



# “(W)Rapping” Traditions into Modernity: The Negotiation of Emilian and Esperanto Identities in YouTube Hip-Hop Songs

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SPECIAL COLLECTION:  
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## ABSTRACT

This study stems from a doctoral research project which assesses attitudes and language use comparatively across Emilian and Esperanto speakers. The latter was chosen as a minoritized language whose vitality and number of L1 speakers is steadily increasing, and its insights may therefore be used to inform revitalization efforts for other languages at risk, such as Emilian. Selecting a rap song in Emilian and one in Esperanto, both uploaded by the artists on YouTube, the analysis is underpinned by considerations around the subversive power of hip-hop as a tool to resist normative narratives of what it means to be a speaker of the language. An integration of three different theoretical tools is applied to the analysis of the lyrics to unravel and expose how values and attitudes are negotiated in the construction of identity for the artists. The discussion is informed by relevant literature on digital polylinguaging broadly and on hyperlocal language revalorization more narrowly. Amplified by the resistance afforded by hip-hop discourse, the comparative element accomplishes a twofold objective in revealing shared struggles that both artists experience in being speakers of minoritized languages and bringing to the fore a reinvented image for both Esperanto and Emilian speakers. Finally, the results shed some much-needed light on how these languages are being used as part of modern communicative functions and how, in turn, the digital space is allowing their speakers to propagate new stories to overturn the status quo.

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The advent of the digital space as a platform accessible to many has brought about opportunities for minoritized languages to claim a new domain (Soria et al. 73; Belmar and Glass 5; Moring 34; Cunliffe and Herring 131). This is particularly significant for the so-called endangered languages of the world, for which a new domain of use can make a difference to the survival of the language. In this article, I analyse the language used in the lyrics of two hip-hop songs uploaded by the artists on YouTube, one sung in the Emilian variety spoken in the province of Modena, Italy (henceforth Modenese), titled “Modena Gang”, and one in Esperanto, titled “Samideano”. The aim is to capture how the identity of the artist as a member of the speech community is negotiated in the lyrics and how the function of rap music fulfils the main communicative objectives of the songs.

By comparing a so-called planned language, Esperanto, with an ethnic language such as Emilian, I aim to identify some of the shared struggles that speakers of both languages experience. With a focus on the ways in which the artists negotiate these struggles to reclaim a different identity for themselves, the comparative element allows me to bring together two seemingly different speech communities. As well as in their origins, Emilian and Esperanto also differ in their level of maintenance, with the latter steadily gaining speakers while the former is increasingly losing them. Both speech communities, however, endure prejudice and social stigma. Emilian is often referred to as an uneducated variety of Italian, whereas Esperanto is considered a “non-language” by laypeople and scholars alike (cf. “contested languages” in Tamburelli and Tosco). As agents in the negotiation of their identity, the artists make use of rap discourse to overcome these prejudices, and through the comparative elements the findings “become more surprising and worthy of explanation [...] than [either case study] would be in isolation” (Seawright 4).

For this reason, my analysis is of a comparative nature and seeks to provide a broad and holistic view of how the artists resist prejudice and reinvent their identity in the face of struggles. Three theoretical tools are adopted to unpack the lyrics and to reveal a multidimensional picture of the ways in which artists make use of rap discourse, the digital space, and language to tell their story. This is done by drawing on my personal experience of being a fellow member of the communities and in a way that does not make use of abstraction to draw generalizations across the communities. Instead, I use descriptive commentary, intuition, sensibility and reflexivity to provide a situated interpretation of the songs which considers identity as fluid and emerging (see Cunliffe for a compelling discussion of human situatedness as effective theorization).

The article is organized as follows: I lay the foundations by discussing the history and discursive power of hip-hop as a music genre in 1.1. I then move on to provide an overview of the main similarities and differences observable across the two speech communities in section 2 where I also discuss the recent developments around language practices in Italy (2.1) and the key role played by top-down language policies for Esperanto (2.2). The data and methodology are outlined in section 3 and give way to the presentation of the theoretical framework adopted in the analysis in section 4. This is followed by the analysis (5) and conclusion (6).

## 1.1 HIP-HOP DISCOURSE

The overarching research project within which this study sits comprises three different methods of data collection to observe language attitudes and practices at the level of the perception of language, the representation of language, and lived language (this is based on Lefebvre’s spatial triad and is outlined in detail in Hampton). According to this model, the analysis presented in this article focuses on the representational dimension by providing an interpretation of how the identities of the artists, as speakers of Emilian and Esperanto respectively, are negotiated in the lyrics of the two hip-hop songs under analysis. The fact that these songs belong to the genre of hip-hop is key to the unpacking of my analysis. This is because rappers engage in their music to tell true stories which are tied to their local environment as a form of protest (Stuckey 25).

Rap music traces its origins to African American music and is characterized by “stock lyrical topics and tropes shared by performers and understood by both musicians and their audiences, many of which makes sense only in the context of a given genre” (Stoia et al. 332). Due to racial politics, in the 1980s musicians started exploiting the resistive nature of hip-hop culture to

explicitly challenge institutions such as the police and government, giving rise to the dangerous and violent image that this genre is popularly known for (Stoia et al. 333). To be recognized as rap artists, musicians are expected to perform authentically through an autobiographical style, which is done as a form of acting in what Quinn identifies as two particular archetype characters, namely, “the ‘badman’ and the pimp/trickster” (qtd in Stoia et al. 335).

Stuckey (16–17) provides a historical background on rap music as a medium for social resistance and criticism and how hip-hop arrived in Europe at the end of the 1980s. The author conducted interviews with local hip-hop artists in the territory of South Tyrol, where a local variety of Austro-Bavarian is spoken, and analysed data thematically. One of the comments that is particularly telling came from an artist called Challack, who resists the idea that minoritized languages are used just for jokes and that they are therefore spoken by less intellectually capable people (Stuckey 23). In line with Dyson (xiv), Stuckey (24) analyses Challack’s comment to reveal how “a vernacular may inherently carry a message of subtle protest against the standard, and perhaps dominant, society” and how, in turn, “using vernaculars in rap also enhances hip-hop’s subversive and resistant character”. In other words, the use of the regional language indexes a specific type of language ideology which goes against that status quo and is in itself part of the speaker’s language policy (Leone-Pizzighella 6; see also Spolsky) which is performed as social action in the form of discourse.

The conscious recognition that hip-hop artists attribute to rap music as a politicized form of protest and resistance will partly inform my analysis in section 5.1. What follows is an overview of how speakers make use of their linguistic repertoire in Italy both at the local and higher level to provide some of the contextual background driving my interpretation in the Emilian context. Likewise, the analysis of the song in Esperanto will be partially informed by the political context within which the language was created, as explained in section 2.2.

## 2 AN OVERVIEW OF EMILIAN AND ESPERANTO

This study is part of a broader research project which compares language attitudes and practices of language maintenance in the speech communities of Esperanto and Emilian. The Modenese variety of Emilian<sup>1</sup> was chosen because it was the main language I grew up listening to in my childhood, thus placing my positionality at the core of the research design and of the interpretation of data. Emilian is a Gallo-Italic language family historically spoken in the geographical area roughly corresponding to the western side of the modern Italian administrative region of Emilia Romagna (Hajek 271). As a language family that developed directly from Latin (as did all other so-called dialects of Italy), Emilian can be considered a sister of Italian, though lacking official status, a standard orthography and not being taught in schools (Foresti 14). Despite being commonly known as *dialetto* (Italian for “dialect”), Emilian is not a regional variety of Italian but rather the heritage language whose speech community has historically occupied this area of Italy (Foresti ch. 1).

Esperanto was selected as a fellow minoritized language which seemingly boasts an increasing level of vitality and is therefore in stark contrast with Emilian. This is despite Esperanto being a so-called constructed language, the existence of whose global community depends entirely on people’s voluntariness (Kimura 168). Esperanto is thought to have up to two million L2 speakers worldwide and around one thousand L1 speakers (Gobbo, “Ideology” 252).<sup>2</sup> Conversely, the vitality of Emilian has never been assessed and it is only assumed to be endangered (see, for example, Ethnologue “Emilian”). The trend is partly due to the shift towards Italian which has been taking place over the past sixty years and has seen the confinement of the use of Emilian to the most familial of domains (Tufi 146). This sociolinguistic phenomenon is known as *dilalia* (Berruto 497) and differs from diglossia insofar as both languages are used in these less formal domains.

It is plausible to assume that competition with Italian (here intended in all its diatopic variation) even in homes and on the streets is now rendering Emilian virtually redundant. An analysis of a rap song on what it means to be a speaker of Emilian can therefore shed light on some of the

<sup>1</sup> It is common practice in the Italian context for speakers to refer to their regional varieties by using names associated with the toponyms of towns, areas and cities.

<sup>2</sup> L2 speakers are those who have learned a language as their second language. L1 speakers are those who acquired the language during childhood.

attitudes that are embodied in the community. Likewise, an analysis of a song in a minoritized language such as Esperanto, whose vitality is increasing over time, can bring to the fore some of the struggles experienced as a member of the community. The comparison brings together two seemingly distant speech communities through the subversive and resistive means of rap to show that all is not lost in the Emilian context and that all that glitters is not gold for Esperanto speakers.

## 2.1 THE HYPERLOCAL PRACTICES OF RESISTANCE IN THE POLYLANGUAGING OF ITALY

To understand the context within which the song “Modena Gang” is to be analysed, it is important to take a step back and look at the wider sociolinguistic dynamics at play. In the previous section I introduced Berruto’s concept of *dilalia* and briefly discussed how Emilian is now thought to be solely spoken within the domestic walls and in the most informal of social contexts alongside the use of Italian. While we do not have studies that focus on the current situation in Emilia Romagna, papers such as Alfonzetti can provide insight into what is happening in the rest of the Italian territory where other Romance languages are spoken alongside the national language in a similar context to Emilian. Alfonzetti conducted a mixed-method study to observe the use of Sicilian among young speakers, and concluded that the language serves an identity-making function for its speakers in a fashion that resembles what Vandekerckhove and Britain define as “functional expansion” (5) in so far as it widens the functions the language fulfils in the community.

According to Alfonzetti’s findings, Sicilian youths make use of their regional language alongside Italian and other languages to index a multifaceted identity which is simultaneously regional, national and global (436). This specific interpretation of the linguistic practices of youngsters in Sicily is connected to the concepts of *polylinguaging*, *translinguaging* and *metrolingualism* among others (Pennycook 201). While they may differ slightly in their lexical appearance, these terms share the core theoretical assumption of accounting for the complexity of the sociolinguistic dynamics within which languages are currently spoken as a result of mobility.

Furthermore, Alfonzetti noted how Sicilian is used as part of polylinguaging as a phenomenon somewhat unbeknown to the speakers (436), who acquire specific fragments of the language through their membership of peer groups (441). This is in line with other studies conducted in Europe where the revival of local languages is increasingly gaining popularity as part of cultural practices “such as music, theatre, cartoons and above all in computer-mediated communication mainly (but not exclusively) among younger speakers” (437). This renewed interest may suggest a glimmer of hope in what would otherwise be a bleak future for these languages. However, the author argues that this level of fragmented polylinguaging is not sufficient as a single means of language maintenance (453–4), and instead a more localized and consolidated effort needs to be in place to ensure the survival of individual regional languages.

It is often the case that the revitalization of the regional languages of Italy finds itself caught up in political discourse, where it is instrumentalized as a populist tactic (Perrino 3). Fortunately, not all actions towards the promotion of the use of regional languages at the local level are of a political nature. There are indeed local actors who engage in practices of revitalization and awareness as a form of activism. Leone-Pizzighella (69–91), for example, analyses local activism in the context of the Venetan language. In the author’s study, data were collected from local activists who use the hyperlocal discourse of food to link the function of indexing provenance, identity and ideal lifestyle that people already associate with local culinary traditions to the regional language (73). Crucially, these local actors operate in a way that makes the “reclaimed language accessible to people who aren’t necessarily interested in language revitalization *per se* [by] [...] (1) situat[ing] this reclaimed language in a participatory medium and (2) [...] us[ing] this medium to tell stories that their listeners can identify with” (Leone-Pizzighella 84). This is something that can be arguably achieved and facilitated through the means of rap music, as I aim to demonstrate in section 5.

## 2.2 THE ESPERANTO MANIFESTO

As mentioned in section 1, Esperanto is known as a so-called constructed language by virtue of its having been created by a Polish ophthalmologist named Zamenhof in 1887 (Korjenkov ch. 3). However, since its conception the language has been gaining an increasing number of

speakers all over the world, to the point that it is now recognized as a fully fledged language (Stria, “Legitimacy” 148). Based on principles such as the existence of a speech community (Stria, “Esperanto” 40), the alignment with a set of features that are believed to characterize human language (33), together with its survival on the basis of voluntariness, a sense of identity, and little intergenerational transmission, Esperanto can be classified as a minoritized language in the same way as Welsh, Galician and Emilian (Kimura).

Given its relative success in being spoken by millions of people globally, scholars such as Gobbo go so far as to declare it the “most relevant International Auxiliary Language (IAL) in history” (“Ideology” 248). While going into the merits of this claim is beyond the remit of this article, it is nonetheless a testament to the vitality of the language and its community. Moving away from the established labelling of the collectiveness of speakers as a “speech community”,<sup>3</sup> Gobbo defines it as a “community of practice” which “in virtue of a shared practice [...] not only builds a shared experience among the group members but also shares a commitment to understand the experience itself” (“Ideology” 248).

The shared commitment to understanding the experience is partly informed by the principles set out in the Manifesto of Rauma, which attempted to spell out the essence of the Esperanto culture as “a vehicle for a sense of belonging” (Gobbo, “Ideology” 261). The interpretation of the Manifesto saw the emergence of a split in the community, whereby some members were more focused on seeing the language achieve its status as the global second language (this achievement is known as the “final victory”), while others engaged in the creation of an Esperanto culture (Gobbo, “Ideology” 262). This dichotomized vision of the community was finally rejected in 2012 by the then-younger generation of Esperanto speakers who proclaimed themselves to be invested in both objectives (262). The ideological clash in the Esperanto community and the idea of the final victory will be revisited in section 5 to inform my analysis of the song “Samideano”.<sup>4</sup> In the following section I provide a brief outline of how data were selected and collected.

### 3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

As discussed in section 1, this study sits within a larger project which compares Esperanto and Emilian by observing attitudes from three different perspectives. The scope of this study is to observe attitudes from the level of representation by analysing data that come from and are produced by members of the community. For this task, I decided to use so-called found data, that is, data that already exist and that were created for a different purpose than that of the research (Baljekar 12). This decision allowed me to collect data that were produced independently from my research interests, and therefore somewhat limits the input of my positionality on the creation of the data.

YouTube is an increasingly popular platform for entertainment and offers opportunities for young artists to reach million of viewers and ultimately fame. It is therefore an ideal place to find songs sung in the two languages, as it provides a window on to the world’s biggest stage. After searching for “Esperanto rap” and “rap modenese” (“Modenese rap”) on YouTube, two suitable songs were found for the former and three for the latter. “Samideano” (by Igor Wasilewski, alias Eterne Rima) was chosen over the other song, “Esperanto-Senegal” by Boozy Bouzot, because of its title (i.e., because it made reference to the membership label of the Esperantist community). Likewise, “Modena Gang” (by Tobia Poppi, alias Tob1) was selected instead of the artist’s other songs “Giaroun” and “Ghirlandeina” because of its mention of the Modenese community in the title.

I purchased Igor’s album from the label’s website and downloaded it on to my device, through which I was able to access the lyrics. The transcription of “Samideano”<sup>5</sup> reflects the exact structure of stanzas and verses and spelling as provided by the artist when purchasing his

<sup>3</sup> For example, Kerswill, who defines it by the existence of an “agreement on the ‘social meaning’ of various linguistic parameters” (24).

<sup>4</sup> This will be done as a way to explain and contextualize the data without endorsing Esperantist ideologies of any kind or taking them as fact.

<sup>5</sup> I was not able to reach the artist for their authorization to publish the full lyrics of “Samideano”. For this reason, I am only including the parts of the lyrics used for the analysis. The full lyrics can be accessed by purchasing the album on the artist’s website.



music. As for “Modena Gang”, the music video has subtitles embedded which I used to create the transcription of the lyrics (see Appendix).<sup>6</sup> This variety of Emilian does not have a standard orthography and can therefore be written freely by its users. I decided to be faithful to Tobi1’s choices and kept the lyrics as they appear in the music video, including spelling inconsistencies and grammatical incongruences.<sup>7</sup> Given my basic competence in Esperanto and my more advanced knowledge of Emilian, I was able to translate both songs into English. After looking at the lyrics I selected three theoretical tools to help me unravel the main meaning-making processes of interest, as described in the next section.

## 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As both songs are available on YouTube, the digital space afforded by the platform provides opportunities for the artists and their languages to reach a wider global audience. I take inspiration from studies conducted in similar contexts, such as [Cutler and Røyneland](#), [Brunstad et al.](#), [Røyneland and Jensen](#), [Opsahl and Røyneland](#) in multilingual Norway, [Moriarty](#) in Irish classrooms, [Ridanpää and Pasanen](#) in the Inari Sami community, and [Simeziane](#) on Roma rap in Hungary to analyse how the issue of language attitudes interacts with the political nature of rap music to tell stories of identities and belonging.

In particular, I follow a similar approach to Røyneland around the negotiation of Norwegian language and identity in hip-hop songs published on YouTube. Underpinned by the principles of emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality and partialness, Røyneland analyses the heteroglossic use of language together with metapragmatic commentary. The analysis brings to the fore the tension between the status quo (a “pure” Norwegian identity through the use of standard language) and the identity embodied by the artist, and how the latter is able “to assert the validity of identities that are multiple and mixed” (Røyneland 160). Due to a lack of number and variety in the comments left by users for each song, I could not include these in my analysis. However, I contacted Tobi1 and spoke to him on a number of occasions about my project and his music.<sup>8</sup> These interactions provide a layer of context which I will be drawing from to inform my analysis of “Modena Gang”.

In the spirit of open research, I now go on to explain how I came to select the three theoretical concepts used to analyse the two songs. As a first step, some time was spent reading the transcripts of the songs in an iterative fashion so that I could focus solely on one aspect of the language each time. This process allowed me to make sense of the songs and create a complete picture of the semiotic elements that I was picking up on. In the second stage I concentrated on the linguistic features that seemed more obvious and through which connections within and across songs were able to be brought to the fore. At this point, the main meaning-making processes identified were labelled as *enregisterment*, *narrative archetypes* and *metalinguistic commentary*. It is through these theoretical concepts that my interpretation of the songs was developed. Each of these tools is an integral part of the overall analysis, as they uniquely contribute by accounting for some of the complexities enacted by the artists and, in turn, are informed by the sociolinguistic contexts that permeate the communities.

### 4.1 ENREGISTERMENT

Within the theoretical framework of *indexicality* – according to which a sign (for example a word, a facial expression, or an item of clothing) takes on a socially recognized meaning by virtue of co-occurring with it ([Johnstone](#), “Enregisterment” 632) – enregisterment can be defined as the “processes and practices whereby performable signs become recognized (and regrouped) as belonging to distinct, differentially valorized semiotic registers by a population” (Agha, qtd in [Johnstone](#), “Enregisterment” 633). The term enregisterment derives from its basic root word *register* which, in turn, means “a set of linguistic forms linked with and constitutive of a context” ([Johnstone](#), “Enregisterment” 633). As explained by Johnstone, enregisterment

<sup>6</sup> Written authorization to publish the lyrics of “Modena Gang” was sought and received directly from the artist.

<sup>7</sup> Here referring to the inconsistencies between what is said in the song (spoken speech) and the subtitles, for example the omission of the subject clitic in the subtitles even when pronounced in the song.

<sup>8</sup> I had also planned on interviewing him and Igor as part of this study, but due to personal circumstances, Tobi1 was unable to commit to an interview during my doctoral project.

is a process that involves an object being linked to a specific meaning by a group of people and is informed by beliefs of ideological, interactional and historical nature (“Enregisterment” 634–41).

As thoroughly discussed in Johnstone (*Pittsburghese*, 1–241), meaning is situated and therefore context-dependent. Part of this context, however, is implicit in the songs, and for enregisterment to be unpacked it requires an analyst who can make the assumed explicit via pre-existing knowledge shared with the communities. As someone who grew up in the area of Modena and is a user of the local variety of Emilian, I will be making use of my experience of being a fellow member of Tob1’s community to achieve this for “Modena Gang”. Likewise, as someone who has been learning, teaching and socializing with fellow Esperanto speakers, my analysis of “Samideano” will draw from both experience and academic readings.

I use the concept of enregisterment in my analysis to look for elements of this process to help me reveal the type of identity performed by the artists in each song. This means that images, words, phrases and even whole sentences are identified in the lyrics and their videos as objects of enregisterment to reveal the meaning attributed to them by the artists. Crucially, this will in turn help me unearth some of the underpinning beliefs and attitudes in the texts. To understand whether these beliefs are resisted or simply reproduced, I further analyse the narrative structure of the songs.

## 4.2 NARRATIVE ARCHETYPES

Due to the applied linguistic nature of this study, it might be natural to instantly think of narratives as defined in Labov and Waletzky as “any sequence of clauses which contains at least one temporal juncture” (28). While this definition is used in similar narrative archetype analyses (such as Sanders and van Krieken 7), in this article I deploy narrative analysis as conceptualized within Jungian archetype theory, according to which archetypes are patterns and images that act as templates while informing our worldview. They are “elemental forces that play a vital role in the creation of the world and of the human mind itself” (Tsai 649). Narrative archetypes feed on the “human inclination to communicate via stories” (Sanders and van Krieken 1), they reside in our “collective unconsciousness” (2), and through repetition they allow people to recognize classic story structures and form an opinion on the characters (Green et al. 100).

Such is the repeated exposure to these patterns that they become “story-schemas [...] that help to guide interpretations and expectations of characters, their narrative roles, and what they are likely to do over the course of the story” (Green et al. 100). As explained by Sanders and van Krieken, “archetypes can be events, such [as] birth and initiation, *figures*, such as the hero and the trickster, or *motifs*, such as the apocalypse and the deluge” (2) [italics in original]. Although thought to be universal, narrative archetypes are culturally reinforced, meaning that their expression may differ across cultures. An example of this was mentioned in section 1.1 where I cited the main archetypal roles performed in rap discourse.

While archetypes are present in stories as the underlying template informing the interpretation of events, they are not to be confused with the practice of storytelling. Instead, “storytellers draw on the language, signs and symbols of their culture to provide meaning through stories” (Kelsey 332). Given their universality, narrative archetypes can be used to analyse a multitude of texts, from branding in marketing (Tsai), to future scenarios (Lee), fiction (Green et al.), and even music (Almén). In this article I follow Kelsey’s approach and scrutinize the language in the lyrics of “Samideano” and “Modena Gang” to reveal the *what* and *how* of narrative (332), with the ultimate goal of untangling how the artists use enregisterment to put their main message across. In other words, by revealing the narrative archetypes underpinning the two songs I aim to bring to the fore the identity roles performed by the artists and how this is accomplished through enregisterment.

## 4.3 METALINGUISTIC COMMENTARY

As a third analytical tool in this article, I finally focus on the metalinguistic commentary offered in the lyrics. Rønneberg defines metalinguistic comments as “language about language, where evaluations of correctness and purity, language policing, legitimacy and authenticity, and

expressions of connections between language use and identity, are explicitly or implicitly made” (153). Jaworski et al. argue that “metalanguage can work at an ideological level, and influence people’s actions and priorities in a wide range of ways, some clearly visible and others much less so” (3). “Metalanguage matters to sociolinguistics” because “it is in the interplay between usage and social evaluation that much of the social ‘work’ of language – including pressures towards social integration and division, and the policing of social boundaries generally – is done” (3).

Although brief, the analysis that I draw from the few excerpts available in the songs will contribute to the overall interpretation of the data by further corroborating the analytical considerations discussed around narrative archetypes and enregisterment. These are important comments that can offer an insight into some of the language attitudes resisted and perpetuated by the artists, what problems they are trying to fix, and what social function the language has in relation to their identity. In summary, through my analyses I aim to examine the different identities performed by the artists. Enregisterment is used as tool to uncover the identities that are being indexed through language (the *who*), narrative archetypes help depict the context within which these identities are performed (the *what*, *where* and *why*), while metalinguistic commentary adds an evaluative quality to reveal the attitudes and beliefs underpinning the songs (the *how*).

## 5 ANALYSIS: SITTING ON THE SAME BENCH WITH GRANDAD IN PIAZZA DUOMO

This analysis focuses on the semiotics of rapping as a means to communicate the artists’ story and on interpreting the story narrated in the lyrics. The first section focuses on rapping as a communicative practice which contributes to the creation of meaning in the songs, while the second part (sections 5.2 and 5.3) is dedicated to the analysis of the lyrics in terms of their structure and sociolinguistic content. It is here that the three theoretical tools will be combined to depict a holistic picture of who, what and how both artists are negotiating their identity. As mentioned previously, the analysis is broad and comparative, rather than in-depth and mono-dimensional.

### 5.1 RAPPING IN SOLIDARITY AND AT DISTANCE

Both “Samideano” and “Modena Gang” are marketed as either hip-hop or rap music by their respective artists. The album *Eterne Rima* which includes “Samideano” is labelled as rap and hip-hop on the author’s website, whereas “Modena Gang” is described as “Modenese rap” as part of its title on YouTube. “Samideano” presents itself as a typical hip-hop song which starts with a sung rhyming chorus, shifts to rapped verses in rhyme (AA, BB, BCB, and other patterns), and directly puts the artist in a dialogue with the listener. The use of the first person as part of the narration is one of the main features of rap music, as it culturally originates in the practice of storytelling (Keyes 24).

In this section I demonstrate how first-person narration is used in “Modena Gang” and “Samideano” together with some of the main tropes of rap music. I do this by drawing parallels across the two songs and highlighting contrasts that underpin the main performative strategies in the lyrics. This is not done with the intention of providing an in-depth analysis of the text. Instead, I focus on the forms of dialogue, as in conversation, created by the artists at a higher level to reveal how distance and solidarity in their relationship with the audience are enacted. A more detailed analysis of linguistic choices will follow in sections 5.2 and 5.3 to build on the analysis presented here.

“Modena Gang” exhibits several features of rap discourse. For example, Tobi1 refers to himself in the first person, uses swear words and other key words such as “gang” and “friends” (the latter both in Emilian and English), makes a reference to free-styling, and reproduces typical short sentences such as “Yeah, yeah I’m back”, “Come on” and “So, listen carefully”. These short sentences fulfil a multitude of functions including establishing a dialogue with the listener and allowing the artist to position himself to tell his story.

In the first verse, Tobi1 creates an atmosphere of anticipation and excitement which is construed as pre-existing the song in his dialogue with his friend, Cappi, and the audience (cf. Figure 1). The author presents himself as someone whose return had been requested all the



way from the Emilian-Tuscan border (i.e., Sestola)<sup>9</sup> and whose new song is going to exceed people's expectations. Cappi and Tobì1 are about to give the listeners what they were waiting for (i.e., a song in Emilian) by bringing balance to the musical repertoire of the city, which is seemingly under the influence of trap music.<sup>10</sup>

	MODENESE EMILIAN	ENGLISH
1	Sè, sè, a sun turnè	Yeah, yeah, I'm back
2	Mo sè sta chiet, mo sè dai	Yeah, calm down, yeah come on
3	Oh Cappi... mo second te...	Hey Cappi... what do you reckon...
4	Gl'in prount chelor??	Are they ready, this lot??
5	DAI	COME ON
6	Cappi prepèra la ciclo ch'ag e di putein	Cappi get the bike ready coz there are some kids
7	Inzéma al tricilo ch'i fan trap	On the tricycle who're playing trap
8	Me sun turnè perché i'm an ciamè cun la sirena	I'm back because they called me with the siren
9	Dall'altopiano Sestola	From the upland Sestola
10	E tot i ragaz ed Modena i in chè c'aspeten	And all the kids of Modena are here waiting
11	Na traza in dialet et voilà	For a track in dialect and voilà
12	Ma te t'al se che chè, nella città,	But you know that here, <i>in the city</i> [ITA],
13	LA QUALITA' LA PORTA TOBÌ1	IT'S TOBÌ1 WHO BRINGS THE QUALITY [ITA]

Figure 1 "Modena Gang", first verse.

The use of the second-person singular when addressing the listener is expected in rap music, as it recreates the conversational setting of a dialogue. This is also evidenced in "Samideano" (cf. Figure 2), where the dialogue is between the artist and the listener, who is assumed to be a fellow Esperantist ("samideano" meaning comrade but more literally member of the like-minded people group).<sup>11</sup> Through a series of rhetorical questions in the chorus, Igor wonders if the listener is waiting for Esperanto to win (cf. the "final victory" in section 2.2) and therefore puts himself in a dynamic of solidarity whereby both artist and listener are pondering the future of Esperanto. The rhythm is slow, the melody is not very complex, and the dialogue is presented as an internal thought process that reflects on his experience of what it means to live as an Esperantist.

Samideano		
	ESPERANTO	ENGLISH
1	Samideano, ĉu vi atendas ĝis la fina venko?	Comrade, are you waiting until the final victory?
2	Samideano, ni ĉiuj sidas sur la sama benko	Comrade, we're all sitting on the same bench
3	Samideano, ĉu vi laboras por pli bona mondo?	Comrade, are you working for a better world?
4	Samideano, kion signifas familia rondo?	Comrade, what does family circle mean?

Figure 2 "Samideano" lyrics.

The dialogue created by Tobì1 differs quite substantially from that of "Samideano". The lyrics of "Modena Gang" contain imperatives which demand attention and allow Tobì1 to perform paternalistic acts towards the listener. While he refers to the gang as his friends, he is telling the listener that he does not care what they want, despite professing to have delivered on their expectation of realizing a new "banging" song. The relationship does not appear balanced, with Tobì1 welcoming the listener to join the gang as a friend and therefore as his equal while also acting with authority and superiority, ordering the listener to "give it a rest" and "listen carefully".

The visual content of the videos for each song provides support to this analysis. The video for "Samideano" is of Igor on his own, sitting on a bench, in a world of predominantly grey colours, slow movements and solitude (Figure 3), whereas the video for "Modena Gang" (Figure 4) is dynamic, busy with shots of Ghirlandina (the bell tower of the Duomo, the main cathedral in Modena) and drone footage of the city centre with people walking by (this was done to overcome the restrictions in place at the time due to the COVID pandemic).

<sup>9</sup> This is a very popular destination for skiing in this part of the region and one of the best-known and furthest of rural places in the province.

<sup>10</sup> A sub-genre of hip-hop characterized by synthesized drums which has its origins in the United States in the 1990s.

<sup>11</sup> Compare with the definitions of samideano and esperantisto provided in Koutny (229).



**Figure 3** “Samideano” video clip.



**Figure 4** “Modena Gang” video clips.

Igor’s strategy draws in the listener/viewer via a sense of empathy and solidarity, while Tob1’s video and music are seemingly centred around the theme of popularity. Both artists make use of symbolism in the landscape in their music videos. The bench on which Igor sits and which he mentions in the lyrics symbolizes solidarity and inner reflection, whereas the city centre shown in “Modena Gang” is a place for socializing and sharing ideas. In the following section I analyse the language in the lyrics in more detail to further elaborate on these initial considerations.

## 5.2 NARRATIVES OF REBIRTH AND QUEST

After discussing how the artists make use of dialogue to place themselves either on the same level as the listener (“Samideano”) or seemingly above them (“Modena Gang”), I now analyse which archetypal narrative is underpinning each song. As seen in section 4.2, archetypal narratives can be analysed to reveal the cognitive schemata which we unconsciously recognize to fill in the information between two or more events (Green et al. 100). Understanding what

archetypal narrative is at play in the two songs can provide further insights into the emotional framing within which the artists package their story. This is further corroborated with the help of enregisterment and metalinguistic comments in the latter part of this section.

Starting with “Samideano”, I have already discussed how this song resembles a process of inner reflection in which Igor is both alone (as mirrored in the music video) and in the company of the imaginary fellow Esperantist/s. To reveal the narrative structure of “Samideano”, the main events must first be identified. The song has a strong focus on the theme of final victory related to the ideological split which emerged following the Manifesto of Rauma and due to which a proportion of Esperantists (used here as defined by [Wood](#)) identified the activity of the community as being engaged with ensuring that Esperanto becomes the only international language of the world.

In this context, the final victory would ultimately work in synchrony with the wider aspirations of creating a fairer, more equal and more peaceful world supported by a global community of Esperantists. Reflecting on this, Igor speculates that Esperanto may have already won but that due to the ways in which people (fellow Esperantists presumably) have decided to act, this victory has not been reported, portrayed as such, nor communicated effectively (cf. 1:50–1:57 of the music video). This, Igor states, does not matter because he is content with the friends that he has been able to make via the use of Esperanto and, perhaps more importantly, because the world is unable to change no matter how hard one tries or even fights (cf. 2:02–2:15 of the music video).

Through the appreciation of the sociocultural context within which the idea of the final victory has come to exist, I feel confident in identifying it as one of the main events in Igor’s narrative. With the final victory standing as an ideal to pursue which is ideologically informed and imposed by peers, Igor’s decision to not partake in this action and instead settle with what he already has comes to resemble a narrative archetype of rebirth and transformation. This is because by making reference to the final victory, Igor is reflecting on the expectations assumed of Esperantists (see section 2.2), and by resisting them he is reinventing himself as a speaker interested in making connections rather than achieving ideological goals. Under this analysis, it is the inner reflection performed through the dialogue with the imaginary comrade that reveals itself as an act of rebirth.

By starting off his Esperanto journey, acting as what he understands a “true Esperantist” to be and pondering on the value of its final victory, Igor has made friends all over the world and realizes that he does not need to pursue this ideal to give purpose to his membership of the community. Instead, he finds it in the experience of making connections across the globe, and simply speaking the language – because he wants to. This rebirth is an act of rebellion against the prescriptive conceptualization of being an Esperantist and one of resistance in the face of the prejudice that he encounters when speaking Esperanto.

Even though subtle, the narrative structure of “Samideano” is relatively straightforward insofar as it is one narrative running through the lyrics. When analysing “Modena Gang”, I realized that the lyrics run across two parallels – or rather, two intertwined narratives. As explained above, the song opens with some typical language of hip-hop discourse through which the artist creates anticipation and affirms their authority with the listener. The first two verses and the following chorus are what I would define as “noise”, as they simply reproduce the tropes of rap discourse by welcoming the artist on stage, describing the plan to sort out the rival gang (the kids who play trap), and presenting “Modena Gang” as a group of friends who throw stones (a reference to one of Tobi1’s other rap songs, “Giaroun”, “Stone”), sit on top of the lions (the Roman sculptures that sit outside San Geminiano’s cathedral) and play pool. While this creates a sense of camaraderie which is also present in “Samideano”, it is done in a carefree and exuberant way. In “Samideano”, friendship is discussed in terms of values and goals, whereas being part of the Modena Gang is about having fun and doing so in mischievous ways.

This narrative of unruly camaraderie is, however, a mere vessel for what I consider to be the real message. In other words, Tobi1 is making use of rap discourse to disguise his true intention, and that is teaching the Modena Gang something very important. In the third verse (cf. [Figure 5](#)), Tobi1 admits that he wants to teach the Modena Gang that there is no need to talk “badly”, using words such as “snitch”, “bitch” “weeda” (an Italianized word for weed) and “dessert”. All of these are loan words which, with the exception of “dessert”, are typical of rap discourse even

in the Italian genre. However, “knife”, “money” and “brother” – also lexical items frequently used in rap music – are in Emilian. When Tobi1 refers to the act of talking badly, I am inclined to deduce that he is referring to the language of rap (drugs and violence) as well as the use of foreign words. He is taking a purist approach to language policy, then going on to bemoan that he is being serious, and that speaking dialect (as in Modenese) is not easy but is the only way to get the attention of the audience.

	MODENESE EMILIAN	ENGLISH
32	Dounca, ascoltamo bein:	So, listen carefully:
33	Mè a sun chè e a fag c’al lavor chè perchè mè	I’m here doing this thing because I
34	A voi insgner a la Modena gang	Want to teach Modena gang
35	Ch’an gh’è brisa bisagn ed ciacarèr mèl ch’an	That there’s no need to talk badly coz
36	M’in ceva gninta di snitch e cultel,	I don’t give a fuck about <i>snitches</i> [ENG] and knives,
37	Di bitch e dener, di te o to fardel, di weeda e dessert	About <i>bitches</i> [ENG] and money, you or your hitches, about weeda and dessert
38	Ch’a voi sul druver al mic	Coz I only want to use the mic
39	Per dir a Modena e a tût i so fiô ch’ag è Tobi sul beat	To tell Modena and all its children that Tobi is on beat
40	Ag avî da capir! L’é na storia séria e parlèr	You must understand! It’s a serious matter and speaking
41	In dialet al n’è menga po facil	Dialect isn’t easy
42	L’è l’ònica via per ferem sculter da ueter	It’s the only way to get you to listen to me
43	Ragaz ch’a pinsèe ai vistî nôv	Kids who care about new clothes

Figure 5 “Modena Gang”, third verse.

It is in the tenth and final verse (cf. Figure 6) that the aforementioned conflict between not caring what the listener wants and delivering on their request becomes clear. This is where Tobi1 reveals his mission to keep on transmitting the tradition of the city, that is, to keep speaking Modenese. Tobi1 is therefore making use of rap music and its power to get through to the youths of Modena to deliver this important message. Put simply, this type of narrative reflects the quest archetype, as Tobi1 sets himself the task (a quest) of keeping the tradition going. A quest is normally enacted when there is a problem that calls for a solution. While the solution may be easily identifiable – albeit through the interpretation of metaphors – as the act of encouraging the people of Modena to speak Modenese, the problem is not clearly spelled out.

	MODENESE EMILIAN	ENGLISH
80	Per tramander un lavor:	To transmit something:
81	La tradizioun ed la zitè... ch’ag avam in dal cor	The tradition of the city... which we carry in our heart

Figure 6 “Modena Gang”, tenth verse.

Using the same metaphor of tradition that Tobi1 uses to refer to Emilian, it is possible to interpret some of the verses in the fourth verse (cf. Appendix) as delineating the problem to solve. In this verse, Tobi1 complains about the lack of values displayed by the youths, who seem to care only about new, expensive clothes and seeking useless jobs. The concept of tradition goes hand in hand with that of principles and values. Within this metaphor it is possible to deduce that in order to save a generation that lacks values and direction, the championing of traditions is a necessary measure.

### 5.3 ENREGISTERING IDEALS IN ESPERANTO AND EMILIAN

So far, my analysis has brought me to two seemingly different yet overlapping interpretations of the songs. In section 5.1 the performative function of dialogue in the lyrics was under scrutiny and revealed how empathy and solidarity are central to “Samideano”, while in “Modena Gang” the focus is on image and being popular. Both are common performances found in the discourse of hip-hop music. However, while the narrative analysis presented in section 5.2 further supported the initial interpretation of “Samideano” as a song about solidarity and, within that, the rebirth of a new form of membership, “Modena Gang” revealed itself as a quest.

This quest is not about what Tobi1 makes it out to be in the first verse (i.e., showing up the kids playing trap music), but has to do with keeping the tradition of speaking Emilian alive. In this sense, then, the rap discourse exhibited in “Modena Gang” is not a means in itself, as it



is for “Samideano”, but rather a means to a different end. That is, Tobi1 is purposely making use of a meaning-making practice that is popular among young people to deliver a message that is typically seen as old-fashioned and unpopular. “Modena Gang” is really a Trojan horse, pretending to be the “banging” track everyone was waiting for but actually serving as an opportunity to reach the target audience and expose them to the solution that they did not know they needed.

I will now show how some of the language used in both songs reflects the widespread understanding of who the typical speaker of Esperanto and Emilian is. I analyse these linguistic practices through the concept of enregisterment and couple this with some metalinguistic considerations which are afforded by the lyrics. This final aspect of the analysis will complete the picture by providing a representational element of who the artist is embodying in their narrative and ultimately who the ideal speaker of each language is, according to the artists.

The lyrics of “Samideano” are considerably shorter than those of “Modena Gang”, and it is therefore understandable that fewer items for analysis can be found. Nonetheless, Igor’s linguistic choices are rich in instances of enregisterment, such as *samideano* (“comrade”), *ĉu vi laboras por pli bona mondo?* (“are you working for a better world?”), *familia rondo* (“family circle”), *bona homo* (“good person”), *amiko/j* (“friend/s”) and *nenia muro* (“no walls”). These linguistic items make reference to some of the principles promoted in the Prague Manifesto (Gobbo, “Ideology” 263), such as creating a democratic world by embodying the values needed for the creation of a better society and ultimately acting as a good person.

To live according to the ideals of the Esperanto movement as set out by its founder means to come together in a global familiar circle (Gobbo, “Coolification” 3), attending local and international congresses, and valuing a multilingual and multi-ethnic world through one language and one community. In this sense, joining the Esperanto movements frees you of barriers (no walls) and grants you membership of a global citizenship.

The lexical items listed above make clear reference to the Esperantist discourse and therefore offer themselves as opportunities to either be perpetuated or questioned and resisted. This is especially important in a context such as that of a rap song where, for directness and flow, language needs to be economical and to the point. This is also evident in the lyrics of “Modena Gang” where Tobi1 uses noun phrases such as *ciclo* (“motorbike”), *putein* (“children”), *arnés e i trapèl* (“tools and knick-knacks”), *trapel e zavai* (“rumble-bumble”), *zugam a bilierd* (“we’ll play pool”) and *tôt i so fiô* (“all its children”). Not only are these lesser-known words of the Emilian variety of Modena – understanding them would index close exposure to the language – but they are also typical words used by Emilian-speaking grandparents.

This is further supported by the following verse (cf. lines 50–53 in the Appendix):

*la ginta ch’la salteva i fos per la lónga e spint dla voia ed deres da fer ed in quelc mod  
saveres cuntinter*

(“people who used to jump ditches lengthways and pushed by the desire to work hard and somehow make do”)

It is well known in the area that older people complain about the younger generation for not working as hard as they themselves did in their youth. To tease them, they would say that, at their age, they used to jump ditches lengthways. This is a literal translation of what can only be interpreted as a person who can do the impossible so as to overcome problems. This idea – and ideal – of tireless perseverance is echoed in the second part of the coordinate sentence, which goes on to further elaborate by describing these people as hardworking and able to make do. These are widespread traditional values in the community of Modena, which are, however, in stark contrast with how Tobi1 describes his peers.

While in “Samideano” Igor uses enregisterment to show membership of the Esperanto community as an equal, Tobi1 uses it to act as the typical speaker of Emilian: a grandparent. He does so by using the stereotypical phrases an Emilian-speaking old person would use and, perhaps most importantly, he does this while performing an act of reprimand (1–2):



1. *dounca, ascolta mo bein* (“so, listen carefully”)
2. *dag mo un tai* (“give it a rest”)

In their study of the use of Ladin in caregiver–child interactions, Fellin shows how the regional language is perceived as being more authoritative and serious than Italian, as it is used for speech acts such as “ordering, threatening, scolding, and disciplining” (50). This function is also an enregistered aspect of Emilian which Tobi1 is able to exploit (either consciously or unconsciously). In this light, “Modena Gang” can be read as a song about a young man embodying the identity of the typical speaker of Emilian telling off his grandchildren for not following the traditions he is working hard to transmit. Through the use of such highly indexical language, Tobi1 (a male in his early twenties) can count on his audience (his peers) to understand the irony of being scolded by a rapping, youthful grandad. In turn, his audience will be exposed to a new identity of the Emilian speaker; one who is modern and relevant but also cares about traditions. This is both enabled and enhanced by the digital space which allows Tobi1 to reach his peers in a way that transcends traditional boundaries of time and space.

A final consideration goes to the metalinguistic commentary found in the lyrics of both songs. These are listed below:

3. *Me a sun ed Modna, a ciacar in dialet* (“I am from Modena, I speak dialect”)
4. *A volte dicono Tobi parla italiano, allora stavolta ti rispondo chiaro, I say what I want, this is my slang, lo slang ed tota la Modena Gang!* (“Sometimes they say Tobi speak Italian [ITA] So this time I’ll be clear [ITA]”)
5. *T’en cata gninta ed boun, al vocabulari in dialet l’e’ la ginta* (“You won’t find anything good, the dictionary for dialect is the people”)
6. *e parlar in dialet al n’e’ menga po facil* (“and speaking dialect isn’t easy”)
7. *Multaj homoj miras kial mi Esperanton parolas, la klarigo estas simpla: mi tiel volas* (“Many people wonder and wonder why I speak Esperanto, the explanation is simple: I want to”)

Excerpt 3 places one’s provenance from Modena on the same logical level as speaking dialect, as if the latter were an assumption deducible from the former. Being from Modena therefore becomes something that goes hand in hand with the use of the regional language and, presumably, this should not be questioned because it is simply the way things should be. This nonchalant representation of the self as a young person from Modena speaking dialect is, however, in stark contrast with reality. This is referenced in excerpt 4, where Tobi1 makes use of English to rebel against the expectations that people have of him speaking Italian, and reclaims Modenese as a form of slang. The reclaiming process starts from the self and goes on to expand and include all of the people in Modena, thus rendering this slang a badge of belonging; the in-group language that grants membership to its speakers.

In true Esperantist spirit, Igor never sways from Esperanto (using words and phrases from other languages is frowned upon and known as *krokodili* in the Esperanto community), but what he says in excerpt 7 is very similar to excerpts 3 and 4. Once again, the scene is set up by introducing a stigmatized judgement on the artist’s choice of speaking the language; this then leads on to the answer, which is packaged as a frustrated and simple truth: they do it because they want to. Voluntariness is arguably a shared feature of all minoritized languages, including Esperanto (Kimura 168), and the frustration expressed in these similar verses can be interpreted in two ways. The first and perhaps more obvious is that the musicians are annoyed at having their choices constantly questioned and judged. I speculate here that a more latent frustration is also at play in the form of resentment towards others who do not follow suit.

The Esperanto movement can be classified as a form of activism that promotes world peace (e.g. Lins 1). Likewise, a young artist singing in protest against modern times and in favour of traditions is, in itself, an act of activism. As activists, both artists may perceive the lack of change (Emilian) or slow change (Esperanto) as disheartening, and nurture resentment towards their fellow community members for not taking action. Through this optic, both songs can be interpreted as forms of resistance, whereby “Samideano” opposes the essentialization of the ideal Esperantist who focuses solely on ensuring that the language becomes the only lingua franca, whereas “Modena Gang” is about rebelling against societal norms (the stigma associated with speaking Emilian and “modern” values) by promoting traditions and ultimately reconnecting with the older generations who embody this cultural knowledge.

The scope of this article was to analyse two rap songs that discuss identity and membership of a minoritized community of practice. This was done with the intention of revealing how the musicians make use of rap discourse to put their story across, and how in turn this contributes to their meaning-making strategies. The analysis of “Samideano” revealed coherence in the structure of the narrative and its content, whereby Igor’s hip-hop song exploits the resistive nature of this genre to reject the idealistic vision of the Esperantist as someone who is solely focused on reaching the final victory. This form of resistance is historically and ideologically contextualized in the discussion to argue for an interpretation which sees this rebellion as a rebirth of Igor’s experience. The lyrics are rich with enregistered language associated with the Esperanto community, which is used to reproduce the ideals of the status quo criticized by Igor. The narrative archetype underpinning the musician’s story is not one of defeatism but of transformation – the rebirth of his identity as an Esperantist.

The analysis of “Modena Gang” embarked on a slightly more intricate journey. Tobi1 follows the discourse of rap to seemingly complain about rival gangs. However, the analysis revealed that the real objective of the resistance is in fact the lack of direction and values that his peers seem to be embracing as part of modernity. Through this song, Tobi1 is performing a speech act of reprimand towards his peers. He does so by using the enregistered language of an Emilian granddad telling his grandchildren off for not continuing to speak the language. The archetypal narrative lying underneath is one of quest, as Tobi1 is on a mission to ensure the traditions of the city are kept alive.

“Modena Gang” makes use of rap to wrap up a message about tradition, and does so by giving it a modern twist which works in two ways: rap becomes a bit more traditional (banning bad language), and Emilian is portrayed as modern and relevant. Wrapping tradition into modernity is a tongue-in-cheek statement that I purposely chose as part of the title to reclaim the connotation that these languages have of being old-fashioned. The use of the languages adds to the rebellious function of rap and does so in a way that allows the musicians to reach their target audience. A digital platform such as YouTube further enhances their reach and instantly renders the hyperlocal<sup>12</sup> global while elevating “its status and broaden[ing] its indexical fields” (Eckert, qtd in Leone-Pizzighella 85).

The very presence of a rap song in Emilian on a global channel such as YouTube can act as a novelty that appeals to young people. This is something that Tobi1 exploits to reach his peers and uses to claim a digital space for the language and to put his controversial message across – in a similar way as local language activists operate in Veneto by linking the connotations of traditional food to Venetan (cf. section 1.1). Rap discourse is used to “tell stories tied to the local environment” (Stuckey 25). Both musicians adapt their story to speak a truth with which their listeners can identify as members of the same community. By doing so they are able to convey their attitudes towards the language as something highly valuable. Igor values it for its social function as a means to make friends all over the world, whereas Tobi1 portrays Emilian as a valuable vessel of cultural knowledge and tradition.

Lastly, the findings discussed in this article provide an example of the importance of comparing minoritized languages with Esperanto which, despite its successful appearance, deals with comparable forms of stigmatization. In particular, this approach to the study of language attitudes and practices of maintenance in Emilian and Esperanto will hopefully have shown how the inclusion of young community members is essential to the creation of revitalization efforts that are in line with the needs and interests of this generation. While there is still a lot of work to be undone and redone, the presence of local actors engaged in language activism is a signal of hope and something that should arguably be embraced in academic cooperation rather than mere observation.

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<sup>12</sup> Hyperlocal because it is an analysis focused on the variety of Emilian spoken in the city of Modena.

## Modena Gang (RAP MODENESE) “Modenese Rap”

	MODENESE EMILIAN	ENGLISH
1	Sè, sè, a sun turnè	Yeah, yeah, I'm back
2	Mo sè sta chiet, mo sè dai	Yeah, calm down, yeah come on
3	Oh Cappi... mo second te...	Hey Cappi... what do you reckon...
4	Gl'in prout chelor??	Are they ready, this lot??
5	DAI	COME ON
6	Cappi prepèra la ciclo ch'ag e di putein	Cappi get the bike ready coz there are some kids
7	Inzéma al tricolo ch'i fan trap	On the tricycle who're playing trap
8	Me sun turnè perchè i'm an ciamè cun la sirena	I'm back because they called me with the siren
9	Dall'altopiano Sestola	From the upland Sestola
10	E tot i ragaz ed Modena i in chè c'aspeten	And all the kids of Modena are here waiting
11	Na traza in dialet et voilà	For a track in dialect and voilà
12	Ma te t'al se che chè, nella città,	But you know that here, <i>in the city</i> [ITA],
13	LA QUALITA' LA PORTA TOBI1	IT'S TOBI1 WHO BRINGS THE QUALITY [ITA]
14	Cappi prepèra la ciclo ch'ag e di putein	Cappi get the bike ready 'cause there are some kids
15	Inzéma al tricolo ch'i fan trap	On the tricycle who're playing trap
16	Tè te vo la canzoun nòva cativa	You wanted the new banging song
17	Ch'la spaca gli urèci a tât i ragaz	Ear-splitting for all of the kids
18	Me a sun ed Modna, a ciacar in dialet	Me I'm from Modena, I speak dialect
19	Ag o tât i me arnès e i trapèl in garage	I've got all my tools and knick-knacks in the garage
20	E te t'al se che chè, nella città,	And you know that here, <i>in the city</i> [ITA],
21	LA QUALITA' LA PORTA TOBI1	QUALITY IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY TOBI1 [ITA]
22	Tira i giaroun cun la Modena gang	Throw stones with Modena gang
23	Sovra i leoun cun la Modena gang	On top of the lions with Modena gang
24	Vin anca te cun la Modena gang	Come along with Modena gang
25	Tôt fradel in d'la Modena gaaaang	All brothers in Modena gaaaang
26	Modena gang, sovra i leoun cun la Modena gang	Modena gang, on of the lions with Modena gang
27	A'n m'in ceva gninta dé quell ch'at per	I don't give a fuck about what you want
28	E quand te vo gnir	And you want to come
29	A'n te preoccupèer, in questa zitè i in tât my friends	Don't worryyy, in this city they're all <i>my friends</i> [ENG]
30	Un gir in zeinter fin a terd, vin nosc zugam a bilierd	A walk in the centre 'til late, come with and play pool
31	Tôt fradel in d'la Modena gang.	All brothers in Modena gang.
32	Dounca, ascolta mo bein:	So, listen carefully:
33	Mè a sun chè e a fag c'al lavor chè perchè mè	I'm here doing this thing because I
34	A voi insgner a la Modena gang	Want to teach Modena gang
35	Ch'an gh'è brisa bisagn ed ciacarèr mèl ch'an	That there's no need to talk badly coz
36	M'in ceva gninta di snitch e cultel,	I don't give a fuck about <i>snitches</i> [ENG] and knives,
37	Di bitch e dener, di te o to fardel, di weeda e dessert	About <i>bitches</i> [ENG] and money, you or your hitches, about weeda and dessert
38	Ch'a voi sul druver al mic	Coz I only want to use the mic
39	Per dir a Modena e a tât i so fiò ch'ag è Tobi sul beat	To tell Modena and all its children that Tobi is on beat
40	Ag avì da capir! L'è na storia séria e parlèr	You must understand! It's a serious matter and speaking
41	In dialet al n'è menga po facil	Dialect isn't easy
42	L'è l'ònica via per ferem sculter da ueter	It's the only way to get you to listen to me
43	Ragaz ch'a pinsèe ai vistì nòv	Kids who care about new clothes
44	Du mila desnov, tât atachè a inutil lavor	2019, everyone after useless jobs
45	Chi ragasol che fanno Tik Tok e	Those kids <i>doing</i> Tik Tok <i>and</i>
46	Intanto Tic Tac e gnanc un valor.	<i>Meanwhile</i> [ITA] Tick Tock and not even a value
47	Calma... calma... calma...	Calm... calm... calm... [ITA]
48	Se t'an capes un quell dmanda a to nòn che se no	If you don't understand something ask your grandpa

(contd.)

	MODENESE EMILIAN	ENGLISH
49	Se te screv sull'iPhone	Cause if you type on your iPhone
50	T'en cat gninta ed boun al vocabulari in dialet l'è la ginta	You won't find anything good, the dictionary for dialect is the people
51	Ch'la salteva i fos per la lóna e spint dla voia	Who used to jump ditches lengthways and pushed by the desire
52	Ed deres da fer ed in quelc mod saveres cuntinter.	to work hard and somehow make do.
53	Io non noleggio la maglia di Gucci	<i>I don't hire a Gucci shirt [ITA]</i>
54	Per farla vedere nel videoclip	<i>To show it in a videoclip [ITA]</i>
55	Il beat non lo vado a comprare a Sick Luke	<i>I don't buy the beat from Sick Luke [ITA]</i>
56	L'ho fatto con Zanna e spacca di più	<i>I made it with Zanna coz it rocks even more [ITA]</i>
57	A volte dicono Tobi parla italiano	<i>Sometimes they say Tobi speak Italian [ITA]</i>
58	Allora stavolta ti rispondo chiaro	<i>So this time I'll be clear [ITA]</i>
59	I say what I want, this is my slang,	<i>I say what I want, this is my slang, [ENG]</i>
90	Lo slang ed tòta la Modena Gang!	The slang that belongs to Modena Gang!
61	Dag mo un tai, adesa as catam in via tai	Give it a rest, let's meet in Via Taglio
62	Menga thai box, non mangiamo pollo thai	No Thai box, we <i>don't</i> eat Thai chicken [ITA]
63	Oh mio Dio questa ché l'an tez mai,	<i>Oh my God [ITA]</i> , this one never shuts up,
64	Arsura l'è al sò scutmai	Sore throat is her nickname
65	L'ag a ados trapel e zavai, dag ados se t e vo guai	She's wearing rumble-bumble, get close if you want trouble
66	OH MY	OH MY [ENG]
67	Non ce la fai	<i>You just can't [ITA]</i>
68	Ad ascolter al paroli ma dai...	Listen to the words come on...
69	Ma dove vai? T'fè so barac buratèin e bagai	<i>Where are you going? [ITA]</i> You leave everything and go
70	Sera la porta ag è Tobi tonight	Shut the door cause Tobi's on <i>tonight</i> [ENG]
71	Ormai	<i>At this point [ITA]</i>
72	Don't cry	<i>Don't</i> [ENG]
73	Snitch mai	<i>Snitch</i> [ENG] never
74	All right	<i>All right</i> [ENG]
75	Dàm chè al stumpai ch'al i fam tasér,	Hand me the babies and we'll make them shut up
76	E quest chè l'è dvintè un freestyle...	This thing has now become a freestyle...
77	Ai ragaz ch'im disen t'è fort, a'g voi bein,	To the kids who tell me I'm cool, I love them,
78	I in i mé sostenidor.	They're my supporters.
79	S'i in ed Modena i capesen incosa ch'ag mèt l'amor	If they're from Modena they get it that I put my all
80	Per tramander un lavor:	To transmit something:
81	La tradizioun ed la zitè... ch'ag avam in dal cor	The tradition of the city... which we carry in our heart

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