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# Language Contact and Language Decay

Socio-political and linguistic perspectives



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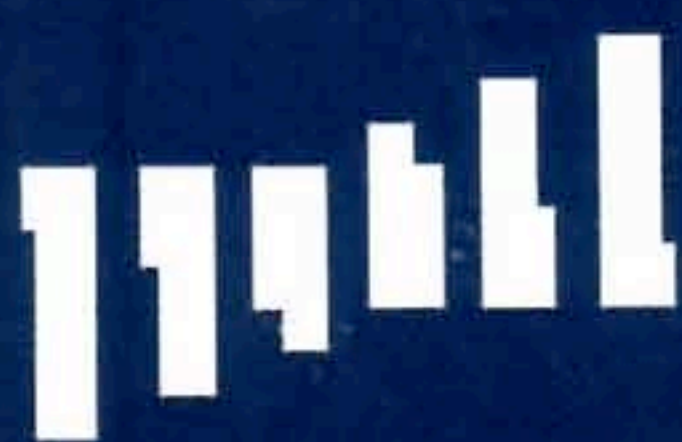




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**Between endangerment and Ausbau**  
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**1. Is there a link?**

An Ausbau language, to repeat Kloss' original definition, is a language which has "deliberately been reshaped so as to become a vehicle of variegated literary expression" (Kloss 1967:30). In other words, it is a language because 'it has been made' such.

An endangered language is a language whose transmission to the future generations is, for whatever reasons, reasonably expected to be barred.

The link between language endangerment and the process whereby a language is made into an Ausbau language (its 'Ausbauization') is provided by the endangerment of minority languages, and the ensuing necessity for them to be upgraded and transformed into full-fledged languages.

Not all the small languages around the world are spoken in a situation of diglossia, but many certainly are or were. Diglossia is defined here as the situation in which two codes are used in different situations and for different topics: a 'high' variety is typically learned formally (and it is not therefore the native language of the community) and is used for more formal contexts; the 'low' variety is instead native and used in informal contexts. While in Ferguson's (1959) seminal paper the two codes were by definition two varieties of one and the same language, I follow here Fishman (1967): the extent of linguistic diversity among the codes is immaterial to the definition, and the two codes may not only be mutually not understandable but even genetically unrelated. Actually, in many diglossic contexts more than just two codes are involved, and multiglossia should rather be used to define them.

The ongoing endangerment of most minority languages worldwide is at least in part a function of the demise of traditional diglossic patterns in modern nation-states. It is well-known that nation-states, imbued with a



nation-building ideology, need a maximally uniform society, and tend to foster monolingualism. In classical nation-states to cling to local varieties is bound to be interpreted as a sign of separatist or isolationist tendencies. On their part, contemporary democratic nation-states are prone to aim at an inclusive ('open') society, and to recast local or regional varieties into class-markers; their active societal flagging and promotion (as opposed to a mere private use) can be targeted as discriminatory.

Language diversity reduction in modern democratic states is all the more effective because it is often invisible (often even to the advocates of linguistic rights and the champions of 'small languages'): it involves what have never, or rarely, been 'true' languages from a sociolinguistic viewpoint, but rather sociolinguistic dialects, traditionally spoken as 'low varieties' alongside what were to become national languages (and which in pre-modern times were just the 'high varieties' of the spectrum). Fishman (1988:4) already mentioned that "the diglossic solution to the problem of endangered languages is a very difficult one to arrive at under any circumstances, whether philosophically or empirically, all the more so under typically modern circumstances".

It is important at this point to appreciate how the diffusion of national languages, an obligatory element of both the national and the democratic ideologies and materially carried out by compulsory schooling and internal migrations within the nation-states, has brought about a quasi-definitive loss of language diversity. It is also necessary to debunk the myth according to which new varieties have come, or will in due time come, to supplement this loss, and therefore make for the loss of the older regional languages or dialects.<sup>1</sup>

To appreciate the point it is of course necessary to accept an external view of what counts as a language, and look at the 'linguistic quality' of the old and new varieties. Briefly, the former were and are sociolinguistically dialects but often without any doubt languages from the point of view of mutual intelligibility.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, the new varieties can only be regarded as linguistic dialects: their difference from the 'mother language' is limited to lexical features (often of an expressive value) plus generally automatic (i.e., unconscious) phonetic or

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<sup>1</sup> This is, e.g., Joseph's (2004) position.

<sup>2</sup> Lack of mutual intelligibility as a criterium to calculate what counts as a language, notwithstanding its problems, is the criterium purportedly used by Ethnologue – the best known and most widely used repertoire on language diversity.



intonational habits.

Minority languages traditionally spoken in a situation of diglossia find therefore their domains of use shrinking. Many local languages and dialects of Europe (and beyond) find themselves in this situation (cf. Salminen 2007 for a recent overview).

Their demise will typically be slow; the language will not be taught to the new generations, and, as the language itself will be used less and less, chances to learn it at a later stage in life will be reduced. Typically, the language itself will come to be signaled by a few formulaic expressions. Once their meaning and native pronunciation have been lost, the formulaic expressions may enter the new language of the group as substratal material. While it can be a matter of contention to determine when such a language is 'dead', the final result of the process is not.

## **2. The folklorization of language diversity**

Before the process of language endangerment has made its natural course, and leaving aside the obvious 'no-reaction' solution – i.e., the demise of bilingualism and the adoption of the dominant language, with the ensuing loss of language diversity – two reactions to endangerment are possible: 1. to cling to diglossia and try to pass it to the future generations; 2. to reject diglossia and try to appropriate all, or at least most, of the 'high' domains of the dominant language.

In my view, the first solution is also the final stage of a 'democratic language death', a stage which Fishman (1988) aptly calls the 'folklorization' of language — its use for irrelevant domains:

"The road to societal death is paved by language activity that is not focused on intergenerational continuity, i.e. that is diverted into efforts that do not involve and influence the socialization behaviors of families of child-bearing age [...] Song concerts, theatrical performances, poetry readings, lectures, publications and prizes are RLS-means,<sup>3</sup> not RLS-ends in themselves. As RLS-means they are not intergenerationally continuous. Families are not formed, the daily and intergen-

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<sup>3</sup> Here and below, RLS stands for 'Reversing Language Shift'.



erational societal channels of Xish<sup>4</sup> communication are not re-established and the oracy or literacy of the young are not substantially fashioned by such activities or by the institutions that maintain and conduct them.” (Fishman 1991: 91)

Characteristic as it may be of the contemporary nation-states, folklorization was conceived and carried on for the first time during the French Revolution. Folklorization is not contrary to the elimination of language diversity through nation-building; it is rather its corollary: “[L]a folklorisation de la différence est le corollaire d’une politique d’unité nationale” (de Certeau/Julia/Revel 1975:178). It is illuminating that, even while still fighting his war against language diversity, Abbé Grégoire enquired about the possibility to collect data on the patois; the private ownership of such documents is little less than a theft from the public: “La nation prend en charge la tâche de préserver les reliques du patois”, and Grégoire regrets the loss of the lexicographic material of those same local languages at whose destruction he was working (de Certeau/Julia/Revel 1975:75). The patois is to be preserved in the form of written lexicographic material: de Certeau, Julia and Revel (1975:78) speak of a “mythification du patois”, part of a “histoire centralisatrice dont le triomphe sur le patois aura pour signe de n’y plus entendre des voix mais d’y observer des pierres tombales”.

Folklorization amounts to the neutralization of differences; a neutered diversity is made politically and ideologically inoffensive. Far from being a sign of failure in the effort to get rid of language diversity, it is the best proof of the nation-state’s final victory: a folklorized language is a language which has lost any communicative value.

At the folklorization stage, while the national language fulfils the whole range of the communicative needs of the community, the ‘original’, or ‘historical’ language will no longer be a medium at all: it has become what Laponce calls “une langue de boutonnière”:

“[...] les problèmes que pose la langue-identité sont plus faciles à résoudre que ceux que pose la langue-instrument-de-communication. La langue-identité, souvent réduite à n’être guère plus qu’une langue de boutonnière, se suffit de peu: des

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<sup>4</sup> I.e., in any (‘X’) endangered language.



crèches ou des jardins d'enfants dans la langue de l'ethnie d'origine, des chèques bilingues, des formulaires administratifs ou des étiquettes bilingues, des sermons ou des discours dans la langue minoritaire. [...] Ces marques de politesse envers une langue minoritaire réduisent, on l'espère, les effets négatifs d'un bilinguisme soustracteur. Le minoritaire acceptera plus volontiers d'utiliser la langue du groupe dominant si, de ci de là, on met en valeur, on donne un coup de chapeau à la langue de ses origines. Cette langue des origines, qui appartient à ce que nous avons appelé la langue-identité, se prête mieux que la langue-instrument aux solutions de type personnel [...] Mais cette langue-identité, dont l'irlandais est un exemple type, est une langue de tout autre caractère que la langue-instrument; c'est une langue symbole qui, à la limite, n'a presque pas besoin d'être parlée." (Laponce 1984:162)

*The reference to Irish is telling: the 1993 Irish survey showed that 19% of the respondents declared themselves to be "committed to using Irish as much as I can", but 77% admitted that "[p]eople in my circle just don't use Irish at all" and 84% never to read Irish columns in newspapers or listen to radio programmes in Irish (and as many as 93% never to read books in Irish). For as many as 39% of respondents Irish "should be preserved for its cultural value as in music and arts" (Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin 1994:10). Another 33% believed that the country should be bilingual, but with English as its principal medium. Almost underlining the possibly pernicious effects of welfare when applied to language matters, more than one third of the respondents in the Irish survey affirmed that less money should be spent on Irish, and that what government does about the Irish language was not important to them (Ó Riagáin and Ó Gliasáin 1994:20).*

As remarked by Laponce above, the identity values of language are satisfied with symbolic means ("La langue-identité [...] se suffit de peu"). An example of language folklorization is the frequent obsession with postsigns in local languages: e.g., in Basque country

"[n]ew road signs are all bilingual, with Basque first and in bolder type, and increasing attention is being given to the Basquization to other features of the 'general environment'



[...] While it is true that all of these make a contribution to the construction of a more Basquish environment, and are both advocated and opposed on that basis, they do not come to grips with the heart of the intergenerational transmission mechanisms: the normal, daily, repetitive and intensively socializing and identity-forming functioning of home, family and neighborhood. [...] Ireland all over again.” (Fishman 1991:161-162)

The same applies to typical more ‘language-connected’ efforts, such as those aiming at “great dictionaries”:

“what is more surprising, however, is the largely unrealistic nature of the practical consequences for RLS’ so often associated with such projects and the large sums of money and the sizable manpower resources that are, therefore, allocated to them [...] Indeed, the investment is so great that, once several volumes have been completed, ‘great dictionary’ projects tend to become sacred causes in their own right, ‘monuments’ or icons to their languages rather than stimulants leading to improved intergenerational mother tongue transmission.” (Fishman 1991:166-167)

Once reached this stage, even minority language activists often come to use the fatal term of ‘dialect’ to refer to such a language-as-heritage: ‘dialect’ is here used no longer for a viable linguistic medium used in a diglossic situation, but as an identity marker, in contrast to ‘language’, which gets its central value of ‘communicative medium’.

Folklorization does not challenge the traditional diglossia of the minority language – it accepts it and therefore the consequent division of roles between the minority and the dominant language; in written domains, folklorization clings to the traditional literary genres of minor languages – most of all poetry, partially belletristic prose. In this connection, already Kloss (1967:33) stressed the role of non-narrative prose in the Ausbauization process, to which we turn now.



### **3. Ausbau and its golden rule**

Against its folklorization, the Ausbauization of a minority language, involving as it does a rejection of diglossia, is an attempt to appropriate all, or at least most, of the 'high' domains of the dominant language. It is not at all 'traditional': no re-appropriation is involved, because the division of roles among the varieties was the quintessence of tradition.

The Ausbau of a minority language involves therefore problems very much akin to those faced by non-minority languages at all: foremost in the contemporary world, the non-Western languages in their modernization process; or the processes whereby new official varieties were created, especially in Central and Eastern Europe during the 19th century, and which were at the core of Kloss' (1967) original formulation of the concept of 'Ausbau language'.

It seems that the basic ideological drive behind the process of Ausbauization is the desire to make oneself (i.e., one's language) as distinct as possible, and therefore as different as possible, from competing varieties, generally the official and national language(s). In a way, the golden rule of Ausbau is: 'Be different – especially from thy neighbor!'

At the same time, internal differences will be minimized. Here we can see at a glance the chasm separating the folklorization and the Ausbauization approaches: while the former cherishes local variation (and it is therefore well consonant with a philological approach to diversity, as represented in the dialectological tradition), the latter promotes language at the expenses of dialect diversity.

In Tosco (2008) I tried to identify three steps in Ausbauization: orthographical decisions, the choice of the variety to be made into the future language, and, finally, corpus planning. Only the third will be treated in what follows.

The mechanisms whereby 'new words' are created and accepted in a language have of course been treated innumerable times, and will not be reviewed here. In light of Ausbau and its 'golden rule', it is evident that the minority language will have to express the domains of the 'other' without accepting the dominating language.

Ausbauization will first and foremost involve salvaging obsolete vocabulary and creating new words through native means. In Tosco (forth.) I argue that the amount of purism involved in the process of making a new Ausbau language will be a function of at least two,



independent factors: 1. in strictly linguistic terms, the distance (genetic, typological, and in terms of mutual comprehension) between the dominating and the minority languages; and 2. in sociolinguistics, the level of endangerment of the minority language.

The two factors work inversely: if the endangerment level is high and the distance between the languages is relatively low, purism will be inescapable. In general, the more endangered the language, the less will foreign influence be tolerated. While the excesses of purism are certainly found also in relatively powerful and healthy languages, it is often the case for severely endangered languages to fall victim of strong puristic tendencies. Purism will likewise be a likely possibility if the language is connected to a past language of great literary value – be the connection real or simply ideological in nature.

In the common situation of a minority language traditionally spoken in a situation of diglossia, and which is nowadays endangered by the encroachment of a dominant, ‘national’ language, an additional problem is given by the fact that the high domains will indeed already be covered by another language – the high variety – in which members of the minority language are perfectly conversant.

If the dominating and the minority languages happen to be fairly similar in structural and lexical terms, the necessity to distance oneself will be all the more stronger, and, at the same time, the road to Ausbau will become all the more narrow.

In such a situation, the availability of a neighboring foreign language will become an attractive possibility. Either lexical borrowing from this foreign language or borrowing of its morphological material (as discussed in Tosco *forth.*) will be exploited as a means to create an Ausbau language. In any case, Ausbau’s ‘golden rule’ will be respected, and what is shared by the dominating and the minority language will be shunned.

#### **4. Piedmontese, or diglossia with many a twist**

Piedmontese (Ethnologue code: PMS) is a language spoken over a great part, but not all, of the historical and administrative area of Piedmont, Northwest Italy. It belongs, like most neighboring varieties, to the Romance family of Indo-European – most specifically to subbranch of



Gallo-Romance.<sup>5</sup> The following map shows Piedmont and the traditional languages spoken in the area:

*Map 1. The languages of Piedmont and neighbouring areas. See page 284*

Piedmontese is and, most of all, was spoken in a classical situation of diglossia, although with a few twist which make its case interesting: first of all, the high domains were partaken by both Italian and French. Second, a regional *koiné* has been in place since long, partially preempting the need for both steps 1 and 2 of the Ausbauization process (orthography and variety choice).

As in any diglossic situation, varieties met both along the horizontal and the vertical plane: languages may occupy (and, I believe, usually do) both a section of the horizontal plane (a portion of the globe) and a section of the vertical plane (a position in a network of socially defined linguistic media).

On the vertical plane the picture was historically dominated in Piedmont by two important literary languages: Italian and French. These were the target of diglossia (maybe multiglossia), but for different domains.

Italian was the official language of the 'Italian' parts of the Duchy of Savoy (the 'subalpine' area) since Duke Emmanuel Philibert (1528-1580) moved his capital from Chambéry to Turin. Italian was used by the Church and in schools, and was the 'default' written language, but it was rarely spoken; the degree to which it was 'native' is impossible to ascertain, but certainly it was very limited. French was widely used as a spoken language at court (alongside Piedmontese) and among the bourgeoisie, and was the language of commerce with the parts of the Duchy across the Alps.

In written domains, Italian dominated belletristic literature (poetry and drama), French 'serious' prose. Official matters were mainly printed in Italian when dealing with the subalpine parts of the Duchy, in both Italian and French when dealing with laws and the like, while French was

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<sup>5</sup> In the same area, Walser (Ethnologue code: WAE), a Germanic variety, is spoken by at most a few thousands in Piedmont and the Aosta Valley; other, somehow larger communities are found in Switzerland, Austria, and Liechtenstein.



winning in the army and, of course, in foreign affairs.

As a result of its complex history at the crossroad of competing influences, Piedmontese lexicon is very variegated; in particular, it literally teems with a great number of French loanwords dating from all periods of its history, up to and well into the nineteenth century. As will be seen, this situation plays a role in contemporary efforts at revitalizing the language, with French loans being preferred to Italian loans whenever possible.

It is probably safe to consider the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars as the turning point in the modern Piedmontese political, and therefore linguistic, history.

Piedmont was first invaded by Napoleon in 1796, and definitely annexed to the French Empire in 1802. Independence was regained only in 1815 in the wake of the Congress of Vienna. As a reaction, a strong anti-French attitude became dominant and the tide tilted definitely in favor of Italian. Italianization was obviously reinforced in the second half of the 19th century with the unification of Italy in 1861. The eminent role of French lasted nevertheless at least until the first half of the 19th century, as witnessed by the great number of French loans in Piedmontese dating from this period.

Second, Piedmontese evolved over the centuries a *koiné* extensively used by speakers of different local dialects in belletristic literature and, to a limited extent, 'high prose'. This *koiné* was modeled after the dialect of the capital, Turin, and was widely used as an interdialectal medium, especially in commerce, the bureaucracy, and the army. The orthography was remarkably uniform, but, as a consequence of its limited use (Piedmontese was never taught in schools), it was never completely stabilized. The *koiné* was always much more an oral than a written medium: it was widely in use not only in the Piedmontese-speaking parts of Piedmont, but all over the 'Italian' parts of the Duchy of Savoy, and maybe even more in the Alpine areas (where Occitan and Franco-Provençal were native) than in the East of the Piedmontese-speaking domain, which were under the influence of external centers of attraction.

The interplay of the different contact patterns is tentatively depicted as follows:

*Map 2. Traditional multiglossia in Piedmont (from Tosco forth.). See page 285*



## 5. The demise of diglossia, endangerment and Ausbau

Heavy Italianization of Piedmontese can be dated back to the late 19th century. This is well shown in the literature in Piedmontese from this period, which strikes even the modern reader for its unadapted or barely disguised Italian words and constructions. A few examples of lexical, morphological and syntactic loans in texts of this period are presented in Tosco (forth.). For our purposes, what counts here is that the language was still actively used and passed on to the next generations: diglossia was not a problem, and Ausbauization was obviously not even dreamt of.

Nowadays, the picture has radically changed: Italian is the only high variety, French simply a foreign language (increasingly less taught at school), and the local varieties are dwindling. As to the *koiné*, which was a sort of middle variety, it has no place anymore among a largely monolingual community and is reduced (and perceived by the speaker) more and more as a vanishing dialect among others. While each town dialect can retain, amidst increasing code-switching in Italian,<sup>6</sup> a role in face to face communication within the local community, foreigners are addressed in Italian. In short, the low variety has become low and intimate; one of the high varieties has displaced the other and has been increasingly encroached the domains of the low, ‘eating up’ the middle variety in the process.

Whatever small amount of Ausbauization is currently being done in Piedmontese, it is certainly made easier by the presence of its century-old *koiné*: the problem of the variety to be chosen for Ausbau and its orthographic expression are simply not relevant in the case of Piedmontese. Taking its rich literary corpus as a starting point, the central and not easy task will be that of developing the Piedmontese *koiné* into a modern, full-fledged medium.<sup>7</sup>

As everywhere, the process entails the resurrection of obsolete native words and constructions, either in order to replace many Italian loans or

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<sup>6</sup> The contemporary Italianization of spoken Piedmontese has of course been dealt with abundantly, and most recently and effectively by Berruto (1997; 2006) and Ricca (2006; 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Of course, this does not exclude folklorization and the presence of a much wider circle of devotees of “traditional” literary genres which do not necessarily require a great deal of Ausbauization.



in order to adapt or extend their meaning to contemporary needs. Here, Piedmontese is certainly not an exception: what is peculiar is rather its choice to resort to a foreign high variety – French – in order to mark its distance from Italian. In a way, through Gallicization Piedmontese plays the two big languages with which it has been historically in contact against each other, and chooses among them the one more likely to mark its identity. As Piedmontese is currently being endangered by Italian, it is no big surprise that French is selected in order to increase the distance from the locally dominating medium.

Many neologisms, especially abstract nouns, will of course have recourse to derivation. The presence of three fairly similar languages with many shared roots and affixes (Piedmontese, Italian, and French) leads to interesting consequences. When a Piedmontese basic noun is different enough from Italian the use of a derivational affix common (in slightly different forms) in the two languages is obviously not a problem, as the difference from the dominating language is guaranteed by the noun; thus, quite common in written Piedmontese is nowadays *sacociàbil* (/saku'tʃabil/) 'pocket (adj.)', which is derived from the noun *sacòcia* (/sa'kotʃa/) 'pocket'. The model for the derivation is obviously Italian – French uses here a genitival phrase (as in *livre de poche* 'pocketbook', vs. Italian *libro tascabile*). The difference between Piedmontese *sacòcia* and Italian *tasca* (/ta'ska/) 'pocket' does the trick.

In other cases the game of Ausbauization is played at the morphological level, with Piedmontese choosing, whenever possible, derivational affixes which, although used in the dominating language too, happen not to be in use for that particular root. Here Gallicization will again play a role: in Tosco (forth.) it is shown that a French word may simply be adopted in Piedmontese: as the French derivational affix *-eur* (/œr/) is also (albeit scarcely) found and productive in Piedmontese as *-eur* (/œr/), we can have apparent French loans which are actually perfectly well formed in Piedmontese. To this category belong inter alia:

- *profondeur* (/prufuŋ'dœr/) 'depth', idem in French as /prɔfɔ̃'dœr/ vs. Italian *profondità* (/profondi'ta/);
- *grandeur* (/graŋ'dœr/) 'size', idem in French as /grɑ̃'dœr/ vs. Italian *grandezza* (/gran'detʃa/), but also vs. 'common', everyday Piedmontese *grandëssa* (/graŋ'dəssa/).

Further and more interestingly, we find neologisms created using the



Piedmontese form of the derivational morpheme found in the corresponding French word, as will be detailed in Section 7. From an Italian perspective, the result may look like an 'Italian-looking' word with the 'wrong' derivational affix: a case in point among many is *Arnassensa* (/arna'sæŋsa/) 'Renaissance' vs. Italian *Rinascimento* (/rinaʃi'mento/) but following French *Renaissance* (/ʀənɛsãs/).

The following sections will take a closer look at these mechanisms and discuss a few proposed solutions in the domain of lexical enrichment through the use of native vocabulary and the creation of new morphologically derived words, as well as through borrowing and loan translation.

## **6. Choosing the right word with an eye to Ausbau**

The first step in lexical enrichment will of course involve, as anticipated, the rediscovery of obsolete or local words which can successfully fill empty semantic slots or, more commonly, take the place of Italian loans. In case, a more native and less Italianized form is chosen, as in:

- *sgav* (/zgaw/) vs. *scav* (/skaw/) 'excavation'. This common word is simply extended in use in order to cover archeological excavations. Interestingly, the written language chooses the form with voiced /g/ instead of its voiceless synonym, which is possibly gaining ground in speech.

In other cases we have a real extension of meaning, as in:

- *fërtage* (/fər'tadʒe/) 'friction', derived from the common verb *fërté* /fər'te/ 'to rub, scrub' and nowadays also used, e.g., for friction in physics. The word is chosen in order to avoid a possible borrowing from Italian *attrito* /at'trito/,

while in still other cases an Italian loan is avoided through the use of a phrase, as in *Età 'd Mes* /e'ta dmez/) 'Middle Ages' (lit. 'age of middle') vs. Italian *Medioevo* (/medjo'evo/).

French loans are so common and entrenched that they obviously form part of the lexical stock of Piedmontese even in everyday speech. Other



loans, although obsolete by now or restricted to local usage, are attested in the literature and in dictionaries. In still other cases French provides the source for a neologism. In ‘ausbauized Piedmontese’ a loan from French is often preferred to a more recent, and nowadays more common, loan from Italian: this is the case, e.g., for *avion* /av'juŋ/ for ‘airplane’ (French *avion* /avjõ/) vs. *aeroplan* /aeru'plan/ from Italian *aeroplano* (/aero'plano/).

Piedmontese /'bysta/ ‘envelope’ is an obvious loan from Italian /'busta/; but both are written *busta* (in the Piedmontese orthography <u> stands for /y/): not surprisingly, the older and nowadays obsolete *anvlòpa* (/aŋ'vlopa/) is preferred (cf. French *enveloppe* /ãvlop/). Equally preferred, in the same semantic field, is *adressa* /a'dresa/ ‘address’ vs. *indiriss* /iŋdi'ris/ (cf. French *adresse* /adʁes/ and Italian *indirizzo* /indi'rittso/). The still partially in use *crajon* /kra'juŋ/ ‘pencil’, a loan from French *crayon* (/kʁejõ/), is preferred to the common *matita* (/ma'tita/), which is further both homographous and homophonous with its Italian source. In the case of *litra* (/ 'litra/) ‘letter’, the choice is based instead upon the existence of an older Piedmontese form, nowadays largely replaced in speech by the Italian loan *letera* (/ 'letera/), from Italian *lettera* (/ 'lettera/). Similarly, *vitura* (/vi'tyra/) is preferred to the nowadays definitely more common *màchina* (/ 'makina/) – the former is a loan from French *voiture* (/vwatyr/), the latter from Italian *macchina* (/ 'makkina/).

The computer and internet vocabulary is obviously particularly rich in neologisms, many of them connected to a French source: for ‘computer’ itself, the neologism *ordinator* (/urdina'tur/) ‘computer’ is widely used in recent publications in Piedmontese and also on the web; the model is obviously French *ordinateur* (/ɔʁdinatœr/). Italian here has simply *computer* (pronounced /kom'pjuter/). Of course, more common is *computer* (often pronounced /kum'pjutær/: unstressed /o/ is generally raised to /u/ in Piedmontese). As discussed in Tosco (forth.), two other possibilities have apparently never been proposed: \**ordinateur* (/urdina'tœr/) and \**ordinador* (/urdina'dur/): the first would be based upon the French derivational affix *-eur* (/ -œr/) referred to above; the second would be built with the derivational affix *-adur* (/ -a'dur/), which is actually the native affix corresponding to Italian *-atore* (/ -a'tore/), nowadays largely productive in Piedmontese under the form *-ator* (/ -a'tur/). In Tosco (forth.) I tentatively explain this as an instance of the Law of Least Effort applied to Ausbauization: as far as the lexical stem is different from the one used in



the dominating language (which in this case simply borrows a loanword), Ausbauization is successful, and no further move is necessary.

Of course, this further shows the often noticed fact that minority and endangered languages can be stricter than robust ‘big’ languages in their acceptance of international words (cf. Tosco 2008). The same, from the same semantic domain, is evidenced from the use of *giari* (/ˈdʒari/) ‘mouse’ in the context of computing. The word means ‘mouse’ and the model is provided once again by the French extension of the meaning of *souris* (/suri/) ‘mouse’. Again, Italian uses *mouse* (pronounced /mawz/).

The desire to look French (but actually to look non-Italian) may lead to forget even good old Piedmontese words: thus, for ‘keyboard’, the French loan *claviera* (/klaˈvjera/) (from French *clavier* /klavje/) is sometimes used; actually, a pre-existing word is well attested since the 18th century in Piedmontese: *tastadura* (/tastaˈdyra/) ‘board’ (e.g., in music), and is also sufficiently different from Italian *tastiera* (/taˈstjera/).

Different is the case of the contemporary formations calqued on French which we are going to discuss in the next section.

## 7. The big game of affixes

When roots are the same or very similar, morphology can come to the rescue in order to make a sufficiently ‘different’ (from the dominating medium) ausbauized language. In Tosco (forth.) I discuss the use of French in Piedmontese neologisms. As anticipated, it seems that whenever possible a different affix is chosen than the one found in the Italian equivalent. Loan translation from French becomes therefore a much exploited way to lexical enrichment. Many examples are provided in Tosco (forth.), and I add here only

- *contribussion* (/kuntribyˈsjun/) ‘contribution’ vs. Italian *contributo* (/kontriˈbuto/) but following French *contribution* (/kɔ̃tribysjɔ̃/).

Different is the case of neologisms such as *anrajament* (/anrajaˈmænt/) ‘radiation’, which seems to follow Italian *irraggiamento* (/irradʒdʒaˈmento/) rather than French *rayonnement* (/ʀɛjɔnmɑ̃/): both Piedmontese and Italian, but not French, use a prefix before the root for ‘ray;’ now, Piedmontese *raj* (/raj/) ‘ray’ is sufficiently different from its Italian equivalent *raggio* (/ˈradʒdʒo/) and further moves in order to make



the word more ‘autonomous’ from Italian are not necessary. Ausbauization is rather shown by the very choice of *raj* instead of the nowadays common *ragg* (/radʒ/), an evident borrowing from Italian.

Foreign place names and ethnonyms are a complex issue, because in a situation of diglossia they usually enter the minority language through the intermediary of the high variety: in addition to the examples given in Tosco (2008), one can mention here the use in written Piedmontese of *polonèis* /pulu'nejz/ ‘Polish’ vs. Italian *polacco* /po'lakko/ (whence the common in Italianized speech *polach* /pu'lak/), and obviously on the pattern of French *polonais* /pɔlɔnɛ/.

Piedmontese, Italian, and French prefixes are very similar, and their derivational potential is lower than for suffixes; still, Piedmontese phonological rules can be exploited in this domain in order to create neologisms fully in compliance with Ausbau’s rule of maximizing difference.

An example is provided by the Piedmontese prefix *an-*, which is nowadays preferred to its synonymous, but more Italian-sounding, allomorph *in-* in such new formations as the following (taken at random among many from the Piedmontese Wikipedia but common in many contemporary writings):

- *andipendent* (/aɲdipen' dæɲt/) ‘independent’ vs. Italian *indipendente* (/indipen' dente/);
- *anluminista* (/aɲlymi' nista/) ‘Enlightenment (adj.)’ vs. Italian *illuminista* (/illumi' nista/);
- *anstalassion* (/aɲstala' sjuɲ/) ‘installation’ vs. Italian *installazione* (/installa' dʒjone/);
- *anteresse* (/aɲte' rese/) ‘interest’ vs. Italian *interesse* (/inte' resse/);
- *anterussion* (/aɲtery' sjuɲ/) ‘interruption’ vs. Italian *interruzione* (/interru' dʒjone/);
- *antonassion* (/aɲtona' sjuɲ/) ‘intonation’ vs. Italian *intonazione* (/intona' dʒjone/);
- *anventor* (/aɲvæɲ' tur/) ‘inventor’ vs. Italian *inventore* (/inven' tore/).

The same happens with the Piedmontese equivalents of words with the international prefix *inter-*, and which appear in Piedmontese with *antër-* (/aɲtər-/):



- *antërnassional* (/aŋtərnasju'nal/) 'international' (cf. Italian *internazionale* /internadzjo'nale/);
- *antërpertassion* (/aŋtərperta'sjuŋ/) 'interpretation' (cf. Italian *interpretazione* /interpretə'dzjone/);
- *antërsession* (/aŋtərsə'sjuŋ/) 'intersection' (cf. Italian *intersezione* /interse'dzjone/).

Both forms with /a/ and /i/ are found side by side in spoken and written Piedmontese, where lowering of /i/ to /a/ is optional and common (e.g., *an* is also the Piedmontese preposition equivalent to Italian *in*). Dictionaries (such as Brero 1982) prefer to list under *in-* a great number of recent Italian loans, even if lowering to /a/ is optionally found in speech: one finds therefore *inventor*, *interpretassion*, etc. The preference for *an-* in modern texts seems to stem again from a desire to make Piedmontese more distant from the source, although the influence of Italian orthography is still felt, and very common words seem to eschew lowering even in written 'ausbauized Piedmontese'. E.g., *impossibil* (/impo'sibil/) 'impossible' only is found, not \**ampossibil* (/ampo'sibil/), which is instead possible and frequent in the spoken language (*am-* is the allomorph of *an-* before a bilabial stop).

Among the same words mentioned above, the following have variants in *in-* in the same sources:

- *indipendent* (/iŋdipenɟ'dæŋt/) 'independent';
- *interussion* (/iŋtery'sjuŋ/) 'interruption';
- *intonassion* (/iŋtona'sjuŋ/) 'intonation';
- *inventor* (/iŋvæŋ'tur/) 'inventor'.

Marginally, *interesse* (/iŋte'rese/) 'interest,' too is found (alongside *antëresse* /aŋtə'rese/ with a centralized unstressed vowel in pretonic position, again a widespread local possibility in Piedmontese). And in the very same articles which make extensive use of *an-*beginning words one can find, e.g., *indeterminassion* (/indetermina'sjuŋ/) 'indetermination.'

Likewise, *ar-* (/ar-/) is preferred to its Italianized equivalent *ri-* (/ri-/) as a prefix meaning 'back, again':



- *arconossiment* (/arkunusi'mæŋt/) 'acknowledgment' vs. Italian *ri-conoscimento* (/rikonofī'mento/);
- *arferiment* (/arferi'mæŋt/) 'reference' vs. Italian *riferimento* (/riferi'mento/);
- *arflessiv* (/arfle'siw/) 'reflexive,' although we find *rifless* (/ri'fles/) 'reflex' (cf. Italian *riflesso* /ri'flesso/, *riflessivo* /rifles'sivo/);
- *arnàssita* (/ar'nasita/) 'rebirth' vs. Italian *rinascita* (/ri'naʃita/);
- *arzistensa* (/arzi'stæŋsa/) 'resistence' vs. Italian *resistenza* (/rezi'stentsa/);
- *arzultà* (/arzyl'ta/) 'result' vs. Italian *risultato* (/rizul'tato/).

*Dës-* follows the same pattern in order to build words corresponding to both the Italian prefixes *s-* and *dis-*. Only two examples will be given here:

- *dëscuverta* (/dəzky'æta/) and *dëscoerta* (/dəzku'æta/) 'discovery' vs. Italian *scoperta* /sko'perta/;
- *dësvlupé* (/dəzvly'pe/) 'to develop'. The word is interesting because of the Ø-derived noun *dësvlup* (/də'zvlyp/) 'development', which goes against the difficulty in Piedmontese to form Ø-derived nouns (common in Italian; cf. Tosco forth.). Again, one may think that the goal of getting a sufficiently "different" word has been attained with the change in the prefix in respect to Italian (which has *sviluppo* /zvi'luppo/), and no further intervention is needed.

## 8. Envoi

In the vast world of cultural and linguistic diversity, languages traditionally spoken in a situation of diglossia with a high variety occupy a special niche. They show inter alia the weakness of our equation 'one language = one territory', and cast doubts about the even more basic and deep entrenched 'one language = one culture'.

The loss of language diversity inherent in the nation building process and in the ideology supporting the contemporary democratic states have been hinted at. The Ausbauization becomes then a likely possibility (maybe the only available one) in order to salvage an endangered minori-



ty language: it entails the definitive abandonment of diglossia and the upgrading of a low variety into a full-fledged language.

Finally, the dangers behind any Ausbauization process are of course well known: they lie in the common situation of the game being played by small circles of devotees completely detached by the linguistic habits of the community. Even bigger, fatal risks are involved in corpus planning activities being carried on per se, without sufficient attention to status planning: the symbolic values of the dominant, national language are accepted and no identity-building activity is undertaken. In such a case, Ausbauization ends up again into an intellectual game with no sociolinguistic and political fallout. And it seems to me that many ongoing ausbauization processes around the world tread such a dangerous path.

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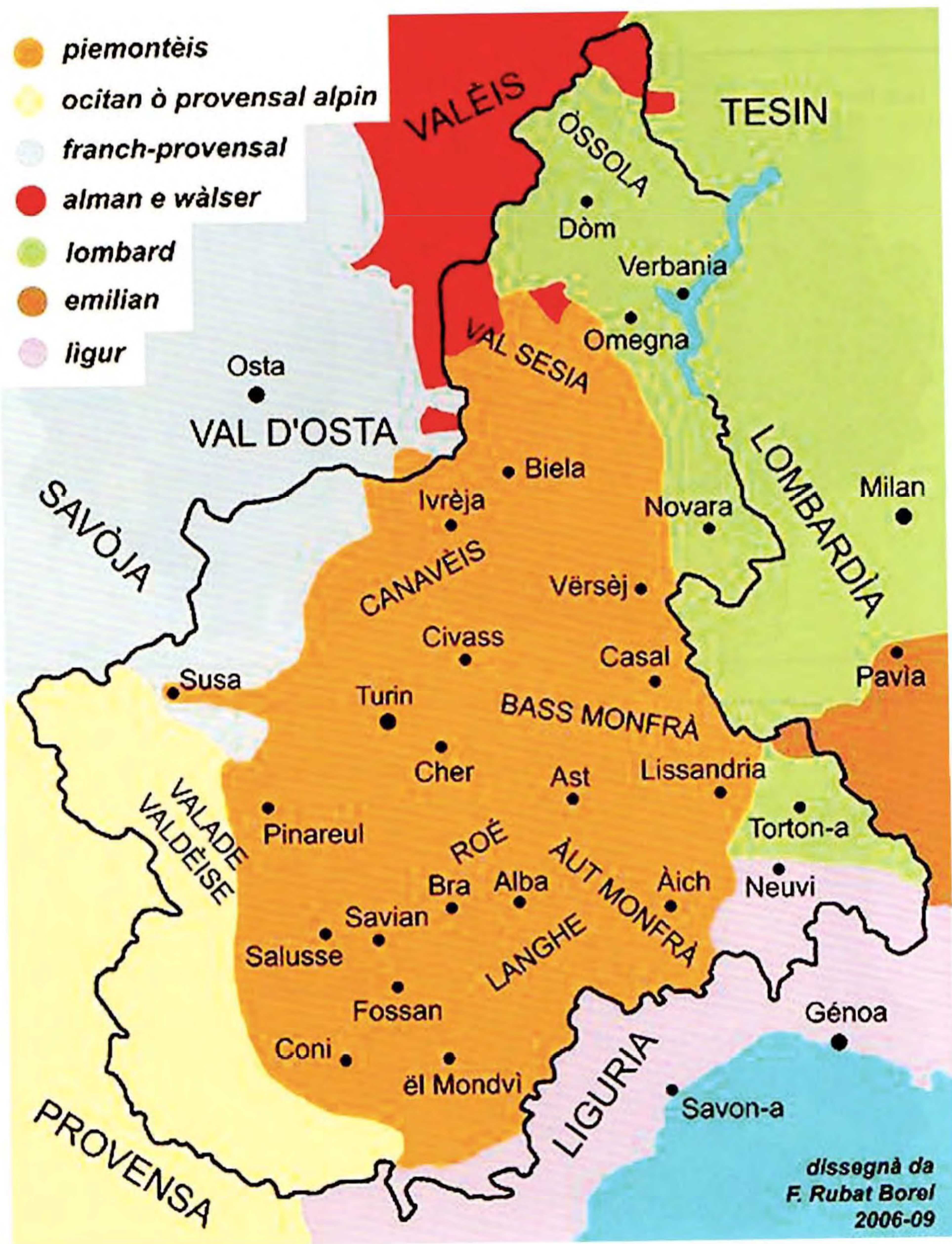
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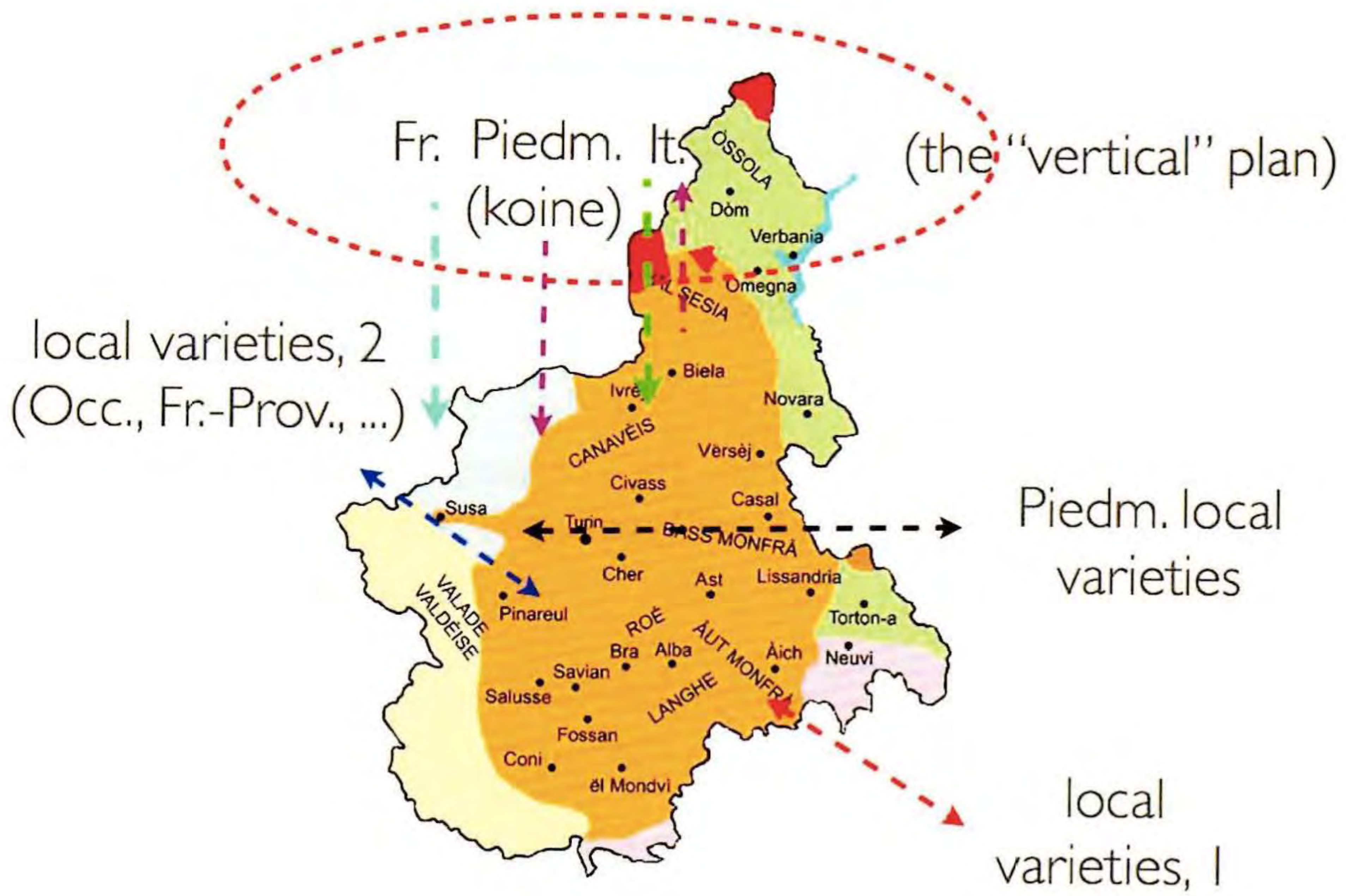
Wikipedia in Piedmontese: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piedmont>





Map 1: The languages of Piedmont and neighbouring areas  
 (© F. Rubat Borel, 2006-2009)





Map 2: Traditional multiglossia in Piedmont (from Tosco forth.)