MINORITY LANGUAGE PLANNING AND REGIONALISM IN ITALY: THE CASES OF LOMBARDY AND FRIULI

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INTRODUCTION

From the linguistic point of view, Italy is surely the richest country in Europe, as rich relatively speaking, for example, as the Indian subcontinent. Even though it is difficult to give a precise number of the varieties spoken in Italy, given that most of the so-called ‘dialects’ do not possess a standard form (which is one of the reasons they are called ‘dialects’), it could be said that between 20 and 35 different languages are spoken in Italy by the majority of its population (i.e. by about 32 million people). Of these, 12 languages have been recognized by the Italian state (Law 482 of 1999) as minority languages (French, Provençal, Franco-Provençal, German – both standard and its Alemannic, Bavarian and Carinthian varieties –, Ladin, Friulian, Slovene, Sardinian, Catalan, Albanian, Greek and Croatian), whereas the remaining 7-22 languages spoken by 52% of Italians above 6 years of age (ISTAT 2000) and understood by many more do not enjoy any legal recognition, even though a few regional laws with a very limited scope have been passed for their protection.¹ This is another reason why Italians normally refer to them as ‘dialects’ and not as ‘regional languages’, which would be a more correct way of naming them. In fact, it should be highlighted that the so-called Italian ‘dialects’ are not dialects of Italian at all, as they evolved directly from Latin, the same as Italian, which is nothing more than a standard form based on 14th century Florentine. It is therefore their lack of official status and of a standard form coupled with the low position they occupy in a diglossic relationship with Italian, their dependence on it (heteronomy) and their lack of prestige that make them ‘dialects’, and nothing strictly linguistic. Yet, some of them are structurally as different from Italian as, for example, French or Spanish are from Italian, hardly mutually intelligible and in some cases possessing vast and very interesting literatures. Other ex-dialects in other European states sharing the same

¹ See Coluzzi, Paolo, Regional and Minority Languages in Italy. A General Introduction on the Present Situation and a Comparison of Two Case Studies: Language Planning for Milanese (Western Lombard) and Friulian (Working Paper 14), Barcelona: Ciemen, pp. 9-15.
sociolinguistic position as Italian ‘dialects’ have already been recognized as ‘regional languages’, like Low German in Germany, Asturian and Aragonese in Spain and Kashubian in Poland, allowing these languages to be protected under the provisions of the European Charter for Minority or Regional Languages (on the other hand, also Friulian and Sardinian used to be considered dialects).

Many factors of a non-linguistic nature distinguish minority languages from regional languages, some of which have just been mentioned, but probably the most important one is the lack of awareness on the part of the speakers of regional languages (‘dialects’) to belong to an ethnolinguistic group different from the dominant one, as various linguists and sociolinguists have pointed out (see for example Fiorenzo Toso 1996, Jan Wirrer 1996 and particularly Tomasz Wicherkiewicz 2003).

NATIONALISM IN ITALY

Such a linguistic and cultural wealth, however, is not reflected in the number and size of political micronationalist groups present in Italy, which are usually known as partiti autonomisti or regionalisti as the terms nazionalismo/nazionalista are usually related to state nationalism, or macronationalism. In other European states (see Spain for example), historical, political and sociological factors together with a widespread belief that a degree of autonomy and decentralization can be conducive to better

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2 Macronationalism is the term that should be used with reference to the nationalistic policy adopted by large multiethnic or multinational states in order to level the differences existing among its various parts with the aim of unifying the country culturally and linguistically; to make its economic system more viable and efficient and to avoid all manner of internal conflicts, of an ethnic or social nature. In fact, for its economic development, a modern state requires fast and efficient communications, social mobility and popular support that a unified culture and one national (i.e. ‘macronational’) language can guarantee. This is the sort of nationalism that Rome, Madrid, Paris or London have pursued from the 18th century onwards (that is to say, in the case of the Italian state from the very beginning).

Even though easy communications and mobility are obviously a fundamental object for small countries as well, micronationalism is the term that should be used when referring to the policy pursued by nationalist movements or parties in regions/nations belonging to a larger state, that possess a distinct culture and often a language (particularly in Europe) different from that of the majority of the population of that state. What these movements and the minorities that support them want is some sort of autonomy from the central government – according to the individual cases, this can vary from regional autonomy, to a federal state or even a sovereign independent state. The reasons for this have basically to do with the frustration and/or underdevelopment that usually characterize these areas as peripheral within the state and far from the centre of political and economic power, and the desire to retain their own distinctness, identity and a sense of community (without wanting to spread them to other ethnic and national groups, which is actually what the dominant group tends to do in macronations, often portraying this macronational assimilation process simply as a ‘natural’ modernization process).
protection for local languages and cultures, have favoured the establishment and in some cases the electoral success of many such groups, whereas in Italy mainstream politics has been strongly centralist since the creation of the Italian state in 1861. This creation was founded on the myth that the ultimate fulfilment of Italy’s destiny was to be one nation with one language, Italian, a language that an estimated 97.5% of Italians could not speak (De Mauro 1963, 41), but that represented new opportunities, modernity and the future. Even some classical Italian writers such as Giuseppe Manzoni, whose first language was Milanese, were far from fluent in the language they were writing in. The latter, for example, wrote his masterpiece *I promessi sposi* (The Betrothed) – the most famous novel of Italian romanticism – with the help of his Milanese-Italian dictionary!

Some authoritative voices did rise in favour of some degree of decentralization or federalism (Carlo Cattaneo, Giuseppe Ferrari, Marco Minghetti, Stefano Jacini, Cavour, etc.), but the fear that ‘any recognition of regions would open the doors to federalism and would endanger national unity, so miraculously achieved’ and that ‘the autonomy of the communes and provinces, considered as "natural institutions"’ would be lost prevailed (Lyttelton 1996, 43). While the Romantic interest for folklore and ethnicity was canalized into regional culture first and micronationalism afterwards in countries like Spain, in Italy it inspired the *Risorgimento* and was used to justify the establishment of the Italian state. However, the first micronationalist stirrings began as early as the beginning of the 20th century, not surprisingly in one of the most marginal of the Italian regions, Sicily, which, like the rest of the South, was suffering for its condition as an outright ‘internal’ colony. There followed Sardinia, South Tyrol and the Slovenian areas in Friuli Venezia-Giulia after the First World War. The still active *Partito Sardo d’Azione* and the *Slovenska Skupnost* were established in this period. Fascist macronationalism put an end to all this from 1922 to the end of the Second World War, when various micronationalist groups began to spring up both in the aforementioned regions and in areas where micronationalism had only taken its first tentative steps in the aftermath of World War I, like Friuli Venezia-Giulia. The *Union Valdôtaine* (in the Aosta Valley), the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* and the *Partito del Popolo Trentino-Tirolo* (in Trentino Alto-Adige/Südtirol), for instance, were established in this period.

Starting from the 1960s a new wave of small autonomist parties arose, many of which began to show a clear left-wing tendency, like the *Movimento Friuli* in
Friuli/Friûl, the Movimento Autonomista Occitano in the Provençal valleys of Western Piedmont or the Movimento Politico Meridionale in the South. However, popular and populist micronationalism only really went off the ground in Northern Italy at the end of the 1970s with the establishment of the Liga Veneta in 1979, followed five years later by the Lega Lombarda, which were to form the core of the Northern League established at the end of 1989. This time the general trend of these parties was clearly right-wing.

These developments highlight a significant dichotomy that can be drawn between left-wing and right-wing micronationalist groups, a very important one also for its implications as regards the attitude of these groups towards the promotion of the local languages. Most Italian micronationalist groups have shown an interest towards the local languages, be they minority or regional languages, particularly from the 1960s onwards (from the very start in the case of Südtiroler Volkspartei, Slovenska Skupnost and Union Valdôtaine), but while some seem to show a serious commitment, like most autonomist groups in Friuli/Friûl, particularly the Movimento Friuli, others seem to be playing what many would consider mere lip-service to the cause of local languages and cultures, like the Northern League. The problem is that the last-mentioned is the one that has enjoyed the largest electoral success so far, and this brought about two interesting though opposite phenomena: on the one hand previously ‘taboo’ issues like federalism and the revival of local languages began to be addressed by most main-stream parties, particularly by the historic Left, and on the other, an interest in local languages began to be associated with leghista right-wing and racist ideas, particularly in the North of Italy.

Just to give an idea of the consistency of the main micronationalist parties mentioned so far, here are the percentages some of them gained in the latest regional/provincial elections:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Region/Province</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lega Nord</td>
<td>(in Lombardy, Piedmont, Veneto, Liguria and Emilia-Romagna)</td>
<td>8.52%</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Valdôteaine</td>
<td>(in the Aosta Valley)</td>
<td>47.24%</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Südtiroler Volkspartei</td>
<td>(in the province of Bolzano/Bozen)</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partito Sardo d’Azione</td>
<td>(in Sardinia)</td>
<td>3.88%</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None of Friuli/Friûl’s nationalist parties get even close to these percentages. However, in the 1978 elections, at the height of its popularity (after the two big earthquakes of 1976) the progressive Movimento Friuli, established in 1966, received as many as 38,200 votes (Meloni Tessitori 1999, 30), and in the 1998 regional elections all Friulian nationalist parties together gained the remarkable share of 9.2% of the votes (Zili 2002, 8).

The huge difference in the extent of language planning efforts that is evident in the following outline concerning Western Lombard/Milanese (a regional language) and Friulian (a minority language) can be attributed in part to the interest towards local languages and cultures shown by the local nationalist parties (mainly the Northern League for Lombardy and the small Fuarce Frûl-Lega Friuli, Movimento Friuli, Unione Friuli, Convergenza per il Friuli, etc. for Friuli/Friûl). Among other things, it should be noted that a comprehensive regional law for the protection of Friulian was passed as early as 1996 (regional Law 15/1996), three years before Law 482/1999, whereas in Lombardy, the region where the Lega Lombarda originated and from where the leader of the Northern League, Umberto Bossi, comes, no laws have been passed so far for the protection of the local languages (Western and Eastern Lombard plus ‘peripheral’ varieties). This is not surprising, since as early as 1989, at the First National Congress of the Lombard League held in Segrate (Milan),

Bossi announced that the issue of local languages was a politically closed alley. […] He said that he had come to realize that Lombard dialects would never be recognized as languages because they were not linked to a national language spoken in another country [and] that the topic of local dialects and cultures had been exploited for years by the Italian Communist Party and so it did not guarantee sufficient identity to Lega politicians. (Bonsaver 1996, 104)

MAJORITY AND MINORITY LANGUAGE PLANNING

Before looking at the efforts carried out in the two case-studies I have chosen for this article, a very important distinction must be introduced at this point as far as language planning is concerned, that between majority and minority language planning.
In the same way as writings on nationalism often fail to make a clear
distinction between macro- and micronationalism, no studies on language planning to
my knowledge make a clear distinction between language planning carried out in a
nation-state and that carried out in a micronation. Most authors are aware of the
existence of different aims and different motivations behind language planning, but a
clear link between the kind of language planning and the sort of institutions, the
linguistic situation, the political aims of the elites and the size of the territory involved
has not been clearly drawn so far. Tollefston (1991), for example, distinguishes
between a neoclassical approach and a historical-structural approach to language
planning in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neoclassical Approach</th>
<th>Historical-structural Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual choices on language use</td>
<td>Sociocultural factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present situation</td>
<td>Historical background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectivity</td>
<td>Class and politics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others have talked about an instrumental and a sociolinguistic approach to language
planning (Fasold 1984, 250-51), while Williams (1991, 63-65) distinguishes between
three different approaches: evolutionist (languages spread and die for different socio-
economic reasons and nothing can or should be done to mitigate the latter);
preservationist (it is modernization that endangers minority languages);
conservationist (languages are a wealth that has to be protected). Ruiz’s analysis
(1984, in Wiley 1996, 114-115 and in May 2001, 182) is also relevant to this study. In
his opinion there are three orientations towards language planning: language as
problem (efficiency), language as right (justice) and language as resource (cultural
richness). Peter Mühlhäuser (1996), on the other hand, distinguishes between a non-
ecological and an ecological approach to language planning; the former focuses on
efficiency (‘one or few languages for social and technological modernization, clear
hierarchical differences in status and power for different languages’, etc.) (ibid., 207)
while the latter promotes diversity as fundamental, since ‘each language offers a

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different perspective on reality and [...] the only way to understand the complexities of this world is to approach them from as many perspectives as possible’ (ibid., 209).

All these classifications are insightful and useful and they roughly match each other, but they could all be subsumed under a dichotomy that seems to me essential if one wishes to understand the motives that lie behind language planning, and therefore appreciate the choice of means and the results. This dichotomy divides language planning into macronationalist or majority language planning on the one hand and micronationalist or minority language planning on the other. Such a distinction highlights the political aspects of language planning, because language planning is basically a political act; as Edwards (1995, 174), among others, believes: ‘Planning [...] is inevitably coloured by ideological imperatives’. And like all political acts, it can greatly affect the social and economic structure of society.

Macronationalist language planning is carried out in macronations in order to unify and centralize the country culturally, politically and economically and make communication and mobility easier and more efficient. Multilingualism is seen as divisive, inefficient, useless and expensive (language as a problem). The focus of the policy is on individual rights\(^4\) and is claimed to be rational and objective (neoclassical approach/autonomous model); language is seen basically as a tool (instrumental approach) and it is claimed that the death of a ‘small’ language is a natural inevitable process and that only the fittest survive (evolutionist approach). In the most positive cases minority languages and dialects can be collected and studied as ‘historical curiosities’. Even though such an approach to language planning may take on different political connotations, economic concerns about cost and efficiency, and political concerns about the ‘anarchy’ and lack of control that multilingualism may bring about are notoriously centre/right-wing preoccupations.

Micronationalist language planning is carried out in micronations in order to foster the local economy and culture by bringing the centre of power and culture closer to the community, and giving people a sense of belonging, of community that may overcome at least partially the alienation and sense of isolation typical of the modern world (historical-structural approach/ideological model). The term reversing

\(^4\) ‘A covert way of making languages disappear at the same time as the state retains its legitimacy in the eyes of (most of) its citizens and the international community, seems [...] to be for a state to observe (or to be seen as observing) several of the basic human rights for all its citizens [...], but to deny minorities those human rights which are most central for reproducing a minority group as a distinctive group, namely linguistic and cultural human rights’ (Skutnabb-Kangas 1996, 180).

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language shift used by Fishman refers precisely to this kind of language planning when he says:

Reversing language shift […] is itself a potential contribution to overcoming some of the endemic sociocultural dislocation of modernity. In this sense, then, RLS is potentially a contribution to the solution of problems that are greater than the one that is first on its own agenda. Indeed, RLS is a contribution to many of the central problems that eat away at modern life, at modern man and at modern society. (Fishman 1991, 6-7)

The local language is important not only for communication, but for its symbolic value and for carrying a whole inestimably rich culture within it (sociolinguistic approach/language as a resource). This is extremely important: a language and the culture expressed by it are inseparable; that means that it is not possible to retain a culture, not in its entirety at least, when another language takes the place of the original one, as many micronationalists reiterate. The language and the unique culture connected with it have to be protected against the invasiveness of the ‘big’ languages that are levelling out diversity in the world (conservationist approach/language as a right). Most importantly micronationalist language planning, at least the most committed strand, usually shows progressive connotations, as the political stance of most activists and scholars devoted to it clearly demonstrates; besides, emphasis on culture and on social justice have always been trademarks of committed left-wing policy. Finally, whereas macronationalist language planning is often implicit, or tacit in the sense that strategies and means are often made to appear as simply ‘natural’, micronationalist language planning is usually explicit or official because it badly needs the support of the community.

All this can be synthesized in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>macronationalist or majority</th>
<th>micronationalist or minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>language planning</td>
<td>language planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neoclassical approach</td>
<td>historical-structural approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instrumental approach</td>
<td>sociolinguistic approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evolutionist approach</td>
<td>conservationist approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language as a problem</td>
<td>language as a right/as a resource</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In reality things are never so clear-cut and a mixture of approaches and motives can of course occur in both examples of macronationalist and micronationalist language planning. For example, something that these two kinds of language planning may have in common is the effort on the part of the elites and the bourgeoisie to maintain or increase their power and position, and the attempt to divert people’s attention from other very important issues in the name of a common history and destiny. This, I believe, can be counterbalanced by an internationalist progressive and ecological vision.

LANGUAGE PLANNING IN WESTERN LOMBARDY AND IN FRIULI/FRIÛL

Friulian is often classified as a Rhaeto-Romance variety sharing a number of features with Ladin in Trentino Alto-Adige/Südtirol and Romansh in Switzerland, spoken by about half a million people living in the three Friulian provinces of Udine/Udin, Pordenone/Pordenon and Gorizia/Gurize. Western Lombard (also known as Milanese on account of its most prestigious variety used in Milan and the surrounding area) is a Northern Italian variety belonging to the Gallo-Italic group spoken by at least 2 million people living in the Western part of Lombardy, in the province of Novara (Piedmont) and in Canton Ticino (Switzerland). This is almost as many speakers as in the case of all the recognized minority languages of Italy put together.

In Friuli/Friûl various associations have been established to protect and promote the Friulian language and culture: the Clape ‘La Patrie dal Friûl’, the Glesie Furlane, the Clape Cultural Aquilee, the Cooperative di Informazion Furlane – which established Radio Onde Furlane –, the Institút Ladin-Furlan ‘Pre Checo Placerean’, the Union Scritòrs Furlans, etc. However, the most important ones and those that are currently carrying out most of the language planning in Friuli/Friûl are the Societât

[^5]: My own estimate based on the data of the 2000 ISTAT survey and the population of the provinces where Western Lombard is spoken: Milan, Varese, Como, Lecco, Sondrio, Novara plus Canton Ticino
Filologiche Furlane 'G.I. Ascoli' (The Friulian Philological Society, founded in 1919), the CIRF (Inter-departmental Research Centre on the Culture and the language of Friuli, established in 1995) and particularly the OLF (Osservatorio for the Friulian Language and Culture), the board instituted by Regional Law n. 15/96, which is soon due to be substituted by another language planning body called Istituto regionale per la tutela e la valorizzazione della lingua e della cultura friulana (Regional institute for the protection and promotion of the Friulian language and culture).

In Milan and the surrounding areas language planning is simply the sum of uncoordinated initiatives carried out by a few private bodies and institutions. The most important and active of these is the Circolo Filologico Milanese (Milanese Philological Society). There are other groups and associations that deal with Milanese, but for most of them the main interest is historical and literary and not really the promotion of the 'dialect'. As important as the Circolo Filologico Milanese for the promotion of Milanese, though on a different front, are the monthly magazine El Nost Paes and Radio Meneghina.

The next three sections will show what has been done so far by all these associations and bodies in the areas of corpus planning (particularly graphisation), mass media and education to promote these two languages.

**Corpus planning**

Friulian has an officially recognized standard form (basically the one proposed in 1986 by a commission chaired by the Catalan scholar Xavier Lamuela) based on central Friulian and the literary koine. Its orthography is close to Italian but with the use of a diacritic (Š) and a few graphemes (j, cj, gj, ç) that give it quite a distinct non Italian look, a cross between Slav and Romance. A small group of Friulians, however, insist on using a writing system put forward by Giorgio Faggin, who used it in his dictionary published in 1985 and in the successive ones, which gives Friulian quite a Slavic look. The main differences between the two systems are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Official</th>
<th>Faggin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Š Š</td>
<td>c (before e and i) or ç</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in Switzerland (however, very similar varieties are spoken in the southern Lombard provinces of Pavia, Lodi and Cremona, which I have not included).

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As far as Milanese is concerned, a literary koine has been in existence since at least the 17th century, using a writing system close to the one used for French. The great majority of what is printed in Milanese is written with this ‘traditional’ system, even though a ‘modern’ system closer to German can be seen every now and then, being the one preferred by members of the Northern League and in general by people not familiar with Milanese literary tradition, probably because it appears more ‘phonetic’ and easier to read by those who are not accustomed to reading Milanese. Moreover, its more ‘Germanic’ look seems to appeal to those who are eager to underline the difference between Milanese and Italian (like many Lega members). As far as vowels are concerned, the main differences between the two systems are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Modern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ð</td>
<td>ò</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>ó (or ‘ó’ if unstressed)</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>oeu</td>
<td>ó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>ü</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Status planning**

There is no lack of initiatives being taken in Friûl/Friuli in spite of the financial difficulties.

First of all, one must point out to the large literary production in Friuli/Friûl, one that includes all genres, from poetry to fiction. About 1460 titles were published between 1945 and 1997 (Cirf 1998, 12-13). However, particularly in the last few

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6 What the supporters of the Faggin system criticise of the official system is its lack of consistency: the grapheme ż, for example, can be pronounced as [dʒ], [tʃ] or [dʒ] according to the cases.

7 The use of the same vowel symbol for two different sounds is what seems to worry some people and to make them opt for the modern system.
years, we are also witnessing the publication of didactic, technical and scientific texts, thanks also to the big advances made by the modernization process of Friulian.

Even though there is a production of books in Milanese, this is quite limited and includes mostly poetry. All in all, not more than a dozen or so publications reach bookshops in the Milanese area every year.

As far as mass-media strictly are concerned, there are 3 main magazines entirely written in Friulian (La Patrie dal Friûl, La Comugne and Segnài di Ìàs) and a bilingual one available on-line (Int), but no periodicals entirely in Milanese. The only magazine available in newsstands in Milan and the surrounding area, El Nost Paes, is only partly written in Milanese. Quite a few magazines and journals partly in Friulian can be also found in Friuli/Friûl, but there is no daily newspaper as yet, even though some Italian dailies do occasionally publish some articles in Friulian.

In Friuli/Friûl there is a private radio station (Radio Onde Furlane) which broadcasts most of its programmes in Friulian (another private radio station, Radio Spazio 103, broadcasts about one third of its programmes in Friulian), while in the Milanese area only one radio station (Radio Meneghina) broadcasts regular daily programs in Milanese (about 1½ hours every day). It is also possible to find some programmes in Friulian on television: for instance Telefriuli broadcasts a news programme in Friulian (Lis gnòvis) twice a day. In addition more than 70 films or documentaries have been produced in Friulian so far, among which 6 or 7 feature films and a Friulian film festival takes place every two years (Mostre dal Cine Furlan).

Finally, scores of groups and singers singing in Friulian are active in the region, covering basically all genres, from Rap to Folk music, and an important song contest is held every year organized by Radio Onde Furlane (Premio Friuli). In Western Lombardy, too, many groups and singers sing in the local language, but their popularity and diffusion cannot be compared with those in Friuli/Friûl. The most important singing contest here is Milanocanta, organized every year by Radio Meneghina.

**Acquisition planning**

Courses for adults have been held both in Friuli/Friûl and in Western Lombardy for many years. As far as compulsory education is concerned, Friulian has been recently introduced in primary and lower secondary schools, but official data is not available.
yet as for the number and level of the students that are benefiting from classes of and in Friulian. According to an estimate by professor Lucio Peressi of the Friulian Philological Society, only about 20-25% of the schools in Friuli/Friuli have introduced Friulian in the school year 2002-3.\(^8\) The form of bilingual education adopted is, however, weak (mainstream with the minority language used only for a few hours a week at the most). In Western Lombardy, on the other hand, Milanese language and culture have only been present in full-time education in a few experimentations.

Finally, as far as higher education is concerned, Friulian has been taught for a few years at the universities of Udine/Udin, Gorizia/Gurize and Trieste, and in Moscow, Prague and Ljubljana outside Italy.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The presence of micronationalist groups, particularly those oriented towards the Centre and Left of the political spectrum, seems to be a factor favouring language planning efforts, particularly when their autonomist agendas succeed in reaching their aims. Many scholars and activists devoted to the promotion of minority and regional languages have realized this.

According to Kristin Henrard of the University of Groningen (Netherlands), a Belgian expert on international law,

> Territorial decentralization, forms of territorial devolution of competencies, and especially forms of territorial autonomy, can amount to an important form of minority protection, also for linguistic minorities. [...] Bringing “government closer to the people” could also have positive repercussions for minority protection in general, albeit more indirectly. Problems are arguably more easily solved at lower levels of government because these are closer to the population concerned and will be more inclined to accommodate the different religious, linguistic and cultural traditions present at that level.

(Henrard, 2001)

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\(^8\) Personal communication. However, a survey carried out by Cgil in December 2002 seems to be a little more positive. According to it, 80% of nursery school children, 68% of primary school children and 55% of lower secondary school students who had requested Friulian received some teaching in Friulian (about one hour per week) in the first term of the year. This corresponds to 45.5% of the total for
Renown sociolinguists like Joshua Fishman and Peter Cooper seem to share Henrard’s opinion:

As Fishman [...] points out, champions of vernaculars for high-culture functions are unlikely to succeed unless they, or those they represent, control the economic and political apparatus in which the community operates. (Cooper 1989, 115, emphasis added)

In most cases, only independent nations or autonomous regions have managed to obtain good results in their language planning efforts. As far as European minority languages are concerned, if we look at the list provided by Euromosaic (Istitut de Sociolingüística Catalana, Centre de Recherche sur le Plurilinguisme, Research Centre of Wales 1996, 65) where minority languages are listed according to the degree of stability and promotion they enjoy, it can be observed that at the top are languages official in regions that have achieved a high level of political and economic autonomy from the state they belong to. This applies to Catalan in Catalonia (number 3) and German in South Tyrol (number 4), as well as to other minority languages preceding and following them in the first 12 positions. On the other hand, the last 15 languages in the list are spoken in non-protected non-autonomous areas. Obviously other factors do come into play, as the authors explain, among which the most important is the number of speakers, but in my view they are less important (for example 280,000 people speak Icelandic in Iceland, a secure official language, whereas 3 or 4 times more people speak Sardinian, a language whose slow erosion law 482 may hopefully slow down). However, it is usually where a strong linguistic and cultural awareness is present in a minority/regional area that micronationalist groups are most likely to arise and thrive. It is a sort of vicious circle that makes both language planning and micronationalist policies difficult to carry out when most of the speakers of a minority/regional language do not see themselves as a distinct ethnolinguistic group

nursery schools, 37% for primary schools and 21% for lower secondary schools, i.e. an average of 34.5% of all Friulian students (Nazzi 2003, 21).

Only German in France can be seen as an exception in this sense.
from the dominant one, wishing to preserve this difference particularly in linguistic terms, which is the case of most Italian ‘dialect’ speakers.

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