Mapping languages from inside: notes on perceptual dialectology

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Language maps can represent many aspects of the linguistic situation in a certain territory. They usually draw particular views of the language setting as seen from outside, i.e. by linguists or scholars in general. However, maps can also be used to show the geographical distribution of the perception of language variation from the point of view of the speakers. The starting point for every kind of language map is the language border (and its definition): thus a perceptual language map needs a definition of border from the point of view of the speaker. To do that it is necessary to analyse 'perceptual data', that is to study the opinion the speaker has of the language diversities and compare the different kinds of perception. Points of interest can be, for example: the influence of the perceived ethnic diversity on the language variation—or vice versa, the fact that perceived ethnic borders do not match with perceived language borders; or moreover that perceived language borders do not necessarily match with the perceived comprehensibility of other language varieties (symbolic versus communicative function of language). Hence a possible linguistic border-line on perceptual language maps could be the limit among social language behaviours. From this point of view, sociolinguistic studies can be a good tool to draw perceptual language maps, since quantitative sociolinguistic researches provide the diatopic/diasthratic variation of the data, whilst qualitative research provides the perception of the variation. The paper discusses some field research case studies, coming from the Eastern and Western Alps in Italy, to better introduce this kind of perceptual geolinguistic explanation.

Key words: perceptual dialectology, linguistic geography, language border, field research, communicative/symbolic function of language.

Introduction

This paper focuses on perceptual dialectology, a branch of linguistics strictly connected with geography. One of its main goals is to map the linguistic landscape of a specific region or community[1] as it is seen from the inside—that is, seen from the standpoint of the members of the communities living there. It attempts to draw the geographical distribution of language varieties as it is perceived by the speakers themselves, and this entails dealing with the notions of linguistic border and linguistic boundary (for more general remarks on perceptual dialectol-

ogy see Canobbio and Iannàccaro 2000b; Iannàccaro forthcoming; Niedzielski and Preston 2000; Preston 1986, 1989, 1993, 1999).

Of course, perceptual dialectology is but one element of a far broader body of work concerned with the socio-spatial aspects of language use. Classical geolinguistic analysis, for instance, pays particular attention to diatopic variation of the internal structure of the language, as well as to the spatial determination of different types of speech.[2] However, because of methodological issues, geolinguistics does not consider the social aspect of the language, compressing all social variation into just one spatial dimension. In contrast, sociolinguistic's view of language reality focuses on the vertical differentiation among social and demographic classes, as well as on communicative situations. Sociolinguistic explanations, nevertheless, are particularly limited at the diatopic level, and tend to consider the area under consideration as geographically homogenous. Perceptual dialectology, as a 'border' discipline of both sociolinguistics and geolinguistics, particularly adopts an interpretive, interactional approach (see for instance Auer and Di Luzio 1984; Cameron 1995; Duranti 1997; Fasold 1984; Saville-Troike 1989; Schiffrin 1994).

Crucially, we would argue that perceptual dialectology—that is, the scientific evaluation of the speaker's opinion—can be viewed as a means of integrating these two perspectives. This proposal is certainly not new. Many strands of the geolinguistic literature during much of the twentieth century have sought to explore the broader contexts of language usage. While a specific concern with perceptual linguistics has developed slowly, nevertheless it has gained much currency in recent years.

Perceptual dialectology then, in its specific terms, does not deal either with internal linguistic variability or with the variation of linguistic phenomena. Its goal is the study of the geographical treatment of the variation of the language itself; in other words, it focuses on linguistic habits and notions of linguistic identification. Indeed, it is an attempt to explain through cartography some phenomena that are internal to spatial communities.[3] Crucially, by building on the tenets of perceptual dialectology, some familiar geolinguistic concepts take on a partially new shape, particularly the notion of the language border. Indeed, it is this well-known theme in geolinguistics that we seek to explore and re-evaluate in this paper.

The language border

Reflection upon language borders has been one of the fundamental characteristics of traditional linguistic geography (see Aitchison and Carter 1994; Ambrose 1980; Ambrose and Williams 1988, 1991; Breton 1976; Laponce 1984; Mackey 1973; Williams 1996).

Some of its methodological instruments, however, such as isoglosses (a line on a map showing the boundary of an area in which a linguistic feature is used (see Crystal 1992)), have always appeared very weak, even to those who have never been interested in social or variational studies. For example, even Pisani, a traditional neo-grammarian indo-europeanist, argues that

Our delimitation of the dialects are always arbitrary, unless the differences are not between two different linguistic types, such as Romance and Germanic, where the lack of mutual comprehension between monoglot (monolingual) speakers of the two languages clearly shows the dividing line. In the absence of this line, the best we can do is to take the type of a well defined centre as a basis (for example, Milan and Turin) and given the most important distinctive features, to ascribe to one type or to the other the

local varieties according to these features. Anyhow, this is only a practical expedient, lacking in theoretical basis. (1971: 77–78)

Of course, this is not to say that no worthwhile research has been conducted on the concept of the linguistic border. Indeed, some excellent quantitative elaboration based on scientific principles such as dialectometry has been conducted in this field (see among others Goebl 1982). There is insufficient space to explore these studies in this paper. We consider particularly fruitful, however, the theoretical and empirical research that delegates the final judgement concerning the nature of the linguistic border to the speakers themselves. In other words, we believe that much may be gained through a detailed exploration of 'the limits of the experienced life that the bearer of the linguistic phenomenon has' (Telmon 1983: 102). Fundamentally, it is the social environment as a whole that creates language borders, through people's experience of them. Of necessity, this point of view implies that borders imposed on communities *ab ovo* do not exist; on the contrary, it is the community itself which recognizes its own borders, and which decides then to fit in with them.

This theoretical outlook, however, is a major development from more classical geolinguistic research—mainly based on Gilliéron and Jaberg's work—which has been focused on pure intralinguistic features and it is based on the analysis of geolinguistic maps and atlases (see, for instance, García Mouton 1994; Pop 1950). Precedents to our theoretical and methodological perspective can be found in the linguistic atlas of Itoigawa (Japan), developed, through Grootaers' mediation, from Buld and Weiner's Flemish school (Iannàccaro forthcoming; see also Goeman 1989; Grootaers 1959, 1964a; Mase 1964a, 1964b). This atlas, which dates back to the 1950s and 1960s, traces the linguistic geographies of the subjective dialectical areas in Japan as they appear in the informers' explicit opinions, obtained through direct interview techniques (see also Iannàccaro 1995, forthcoming). The main point here is that the 'other' varieties of language or dialect (different from one's own variety, but more or less contiguous) are always felt to be 'completely different' from one's own. Work carried out by Weinen (as quoted in Goeman 1989) in Flanders, Leonard (1987) in the Vendée, and de Paiva Boléo (1971) in Portugal support this. Crucially, objective phonetic and grammatical differentiation between the languages and dialects[4] are not considered: imagined geographies of difference are far more significant (on this broad theme, see Said 1978).

The upshot of this discussion is that there is often a significant difference between *etic* isoglosses, that is, 'objective' boundaries between areas of different language usage constructed by outside observers; and the linguistic *emic* spaces of the speakers of the language.[5] In fact, in normal communicative situations, speakers always come in contact with many varieties that are different from their own from a diaphasic, diastratic and diatopic point of view.

To communicate successfully during an ongoing linguistic event means to be able to distinguish, often in a very subtle way, between the different styles of language and dialect that can be used during a communicative exchange. Such statements suggest that we need to recognize the existence of a number of different borders that intersect in different linguistic situations. Therefore, to belong to a structured culture involves (or implies) a reference to different types of borders (diachronic, diaphasic, diastratic, and so on), and not only to a diatopic one.

Consequently, the concept of the 'language border', which, according to some linguists is

in crisis, does not seem to disturb the speakers. On the contrary, they are incredibly aware of diatopic variation, and subsequently of 'other' varieties. As such, they seem to mark their whole experience of linguistic space with so definite and precise boundaries that they may, to the outside observer, appear disconcerting (Canobbio 1995: 107). To summarize, therefore, the speakers and those geolinguists belonging to the classical school propose a geographical and spatially defined vision concerning linguistic facts. But speakers' borders, even if they are marked in a precise and geographically determined way, do not match with the 'objective' ones assumed by linguists on the basis of phonetic and grammatical differences (see Dell'Aquila 1997).

We believe, therefore, that the perceptual approach may be useful since it enables us to explore and penetrate speaker's statements, and to test the effective geographical value of his or her assertions concerning language and dialect usage. In fact, 'l'enquêteur est bien la dernière personne à qui l'on parlera franchement'[6] (Chaurand 1968: 20). That is why the so-called vertical boundaries are concealed to the dialectological inquiry: the interviewed does not readily speak with the researcher about the intra-communitary tensions. Therefore, it is difficult to explore the internal variation within a given community, either diachronic or diastratic, or diaphasic, if this last is important enough to be considered. Rather than elaborating on these internal variations, we would argue that respondents tend to focus on linguistic stereotypes (see Labov 1972; Quasthoff 1987), or the conscious level of linguistic differentiation (Iannàccaro forthcoming). In other words, it is the speaker's ideological answer to the problem concerning borders that carries with it a hyper-evaluation by the speaker of diatopic linguistic differentiations.

Therefore, not to analyse the grammatical

linguistic border as it is conceived by the researcher, as well as the linguistic border as it is experienced by the speaker—even if it is necessary to keep these two levels distinct—seems limiting. However, until recent years, researchers have tended to pay far more attention to considerations of the so-called external boundary, rather than on its perception. Moreover, no attempt to compare the findings of these two perspectives has been made, although such attempts would be useful since they could furnish many fruitful results.

The above discussion, therefore, enables us to recognize two basic meanings of the term 'linguistic border', ones that may imply different linguistic and dialectological realities:

- The more traditional geographical and static linguistic boundary, which does not consider other forms of differentiation or any dynamic process. It is usually related to standard dialectological works, and has its linguistic counterpart in the classical isogloss, which does not take into consideration the internal structure of the society speaking the language.
- The abstract non-intralinguistic (in other words, non-grammatical or phonetic, etc.) border that modifies the linguistic vision or the linguistic behaviour of the speaker. Those internal and ideological borders are responsible for the actual linguistic behaviour of the speaker, but they are perceived as geographical borders.

We will deal here only with the second kind of linguistic border. When asking the speakers about their perception of the linguistic landscape in which they live, we can obtain different kinds of responses referring to a wide range of perceived realities and those responses are—according to the subject of the question—more or less influenced by social and ideological factors.

So, for instance, when directly asking about language borders, we obtain classic, ideologically or socially acceptable answers; in a word, answers pointing out the perceived symbolic value of the language (Edwards 1985). Those are principally diatopic: the main goal for the speaker being to distinguish very clearly between the 'we-group' and the 'other-group' (see Canobbio 1995: 106–107; De Simonis 1984), and, of course, the first division one can think of is the geographical one. That is why linguistic variation is most of the time seen as a diatopic one, clearly overstating the territorial distinction among different dialects in neighbouring communities. For the same reason, internal borders are very frequently neglected.

By testing the interviewed with indirect hints about actual language use or situations,[7] we can obtain a different set of data which point more to the pragmatic linguistic landscape. By doing this, we are far more likely to obtain information about the communicative value of the language (Edwards 1985). These data show a minor degree of rationalization and are hence less influenced by the symbolism of the language issue; they are also less sharply defined and show more blurred borders. Finally, in the light of this second type of information, we can outline the structure that rules the linguistic behaviour of the community.

Language borders: examples from the Alps

In this section, we discuss some brief vignettes drawn from some research we have conducted in the Alpine region of Italy. Taken together, these examples help to demonstrate the utility of perceptual dialectology to the study of language.

The fieldwork consisted of interviews carried out by the authors following a path which derives in part from Gould and White's (1986) instruction for the drawing of 'mental maps' and in part from the suggestion of Preston (1986, 1999). These 'hints' have been further processed within a working group on 'folk language borders' at the University of Torino.[8] Given the qualitative structure of the research, the sample was composed of 40 persons chosen among the population of the target areas. These individuals were asked to perform two basic tasks. At first we asked to draw on a white paper the position of the informants' village in relation to the surrounding regions, in order to understand the extension and the articulation of their declared mental map. The second task let them draw lines corresponding to their perceived language borders (or perceived language areas) on a simplified geographical map. Afterwards the interviewed were asked to answer specific and ideological questions about language identities in the area.

The Borders of Ladinia

The first example relates to a perceptual poll carried out in the Fassa valley. According to the literature on Romance languages, the region belongs to the so-called Ladin-speaking areas of the Dolomites. Geopolitically speaking, this area, in common with other areas of the northeastern border of Italy, was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire until 1919. Along with Italian, Ladin is (since 1995) the co-official language of this small area, comprising of seven municipalities and approximately 10,000 inhabitants. More than half of the overall Ladin-speaking population, however, resides in the bilingual (German–Italian) Autonomous Province of South Tyrol, north and west of Fassa valley, in villages where the official and school languages are Italian, German and Ladin (Dell'Aquila and Iannàccaro 1999; Ian-
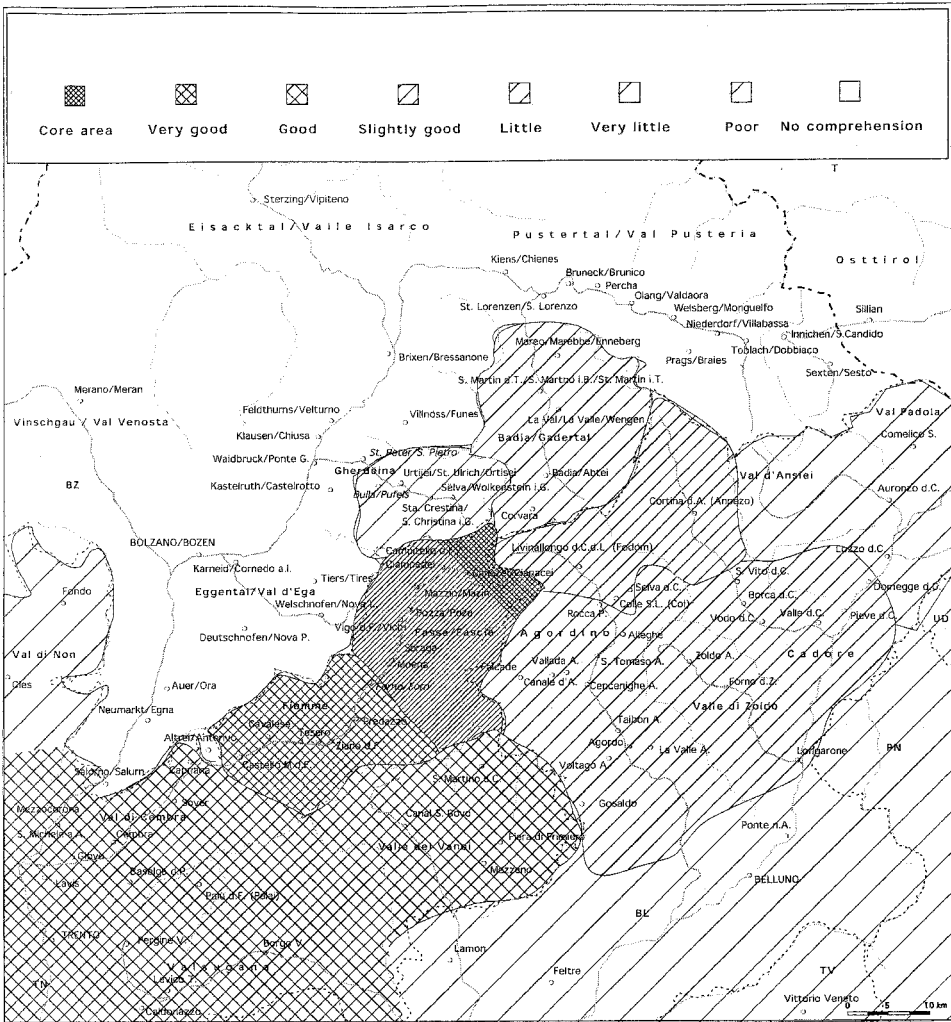
Figure 1   Dialectal intercomprehension in the Dolomic area.

nàccaro and Dell'Aquila 2000). The Romance varieties that lie southward and eastward of the Fassa valley are closely related to Ladin, but no official status is granted to them, and they are considered as merely Italian dialects.[9] Critical for our discussion is the neighbouring Alpine region of Cadore, in which Ladin-like varieties are spoken but yet was never part of the Empire. In recent years, an ideological movement

has arisen here re-vindicating the 'Ladinity' of local dialects and folklore.

We can start the discussion by analysing Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 demonstrates the linguistic geographies produced as a result of asking a group of speakers, placed in front of a black and white map of the region, 'can you draw an imaginary line beyond which you no longer understand if the local variety is spo-
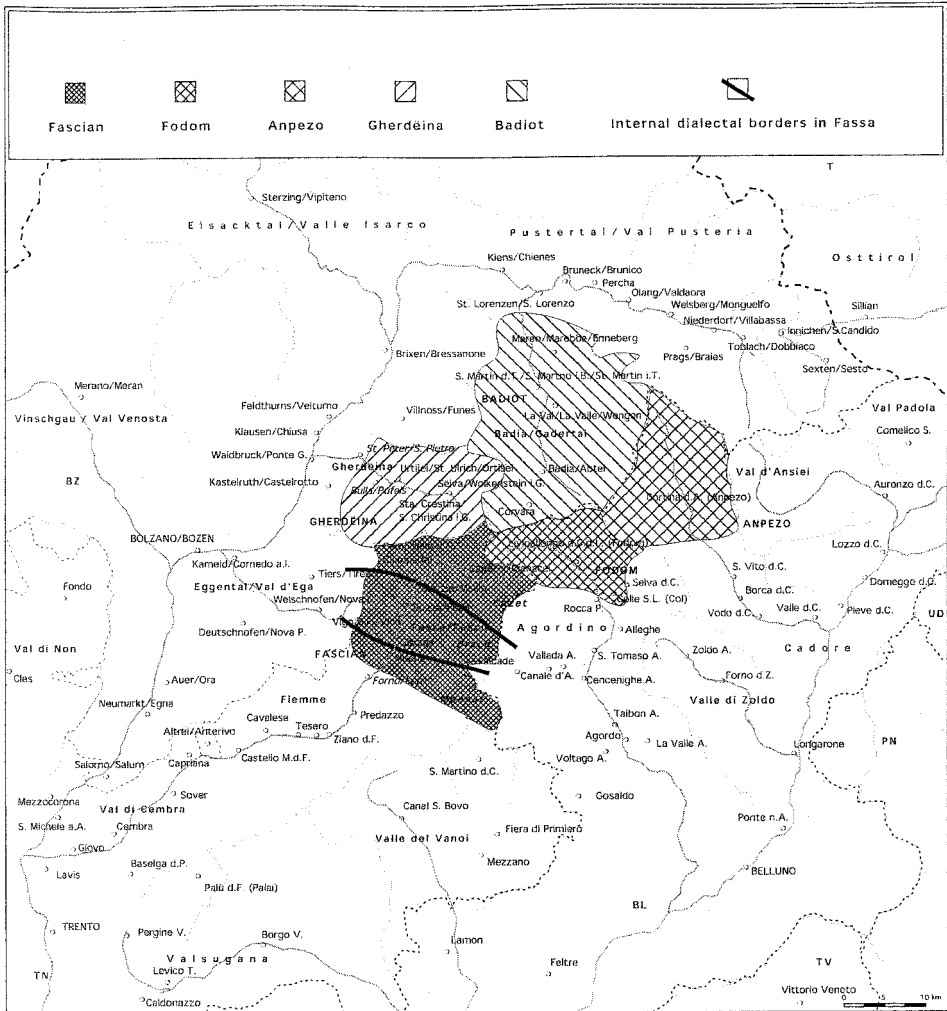
Figure 2 (Perceived) varieties of Dolomitic Ladin.

ken?' As we can see, the area of better comprehension lies to the south of the Fassa valley. Figure 2, however, represents a map of linguistic perceptions, based on answers to the question 'Where is Ladin spoken?'. Very curiously, but not unexpectedly, Ladin is said to be spoken to the north and east of Fassa valley. Southward, it is believed that another language is spoken, namely Italian and its dialects.

Significantly, the two maps seem to depict different linguistic realities. In particular the second map is an ideological one. Every inhabitant of Fassa valley knows (by heart) where the boundary between Ladin varieties and 'others' are: they are taught at school to recognize those borders on a map. In fact, the area outlined in the second map tallies well with the received ideas of 'Ladinia', or in other words, the terri-

tories in which Ladins are said to live and in which Ladin varieties are said to be spoken.

The crucial point we would wish to emphasize is the difference between the two maps. We have noted above that Ladin speakers tend to recognize the fact that most of the easily comprehensible languages and dialects are located to the south of the Fassa valley, even though Fassa valley lies at the southernmost point of the classical Ladin region. Whilst the second map represents the symbolic value and ideological geographies of the language, the first illustrates the pragmatic linguistic landscape, or, in effect, the borders of the communicative value of the Fassan variety.

The examples discussed above clearly shows that linguists (dialectologists), speakers and language-behavioural rules do not seem to follow the same borders. Most particularly, the language borders as perceived by the speaker do not necessarily respect the variations of the internal structure of the languages involved. Inside the same linguistic continuum, perceived borders and phonetic-grammatical variations seem to be following different paths, even if a high gap in the linguistic structure and typology of the neighbouring languages can help the two kinds of border to merge. At the same time, areas in which people understand the other's varieties can easily cross the perceived linguistic borders.

Gardenese: Germanic or Romance?

A second example relates to particular language situations that seem to be considered by speakers as connecting areas between two language groups. The Gardena valley represents such a view. Gardena is officially a trilingual valley. Whilst Ladin is the local variety, German (both High German and Tyrolian substandard) is the code that holds the highest

prestige. In that area, Ladin is deeply influenced by German, especially in vocabulary, but also in some phonetic items. Spoken languages are mainly Ladin and German Dialect, but written ones are predominantly Italian and German. Interestingly, our informants in the Fassa valley consider the Gardena Ladin to be a sort of bridge between Germanic language and Romance ones. By doing so, they disregard the Romance character of the Gardenese Ladin, which is clearly evident. In the same way, in Badia, the northernmost Ladin area, which is linked in terms of economy and administrative purposes to Bruneck/Brunico in the German-speaking Pustertal (see Figure 3), speakers seem to neglect unconsciously the existence of the Romance–Germanic border in the north of their territory. Those speakers state that while they can understand people speaking a sort of German Pustertal as well as Romance varieties of South Tyrol, they also say they do not understand either Germanic or Romance varieties in other surrounding areas. In this way they seem not to have injected any form of differentiation between Romance and German (which is very striking for a linguist). Their perception of 'understandable' varieties as opposed to 'non-understandable' ones is simply based on geographical consideration of proximity.

We still do not have any scientifically obtained data about the language perception of the Gardena inhabitants, but our experiences in the region allows us to suggest that even they feel their own language to be a link between the two main areas. We believe that a question like: 'Is Gardenese more similar to German or to French?' would not give any clear answer, even among the Gardenese speakers themselves. It is clear that the peculiar way of life, the good relationships of the Gardena inhabitant with the German-speaking population and their high use of German as a culture language,
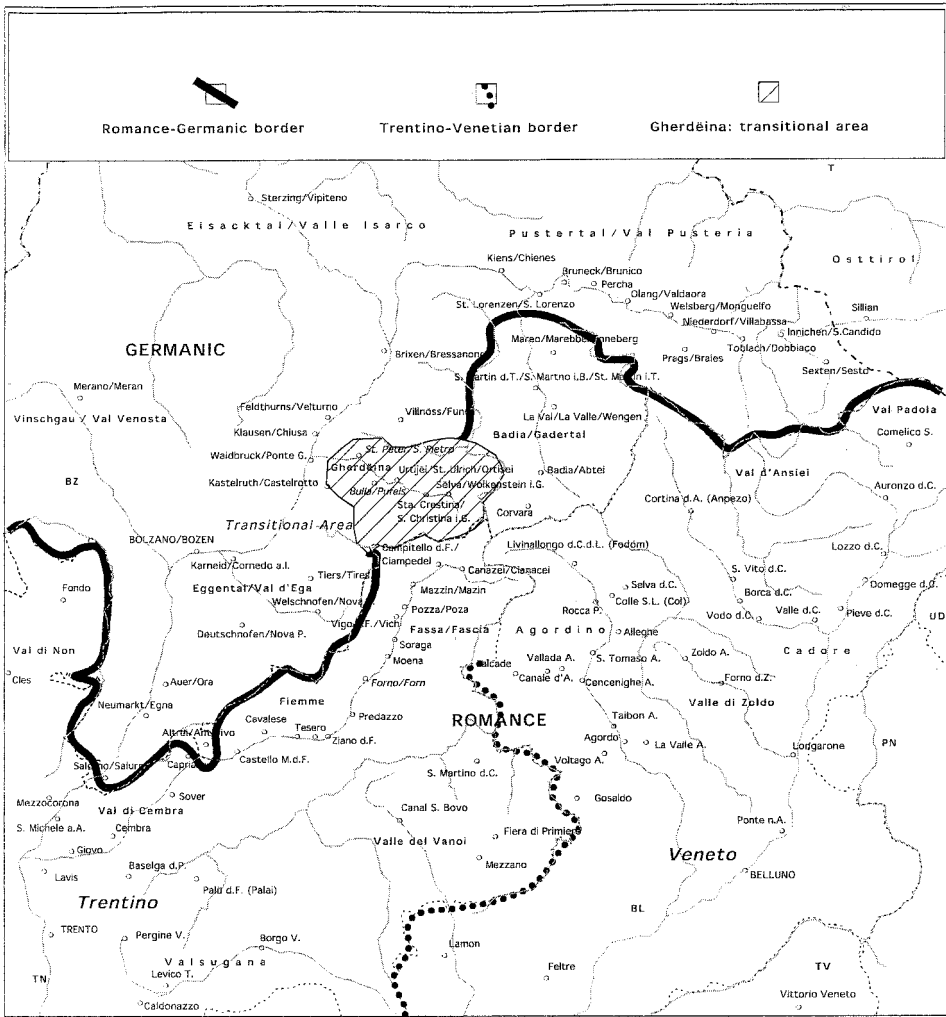
Figure 3 Perceived linguistic position of Gardenese (Fassan speakers).

are all factors that deeply influence the perception and evaluation of the linguistic character of this group. What is important here is that regardless of how the thinking has developed, it only takes linguistic features for the neighbouring Ladins to state that in Gardena they speak a highly Germanized Ladin (instead of, say, stating that in Gardena they 'feel' themselves too Germanic). In other words, differentiation takes the shape of a linguistic (and more importantly, spatially definable) stereotype and not that of a generic negative judgement about the inhabitants.

Similar linguistic opinions can be found in the judgements made by Fassa inhabitants about Cadore, the official Italian-speaking area that lies eastward of the Fassa valley. Commonly heard statements include the following:

'They do not speak any Ladin over there, their way of speaking is much too Italianized'. The inhabitants of the Fassa valley maintain such views even though Cadore dialects are much more easily understandable than Gardenese ones. Obviously, this is just an unconscious way of saying that Cadore people are not—and must not—be part of the Ladin in-group.

Moreover, the opinion towards German is less negative than that towards Italian, since in the region German has—for historical, political and economical reasons—a higher prestige than Italian. In the mind of the speakers, the fact that a certain local variety (dialect) is more or less understandable—at least inside the same linguistic *continuum*—does not affect its affiliation to one language or another. Instead, historical, political and especially social reasons seem to be what attributes a dialect to one language or to another. Those reasons are then reflected in the pragmatic use of the language. It is quite common, for instance, that a Fassan speaker will use Italian to communicate with people of the adjacent Fiemme valley, and Fassan with Gardenese speakers, even if the internal (phonetic, grammatical and lexical) distance between Fassan and Gardenese is much deeper than between Fassan and Fiemmese. Actually, our informants themselves confirm that Fiemmese is much easier to understand than Gardenese.

In this regard, the conceptual differentiation between the 'symbolic value' and 'functional value' of the language, as theorized by Edwards (1985), is very fruitful for the explanation of the linguistic behaviour and the perception of languages in the Dolomitic area. Furthermore, it is presumably possible to extend such a vision to the geographical level, and determine a 'symbolic value' and 'functional value' of the territory. The territory of everyday life—the focus of a person's economic and social relationships (in addition to one's own village; the town or the region in which school, health, commerce and administration facilities are located; as well as the place where communication networks are more effective)—does not necessarily match with the territory of which one feels to be a part, and within which one decides to tie one's aesthetic, emotive feelings and identity needs.

Sociogeographical variation in the Western Alps

A further example can be taken from another valley in the Alps, Val Vigezzo in Piedmont, on the Swiss–Italian border. Here, Lombard local varieties and Italian are spoken (the two codes are *not* mutually understandable), Italian being the only written and official language (see Iannàccaro 1994, forthcoming). The local dialect spoken in the village of Coimo has some phonetic features which help to distinguish it from neighbouring dialects. For instance, Latin short O and short E give [ø] in Coimo, but [e] in the rest of the valley; similarly, Latin CL and GL give respectively [ky] and [gy] in Coimo, but [ch] and [j][10] in the rest of the valley. As such, these two features, along with the existence of a few archaic words, make a slight difference (for the linguist) between Coimo and the other villages. However, the same differences are perceived as being so significant by the inhabitants of Val Vigezzo that they all consider the Coimo dialect as one which is 'completely different' from all the other local dialects. When speakers are asked about the nature of the differences, they usually respond by saying that 'words' are distinct in Coimo, and possibly that 'in Coimo they just put [ø] in every word'. Respondents never mention the difference between [ky] and [ch] or [gy] and [j]. It has actually been proven that, for speakers, one phonetic stereotyped and over-generalized variable (for instance,

they put [ø] *everywhere*), is enough to define the differentiation between two dialects. This variable, then, has the potential to hide all other means of differentiation (see Leonard 1987).

The example of Mrs Giuditta, born and nurtured in Coimo, but living in Gagnone for sixty years, is instructive in this respect. In her own words, 'every village has its own dialect. Each village has just one dialect, its own. Everybody speaks the dialect inside the village'. But actually she speaks Coimo dialect with her husband from Gagnone while the husband has been speaking Gagnone dialect with her for sixty years. At the same time, she only speaks Italian with the parson of the parish, even though he comes from Coimo too, and even though they used to play together in the same courtyard as children, speaking the Coimo dialect. The clear-cut perception of the linguistic reality shown by Mrs Giuditta (whose behaviour is shared by the rest of the population of Gagnone, regardless of age and gender[11]) does not seem to match with the pragmatic use of language in the society in which she lives. In Gagnone, as in probably all other villages of the world, in the same house, in the same family, more linguistic codes co-exist. The norms ruling the use of these linguistic codes are to be found in the social structure of the population and particularly in the different settings of the single language interactions.

The geographical definition of the language border seems thus to be a necessary condition for the classification of reality—at least for European people—even when it does not correspond to the 'objective' reality. It seems then to be clear and unique for all the speakers, independent of age, social class or so on.

Furthermore, this geographical perception of language variation has been supported by two centuries of dialectology for which the static (geographic) isogloss is a founding principle

(Telmon 1983: 101). What a perceptual dialectological approach can discover, however, are the internal borders, seen and rationalized by the speakers as geographical borders. By means of language, the speaker organizes and systematizes the surrounding reality. The 'we-reality' includes not only the village and the neighbouring ones, but also all situations in which the subject comes into contact with the people living there, and all the language codes he or she uses to interact with them. Thus the language not only organizes the geographical space between the we-group and the other-group, but it also arranges the internal structure of the society.[12] Language is the instrument of cultural differentiation, the first way to state a perceived variation. A common linguistic code does not unify different communities; it is the feeling of belonging to the same community that makes its members consider speaking the same language. The border of this language is thus prominently geographic.

Discussion and conclusions

Language differentiation defines the border between the 'we-group's' space and the 'other-group's' space and at the same time structures the internal 'we-group' space. The stereotype, which is the diatopic characterization of other-groups, is the ideological and culturally produced answer of the speaker to the problem of linguistic variation—both diastratic and diatopic. This is the first, most obvious issue on which the interviewed has rationally thought about; in other words, that 'we' are different from 'them'. With regard to social relations, all linguistic borders have the same practical, pragmatic and functional value. Language consciousness (Canobbio and Iannàccaro 2000a) applies to all borders and profoundly influences the corresponding linguistic behaviour.

Linguistic behaviour does not follow any rule that has been determined according to objective differentiation, but is rather adjusted to the perceived representation of linguistic space. In other words, to react adequately to all communicative situations, linguistic consciousness has the capability to create evaluation schemes, which enable the speaker to recognize—consciously or unconsciously—all kind of linguistic borders. Only some of these evaluations are then rationalized as stereotypes.

The ideological aspect of the declared geographical linguistic border helps to determine notions of the 'we-group' and the 'other-group', and this evaluation can be made public and explicitly affirmed. The pragmatic aspect of the linguistic border (actually the recognition of a network of diastratic and diatopic boundaries) instead allows the speaker to select the right linguistic variety and the socially correct linguistic behaviour. Hence, for the speaker, the quantitative content of a (linguistic) border is not really important. He or she does not quantify the degree of differentiation between the 'we-group's' speech and the 'other-group's' speech, which can be characterized by either major or minor grammatical or phonetic differences. It is just the others' way of speaking. The speaker does not care how the other actually speaks, or why the other speaks like that. What is important instead in or at a language border are the pragmatic considerations that enable the individual to select the right code and, furthermore, to allow the maintenance of the linguistic behaviour rules inside the 'we-group' (see Leonard 1987: 11).

Although the diatopic variable would seem to be the first and most important variable, in fact when the interviewees were asked directly this variable seems to influence the linguistic behaviour less than other (social/interactional) variables. The diatopic variation can—depending on the sociolinguistic situation of the area—at most lead to a switch to a completely different code. The diastratic variation, instead, induces the speaker to adjust and accommodate his or her speech to a high variety of codes (up to the overall switch to a completely different code) according to precise, but sometimes unconscious, social rules. It seems thus that the language border is an ideal boundary among different linguistic situations. In effect, it represents the moment of the recognition of the different language-behaviour situations.

Such perceived language borders are fundamental in the reconstruction of the linguistic space of the speaker, the mental map of his or her community and moreover the 'actual' one (not the declared one). It is the mental map that teaches the rules for the selection of the socially appropriate language code. It is, however, important to interpret it beyond any merely geographical and static schemes. 'Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt', wrote Wittgenstein: The limits of my language mean the limit of my world. Actually, language borders, producing linguistic behaviour rules, give meaning to the pragmatic linguistic acts and to the social communicative interactions between speakers.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 We use the term in a very broad sense. For some preliminary remarks on Alpine communities, with which we will deal here, see Cole and Wolf (1974).

2 Here and below, with regard to received sociolinguistic terminology, the term diachronic = 'concerning (language) variation through the time'; diastratic = 'concerning (language) differentiation through social and demographic strata'; diaphasic = 'concerning (language) differentiation through communicative situations'; diatopic = 'concerning (language) differentiation in geographical terms'.

3 See Ludo Melis (1996: 176), who argues that 'au départ, le chercheur dispose donc d'un jugement intuitif et global de la part des locuteurs natifs sur l'existence de variétés linguistiques. Cette intuition ne peut que difficilement être traduite immédiatement en une représentation spatiale, par manque d'instruments d'observation adéquats'.

4 About the crucial distinction between language and dialect (which we will not discuss here) see Alinei (1980, 1981), Berruto (1995), Haugen (1966), Kloss (1967) and Lepschy (1999).

5 By etic we mean that kind of knowledge and analysis made by an observer who is alien to the culture and uses concepts and ways of analysis which are external to the culture itself. Emic, on the other hand, is not only the way of acquiring knowledge typical of the members who are internal to any culture, but also of whichever type of approach that tries to account for the vision of the world peculiar to a certain community (from Pike (1967); see also Pignato (1981) and Carpitelli and Iannàccaro (1995)).

6 'The interviewer is actually the last person to whom one speaks freely'.

7 For a broader discussion on the principles and methodologies of perceptual dialectology see Canobbio and Iannàccaro (2000b), Carpitelli and Iannàccaro (1995), Goeman (1989), Iannàccaro (forthcoming), Preston (1986, 1999) and Niedzielski and Preston (2000).

8 Gruppo di Torino (forthcoming).

9 In fact, three villages formerly belonging to the Empire are part of the Region Veneto since 1920. Officially they are monolingual Italian, but they are part of the self-recognized community of 'true' Ladin-speaking villages. Even to the south and east there lie many other villages in which varieties very close to Ladin are spoken, but which gain no consideration neither by the Italian law, nor by the main Ladin community.

10 We have used a simplified transcription based on English spelling to ease the typographic work ([ø] is like German ö in *Löwe* 'Lion').

11 In the majority of the small villages of the Alps (at least) there is no evidence of social class differentiation nor do the inhabitants feel any difference in social state inside the same small community. We have chosen to mention Mrs Giuditta because of her explicit statements about the unity of the dialect.

12 It is worth recalling that the vertical (social) boundaries are very often hidden to the researcher. The interviewed does not readily speak with the researcher about the intra-communitary tensions and shifts the attention to the outer differentiations.

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Abstract translations

Cartographier les langues de l'intérieur: notes sur la dialectologie perceptuelle

Les cartes de langues peuvent représenter plusieurs aspects de la situation linguistique d'un territoire. Elle dessinent habituellement une vision particulière d'un cadre linguistique perçu de l'extérieur, c'est-à-dire par des linguistes ou autres scientifiques. Pourtant, ces cartes peuvent aussi être utilisées pour démontrer une distribution géographique de la perception des variations de langage selon le point de vue des gens qui le parlent. Le point de départ de toute cartographie des langues est la frontière du langage (et sa définition): ainsi une carte linguistique perceptuelle nécessite une définition de la frontière ancrée dans la perspective de l'utilisateur. Dans ce but il est nécessaire d'analyser "l'information perceptuelle": en d'autres mots, d'étudier l'opinion que l'utilisateur se fait de la diversité de la langue et comparer les différents types de perception. Susceptible d'intérêt, par exemple, serait l'influence de la perception d'une diversité ethnique sur les variations de langage ou, vice-versa, le fait que les frontières ethniques perçues ne correspondent pas aux frontières linguistiques perçues. De plus, les frontières linguistiques perçues ne correspondent pas nécessairement à la compréhension d'autres variétés de langage (fonction symbolique vs fonction communicative de la langue). Ainsi une ligne donnée de frontière linguistique sur une carte perceptuelle pourrait représenter la limite d'un comportement sociolinguistique. Des études sociolinguistiques peuvent donc servir d'outil pour la création de cartes linguistiques perceptuelles puisque les recherches socio-linguistiques quantitatives fournissent les variations diatopiques/diasthratiques des données, tandis que les recherches qualitatives établissent la perception de ces variations. L'article présente des analyses de cas basées sur des études de terrain effectuées en Italie dans la région est et ouest des Alpes, offrant ainsi une meilleure introduction à ce genre de perception geolinguistique.

Mots clefs: dialectologie perceptuelle, géographie linguistique, frontière linguistique, terrain, fonction communicante/symbolique du langage.

Trazar los idiomas desde dentro: notas sobre dialectología perceptible

Mapas de idiomas pueden representar muchos aspectos de la situación lingüística en un territorio dado. Normalmente trazan opiniones particulares sobre el marco lingüístico como es visto por los de fuera, es decir, por lingüístas o eruditos en general. Sin embargo, se puede hacer uso de los mapas también para señalar la distruibución geográfica de la percepción de variación lingüística desde el punto de vista de los hablantes. El punto de inicio para todos los mapas de idiomas es la frontera lingüística (y su definición): así un mapa que define las percepciones de un idioma requiere una definición de frontera desde el punto de vista del hablante. Para hacer esto hay que analizar 'datos de percepciones': es decir, estudiar las opiniones que tienen los hablantes de las diversidades de la lengua y comparar las diferentes percepciones. Puntos de interés pueden ser, por ejemplo, la influencia de la percebida diversidad étnica sobre la variación lingüística—o vice versa, el hecho de que las percebidas fronteras étnicas no son iguales a las percebidas fronteras lingüísticas, o por otra parte, que las percebidas fronteras lingüísticas no son necesarialmente iguales a la percebida comprensibilidad de otras variedades del idioma (función simbólica vs función comunicativa de la lengua). Por lo tanto una posible linea fronteriza lingüística en los mapas que definen las percepciones de un idioma sería el límite de comportamientos sociolingüísticos. Desde este punto de vista, los estudios sociolingüísticos pueden ser muy útiles a la hora de trazar un mapa de las percepiones de un idioma ya que las investigaciones sociolingüísticas cuantitavas proporcionan la variación diatópica/diastrática de los datos, mientras que investigación cualitativa proporciona la percepción de la variación. El papel habla de estudios de caso elaborados en los Alpes occidentales y orientales de Italia para mejor introducir este tipo de explicación geo-lingüística.

Palabras claves: dialectología perceptible, geografía lingüística, frontera lingüística, investigación de campo, la función comunicativa/simbólica del lenguaje.