

Gorgia Toscana “out of context”: a Local spreading (?) feature in urban Florentine Italian

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Keywords: Tuscan lenition, dialectal divergence, urban varieties, sociophonetics, dialect variation and change, prestige perception and attitude

The Italian sociolinguistic context is very complex, due to the many regional varieties of the language, spoken alongside more than fifteen Italo-Romance dialects and about fifteen historical linguistic minorities (Cerruti 2011). Among the Italian varieties, Florentine has been used as a model during the past centuries for the definition of a Standard Italian (SI), but, it shows some features that distinguish it from SI pronunciation, as the Gorgia Toscana, traditionally defined as intervocalic stop spirantization (Castellani 1961), which will be the focus of our study.

For its proximity to the standard, Florentine has a certain prestige, considered as overt in the Tuscan area (Marotta 2014; Calamai 2017). Outside the region, however, it recently retroceded in favor of Milan (Galli de' Paratesi 1984) and Rome (De Mauro 1963) varieties, due to their major socioeconomic relevance and visibility on the media.

How does this situation reflect on the Gorgia Toscana variation, a Florentine local feature, nowadays? Have speakers perceived the recent loss of prestige on the national level and levelled their local features toward a standard stop pronunciation? Or, on the contrary, do the regional prestige and the proximity with SI let the feature spread even further?

We will try to investigate this research question, given that the last sociolinguistic inquiry in town, without quantitative analysis, was Giannelli and Savoia (1978). We will thus look at the realization of 960 voiceless and 960 voiced intervocalic stops in 40 Florentine speakers (elicited through a meaningful sentence reading task), exploring not only traditional factors as gender, education and age (Labov 2006), but also explicit attitude and prestige perception. To parameterize these last two factors we based on participants' responses (Nodari 2022; Piccardi 2023) on the following open questions during a semi-structured interview (Karatsareas 2022): (a) what's your opinion on the Florentine variety?" (0= negative , 1= partially negative 2= positive); (b) "do you think Florentine is still a model for Italian?" (0=no, 1=yes).

Giannelli and Savoia (1978) noticed that spirantization was almost categorical in intervocalic position, but they found few cases of spirantization in post-consonantal stops as well, a strong position in which lenition is more rarely found (Kirchner 2001; Scheer & Ségéral 2008). While many acoustic studies investigated on GT on voiceless stop in intervocalic position (Soriano 2001; Marotta 2001; Villafañá Dalcher 2008; Stevens 2012; Fiorenzoni 2019), no phonetic analysis has ever been conducted on this new context. We will investigate acoustically 960 postconsonantal voiceless stops, to consider whether spirantization in strong position has maintained, expanded, or regressed, if it's a free variant or it is socially marked. Results will indicate that Florentine speakers show no levelling toward a stop standard pronunciation: for voiceless stops in intervocalic position, percentages of spirantization are at ceiling for all social groups and GT is still expanding, with young speakers leniting more. Florentine speakers tend to maintain spirantization of postconsonantal and voiced stops and play finely with these features to express their Florentine and social identity. It thus seems that, in the contemporary Italian context, urban varieties with some prestige could go toward divergence, instead of advergence, from standard pronunciation norms (Hinskens et al. 2005).

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