

SPEAKERS SELECTION FOR A MATCHED-GUISE TECHNIQUE IN SARDINIA: HOW TO APPROPRIATELY SELECT VALID REPRESENTATIVES OF SARDINIAN AND ITALIAN

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Abstract: This article deals with the selection of speakers for a Matched-Guise Technique to be conducted in Sardinia, with the final aim of studying attitudes towards Sardinian and Italian. Speakers who could validly represent the two main varieties of Sardinian – Campidanese and Logudorese – and the variety of Italian typically spoken in Sardinia were sought after. Following mainly Newman et al. (2008) and Nejari et al. (2019), twenty candidates produced a reading in Sardinian (either in Campidanese or in Logudorese) and in Italian: the nativeness of their Sardinian voices and the accentedness (or typicalness) of their Italian voices were evaluated by sixty non-linguists with bilingual competence in Sardinian and Italian. Seven candidates out of twenty were perceived as not native or typical enough to be accepted as “matched guises”. This demonstrates that the selection of appropriate guises should not rely only on the judgment of researchers, but it should also rely on the perceptions of linguistically naïve evaluators, especially when speakers of minority languages in which literacy is normally not acquired are asked to read aloud a text. Nevertheless, the procedure carried out in this study allowed us to identify speakers with the required level of nativeness while speaking Sardinian (Logudorese or Campidanese) and with the required level of typicalness while speaking Italian. Moreover, it has been found that male candidates were perceived as having a more pronounced regional accent than female candidates when speaking Italian; and Logudorese candidates reached higher peak scores than Campidanese candidates, especially when they got judged on the nativeness of their Sardinian voices. Even regardless of the specific outcomes though, the procedure described in this article provides a helpful contribution for the selection of speakers in matched-guise experiments to be conducted in contexts where a national majority language and an unstandardised minority language are involved.

Keywords: speakers selection, matched-guise technique, language attitudes, Sardinian, Italian

1. Introduction

This article is a methodological contribution dealing with one of the preliminary phases in the construction of a Matched-Guise Technique (henceforth also MGT), which is the most widely used and effective indirect method to investigate language attitudes in sociolinguistics and social psychology of languages (Labov 2001: 194). The relevant phase is the selection of the appropriate speakers who have to be listened to by participants. In the MGT – sometimes also called speaker evaluation experiment (Garrett 2010: 37) – participants whose attitudes are investigated are asked to listen to some recordings, each containing the voice of a speaker reading a text. Usually, the recordings alternate speakers reading in a certain language or language variety and speakers reading in another language or another variety of the same language (Gaies & Beebe 1991: 157-158, Garret et al. 2003: 16-17, Van Herk 2012: 152). Researchers typically ask listeners to rate each speaker on a number of personality traits, such as intelligence, professionalism, trustworthiness, friendliness, and similar ones. Participants are not told that the speakers who performed the readings in the various languages (or in the various varieties of the

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same language) are actually the same. Hence, while participants believe to rate the speakers, they are actually providing for evaluative reactions to the languages used by the speakers (Gaies & Beebe 1991: 157-158, Garret et al. 2003: 16-17; Van Herk 2012: 152). It appears clear already from this short description of the experiment that the choice of the right speakers is particularly important, since such speakers – in order to make the underlying idea of the MGT work – need to be valid representatives of the languages or language varieties under study. The work I present in this article has to be thought of as embedded in a wider research project being conducted in Sardinia and aimed at comparing Sardinian students' language attitudes towards the two most widely spoken languages in Sardinia, i.e. Italian and Sardinian. The purpose of the project, in other words, is to verify how these two languages are perceived, what kind of prestige and stigma students bestow upon them, and what type of values and stereotypes they assign to each of these languages. Since, as far as my knowledge goes, a Matched-Guise Technique for the study of language attitudes has never been used in Sardinia, and it has not been frequently used even considering the whole Italian territory, it is opportune to reflect upon each step of its construction and – when it is necessary – adapt it to the peculiarities of the sociolinguistic context of Sardinia. In virtue of this, a procedure specifically addressed to select suitable guises for a MGT to be conducted in Sardinia has been built and it is described in this article.

2. Literature review

2.1 The “nativeness” and the “accentedness” criteria: selection procedures

The purpose of this literature review is not to go through every study that has adopted the MGT to investigate language attitudes. The focus will be put on those pieces of research that have dedicated at least some attention to the process of selecting the right speakers. This is, indeed, a fundamental and crucial aspect in every attitudinal study that makes use of a speaker evaluation experiment, both in the typical version of the Matched-Guise Technique and in the Verbal-Guise Technique – namely the variant of the MGT where there is no person who is recorded twice, but each speaker is recorded while speaking a different language variety (Garrett et al. 2003: 53). Yet, in many pieces of research, the description of such process is overlooked or resolved in a few words. Other studies, on the other hand, have given interesting suggestions on how to conduct similar procedures and thus should be taken into account when constructing these types of experiments.

In the light of all this, I believe it is appropriate to mention immediately a very recent study conducted by Nejari et al. (2019), which was devoted entirely on the selection of suitable speakers for the MGT, and because of that, it can be regarded as an inspiring reference point for this work too. That study was actually addressed to matched-guise experiments that want to compare native and non-native speakers of English, but – I think – its approach has a broader validity. The authors searched for speakers who were able to be perceived as representatives of three English accents, the American one, the British one, and the typical accent of English produced by educated Dutch people. What really

matters here is that the authors reckoned that, to give validity to the guises selection, each speaker had to receive an evaluation on his/her “nativeness” and “standardness” (Nejjari et al. 2019). By “nativeness” is meant the degree to which a speaker sounds as a native speaker of a certain language or language variety. By “standardness” is meant the extent to which a speaker sounds as a standard speaker of a certain language or language variety; however, as far as the Dutch English guises were concerned, the authors preferred to refer to this second parameter as “typicalness”, meaning the extent to which speakers could sound as typical representatives of the Dutch accent while speaking English. The nativeness criterion basically gives important indications on the competence, the fluency, the mastery that a speaker is perceived to have in a language, and it ranges within a native/non-native continuum. The standardness criterion provides information on the perceived closeness or distance of a person’s way of speaking from the standard variety of a given language. In a standard/non-standard continuum, if total conformity to the standard variety is one end, the adherence to regional or local pronunciation is the other end; this means that, depending on the point of view, we can refer to the standardness parameter even as “localness” or “regionalness”. The term “accentedness” has often been adopted too, and, since it provides a sort of neutral viewpoint, I will also frequently use such a term in this work. Apart from these terminological matters, what is important to underline here is the fact that Nejjari et al. (2019) believed that making speakers be evaluated on those two criteria is a fundamental step for researchers who want to choose appropriate guises for the MGT. This is a brilliant and compelling intuition, since nativeness and accentedness are arguably the two parameters that are most capable of influencing the results in a speaker evaluation experiment. This could be noticed even from the pioneering work by Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner & Fillenbaum (1960) on attitudes towards French and English in Montreal. They used four male balanced bilinguals, who were selected on acquaintance basis and then judged to be appropriate by three experts. The recorded readings produced by the bilinguals were rated as perfectly native-sounding in both languages. All the French guises but one, moreover, got commented on sounding Canadian: in retrospect, the authors speculated that the Canadian accent of the French guises may have conditioned the results (Lambert et al. 1960). From this early work already then, it is possible to notice that the researchers were aware of the importance of clarifying whether the speakers had a regional accent and whether they sounded as native speakers in both languages.

With respect to the nativeness criterion, it is easily understandable that native-level sounding voices are more likely to be rated more positively than those that are perceived as non-native, and, hence, assumed to be not as much proficient (see Fuertes et al. 2012 for an overview). Several verbal-guise experiments have been devoted to confirm the advantage of native speakers over foreign-accented ones. For example, Callan et al. (1983) showed that, in comparison with Australian English native speakers, Australians who speak English with a Greek accent were judged more negatively, especially on status-related traits. Very similar results were found by Lindemann (2003), who compares the attitudes towards American English native speakers with those towards Korean non-native speakers of English. Evidently in compliance with the purposes of the specific research, the speakers selected for the matched- or verbal-guise technique in these studies were not all native speakers. However, since the aforementioned initial work by Lambert

et al. (1960), the canonical version of the MGT has provided for the presence of bilingual speakers who are, or at least sound as, native speakers of the languages involved in the study, in order to guarantee an equal starting point for all the languages (Gaies & Beebe 1991: 157-158, Kircher 2015: 199-200). I want to put in the foreground two studies, precisely for their effort in explaining the procedures employed to select native or native-like speakers. Firstly, the study by Genesee & Holobow (1989), who intended to replicate Lambert et al.'s (1960) study by comparing the attitudes towards English, Canadian French and European French in Canada, using a few speakers who could natively read a text in these three varieties. They pre-selected 5 potential appropriate speakers and recorded each of them thrice, once per language variety. Then, the researchers asked 20 university students to indicate which was, in their opinion, the first language of the speaker of each recording, clearly not making the students aware of the fact that the same five speakers were the protagonists of three recordings each (Genesee & Holobow 1989). Only if at least the 85% of judges believed that the first language of a given speaker corresponded to the one of the recording in all three guises, that speaker was deemed to be suitable for the main experiment (Genesee & Holobow 1989). The second study I would like to highlight is a more recent investigation conducted by Schüppert et al. (2015). The goal of this research was to examine the attitudes towards Swedish and Danish on the part of children from Sweden and Denmark, and see the correlation between such attitudes and word-recognition capacities. The MGT was adopted, but having only one bilingual speaker who produced the reading in the two languages, whereas the other recordings were fillers (Schüppert et al. 2015). To make sure that the selected speaker sounded native in both languages, the researchers organised two “voice parades”, one with Swedish listeners and the other with Danish listeners. The procedure of these “voice parades” was as follows:

It involved presenting native listeners (none of which participated in the matched-guise experiment) with a number of recordings of native speakers, including one by the bilingual, and instructing them to pick out one speaker that sounded non-native. We assumed that if the bilingual speaker is not chosen as the foreigner more often than on chance level, he or she sounds sufficiently native for our purpose (Schüppert et al. 2015: 383).

In few cases though, researchers deliberately chose to have speakers who were not, and did not even sound as, native-speakers of the languages involved in the MGT. Notable examples are the studies conducted by Woolard (1984, 2009) and Woolard & Gahng (1990) on the attitudes towards Spanish and Catalan in the Barcelona area. In these studies, the same voices of 4 female speakers reading a mathematical text both in Castilian and Catalan were used. Speakers were recruited to represent a credible sociolinguistic spectrum, so not all of them had to have the same degree of nativeness in the two languages. Such speakers were evaluated by an unspecified number of independent judges, who commented on the way they sounded: one of the selected speakers was indeed considered as a markedly non-native speaker of Catalan. In a sort of follow-up of these studies, namely the research by Newman et al. (2008), the guises were formed by 5 female speakers, and a same number of male speakers. The ratio was again

to pick both balanced bilinguals and unbalanced ones, in order to have a wide range of speakers who were truly representative of the Catalan society. To select the appropriate guises, nine college students were asked to judge 20 possible candidates, 10 men and 10 women, in terms of the way they sounded (Newman et al. 2008). More specifically, they were required to indicate the choice that – in their opinion – best fitted each speaker among these four options: “Very Catalan sounding / Catalan sounding / Spanish sounding / Very Spanish sounding” (Newman et al. 2008: 312). Reflecting on this kind of procedure and question, it is possible to speculate that speakers sometimes got evaluated on their nativeness and sometimes just on their accentedness. Since Catalan is a regional minority language whose acquisition as L1 is not to be taken for granted, when the Catalan voices sounded strongly Spanish it seems safe to assume that they were perceived as non-native. On the other hand, since it is not common to find Spanish people in Spain who do not have a native level in Spanish, when the Spanish voices sounded strongly Catalan it might have just meant that they were perceived as belonging to regionally-accented speakers. The authors, indeed, illustrated that some Spanish guises were represented by standard speakers and others by speakers with a noticeable regional accent (Newman et al. 2008).

This fact shows that, aside from the native-level of speakers, their degree of standardness or regionalness is another factor that researchers usually want to have under control. As happened in Newman et al. (2008) moreover, the judgment on the level of accentedness of speakers who might be part of the MGT has been sometimes left to the perceptions of external raters. Similarly indeed, Luhman (1990) wanted to employ the MGT to compare attitudes towards Standard American English and Kentucky-accented English: the speakers the researcher had chosen “were judged by 50 evaluators on a 7-point scale that ranged from (1) nonstandard to (7) standard to affirm that the speech samples did indeed represent the intended guises” (Luhman 1990: 333). In the aforementioned study by Genesee & Holobow (1989) – where each of 5 potential candidates for the MGT produced three guises in English, Canadian French and European French, the authors decided to ask 20 judges also about the nationality of those speakers. This can clearly be seen as an indirect way of getting information on the degree of perceived accentedness of the guises produced by those 5 candidates.

It has to be underlined that, unlike for the nativeness criterion, it might not be as much straightforward to understand how speakers’ level of standardness/regionalness conditions the judgments those speakers receive in a MGT: in this respect, it has often been said that standard speakers usually score higher on traits associated with intelligence, competence and similar, while regionally-accented speakers score higher on traits connected to pleasantness and attractiveness (Cargile & Bradac 2001: 350, Van Herk 2012: 151). Focusing just on the matched-guise experiments that involved the Italian language, it is possible to find only partial confirmations to this general trend. Baroni (1983) made Italians coming from different regions express evaluations on “matched guises” representing standard Italian, regional Italians and local dialects: standard Italian guises got much more positive judgments, especially in traits related to socio-economic and cultural status, while regional Italian guises were downgraded in a wide number of traits. Contrastingly, in the research conducted by Bettoni & Gibbons (1988) within the Italian community in Sidney, where attitudes towards English, Italian and an Italo-Romance dialect were compared, different results were found. The regional

Italian guises were accorded very positive evaluations, and they were judged as being rich, competent, educated and sophisticated (Bettoni & Gibbons 1988). The authors gave a compelling explanation that could account for the differences between the perceptions of regional Italian found in their study and those found in Baroni (1983): they claimed that Baroni's participants were made more inclined to downgrade regional Italian guises since such guises were explicitly put up against standard Italian, namely a variety that is naturally associated with socioeconomic prestige (Bettoni & Gibbons 1988). It seems that, when the standard variety is out of the equation, the regionally-accented guises are more likely to be perceived very favourably even on status-related traits. However, Volkart-Rey (1990) did not adopt a similar perspective in his attitudinal study in Catania and Rome: the author, instead, used a verbal-guise technique to compare the perceptions of people from these two towns towards standard Italian and respectively towards Sicilian-accented Italian and Roman-accented Italian. The standard guises were rated more favourably in terms of socio-economic and cultural values; nonetheless, the regionally-accented guises were perceived as friendlier and warmer: the author explained this finding as being determined by the artificialness of the standard language compared to the naturalness of the regional variety (Volkart-Rey 1990: 125). More recently, a verbal-guise test designed by De Pascale et al. (2017) revealed that young Italians seem to confer many status-related values upon certain regional Italian accents – like the Milanese one.

In sum, studies that adopt the matched- or verbal-guise technique may have different combinations of speakers in terms of their nativeness and accentedness: these are the two parameters that have proved to be most crucial in conditioning the evaluative reactions of listeners, albeit not always in the same ways. Therefore, what seems to be really important is that researchers – whatever combination they choose according to the purposes of the specific studies – are aware of the extent to which each of the speakers sounds native and regional. In order to do so, experts may rely on their own judgment, but arranging a selection procedure with external judges seems much more reasonable and safe.

3. The MGT in the Sardinian context

3.1 Sardinia's sociolinguistic situation

Sardinia is a Mediterranean island and an autonomous region of the Republic of Italy. A multiplicity of languages can be found in the island: from north to south, the Italian-Corsican dialects in Gallura and in the city of Sassari, Catalan in the city of Alghero, a Ligurian dialect called Tabarchin in San Pietro island (Spiga 2007: 65). In all the rest of the Sardinian territories, Italian and Sardinian are known and spoken, and these are the two languages to which the attention of my research project – and, thus, of this article – is directed.

It is immediately worth emphasising, however, that Italian and Sardinian do not play the same role in the Sardinian society, nor they are in the same condition as far as their ethnolinguistic vitality is concerned. Italian, more than being the official language of the Republic of Italy and then also of the Sardinian Region (Parlamento Italiano 1999), is

the language of instruction at all levels of education, from nursery to university. Sardinian, by contrast, despite the status of protected minority language within the Italian territory in virtue of the National Law n.482 (Parlamento Italiano 1999), has been for a long time excluded from formal and public contexts. After over a century of complete absence, it has started to gain some space in schools in the last few years, but its role keeps being quite limited and marginal (Schjerve 2017: 40, Mura 2019). Sardinian, indeed, remains mainly an oral language, whose primary uses are still associated with private contexts (Oppo 2007: 15, Schjerve 2017: 40). Within the family too, however, Sardinian has been undergoing a process of replacement in favour of Italian, putting in jeopardy its own survival (Schjerve 2017: 38-39). Moreover, Sardinian is considerably less spoken by young people and women, and the use of such language negatively correlates with level of education and size of the place of residence (Oppo 2007: 10). It is, therefore, not surprising that the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger classifies Sardinian as “definitely endangered” (UNESCO, n.d.).

Related to this matter, it is important to highlight the different condition of Sardinian and Italian in terms of internal variation and standardisation. Sardinian is a language with great diatopic variation, without a standard variety to function as a model for the other ones. Given the huge amount of variation found throughout the diatopic axis, it is even difficult for the experts to classify the different local varieties in wider groups (Molinu & Floricic 2017: 15). However, a traditional division exists and it is the one between Campidanese and Logudorese, with the former being the macro-variety of the southern part of the island, whereas the latter is the macro-variety spoken in the septentrional half. This traditional classification was supported, among others, by Blasco-Ferrer (1984: 195) and Viridis (1988) too, although he identified four linguistic areas, acknowledged that the main partition is the one between Campidanese and Logudorese. As Lai (2018) stated, this bipartite division is still the most accepted internal taxonomy of the Sardinian language among linguists. In any case, none of these macro-varieties can be said to have the role of standard variety of Sardinian.

In the last 20 years, top-down corpus planning initiatives have attempted to create such standard variety, but with poor results. A so-called “Limba Sarda Unificada” was proposed by the Regional Administration in 2001: Tufi (2013) explained that it was never put into being by Sardinians in virtue of its adherence uniquely with Logudorese. The most relevant attempt was made by the Regional Administration in 2006, with a proposal of standard Sardinian called “Limba Sarda Comuna” (LSC). Nevertheless, even this proposal can be said to be modelled only upon Logudorese (Calaressu 2008, Tufi 2013; Lai 2017, 2018, 2019), so much that Lai (2017: 186) claimed that “LSC is to all intents and purposes a Logudorese dialect”. This new proposal of standardisation indeed had to face a strong opposition that hugely limited its actual implementation and diffusion. In 2009, with the explicit aim of promoting two differentiated standard varieties, one for Logudorese and one for Campidanese, the Province of Cagliari launched *Arregulas* (= ‘Rules’), a proposal of linguistic and orthographic standard for Campidanese. More than ten years later, the standardisation issue is still debated in Sardinia and no solution has been found: in sum, it is safe to say that there is neither a variety of Sardinian that is acknowledged to be a standard, nor there is a variety that is actually widely known and acquired through grammars and schools that can function as a model for other varieties.

By contrast, Italian is a highly standardised language, since one of its varieties – called indeed standard Italian or Italian without adjectives (Masini 2010: 15) – is a system that presents a decent amount of consistency, determined especially by its presence in vocabularies and grammars, and by its relevant role in schools (Masini 2010: 71). However, as far as orality and pronunciation aspects are concerned, almost no one can be said to speak an Italian without adjectives, so that Masini (2010: 71, my translation) stated that “for the vast majority of Italians the standard variety is a completely virtual entity”. On the other hand, different varieties of Italian are spoken in the various Italian regions: such varieties are indeed named regional Italians and are characterised by the presence of local traits, often substrate phenomena (Berruto & Cerruti 2015: 152). It is safe to say then, that spoken Italian, and hence its prosodic and phonetic features are massively affected by the diatopic dimension. It has been even possible to claim, therefore, that regional Italians are the only varieties of Italian that can be found in spoken language (Marcato 2002: 93, Antonelli 2011). Sardinia makes no exception in this respect, since the regional Italian of Sardinia plays a clear leading role in the communication practices within the island (Loi Corvetto 2011, Piredda 2017: 496). Although such a regional variety exhibits peculiarities at every level of linguistic analysis, the prosodic and phonetic characteristics are the most deeply-rooted ones (Loi Corvetto 1983/2015: 43, Piredda 2017: 497). To be precise, with specific regard to prosody and phonetics, even local differences can be found within the regional Italian of Sardinia depending on the area of origin of speakers (Loi Corvetto 1983/2015: 119-120), and, especially at a perceptual level, it has been shown that Sardinians are able to differentiate between Italian speakers coming from the southern half of the island and those coming from the central and northern area (Piredda 2013: 172-173).

3.2 Designing a MGT in Sardinia

I intend to conduct my research about attitudes towards Sardinian and Italian using a fairly typical version of the matched-guise technique. Participants will be presented with a number of recordings, to which I will be referring as “voices” or guises. Each recording will contain a speaker reading a portion of a text in a different language: clearly, the recordings will be either in Sardinian or in Italian, and listeners must not be told that the Sardinian and the Italian “voices” actually belong to the same speakers. Since this is the first time that a MGT will be conducted in Sardinia though, it is opportune to reflect upon which language varieties the Sardinian and the Italian guises should represent. It has been illustrated in the previous paragraph that the Sardinian language cannot be considered as a monolithic entity, nor there is a variety that works as standard or model. Moreover, the most widely accepted subdivision of Sardinian is the one that splits such language into two main macro-varieties, Logudorese and Campidanese. Hence, as far as the Sardinian guises are concerned, it seems appropriate to look for speakers who can validly represent the Logudorese variety and speakers who can do likewise for the Campidanese variety. With regard to the Italian language, it has been described that the oral language practices of Sardinians are almost exclusively carried out in regional Italian, while the standard variety is a nearly non-existent entity in spoken language. Since the stimuli of the MGT are samples of spoken language, it seems very

reasonable to look for speakers who are recognised as having a regional accent, hence who are valid representatives of the regional Italian typically spoken in Sardinia. Furthermore, the differentiation in terms of area of origin of speakers, necessary to have both Campidanese and Logudorese speakers of Sardinian, is also useful to give representatives both to the southern and to the central-northern way of speaking Italian in the island. It has to be clarified that the text that speakers are asked to read is written in an Italian that can be easily defined as standard (or grammatically correct, if we adopt a normative perspective); it is only the prosodic and phonetic aspects of the speakers that allow to associate them with the regional variety. In effect, Loi Corvetto (1983/2015: 43) and Piredda (2017: 497) stated that prosody and phonetic features of the regional Italian of Sardinia not only are the most well-established ones in Sardinians' way of speaking Italian, but are also quite difficult to hide. Therefore, it is safe to say that the typology of Italian guises I want to include in the MGT consists of typical Italian speakers from Sardinia. One can object that regional varieties in MGTs tend to be sanctioned in terms of socio-economic prestige; however, it should be reminded that this seems less likely to happen when regionally-accented speakers are not put up against standard speakers, and thus listeners' attention is not led to be focused on such difference more than on the comparison between national language and dialect (see Bettoni & Gibbons' explanation [1988] of Baroni's results [1983]). Recent indirect attitudinal investigations, moreover, suggested that some regional Italians have been gaining prestige in the last few years (De Pascale et al. 2017). In the light of the scarcity of studies conducted in Sardinia in this regard, it is interesting to verify the values and stereotypes accorded by Sardinians to their own regional variety of Italian, and to compare them with those bestowed on the local minority language.

The structure of the MGT to be conducted in Sardinia that has been just described provides for the presence of an inter-linguistic opposition between Sardinian and Italian, and an intra-linguistic comparison between Campidanese and Logudorese. Italian, meanwhile, is represented by typical speakers of that language coming from Sardinia, namely Italian native speakers who have the prosodic and phonetic peculiarities of the regional Italian of the island. In this case too though, a sort of intra-linguistic comparison can be found, since – as Piredda (2013: 172-173) showed – differences among local Italians of Sardinia due to speakers' area of provenance are noticed and perceived by Sardinians. Beyond this elucidation, it can be said that a very similar structure of the experiment was set up by Loureiro-Rodriguez et al. (2013) in their MGT designed to investigate attitudes towards Spanish and Galician in Galicia. In that study, there was an inter-linguistic opposition between a majority language (Spanish) and a minority language (Galician), but at the same time there was an intra-linguistic opposition between two varieties of the minority language (vernacular Galician and school-acquired Galician). The majority language, moreover, was represented by regionally-accented speakers typically found in Galicia. It is important to specify that – as it happened in Loureiro-Rodriguez et al. (2013), as well as in Bettoni & Gibbons (1988), in Woolard (1984), in Newman et al. (2008), and in other studies – the inter-linguistic opposition in my research is planned to be created by different guises produced by the same speakers, in compliance with the typical version of the matched-guise technique. The intra-linguistic opposition, on the other hand, is programmed to be formed by “unmatched” guises

produced by different speakers, more similarly to a verbal-guise technique in this respect. It is indeed very easy to find bilingual speakers of Sardinian and Italian who can generate the “matched” guises; it is very difficult instead to find speakers who are able to read a text in Logudorese, in Campidanese, and in regional Italian sounding authentic and fluent, and without noticeably forcing the characteristics of their natural voice. Therefore, readings in Campidanese and in Logudorese will be always performed by different people, respectively coming from the Campidanese- and the Logudorese-speaking area of the island.

4. Research question

One may wonder how it is possible to choose appropriately the speakers who will form the guises of the experiment. As it has been possible to see in the Literature Review section, the selection of speakers for a matched-guise technique may go through a task that involves external judges evaluating the suitability of a group of candidates. Hence, the research question wonders whether it is possible and desirable in Sardinia to carry out a procedure with external judges in order to select a group of speakers who can be considered as appropriate Sardinian/Italian “matched guises” and valid representatives of the language varieties that can be reasonably included in a speaker evaluation experiment to be conducted in the island, namely Logudorese, Campidanese and regional Italian(s) of Sardinia. The interest and the focus is put on how such procedure is carried out and which results are derived from it.

5. Methodology

5.1 The choice of the candidates

The first step that had to be completed was the choice of a certain number of speakers whose appropriateness for being part of the main experiment would be evaluated by external judges. These speakers can be, therefore, referred to as candidates. In line with Newman et al. (2008), precisely 20 speakers were contacted: they were asked to read a text both in Sardinian and in Italian, in order to create the “matched guises” belonging to the same speakers already for this preparatory experiment. All candidates were recorded several times until a reading with no mistakes or hesitations was produced in both languages. Clearly, people who were born in Sardinia and who are known to be proficient and competent speakers of Sardinian were identified; at the same time, they have grown speaking Italian too and have been educated in Italian throughout the mandatory school years. Huge differences in terms of candidates’ ages were avoided; indeed, all the pre-selected people range from 24 to 31 years of age. This was done evidently to avoid that the evaluations they receive would be influenced by perceived age gaps. It is important to specify that half of these candidates come from places in which Logudorese is spoken, while the other half come from a city or a village in which a variety of Campidanese is used. Comprehensibly, the candidates who come from the

Logudorese area read the Logudorese version of the selected text, whereas the candidates who come from ‘Campidano’ read the Campidanese version of that same text. Finally, it has to be clarified that I intend to include both male and female voices in the main experiment, since the gender of the speakers has proven to be able to influence the judgments given to them (Cargile & Bradac 2001: 358, Giles & Billings 2004: 195, Newman et al. 2008, Kristiansen 2009). Therefore, within the 20 candidates, 10 are men and 10 are women.

5.2 The text read by the candidates

In speaker evaluation experiments, the content of the recordings is usually left constant throughout the various recordings, so that the judgments are not conditioned by the content of the text read by speakers (Gaies & Beebe 1991: 157-158, Garrett et al. 2003: 52). However, when participants are asked to listen to a high number of different speakers and recordings, minor differences in the message conveyed have been allowed (e.g. Bettoni & Gibbons 1988), or different – albeit strongly comparable – parts of a same text have been read by the various speakers (e.g. Nejjari et al. 2019). Since in my experimental design – as it will be seen in section 5.5 – listeners were asked to hear 22 consecutive recordings, playing the exact same content over and over again would have risked to end up in loss of attention and task engagement on the part of participants, which could have jeopardised the reliability of the results (Nejjari et al. 2019). Therefore, I chose to take a single text and divide it into two portions, so that some recordings would contain one part of the text, and some other recordings would contain the other part of that same text. It is important to specify that such two portions are highly comparable in terms of length, topics covered and complexity of linguistic structures employed. It is just as much important to clarify that participants listened to the same speaker reading the same portion of the text in both Italian and Sardinian: in the analysis of the ‘matched guises’ of a same speaker then, variables such as the linguistic structures and the message conveyed in the two recordings were completely controlled.

The text I have selected is a brief and general description of Hungary, in which some political, geographical and historical characteristics of that country are outlined in a very basic way. It is worth underlining that, since candidates got judged on the readings of such a text, those readings are the ones that I plan to use even in the main experiment. The parts that make up the text have been taken from the page dedicated to Hungary in the Sardinian version of Wikipedia (Wikipedia, n.d.). The original text was written in LSC, namely a Sardinian variety that can be basically defined as Logudorese (Calaresu 2008, Tufi 2013, Lai 2017, 2018, 2019). It has been partially modified to correct some linguistic imperfections and to make it shorter; it has been then translated into Campidanese Sardinian and Italian. Such a text has been chosen to comply particularly with a fundamental criterion: cultural neutrality. This is indeed the most essential factor to take into account in the choice of the text for the MGT (Kircher 2015: 199). Hungary can be surely regarded as a neutral topic, which is linked neither to the Italian nor to the Sardinian culture. A particularly similar choice was made by Price et al. (1983) in their study on attitudes towards English and Welsh in Wales. They selected a text about

Palestine, justifying such a choice with the neutrality and the simplicity of the content conveyed (Price et al. 1983).

It has already been mentioned that great care has been devoted to make the two portions into which such text has been divided as much comparable as possible. As far as the topics covered are concerned, both parts deal with institutional, historical and geographical features of Hungary, presented briefly, elementarily, and in a mere referential style. As far as the length is concerned, out of a total of about 100 words (the exact number varies depending on whether the text in Logudorese, Campidanese or Italian is considered), the two portions differ by 9 or fewer words. As far as the language used is concerned, the two parts exhibit roughly the same linguistic phenomena. The two portions written in the same language are, therefore, strongly alike; at the same time, in both parts, very similar differences were maintained between the version in Sardinian and the one in Italian, and between the version in Campidanese and the one in Logudorese. Despite I am aware of the importance of showing and exemplifying such comparability in terms of linguistic phenomena of the two parts of the text, that would not be feasible (in terms of both space and scope) in this article; however, a similar description is planned for future papers.

5.3 The external judges

As seen in the literature review section, there have been few studies that have employed independent judges to establish the appropriateness of some candidates for a speaker evaluation experiment; however, only some of them have decided to let such judges be non-linguists. Although in many cases the non-linguists seem to agree with researchers in designating suitable “matched guises”, it is also true that sometimes such naïve speakers express perceptions that diverge from the ideas of experts (Nejjari et al. 2019). Those cases in which judges who were not linguists disagreed with the pre-selection made by linguists – as it happened indeed in the study by Nejjari et al. (2019) – showed clearly the usefulness of employing naïve speakers as judges, instead of relying exclusively on the ideas of the researchers. In virtue of this, and following the recommendations by Nejjari et al. (2019), I decided to involve judges who have not had any specific training in linguistics but have a Sardinian/Italian bilingual competence. Sixty people agreed to participate as evaluators, a number that is higher than many previous similar experiments designed to test the representativeness of a group of “matched guises”. It has to be said though, that, since the purpose of this preparatory experiment was to verify how my candidates were perceived when reading a text in both Italian and Sardinian by a variegated range of bilingual Sardinian people who could represent a larger population, no particular requirement was sought for the judges. Indeed, the people who participated in the experiment are of very different ages and come from different parts of Sardinia.

In the light of the fact that Sardinian varieties are broadly mutually intelligible and that many of the core features of the language are shared by all its dialects (see Virdis 2003), I considered appropriate to have the judges assess both the Campidanese speakers and the Logudorese ones, regardless of their area of origin. It is opportune to clarify that, due to logistic reasons, unfortunately, it was not possible to perfectly balance the number

of judges who come from the Campidanese-speaking area of the island and those who come from the Logudorese-speaking area. Similarly, more men than women agreed to take part in the experiment as judges. To be more precise, 39 judges come from the Campidanese-speaking area, while only 21 come from the area in which a variety of Logudorese is spoken; moreover, 36 judges are men and 24 are women. Basically, the Campidanese judges as well as the male ones cover around the 60-65% of the total sample of judges.

It is fundamental to clarify that not all judges evaluate the ‘matched guises’ of all candidates. Indeed, making judges rate all 20 candidates in both their Sardinian and Italian guises would have meant to force them to listen to 40 consecutive recordings in an experimental session of around 50 minutes; attention and task engagement could have been seriously affected. Hence, each judge has been assigned to a group of just 10 candidates and asked to listen and rate 20 recordings (the 10 Sardinian guises and the 10 Italian ones). This means that each candidate has received evaluations on his/her “matched guises” by a group of 30 judges.

5.4 The questions to elicit evaluations on candidates

Following the literature and the considerations that have been illustrated in the previous sections, I decided to make the judges of the test evaluate the candidates in terms of their nativeness and standardness/accentedness. These two are indeed the most important parameters capable of influencing the results of a matched-guise experiment. However, when a majority and a minority language are involved, these two parameters might not be equally relevant for both languages: as explained in the Literature Review section, when Newman et al. (2008) asked judges to evaluate how their candidates sounded, it might easily be that the Catalan voices got rated mainly on their nativeness, while the Spanish voices got rated mainly on their accentedness. Therefore, it was right to wonder in my case too whether those two parameters are both relevant for both Sardinian and Italian.

Firstly, it has to be specified that the standardness criterion, understood as a scale to identify standard and non-standard accents, is not relevant as far as the Sardinian recordings are concerned. Indeed, it would be inadequate to ask for the extent to which the candidates sound as Sardinian standard speakers if there is no standard variety of Sardinian. This implies that for Sardinian (and for all the non-standardised minority languages) the parameter of standardness is not applicable. Nevertheless, different accents while speaking Sardinian may derive from diatopic differences. In this respect, it has been specified that some of the Sardinian guises are speakers of Campidanese and some others are speakers of Logudorese. However, the judges of the test were not asked whether the candidates could be truly distinguished in Campidanese and Logudorese speakers. The validity of such distinction indeed is already guaranteed by the place of origin of the pre-selected speakers and by the researcher’ expertise in that language; moreover, the text that people from the Logudorese and Campidanese area read was respectively either in Logudorese or in Campidanese. Therefore, there is no possibility that a candidate chosen to represent the Logudorese variety was perceived by the judges of the test as Campidanese, or vice versa. What had to be verified by these judges was

which speakers sounded as Sardinian native speakers; those who did were automatically perceived as native speakers of either a Campidanese or a Logudorese variety. The criterion of nativeness, indeed, is crucial for the Sardinian recordings. Although effort has been put in pre-selecting proficient speakers of Sardinian, there was no guarantee that such speakers would sound natural and authentic while performing a reading in this language. This is linked to the fact that Sardinian, especially until few years ago, was completely excluded from schools and from public and official contexts, so that “Italian has been for almost three centuries the only language of writing and official communication [...], whereas Sardinian is almost exclusively the language of orality and private communication” (Angioni 2000: 254, my translation). The exclusion from schools, in particular, has prevented many generations of speakers to get literacy and education in Sardinian (Schjerve 2017: 37). In the light of this situation, even proficient speakers of the minority language cannot be assumed to sound native when they have to read a text in that language. It is indeed known that reading in minority languages might be more problematic regardless of the speakers’ proficiency, since it is often the case that the resources and the occasions to read in such languages are quite limited (Hickey 2005: 398). As far as the Sardinian readings are concerned then, the perceived nativeness of the speakers had to be ensured by asking the judges of the test to evaluate each of the candidates in this regard. More precisely, participants were asked to indicate the option that – among the following four possibilities – best fitted the voice they had just heard: “the speaker you just heard... is definitely not a Sardinian native speaker / is not a Sardinian native speaker / is a Sardinian native speaker / is definitely a Sardinian native speaker” (the Italian formulation was “*la persona che hai appena ascoltato...: non è assolutamente un madrelingua di sardo / non è un madrelingua di sardo / è un madrelingua di sardo / è assolutamente un madrelingua di sardo*”). This question can be described as quite explicit and such a direct way of asking for the extent to which people sound as native speakers of a language has been inspired by Nejjari et al. (2019: 94-95), who asked the evaluators to indicate their level of agreement with statements such as, for example, “The speaker is a native speaker of British English”.

With respect to the Italian voices, the situation is quite different. Although it was possible to ask for the nativeness of the Italian guises too, the pre-selection was considered more than enough to guarantee that the candidates sound as native speakers while reading in Italian. Indeed, it was sufficient to choose speakers who were born in Italy, who have grown in Italy and have been educated in Italian throughout the mandatory school years to assume that they sound natural and native when they read a basic text in Italian. Therefore, although the nativeness parameter is theoretically applicable for the Italian guises, it can be just taken for granted from the pre-selection of candidates. What is really important to verify in the test was the accentedness of the Italian guises, namely the perceived degree of regional (or standard) accent while using the majority language. It is known indeed that Italian speakers coming from a specific region – in this case Sardinia – are very likely to present a certain degree of local accent. As far as the Italian guises are concerned then, judges had to indicate the option that – among the following four possibilities – best fitted the voice they had just heard: “the speaker you just heard... does not sound Sardinian at all / barely sounds Sardinian / sounds Sardinian / sounds definitely Sardinian” (the Italian formulation was “*la persona*

che hai appena ascoltato...: non si sente per niente che è sarda / non si sente quasi per niente che è sarda / si sente che è sarda / si sente molto che è sarda). Such a formulation resembles the one employed by Newman et al. (2008) and it was adopted because of the following logic: if a speaker who reads in Italian is recognised as sounding definitely Sardinian or just Sardinian, it means that he/she has a strong or at least a noticeable regional accent; by contrast, if a speaker who reads in Italian is not recognised as sounding Sardinian, it means that such speaker has a neutral accent, which cannot be regionally identified, at least by listeners from Sardinia. A similar approach to explore the regional accentedness of the candidates was also adopted by Genesee & Holobow (1989): in order to be sure to select good representatives of European French and Canadian French, the investigators asked listeners to guess the nationality of the speakers they heard.

It has to be clarified that the four-option structure of both questions has been taken from the study by Newman et al. (2008): such statements with four possible completions are particularly simple and clear, and they are apt to emphasise the contrast between the two sides of the spectrum. Nonetheless, since participants completed the task online and were not given the option to skip a question, I actually deemed right to add a last option, *non so* ‘I do not know’: this was inserted, though, not as median point of the scale, but just to give judges the possibility to express their inability to decide for a particular speaker and move to the next one. When this option was chosen, that specific evaluation was excluded from the analysis; fortunately though, the ‘I do not know’ option was selected only in around 2% of cases.

5.5 The scoring

Having described the type of questions through which it was possible to obtain evaluations on the nativeness and the accentedness of the candidates, it is now crucial to illustrate how to identify – on the basis of the results of the test – those speakers that can be reliably considered as suitable “matched guises” for the main experiment. It is opportune to imagine the range of possible answers as points of an ordinal numeric scale: as for the nativeness question, the option “is definitely not a Sardinian native speaker” corresponds to an evaluation of 1, while the option “is definitely a Sardinian native speaker” corresponds to an evaluation of 4. Similarly, in regard to the accentedness question, the option “does not sound Sardinian at all” corresponds to 1, whereas “sounds definitely Sardinian” corresponds to 4. Nejjari et al. (2019) used a similar strategy to calculate the mean evaluations received by each candidate and to decide which of them could be considered as a representative speaker for the main experiment and which of them could not. The authors claimed that before their methodological article no threshold had been validated to accept or reject guises on the basis of their perceived nativeness and standardness. They suggested that each guise that receives a mean score that falls into the positive side of both scales (the nativeness and the standardness one) should be considered as an appropriate and suitable representative (Nejjari et al. 2019). More precisely, those researchers decided to employ a 7-point scale, and they clarified that getting a mean higher than 4.0 (which was the neutral point of the scale) in both parameters was enough to consider a speaker as an appropriate representative for the

matched-guise technique. They compellingly justified such a choice with the following motivations:

rather than an absolute phenomenon, “nativeness” and “standardness” are continuous phenomena that are best measured as a range. Therefore, the range for representativeness should be set at values ranging from 4 (neutral) to 7 to allow for variation within a given range to emerge from the data. A threshold set at any value above 4, for example 5.5, would imply that any scores between 4 and 5.5 are not native and standard enough. However, there is no valid reason to set the threshold at that exact point, because it cannot be proven that 5 would not be high enough a score to achieve representative speech samples, since it is on the positive side of the 7-point scale, even if a 5 score could be significantly lower statistically speaking than 5.5. Therefore, the threshold should start at a non-negative point which is neutral, and in our case was a score of 4” (Nejjari et al. 2019: 95).

It has to be reminded again that, when the Dutch English guises were involved, the authors replaced the standardness criterion with the typicalness one, but the scoring procedure did not change: each guise that got an evaluation falling at any point in the positive side of the scale was considered as typical enough to be accepted. Following this line of reasoning, I deem adequate to consider all those people who get an average evaluation higher than the median point of the scale in both parameters (nativeness and typicalness) as representative “matched guises” for my main experiment, since it means that they are perceived as native speakers of Sardinian and typical speakers of the regional Italian spoken in Sardinia. As I used a 4-point scale, the median and neutral point is 2.5: the speakers who get a mean higher than that both in the scale measuring the nativeness and in the one measuring the typicalness (or accentedness) have to be regarded as suitable “matched guises”.

5.6 The procedure of the task

The experiment has been created in the platform *Qualtrics XM* and administered to the participants online. As already said, the 20 speakers were divided in 2 lists of 10 speakers each, and the 60 judges were randomly assigned to one of these two lists. Participants were provided with a link to access the platform in which the task had to be carried out. Firstly, they were asked for their consent to participate in the research, and then they were required to provide few demographic data, such as age, birth place and place of residence. Then, they were also required to complete a very brief self-evaluation of their active and passive competence in Sardinian and Italian. After that, the instructions to carry out the task were displayed to them: it was explained that they were going to listen to a series of short recordings containing, first, different people reading a text in Sardinian; what they had to do was to judge how much each of those speakers sounded as a native speaker of Sardinian, by choosing one of the options illustrated in paragraph 5.4. It was specified that after 70 seconds the system would bring them automatically to the next recording, provided that they had ticked one of the options; however, just after 35 seconds, they were allowed to answer and move to the next recording. The first recording

was simply a trial to help participants get familiar with the procedure, but it was followed by 10 recordings of 10 of the candidates reading a part of the text about Hungary in Sardinian (5 in Campidanese and 5 in Logudorese). Once the section with the Sardinian recordings was completed, another page with instruction was displayed: participants were told that they were going to listen to a series of recordings containing now different people reading a text in Italian; they were asked to evaluate the degree to which each of those speakers sounded Sardinian while using Italian, by choosing one of the options illustrated again in paragraph 5.4. As in the first set of instructions, it was clarified that there was no right or wrong answer, and they had to reply sincerely and just following their perceptions. Once again, the first recording was a trial to familiarise with the procedure, and later there were 10 recordings of the same 10 candidates as before reading the same part of the text about Hungary as before, but this time in Italian. The experimental session lasted about 25 minutes.

6. Results

6.1 Reliability tests

In order to test the reliability of the instrument used to collect data, it has been chosen to run a series of statistical tests designed for this aim. More precisely, interrater reliability was verified. Considering the similarities between this study and the one by Nejari et al. (2019), which also dealt with ordinal data, I deemed appropriate to replicate their decision to calculate the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC). In fact, ICC is a widely used statistical test in interrater reliability measurements (Koo & Li 2016). Similarly to what Nejari et al. (2019) did, such coefficient was calculated separately for the two group of speakers to which judges were randomly assigned, and separately for the Sardinian voices (the ones that got evaluated on their nativeness) and the Italian voices (the ones that got evaluated on their accentedness), leading to a total of four ICC tests.

Among the different forms of ICC, I adopted a Two-Way Random model: in line with the recommendations by Shrout & Fleiss (1979), McGraw & Wong (1996) and Koo & Li (2016), this choice has been led by the fact that, within each group of speakers, each candidate has been rated by the same set of judges, who represent a sample taken from a larger population with similar characteristics. Since I was interested in the degree of equivalence or similarity between scores that judges have given to same speakers, it was appropriate to employ the Absolute Agreement variant of the ICC rather than the Consistency one (McGraw & Wong 1996, Koo & Li 2016). Finally, as my data examination was based on the mean scores of multiple raters – following again the suggestions by Shrout & Fleiss (1979), McGraw & Wong (1996) and Koo & Li (2016) –, I calculated the reliability for the average of k ratings, with k being equal to 30 in my case.

The four ICC tests were run through the statistical software *R*, and the results are shown in Table 1. It is important to specify that Koo & Li (2016: 158) established that “ICC values less than 0.5 are indicative of poor reliability, values between 0.5 and 0.75 indicate moderate reliability, values between 0.75 and 0.9 indicate good reliability, and values greater than 0.90 indicate excellent reliability”. In compliance with such

indications, it is possible to claim that, for each group, reliability was either very close to excellent or excellent. With regard to the evaluations given by a first set of 30 judges to the Sardinian recordings of the group of 10 candidates to whom they were randomly assigned, the ICC value is equal to 0.89, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.79 to 0.96. Considering the scores given by the same set of judges to the Italian recordings of those same speakers, an ICC value of 0.88 was calculated, with a 95% confidence interval ranging between 0.78 and 0.96. Taking into account the judgments given by a different set of 30 judges to a second group of 10 candidates, similar – and even slightly better – results can be found: as far as the Sardinian voices are concerned (and hence the evaluations given in the nativeness scale), the ICC value is 0.91, with the lower end of the confidence interval being equal to 0.83 and the upper end being equal to 0.97; as far as the Italian voices are concerned (and hence the evaluations given in the accentedness scale), the intraclass correlation coefficient is 0.92 and the 95% confidence interval ranges from 0.86 to 0.97. Generally speaking, the results just described show that the procedure employed to collect data seems to benefit from a very good inter-rater reliability.

Table 1. Summary of the ICC reliability tests

Group	ICC type	ICC value	Lower bound	Upper bound
Group 1 of judges_Evaluations on Sardinian voices (evaluations on speakers' nativeness)	Average random raters ICC2k	0.89	0.79	0.96
Group 1 of judges_Evaluations on Italian voices (evaluations on speakers' accentedness)	Average random raters ICC2k	0.88	0.78	0.96
Group 2 of judges_Evaluations on Sardinian voices (evaluations on speakers' nativeness)	Average random raters ICC2k	0.91	0.83	0.97
Group 2 of judges_Evaluations on Italian voices (evaluations on speakers' accentedness)	Average random raters ICC2k	0.92	0.86	0.97

6.2 Evaluations on candidates' nativeness and accentedness

Through the statistical software *R*, means and standard deviations of the evaluations that each candidate had received have been calculated, with regards to both the Sardinian and the Italian recordings. The bar graph in Figure 1 visually summarises the average ratings of all candidates: only those whose two bars (the one concerning the Sardinian recording and the one concerning the Italian recording) reach a point higher

than 2.5 – hence reach the half of the graph coloured in green – have to be considered as suitable speakers for the MGT. As it can be seen, among the first 10 candidates only speaker *I_1* and *I_9* cannot be regarded as appropriate representatives: in the case of speaker *I_1*, the inappropriateness is due to a too low score in the Italian recording, meaning that she has not been perceived as Sardinian while using the majority language. In the case of speaker *I_9* instead, the score that falls under the cut-off point is the one concerning the Sardinian recording, meaning that she has not been perceived as a native speaker of Sardinian. As far as the second group of 10 candidates is concerned, speaker *2_1* and *2_5* cannot be considered as suitable guises since their Italian recordings have not been perceived as belonging to a Sardinian person, and thus, they cannot be considered as typical speakers of Italian coming from Sardinia. Candidates *2_7*, *2_8* and *2_9* instead should be rejected since their Sardinian recordings have been judged to belong to non-native speakers of Sardinian. All the other candidates can be regarded as suitable “matched guises”.

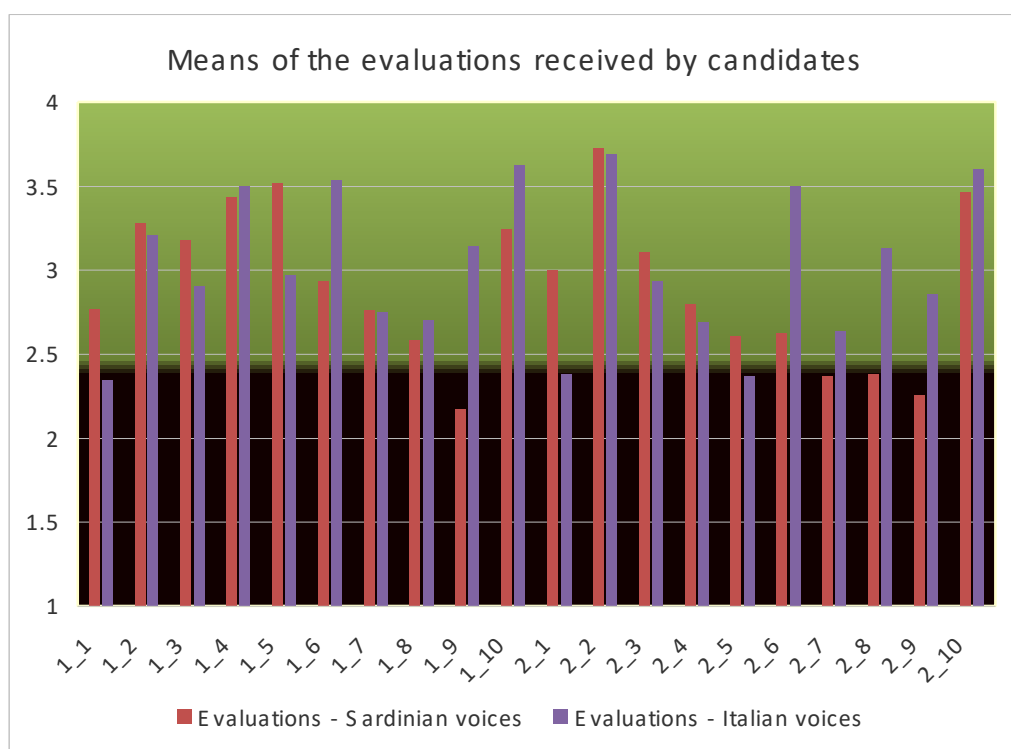


Figure 1. Bar graph summarising the average evaluations received by candidates in both the Sardinian and the Italian recordings

It has to be reminded that, for the purposes of my study, I want to select both Campidanese and Logudorese speakers, as well as both male and female speakers. It was fundamental, then, that speakers belonging to all these categories would get evaluations exceeding the threshold for acceptability. As it is possible to observe in Table 2, at least

two candidates per category have reached this goal (and, hence, have been coloured in green in the Table). Some categories have more than two speakers who can be regarded as appropriate “matched guises”, and, in the category of Logudorese male speakers, all five candidates got scores exceeding the cut-off point.

Table 2. Average evaluations of candidates and their standard deviations (in brackets and in italics). The candidates have been sorted out by category. In green, the speakers who got evaluations higher than the acceptability threshold in both scales

Category	Evaluations	
Fem_Log	Evaluations - Sardinian voices	Evaluations - Italian voices
1_1	2.767 (<i>0.727</i>)	2.345 (<i>0.768</i>)
1_5	3.517 (<i>0.687</i>)	2.967 (<i>0.927</i>)
1_9	2.172 (<i>0.848</i>)	3.143 (<i>0.803</i>)
2_3	3.103 (<i>0.673</i>)	2.931 (<i>0.798</i>)
2_7	2.367 (<i>0.889</i>)	2.633 (<i>0.556</i>)
Category	Evaluations	
Male_Log	Evaluations - Sardinian voices	Evaluations - Italian voices
1_4	3.433 (<i>0.817</i>)	3.5 (<i>0.629</i>)
1_8	2.586 (<i>0.779</i>)	2.7 (<i>0.915</i>)
2_2	3.724 (<i>0.454</i>)	3.69 (<i>0.66</i>)
2_6	2.621 (<i>0.941</i>)	3.5 (<i>0.572</i>)
2_10	3.464 (<i>0.637</i>)	3.6 (<i>0.621</i>)
Category	Evaluations	
Fem_Camp	Evaluations - Sardinian voices	Evaluations - Italian voices
1_3	3.179 (<i>0.772</i>)	2.9 (<i>0.803</i>)
1_7	2.759 (<i>0.83</i>)	2.75 (<i>0.844</i>)
2_1	3 (<i>0.742</i>)	2.379 (<i>0.676</i>)
2_5	2.607 (<i>0.916</i>)	2.367 (<i>0.808</i>)
2_9	2.25 (<i>0.967</i>)	2.857 (<i>0.89</i>)
Category	Evaluations	
Male_Camp	Evaluations - Sardinian voices	Evaluations - Italian voices
1_2	3.276 (<i>0.84</i>)	3.207 (<i>0.818</i>)
1_6	2.933 (<i>0.739</i>)	3.533 (<i>0.628</i>)
1_10	3.241 (<i>0.739</i>)	3.621 (<i>0.676</i>)
2_4	2.8 (<i>0.886</i>)	2.69 (<i>0.929</i>)
2_8	2.379 (<i>0.862</i>)	3.133 (<i>0.776</i>)

Looking at Table 2, in effect, it can be seen that there is not an excellent balance in terms of evaluations received by speakers belonging to different categories. The tendencies that can be detected are that men often got higher mean scores than woman, and that – although to a much lesser extent – Logudorese candidates received higher evaluations than Campidanese ones. Starting with the former, it can be said that women tended to be perceived as having a lower native-like level when speaking the minority language; however, seven women out of ten passed the cut-off and four of them got an

evaluation of at least 3 in the nativeness scale. The most remarkable difference between genders concerns the accentedness parameter, where eight men out of ten exceeded an evaluation of 3 – and six of them exceeded an evaluation of 3.5 –, whereas no woman, except for speaker *I_9*, scored 3 or higher. However, it was possible to find seven women who passed the cut-off, meaning that they can be considered as typical female regional speakers of Italian.

The gap between Logudorese and Campidanese speakers is much less evident, but it can be observed that Logudorese speakers (both male and female ones) reached higher peaks of evaluations than the ones reached by their Campidanese counterparts. This is true in both scales, but more evident in the nativeness one, where no Campidanese speaker got an evaluation higher than 3.276, while Logudorese speakers who scored higher than 3.5 can be found within both genders.

One could hypothesise that the higher number of judges coming from the Campidanese-speaking area (see section 5.3) might have resulted in higher scores for Logudorese candidates, due to more emphasised perceptions of Sardinian nativeness for those speakers who used a different variety from the one judges are more familiar with. To explore such an hypothesis, I isolated the scores given to each of the candidates by the judges coming from Logudorese- and Campidanese-speaking areas, and I compared the means of these two populations of judges with a series of t-tests. As for the nativeness scale, no t-test has produced a statistically significant difference. In *Table 3*, it is possible to find the values referred to speakers *I_4* and *2_3*: these are the only candidates whose comparison between the means given by the two populations of judges has produced a *p* value lower than 0.1 (which is still not significant, since significance is reached at *p* values lower than 0.05). This means that for all the other candidates the tests were way far from being significant. Moreover, while the Logudorese female speaker *2_3* received higher scores from the Campidanese-speaking judges, the Logudorese male speaker *I_4* got higher scores from the Logudorese-speaking judges. Such results do not seem to suggest that the overall higher evaluations received by the Logudorese candidates were conditioned by the presence of more Campidanese-speaking judges.

Table 3. T-test results comparing evaluations given by the Campidanese-speaking judges to those given by the Logudorese-speaking judges: the table only reports the results where $p < 0.1$

Candidate	Mean evaluation from Campidanese-speaking judges	Mean evaluation from Logudorese-speaking judges	t-test results
<i>I_4</i>	3.262 (0.933)	3.727 (0.467)	t = 1.701 p = 0.08
<i>2_3</i>	3.263 (0.561)	2.8 (0.788)	t = 1.833 p = 0.07

7. Discussion and conclusions

It has been shown that, in preparation for a study on language attitudes to be conducted in Sardinia in which an indirect methodology will be employed, it is possible

to carry out a preliminary procedure in order to select ‘matched guises’ whose level of perceived nativeness and accentedness are known. However, it has been clarified that these criteria are not equally applicable for both the majority and the minority language. With this in mind, and being inspired mainly by the work of Newman et al. (2008) and Nejari et al. (2019), 20 candidates have been recorded while reading a text in Sardinian and Italian, and 60 naïve speakers with bilingual competence in these two languages have been asked to judge the nativeness of the Sardinian voices and the accentedness of the Italian voices. Among the 20 candidates, half are Logudorese speakers and half are Campidanese speakers; similarly half are men and half are women. In this way, it has been possible to identify both male and female speakers who can validly represent either the Campidanese or the Logudorese Sardinian dialect, as well as the typical Italian(s) spoken by Sardinians. Conducting such a preliminary procedure has proved to be quite desirable, since it turned out that researcher’s judgment might not be enough to choose appropriate speakers. In my case indeed, effort was put on pre-selecting speakers who are proficient speakers of Sardinian: however, non-linguist raters sanctioned some of them as sounding non-native, demonstrating that the perception on the degree of nativeness while reading a text should not be taken for granted in minority languages in which literacy is normally not acquired. Even more generally, the evaluations given by the external judges revealed that, out of 20 pre-selected candidates, 7 cannot be regarded as valid representatives of the intended guises.

Among those candidates who can be regarded as such instead, it might be necessary to make choices about which of them should be included in the main experiment. As a rule of thumb, the candidates who got the highest evaluations should probably be given priority. However, other factors have to be taken into account: for example, a high degree of balance should be searched for among speakers belonging to different categories. Taking the Logudorese male speakers category as an example, choosing speaker 3_7 would probably create too much gap between such a Logudorese male speaker and other speakers belonging to other categories. As underlined in the Results section indeed, a perfect balance among categories of speakers was not found in the evaluations of this test already.

In this regard, it has already been said that the female speakers tended to receive lower ratings than the male ones. This can be simply due to the pre-selection of the particular candidates: it is possible that women who are slightly less proficient in Sardinian and have a less pronounced accent in Italian than their male counterparts have been chosen. Further generalisations do not seem to be warranted. Focusing on the nativeness scale, however, it would not be very surprising to find a similar result in other analogous studies in Sardinia: it has been demonstrated by Oppo (2007: 7-10) indeed, that women tend to know and use Sardinian much less than men, especially when young and educated generations are involved. One may speculate, then, that it is not easy to pre-select young female candidates who are perfectly as good as men at speaking Sardinian. The gap between genders though, has proved to be much more pronounced along the accentedness parameter, with women having a less marked regional accent than men. Speaking the majority language without a too marked accent means getting closer to the standard pronunciation, and the fact that women have been perceived as sounding in a more neutral, standard way is again not very surprising. Classic sociolinguistics has often

claimed that men tend to make use of non-standard, socially unfavoured variants, while women have the tendency to adhere to those variants that are generally considered as standard and that benefit from overt prestige (see, for example, Labov 1990). In Sardinia too, similar gender-related phenomena have been already noted for some decades: Dettori (1979: 189-194) and Sole (1988: 96) explained that social conditioning derived from the traditional roles within the community makes Sardinian women more inclined than men to comply with the standard national language. Those authors were specifically referring to the female preference towards Italian over Sardinian, but it is not unexpected that the same process applies when the degree of regional accent in the national language is concerned. In the case of my candidates, it was possible to find female speakers who have been perceived as Sardinian while using Italian, but to a lesser degree than male speakers. The presence of such a gap though, as long as it is not too wide to risk influencing the results of the main experiment, should probably not be avoided, since it ends up being a faithful representation of the relevant sociolinguistic reality.

Another difference that has been detected in the results is the one between Logudorese and Campidanese candidates, with the former ones who received slightly higher mean scores than the latter ones in both scales. It is again simply plausible to hypothesise that, overall, the specific Logudorese candidates pre-selected by me speak Sardinian better and speak Italian with a heavier Sardinian accent than their Campidanese counterparts. This is obviously possible, and, in the light of the limited number of speakers involved in the study and of the fact that such tendency does not even apply to all of them, further generalisations are quite risky and must be taken with the utmost caution. Nonetheless, other possible explanations can be attempted if future research wants to investigate this issue further. First, it can be said that finding very fluent speakers of Sardinian is easier, proportionally speaking, in the Logudorese-speaking area, since the minority language is more known and used there than in the Campidanese-speaking area; such a difference, however, is quite reduced (Oppo 2007: 65-66). More compellingly, it is possible to suppose that classic stereotypes about Sardinian varieties might have played a role: indeed, the opinion according to which Logudorese is as a sort of more genuine, uncontaminated Sardinian dialect is rather known and dates long back (it can be clearly found in Spano 1840: 197-198 [this stereotype, moreover, seems to be present even outside of the island: in this sense see, for instance, the textbook of Romance philology by Tagliavini 1972: 388, in which Logudorese is defined as “the Sardinian *par excellence*”).

In any case, it is not the priority of this study to investigate to which factors the slight differences among categories are due, and whether such differences are systematic or not. Moreover, it was not its main objective to have a perfect balance between candidates of different categories. What mattered in this piece of research was to establish which candidates within the male and female categories, as well as within the Campidanese and the Logudorese categories could be seen as valid “matched guises”. In line with the recommendations by Nejjari et al. (2019: 95) to consider parameters such as nativeness and typicalness as “continuous phenomena best measured as a range”, all those candidates whose mean scores fell within the positive side of both scales were regarded as native and typical enough to be accepted as suitable representatives of the relevant language varieties, regardless of small differences among the speakers whose evaluations are included in such a range.

Modifying a procedure to select appropriate “matched guises” that had been (seldom) used in international contexts with majority languages, and applying it in a situation where a national language and a local minority language are involved is the contribution that this study gives to the scientific research on language attitudes. However, such a study does not lack limitations. First of all, a higher number of judges would be preferable, and especially, it would be an important improvement to have a more balanced number of evaluators between genders and between areas of provenience. Secondly, I am aware that the perceptions of more or less nativeness, and more or less accentedness, might be triggered by tiny linguistic cues: however, we do not know exactly which ones they are, since a phonetic analysis of the stimuli has not been conducted; researchers keen on such matters and who have the availability of adequate tools may want to add a phonetic examination of the speech samples to similar pieces of research. Furthermore, the fact that evaluators had to listen to all Sardinian recordings first and then to all Italian ones has made the task more fluent and easily understandable for them; however, the task structured in such a fashion perhaps made too easy for listeners to figure out that the same people were involved twice in the same order, and this might have influenced the results. Having Sardinian and Italian recordings alternate would be a little more confusing and would require more task engagement by participants, but it would probably allow for less conditioning effect on the scores. Another factor that may have affected the evaluations was the fact that speakers read different parts of a same text, hence the content of the recordings was certainly comparable but not perfectly equal. As already said in the Methodology section however, making judges listen to 22 completely identical recordings could have easily ended up in loss of attention on their part.

Future research may want to include speakers who are perceived as standard or nearly standard speakers of the majority language, although the Italian variety regularly spoken in Sardinia and in the various other areas of the peninsula is the regional variety, especially as far as phonetics and prosody are concerned. I deem adequate to avoid huge differences in terms of speakers’ accentedness because of this reason, and also in the light of the fact that, in the actual MGT, such differences can capture listeners’ attention and it is possible to end up having attitudes towards the different degrees of accent rather than towards the language itself. However, other studies may want to focus on the differences in attitudes towards standard and non-standard speakers of the majority language, as it has often been the case in the MGT-related literature. In such an instance though, researchers should choose carefully their candidates, because speakers who do not sound regional or local might not be easily found, especially among the male gender, as classic sociolinguistics, Italian sociolinguistics and this piece of research suggest. Finally, it is important to underline that the choice of the Sardinian varieties included in the study was arbitrary and was based on a generic division of Sardinia’s linguistic space; other studies could choose to operate more fine-grained distinctions in this regard. All that being said, it is opportune to remind that the present article has presented a methodology to appropriately select speakers for a MGT to be conducted in Sardinia, hence the procedure illustrated here is thought to be particularly apt for the Sardinia’ sociolinguistic situation. Modifications and adaptations should be done to adjust it to other contexts. Nonetheless, it seems plausible to believe that some of the elements that compose such procedure, and

especially many of the reflections on which those elements are based, can be applied in other studies that aim at investigating attitudes towards majority and minority languages in other contexts of community unbalanced bilingualism. In particular, in the light of the scarcity of language attitudes studies that have employed an indirect methodology in Italy, it is hoped that the insights present in this article on how to choose representative speakers for a MGT to be conducted within the Italian territory will encourage further researchers to employ similar methods to investigate attitudes towards Italian and the various local dialects scattered in the peninsula.

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