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IV Identity through Orality, Identity through Literacy

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1 Barbara Turchetta

2 **16 The Writer's Identity and Identification** 3 **Markers in Writing Code Mixing and** 4 **Interference**

5 6 7 8 **1 Approaches to writing contact and mixing**

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10 In the framework of sociolinguistic research devoted to multilingual contexts
11 and dynamics, several scholars have concentrated on code-mixing and code-
12 switching as communication strategies within multilingual communities. A lot
13 of work has also been oriented toward the dynamics of lexical loans and syntactic
14 structures as well as toward semantic and speech interference, both in multi-
15 lingual speakers and in interlinguistic communication strategies. The historical
16 perspective, concentrating especially on these last two phenomena of contact
17 among languages, has shed some light on the strategies and mechanisms which
18 lead to interference in portions of language, contributing to language shift and
19 language change. Until very recently, the interest in the relationship between
20 writing systems and languages has largely been directed towards the interface
21 between sounds and graphic signs, mainly focusing on language as the object
22 for investigation and writing as a tool to fix it.

23 In linguistic and anthropological investigation, some attention has been
24 given to writing systems. In the framework of the ethnography of writing most
25 of the scientific research has been strictly focused on "writing systems" in their
26 broadest sense, as a fundamental part of the symbolic heritage of human com-
27 munities. Written signs are observed as part of the shared symbolic and cultural
28 background of human groups. Social activities within larger communities con-
29 tribute to the role writing has, both as an interface with oral language and as a
30 symbolic system of values separate from the language. Unfortunately, most of
31 the literature devoted to speech and its relation to the written text often defines
32 writing simply as a support system. Language becomes, therefore, the main
33 object of focus, whilst writing becomes a tool where the interface between the
34 oral and the written sign is investigated in its intrinsic value, either from a
35 variation perspective, as in many of the works by Coulmas (2002, 2013), or in
36 its cultural and historical perspective, as in much of the work by Ong (1967, 1982)
37 and Havelock (1986). In fact, there are several examples and strong evidence of
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1 this strict connection wherever human societies have been using the written lan-
2 guage as a powerful means of storing knowledge, both in the past and in the
3 present, where writing shows to be widespread and culturally meaningful tool
4 for a given society.

5 In all the works we have quoted, there is a pervasive tendency to interpret
6 writing in its narrow sense. That is, as a support for language where style and
7 variation would be determined by a strong reference to a high prestige model
8 both for the language and for the writing. We consider writing variation phe-
9 nomena such as allography as a relevant element to be observed in order to
10 re-orient our perspective and concentrate more on its intrinsic connection with
11 speech variation. In these terms, allography, writing shift and interference would
12 be a clear expression of what speech represents in terms of social variation
13 according to speech content, relationship between the speakers and repertoire
14 at a single speaker level. Both in a strict reference to a high prestige language
15 choice and in its variation reflecting speech phenomena, writing in its narrow
16 sense is definitely a means to conduct language and fix it on a support. Therefore,
17 deviations from writing norms eventually shared by a group of writers are a more
18 relevant variation, in sociolinguistic terms, than a mere mistake by a single writer.

19 When considering writing in a broader sense as a way of communicating
20 amongst individuals or communities, the traditional evolutionary perspective on
21 the development of writing needs to be abandoned. Nevertheless, reflections on
22 writing systems and literacy processes have mostly been investigated in their
23 historical perspective. The evolutionary approach by Gelb offered a clear example
24 of a diachronic perspective of the evolution of writing as stated in his masterpiece
25 in 1952:

26 “There are no pure systems of writing just as there are no pure races in anthropology and
27 no pure languages in linguistics. As elements retained from an older period and innova-
28 tion ahead of the accepted development may be found in a language of a certain period,
29 so a system of writing at one period may contain elements from different phases of its
30 development.” (Gelb 1952: 199–200).

31
32 A very similar evolutionary approach is offered by Cohen (1958), who has had a
33 major influence on many researchers in interpreting writing in its evolution
34 where pre-writing systems, and logographic and syllabic systems are just earlier
35 steps from when alphabetic writing was conceived in classical literate societies.

36 Language change in an historical perspective would have been part of a
37 natural transformation process involving a cultural, ethical, and symbolic world-
38 view of human societies and implying a stable and commonly diffused single
39 pattern at a given time for a given society.

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1 In a more comprehensive perspective on writing offered by Harris (2000),
2 writing is an instrument for noting memory, whether for a symbolic purpose or
3 a functional one. Music, mathematics, language sounds and religious or magical
4 symbols are therefore at the same level in being portrayed by written signs
5 closely related to them. Writing in its broader sense is therefore a means of
6 communication holding a functional or symbolic meaning and shared by a
7 community.

8 In considering the different points of view on writing, we can assume two
9 different traditional attitudes in the scientific literature devoted to it: on the one
10 side we can observe how a writing system is built up in relation to a single
11 language in a strict interface between oral and written sounds and signs. On
12 the other side, in a more semiotic and interpretive reflection, writing becomes a
13 rational tool and a direct manifestation of knowledge, as it is in Barthes' works
14 or in other researchers who focussed mainly on semiotics and the interpretation
15 of written texts.

16 In taking into account the first technical perspective, we wish to observe
17 writing in its strict sense, that is as a means to convey language. It is not our
18 intention to consider the evolutionary perspective on writing systems; we wish
19 to focus on its fluctuation, hesitation and switching within the framework of
20 the ethnography of writing and the anthropology of writing, taking into account
21 the self-representation and identity markers of the writer (Cardona 1981, 1986;
22 Barton and Papen 2010).

23 A broader view of writing as a communication device, regardless of whether
24 this implies a close connection to speech or a particular language model, offers
25 a relevant point of reference to observe both the writer's identity (in its cultural
26 and symbolic sense) and the writer's identification in terms of self-confidence
27 and personal skills with writing tools and writing choices.

28 A variation in writing and the writer's attitude in choosing alternative signs
29 would mean a distancing from a strict model and a common sharing of writing
30 attitudes and habits within a social group. Social groups share common com-
31 munication patterns and are inclined to use the same variation in speech and
32 writing (where it exists). Therefore, we interpret writing as a social practice
33 (Mancini 2014) and we regard variation in writing as a social norm rather than
34 the product of a single writer's skill in his literacy development (Mancini and
35 Turchetta 2014).

36 In the following section, we will refer to writing as a writer's capacity to
37 establish a relation with a reader in very functional terms and in an effort to
38 establish a common and shared background with a symbolic or information
39 function. As shown by Di Salvo, Mori, Muru (this volume) message content is
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1 more relevant than writing style and fluctuation in the choice of a sign; alterna-
2 tively, according to Mion (this volume), a writers' shift toward a new writing
3 system shows a strong adherence to socially and culturally motivated choices.
4 Reference to a model and a writer's interpretation and choice are then discussed
5 by Murgia (this volume), reflecting on the dynamics of language and writing
6 selection as a skill of a writer in creating a text at its best, with special attention
7 devoted to the aesthetics of style and words.

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10 **2 Writing codes and the cultural identity of** 11 **writers: some critical assumptions**

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14 Current literate societies have very little in common with those of the past. In
15 the past writing systems were little used as a means of communication until
16 the invention of printing in late 15th century strongly contributed to the spread
17 of reading as a socially common practice. From then on, what had traditionally
18 been a powerful instrument in the hands of very small social groups, normally
19 distinguished by their specific role and the political power within their com-
20 munity, became a widespread skill and a widely used means of communication,
21 though not always in a strict reference to a high prestige model.

22 In using writing skills and literacy to measure the difference between the
23 political and social roles of groups of individuals (Goody 1986) we should make
24 the following three assumptions.

25 Literacy and writing offer an effective tool for sharing knowledge: literate
26 and illiterate speakers of a language are socially differentiated in terms of social
27 rank and cultural prestige.

28 A limited diffusion of writing and reading skills in literate societies implies a
29 significant political strength in writing: social groups who use writing actively
30 and passively (as it is in reading) dominate and influence the political and
31 cultural order of a society. Since writing is a cultural practice, in those societies
32 where it is widespread it contributes largely in spreading cultural patterns among
33 different social groups. Evidence of diffusion dynamics is offered nowadays by
34 all literate societies where either through traditional media or ICT new media,
35 information is mainly spread through writing and reading.

36 A written repertoire in a given society can be both politically and culturally
37 motivated: bilingual and multilingual societies differentiate among written reper-
38 toires and attribute high and low prestige to different writing standards. Evi-
39 dence of a culturally motivated writing shift is found in several languages, in
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1 bilingual and multilingual societies, where language ideology and a speaker's
 2 self-representation may push toward a writing system shift as studied by Banfi
 3 (2015) in old Greek varieties. A writing system shift may sometimes lead to
 4 dramatic changes due to the political and cultural dominance of new models
 5 (Selvelli 2015, Mion this volume).

6 7 8 **3 Variations and dynamics of writing systems** 9 10 **and texts**

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12 Multi-graphism and written code-mixing are dynamic processes widely used by
 13 writers. They are often part of a written repertoire commonly accepted by writers
 14 who might not belong to the same language community despite sharing common
 15 languages and writing systems. A language community *stricto sensu* would be
 16 defined as a national and socio-cultural entity, with a common background,
 17 where literacy might be diffused according to strict standards and would be
 18 used by public media and the political administration of the State. In those
 19 contexts of use where writing is strongly connected to specific cultural and
 20 symbolic patterns as with religion, nationalism, or cultural ideology, a strict
 21 adherence to a writing norm is strongly required from individuals joining and
 22 sharing these patterns in specific social groups and communities.

23 Where writing is a widely diffused means of communication and loses
 24 any specific ideological value, societies share a common tendency to language
 25 variation and writing variation. Literacy brings vernacular forms of writing
 26 which are not necessarily associated with uneducated people showing their
 27 poor literacy skills. Most of the time standard spelling and grammar norms
 28 are strictly observed in formal contexts only where attention to a high prestige
 29 model is due. Writing practices among writers who often make use of written
 30 signs are characterised by rich repertoires where strict adherence to a code is
 31 due in formal occasions only. Sub-standard writing systems are widely used
 32 and diffused in rich repertoires. We have a clear example of that in contemporary
 33 times in all sub-standard writing systems developed through ICT tools. Muru
 34 (2015) discusses interesting examples of language and writing fluctuations by
 35 dragomans, those translators and interpreters who were officially in charge of
 36 encoding and translating oral and written texts in the multilingual and multi-
 37 cultural society of the Ottoman Empire (Lucchetta 1989, 1993).

38 Cultural and linguistic change over time may preserve some of the most
 39 common fluctuations or lose them when assigning new functions and meanings
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1 to writing systems. To give a clear example of this kind of change, almost all of
 2 the 14,000 abbreviations used in Latin, Late Latin and Italian romance languages
 3 up to the 14th century are lost nowadays. A complete inventory of them is offered
 4 by Cappelli ([2011] 1929) showing a rich and sophisticated technique of word
 5 shortening as a common practice amongst writers; many of the abbreviated
 6 signs show a high frequency of allographies, sometimes differentiating in a
 7 significant way in terms of graphic style and number of graphic tracts.

8 The invention of printing in the late 15th Century CE brought new habits in
 9 handwriting, which became gradually restricted in calligraphic styles and in text
 10 length.

11 Everyday writing in the last two centuries in highly literate Europe has
 12 brought new substandard forms of handwriting in ordinary and informal written
 13 communication. Postcards offer superb examples of modern writing variation;
 14 they used to be a widely diffused means of short communication in use in
 15 Europe's recent past. To give an example, Brooks, Fletcher and Lund (1982) offer
 16 a printed transcription of some 200 Edwardian postcards showing several cases
 17 of word shortening, unstable written norms and strong fluctuation.

18 The geo-morphological conditions in certain areas would favour social, com-
 19 mercial and cultural contacts and therefore contribute to political domination.
 20 Wherever an intensive contact among human groups is there, language contact
 21 and interference work effectively. Scholars have shown how the Mediterranean
 22 area has been one of the most interesting areas of language and cultural contact
 23 over the centuries (Abulafia 2011) where speakers and writers have traditionally
 24 shared (and still share) rich repertoires and significant variation in their language
 25 choice. Romance languages are certainly among those communication devices
 26 which have been strongly affected by language contact in their history (Banfi
 27 2014). Some recent collections of papers by scholars working on language and
 28 writing contacts in Asia and in the Mediterranean area from cuneiform times to
 29 the late Middle Ages detail a great and intensive communication activity involv-
 30 ing several languages and varieties over the centuries (Mancini and Lorenzetti
 31 2013; Baglioni and Tribulato 2015).

32 Meaningful examples from the Mediterranean past come to show how deeply
 33 radicated the use of different writings and languages was in the ancient empires
 34 where epigraphic archaeological masterpieces belong. It is the kind of public
 35 use of writing defined by Petrucci (1979) as 'exposed': a public and permanent
 36 way to communicate through writing.

37 Syrian inscriptions of the Decapolis inscribed between the 2nd century BCE
 38 and the 3rd century CE are just one great example of co-existing texts ranging
 39 from Greek to Aramaic, Syriac and Latin. Those shown on the Palmyra *Cardo*

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1 columns in Syria belonging to the 2nd century CE are contextually written in
2 Greek and Aramaic and show a widely diffused pattern of code-switching which
3 was presumably very common both in writing and in speech (As'ad and Yon
4 2001; Yon and Gatier 2009).

5 Communication practices in multilingual contexts reach significant levels of
6 code-mixing and contact especially in non-formal contexts, where little attention
7 is paid to self-regulation in speech and writing unlike formal communication,
8 where speakers and writers perceive the relevance of a model to pursue.

9 Many scholars have shown the high frequency of continuum variation and
10 code-mixing and switching in human societies where no strict prestige is attributed
11 to a specific language or variety, especially where there is no strict standard model
12 as a reference in code use, in formal and public contexts of language use. Some
13 clear examples of a high prestige model to refer to are offered by studies devoted
14 to the Bedouin world where Classical Arabic does not show its strict symbolic
15 relevance and is not considered in terms of prestige as relevant as Bedouin
16 varieties of Arabic are, especially in specific linguistic expressions (Ibrahim 1986).
17 As a clear example of that, we could mention Bedouin oral poetry where the
18 symbolic relevance of conservative Bedouin varieties is quite strong (Abu-Lughod
19 2000).

20 Multilingual dynamics in use can be observed in any context, regardless of
21 whether they are to be ascribable in theory to monolingual societies apparently
22 used to very restricted repertoires. Meaningful examples of multilingual com-
23 munication contexts are offered at a regional level in Europe where in those
24 countries like Italy – apparently monolingual – romance varieties, language
25 minorities and sub standards of the official language are commonly in use (Toso
26 2006).

27 Language or writing interference and contact phenomena, which are observ-
28 able at a textual level when effectively contributing to language mixing, are
29 to be considered as a widely accepted communication strategy rather than a
30 deviation from a linguistic norm. In that respect, Mori (2015) has shown in a
31 selected corpus of documents produced between the 16th and the 18th centuries
32 CE how both interference at a graphic-phonetic level as well as lexical and mor-
33 phosyntactic calques and loans are common interlinguistic devices in intercultural
34 communication among writers and speakers of the eastern Mediterranean
35 sharing common wide repertoires, during the Ottoman era. Interferences, code-
36 mixing and fluctuations in writing underline a diffused pattern of code-switching
37 among speakers of different mother tongues in the same socio-historical context
38 involving Romance languages, Semitic languages and Greek (Di Salvo 2015; Zinzi
39 2015).

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4 Writing variation and text production

In considering a wide diffusion of writing in multilingual contexts where speakers belonging to different societies share common working activities such as traders in a harbour, officers in a colonial context or any other situation involving international and intercultural social contact, speakers and writers share a common attitude and use of several patterns of written and oral communication. Such a kind of human communication activity is better defined as a community of practice (Wenger 1998) rather than a language community, since individuals sharing written and linguistic codes do not attribute any specific and common symbolic meaning to them and do not share any common background in terms of cultural identity, group history and territorial provenance.

As shown by Di Salvo, Mori and Muru (this volume), where no standards are specifically offered to a community of practice sharing written communication strategies, variation in writing becomes a common attitude.

Writing is therefore an expression or result of three main forces interacting:

- a. *The relation between the writer and the reader according to the selected code and specific variety of the language and of the writing system.*
- b. *The writer's attitude towards a reference model in terms of prestige or as a shared choice within a community of practices.*
- c. *The symbolic and cultural meaning attributed at times to specific styles and varieties (identity oriented choices).*

Examples of the three forces interacting in writing switching and interference will be discussed below.

- a. The relation linking the writer with the reader implies a common and shared use of different oral and written codes when interacting and switching from one system to another. Frequency of shifting in language contact and in multilingual repertoires is the common background of several examples of switching in writing systems for the same language in writing code-mixing and code-switching. Multilingual and multicultural contexts of interaction, both in writing/reading and in speech, show a natural tendency to develop plurilingual texts in public contexts where the same message needs to be transmitted in different languages. Shared repertoires among speakers and writers in a multilingual context imply a distributional scale of interaction between different languages and writing systems; therefore, we need to consider language one, language two, together with writing one, writing two and so on, as distributed variably amongst different speakers and writers.

1 In an attempt to transmit written information in such a kind of social setting,
 2 the writing systems might interact to let readers from different cultural back-
 3 grounds read a message. We will introduce as an example of a multicultural
 4 setting from the past, the communication through epigraphies that was quite
 5 common during the Roman Empire, especially during its later centuries when
 6 more and more Roman citizens from different and remote provinces of the
 7 Empire had different mother tongues and cultural backgrounds. In some provinces,
 8 as in the case of Palestine, different written traditions co-existed and were socially
 9 distributed in a shared continuum, as shown by Mancini (2008), mostly reflecting
 10 the competence of speakers belonging to different social groups. Co-existence of
 11 Latin, Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew was in that context distributed according to
 12 social rank, communication context and social prestige; in public writing, the
 13 choice of plurilingualism and plurigraphism was therefore controlled by the
 14 relationship between the intention of the addresser and the kind of addressee
 15 the message was directed to. Similar conditions can be seen in another example
 16 from the Latin world. When interacting with readers of different mother tongues,
 17 public Latin texts were often presented in a multilingual version. A good example
 18 of this common practice is the funeral inscription for Gordianus III (238–244 CE),
 19 one of the last emperors of Ancient Rome. Soldiers from his battalion had the
 20 following sentence on his sepulchral inscription in Latin using Latin script
 21 together with different writing systems, namely Greek, Persian, Hebrew and
 22 Coptic, to let the soldiers from several provenances read it, as stated in the text:

23
 24 (1) *et Graecis et Latinis et Persicis et Iudaicis et Aegyptiacis litteris ut ab*
 25 *omnibus lege(re)tur*

26 'it was written in Greek, Latin, Judaic and Aegyptic letters to let everybody
 27 read it' (Donati 2010: 15)

28
 29 b. Cultural, political and economic exchanges make language contact more
 30 frequent. Language variation and language shift are common strategies in multi-
 31 lingual repertoires and intercultural communities of practice are used to sharing
 32 them. In such a variable dynamic use of different languages, symbolic values
 33 are less evident in language choice. Some widespread contemporary languages,
 34 such as English, have become a functional tool in international exchanges and
 35 by the time they reached a significant number of speakers as a second language,
 36 they lost most of their symbolic force for speakers who do not identify them as
 37 part of their national or regional heritage. The same holds true for scripts. None
 38 of us would consider the Latin script in our daily use as rich in its symbolic
 39 meanings in the same way as an ancient Roman would have done. Thousands
 40 of languages use it for writing. Nevertheless, when scholars of the humanities

1 share a common interest in the ancient Latin world, they still attribute to
 2 *scriptae* a high prestige value in terms of the cultural intensity they bring and
 3 evoke. The prestige of a model can be gradually assumed when social and cultural
 4 circumstances contribute to modifying a writers' opinion, as it did in Renaissance
 5 Europe when some linguistic models gradually became relevant in terms of their
 6 prestige.

7 Between the 13th and the 18th centuries, the Embassy of the Republic of
 8 Venice in Constantinople, and all other diplomatic missions located in strategic
 9 points of the Mediterranean Sea, gradually showed a general tendency to use
 10 the Tuscan romance variety of written language. In the middle of the 16th
 11 century, in all the documents written by registrars in the Venetian chancelleries
 12 ranging from legal depositions to notarial deeds, Venetian and southern Italian
 13 varieties became less and less used in written official texts.

14 Renaissance Tuscany was a model to pursue by many of the courts both in
 15 Europe and in the Mediterranean area in terms of aesthetics, as in art, but also
 16 in political and international affairs, thanks to the court of the Medici in Florence.

17 The dragomans, namely the translators who were officials at the courts in
 18 Constantinople and Venice at the time, had employed Tuscan lexical choices
 19 and textual styles even before that. In translating official political agreements
 20 between the Ottoman Sultan and the Venetian Doge, which were contained in
 21 Ottoman *Firmani* traditionally written in Persian, they used to convert texts into
 22 Romance Florentine. Because of frequent language shifts in such a multilingual
 23 context in the Mediterranean area, flexible criteria of language notation were
 24 very common in transcribing oral expressions. Language variation and multi-
 25 lingual competences are evident, especially in documents showing legal deposi-
 26 tions where witnesses were speaking different languages and romance varieties;
 27 variation in writing was gradually substituted by a strict adherence to a model
 28 as demonstrated by the legal tradition of Tuscany during the Renaissance
 29 period.

30
 31 c. Styles and varieties of a given language may vary in their prestige over time
 32 and under certain socio-cultural and political conditions. This is very true espe-
 33 cially when cultural and ideological dominance from external forces might
 34 involve political, cultural and social domination. Cultural patterns of shift some-
 35 times imply a re-orientation in terms of religion and attachment to a language
 36 and to its writing system. That is the case of some well documented changes in
 37 the past as exemplified by the well known shift of three different writing systems
 38 in the history of Old, Middle and New Persian, a language that in its historical
 39 evolutionary line shifted from Cuneiform, to Avestic (Pahlavi) and then to the
 40 Arabic system after the Islamic conquest of the Iranian Highlands.

1 Most of the changes we are able to document from the past, for speakers
2 of languages shifting from one writing system to another, are actually what
3 emerges from an already existing condition of diffused bilingualism or multilin-
4 gualism within a community of speakers and writers. Communities of practice
5 participate in language change motivated by contact, and therefore are often
6 inclined to writing shift and fluctuation as a frequent strategy to adopt writing
7 and use it for new functions and symbolic representations (Perri and Turchetta
8 2014: 325).

9 Sometimes a shift in the writing system may occur gradually and offer inter-
10 esting examples of code-mixing. An interesting case in that sense is offered by
11 an ancient form of writing of Old Syriac: the Estrangelian, used by Nestorians
12 by the 1st century CE. The Epheso Conciliulm in 431 CE condemned the Nestorian
13 Christian Church and pushed the Nestorians toward Mesopotamia; they gradually
14 migrated toward the Middle East and reached China after several centuries.
15 Estrangelian had been a high prestige writing system up to the 6th Century CE;
16 the traditional writing system was linked to symbolic and religious values. The
17 migration and the intensive contact with different languages, cultures and reli-
18 gious cults pushed Nestorian followers to syncretism in religious practices. As a
19 consequence, the crystallized language formula in Syriac gradually became
20 transcribed into mixed scripts, even including Chinese writing as it is in a
21 famous inscription dating from the 8th Century CE from Xi'an Fu, China, in a
22 biographic Syriac text written in Estrangelian and Chinese characters (Briquel
23 Chatonnet, Debié and Desreumaux 2004).

24 One last example of the symbolic loss in the use of a writing system is offered
25 by the history of the Somali language, transcribed into Arabic characters follow-
26 ing the Islamic conquest of the Horn of Africa and the Islamization of the area.
27 Somali intellectuals started writing Somali Oral poetry using Arabic scripts in
28 the late 18th Century CE. The nationalist movement at the beginning of the 20th
29 Century CE brought new idealistic principles and pushed a National movement
30 whose expression is a tentative use of a newly invented writing system.

31 The Osmanya script was created by Cismaan Yuusuf Keenadiid, a poet and
32 intellectual in the 1920s and adopted for use with the Somali language until 1973
33 when the Latin script was officially introduced. The use of Osmanya was very
34 limited although widely used among nationalists who struggled for the indepen-
35 dence of Somalia during the colonial era. The Somali language has more recently
36 re-adopted in non-formal written communication the Arabic alphabet following
37 the civil war which began in 1991. The country is now exposed to an intensive
38 Islamization and writers show a tendency in informal communication to use the
39 Arabic script for Somali as a clear marked choice, which is religiously motivated.

40

5 Dynamics of socially or culturally motivated code-switching and code-mixing in writing

As stated in the title of this paper, in multilingual contexts where allography and multi-graphism occur, it is useful to distinguish between identity markers in graphic choices on the one side and identification marks on the other, the latter being elements useful to a researcher to point out what the competence of the writer is. Symbolically oriented language choices are very seldom an acknowledged choice of the speaker himself; most of the time these acts of identity (Le Page and Tabouret Keller 1985) are unconsciously produced in the selection of linguistic items and varieties, culturally and socially oriented but at the same time they are used by speakers to identify themselves within a group. In their words: “the identity of a group lies within the projections individuals make of the concepts each has about the group” (Le Page and Tabouret Keller 1985: 2).

On the contrary, identification markers are the relevant types of language deviations from a target variety of language where no cultural motivation to direct choices is there. Substandard norms are quite common in an interlanguage process of acquisition. In an acquisition process of a second writing system with a previous literacy process completed, we find most of the reasons for free allographies. The graphic system is not yet stable in the writer’s competence nor is there a target model to pursue. In both cases, the range of choices widens and pushes the writers to fluctuate more. Allographies produced in multi-graphic contexts are the result of a wide spectrum of graphic choices that writers share; they are not necessarily attributable to a specific ideologically or culturally oriented pattern. They are only part of a range of graphic devices a community of practice shares.

Linguistically and culturally heterogeneous situations constantly develop incoming communication patterns where identity is negotiated according to the social context and linguistic competence of interlocutors. Unstable, uncertain selections of different graphic signs within a single text, and for the same speech correspondence, are therefore more the result of a socially accepted free variation in the framework of a multilingual competence in a group of writers, than a specific choice culturally oriented. This holds true in social contexts where the culturally oriented attitudes of individuals are part of multicultural contexts and lose their strong value in terms of the cultural identity of the speakers. A diffused plurilingualism makes individuals choose from their linguistic repertoires, languages and varieties according to socially distinguishable sets of norms. This was, in fact, the situation of the above mentioned Tuscan variety of the written

1 language which started to spread across the Mediterranean centres of cultural,
 2 political and economic exchange in the late Renaissance period. It became a
 3 linguistic norm, a socially accepted convention for all writers and readers dealing
 4 with legal and commercial affairs and entering into contact at various levels and
 5 social ranks with the economic and cultural Italian area, but in no way was it dis-
 6 tinguished as a language choice made in reference to Florentine cultural patterns,
 7 social behaviour or lifestyle.

8 In the framework of a socially accepted variation or norm, we will focus on
 9 some interesting conditions, which develop common attitudes in a group of
 10 writers and do not keep or gain any cultural or symbolic significance for them.
 11 Therefore, we wish to focus on identification markers rather than on acts of
 12 identity in considering the following two strategies acting in language and writing
 13 variation: a. code-switching in writing; b. Interference and calques in writing.

14 a. Since the 1990's, scholars have made a thorough investigation of code-
 15 switching as a communication strategy. Innovative works by Myers-Scotton
 16 (1993a, 1993b) evidenced the relevance of code-switching in understanding the
 17 dynamics of conversation strategies in bilingual communities. Written bilingual
 18 and multilingual texts have been studied ever since in Linguistics, but little
 19 attention has been paid to graphic choices. Human societies sharing different
 20 languages are used to code-switching and frequently present it in writing.

21 Code-switching is sometimes socially or culturally motivated: the first being
 22 a more frequent condition than the latter.

23 A very common and diffused example of socially motivated code-switching
 24 (non-identity oriented) is the Arabic/English keyboard of laptops. In websites
 25 and email addresses. Arabic script has coexisted with English script since when
 26 computer science developed a mixed pattern for most languages dealing with
 27 writing systems differing from the Latin. Keys showing computer language and
 28 punctuation cannot be transcribed in any other system of symbols, as shown in
 29 the figure below.
 30



(Arabic-English Keyboard)

37
 38 Culturally motivated code-switching instead is identity oriented. Language and
 39 script selection lets the reader perceive the cultural relevance of the specific
 40 choice and understand secondary and extra-textual symbolic meanings. An

1 interesting example of identity oriented code-switching is offered by a signpost
 2 in Tanzania promoting a health campaign against HIV. We report the text here
 3 below, rendering the three lines in different languages with the use of three
 4 different fonts. The reported speech is in Kiswahili while the comment to it is
 5 rendered in English:

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7
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FAITHFUL CONDOM USER: <i>“Nilitumia kondomu kwa umaminifu”</i> (‘I use condoms faithfully’) Human Link International

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On the left side of the signpost is a picture of a large skeleton standing as if listening to the conversation contained in the text. An outside voice introduces the reported speech in English, stating that it is an eager Tanzanian speaking. Being the official voice of Nationalism it speaks the official formal language, namely English. The Tanzanian reports a personal opinion on the use of condoms and does it using Kiswahili, the second official language in Tanzania. Language choice and connected script are an identity-oriented choice. A ‘real’ Tanzanian would speak and write Kiswahili and not English.

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b. When observing interference and calques in writing, mixing multigraphism must be attributed to a natural tendency of interlanguages to fluctuate and regularize sub-standard norms. The same phenomenology holds true in writing fluctuations, offering the researcher interesting hints in observing a writer coping with a writing system and sometimes a language he acquires. When working in large communities of writers where no common cultural or language patterns group them within a single language community, sub-standard variation in writing may become a shared norm. In this sense a widespread use of Latin script in Arabic countries has led writers of public forms of writing, such as advertisements, road signs and generic signposts along the road, use international words, (which we would define as loans) choosing the Latin script. The choice of letters as a correspondence to foreign language sounds is strongly influenced by the relation between language one (Arabic) and writing one (Arabic script) as it is in the following case where the first part of the word ‘Alitalia’, on an advertisement leaflet has been interpreted as the definite article in Arabic which is normally transcribed as <’al>:

37
38
39

(الإيطالي) AL’ITALIA

40

Systematic interference is offered as an influence of L1 and W1 to L2 writing when a high prestige model constantly influences the writer. The selection of

1 missionary writing for African languages is one of the best examples of the
 2 interference caused by the relation between L1 and W1 of the writer. When they
 3 started describing African languages during the 16th and 17th centuries CE, they
 4 replicated the model they had as a matrix from their mother tongue (Turchetta
 5 2009). As a consequence, missionaries having French, rather than English or
 6 Portuguese as their mother tongue, followed the interface rules between writing
 7 and speaking in their own language. In this kind of interference among languages
 8 and writings, self-oriented interference gives the writer's identification but does
 9 not show any act of identity in terms of the symbolic meaning of signs selected.

	[u]	[i]	[ʊ]	[ʃ]	[z]	[l]	[ɲ]	[tʃ]	[dʒ]	[s]
English	u	i/e	u/o	sh	zh/z	ny	ny/ng	ch	j	s
French	ou	e	o	ch/tsh	g/j	ny/n/n	ny/ñ	tj/tch	dj	ss
Portuguese	u	i	u	sh/x	zh/xj/jh	ny/ng	ng'/ñ	c/ch	j/dj	s/c

17 Lastly, we wish to offer some widespread and well known cases of interference
 18 in writing mixing. Some famous Italian words dealing with Italian drinks and
 19 dishes are written all around the world following the rules English has in
 20 English writing. These internationally transcribed words then follow a more diffused
 21 pattern, which is the one of an international convention oriented toward English
 22 rather than respecting the Italian norm.

23 Therefore, Italian *spaghetti* becomes <spageti> and Italian *cappuccino* becomes
 24 <capuchino>, where It. <gh> [g] becomes <g> and It. <cci> [tʃ:i] becomes <chi>.

27 6 Some final remarks

30 Writing systems are constantly influenced by the writers' competence in different
 31 writing systems and their ability to mix them. Writing standards are more a model
 32 of reference than an eradicated and stable skill in writers; reference to a model
 33 is variable and due to the prestige of the latter and the competence of the writer
 34 when the writing system is not that of their first language. Fluency and variation
 35 are clearly visible in writing interference among writing codes in multilingual
 36 and multicultural contexts. All writing codes undergo interference processes
 37 when used by bilingual or multilingual societies; variation in writing is stronger
 38 where no identity-oriented influences are there such as there is in language
 39 communities.

1 Communities of practice in multilingual contexts foster polymorphism and
2 variation in writing.

3 In multilingual contexts, communication codes either in speech and writing
4 overflow: When writing systems fluctuate in different social and cultural contexts,
5 writers who share common codes are regarded as social groups sharing common
6 practices rather than speakers belonging to single language communities.

7 When observing written codes within a single community there is a need to
8 consider the choice of written signs and techniques as strictly related to the
9 symbolic meaning and the cultural knowledge of writers. A writer's identity
10 is constantly underlined and confirmed towards the relationship with a reader
11 in promoting and confirming his cultural identity. It is the only case where we
12 can assume a writing system or a switching towards it as a culturally oriented
13 choice.

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