



Playing with languages: code-switching between Italian-Brazilian immigrants during a *ruzzola* tournament

Brincar com as línguas: a troca de código
entre imigrantes Ítalo-Brasileiros durante
um torneio de *ruzzola*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the language strategies, in particular code-switching, implemented by a group of Italian immigrants who live in the city of São Paulo and are enrolled in a ruzzola tournament. In this bilingual context we saw that, in accordance with the language skills of the players and interaction management requirements, the language of interaction is constantly negotiated. The data analyzed tend to indicate that even very minimal and rudimentary use of the language can help contribute to the individual's Italian identity, and that certain activities that are perceived as traditional in the culture of origin can function as a vehicle for renewed interest in the language of the country of origin. This study adopts as our theoretical and methodological reference the bilingual conversation procedural model developed by Auer (1984), Alfonzetti (1992), De Fina (2007a, 2007b), and the contextualization theory of Gumperz (1982).

Key-words: *code-switching; negotiation of the language of interaction; identity; italian-brazilian immigrant communities.*

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa as estratégias, especialmente a troca de código, utilizadas por um grupo de imigrados italianos que residem na cidade de São Paulo, no Brasil, e estão inscritos em um torneio do jogo da ruzzola. Por ser um contexto caracterizado por um repertório linguístico diversificado, observou-se que, de acordo com a competência linguística dos jogadores e em função das exigências de gestão da interação, a língua da interação pode ser constantemente negociada. Os dados analisados tendem a indicar que mesmo um uso realmente mínimo e rudimentar da língua pode contribuir para a manifestação de uma identidade italiana e que determinadas atividades vivenciadas como tradicionais da cultura de origem podem funcionar como fatores de uma retomada de interesse pela língua do país de proveniência. Este estudo adota como referencial teórico e metodológico o modelo de conversação bilingue de Auer (1984), Alfonzetti (1992), e De Fina (2007a; 2007b), bem como a teoria da contextualização de Gumperz (1982).

Palavras-chave: *mudança de código; negociação da linguagem de interação; identidade; comunidade de imigrados italo-brasileiros.*

Introduction

The globalization and internationalization processes that the modern world is undergoing have led, in recent decades, to international scientific cooperation programs that allow individuals with different languages and nationalities to circulate – with a certain degree of freedom – within the academic and corporate worlds. This process has, in turn, driven the establishment of traditional and on-line language courses whose objective is to promote integration through the development of an increasingly plurilingual and pluricultural linguistic repertoire (Coste; Moore; Zarate 1997:12). While this is happening currently, the experience of immigrants during the 1900s, who for various reasons had to leave their homes for a new country, was very different. This article addresses this earlier migratory experience.

It is well-known that in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century Italy suffered massive migration outflows of a large number of its citizens, throughout Europe, but especially along paths leading Italians towards the Americas,

with some immigrating to Oceania. From 1876 to 1965, an estimated 25 million Italians immigrated, settling mainly in Europe and the Americas. The reasons that led them to leave, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were mainly of an economic nature; however, other factors such as political dissent and the expansion of production in Italian industry, which contributed to the industrialization of some regions in the Americas, especially Latin America, also contributed. The large number of immigrants is one of the main factors that has favored the formation of important Italian communities in the host countries, and these communities are of great interest to historians, sociologists, writers and, obviously, linguists. In particular, the latter have created a vast literature analyzing the phenomenon of attrition and loss of language based on large-scale quantitative studies in migration contexts. For example, Haller (1993) and Scaglione (2000) conducted research in the United States. Publications by Bettoni and Rubino (1996) and by Caruso (2010) in Australia combine the study of the dynamics of attrition through successive generations of speakers with that of shifting¹ into English. Bizzoni (2003) undertook research in Mexico. Meo Zilio (1995) carried out work in Brazil in which he focused on the dialect of Vicenza in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, and more recently a study was conducted by the research group *The Italian of Italians in São Paulo* that analyzes the phenomenon of attrition in Italians with an undergraduate degree (Raso 2003; Stauber Caprara 2003; Maggio; Stauber Caprara; Mordente 2011). The results of these studies are mostly in agreement and report a process of “subtractive” bilingualism (Andersen 1982), i.e. “a decline in competence and fluency in the native language that affects principally the first generation and then to an even greater extent the second and third generations” (Andersen 1982: 86).

However, while a lot has been written about the phenomena of language loss and maintenance in bilingual situations, the line of research analyzing bilingual discourse in communities of Italian immigrants residing abroad is still paid little attention, especially code-switching as a communication resource and as an indicator of identity based on observations of occurrences in a natural context.

1. Understood here as the decrease in the use of a language in contact with another. For the original meaning of the term *shift* see Weinreich (1953:155).

This is particularly notable if we consider the significant presence of Italians abroad. In the United States, De Fina (2007a, 2007b) studied the phenomenon of code-switching in Italian immigrants with different linguistic competence levels during a game of *Briscola* in an Italian club. The analyses of Rubino (2003, 2014), Ciliberti (2007), Pasquandrea (2008) and Ferroni, Veloso and Mordente (2014) examine families of Italian immigrants because the family is the fundamental domain for immigrant language maintenance (Lüdi; Py 1986). These studies, with a clear interactionist origin, demonstrate that the practice of code-switching does not have pre-defined significance, but rather must be interpreted through an accurate analysis of the specific interaction. This implies that the relationship between code-switching and identity is made relevant by speakers through negotiated procedures.

Given this premise, we will analyze data obtained from a broader research project whose objective is to study the linguistic repertoires² of Italians living in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, in social situations (community lunches and dinners, events to commemorate the main Italian holidays, and recreational activities). We use a qualitative approach that focuses on the minute aspects of interactive, spontaneous discourse, and the use of different languages (Italian and Brazilian Portuguese) in the language repertoire of a small number of Italian immigrants living in the city of São Paulo and participating in a *ruzzola* tournament. The decision to collect data from this type of activity was not arbitrary, but rather based on the fact that the game is an element of strong ethnic identification for Italians (De Fina 2007a; 2007b), and also because we are interested in code-switching, and it occurs regularly in the speech of tournament participants. (see Table 1).

In summary, the objective of the analysis is to discuss the following points:

- How the languages in the repertoire of a multilingual speech community contribute to the social life of the group and what functions code-switching serves in the local organization of interactions;

2. By repertoire we mean all linguistic forms used regularly during meaningful social interactions (Gumperz 1964).

- Which of these code-switching functions is significant in terms of expression of identity.

Our study was carried out with the help of the *Marchigiani* Association in Brazil and, from the micro-sociolinguistic perspective, adopts the bilingual conversation procedural model developed by Auer (1984), Alfonzetti (1992), and De Fina (2007a, 2007b), and the contextualization theory of Gumperz (1982). The development of this model, which takes into account the approaches of different – but mostly complementary – viewpoints, is shown to be essential to grasping the complexity and large number of aspects inherent in code-switching.

This article is structured as follows: in the second section we define the phenomenon known as code-switching and in the third and in the fourth sections we describe the context in which the study was carried out; in the fifth we present the methodology adopted for collecting data, the participants, and the data; in the sixth we propose an analysis of linguistic code-switching between the videotaped members; and in the last we discuss the data and state our conclusions.

Code-switching

Before beginning to discuss the data collected in our corpus, we must clarify what we mean by code-switching. Many studies have been dedicated to the analysis of this phenomenon since the 1970s due to its multi-dimensional nature involving many branches of linguistics.³ We are aware of the fact that researchers of linguistic practices in bilingual⁴ communities have begun to use a post-structuralist and post-colonialist epistemology (Blommaert 2010), which recognizes the heteroglossia of the discursive practices of the speakers and the dynamic characteristics that define them (García 2013). The concept of translanguaging is an example, defined as the “dynamic, complex

3. So much so that, from the theoretical perspective that we intend to adopt, this phenomenon has been referred to by various names, such as: code-switching, code-mixing, transfer, code alternation and language alternation.

4. By bilingual we mean “[...] be able to switch from one language to another in many situations [...] even when competence in the languages is relatively asymmetric” (Lüdi; Py 1986: 131).

discursive practice that, observed from a bilingual viewpoint, cannot be easily attributed to one or the other language” (García 2013:363). However, when analyzing the linguistic practices of the group observed, we preferred to adopt a structuralist epistemological approach.

Therefore, in this study we will use code-switching or code alternation to refer to the various phenomena related to “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (Gumperz 1982:59). In fact, it may take place between two speaking turns or within the same turn, between two sentences or during the same sentence, between two clauses or within the same clause, and when it appears within a single sentence it could consist of a single element or of a mixed element (one lexical unit inserted into another language, using the grammatical structure of the base language).

According to the functionalist-interpretive point of view (Gumperz 1982; Auer 1998) we take here, code-switching should be interpreted as a somewhat enriching communicative strategy that provides a series of possibilities for the verbal repertoire of the speaker, at least within the group of which she is a member, and which therefore has at least a positive cohesive social function (Alfonzetti 1992).

In this study we will examine the functions of code-switching within the Italian immigrant community and the relationship established between the language selected and the identity of the speaker, rather than analyze the structural characteristics and morphological and syntactic restrictions of the practice.⁵ We have adopted as our theoretical and methodological reference a series of interaction-conversation studies that have brought to light the many sophisticated functions involved in code-switching in the local organization of the interaction, such as select and take a turn (Auer 1984; Alfonzetti 1992); indicate a change in the stance of the speaker (Auer 1984); express one’s own linguistic preferences (Auer 1984); signal the insertion of off-topic or embedded sequences (Wei 1994; Alfonzetti 1992); change the topic (Alfonzetti

5. See, for example, the variationist model of Poplack (1988) or Myers-Scotton (1993). The latter developed one of the most complex theoretical models, called the Matrix Language Frame Model, which allows description of many code-switching phenomena within an utterance in which one language is that in which the majority of the communicative exchange analysed takes place.

1992); cite someone or report the speech of others (Auer 1984); or introduce narrative sequences or stories (Alfonzetti 1992).⁶

From this perspective, code-switching is seen as a phenomenon whose grammatical and functional characteristics and whose communicative value cannot be determined without an ethnographic study of the community that produced it, and thus on the analysis of its use in concrete situations and on the dynamics characterizing the social encounters in which it occurs. In other words, if the use of different languages is analyzed from the interactional point of view, we cannot assume the existence of a fixed relationship between social categories (such as the identities of the speakers) and linguistic categories (codes), but rather we must seek to interpret the relationship through the analysis of concrete situations (see Auer 1998; 2005; Pizzolotto 1991; Alfonzetti 1992; Anderson 2007; De Fina 2007a 2007b; Gafaranga 2007; Pasquandrea 2008; and Rubino 2014). In the case discussed here, the significance of code-switching will be determined by observing the activity and social roles that develop within the environment of the community of practice studied.

Participation in Italian associations

The first Italian associations in Brazil arose in the 1870s (see Trento 1986). These associations are still active today in the vast region of the state of São Paulo and plan recreational and cultural activities, in addition to promoting teaching of the Italian language (Stauber Caprara; Mordente 2004).

It was in this social context that the *Marchigiani* Association was founded in Brazil, based in the city of São Paulo and consisting of 700 members of both sexes and various ages, pertaining to the first, second and third generations of Italians living in São Paulo.⁷ We chose to carry out research with the help of members of this Association because we sought a recreational context in which to collect data and, of the various association representatives contacted, Paulo, president of the

6. For a more thorough discussion of the functions, see section 7.

7. This information was provided by the current president of the *Marchigiani* Association in Brazil.

Marchigiani Association, offered us access. Moreover, we were looking for a research context in which the linguistic repertoires of the speakers were as different as possible⁸. The *Association*, which is currently managed by 9 honorary members – 5 men and 4 women, aged 70 to 90 – meets monthly to organize events of various types: the Eucharist in Italian, gatherings to commemorate the main Italian holidays, and social dinners. While the monthly meetings of the members of the board – composed mainly of Italians born in the Marche region of Italy⁹ – are predominantly held in Italian, both Italian and Portuguese are spoken at the recreational activities open to all members (including children and grandchildren of the first generation). The social background of the members is equally varied, with businesspeople and professionals with a university degree, but also skilled workers and mechanics with lower educational attainment levels compared to the former. This variety allows us to define the linguistic and cultural repertoire of the members of the Brazilian *Marchigiani* Association as plurilingual¹⁰: some members speak Italian and Brazilian Portuguese; others also speak an Italian dialect; others speak only Brazilian Portuguese; others, as we will see, favor Portuguese.

One question that arises is therefore: how do these individuals express themselves? What language do they use? While Italian is by far the preferred language in events, and acts as the *lingua franca*, in contrast the base language must be established during each private conversation depending on the competence¹¹ of the speakers and may vary, as in the recreational context studied here, according to this and other factors.

8. In this respect, Paolo told us, during an initial telephone conversation, that the linguistic repertoires of the association's members varied significantly.

9. Only two board members are Brazilian.

10. An individual with plurilingual competence has a competence profile in one language that differs from that in another. (Common European Framework of Reference 2000: 134). A further characteristic of plurilingual competence is that "it does not consist of the simple addition of monolingual competences, but permits combinations and alternations of different kinds." (Common European Framework of Reference 2000: 134).

11. We understand competence to mean "the knowledge of, and ability to use, the formal resources from which well-formed, meaningful messages may be assembled and formulated" (Common European Framework of Reference 2000: 109). The linguistic competences that make up the linguistic repertoire of each speaker are "diverse and allow code switching from one language to another during the formulation of the message and the use of bilingual forms of speech" (Common European Framework of Reference 2000: 134).

The game of *ruzzola*

The data we will analyze were collected on the occasion of an event organized by the *Marchigiani* Association in Brazil to celebrate the *Day of the Madonna of Loreto* (*Giornata della Madonna di Loreto*) and the *Day of the Marche Region* (*Giornata delle Marche*). The event took place on December 14, 2014, on the grounds of a private restaurant in the town of São Roque, located in a rural region a few kilometers from the city of São Paulo and visited by the upper and middle classes in the city only on weekends. On this occasion a *ruzzola* throwing championship game was held, in which individuals and teams could compete. Shortly before the tournament a Brazilian priest celebrated mass in Italian and some of the tournament participants attended the service.

Ruzzola throwing is a game with an ancient tradition practiced in various regions of Italy. It was disseminated by and became entrenched among the working classes up until the end of the nineteenth century. The only instrument used in this game is a cylinder-shaped piece of wood called a *ruzzola*, roughly resembling a wheel of cheese. A band is used to throw the *ruzzola*. It is played outdoors, along country roads, and the principal objective is to throw it along a defined path in as few throws as possible. Seven members of the association registered for the tournament, and will be described in the next paragraph.

Data and participants

The data was collected by means of a video recording lasting about one and a half hours, made by the researchers during the tournament, and the following individuals took part: Paolo, Giorgio, Luigi, Felice, Luca, Tina, Luisa, in addition to the two researchers Giulia and Paola,¹² and a referee. In order to record all movements during the tournament a hand-held video camera was used. While Giulia filmed the activities, Paola followed the players along the approximately 1-kilometer-long field.

12. To protect participants' privacy, all names used are fictitious.

Except for Giulia and Paola, all participants were members of the *Marchigiani* Association and knew each other beforehand. It is important to note that, before filming, Paola, the researcher responsible for the project, contacted Paolo, the President of the Association and organizer of the event, in person and via telephone. Paolo, in addition to providing a series of details on the type of event, the members registered for the tournament and the course of the game, presented the researchers to the players on the day of the event, explaining the objective of the study. The researchers arrived at the event location in advance in order to meet the participants, familiarize themselves with the grounds, and solve any technical problems. During this period, they explained the purpose of the study and had participants sign a release form authorizing videotaping and use of the data. The video recording was carried out using the participant observation mode (Duranti 1997), as the researchers were directly involved in the context observed, and interacted closely with the participants.

Immediately after the match, all players, including the researchers, had lunch at the adjacent restaurant. During lunch, with the video camera turned off, questionnaires were distributed to the participants. They allowed us to develop a socio-linguistic profile of the participants, which we will describe briefly before continuing on to the analysis of the data. The responses could be either in Italian or Portuguese. Given that the participants were eating lunch, the information was collected orally and then written down by the researchers.

Paolo, originally from the *Marche* region of Italy, is president of the *Marchigiani* Association. He is 76 years old and has resided in São Paulo since 1950, when he arrived with his wife. Now retired, he was the manager of a large automobile company. He understands and speaks both Portuguese and Italian and practices Italian constantly with his family,¹³ colleagues and members of the Association.

Giorgio is a 69-year-old man from *Pescia*, a small Tuscan town in the province of Pistoia. He has been living in Brazil for 55 years, worked as an engineer and also managed a local Italian-language newspaper. Giorgio is married to an Italian, and has three children and two sisters

13. In this regard, see a study carried out on the linguistic repertoire used within this family (Ferroni; Veloso; Mordente 2014).

living in São Paulo. He assiduously attends Italian Association events, where he has the opportunity to practice Italian.

Luigi is 49 and is the youngest of the members that participated in the tournament. He was born in Italy, in *San Benedetto del Tronto* and has been living in São Paulo with his Italian wife and Brazilian-born daughter since 1998. Luigi is the owner of a small textiles factory, and speaks both Portuguese and Italian, but prefers the latter in both family and work contexts.

Felice is an 81-year-old man from *Folignano*, located in the province of *Ascoli Piceno*. His story is a bit different from that of the others. He immigrated with his family to Brazil at the age of four, and stayed until 1989, at which point he returned to Italy for 25 years. At the time of filming, he had been back in São Paulo for 7 months. Felice is married to a woman from the *Marche* region and was a car mechanic. He speaks both Portuguese and Italian, preferring the latter during the *Marchigiani* Association board meetings, in which he takes part as a board member.

Tina and Luisa are two sisters who arrived in Brazil in 1952. Tina is the oldest, at 80, while Luisa is 76. Both were born in Italy, in *Ascoli Piceno*. They worked as seamstresses in the textile industry and are now retired. Of the two, only Tina is married, and has 4 children. They prefer to speak Portuguese and participate in *Marchigiani* Association events relatively frequently.

Luca, 72, arrived in Brazil in 1948. He was a technical expert, but has been retired for years. Luca speaks Portuguese for the most part, like the sisters Tina and Luisa, but he has no difficulty in speaking or understanding Italian. He attends many Italian association events in São Paulo, where he has the opportunity to speak Italian.

Giulia, the researcher, is a 25-year-old woman born and raised in São Paulo by a Venetian mother. She has been studying Italian at the university for 5 years, and has frequent contact with Italy, where her uncle and cousins live.

Paola, the second researcher, is 39, and has been living in São Paulo for eight years, where she teaches Italian at the University of São Paulo.

She speaks Portuguese, although she prefers Italian to Portuguese for work and family reasons. She is Italian.

The referee, born in São Paulo, speaks Portuguese.

The data was transcribed afterwards. The biggest problem encountered during the transcription phase was understanding everything that the participants said during the interactions, since sometimes speech was incomprehensible due to noise and because more than one person spoke at once.¹⁴

In order to identify the phenomenon of code-switching from Italian to Portuguese and relative frequencies, we counted the number of turns for each speaker. Then, based on the descriptive categories identified in the functional study (see section *Code-switching*), we classified each code-switching occurrence by function. It is important to note that, during the match, two participants – namely the two sisters – abandoned the field and returned only near the end of the competition.

14. The transcription conventions are those commonly used in the field of Conversation Analysis. Symbols used:

(.) brief pause

(1.5) length of the pause, measured in seconds and tenths of a second

= Two utterances that follow one another without interruption.

[point at which the turns of two speakers overlap

(word) segment that was difficult to interpret

(all the/other) alternative interpretation of a segment that was not very comprehensible

() incomprehensible segment

(2 syll) incomprehensible segment (indicating the approximate number of syllables)

(()) non-verbal elements are inserted between double parentheses (e.g. gestures, facial expressions, posture, gaze) or information on what happens during the conversation (e.g. movement, manipulation of objects, events of various types)

so:: elongation of the syllable

? rising intonation (not necessarily a question)

, hanging intonation

, descending-conclusive intonation

hm / mh vocalizations indicating hesitation, consent, doubt, etc.

mhm / ehe / aha laughter

word- word or sentence cut short

text emphatic utterance

TEXT words spoken more loudly than the rest of the utterance

<word> segment pronounced more slowly

“text” reported speech in quotes

°word° speech spoken more quietly than the rest of the utterance

text word(s) not in Italian

Table 1 – Frequency of code-switching for each participant

Participant	Number of occurrences of code-switching from Italian to Portuguese	Number of turns
Paolo	9	176
Giorgio	10	128
Luigi	3	81
Felice	7	69
Luca	3	47
Luisa	25	45
Paola	1	38
Tina	19	32
Giulia	1	4
Referee	0	4
TOTAL	78	624

Table 2 – Distribution of occurrences of code-switching by category

Name	Reformulation or self-repair	Discourse-related switches	Language negotiation sequences	Expressions of identity
Paolo	3	3	3	0
Giorgio	2	4	4	0
Luigi	0	3	0	0
Felice	1	2	4	0
Luca	1	0	2	0
Luisa	1	2	12	10
Tina	0	1	10	8
Paola	0	0	1	0
Giulia	0	0	1	0
Referee	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	8	15	37	18

Repertoire and linguistic orientations of the *ruzzola* players

In the following pages we seek to identify the functions of code-switching in the speech of a group of Italian immigrants in a recreational context through the analysis of a series of examples from the corpus of their speech. Given that many examples were found of each function in the course of the analysis, we have selected a single example for each in order to avoid redundancy. As mentioned, all participants in the *ruzzola* tournament have a plurilingual linguistic repertoire. This is why the base language is negotiated during various periods of the tournament and can vary depending on the linguistic preferences of the speakers.

One type of code-switching present in the corpus is that which appears within a single turn, in which the speaker, after beginning to speak in one code, feels the need to “correct” himself, here reformulating in one language what was just said in the other. The direction of self-correction in this code-switching group is always from Portuguese to Italian, and it appears as a series of reformulation and self-repair events (Schegloff; Jefferson; Sacks 1977), principally of single lexical items in Portuguese.

An example of this type of alternation is seen in example 1 during an animated discussion between Felice, Paolo and Luca.

(Example 1)

01Felice:	oh Paolo oh Paolo
02Paolo:	adesso:: ((walking in the direction of the other players)) now :: ((walking in the direction of the other players))
03Felice:	nel posto che ci stai ((looking at Paolo)), tu non puoi spostare di qua per giocare dopo, te ne rimani lì per giocare] Where you are ((looking at Paolo)), you cannot move from here to play after, stay there to play]
05Luca:	[Felice [Felice
06Felice:	[sennò sposta di qua e l' <u>angolo</u> è favorevole [otherwise throw from here and the <u>angle</u> is advantageous
07Luca:	[Felice, gioca a favore della curva, <i>ninguém</i> , nessuno è stupido [Felice, play taking advantage of the curve, <i>no one</i> , no one is an idiot

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08Felice:	ho capito però ((walks towards Luca)), se tu stai di là tu stai in svantaggio, =io sono andato, giocato bene ()
	I know but ((walks towards Luca)), if you are there you will be at a disadvantage, = I did, I played well ()
09Paolo:	arriviamo fino al cancello ((indicating the gate in front of him)) e poi ritorniamo indietro
	we have arrived at the gate ((indicating the gate in front of him)) and now we go back

Felice argues that Paolo cannot throw his *ruzzola* from the spot where it fell after the last throw because otherwise he would have an advantage (turns 3–4). Luca, in turn, to reinforce what Felice said, intervenes in Italian (turn 7) and uses the Portuguese word *ninguém*, then immediately performs code-repair in the same turn, translating the term into Italian. A case like this makes clear, as Auer (1984:60) notes, that “speakers orient to the other language character of the transferred item and treat its use as an ‘inappropriate’ verbal activity – one that calls for repair”.

A second category that appears in our corpus, with 15 occurrences, is represented by a series of turns in which the speaker switches from Italian to indicate a change in subject or the attitude of the speaker. This type of code-switching, which Auer (1984) calls “discourse-related switches,” should be interpreted in relation to conversational activity and usually appears in the data collected through the use of humorous or sarcastic comments, jokes or irony, and protests or attacks against fellow players, which are often marked by code-switching in our material, principally into Portuguese.

Note that this type of code-switching, accompanied by paralinguistic elements such as gestures, looks, winks and a higher volume when speaking, is inserted into the normal flux of speech and is considered to be a strategic choice by the speaker, so much so that it is not accompanied by phenomena such as hesitations, pauses, false starts or self-repair. In these cases switching to Portuguese seems to serve precise discourse functions: to emphasize an important element and, at the same time, mitigate expressions that could threaten to cause the adversary to lose face (Brown; Levinson 1987).

This second category is seen in example 2, in which the players are all arranged along the starting line and are ready to throw the *ruzzola* for the first time.

(Example 2)

01Paolo:	questa è una regola, è una regola, questa regola io non l'ho mandata ((speaking to Giorgio and Felice))
	this is a rule, a rule, I did not make this rule ((speaking to Giorgio and Felice))
02Giorgio:	questo tracciato lo hai fatto te? ((speaking to Paolo and pointing to the path))
	Did you trace out this path ((speaking to Paolo and pointing to the path))
03Paolo:	no, l'ha fatto lui ((he indicates the man in the shirt to his right)) = allora volete provarla prima? Provate, fate un tiro per uno ((he moves a little in the direction of the other players)). Vai. ((Luca throws the <i>ruzzola</i>)) (.) Ecco, lui ((Luca)) ricomincia da qua
	no he did it ((he indicates the man in the shirt to his right)) = so do you want to go first? Try to throw it once. ((he moves a little in the direction of the other players)). Go. ((Luca throws the <i>ruzzola</i>)) (.) Here he ((Luca)) starts again from here]
04Luca:	è rientrata, [è rientrata ((pointing to the <i>ruzzola</i>))
	it returned [it returned ((pointing to the <i>ruzzola</i>))
05Giorgio:	[è rientrata ((pointing to the <i>ruzzola</i>))
	[it returned ((pointing to the <i>ruzzola</i>))
06Paolo:	no no no, che rientrata?
	no no no, what returned?
07Giorgio:	dovrebbe valere dove è uscita fuori
	where it went out should be used
08Paolo:	ma il regolamento, oh <i>caramba</i> , il regolamento dice così e facciamo così. Non può giocare così forte ((facing Giorgio))
	but the rules, oh <i>caramba</i> , that is what the rules say so we will do it that way. You cannot throw it with such force ((facing Giorgio))
09Luca:	[tutti vanno fuori ((facing Paolo))
	[they all go out ((facing Paolo))
10Paolo:	non vanno tutti fuori
	they don't all go out
11Luca:	() [dove è arrivata ((pointing to the <i>ruzzola</i> that has just been thrown))
	() [where did it go ((pointing to the <i>ruzzola</i> that has just been thrown))

Paolo, who organized the competition, is explaining the rules of the game to the participants and invites those present to take a practice throw. Luca then makes the first throw and, because of excessive

effort, the *ruzzola* ends up outside the path. Giorgio then suggests that the players should start again from the point at which it stopped (turn 7), while Paolo argues with some vehemence that they should follow the rule according to which each time the *ruzzola* leaves the path the next throw should be from the starting point of the previous throw (turn 8). As you can see, switching from Italian to Portuguese, signaled by the use of the interjection *caramba*, a Portuguese expression indicating rejection of a context, idea or fact, is used by Paolo to express disappointment.

Many scholars (Alfonzetti 1992; De Fina 2007a; 2007b; Gafaranga 2007; Pasquandrea 2008; Rubino 2014) have demonstrated that, in many cases, the code used by speakers is not entirely predictable a priori, but rather the choice derives mostly from local negotiation processes. It is therefore the speakers themselves who must address the problem of negotiating the language (or languages) in which the conversation will be conducted. This is also what happens in our corpus through what are called “language negotiation sequences.” While, in fact, the conversation between Giorgio, Paolo, Luca, Felice and Luigi is principally in Italian, and the use of Portuguese is limited to a series of isolated expressions inserted into a turn entirely in Italian, the orientation of the speakers changes during the few minutes in which the sisters Luisa and Tina participate in the competition. Indeed, in this case the language of interaction seems to orient towards Portuguese through sequences of varying lengths in which the language is entirely renegotiated and the interaction moves from one language to the other. Language negotiation sequences appear 37 times in the corpus.

This concept was first introduced by Heller (1982) and then developed by Auer (1984), who defines it as a sequence that begins “with a disagreement between two or more parties about which language to use for interaction, and ends as soon as one of them ‘gives in’ to the other’s preferred language” (Auer 1984:20-21). Sequences of this type are interesting because the linguistic preferences of the individual speakers become very clear during this process. The concept of preference, as used by Auer (1984), takes into account the inclination of a speaker to use a given language, that he could prefer to interact in one code rather than another because he is more competent in it, or because it is more appropriate for carrying out a specific function in

that particular context, or even for reasons related to prestige, macro-social norms, etc.

In example 3, many of the dynamics described above can be seen. The participants are Luca, Luisa, Luigi and Paola, the Italian researcher. After all the male players have taken their turns in the game it is the turn of the sisters, who are playing as a team.

(Example 3)

01Luca:	aspetta aspetta ((speaks to Felice and indicates the couple who should play), adesso gioca la quarta coppia (.) la terza coppia ((Luigi throws the <i>ruzzola</i>))
	wait wait ((speaks to Felice and indicates the couple who should play), now the fourth couple plays (.) the third couple ((Luigi throws the <i>ruzzola</i>))
02Luisa:	io adesso? [Finito? Finito gli uomini
	now me? [Done? Are the men done?
03Luca:	[si
	[yes
04Luisa:	la mia ((<i>ruzzola</i>)) non arriva a dieci centimetri
	mine ((my <i>ruzzola</i>)) didn't go ten centimeters
05Luca:	fa vedere ((turning to Luisa)) un po' come l'hai messa ((he takes Luisa's <i>ruzzola</i>))
	let's see ((turning to Luisa)) a bit how you threw it ((he takes Luisa's <i>ruzzola</i>))
06Luisa:	<i>eh mas não posso () o dedo aqui () e o dedo [aqui?</i>
	<i>eh but I can't () the finger here () and the finger [here?</i>
07Luca:	[si si
	[yes yes
08Luigi:	la corda deve rimanere sul dito
	the cord should be under your finger
09Giorgio:	<i>o dedo vai embora não, o dedo vai embora não</i>
	<i>the finger doesn't go, the finger doesn't go</i>
10Luca:	<i>joga assim, joga assim</i> ((shows Luisa how the <i>ruzzola</i> should be thrown))
	<i>throw this way, throw this way</i> ((shows Luisa how the <i>ruzzola</i> should be thrown))
11Luisa:	<i>nem a cordinha vai embora</i>
	not even the cord goes
12Luigi:	<i>não a corda não, ela fica com você</i>
	<i>the cord no, it stays with you</i>
13Paola:	<i>você</i> ((speaking to Luisa)) <i>fica aqui, não vai embora</i>
	<i>you</i> ((speaking to Luisa)) <i>stay here, don't go away</i>

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14Luisa:	va bene ((looking at Paola))
	ok ((looking at Paola))
15Luca:	la corda se la porta via aha aha
	the cord sends it away aha aha
16Giorgio:	aha aha
	aha aha

The beginning of this extract, in which Luisa asks her fellow player if it is her turn, takes place in Italian (turn 2), and Luca then follows Luisa's linguistic choice and responds in Italian (turn 3). Convergence, however, is only temporary, as in turn 6 Luisa switches to Portuguese to ask Luca how to throw the rope, presumably due to greater familiarity with this language. The players, in turn – including the researcher who is watching the game and until then had taken part in the conversation in Italian – adopting a convergence strategy that serves to “establish a relationship of solidarity between interlocutors” (Alfonzetti 1992:41) explain how to use the rope (turns 9-13), conforming to Luisa's code. It is Luisa that, turning to the researcher, concludes the sequence, this time returning to Italian (turn 14). What is interesting in this example is that, despite Luisa's inclination towards Portuguese, in this context the speaker sees the code as ‘marked,’ so much so that she makes an effort to orient the interaction towards Italian. Among the reasons that contribute to the choice of Italian by Luisa are, above all, the knowledge that the forms and use of Italian spoken abroad are the subject of the study and that the most natural way to make the Italian visitor feel welcome is to speak her language. If, in this example, the use of Italian by Luisa can be attributed to a sort of alignment when talking to an Italian visitor (the researcher), who then becomes the focus of the encounter, when she interacts with her sister, Tina, the language of interaction with her sister naturally tends to move towards Portuguese, the language used for communication in their family. This will be seen in example 4, in which Tina turns to her sister to ask the name of a game similar to the one they are playing.

(Example 4)

01 Tina:	<i>como se chiama coma-</i> ((looking at her sister))
	<i>what do you call what-</i> ((looking at her sister))
02Luca:	<i>eu tenho ()</i>
	<i>I have ()</i>
03Luisa:	<i>no:: è como o jogo di bocce solo que tem piastrelle</i> ((imitating the object with her hands))
	<i>no:: it is like the game bocce but it has tiles</i> ((imitating the object with her hands))



Figure 1 – Luisa turning to respond to Tina

At the start of turn 1, Tina shows uncertainty in speaking Italian, and her uncertainty is seen in a series of very notable elements: she begins a sentence first with a word in Portuguese, then switches to Italian, then imitates the object with her hands, and then interrupts her turn and turns towards her sister, who is closest to her physical position (Figure 1 shows Luisa¹⁵ at the precise moment in which she turns towards Tina to respond to her question). Luisa, who feels she is being called upon, intervenes in turn 3 as an expert and provides her sister the word she was looking for *bocce*.¹⁶ By doing this she

15. Luisa is wearing a white knit top, while Tina is wearing a print blouse.

16. The phenomena involved in seeking words were first described by Jefferson (1972) and then organized in a more systematic way by Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977).

adopts a convergence strategy because she responds in Portuguese, but uses the key words *bocce* and *piastrelle* in Italian,¹⁷ which in Brazilian Portuguese are called *bochas* and *malhas*. In this way the two sisters manifested their belonging and a common appreciation for and attachment to Italy, providing evidence that they know the traditional Italian games perfectly well. Hence, we would like to present the last category that we have identified in our corpus and that corresponds to code-switching used to express identity: it appears only in turns taken by the two sisters. This category is represented by Italian words related to the typically Italian game that appear in turns expressed entirely in Portuguese. Through use of these expressions, which can be considered for all effects to be true and characteristic acts of identity – as they allow the speaker to reveal their personal identity or the social role they hope to attain (Le Page; Tabouret-Keller 1985) – the players affirm, independent of their linguistic competence, their own affiliation with Italian culture, precisely because, for these speakers, Italian is not their strongest language and the fact that they make the effort to speak it is significant.

The example we will discuss next, example 5, includes the sense discussed above and involves Luisa and Tina as protagonists.

(Example 5)

01Tina:	<i>è ruim pra segurar () praticar [nè? Nunca fiz isso (.) Nunca fiz isso</i> <i>it's difficult to hold () practice [eh? I've never done this (.) I've never done this</i>
02Luca:	<i>[agora tudo o domingo vamos estar aqui treinar</i> <i>[now every Sunday we will be here practicing</i>
03Tina:	<i>aha aha aha</i> <i>aha aha aha</i>
04Luisa:	<i>na associação, na associação</i> <i>at the association, at the association</i>
05Luca:	<i>na associação</i> <i>at the association</i>
06Tina:	<i>() jogava quando jogava a coppie lá onde o Vitorio fez a coppa do</i> <i>boccia () nos ganhava sempre</i>

17. *Bocce* is a game in which balls (called *bocce*) and a smaller ball (called a *pallino*) are used. It is similar to bowls and *pétanque*. Each player throws a ball, alternating back and forth between the teams. The objective is to place the maximum number of large balls closest to the small ball. *Piastrelle* is similar to *bocce*, but tiles are used instead of balls.

	() <i>I played when I played doubles there where Vitorio participated in the boccia tournament () we always won</i>
07Luca:	[()
	[()
08Tina:	[<i>que era bom era Alberto, () Olanda e o Vitorio, a Iolanda e o Alberto eram melhor que a gente</i>
	[<i>Alberto was good, () Olanda and Vitorio, Iolanda and Alberto were better than we were</i>

In the passage reproduced in example 5, the game is about to start and Tina, after the first test throws, using Portuguese, addresses the rest of the group, which until then had been oriented towards Italian, and says that it is very difficult to throw the *ruzzola*, given that it is her first time (turn 1). Luisa then intervenes, also in Portuguese, reminding her sister that she had already played in the association (turn 5). Tina, thanks to the reminder from her sister, tells a sort of story (Alfonzetti 1992:75) during which she recounts, in Portuguese, an episode from their past related to a typical Italian game: *bocce* (turn 7 and 10). The topic is not accidental: traditional Italian games are one of the most common topics of discussion in the corpus, both because of the matches recorded (interactions during a game) and because they are strongly related to ethnic identification for Italians (De Fina 2007a; 2007b). It is therefore a sort of familiar lexicon that the sisters insert into Portuguese, the base language of their discourse. We therefore have an autobiographical narrative, linked to Italian culture and traditions and centered on a subject that in itself has a potent identity connotation. Even if the recounting takes place not so much through switching from Portuguese to Italian as from the integration of Italian words related to the Italian game into Portuguese (*a coppie*, *boccia*, *coppa*), these expressions¹⁸, in the context described – that is in a situation in which the speaker is not competent in the language, but the community supports its use in certain situations – can be interpreted as demonstrating identification with the culture of origin, independent of linguistic competence in Italian. Thus, Tina exhibits her pride in being Italian, especially in front of a listener who, in a certain sense, represents that culture, namely the Italian researcher.

18. In Brazilian Portuguese *bocce* is called *bocha*, the expression *a coppie* would be *em duplas*, and *coppa* would be *torneio* or *campeonato*.

Conclusions

Before presenting our conclusions, we wish to stress that we are aware of the limits of this study. First, two of the participants in the game abandon the field almost immediately and return only near the end. Furthermore, in an ethnographic study the presence of the observer creates a new context in which the researcher, while uncovering the communicative strategies of the subjects observed, unavoidably becomes part of the experiment, to the extent that “he himself becomes a subject of his study” (Ciliberti 2007:17). Having made these preliminary remarks, we will now illustrate the results that arose from this study, whose objectives are: 1) to question how the languages in the repertoire of a multilingual speech community contribute to the social life of the group and what functions code-switching serves in the local organization of interactions, and 2) to analyze which of these code-switching functions is significant in terms of expression of identity.

The examples discussed show that the general tendency of the players is to speak Italian in the context studied. This tendency is demonstrated not only by the prevalence of turns in Italian (see Table 1), but also by a series of reformulation and self-repair events (Schegloff; Jefferson; Sacks 1977), principally of single lexical items in Portuguese. Among the reasons why Italian was chosen during the match was certainly the knowledge that the forms and use of spoken Italian was the specific subject of the study; that Italian is the language that all members of the group share; that it is a very specific context, given that the data were collected while the subjects were playing a typical Italian game; and, finally, that the most natural way to make the Italian visitor feel welcome was to speak her language. However, since the context is characterized by a plurilingual linguistic repertoire, we see that the language of interaction can be constantly negotiated by the speakers analyzed based on the linguistic competence of the players and on interaction management requirements.

Although the behavior of the participants in an interaction is frequently the result of active choices, in which social rules are renegotiated dynamically and flexibly based on the requirements of the interaction (Auer 1984), we were able to identify a series of possible

discursive functions of code-switching inside an Italian immigrant community, namely to:

- 1) Indicate a change in topic or stance of the speaker, the type of alternation that Auer (1984) calls “discourse-related switches,” which usually occur through the use of humoristic or ironic comments in Portuguese, inserted into a turn entirely in Italian (example 2);
- 2) Express one’s own linguistic preferences (examples 3 and 4);
- 3) Affirm one’s association with a given culture, in this case code-switching has a strong identity connotation and appears in the form of Italian words, related to Italian games (example 5).

Given these examples we can comment on the use of code-switching in a community of Italian immigrants abroad during a recreational activity. Code-switching, in the context studied, is ascribable to situational factors. In fact, in the situation in which the players are bilingual there are communicative exchanges in which the language of interaction is negotiated continuously based on interaction management requirements. However, in situations in which the players have minimal competence in Italian, code-switching can be ascribed to symbolic factors related to identity. We have, in fact, seen that despite Tina and Luisa having limited Italian language competence compared to the other players, so much so that they often readily orient their linguistic choices towards Portuguese and confine their Italian to the terms related to games (*bocce, a coppie, piastrelle*), their relationship with Italian culture and traditions is still very strong. In this sense we can affirm that Italian games constitute a strong element of ethnic identification for the Italians studied and while speaking of them they affirm their Italian origins regardless of their linguistic preferences.

The existence of this mechanism to indicate affiliation with one’s culture of origin raises important questions for the study of the relationship between language and identity in communities of Italian immigrants abroad. In fact, in general, the studies analyzing the phenomenon of language attrition in the context of Italian immigration tend to concentrate on the transformations the mother tongue suffers. They limit themselves to showing the coincidence of language loss

and the loss or evolution of ethnic identity (Scaglione 2000; Raso 2003). The data analyzed, however, demonstrate how participation in an event that itself has a strong cultural connotation can contribute to reinforcing one's ties to an ethnic identity, even when the person has only basic knowledge of the language of the country of origin. This conclusion may, in fact, open new horizons for reflection for the purpose of studying communities of Italians living abroad and immigrants during the previous century.

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