
An Overall View about Lexicography Production for the Friulian Language

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Researches about distinctive characteristics of Friulan language began in the second half of the Eighteenth Century. There was a need to have lexicography instruments that could help to understand and convert the lexicon heritage of the language actually spoken in large parts of Friuli, Friulian language, in the quite unknown linguistic code of the new born Italian state, the Italian language.

Some of these lexicographic works still exist and are nowadays very important: for example Il Nuovo Pirona, a formidable tool for the dialectological work; also other interesting tools were printed such as, for example, Vocabolario della lingua friulana by Giorgio Faggin, or Dizionario pratico illustrato italiano-friulano by Maria Tore Barbina.

A meaningful change happened in the 90's when the first law to safeguard and promote the Friulian language was approved and the first body for the linguistic policy, l'Osservatorio Regionale della Lingua e Culture Friulane (OLF), was founded. The lexicographic work began to be more structured.

A great work has been done for computer medium: a spelling corrector: Coretôr ortografic furlan by Informazione Friulana Cooperative; a dictionary on CD Dizionari Ortografic Furlan (DOF) by Alessandro Carozzo.

Lately the most important lexicographic work is Grant Dizionari Bilengâl Talian Furlan (GBDTF), by Consorzio Friûl Lenghe 2000, based on a prestigious Italian model such as the Grande Dizionario dell'Uso della Lingua Italiana, by professor Tullio de Mauro that coordinated the Friulian version too.

Reflections on distinctive characteristics of the Friulian language, also about its particular lexicon, began very long ago. Archive researches date back to the second half of the Eighteenth Century the first Friulian-Italian (or better, as it is written, 'Tuscany') lexicon inventory: it is a manuscript titled *Vocabolario Furlano e Toscano (Friulian and Tuscany vocabulary)*, ascribed to Pietro Someda, an jurisconsult from Udine, that opens a series of attempts to write down a complete vocabulary, the *Vocabolario Friulano (Friulian vocabulary)* by Jacopo Pirona, published by instalments from 1868 and in its complete edition in 1871.

Accompanied by a linguistic discussion that finds in the specificity of Friulian echoes of Celtic traces or French or Provençal influences or simply a blend of different languages, this and former attempts, so as the following ones, of inferior size and quality, show the need of the ruling classes of the new and weak Italian state body to have lexicography instruments that could help them to understand and convert the lexicon heritage of the language actually spoken in large parts of Friuli, Friulian language, in the linguistic code, Italian language, chosen as the 'national' language by the Italian State: a surely quite unknown and lesser spoken language.

This will be partly the reason: from the well known to the lesser known, of another work, that it is still nowadays very important: *Il Nuovo Pirona (The new Pirona)*. But, published in 1935 and enriched by a solid series of *Aggiunte (Additions)* concerning the single local varieties and published in the second edition in 1992, this vocabulary it is actually a formidable tool for the dialectological work and analysis where programmatically the matter of a standard variety (or rather even the idea of it is dissuaded) is eluded and a spelling orienting Friulian language towards the only linguistic code felt as prestigious and of reference is used: the Italian one.

For a lot of Friulian people, also thanks to the several reprints, *Il Nuovo Pirona* is still pre-eminently 'the Friulian vocabulary', not only for the undoubted quality of the work, but mostly as the mirror of the idea of Friulian language like the peasants culture language, inexorably faded away and so unchangeable and closed to the modern society and to

contemporary matters. Firmly related to this point of view it is the contrariety to every kind of standardization and normalization, considered as the breaking off of a ‘natural’ set where Friulian is considered as the language of the past, inevitably subordinated to the ‘national’ language.

We have to wait until 1985 to see a dictionary, comparable in amount of work and accuracy to the *Nuovo Pirona*, when the pluriannual work of the Netherlandist, and non Friulian, Giorgio Faggin, was carried out: the *Vocabolario della lingua friulana (Vocabulary of the Friulian language)*. Also this work is Friulian-Italian oriented but the goal is very different from the one of the former dictionaries. Sources to gather lexicography are selected: mostly literary works from the Eighteenth century, a model of a ‘good literary Friulian’ in order to be model for standardized Friulian language.

As standard the central Friulian variety is chosen, sometimes with rather purist accents and the most discordant with Italian as possible, a language of neo-Latin origins however, where the spacing out efforts are heavily perceptible; the choice of this variety agrees with the long literary tradition that from the Seventeenth century looks at it as the reference variety or the ‘common and illustrious’ koinè, even if other literary events, with alternative values and protesting its actual or presumed role, recurrently occur.

In the Faggin’s work you can catch signs, also suffered, of a very different and diverging tendency from the one that considers Friulian language as ‘naturally’ subordinated to Italian language, a dialect of it essentially; it is considered rather an autonomous language with a rich lexicon heritage ready to expand to be able to face all communicative subjects and contexts. Spelling characteristics, purist choices and being ahead of his times, that will be ripped only after the book was published, do not help it and, for example, spelling choices remain as an heritage of a very narrow group of Friulians.

Signs of the different political and cultural atmosphere in the 70s and 80s of the last century come out also of the publishing in 1980 of the first quite thick vocabulary from Italian to Friulian: *Dizionario pratico illustrato italiano-friulano (Practical illustrated dictionary Italian-Friulian)* by Maria Tore Barbina.

A pioneering work, although lacking in spelling choices and in neologisms, that shows the conscience, also in not exactly radical backgrounds towards the Friulian-Italian dialectic, of new dynamics brought to end ends during those years. The Italian language begins then to be actually spoken and used and indeed, besides preventing developing of Friulian language as a modern communication language, it also erodes its lexicon heritage.

It urges to find out countermeasures to stop abandonment and loss of Friulian linguistic heritage. But those need choices in linguistic policy ripened only in the second half of the ‘90s.

In 1996 the first law about safeguarding and promoting Friulian language in the Autonomous Region Friuli–Venezia Giulia passed: *Norme per la tutela e la promozione della lingua e della cultura friulane e istituzione del servizio per le lingue regionali e minoritarie (Rules about safeguarding and promoting Friulian language and culture and institution of a Regional office for the minority languages)*, that considers language as a rights matter and sets up a body for the linguistic policy: *l’Osservatorio Regionale della Lingua e Culture Friulane (OLF)*, that is to say *Regional Observatory for Friulian language and culture*, that later will

change in its name and, partly, in its competences becoming *Agenzie Regjonâl de Lenghe Furlane (ARLeF)*, that is to say something like *Friulian language board*, and it officially fixes a standard spelling referring mostly to the central Friulian variety. For the first time there is the concrete possibility to begin a linguistic policy considering Friulian language as a language to be safeguarded according to art. 6 of the Republican Constitution: *Republic protects with special rules language minorities*.

This new situation, that will find a confirmation with the approval of the state law n. 482 in 1999 that safeguards ‘historical minority languages’, finds opposite both those supporting subordination of Friulian language towards Italian language, hiding behind the alarm of an hypothetical uprooting and destruction of local varieties and crying shame for the creation of an ‘artificial’ Friulian language, both supporters of a standard Friulian language that do not like ‘this’ standard. It is the case of a faithful supporter of Faggin, Gianni Nazzi, professor of French language, that, besides a resentful and never ending controversy against linguistic policy bodies: first OLF then ARLeF, supports his own rules outlook, mostly graphic but also supplied with iper-purist lexicon choices, producing several lexicon tools both towards Italian language than other languages belonging to small or huge communication (from English to Czeck language or French, Portuguese or Brazilian language) using Faggin’s (partly settled) data base and spelling.

The new atmosphere born from the safeguarding laws is also stressed by several lexicographic tools (more than the ones in the questionnaire) according with ‘official’ linguistic policy guide-lines: basic little dictionaries, specialized languages index, products done by cultural associations such as *Il Truoi, Istitût Ladin Furlan Pre Checo Placerean*, or social cooperative as *Centro Espressioni Cinematografiche* or the Province of Udine and Interdipartimental Research Centre about Friulian language and culture of the University of Udine. Very important in this context it is also the spelling corrector: *Coretôr ortografic furlan (Friulian spelling corrector)* by *Informazione Friulana Cooperative*, important also for the computer indexing and official spelling conversion of the entries in Pirona’s and Faggin’s dictionaries. From this data base the work on paper by Alessandro Carrozzo springs out, *Dizionari Ortografic Furlan (DOF)*, that is to say *Friulian spelling dictionary*, that does not present all the accepted meanings of the words, of almost 38.000 entries both for Friulian and Italian.

All of these works show a willingness to develop Friulian language, but for a strategic and necessary result, like a high level dictionary in official spelling and language, the linguistic policy body thinks it is necessary a structure where the most important subjects could work together for this goal.

So, stimulated by it, *Consorti Friûl Lenghe 2000*¹ (CFL2000) is set up, constituted by *University of Udine, University Consortium of Friuli, Friulian Filological Society, Informazione Friulana Cooperative* (publisher of *Radio Onde Furlane*), cultural association *Patrie dal Friûl* (that has now withdrawn its adhesion), *Union Scritôrs Furlans* and the cultural circle *Menocchio*.

Availability of data base used for the corrector allows to have a tool suitable for the search of every Friulian entry or locution registered in Pirona and Faggin dictionaries, both if you start from Friulian and Italian language. It is necessary now to fix standardization criteria so in 1999 a commission with members of the linguistic policy body, lexicographers trained *ad hoc*

¹ You can visit its site: www.cfl2000.net.

by the University of Udine, university lecturers, and cultural operators begins to work. At first the reference text for the commission was the one of the Catalan professor Xavier Lamuela, that formerly drafted spelling rules; his text, discussed in every detail, was approved and, in case, completed.

The result is a handbook on the normalization of Friulian language approved and published by the linguistic policy body, directed to choose primary forms of the entries that have more than one meaning and to fix rules to create neologisms, trying to balance phonological features of Friulian language and common items of the lexical heritage of neo-Latin languages.

Next choice is a prestigious Italian reference model to develop the *Grant Dizionari Bilengâl Talian Furlan* (GBDTF): the *Grande Dizionario dell'Uso della Lingua Italiana*, work coordinated by professor Tullio de Mauro. It is a strict and extremely rich in lexicon work (more than 270.000 entries), with fundamental marks of use that allow to graduate admissions of entries in the Friulian language inventory.

The choice of a bilingual model referring to Italian language has gained some criticisms, but we have to think of them considering the existing sociolinguistic situation of Friulan language. Currently for Friulian-speaking people the language of reference is the Italian one; creating a bilingual inventory, with wide and precise definitions in Friulian language is a necessary preliminary work for a coming Friulian monolingual dictionary.

Very important is the improvement of the limited work in a data processing and telecommunication context. The Internet site where you can find GBDTF versions has a lot of visits and the lexicographic work causes also interesting reflections about the use of computer technologies in linguistic planning activities.

Lately the linguistic policy body agreed to print on paper the basic inventory of (more or less 35.0000 entries) of GBDTF. This project should end in 2010.

Resistances and disappointments mentioned above concentrated on this project, criticizing both financial aspects, for someone too expensive, and choices of items, for someone too purist or too close to Italian language.

If you consider them carefully, criticisms are exploited and they are the mirror of a situation where Friulian language is still considered a 'little useful' language, and not a 'common language', where lack of habit in working together in a coordinated way gives space to a solitary work and a sterile and individualistic contraposition.

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Wordlists, only with equivalents without phrases

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² The asterisk means that they are not written in the official Friulian spelling.