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Avoiding typological affinity: “negative borrowing” as a strategy of Corsican norm finding

1. Introduction

Corsican is a relatively new Romance language and is therefore still in the process of norm finding¹ and elaboration.² The formation of a standard differs from “ordinary” dialectal change in that it involves a social interaction with at least partially conscious proposals and acceptations. Grammarians, school teachers, writers, editors, etc., make choices³ and a larger, more or less educated public adopts or declines the recommended forms. Obviously, proposals do not come out of the blue. When writers and educators try to fill a lacuna or decide on a variation, they normally refer to the model of a more elaborated language (*ausbau* language in the sense of Kloss 1967), especially of the language they are used to employing in formal speech. Hence, for centuries Latin was the favorite “quarry” while establishing the

¹ I propose “norm finding” as a more general concept in the sense of “corpus planning” that implies language policy as an activity of an authoritative group (cf. Hornberger 2006).

² *Elaboration* is taken as the English translation of the term *ausbau* coined by Kloss in the 1960s to describe a process of norm finding that leads to recognized standard language. The term *development* proposed by Kloss himself (Kloss 1967) will not be used because it implies comparison and evaluation, and the notion of one language being better than the other. This is not the case, although different degrees of elaboration do make linguistic varieties more or less suitable for usage in formal domains (legislation, judiciary, religion, science, etc.) (cf. Hymes 1992). In opposition to Hornberger’s framework on language policy and language planning (Hornberger 2006), I shall deny the clear-cut difference between two aspects of language planning: codification of language’s form and elaboration of language’s function. Function and form are entangled to the extent to which new domains require a higher differentiated lexicon and a more complex syntax. Hence, the term *elaboration* refers to both. It describes a process of forming new linguistic items and structures (a new “code”) in order to cope with new linguistic functions.

³ Proposals in norm finding processes do not only come from political institutions, but from educated speakers and writers who care about the language varieties they use and intervene deliberately in their elaboration (Kailuweit 1998). As Kabatek (1996) points out, to some extent the speakers become linguists in the process of language planning.

standard varieties of Romance languages.⁴ According to one of the main assumptions in contact linguistics, namely that typological similarity facilitates mutual structural influence (Weinreich 1953; Siegel 2008; Matras 2009; Johanson 2002, this volume), it is quite probable that linguistic relatedness and typological congruence between Latin and the Romance languages facilitated the borrowing, transfer and copying processes. Although Arabic was the language of a highly elaborated and prestigious culture for centuries in medieval Spain, the morphosyntactic loans from Arabic are insignificant in comparison to the loans from Latin (Penny 1991: 13). Nonetheless, as far as *ausbau* is concerned, not only should linguistic relatedness and typological congruence be taken into account, but also the attitudes of experts and non-specialists towards the source languages that the cultural context imposes.

In the case of Corsican, the most familiar models that one must look into are standard French and standard Italian. For various sociopolitical reasons⁵ that I shall explain in greater detail in the course of this chapter, both languages provide a model that is generally perceived as something to be avoided rather than to be followed. Needless to say, social motivation for a conscious linguistic change has been detected by other researchers in situations of endangered languages and dialects, and shift-induced interference: a group of speakers highlights one linguistic feature to show distinction from other groups, even if the groups speak the same language or dialect.⁶ However, as far as I can see, the specific ambiguity of following a model of another cultured language and avoiding its particular solutions can only be understood if one takes the linguistic change seriously that follows elaboration. The fact that varieties intended for more formal situations differ considerably from unmarked everyday language has been often neglected in the literature.⁷ Hence, it seems necessary to introduce a new term that describes a special strategy in an *ausbau* process which goes beyond the simple and fre-

⁴ Posner (1996: 141–149) refers to the subjunctive, the “accusative and infinitive” and the negation as three examples of modern uses of Romance languages “that might not have survived without the buttress of Latinate grammar” (141).

⁵ In the centralized national state of France, French is the language of breadwinning. However, many Corsicans perceive the French dominance over the island, which dates back to the late 18th century, as the result of a colonization process. Traditionally, Italian was the cultured language for Corsicans, but its prestige was impaired as a result of Mussolini’s occupation of the island during WW2.

⁶ See Thomason this volume and references therein.

⁷ Cf. Thomason and Kaufman 1988; Campbell and Muntzel 1989; Schilling-Estes and Wolfram 1999; Thomason 2001a and 2001b.

quently observed aspect of performing distinctiveness by producing or avoiding certain feature in everyday communication.

I shall call “negative borrowing” a strategy that in a process of *ausbau* weighs the dialectal variation in the light of a model language and opts for employing or further elaborating the local form that is the most dissimilar in comparison to the model. The concept is partly inspired by Jerger’s claim that the same language – French for Corsican – can be a positive model on a constructional level and a negative model on a level of linguistic expression (Jerger 2004: 235). On a constructional level, the model language provides a checklist of linguistic items that must be dealt with in the *ausbau* process. On a level of linguistic expression, the specific solutions of the model language are excluded in order to keep the language in the process of elaboration dissimilar to the model. The concept of “negative borrowing” collates the two aspects, but it primarily refers to a specific strategy in the process of elaboration.

In fact, a word or construction of the model language can function as a kind of linguistic eraser: local expressions that are perceived as too similar to the model are erased. A paradigmatic example in the field of lexicography is the polemic discussion about the Catalan word for ship. *Barco*, homonymous with the Spanish form, was the current word for ship in spoken Catalan until the 1980s. Although linguists proved that *barco* had been used in Catalan for centuries and that it was incorporated into the language in a time when the ending *-o* for a masculine singular still fitted into the morphological system,⁸ the form was considered intolerable in public discourse due to the Spanish parallelism. At school, pupils were taught that the correct Catalan expression is *vaixell*, a word that sounded old-fashioned and pretentious to most adult speakers. As a result of successful school teaching, by 1990 it seemed anachronistic that some linguistically “tolerant” journalists were defending *barco* (Tubau 1990; Kailuweit 2002). *Barco* had been erased from standard Catalan by “negative borrowing”.

It must be pointed out that “negative borrowing” is not just a new term for the old phenomenon of linguistic purism. In the case of “negative borrowing”, the proper language is not an ideal that has reached its level of perfection in the past and is now in danger due to foreign influences. On the contrary, the proper language aspires to a level of elaboration that a model language has already achieved. In order to reach this level, the model lan-

⁸ By the way, the term *barco* was perfectly integrated in a Catalan word family, too: *barca* (‘boat’), *embarcador* (‘wharf’), *embarcació* (‘watercraft’), *embarcar-se* (‘to embark’).

guage is a permanent guide, but the specific solutions for the language in the process of elaboration must be as dissimilar to the model as possible.⁹

“Negative borrowing” can also have another effect, as we will see in the following sections. By comparing the linguistic inventory of the language in the process of elaboration to that of the model language, every form or construction suitable for formal use, but absent in the model language is a feature to be considered and further elaborated: the core grammar of the language in the process of elaboration is defined not by internal aspects, but in comparison with the model language – its lacunae and dissimilarities.

Hence, after a short outline describing the historical situation that led to the differentiation of Corsican as an *ausbau* language (section 2), I shall analyze non-specialist orientated,¹⁰ normative discourse concerning the elaboration of Corsican today (section 3). I shall illustrate the fact that many terms of the Corsican written varieties are designed to avoid obvious parallels not only with French, but also with Italian. The hypothesis that I aim to prove will be that Corsican norm finding is highly influenced by “negative borrowing” to assure – according to Marcellesi’s ([1983] 2003) theory of linguistic marking (section 4) – the status of Corsican as an independent language.

⁹ An anonymous reviewer interprets the term “negative borrowing” strategy as indicating the social distinctiveness between one group and another. S/he claims that the phenomenon itself is well attested, and is neither novel nor restricted to the case study presented here. I only partly agree with this view. The motivation of “negative borrowing” is of course to perform distinctiveness, but this motivation leads to considerable structural changes in the formal varieties of the diasystem (in the sense of Coseriu 1974 and Berruto 2004). The same reviewer asserts that “Corsican, whether thought of as a language or as a variety of a language, is a full linguistic system, and has been for around two hundred years, at least”. This is obviously not the case. “Corsican” has never been one full linguistic system, but a cluster of dialects with Tuscan as an umbrella language (*dachsprache* in the sense of Kloss). Becoming a language of its own is not only a question of social status or prestige as one might suggest defending a concept of variation and style that neglects the diasystematic organization of a historical language (cf. Eckert/Rickfort 2001). In the case of Corsican, it entails the elaboration of new varieties with a lexicon and syntax suitable to substitute Tuscan in representative functions.

¹⁰ In this chapter, “non-specialist linguistics” will be used in a broader sense and not as euphemistic synonym of “folk linguistics”. I will consider as non-specialist orientated linguistic discourse any linguistic discourse that is directed to a broader public in order to inform and entertain the addressees or even influence their linguistic practice. The addressers of non-specialist linguistic discourse could be non-specialists or experts as far as their scientific education is concerned. Especially when I refer to the writings of Corsican (socio)linguists as instances of non-specialist orientated linguistic discourse, I do not cast doubt on their expertise, but only highlight the fact that they intend to reach a non-expert audience.

Nevertheless, the *ausbau* of Corsican seems to be restricted by the requirements of its function as a compensatory language, a function that also facilitates the “negative borrowing” strategy (section 5).

2. Historical background: *ausbau* as a criterion of linguistic independence

The initial statement that Corsican is a relatively new Romance language needs further explanation. The island was dominated by the Roman Republic from 237 BC on. As Giacomo-Marcellesi (1988: 822) points out, latinization was complete and ran parallel with Sardinia and Southern Italy due to both a common substrate and similar social conditions, especially the settlement of retired soldiers from the Naples and Messina regions.

Judging by the absence of linguistic and metalinguistic indicators, during the Middle Ages the Latin in Corsica did not develop into an independent Romance language. The island was ruled by Pisa, causing the Neolatin spoken varieties to be overlaid with dominant Tuscan elements. From 1282, Corsica belonged to the Genoese who continued to use the Tuscan-centered written variety of Italian in prestige domains. As in many other parts of the Italian speaking territory, the local dialect formed a continuum with the language of Dante and Boccaccio: the more formal a situation, the higher the necessity to adapt to the prestige variety. Therefore, the Corsican language was considered a Tuscan dialect from the beginnings of Romance linguistics (Diez 1836: 82), a classification that has been challenged only in the last few decades.

The criteria with which we classify Romance languages are heterogeneous. When Diez differentiated between the national languages French, Spanish and Portuguese, Italian, the language of culture, Provençal (Occitan), the language of the medieval poetry of the troubadours, and also Walachian (Romanian) in his work *Grammatik der romanischen Sprachen*, he applied *avant la lettre* the two criteria that had been established by Kloss in the 1960s: languages can distinguish themselves from one another either by their immanent distance (*abstand*) or by their level of elaboration (*ausbau*) (Kloss 1967). Distance appears as both an external and horizontal criterion that bundles and separates primary varieties – *genolects* in my terminology (Kailuweit 1997: 18–24). In this way, Walachian was primarily a language of distance in Diez’s day and age, a cluster of Romance varieties in a Slavic, Germanic, Hungarian, Albanian, Turkish and Greek surrounding. In contrast, the other five languages correspond to the criterion of *ausbau* which is, to some extent, internal and vertical. As national languages they possess a norm – a representative *grammolect* in my terminology (Kailuweit 1997: 18–24) which is applied in the state apparatus and

taught in schools. Before the language reaches national status, the written culture (especially literature, such as in the case of Italy) is the main point of orientation towards which a language area is able to develop. Provençal (Occitan) has achieved the status of an independent language thanks to the prestige of medieval literature which generally, however, does not form part of the accepted corpus of orientation for modern usage.

The examples show that the grammolectal constitution of a language is media-oriented from the very beginning, seeing as it surpasses the linguistic immediacy, the so-called face-to-face level. The use of the media does not only, however, exceed the horizon of day-to-day communication, but at the same time corresponds to a functional extension and structural elaboration. The grammolectal, mediatized variety adopts functions that are non-existent in genolectal day-to-day communication and does so with the help of a level of formalization that demands reflection and additional study. Potential social mobility is so strongly linked to the acquisition of the standard variety of a (national) language community because the access to the standard is generally socially selective (Bourdieu 1982).

On the base of these preliminary thoughts it becomes clear that the assumption of further Romance languages in French, Spanish or Italian territory is precarious. These languages can hardly be considered languages of *abstand*, due to the fundamental typological similarities and the imprecise dialectal borders. The level of *ausbau* is therefore decisive, as is the speakers' acceptance. In the case of Corsican, the process of *ausbau* is still under way (Goebel 1988; Jerger 2004; Farrenkopf 2011). In *ausbau* processes, one usually differentiates between *corpus planning* and *status planning* (Kloss 1969; Hornberger 2006). The elaboration of the corpus consists not only of an intermedia transcription, in which the day-to-day speech is transported into writing, but also in the adoption of foreign models of formal speech. The status, on the other hand, is a result of the usage of the elaborated items in prestigious forms of media.

It is no coincidence that the beginning of the systematic elaboration of the Corsican written culture dates back to the late 19th century, when French replaced Italian in the areas of written language. When Corsica was purchased by the French crown in 1764 and fully incorporated into France in 1796, the influence of written Italian faded away. However, it was only at the end of the 19th century that French became a reasonably well-known and commonly used language in all written domains, thanks to Jules Ferry's education policy. Interestingly, the first systematic attempts to establish Corsican as an independent (written) language date from the same time (Blackwood 2008: 11–37; Adrey 2009: 160–176). Cut off from Italy for political reasons and thus, in Kloss' (1967) words, having lost its “umbrella language”,

spoken Corsican seemed to be too different to be considered a spoken variety of French. Therefore, standard French never acquired the status of a natural means of formal expression for native speakers of Corsican varieties. Nonetheless, throughout the 20th century, spoken French spread at the expense of Corsican, giving birth to a process of language shift that threatens the future of the Corsican varieties in their function as mother tongues. Today, the majority of Corsicans classify their genoelectal competence as French, but it is difficult to estimate how many Corsicans still master the Corsican language as a genoelect. Going by the 1999 statistics of the *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques* (INSEE)¹¹ a mere 6–10% of all Corsican genoelect speakers born before 1965 passed on this competence to their children (*retransmission habituelle*). Thus, the number of Corsican genoelect speakers has been decreasing by a factor of 10. Nonetheless, the same study proves an increasing degree of occasional transmission (*transmission occasionnelle*) that reaches 65% for the parents' generation born in 1965.

In my opinion, the *transmission occasionnelle* must be interpreted in the light of a tendency that at first view seems to contrast paradoxically with the reduction of linguistic competence in the genoelectal area: despite a loss of genoelect speakers, Corsican has been developing linguistically for several decades. It is used in various kinds of texts, from literature to scientific prose, but does not compete with French in any more than a symbolic way.

Due to the fact that Corsican itself occupies grammoelectal domains, a diglossic dimension arises. In the light of Ferguson's (1959) classical examples – Swiss German, Modern Arabic, Haitian Creole, among others – I wish to redefine diglossia as a hierarchic language contact situation whose relative stability is conspicuous, given that the B-language could potentially insert itself into the functions of the A-language. Based on this claim, in the field of Catalan sociolinguistics a theory has been developed that diglossia is in fact not of long-term stability, but ends with the replacement of the B-language by the A-language or with the so-called normalization of the B-language and the reduction of the A-language (language conflict) (Aracil 1986: 25). The aim of corpus and status planning would therefore not be bilingualism, i.e. balanced competence of both languages in the whole linguistic community, but the reacquisition of monolingualism in the B-language. It is evident that in this case, state independence is a necessary condition but indeed not a sufficient one, as the current status of Gaelic in the Republic of Ireland proves.

¹¹ http://insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=6&ref_id=7500 (accessed 30 September 2013).

Corsica did not have the chance to become an independent state, which would have enabled Corsican to function as the official language. During the short phases of independence in the 18th century (1736 and 1755–69) there was an identity defining discourse (cf. Vergé-Franceschi 1996), but it did not result in a lasting promotion of linguistic independence, not least due to the language thinking that dominated in the period of Enlightenment: in the century of universalism the individual language played no significant role in the identity-forming processes. Just as the Catalans considered the universal language Spanish a means of expression of their cultural independence (Kailuweit 1997: 206–210), the referential language Italian and the universal language French were available to the Corsicans as possible cultured languages.

It was not only the loss of linguistic competence in the Italian grammar, but also the dominant linguistic attitudes in the 19th century that connected the articulation of cultural independence to the use of the mother tongue, i.e. to the genoelectal competence. The absence of political independence and the economic underdevelopment that caused the emigration of a considerable proportion of the population – during the first half of the 20th century, Corsica was one of the most thinly populated regions in Europe – prevented Corsican from becoming a fully elaborated language used in all domains of literacy. The nationalist French linguistic ideology and its realization in language policy (Kailuweit 1997; Schiffman 2002) also played a role in this aspect. The propagation of French monolingualism that made its native competence a condition for participating in both economy and society, resulted in the decreased transmission of Corsican genoelectal competence, as demonstrated in the INSEE study. In addition, after the fascist occupation of the island during the Second World War reintegration into Italophony was definitely out of the question. The only way of maintaining the local dialect seemed to be to convert it into a written language and to teach it at school.¹² As far as norm finding for this new language is concerned, “negative borrowing” as a strategy comes into play to avoid similarities with both French and Italian and to guarantee the symbolic independence of the Corsican grammatical system.

To sum up this section: Based on Kloss’ criteria of *abstand* and *ausbau*, Corsican achieved the status of an independent Romance language in a time span ranging from the late 19th century to post-WWII. Thus, one can observe a paradox that goes back to this period and that is gradually increasing due to the intensification of Corsican lessons at school and the possibilities

¹² Corsican is taught to a percentage of pupils that is higher than for any other minority language in France (Comiti 2005: 69–79; Farrenkopf 2011: 110–117).

offered by the new forms of media: the elaboration and spread of grammolectal competence is accompanied by a loss of genolectal competence. The question therefore remains as to what degree this particular situation influences the strategies underlying borrowing, transfer and copying processes that are at work in the formation of a elaborated variety of Corsican. This variety would symbolically represent the still existing dialectal cluster and assure the survival of Corsican at least as a second language learned at school.

3. Non-specialist orientated discourse

In his study on linguistic attitudes, Ulrich Farrenkopf reports on his own experiences with what I would like to call “negative borrowing” in this chapter. He reports that in a Corsican class he assisted at the Lycée Giocante de Casabianca, the teacher advised his pupils to use *manda* instead of *invia* (‘he/she sends’) and *di ogni locu* instead of *dappertuttu* (‘everywhere’). Farrenkopf points out that all the forms are currently used. With regard to the first two words, the teacher recommended a form that is a homophone in standard Italian but non-existent in French and in the case of the last two, he recommended a form that also differs from standard Italian (Farrenkopf 2011: 80).¹³

The reported cases can obviously not be considered representative, although they may illustrate a more generalized attitude. Therefore, in this section I shall have a more systematic look at different manifestations of non-specialist orientated discourse, i.e. works that are directed toward a broader audience and that, intentionally or non-intentionally, have a certain impact on the readers’ linguistic attitudes and behavior. As we will see, even though the reviewed texts by no means advocate directly for “negative borrowing”, they nevertheless prepare the ground for this phenomenon.

According to the foreword by Jacques Fusina, Jean-Marie Comiti, sociolinguist of the Corsican university at Corte, aims his essay *La langue corse entre chien et loup* (2005) at a broad audience. Comiti starts with the hypothesis of an early Corsican linguistic identity as the perception of a special flavor in the local Latin.¹⁴ He then comments on the formation of Romance languages

¹³ The current form of standard Italian is *dappertutto*. *In ogni luogo* exists as an alternative.

¹⁴ “Considérons que le peuple corse a progressivement imprimé au latin une ‘corsité’ qui préside à son autonomie linguistique et lui confère son caractère propre. Cette nouvelle identité se constitue autour d’une matrice linguistique latine ayant subi très tôt les influences d’un substrat prélatin, d’une part, et ayant intégré, d’autre part, les éléments germaniques introduits par les grandes invasions qui n’ont pas épargné la Corse. D’autres influences viendront s’ajouter par la suite, notamment

and highlights the sound changes that Corsican shares with Portuguese and Catalan (2005: 21–24). In the course of the essay he tackles the question of Tuscanization in order to unmask the widespread belief of a Tuscan-Corsican linguistic unity as a myth that conceals the Corsican monolingualism until the French dominance.¹⁵ The essay does not present a large quantity of linguistic data, but one detail is especially interesting in the context of “negative borrowing”. Comiti describes a tendency of Corsican to reduce the number of nominal classes from four – like in standard Italian – to two. Hence, instead of the masculine and feminine with the ending *-e* – *paese, sale, ponte, nome, fiume, mare; corte, croce, pelle* – we find the masculine forms *paesu, salu, pontu, nomu, fiumu, maru* and the feminine forms *corta, crocia, pella* (Comiti 2005: 116). Comiti does not directly suggest the use of these forms that are – as he points out – more or less accepted, but he raises the question as to whether we are dealing with a normal morphological change or with unacceptable “monstrosities”. He concludes that changes are inevitable for every living language and that the people have the right to establish the solution they perceive as functional (Comiti 2005: 116).¹⁶

Jean Chiorboli's¹⁷ *Le corse pour le nuls* (2010) is aimed not only at short-term tourists, but also at those who have taken up their first or secondary residence on the island. These people are invited to learn some Corsican to communicate with their new neighbors and/or colleagues (Chiorboli 2010: 3–4). In his short introduction into the history of Corsican, Chiorboli insists on the linguistic independence of the island in spite of the impact (more or less profound) by all the languages of foreign rulers.¹⁸ Nonetheless, he ad-

après la naissance des nouvelles langues romanes de proximité, mais sans jamais remettre en cause l'identité propre à la Corse” (Comiti 2005: 21).

¹⁵ “On considéra alors le corse comme une variante locale du toscan en forgeant l'idée qu'il n'y avait dans l'île qu'une seule langue qui pouvait se décliner sous une forme savante, “haute”, et une forme populaire, “basse”. C'est ainsi qu'un fantasmatique monolinguisme toscan est né dans l'imaginaire collectif et que le monolinguisme corse, qui avait vécu comme une réalité linguistique inconfortable, parfois dégradante, a été occulté, escamoté, évacué telle une tare que la conscience linguistique collective a jetée aux oubliettes” (Comiti 2005: 31).

¹⁶ “Les mutations linguistiques sont le lot de toute langue vivante dont l'évolution est inévitable. C'est peut-être le dicton populaire (qui véhicule toute la sagesse du monde) qui semble répondre le plus efficacement à la question: *a pratica vince a grammatica* (l'usage vient à bout de la grammaire)” (Comiti 2005: 117).

¹⁷ Jean Chiorboli is professor for Corsican Language and Humanities at the University of Corsica (Corte).

¹⁸ “... l'influence plus ou moins profonde du latin de Rome, des divers parlers italiens (notamment toscan et sarde) puis du français s'exerce sûr île, sans jamais

mits that Corsican remains a part of Italo-Romance even though the island is integrated into the French speaking sphere of communication.¹⁹

In his short grammar we find a couple of potential examples for “negative borrowing”. One candidate would be the names of the week in a phonetically more southern form and without the ending *-di* (‘-day’) that we find in French and standard Italian (*luni, marti, mercuri*, etc.; French: *lundi, mardi, mercredi*, etc.; Italian: *lunedì, martedì, mercoledì*, etc.) (Chiorboli 2010: 96). As another candidate for “negative borrowing”, I would like to mention the paraphrase of obligation *ci vole à* + infinitive (Chiorboli 2010: 62). If Corsican allows for variation (*ci vole à, bisogna*, etc.),²⁰ Chiorboli mentions just one form that has no functional parallel in standard Italian.

Jean-Marie Arrighi – a school inspector for Corsican language teaching – also addresses his *Histoire de la langue corse* (2002) to a broad audience that is not restricted to Corsica.²¹ While discussing the relation of Corsican and Italian he tells a “joke”: Corsican is not an Italian dialect, but Italian should be considered a Corsican dialect, since Corsican is closer to Latin.²² He goes on to concede that Corsican incontrovertibly belongs to the Italo-Romance group, although its place in this group is debatable.²³ Some pages later he insists on the similarity of Tuscan, Corsican and the North of Sardinia. In the Middle Ages, the three regions are supposed to have formed a linguistic unity.²⁴ Hence, Corsican could claim the same heritage as Tuscan and, in fact, has conserved part of this heritage that standard Italian has already lost, as some lexical and morphological examples prove. One example is the main-

gommer entièrement des caractères linguistiques spécifiques forgés au cours d’une évolution plurimillénaire” (Chiorboli 2010: 10).

¹⁹ “Si la Corse [...] reste dans l’aire linguistique de l’ensemble italo-roman, où elle a longtemps évolué, elle a cependant complètement basculé dans le champ de communication français” (Chiorboli 2010: 10).

²⁰ <http://gbatti-alinguacorsa.pagesperso-orange.fr/grammaire/tournures.htm#ILFAUT> (accessed 30 September 2013).

²¹ “Cet ouvrage a d’abord pour but d’apporter au grand public – corse ou non – une information minimale, aussi objective que possible, sur les étapes historiques qui ont conduit à l’élaboration de la langue corse” (Arrighi 2002: 9).

²² “Le grand avocat corse Moro-Giafferi, à la question d’un journaliste “le corse est-il un dialecte italien?”, répondit: “c’est le contraire, c’est l’italien qui est un dialecte du corse, puisque le corse, c’est le latin”. Au delà de la boutade, c’est aussi une évidence qu’il énonçait” (Arrighi 2002: 35).

²³ “A l’intérieur de ces langues romanes, le corse [...] se situe indiscutablement dans le groupe dit “italo-roman”. Il y a débat cependant sur sa place à l’intérieur de ce groupe” (Arrighi 2002: 36–37).

²⁴ “Durant la période médiévale, on doit considérer que l’ensemble Toscane-Corse-Nord de la Sardaigne constitue linguistiquement un tout” (Arrighi 2002: 43).

tenance of *avali* ('now') that has been substituted by *ora* in standard Italian.²⁵ This form is also mentioned by Giacomo-Marcellesi (1988: 823) as a typical Corsican marker, but one restricted to southern varieties. Thus, presenting this marker as Corsican *tout court* is a gesture that erases variation by "negative borrowing".

Arrighi concludes by adducing some examples of *-u* at the end of words instead of Tuscan *-o* and of the prepositional accusative in medieval Tuscan texts from the island that illustrate the regional linguistic flavor.²⁶ Even though these phenomena are not restricted to Corsica – as he points out – in their totality they make Corsican stand out. In addition, although the markers may not mean the same to the specialists, they represent a highly important symbolic treasure for the inhabitants of the island.²⁷ This last comment is especially interesting. It highlights the fact that what we might call the core grammar of Corsican is not determined by the linguistic system itself, but by a set of features representing dissimilarities with the model languages. We shall find this argumentation more explicitly in an expert-orientated discourse by Marcellesi that we shall analyze in the next section.

To conclude this section I shall comment briefly on a more systematic study that was undertaken by Christian Jerger in 2004. In his dissertation, Jerger analyzes 30 Corsican dictionaries published between 1905 and 1999 (Jerger 2004: 80–82). These dictionaries oscillate between a descriptive and prescriptive claim. Hence, they can be considered instances of non-specialist orientated discourse in that one of their objectives, albeit not the primary objective, is to function as handbooks of reference for the formal use of Cor-

²⁵ "Il n'est dès lors pas absurde d'affirmer [...] que le corse est, autant que l'italien officiel, héritier du toscan primitif et de sa littérature [...] De cette ancienne communauté témoigne en particulier le lexique: de nombreux mots aujourd'hui disparus de l'italien, ou cantonnés à un usage poétique, restent usités en corse. C'est le cas de *avà* ou *avali* (maintenant), remplacé par *ora* en italien moderne, ou de *nimu* (personne) remplacé par *nessuno*. En morphologie, le corse a maintenu la forme de la première personne du pluriel du présent de l'indicatif, quand l'italien l'a alignée sur celle du subjonctif (*andiamo* en italien, *andemu* en corse) (Arrighi 2002: 44).

²⁶ "Ses traits caractéristiques [du corse, R.K.] se repèrent dans des textes notariaux ou baptismaux [...] On y constate notamment la présence du *u* final au lieu du *o* toscan: "*e statu battizatu ne la iesa di sanctu Iuvanni per me prete Paduanu*". Une communauté rurale qui élit un chasseur a "*eleto a Colombanu*". On rencontre ici l'emploi corse du *à* avant le complément d'objet direct quand celui-ci est un nom de personne" (Arrighi 2002: 45–46).

²⁷ "Chacun de ses phénomènes pris isolément peut se retrouver quelque part ailleurs dans la Romania, mais la présence de l'ensemble de ces traits permet de reconnaître "le corse". S'ils n'ont pas la même importance pour les spécialistes, ils ont un sens symbolique fort pour les habitants de l'île eux-mêmes" (Arrighi 2002: 46).

sican. Jerger points out that as far as the explicit comment of French and Italian loan words is concerned, the reviewed dictionaries reveal a rather neutral attitude towards Italian loan words, whereas in the older editions and also in some of the newer ones, French borrowings are stigmatized (Jerger 2004: 180–183).

In the field of neologisms, Jerger (2004: 201–203) observes a strong tendency to adopt forms of standard Italian, partly with smaller phonetic and morphological modifications (*anapéstu; aerunàutu; aritimetica; annegazione*). Corsican forms that avoid both the French and the Italian form – e.g. Corsican *aberramento*, French *aberration*, Italian *aberrazione* – are relatively rare (Jerger 2004: 204). Detailed scrutiny of the use of the morphemes *-ista* versus *-istu* for nomina agentis and *-abile/ibile* versus *-evule* for adjectives of “disposition” shows a tendency towards the learned suffix *-ista* in the first case and of the inherited form *-evule* in the second. While the use of *-ista* does not differ from the standard Italian solution, *-evule* is no longer productive in the model language (Jerger 2004: 230–236). Therefore, the choice of traditional *-evule* instead of the learned suffixes *-abili/ibile* can be considered a case of “negative borrowing” in the sense of the present study.

4. Markers of “Corsicanness”

In an academic article first published in 1983, Jean-Baptiste Marcellesi develops a theory of linguistic marking as a central strategy to construct and maintain linguistic identity.²⁸ A linguistic identity marker is a feature that is considered representative when identifying a certain language or variety. Marcellesi points out that markers need not be central features as far as the linguistic system as a whole is concerned.²⁹ In addition – and this is especially important in the context of a theory of “negative borrowing” – the markers are not even necessarily the only forms for a certain function that are consistent with the normal usage. It is entirely sufficient for them to be perceived as symbolically representative.³⁰

²⁸ A marker in Marcellesi’s terms would be – more or less – a stereotype (third order indexicality in the sense of Johnstone et al. 2006). This is not the place to discuss this terminological difference in detail. However, as the stereotype has a negative connotation, the term should be avoided in the context of norm finding.

²⁹ “Les indicateurs d’identité ne sont pas nécessairement des faits linguistiques importants, si on les considère d’un stricte point de vue de structure” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 210).

³⁰ “En réalité dans la communauté qu’ils caractérisent, il s’agit de traits dépendant fortement de la puissance symbolique que la communauté leur confère, provo-

To retrack the question of Corsican linguistic identity, Marcellesi starts with an anecdote. He quotes a Catalan linguist and militant who defended the close relationship of Corsican and Italian at a conference in 1981, stating that the slogan *libertà per i nostri fratelli incarcerati* that he had read on the city walls of Ajaccio was identical to one on the city walls of Florence. Marcellesi comments that on the one hand, the example proves the ineffectiveness of the attempts of those who try to attest that Corsican differs greatly from Italian and is even closer to Portuguese from a linguistic point of view. On the other hand, the similarity of a certain construction does not prove anything with regard to sociolinguistic perception.³¹ What is really important for the perception of linguistic identity is the specific and to some extent arbitrary catalog of markers that stand for the linguistic community.³²

Marcellesi ([1983] 2003: 212–215) goes on to list seven canonical markers of “Corsicanness”: the ending *-u* which corresponds to the standard Italian *-o*, the palatalized /t/ and /d/, the sandhi, the vowel raising of /e/ and /o/ to [i] and [u] when the tone of a derivative form changes to another syllable, the article, the compound future and the prepositional accusative. In the main part of his article, Marcellesi ([1983] 2003: 218–234) deals with two other markers, Corsican exclamative and subordinate structures that are dissimilar to their French and standard Italian counterparts. In between the two parts, we find some highly interesting considerations concerning the status and function of identity markers in the context of language teaching. He starts this section with the remark that students who haven’t learned a local

quant des entreprises de valorisation et de stigmatisation liées au degré de prise de conscience de l’identité et aux projets de définition de la communauté que forment les groupes culturellement hégémoniques qui la constituent et qui la structurent” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 210).

³¹ “Dans un congrès récent (Montpellier, décembre 1981) un chercheur et militant catalaniste [...] soutenait la cause de l’italianité de notre langue en faisant remarquer que l’inscription qu’il avait lue sur les murs d’Ajaccio en août 1981 (“libertà per i nostri fratelli incarcerati”) aurait pu être tracée, exactement identique, sur les murs de Florence. Cet exemple est extrême. Mais il suffit d’un côté à dénoncer la vanité des efforts de ceux qui continuent à écrire que le corse est très éloigné sur le plan strictement linguistique de l’italien, et même qu’il est plus proche du portugais. En sens inverse, la réalité linguistique étant ce qu’elle est, on met ainsi en évidence que les rapprochements de détail ne font rien à l’affaire [...] cela ne prouve absolument rien quant à l’identité sociolinguistique” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 211).

³² “Comme pour chaque langue ce qui fait la corsité, c’est la synchrasie, le mélange intime en une structure unique d’un ensemble de traits pancorse – dont chacun peut se trouver ailleurs, isolé – et d’un ensemble de variables différenciant, selon la géographie ou l’appartenance sociale, des Corses entre eux, qui permet de cerner la corsité linguistique” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 211).

variety of Corsican as a first language need special orientation as far as the Corsican norm is concerned.³³ This orientation should be based on the decision by norm-giving authorities that are acknowledged by the mass of speakers.³⁴ The autonomy that the norm-giving authorities guarantee could be illusory, following an external norm either explicitly or implicitly, consciously or unconsciously.³⁵ As far as the Corsican language is concerned, the process of identity marking oscillates between two poles: integration into the external, i.e. Italian model or the search for forms that are the most dissimilar to the model languages.³⁶ Having taken this into consideration, the sentences *libertà per i nostri fratelli incarcerati* might be a perfect example of Corsican if one adopts a norm that is based on the northern dialects and their dominant orthography, but at the same time, this option relates identity to a historically and culturally motivated integration.³⁷ The alternative, i.e. the search for the most dissimilar forms, is also problematic because it risks mixing up forms from different Corsican dialects – it is not always the southern forms that are most dissimilar in comparison to standard Italian.³⁸

In conclusion, Marcellesi advocates a norm that is based on generally accepted markers of Corsican identity.³⁹ Needless to say, the list of theses

³³ “En effet dès qu’on est en situation d’enseigner la langue à des gens qui ne la parlent pas et qu’on n’est pas dans une situation privilégiée (unité dialectale dans un village par exemple), il n’est pas facile d’échapper au problème (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 216).”

³⁴ “Une langue aura son autonomie quand la communauté qui la parle aura ses instances normalisatrices propres, c’est une chose, et que ces instances normalisatrices sont reconnues par la masse parlante” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 216).

³⁵ “Mais cette autonomie peut fort bien n’être que factice: C’est le cas quand les instances normalisatrices de la communauté reproduisent explicitement ou implicitement, consciemment ou inconsciemment, un modèle extérieur à la communauté” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 216–217).

³⁶ “Les instances normalisatrices sont contraintes de naviguer entre deux points extrêmes: l’un est l’intégration au modèle extérieur [...] L’autre point extrême opposé est la recherche de l’écart maximum par rapport au modèle extérieur” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 217).

³⁷ “Dans ce cas la recherche de l’identité est liée à l’intégration, à l’historicité de la communauté corse, à l’enracinement dans son passé culturel (qui n’est pas homologique avec son passé politique [...])” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 217–218).

³⁸ “Contrairement à ce que pourrait faire croire cette première série, l’écart maximum ne va pas toujours conduire aux variétés sudistes [...] tout autant que la règle d’intégration non critique, la règle de l’écart maximum a ses impasses et ses absurdités” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 218).

³⁹ “C’est pourquoi nous pensons que la normalisation doit être éminemment critique et de ce fait prendre soigneusement en compte les indicateurs de corsité” (Marcellesi [1983] 2003: 218).

markers is open and there will not be significant variation for all markers. Even so, I would like to raise the hypothesis (which further research will either confirm or confute) that linguistic markers of Corsican identity which compete with other dialectal and sociolectal forms are the best candidates for “negative borrowing”.⁴⁰ If a form or construction is accepted as a marker of “Corsicanness”, then in the long run, varying forms will be erased that are more similar to the model languages. Variation in the field of linguistic features that are less salient as markers of identity must be more stable and allow for forms that are similar to the model languages.

5. “Negative borrowing” and compensation

In the last section of this chapter, I will cast light on the relation between “negative borrowing” and what I wish to call the compensatory function of language maintenance (Kailuweit in print). The concept of compensation I refer to falls back on the “compensation theory” (Ritter 1961; Lübke 1977; Marquard 1978). The works of the German philosopher Joachim Ritter and

⁴⁰ An anonymous reviewer has commented that this hypothesis is circular, because in her or his view, “negative borrowing” means that the presence and/or absence of particular elements have become markers of Corsican identity since the forms differ from the other relevant languages. This is an incorrect interpretation of “negative borrowing”. Especially the diachronic process of elaboration and norm finding is completely ignored. “Negative borrowing” is a conscious or unconscious strategy in norm finding processes. It provides specific solutions at the level of expressions for structures that are taken as means of formalized (elaborated) speech from the model language(s). The specific solutions are taken from an array of varying dialectal (and/or sociolectal) forms. The effect of the ongoing process of “negative borrowing” will be that the form that is most dissimilar from the model gains in prestige and erases the alternative forms that are more similar to the model language(s) at least at the level of formalized speech (at school, in other domains of writing, etc.). This entails that the forms chosen by “negative borrowing” will become potential markers of linguistic identity (Corsican identity in our case), but not all dissimilar forms that are elaborated in a process of “negative borrowing” are already markers before this process sets on. In addition, not all existing linguistic markers of (Corsican) identity result from “negative borrowing”. Markers are by definition dissimilar, but in the sense of *abstand*. However, there are markers without variation (i.e. the ending *-u* which corresponds to the standard Italian *-o*) and if no process of elaboration takes places, an existing variation in which the marker is one form among others will not be affected, which is even more relevant. Hence, the hypothesis claims that a marker that competes with other dialectal forms is only a perfect candidate for consequent “negative borrowing” during a process of norm finding and elaboration, i.e. during a process that erases variation in favor of the form that is most dissimilar from the model.

his students Hermann Lübbe and Odo Marquard revived the debate about the function of the humanities in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result of compensation, the humanities counterbalanced the loss of tradition, brought about by the processes of acceleration, rationalization and standardization that characterize modern times. Compensation can however be observed not only on a level of scholarship, but also in the practice of everyday life itself. Lübbe (1992) chooses the phenomenon of city planning as an example, while Marquard (2000: 122) transfers the ideas to the sphere of politics and points out that regionalisms are cultivated in a time in which the world is becoming increasingly standardized. Compensation by means of emphasis on regionality is carried out more often than not in relation to language and, in fact, in language areas in which minority languages and dialects are under pressure from national languages.

The parameters that Lübbe sets out in his example from the field of city planning can be transferred to the Corsican setting. The “heritage neutrality” of modern architecture under the “constraints of functional demands”, which – as he points out – must be compensated for, relate, with regard to minority language such as Corsican, to nationalization, Europeanization, and globalization, which orientate language and cultural practice towards French and, increasingly, English. A sphere of communication is thereby created, which is too large to guarantee identity anchoring. An identity deficit arises, which must be compensated for. Lübbe’s premodern structural condition the compensation endeavors fall back on is accompanied by relics of traditional speech in the field of communication, which are still found among older generations in rural areas. Just as importance was placed upon not transmitting these language forms to future generations in an age of unbridled belief in progress, today there are language activists in many places (such as the citizens’ initiatives in Lübbe), who are encouraged by experts (dialectologists, sociolinguists) and demand the preservation of traditional, regional, or rather local speech and are willing to make a public effort.

However, it is not the goal of compensation to develop a language policy which would lead to the *ausbau* of dialects and minority languages into full-fledged cultured languages as part of a nation-building process. It has much more to do with a limited, symbolic use, starting with the labeling of the public realm (Blackwood 2011) and ranging from interlacing regional words and phrases into conversation in the national language, i.e. in Corsican French, to instructing language in schools, which does not necessarily lead to a high grammolectal competence for the majority of school pupils.

Lübbe’s statement that in the activists’ view, as a matter of principle, everything that is “old” and still exists is unquestionably worth preserving,

undoubtedly implies a particular value judgment, which I do not wish to confer upon (individual) Corsican dialects. Regardless of value judgments, if one considers preservation as primarily compensatory, it seems more understandable that it will not amount to a standard debate in the form of a *questione della lingua*, but rather to an explicit and conscious process (to greater or lesser extent) of “negative borrowing”.

The effect it has on grammolectalization is limited precisely because it is symbolic. If one does not wish to challenge the identity status of Corsican, the efforts at grammolectalization can remain partial. These partial efforts thus offer a point of reference that transcends the practice of everyday life for the construction of a “diffuse solidary community” in which partial grammolectal competence can be punctually retrieved in order to compensate for identity loss.

I would once again like to stress that such a compensatory practice appears to me to be just as legitimate as the effort to reverse language substitution processes. Ultimately, it is a necessary outcome of the modernization process, as demonstrated by the compensation theory with regard to the humanities. In this respect, describing language practice as compensation does not mean that this practice is perceived as inauthentic, but as an alternative way to maintain dialects and minority languages. The question as to how compensatory language maintenance influences the relationship between a minority language and a national language in the long run, and whether or not it can prevent extinction, will not be brought up here. It is clear, however, that as long as compensatory practice is a societal concern, the minority language will not become extinct, even if the competence of speakers does develop from a genolectal to a (limited) grammolectal one.

In this context, it is important to take into consideration that compensation entails a practice that is necessarily cost-intensive, even if it seems cheaper in comparison to full-fledged “normalization” or the Reverse Language Shift program. It is not only the case that the production of linguistic presence in the public realm (labeling) and school instruction cost tax dollars, but compensation also demands a varying, but not insignificant input of time and money from the individual.⁴¹ Many Corsicans are clearly willing to provide these resources. Should things remain this way, there is hope that Corsican will persist at least as a compensational language. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether the daily routine of compensatory practice amounts to

⁴¹ Attending facultative language courses at public schools or private institutions, buying teaching material and media products in Corsican or participating in Corsican social networks on the web, etc.

cognitive dissonance, since the nature of the relationship between one linguistic strategy leading to identity by means of integration and another that aims to achieve identity by means of “negative borrowing” remains unclear.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to prove that perceived similarities play an important role in the development of what one could call a sociolinguistic core grammar of Corsican. Similarities are important in a negative sense in that forms that are too similar to the model languages (French and Italian) tend to be excluded from the core grammar and substituted by forms that are more dissimilar. Nonetheless, what we have considered a feature in the process of elaboration is dictated by the model languages – by French in particular – that provide the textbooks and linguistic manuals on which the norm finding process is based. I have called this phenomenon “negative borrowing”: while structural patterns are taken from the model language, similarities must be avoided at the level of expression. One can observe two strategies that aim to guarantee a Corsican linguistic identity. The first only opposes French forms and tolerates similarities to standard Italian, the second consequently opts for solutions that are most dissimilar to both model languages. Jerger (2004: 318) highlights the contradiction between the two strategies and states that the first strategy remains dominant. Taking into account Marcellesi’s ([1983] 2003) theory of identity markers, one could pose the hypothesis that the more accepted an identity marker is, the higher the probability that it will become a good candidate for consequent “negative borrowing” if it competes with other dialectal or sociolectal forms, excluding similarities with both French and standard Italian. “Negative borrowing” may lead to a certain disharmony in the internal linguistic system (combination of forms stemming from different dialectal traditions). To take these risks seems to be more worthwhile in a context of linguistic compensation, in which the developing language does not function as the only language or as the dominant one in all domains, but rather as an important symbol for the speaker community that marks the identity of the community in times of inevitable nationalization, Europeanization and globalization. I would like to once again insist on the fact that I consider “negative borrowing” a perfectly legitimate strategy of norm finding. It is up to the Corsican speaker community to either accept or reject the proposed forms. The (foreign) linguist must describe, but not judge the strategies employed by Corsican language activists.

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