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Structure and Meaning of Linguistic Variation in Italian Migrant Children in Germany

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0. Introduction

When made available to fine grain analysis by means of tape recording, the linguistic behaviour of Italian migrant children living in the Federal Republic of Germany is easily observed to show a high degree of variability. The children alternate between 'German' and 'Italian', and between a 'standard' variety and a 'dialectal' variety of both; and even these varieties are not homogenous but a number of linguistic categories are realized differently from time to time. In this paper we want to outline a model for the common grammatical description of several types of variation. On the basis of this model, we will then show that the relevance of the phenomenon of structural variation cannot be captured unless it is complemented by an analysis of its social (interactionally accomplished) meaning. The discussion will mainly be concerned with the functions of linguistic variation in and for a specific interactive episode (*diskursfunktionale Variation*); a second type of social meaning that may be carried by linguistic variation and which we have labelled somewhat provisionally 'symptomatic', is treated elsewhere (cf. Auer & di Luzio, in press).

The data we will present here have been collected in a project on the native language of Italian migrant children in Konstanz (*Muttersprache italienischer Gastarbeiterkinder, M.I.G.*).¹

¹ For reasons of space, only few data can be reproduced here. Brigitte Behrens, Ilona Klein, Domenico d'Angelo and others substantially helped in recording and transcribing the data – we want to thank them here.

Note the following transcription symbols:

- / : phonet. break-off (glottal constriction)
- (.) : phonetic pause
- : pause not exceeding 0.2 seconds
- h h h : laughter
- [] : higher/lower pitch level
- ʔ : glottal stop

For the transcription of the Italian passages, we use the following symbols:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| E, O, I : open vowels | s, z : [s], [z] |
| e, o, i : closed vowels | s', z' : [ʃ], [ʒ] |
| ɛ, ɔ : very closed (high) variant | l', n' : [λ], [ŋ] |
| k, g : [k], [g] | mm, dd : [m:], [d:] |
| ts, dz : [ts], [dz] | ȳ : Zentralisierung |
| c', g' : [tʃ], [dʒ] | |

1. Scope of Variation in Italian Migrant Children's Speech

Probably the most striking phenomenon in the linguistic behaviour of Italian migrant children in Konstanz is their alternating use of 'German' and 'Italian' – a phenomenon known as code-switching, or language alternation. It is used in the following extracts by a bilingual speaker to mark an intended change in participant constellation, in the asterisked lines:

(1) VIERER A:1:1–6/ii

- 01 Al.: *allora proviam;*
((mn))
02 x: *kominc'amo kon Alfredo allorë;*
((f))
03 Cm.: *kõ Alfredo;*
((mf))
04 Ag.: *(ajo)*
05 x: *he? --*
*06 Ag.: *°fang mal an°*

- 01 Al.: *okay then let's try it;*
02 x: *let's start with Alfredo then;*
03 Cm.: *[with Alfredo;*
04 Ag.: *(oh yes)*
05 x: *okay? --*
*06 Ag.: *so you start*

(2) TARZAN 46

- 01 t-Nc.: *i bambini; – Hänsel Gretel =ke dovevano fare;*
02 *la madre – non o kapito;*
03 (1.0)
04 *kon i:: kon i: rok/ Kieselsteine ke kos=eranë;*
05 Nc.: *Kieselsteine –le eh Steine dovE:: s – eh sOnO di*
06 *luc'e dOvE*
*07 In.: *ja schon aber wieso hab.n se die denn genommen wenn sie*
08 *so weit weg müssen*
09 Nc.: *[k/ pEr nO:n:: pEr nOn:: – [si ((etc.))*

- 01 t-Nc.: *the children; – Hänsel and Gretel=what did they have*
02 *to do; the mother – I didn't understand;*
03 (1.0)
04 *with the:: with the: sto/ pebbles what was it;*
05 Nc.: *pebbles – the eh stones where – eh they're made of*
06 *light (?) where*
*07 In.: *okay but why did they take them with them although they*
08 *had to go so far away*
09 Nc.: *[for no:t for no:t – yes ((etc.))*

(3) FOTOROMANZO A:430,1

- 01 b: *annamaria [perke parli sempre dialetto;*
*02 Fr.: *m\die/kann halt nicht anderscht – sie [ver/sucht/ja*
03 ?:
04 Fr.: *italienisch [zu sprechen --*
05 b?: *(mhm)*

- 01 b: *annamaria why do you always speak dialect;*
*02 Fr.: *m she cannot do otherwise – she [tries*
03 ?:
04 Fr.: *[to speak Italian --*
05 b?: *(mhm)*

((discussion continues in Italian, without Fr.))

(4) PRANZO A/I, 61

((Dn. is about to answer a.'s question concerning the difference between two types of German schools, *Hauptschule* and *Realschule*))

- 01 Dn.-a: *nO: – n si fannO: piü materie:=perQ=m – fannO*
02 *(.) per ezempiO: nOi: siamO: alla pag'ina (.)*
03 *c'inkwe:/nO: – nell=ingle:ze=e llOrO sOnO*
04 *g'a nella pag'g'ina sEtte:: – (g'innO:)*
05 *'ssEmpre: piü: (.) zve:ltO di nOi.=*
06 a: *=mhm,*
07 (7.0)
*08 Dn.-b: *gell?*
09 (4.0)
10 b?: *°°m°° –*
11 Dn.: *nicht daß ich nach – du sagst so wieder – ich*
12 *lüge;*
13 b: *?eh! ehhehi wann hab ich das gesagt?*
((mf))

- 01 Dn.-a: *no – they do not have more subjects=but=m – they*
02 *do (.) for instance we are at page (.)*
03 *five/you see – in English=and they are*
04 *already at page seven. – (they)*
05 *always (go) faster than we do.=*
06 a: *=mhm,*
07 (7.0)
*08 Dn.-b: *right?*
09 (4.0)
10 b?: *m –*
11 Dn.: *just that I – that you can't say again – I am*
12 *a liar;*
13 b: *?eh! ehhehi when did I say that?*

((continues in German))

Code-Switching may be seen provisionally as the use of different varieties out of a single linguistic repertoire, by one or several speakers in a given interactive episode, that is, variation on the elements contained in this repertoire (cf. Gumperz, 1969: 244).

Examining more closely the two elements in the linguistic repertoire between which alternation occurs, we note that the terms 'Italian' and 'German' should be seen as no more than a sort of convenient shorthand. Far from being internally homogeneous, both systems themselves show variation between the standard variety (Italian or German) and the local dialect variety (a southern Italian dialect and *Alemannisch*), respectively. In order to interpret linguistic alternation in conversations among and with migrant children, for instance, it is generally not without consequences whether they alternate between standard Italian and Alemannian or between Alemannian and Lucanian. On the other hand, we observe code switching not only between Italian and German, but also within both diasystems, between the dialect and the standard. Our original representation of the repertoire thus turns out to be inadequate; instead of two elements it must contain the following varieties: Italian dialect, *Alemannisch*, standard Italian, and standard German. We will not be concerned with variation between the German varieties and will direct our focus on the Italian domain of the repertoire.

In the following extract, alternation between 'standard Italian' and 'dialect' is used to do the same job as 'German'/'Italian' alternation in data (1) to (4):

(5) VIERER 47/48 (II)

- 16 Ag.: au:: so g'a le tre=medzdzO; --
 01 x: so le tre=medzdzO?
 02 Al.: sei mattë so lë kwattrë menë c'ink
 03 Ag.: jija!!
 ((ff, sotto voce))
 04 Al.: passatë
 05 Ag.: a verdammt nom --
 06 x: le kwattro meno c'inkwe! e tanto tempo ke stiamo
 07 kwi g'a c'oe un=ore!
 08 Cl.: [e piu: d=un orë
 09 Cm.: [piu:
 10 Ag.: [piu:
 11 Al.: [kwasë n=orë e medzdzO
 12 Cm.: [piu kwasë nu=orë e medzdzO
 13 x: ke stiamo a kiakkierare kosi --
 14 Ag.: së! e allorë daj - fac'emë tuttë kosë
 15 Al.: weiter! ↗

- 16 Ag.: ow.: it's already half past three; --
 01 x: it's half past three?
 02 Al.: you're a fool it's quarter to four
 03 Ag.: really!
 04 Al.: later than that
 05 Ag.: oh damn it --
 06 x: quarter to four! it's been so long that we've
 07 stayed here an hour already!
 08 Cl.: [it's more than [an hour
 09 Cm.: [more
 10 Ag.: [more
 11 Al.: [almost an hour and a half
 12 Cm.: [more than almost an hour and a half
 13 x: that we've been talking like that --
 14 Ag.: yes! so come on -- let's do everything
 15 Al.: let's go on ↗

If we take our analysis a step further, once again the terms 'standard Italian' and 'Italian dialect x' prove to be very loose approximations when used to characterize the varieties contrasted by the participants. Careful analysis, for instance, reveals that the variety used by most of the migrant children in Konstanz as their nearest approximation to standard Italian (displayed, for instance, when explicitly requested to speak 'Italian', e.g. at the Italian school or during interviews) is a partly *ad hoc* and highly tenuous construction laboriously pieced together using structures from Italian dialect, German (dialect), and Italian standard. Similarly, the dialect variety spoken by the majority of the children is not the parents' original dialect, but a structurally heterogeneous variety.

Now an attempt might be made to further refine the model by once more doubling the elements in the repertoire, once more discovering alternation between the subvarieties and again subdividing them if necessary, and continuing in this way, until stable (homogenous) sub-varieties appear. However, as we will demonstrate in a moment, this model is already inadequate for variation on the second level (standard variety vs. dialect variety); it breaks down completely for third- or higher-order variation.

Let us consider what varies on levels beyond the alternation between dialect and standard: no longer entire linguistic (sub)systems, but individual linguistic categories, such as the word-final unstressed vowel, which is reduced to schwa with greater or lesser frequency. This type of variation in the application of certain rules is the one usually represented by Labovian variable rules based on statistical distributions. Consider now the consequences for this type of variation for our initial attempt to subdivide the children's speech into homogeneous varieties. Variability e.g. in the reduction of final vowels to schwa is present both in the children's standard variety and in their dialect variety. Thus, if we state final vowel reduction separately for both systems, we are not capturing a salient generalization relevant to the task of describing the structure of the children's linguistic behavior, especially their Italian

varieties viz. that variable schwa word-finally is a phenomenon characteristic for all Italian varieties of the Southern Italian migrant children.

It seems then that we are confronted with two quite different types of variation. In one case, we find alternation between two systems, for instance standard Italian and an Italian dialect; in the other, we find variability in the realization of a single parameter within a (dia-)system that comprises both of them. And indeed, the present state of the art of code-switching research and variation analysis is characterized by a parallel but largely independent methodological and conceptual development². While code-switching research has avoided the step from intersystemic to intrasystemic variation, variation analysis has thus far been unwilling to perform the corresponding task of integrating individual varying parameters to an extent that would allow the constitution of systems to be examined. As a corollary of this somewhat unfruitful division of labour, the interactional function of code-switching has been investigated, while Labov-type variation is only considered to be meaningful as a marker of social class.

Now there is a phenomenon which has not received much attention by (socio)linguistics up to now³, perhaps because it dangerously blurs the borderline between the two types of variation considered so far: the phenomenon of code-shifting – the gradual transition from a variety A to a variety B by one or by several participants in an interaction. Here are some examples:

(6) VIERER B 69ff.

- 01 m: *dove siete stati*
 02 Ag.: *a KKomo*
 03 Cm.: *a Kkomo*
 04 Ag.: *dalla mia nonna =*
 05 Cm.: *=dalla nonnina –*
 06 Cl.: *San Kiriko –*
 07 m: *[e kome k] om = E [komo rakkontami un pó*
 08 Ag.: *[° (...)°] [e, bella c'ittá*
 09 Al.: *[mm; (schpinnst)]*
 10 Cm.: *[?ðð! piú] bbellë dë kwa*
 11 Ag.: *[?ðððh!]*
 12 m: *[e ke fa] [c'ev/*
 13 Al.: *[a wa sei ruhig du,*

² Although there exists an extensive literature on code-switching, the only serious theoretical approach seems to be the one developed by J. Gumperz (cf. Gumperz, 1976, Blom & Gumperz, 1972, Gumperz & Hernández, 1968 (1971); also cf. Gal, 1979).

The classical approach to variation analysis is to be found in Labov, 1966 and 1972; a relatively recent documentation is Labov (ed.), 1980.

³ A notable exception is Gal's work on the bilingual situation in Oberwart (Gal, 1979). According to Gal, shifting is not possible between two varieties A and B, if there is switching between A and B. As our data show, this is a contestable statement.

- 14 Ag.: *Komo E piú bbellë heil sakr gibt en schöne* [Münster du:
 15 Cm.: *oh tu në*
 16 *puoi parlarë proprië*
 17 Ag.: *c'e un bel ahm mm – Platz lá*
 18 Al.: *a [wa Konschdanz isch schöner*
 19 Ag.: *mit Lichter drum*
 01 Cm.: *ganz (echt) [kuillë lá kaminëñë komë lë diavëlë kaminëñë*
 02 *(...)]*
 03 Ag.: *[a ja*
 04 Cm.: *vin: n: n: ((imitates noise of engine))*
 05 Al.: *ehhe it wegen fahren von der Schönheit isch Konschdanz*
 06 *[schöner der See hier die Brücke des [Münschter*
 07 Ag.: *no [vajë geh zum Como*
 08 *See ema vëré kiss ke fa u*

- 01 m: *where have you been*
 02 Ag.: *in Como*
 03 Cm.: *in Como*
 04 Ag.: *with my grand-ma =*
 05 Cm.: *= with my grand-mother –*
 06 Cl.: *San Chirico –*
 07 m: *[and what what = is [Como like tell me a bit*
 08 Ag.: *(...) [eh a beautiful city*
 09 Al.: *[mm; (you're a fool)*
 10 Cm.: *[?ðð! more beautiful than here*
 11 Ag.: *[?ðððh*
 12 m: *[and what [did y/*
 13 Al.: *[come on you shut up!*
 14 Ag.: *Como is more beautiful damn it there is a beau[tiful minster*
 15 Cm.: *[ohh you can't*
 16 *say anything about it*
 17 *there is a beautiful ahm mm – square there*
 18 Al.: *come on Konstanz is more beautiful*
 19 Ag.: *[with lights around it*
 01 Cm.: *really [there they drive like hell they drive*
 02 Ag.: *(...)]*
 03 Ag.: *[so what*
 04 Cm.: *vin: n: n:*
 05 Al.: *eh not because of the driving because of its beauty Konstanz*
 06 *is more [beautiful the lake here the bridge the [minster*
 07 Ag.: *[no [go go to the*
 08 *lake of Como we will see what {this does} {they do}*

(7) SCHNECKENFRESSER 91: 10/11

- 06 Ag.: *ma kwellë = lo = fanno appo: s[të*
 07 Cl.: *[komm =*

- 07 Cl.: = [... ds sind scho a paar
 08 Cm.: [mde: - (lo=) fannē appostē -]
 09 fannō [verĒ kē nun sann=abballā^{oo} (kwessē mO)^{oo}
 10 Ag.: [tu lEv nu pO: kē nu po: k=italia: n=o Remember
 11 Cm.: [mma: vva:
 12 Ag.: [vOl'ē sapē [kē c'e sta;
 13 Cm.: [mma vva::
 14 Ag.: ma kwand=Ē s'Emo kwEstō kwestē tu se=divendado
 ((pp)) ((p)) ((mp))
 15 (prOpē) (kOmē) nu tedEskē. (o.5) u u sai? (vaj a u mani) =
 ((mf)) <
 16 komjē tedEskē; --
 ((f))
 17 x: ^{ooo}h^{ooo}
 18 (0.3)
 01 Cm.: [e tu kē kwissē tedEs'kē=
 02 ?.: (...) <
 03 Cm?: =ma si/
 04 Cm.: mē bisch nimme ganz sauber oder (0.5)
 ((f)) < ((f))
 05 x: h h h=
 ((mp))
 06 Ag.: =parlē purē (i) tedEskē; almEno litigasse in Italia: nē
 07 Cm.: [a: pallē
 08 Cm.: tēdēskē (va: u manikOmē tedEsk;) -- ((imitating))
 09 x: > [^{oo}ān^{oo}

- 06 Ag.: but they do it deliberately
 07 Cl.: [come on [...] sure there
 08 Cm.: [what=do=you mean
 Cl.: [are a few w/
 09 Cm.: [they do it deliberately they show that they don't
 10 Ag.: [take the Italians away
 Cm.: [know how to dance (those)
 Ag.: [from the Remember a bit a bit and I
 11 Cm.: [come o::n
 12 Ag.: [want to know [who (stays)
 13 Cm.: [come on
 14 Ag.: what an idiot he is this one here you have really become
 15 a German. (o.5) you know it? go to the German madhouse; --
 17 x: h h
 18 (0.3)
 01 Cm.: and you and these Germans=
 03 Cm.: =but if/
 04 Cm.: but you are not all there are you? (0.5)
 05 x: h h h=

- 06 Ag.: =he even speaks German; if he would at least quarrel
 in Ita [lian
 07 Cm.: [oh he speaks German; - (go to the German madhouse)

(8) TERREMOTO 20

- 01 m: Ma tu sei andato a Bella adesso kwando c'è stato il
 02 terremoto?
 03 Ez: nO miō padre E andatO per due o tre g'Orni
 04 m: Ah! te l=a rakkontato papa?
 05 Ez: a detto ka la ka - le kasē del nOnnO e della nOstra
 06 mamma è tutti rotte e ppure i g'okattoli mei ke io
 07 tjEn = i g'okattOli mEi ke u patrē a mamma mi: e mi
 08 tjEn= e=palline -- u=sai pēkkĒ
 09 m: nella kasa di nonno?
 10 Ez: sai pErkĒ:: due nOnni c'O -- na nOnna e mwOrtō
 11 m: adesso?
 12 Ez: nO: Erā neunzehnhundertfünf Jahr neunundsiebzig
 13 m: mhm hmhm
 14 Ez: saj kom=Era mia -- u - mia nOnna: kwElla la k=E
 15 morto: saj nO nOn l'E la fac'eva pju a a pil'ato
 16 una -- kome si dic'e -- una ko si fac'ē la varvē
 17 e s=E tta'at'ē
 18 m: [tua nOnna?
 19 Ez: e rOppē e mmOrtē pekkĒ u sapia ka ka ka nu pŌts:e
 20/21 fa k'u ggwari:nē je e rOppē s=a luvat'e do nu
 22 Rasiermesser e doppe e doppe e mmortē=
 23 m: =mannag'g'a G'uda!
- 01 m: and you went to Bella just now when there was the
 02 earthquake?
 03 Ez: no my father went there for two or three days
 04 m: ah! your father told you about it?
 05 Ez: he said that the hou -- the houses of the grand-
 06 father and of our mother is ((sic)) all broken and
 07 even my toys which I've got=the toys which my father
 08 and my mother keep for me=and=marbles -- you know why
 09 m: in the grandfather's house?
 10 Ez: you know why; I've got two grandfathers ((sic)) -- one grandmother died
 11 now?
 12 Ez: no it was (in) nineteenhundredfive year seventy-nine
 13 m: mhm hmhm
 14 Ez: you know what my -- the -- my grandmother was like
 15 the one who died you know don't you she couldn't stand it any
 16 more she she took a -- what is it called -- the
 17 things you shave with and she cut hers[elf
 18 m: [your grand-

- 19 Ez: mother?
 20 and then she died because she knew that that
 21 that she couldn't make it to recover
 22 and then she took and the/a razor and then and then
 23 she died=
 23 m: =oh dear!

In these extracts, single parameters (like for instance final vowel treatment or the realization of various pronouns and the article) vary, but they do so in a way that renders them amenable to a conversational interpretation of the type usually restricted to code-switching. (Namely, shifting can be seen to indicate situational involvement.) Code-shifting thus constitutes a phenomenon that combines features of code-switching (local accountability) and of the variation of single parameters (of which it is made up). It therefore calls for a uniform treatment of both types of variation.

In the following chapter we argue and will attempt to substantiate our argument that code-switching analysis and variation analysis complement each other and are capable of a synthesis that is especially fruitful in analyzing migrant children's linguistic behavior. While a distinction exists between the phenomena to be explained – on the one hand we have the variation of individual parameters within a system; on the other, alternation between systems – it is possible to find a common denominator for both domains. A uniform treatment will incorporate code-shifting, not as a peripheral phenomenon to be explicated *ad hoc*, but as a natural outcome of the descriptive model.

2. A Uniform Model of Description

To see what such a model might look like, note first that certain realizations of a given linguistic category display an orderliness: they can be aligned on a continuum with 'dialect' and 'standard' as the polar ends.⁴ Take for instance the realizations in the following words and phrases:

Table 1: Standard/dialect continua

| | | | | standard pole | | | | | | |
|--------|---------|--------|--------|----------------|----------|-------|------------|----------|---------|--|
| vedere | g'okare | kwando | loro | le kose | il primo | tanto | o portato/ | portavo/ | portai | |
| vedErē | g'okarē | kwandē | kwelli | lē kosē | il primē | tantē | o portatē/ | portavē | | |
| vEdé | g'oká | | kwellē | | | | | | | |
| vēdĒ | | | | | | | | | | |
| vērĒ | juká | kwannē | kwillē | i kosē | u primē | tandē | ag'gē | purtatē/ | purtavē | |
| | | | | dialectal pole | | | | | | |

⁴ Not all realizations of a category may be locatable on this continuum. Some may be elements of an inter-language that characterizes a certain acquisitional stage. This sort of variation (code-fluctuations, *italiano stentato*) is not treated here; cf. Auer & di Luzio (in press) for some comments and a brief structural description.

Each element of any one of the paradigmatic lists in this table can be classified, first intuitively, then by 'splitting up' this intuition by describing various categories involved in its production, as more or less dialectal or more or less standard Italian. Rules relevant for the description of 'dialectality' are, among others:

(on the phonetic level)

– nasal assimilation:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{cons} \\ \text{nas} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \text{obstruent} \\ \text{voiced} \end{bmatrix} > \begin{bmatrix} \text{cons} \\ \text{nas} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \text{cons} \\ \text{nas} \end{bmatrix}$$

– postnasal voicing:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{cons} \\ \text{nas} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \text{obstruent} \\ \text{unvoiced} \end{bmatrix} > \begin{bmatrix} \text{cons} \\ \text{nas} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \text{obstruent} \\ \text{voiced} \end{bmatrix}$$

– raising of mid-vowel before stressed syllable:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{vowel} \\ - \text{high} \\ - \text{stress} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \$ \\ + \text{stress} \end{bmatrix} > \begin{bmatrix} \text{vowel} \\ + \text{high} \\ - \text{stress} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \$ \\ + \text{stress} \end{bmatrix}$$

– reduction of unstressed vowel in unstressed word-final syllable:

$$(C)\check{V}\# > (C)\tilde{e}\#$$

(on the morphophonemic level)

– article:

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{MASC} \\ \text{SING} \\ \text{DEF} \end{bmatrix} > \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{il} \\ \text{lu} \\ \text{u} \end{array} \right\}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{FEM} \\ \text{PLUR} \\ \text{DEF} \end{bmatrix} > \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{le} \\ \text{lē} \\ \text{i} \end{array} \right\}$$

– infinitive ending:

$$\text{INF} > \left\{ \begin{array}{l} -re \\ \emptyset \end{array} \right\}$$

(on the lexical level)

$$\text{'to play'} > \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{g'okare} \\ \text{juká} \end{array} \right\}$$

Suppose a participant uses the form *vEdé* in an utterance while in other corresponding instances s/he uses the standard form *vedere*. The above scale then enables us to describe this fact not merely as variation, but as the potential beginning of a movement towards the dialectal pole.

Note that the polar ordering of realizations does not oblige us to presuppose an identical standard and dialectal pole for all children. On the contrary, we have to take into account the individual repertoire of the speaker; for instance, in different children the distance between the two poles may differ.

Incorporating polar ordering brings us one step nearer to a uniform treatment of variation. The second equally important step bridging the gap between variation and code-switching analysis consists in recognizing individual varying rules in their interdependence.⁵ This is conveniently done by formulating co-occurrence restrictions on the syntagmatic and paradigmatic level. Some examples are given in table 2:

Table 2: Co-occurrence restrictions

| | | | | |
|----------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|
| u patrē | a fēnEstē | a skolē | ag'g'a dēvēndá | ag'g'ē purtatē |
| u padrē | a fēnEstrē | a skwOlē | ag'g'a dēvēndarē | ag'g'ē portatē |
| il padrē | la finEstrē | la skwolē | *ag'g'a diventare | *ag'g'ē portato |
| il padre | la finEstra | la skwola | devē dēvēndá | o portatē |
| *u padre | *a finEstra | *la skolē | devo diventá | o portato |
| | | | devē diventare | *o purtatē |
| | | | *devo dēvēndá | |

If, for instance, our speakers from Lucania choose the variant *u* or *a* for the masculine or feminine article, respectively, then we can expect final *-ē* in the following noun instead of the gender markers *-o*, *-e* or *-a* (e.g. *u patrē*, *a fēnēstē*, *a skolē*, where co-occurring devoicing of *d* in *padre*, reduction of *r* in *finestra* and of the diphthong *wo* (in *skwola*) increase the dialectalizing effect.) Another example: the choice of the dialectal form of the auxiliary (*ag'g'ē* instead of *devo* or *o*) leads one to expect subsequent infinitival or participial forms situated close to the dialectal pole. Standard Italian forms such as *diventare* and *portato* are rare and 'marked', while forms showing only some dialectalizing features such as vowel-reduction are not.

In addition to the restrictions governing the co-occurrence of phonemes or syntagmemes on the sequential level, there are also those on the paradigmatic level which concern the realization of simultaneous features. Thus, the dialectal lexeme *ag'g'ē* will have final schwa. Accordingly, the choice of lexical forms on one varietal level simultaneously restricts the choice of phonological and morphological features of the same level.

⁵ This is also suggested by J. Gumperz:

"The value of a variable in a particular situation in a particular utterance is never independent of that of other variables within the same stretch of speech [...]. It is not enough to say that 'X speaker from Y social class selected value 3 of the (Z) variable under certain social conditions [...]. Variants [...] tend to appear in co-occurrent sequences. It is the variation of each distinctive cluster of values, not a single variant, which correlates with distinctive social content or function. Wherever co-occurrence rules are regular and clearly statable we can speak of speech variation as alternation between varieties." (1969, 245f.).

According to the model, which now incorporates polar ordering and co-occurrence restrictions, both code-shifting and code-switching can be derived from the variation of individual parameters (or rules) which are never considered in isolation, but always in connection with other features, thus enabling us to describe gradual transitions involving several linguistic categories. Since the location of the respective realizations is determined with reference to the dialect and the standard pole, the direction of each step of the transition is fixed. Where unidirectional implications hold between features, we can predict which features will be varied first at transitions, allowing for their interpretation by the other participants as an index or a preparation for further shifting.

Just as shifting, code-switching can be derived from single parameter analysis⁶. Under this treatment, it is characterized as the abrupt, simultaneous variation of whole clusters of features (categories); the key is the type of transition, not the type of codes involved, which may differ from case to case. This seems to be particularly relevant in our case, since as we have mentioned the systems used by the migrant children are sometimes hardly commensurable, so that terms such as 'standard variety' or 'dialect variety' suggest a degree of consistency and a shared character which in reality are lacking.

3. The Conversational Interpretation of Code-Switching and Code-Shifting

We have now singled out three variational phenomena and we have suggested a model for their uniform grammatical description:

- code-switching between systems (German/Italian or Italian standard/Italian dialect)
- code-shifting from one variety closer to the dialect to another variety closer to the standard pole, or vice versa, and
- single parameter variation beyond the level of shifting or switching⁷.

However, a problem remains. Take for instance a case of what we have perhaps somewhat uncritically and prematurely labelled code-shifting such as example (6). How are we to decide whether we are dealing with alternation between standard Italian and dialect, with shifting, or merely with conversationally unnoticed 'matter-of-chance' variation of several grammatical categories? One might consider including a quantitative criterion in the model, for instance of the following sort:

⁶ Evidently, the grammatical description of co-occurring variables is of little interest when systems such as 'German' and 'Italian' alternate. In this case there is no alternative. However, the problem becomes much more interesting when it comes to code-switching between dialect and standard; here, we also observe shifting, and it may therefore be relevant to see how parameters are affected in the one and in the other case.

⁷ Cf. Auer & di Luzio (in press).

- (1) the variation of n or more parameters in one direction at a given point such that no realization occurring before that point also occurs after it, is called code-switching;
- (2) the gradual variation of m or more parameters in one direction over a stretch of speech containing not more than p words is called code-shifting;
- (3) all variation that does not meet criteria (1) or (2) is called single parameter variation.

But how are we to determine the values of n , m and p ? Certainly this could only be decided by the analyst on an *ad hoc* basis and would have no bearing on how conversationalists themselves decide on these matters. As it is our aim to find out about the *emic* status of variation, our grammatical description remains pointless, for it does not tell us how participants proceed to know which type of variation they are dealing with. Our model gives us a technical device, but it can't work unless we presume that we already know how to identify the three types of variation mentioned here from the member's point of view. Thus, the grammatical analysis, important as it surely is, assumes value for the description of bilingual language use among migrant children only if we manage to link it to an interactive interpretation of the phenomena to be captured by it.

Ethnomethodology offers us a very useful approach to this problem of interpretation. According to one of its most fundamental ideas, the production and interpretation of social activities, i.e. the mundane accomplishment of social structure and social meaning are reflexively bound to each other.⁸ In order to find out what code-shifting and code-switching 'mean', we are therefore invited to examine how these phenomena are used by members for the organization of their everyday affairs. The question is then: how do code-switching and code-shifting contribute to the orderly construction of bilingual interaction? The answer to this question can be given via a conversational analysis of the items hitherto classified only intuitively as one or the other; for both are features of conversations. In the framework of this paper, we are of course unable to give a comprehensive account of all the ways in which code-shifting and code-switching can contribute to the negotiation of interactive meaning and structure in bilingual conversation. Instead, we must limit ourselves to two functions typical for our materials: the use of code-switching to initiate a change in participant constellation, and the use of code-shifting to indicate emotional involvement. The sets of data introduced above have been selected from the viewpoint of this restricted analysis.⁹

3.1. Code-Switching and Participant Constellation

When taking part in an interaction, we are usually sure about who else is taking part in it, and who isn't. Let us call the participants to an interactive episode at a given time the participant constellation of episode x at

⁸ On the notion of reflexivity in ethnomethodology, cf. Garfinkel, 1967: 1 (*et passim*).

⁹ Some other functional uses of code-switching are discussed in Auer & di Luzio (in press) and in Auer, 1982.

time i . On closer inspection, the intuitively trivial question of who is taking part in an interaction turns out to be quite a complicated one.

Evidently, the constellation cannot be defined as the total of all persons bodily present. To begin with, there are those rather obvious cases in which we converse with each other with other persons around us (e.g. walking in a street, dining in a restaurant, and in most other public places). Bodily co-present persons may, intentionally or not, overhear what we say, but they do not take part in the interaction – even in the peripheral case in which we say something for somebody who we suspect or know is overhearing us. In Goffman's terms (1981: 130ff.), we must distinguish between "bystanders" in a "social situation", and "ratified participants" to "a talk" (= an interactive episode).

But even people who suggest by their bodily position that they belong together (e.g. four people sitting at a small table, some people walking together) do not necessarily have the same participant status. Consider the phenomenon of conversational schism, i.e., a party of four or more candidate or former co-participants splitting up into two parties.

Interactive constellations are additionally characterized by the role of the various co-participants. First, we have the role of the speaker, usually assumed by one participant, but occasionally (e.g. in the case of collaborative turns) also shared by more participants. From the point of view of the speaker (now taken as a role, not as a person), we must again distinguish between (intended) addressees and recipients, that is persons actually accepting the role of the addressed (Goodwin, 1977). Routinely, the roles not only of speaker and non-speaker, but also of addressee/recipient change continuously over the course of an interactive episode. Although, for instance, former recipients may still be hearers of a given turn, they may not be its addressees, or may refuse this status for a turn perhaps addressed to them; they may be excluded from a piece of interaction, or may voluntarily retreat from it. As Goffman suggests (1978), the maintenance of an interactive constellation is even problematic and has to be 'bracketed' by the analyst in the case of two-party conversations: asides spoken to oneself or response cries (such as *ouch* or *wow*) are examples for utterances that break the two-party constellation.

Again assuming the point of view of a participant currently in possession of the turn, various techniques are available to include or exclude other participants: they may or may not be intended, and will know which is the case, by monitoring the production of the turn with regard to, for instance

- gaze
- address terms
- presuppositions tailored to diverging background knowledge of different candidate recipients
- loudness (cf. the phenomenon of side remarks).

The point here is that code-switching is also used by bilingual speakers for the purpose of influencing the participant constellation. The contrastive effect

inherent in the abrupt contraposition of two varieties can be exploited to signal an intended change of constellation.

The technique is especially appropriate in (but not restricted to) the following situation. A present turn-occupant is part of two or more different language preference dyads, whose other members are his candidate recipients; that is, he usually speaks language A. with candidate recipient a, but language B. with candidate recipient b.¹⁰ This applies for instance to extract (1) (VIERER A/1); here the language used in the constellation that comprises all five participants is Italian ('Standard'), due to the influence of adult x. However, the four boys usually speak Alemannian-German among each other, and Ag. and Cm. additionally use Italian dialect. Thus, Ag. may choose between Italian Standard, German and Italian dialect to indicate an intended addressee, and an abrupt change of language to indicate a change in intended addressee selection.

In our extract, he uses German to mark the transition from the constellation x/Ag./Al./Cm./Cl. which is maintained in lines 01–03, (5?), to the constellation Ag./Al. (note the second person verb ending *fang* (imperative), linked to the explicit address term in lines 02/03).

Let us have a brief look at the other examples. In (2), Nc. has just finished telling adult t. a story (the fairy-tale of Hänsel and Gretel). In 01–04, t. tries to elicit a clarification of an element of the boy's story; the question is 'answered' by Nc. in lines 05/06. At that point, In. (Nc.'s sister) intervenes in the constellation t/G. and criticizes his explanation by a question which is now formulated in German: the code-switching marks the contraposition of constellations t/Nc. and In./Nc./t).

In datum (2), the code-switching party tries to 'get into' an on-going sequence by addressing one of its ratified participants by means of a question, i.e. an initiative pair part making addressed party's response a "conditionally relevant" next activity. A different strategy for 'getting in' is observed in extract (3); here, the code-switching party takes over the role of the answerer (and thereby also the role of the recipient), although questioner b. has explicitly addressed another participant (note the address term *Annamaria*, produced as a pre-element to the question). It is the asynchrony between the roles of 'addressee' and 'recipient' which coincides with the new language choice.

Yet a different type of change of constellation is (partly) accomplished by code-switching from Italian into German in our extract (4). Speaker addresses co-participant a. in lines 01–05, a. displaying reciprocity by the backchannel signal *mhm* (line 06). Then, after a 7-sec. pause, she turns towards b. and asks her in German for confirmation.

Finally, consider extract (5) where code-switching between standard and

¹⁰ The preference dyad may be based on the incompetence of one of its members (cf. Auer, 1981). A special case to be considered here is the use of a language as a 'secret code'.

dialect is used to mark an intended change in the constellation. The switch into dialect (*fac'ëmë tuttë kosë*) occurs in a locus where Ag. cannot secure one and only one intended addressee of his utterance merely by its positioning; due to the overlap in 11/12 and the collaborative production of 11/12 and 13, the scope of 14 is potentially equivocal. Switching into dialect, together with the use of the *tu*-type verb ending (II SING *dai*), makes sure that adult x is not intended: he regularly receives the politeness form and is addressed in standard Italian.

3.2. Code-shifting and Situational Involvement

Compared to code-switching, the range of communicative functions served by code-shifting is more restricted. Fewer things are done by Italian migrant children by code-shifting than by code-switching. The most important feature of the situation which may be produced and at the same time symbolized by code shifting is the involvement vs. distance of participants, here taken as a dimension along which coparticipants shape their responses to conversational items. Thus, the same interactional event may result in a highly emotional debate in one case, or it may not be paid more attention than an excuse token such as *sorry* can provide in the other. The same topic may carry co-participants away to such a degree that they burst out in tears, or it may be dealt with in a sober exchange of condolation and appreciation. The same mundane question such as *what's new* may occasion a lengthy report or it may be responded to with a simple *nothing really*. Whatever the response may be, recipients have the competence to locate it on a continuum with 'distance' and 'involvedness' as its polar end, and speakers have the competence to produce their utterances in such a way that recipients can perform this location operation.

Among the techniques available to produce distance and involvement accountably are those on the prosodic level (such as pitch level-pitch modulation, amplitude), those on the extralinguistic level (such as laughter, crying, "response cries" (Goffman, 1978)), and those on the segmental level (such as length of utterance, evaluations and invectives contained or not contained in it). For our speakers, shifting is an additional technique that can be used.

Let us now have a look at the examples for code-shifting given above. Extract (6) is taken from an episode in which two pairs of brothers converse with a male bilingual Italian student.

It starts with a routine question of the adult participant about the youngsters' holidays. Agostino and Camillo give the information requested by answering m.'s question in a standard-near variety (lines 02–05). The passage up to now lacks all emotional involvement; it is the transfer of information which is at stake, nothing more. However, when Agostino answers m.'s additional question by stating that the place he and his brother Camillo went to (Como) is a "beautiful city", Alfredo intervenes (line 09).

First of all, his turn implies a change of participant constellation, selecting Agostino, and only him, as the addressee of the utterance. In the following passage, m., who has started the topic and has taken an active part up to now, is excluded from the interaction that is from now on restricted to the constellation Agostino/Alfredo/Camillo/Clemente; the boys disregard m.'s later attempt to take part in the conversation again by asking another question (line 12). But Alfredo's intervention in line 09 not only alters the constellation; it can also be described as a turn producing disagreement with prior speaker's opinion (cf. Pomerantz, 1975), and indeed disagreement is formulated in a rather harsh way (*schpinnst*). Both the change of constellation and the production of disagreement coincide and are partly produced via code switching from Italian into German.

By disagreeing with his friend, Alfredo initiates a verbal activity different from the one relevant up to this point: the verbal activity of 'having an argument'. The interaction now takes a different course which is characterized by the increasing involvement of the four boys, produced and symbolized among other things by code-shifting. Take first Camillo's next turn (10), which supports his brother's opinion by restating it; at this locus, we already note a slight dialectalization of the Italian used by Camillo (*bella* → *bbellë*, *di* → *dë*, *kwi* → *kwa*). Alfredo's next turn in the argument (13) is German and repeats his disagreement with Agostino and Camillo, who responds in Italian, keeping the level of dialectalization more or less constant (cf. in line 14: *bella* → *bbellë*, line 15: *non* → *në*, *proprio* → *proprië*). We are now in the middle of the argument between the four boys, m. is excluded.

The process of dialectalization is carried one step further by Camillo in line (01); the evidence he brings forth to support his preference for Como starts with a German intensifier (*ganz echt*), he then switches back into an Italian variety that contains not only numerous vowel reductions but also the dialectalized form *kuillë* (for Standard Italian *essi* or *kwelli*). Whereas his opponent Alfredo continues to use German (05/06) for his next contribution, Agostino reaches the climax of the dialectization process in lines 07/08 (*kodesti* → *kwissë* is further dialectalized into *kissë*, *va* into *vajë*, *vedere* via *vederë* and *vedÉ* into *vërÉ*).

The gradual transition into a variety closer to the dialectal pole then simultaneously indicates and produces the boys' growing involvement in the situation as an oriented-to feature of this interaction. The topic's personal relevance for the youngsters lessens their original aloofness and gives rise to the continuous shifting of their variety towards the dialect.

In extract (7), growing involvement and gradual dialectalization again emerge in the course of an argument among the same boys.

In the preceding passage (not reproduced here) the topic is the type of people and the type of dancing in German discothèques. Answering m.'s questions, Agostino states that there are differences between German and Italian dancing; his friends disagree. However, although the conflict between

Agostino and his friends is already prepared in the passage before line 06, it is only in the passage documented by our extract that this antagonism escalates into an emotional quarrel between Agostino and his brother Camillo.

Agostino's first line (06) comes as a defense of the Italians attacked by the other participants. It is formulated in a variety close to the standard (the only slightly dialectalizing features are the two vowel reductions). Camillo's response (08/09) consists first of an imitating and mocking repetition of his brother's argument, trying to ridicule it. His own argument (09) starts a shifting process towards the dialectal pole (*vedere* → *vederë* → *vëdë* → *vërÉ*; *non* → *nën* → *nun*; *ballare* → *ballarë* → *ballá*); the antagonistic status of the whole contribution is underlined and prepared by the introducing turn component, the interjection *meh*. Agostino responds in line (10), overlapping Camillo's contribution, and now also using a dialectalized variety (*un poko* → *un pOkë* → *un pOkë* → *nu pOkë*; *leva* → *lEvë*; *vol'o* → *vol'ë*; *sapere* → *saperë* → *sapÉ*; *c'i* → *c'e*).

Camillo counters by an emotive and highly elliptical *mma vva* : , accentuated by intensity and vowel lengthening ('go to hell'). Agostino's next step in the argument is artfully organized and escalates the quarrelling by a rather rude offence (*vajë u manikomjë tedesjë*, 'go to the German madhouse'). This climax of his contribution is prepared in a sophisticated way. Note first the gradual increase of amplitude, starting with *pp*, ending in *f*. Also note the turn-internal reorganization of addressee specification; in the first turn component, Agostino seems to turn away from his opponent (third person pronoun) and makes us believe that he is 'beyond' the matters discussed here (*ma kwand = E s's'Emo kwEstö*). The second turn component starts out with a third person pronoun (*kwestë*) which however is immediately self-repaired by the second person *tu*: Agostino re-addresses Camillo personally and marks this redefinition of the constellation by the repair work. After a half-second pause in which Camillo fails to take up the turn, Agostino continues himself with a dialectal tag (*u sai*) which has direct appeal to Camillo; he is being addressed more and more directly by his brother. It is only now that Agostino tops his contribution by the escalating offense which leaves Camillo speechless for about half a second, while m. tries to defuse the situation by his *ppp*-laughter.

Now note the shifting in Agostino's contribution. The first turn component, simulating aloofness and distance from the debate, returns to a more standardized variety of Italian. The second turn component already contains dialectal markers, above all the article *nu* (instead of *un*). Finally, the speaker reaches the dialectal pole of his diasystem after the (0.5)-second-pause, when he directly and very loudly addresses his opponent; dialectal article forms (*u*) together with dialectal verb forms (*vajë* for standard *va*) produce the dialectalization.

After this climax of the debate, Camillo takes some time to formulate his counter-argument; he remains in a very dialectal variety in line 01 (*kwissë*

for standard *codesti*, *kē* for *kon*) but then switches into German for the response proper (line 04). Note Agostino's comment on this code-switching (06): again symbolically using the third person pronoun to indicate his aloofness he attacks his brother for using German instead of "Italian" (in his parlance also including Italian dialect). The selection of this language out of the linguistic repertoire is to him a betrayal of the boys' Italian identity.

Whereas code-shifting and situational involvement emerge in extracts (6) and (7) in the course of an argument between various participants, extract (8) is different. Here, a teller gets increasingly involved with the story he is about to organize. Again, involvement is not only signalled but also produced by code-shifting into a variety closer to the dialectal pole.

There are some indications in this extract that the topic of interaction may be a factor influencing code-shifting. Topics related to family affairs may have an enhanced potential for being organized via shifting. Further investigations are necessary to substantiate this claim.

In sum, code-shifting can be shown to be a regular and systematic phenomenon among Italian migrant children; its occurrence during and for the organization of arguments/quarrels and stories points to a stock of knowledge shared by members that contains 'rules' on its application.

We are convinced that code-shifting is a conversational phenomenon that can be used by speakers to produce certain interpretable effects, and we have tried to show how this can be done. Note that this functional approach to shifting is different from Labov's conception of formal and informal talk (cf. Labov, 1966). According to our analysis, shifting is not merely a matter of increased or decreased monitoring, but part of the social accomplishment of 'defining the situation'. It can be used as a strategy for certain communicative ends, as a means to produce and symbolize the speaker attitude towards the situation.¹¹

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have distinguished three types of variation to be observed in Italian migrant children's linguistic behaviour and sketched a uniform grammatical description. But the technical description of variation (whether we are dealing with code-switching, code-shifting or single parameter variation), so we have shown, cannot be considered in abstraction from the question of how participants use it to negotiate their everyday linguistic affairs in the specific situation of linguistic and cultural contact.

If one is interested in elucidating the meaning of variation from the participants' point of view, and thus in capturing its *emic* status, then it is not enough to provide the *technicalia* of grammatical description – as necessary as they

are. Distinctions relevant for interaction such as that between code-switching and code-shifting, or between code-shifting and single parameter variation, are possible on 'purely linguistic' grounds on an *ad hoc* basis at best. We have therefore selected two conversational functions (change of participant constellation and situational involvement) and tried to show how they can be served by code-switching and code-shifting, respectively. It is because of the systematic relationship between certain grammatically describable phenomena and such features of the situations that variation can be said to be not only interactionally meaningful but also functional.

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¹¹ Cf. Gal, 1979 (Chpt. 1).