

## Foreword

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This issue of *Rivista di Linguistica* contains a group of papers gathered under the general title "Italian as a contact language". A language A is a "contact language" when it works "in contact" with others (B, C, etc.), that is when it is used by a community which also has another language, irrespective of the mutual status of A and the other languages involved (diglossia, bilingualism, migrant versus native languages, etc.). In such situations, language A is likely to show features which would not be evident under "normal" conditions. The most obvious of these is that A may exhibit interferences due to B or C; but other phenomena also become evident, and the aim of the research on these phenomena is to identify and interpret the types into which they fall and possibly to explain them within a principled framework.

The idea of concentrating on Italian as a contact language arose in view of the increasing significance of this language as an object for descriptive linguistics and the remarkable amount of studies concerning this language in contact situation (in Italy and abroad). This latter class of works in particular boasts now several remarkable pieces of research, which can be profited both from the sociolinguistic and the strictly linguistic point of view. The papers by Berruto and Bettoni, which are inspired by this line of research, discuss aspects of Italian as used in Australia and in Switzerland, while Haller considers another sociolinguistically important dimension of Italian as a contact language, namely the attitudes that Italian communities abroad (in his case, in the U.S.A.) have towards their original language when living in another country and speaking another language. My own paper tries to derive from data concerning Italian as a contact language some predictions about the possible changes that Italian may undergo or is currently undergoing, relying on the assumption that languages in situation of contact may reveal trends relevant also to the structure of their native counterparts.