

International Linguistic Association

Monthly Lecture Series

Saturday, October 7, 2023. 11 AM - 12 PM (EST)

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Observing migrant words: researching the fate of Italian loanwords in Europe and beyond

Abstract

The *Osservatorio degli italianismi nel mondo* (OIM), an observatory on Italian loanwords worldwide, is an ongoing international project hosted by the Accademia della Crusca in order to document the lexical impact of Italian as a donor language worldwide (cf. Heinz 2017, Pizzoli 2017, Pizzoli/Heinz 2022). With its long-standing history as a rich and diverse source for loanwords Italian has been the source of many borrowings from culturally relevant lexical domains (e.g. music, arts) in various languages while numerous Italianisms also stem from geographical proximity or the presence of migrant communities and are therefore contact-induced.

Starting from a dictionary of Italian loanwords in French, English and German (DIFIT, Stammerjohann et al. 2008), the OIM has developed into an international research endeavor, integrating in its database corpora of Italianisms present in a growing number of languages. The first version of this lexicographical tool has been launched with the release of data for Portuguese and Hungarian, soon to be followed by Spanish, Catalan, and Polish. Meanwhile collections of Italianisms in Maltese, Mandarin Chinese and other languages are well underway. Thanks to DIFIT core data and data from an earlier survey project on Italianisms (cf. Serianni 2017) database entries for further languages are constantly being added while existing entries, especially regarding American varieties of French, English and Spanish, are being revised and refined.

This talk will address innovations and challenges inherent to such a large-scale digital research tool and the findings it can provide as to the diachronic and synchronic dimension of Italian as a contact language. Drawing on data from the OIM database allows us to reconstruct the specific ‘migration paths’ of some Italianisms and clarify the typology of the loanwords, which may differ characteristically from one recipient language to another.

Date & Time: October 7, 2023 at 11:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

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Matthias Heinz is a professor of Romance linguistics at the University of Salzburg, Austria; having been trained at the universities of Heidelberg, Pavia, Lyon, Chemnitz and Tübingen, he has been a visiting professor to several universities such as the Università degli Studi di Firenze and the University of Toronto. He has worked and published on the prosody of Italian and French, the history and phonological typology of Romance languages and on language contact and the lexicon, especially loanwords from Italian. His present research interests focus on the lexical impact of Italian as a donor language throughout the world's languages within the research project OIM (*Osservatorio degli Italianismi nel Mondo*), an observatory on Italianisms worldwide, which he directs together with L. Serianni (until 2022) and L. Pizzoli for the Accademia della Crusca, the National Academy of the Italian language.

For more information on the speaker, click on the link below:

<https://www.plus.ac.at/romanistik/fachbereich/mitarbeiterinnen-und-mitarbeiter/heinz/>

References

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(<http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/attivita/oim-osservatorio-italianismi-mondo>;
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