1. OVERVIEW

- Laryngeal Realism (Iversen-Salmions 1995, Honeybone 2002, 2005; Cyran 2014; etc.) classifies the languages with a two-way laryngeal system into two categories, according to the markedness of the [voice] or the [spread glottis] feature:
  a) Aspiration languages: voiced obstruent only in interonsonant position; Germanic, Chinese, etc.
  b) Voice languages: obstruents may have actual voice; Slavic, Romance, Hungarian, etc.

- The case of Italian:
  a) It is a voice language, like other Romance languages (cf. Krämer 2009), but apparently, RVA is defective in Italian, and voiceless stops are mildly aspirated.
  b) Diachronically the only obstruent cluster in Italian was /CVC/; RVA seems to work in /VC/, e.g. p[aj]li, [a]t[d]omo “disdain”, [ka]bor “snob”, [di] “three”, etc.
  c) However, adjacent obstruents in loanwords tend to preserve their voice values.
  d) Hypothesis: s-voicing in /VC/-clusters is not RVA in synchrony.

2. CORPORA

2.1 The analysis of Italian foreign accent:
- Fieldwork in three cities of Italy (Gorizia, Florence, Naples), with 68 informants.
- Broadly 20 hours of direct and indirect voice recordings “on the street”.
- Speech in 4 foreign languages (English, French, German, Spanish), with sample sentences.
- Results: despite the dialectal differences, we can establish “a common Italian foreign accent”.

2.2 Loanword experiments:
- Recordings in soundproof studios (Hungarian Research Institute for Linguistics & the SNS of Pisa).
- Focussed on consonant clusters (19 sample words with 3, target words, repeated 5 times).
- With the participation of 15 Italian informants (from Veneto, Trentino, Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy, Tuscany, Lazio, Campania, Apulia, Calabria and Sardinia).

3. ITALIAN AS A VOICE LANGUAGE WITHOUT RVA

3.1 Italian as a voice language:
- The phonetic shape of voiced obstruents is the same as in other languages of the Romance family.
- Voiced obstruents have a long vowel lead even in non-intonosyllabic and in word initial position.
- Voice is distinctive: obstruents are in phonological opposition according to [voice].
- The aspiration of the voiceless obstruents is possible and frequent (especially in certain dialectal regions, such as in Tuscany and in Calabria), but voiceless aspirated obstruents are in opposition with voiced unaspirated ones, so the marked laryngeal feature is still [voice].

3.2 The absence of RVA in Italian:
- Adjacent obstruents tend to preserve their original voice value in recent loanwords (see Chart 1).
- Only the sibilants may get voice before voiced consonants in Italian, but their voice markings in recent loanwords (see Chart 2).
- Spectrograms and wave forms clearly show that between voiced and voiceless obstruents there must not necessarily be any epenthetic vowel (schwa), and the segments can follow each other even with different voice values (see Praat Picture 1 for D+T and Praat Picture 2 for T+D).
- However, the first stop is often replaced, which may cause a schwa-epenthesis.

![Praat Picture 1: Wave form and spectrogram of the Italian pronunciation of vodka (25-year-old female informant from Emilia-Romagna)](image1)

![Praat Picture 2: Wave form and spectrogram of the Italian pronunciation of backslash (16-year-old male informant from Calabria)](image2)

4. STATISTICS

4.1. Obstruct clusters in the corpus apart from /AC/:
- Obstruct clusters: 1662 occurrences in total
  - No RVA: 1091 occurrences
  - RVA: 256 occurrences
  - Progressive devoicing: 132 occurrences
  - Consonant-deletion from cluster: 164 occurrences
- Additional information:
  - Other solutions: 17 metatheses, 2 progressive voiceings
  - Schwa-epenthesis between the two obstruents: 257 occurrences only (15% of the data)

4.2. Differences between the attitude of northern and southern informants:
- Stevens & Hajek (2010) and Nodari (2015) claim that /p, t, k/ are moderately aspirated in all varieties of spoken Italian, and heavily aspirated in Calabrese dialects.
- In the corpus mild aspiration has been detected in the case of /p, t, k/, which falls between the standard values of aspiration established for classical voice languages and classical aspiration languages:
  - Aspiration mean of [p]: 24.046 ms
  - Aspiration mean of [t]: 27.465 ms
  - Aspiration mean of [k]: 46.123 ms

5. PHONOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

- Italians strikingly tend to avoid RVA in obstruent clusters which can be interpreted as a conservative phonological tendency in synchrony: the aim in the conservation of the input values, even if it require insertion processes (such as schwa-epenthesis).
- Dilemma: Is Italian a true voice language with inactive voice and aspiration? Are there other theoretical options to solve this situation?
- From a Laryngeal Relativism approach, if there is no true laryngeal activity in Italian phonology, it may be seen as an h-system, with virtually no aspiration in the fortes series (see Balogné Bercés & Huszthy 2017).

REFERENCES