive linguistics and other approaches to language comparison*, 47–68. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.

Repetti, Lori. 1996. Teaching about the other Italian languages: Dialectology in the Italian curriculum. *Italica* 73(4). 508–515.

Rohlf, Gerhard. 1925. Un problema di sintassi italiano-meridionale. (Abruzz. Mammasé=figliuol mio). *Archivum Romanicum* IX, 439–443.

Rohlf, Gerhard. 1969. *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti. Vol. III: Sintassi e formazione delle parole*. Turin: Einaudi.

Ruberto, Laura E. & Joseph Sciorra. 2017. *New Italian Migrations to the United States: Vol. 2: Art and Culture Since 1945*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Shandler, Jeffrey. 2004. Postvernacular Yiddish: Language as a Performance Art. *TDR/The Drama Review* 48(1). 19–43.

Valente, Vincenzo. 1975. *Puglia*. Pisa: Pacini.

Vellon, Peter G. 2014. *A Great Conspiracy Against Our Race: Italian Immigrant Newspapers and the Construction of Whiteness in the Early 20th Century*. New York: NYU Press.

Wallace, Mike. 2017. *Greater Gotham: A History of New York City from 1898 to 1919*. New York: Oxford University Press.