

Enforcing Linguistic Transformation: The EU Parliament's Role in Italian Grammar and Lexicon Revision

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Abstract

The Italian language, like any other, serves as a means of communication, comprising sounds, words, expressions, and grammar rules that people utilize to understand and interact with others in their community. Linguistic experts in Italy concur that languages are natural processes that evolve on their own and do not require intentional guidance. The language is influenced by socio-cultural circumstances, rather than vice versa. Imposing specific words or expressions on a language is an impractical and ahistorical endeavor. The Italian language consistently progresses and updates itself organically. Presently, many English words are used in spoken and written Italian, even when corresponding Italian equivalents are available. It is people's prerogative to choose how they speak and write. This inclination would not change even if foreign words were prohibited. During Benito Mussolini's regime, Italians were compelled to abstain from using foreign words and were obliged to employ expressions that the dictatorship favored and promoted. Non-compliance with these rules was subject to legal consequences. However, after Mussolini's fascism came to an end, these imposed changes to the language disappeared. In a democracy, public institutions and linguistic academies cannot dictate how citizens should speak, think, write, or behave. At most, they can explain why certain linguistic and cultural phenomena occur or why specific grammar errors become prevalent. Nevertheless, in recent years, the Italian language has faced challenges from the EU Parliament which has attempted to impose new grammar rules, expressions, or even basic words on the populace. This research paper aims to investigate the nature of these interferences, why they were undertaken, whether they succeeded in altering the language, and how the Italian people reacted to them.

Keywords: European Parliament, Inclusive Language, Italian Language, Political Interference

Introduction

Italian, like all languages, undergoes changes over time, adapting to the current era, acquiring diverse nuances, and continually growing and evolving. As a language abundant in history and tradition, Italian has experienced transformations throughout the years. Some words that were prevalent in the past have faded into obscurity, making way for novel phrases and terminology that align with the demands and circumstances of modern society. For instance, the term *dattilografa* (a woman engaged in typing) has become antiquated, and nowadays the prevailing expression is *segretaria* (female secretary). The organic progression of language entails the gradual fading of words, driven by shifts in societal and cultural dynamics, technological advancements, the impact of other languages, or fluctuations in linguistic patterns. Nonetheless, a fundamental truth remains: it is the collective body of speakers that truly shapes a language, as they selectively adopt words to convey specific ideas effectively. Seldom does genuine linguistic transformation occur under external or authoritative coercion, as languages predominantly evolve through the choices made by their community of users (Maccario, 2023). In recent times, Italy has witnessed efforts to implement changes in the Italian language, initiated by specific political factions representing the prevailing majority within the EU Parliament. Presently, the EU Parliament is predominantly influenced by a left-leaning political majority, comprised of a coalition between the European People's Party (EPP) and the Socialists & Democrats (S&D), both actively engaged in these language-modification endeavors (Genovese, 2022). The European Parliament has mandated the adoption of gender-neutral, nonsexist, and inclusive language across all member-state languages. Each European language is required to eliminate phrasing that could potentially be construed as discriminatory or demeaning, ensuring equitable treatment for all individuals regardless of their gender identity. Gender-neutral and inclusive language transcends the realm of mere "politically correctness" - a concept perceived and experienced as a contemporary manifestation of censorship by a significant portion of the populace -, though a comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon falls outside the purview of this study and will constitute a forthcoming investigation. Undoubtedly, language itself serves as a potent instrument that mirrors and shapes attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives. Given the diverse array of languages and cultures represented within the European Parliament, implementing a one-size-fits-all solution is not feasible. Instead, tailored solutions must be developed, taking into account the unique linguistic characteristics of each context. In the case of the Italian language, specific measures were not only suggested but also enforced at an authoritative level. Since the decisions made by the European Parliament carry legal weight in each sovereign state, these revisions were formally incorporated into the Italian language (Farri, 2021). The "Results and Discussion" section will analyze the modifications applied to the Italian language. These revisions encompass the utilization of: A) Definite articles. B) Masculine plural nouns incorporating subjects of different sex or gender. C) Feminine nouns attributed to specific roles, titles, or occupations. The European Parliament, seeking to promote inclusivity and gender neutrality in the Italian language, as well as in all other languages within the European Union (EU), has influenced the language's evolution. This influence, although resulting in changes, has not unfolded entirely organically or without external impetus. Language inherently reflects the broader societal landscape and adapts accordingly, undergoing transformations in response to shifts in social and cultural norms (Servidori, 2019). The linguistic modifications imposed on Italy and all other European Union (EU) member states are the outcome of a deliberate political and ideological stance aimed at instituting a new language devoid of its inherent naturalness. All linguists agree that a

language, within countries governed by liberal democracies, evolves organically and cannot be imposed from above, even by a significant entity such as the European Parliament. Language serves as a reflection of a nation's identity and sentiments, and while certain changes - societal, political, and cultural - influence its evolution, they must occur naturally and without coercion (Bagaglini, 2020). In the current context, it is pertinent to observe that the European Parliament sought to impose its ideological perspective on the EU member states through the promotion of inclusive language, thereby restricting individual autonomy in linguistic expression. Forcing a community's linguistic norms, and altering them for ideological reasons, does not foster greater inclusiveness and social harmony. Dismantling or modifying a language through imposition, driven by ideological motives, can only be counterproductive and instigate greater intolerance and discord among citizens. The linguistic changes enforced by the political majority leading the European Parliament adhere to a precise political agenda: to strengthen, from a linguistic standpoint, the gender ideology - which is not universally endorsed - and to prevent certain terms or thoughts from being freely expressed, propagating the belief that they are insulting, thus incorrect, and, therefore, must be censored and negated. In EU countries, including Italy, freedom of thought and expression should still be a constitutionally guaranteed right for all. Instead, the European Parliament is doing everything to transform it into an ideological battleground, systematically applying censorship towards anything that does not respect the canons and dictates of thought conformism. Herein lies the danger of imposing forced changes to a language, whether written or spoken. The prevailing ideology in contemporary Western Europe promotes certain values (which, however, are not shared by all) such as surrogate motherhood, the annulment - even linguistic - of the male and female genders, and sexual fluidity. Furthermore, the term "normality", understood etymologically as adhering to the norm - that is, habitual, common, frequent, and prevalent - is now prohibited (Rinaldi, 2022).

Problem Statement

The elimination of longstanding grammar rules and the introduction of new Italian vocabulary through directives from the EU Parliament prompt crucial inquiries regarding potential impacts on the language's structure, communication, cultural identity, and societal attitudes. This research focuses on the pertinent issue, which has yet to be adequately explored and analyzed, regarding the linguistic clarity of written and spoken Italian when incorporating new grammar regulations (such as the elimination of definite articles before feminine names) and a novel lexicon that has not naturally emerged among speakers.

Research Objectives and Inquiries

The endeavor to introduce novel grammatical constructs aimed at neutralizing gender distinctions in Italian nouns and adjectives, along with the incorporation of innovative vocabulary, prompts a multifaceted exploration into their repercussions on language structure, communication dynamics, cultural fabric, and societal attitudes. This research, delving into a domain as yet inadequately scrutinized, is centrally concerned with elucidating the clarity of written and spoken Italian discourse and the assimilation of a burgeoning lexicon.

The primary objectives of this study are to address the following research inquiries pertaining to the alteration of specific Italian grammar rules and the imposition of new terminology mandated by the European Parliament:

- 1) To what extent does the elimination of the masculine gender in nouns and adjectives contribute to fostering inclusivity within the Italian language?
- 2) Does the use of the Italian determinate article render the Italian language non-respectful towards women?
- 3) What are the ramifications of introducing new terms into the Italian lexicon? Do such impositions contradict the fundamental principle that language should naturally evolve? Furthermore, how receptive is the Italian populace to the adoption and integration of these novel expressions?

Methodological Framework

This research adopts a qualitative approach, characterized by the observation and interpretation of the following key elements:

- 1) Examination of the newly instituted grammar rules, exploring their impact on the fundamental structure of the Italian language.
- 2) Analysis of the political objectives pursued by left-wing entities in their endeavor to eliminate the generic masculine form within the linguistic framework.
- 3) Scrutiny of contemporary newspaper articles sourced from Italy, spanning the temporal landscape from 2019 to 2023. These articles serve as reflective windows into the societal landscape of Italy and the ideological conflicts that unfold within its boundaries.

The references presented in the Literature Review section not only contribute to the academic discourse but also provide readers with the opportunity to delve deeper into specific domains:

- 1) Comprehending the nuances of "inclusive language" as a linguistic concept.
- 2) Examining the extent of political interference sought by the European Parliament in areas beyond its designated jurisdiction within Italy and each member state.

List of newspapers employed in this paper

Names	Website
Il Giornale	https://www.ilgiornale.it
Radio Radio	https://www.radioradio.it/
Il Digitale	https://www.ildigitale.it/
Siena Post	https://sienapost.it/
Accademia Della Crusca	https://accademiadellacrusca.it/
Quotidiano di Puglia	https://www.quotidianodipuglia.it/
Solo Libri	https://www.sololibri.net/
La Repubblica	https://www.repubblica.it/
L - Jus	https://l-jus.it/
Secolo d'Italia	https://www.secoloditalia.it/
Linkiesta	https://www.linkiesta.it/
La Svolta	https://www.lasvolta.it/
Cuneo Dice	https://www.cuneodice.it
Il Foglio	https://www.ilfoglio.it/
Cronaca Bianca	https://cronacabianca.eu/
Il Diario del Lavoro	https://www.ildiariodellavoro.it/
Maremosso	https://maremosso.lafeltrinelli.it/
Vanity Fair	https://www.vanityfair.it/
Wired	https://www.wired.it/

Literature Review

The literature surveyed within this section thus provides a comprehensive examination of the discourse surrounding the dynamics involving the European Parliament authority and the resultant impact on societal values and language evolution.

2023's Brigitte Vasallo's essay entitled *Linguaggio inclusivo ed esclusione di classe* (Inclusive language and classist exclusion) delves into the discourse surrounding inclusive language. The author Vasallo (2023) undertakes an examination of the intrinsic characteristics of inclusive language, highlighting the nuanced dynamic whereby linguistic inclusivity for one group can inadvertently lead to exclusion for another. Vasallo posits that a truly equitable linguistic framework must transcend ideological underpinnings, such as the emphasis on the schwa and its adherents. The essay elucidates that language serves as a reflective tool, mirroring the socio-cultural milieu of a specific historical epoch, without wielding the transformative prowess to effect societal change. The adoption of so-called inclusive language by a majority within a given nation does not inherently signify a congruent shift within the broader societal landscape. Thus, the belief that language possesses the autonomous capability to metamorphose the attitudes and perspectives of an entire populace is illusory. Instead, the interconnection between cognition and linguistic expressions highlights that changes in thought patterns lead to alterations in written and spoken discourse, rather than the other way around (Masini, 2020).

In the year 2023, Vera Gheno's work titled *Parole d'altro genere. Come le scrittrici hanno cambiato il mondo* (Words of different gender. How women writers changed the world) emphasizes the significance of employing feminine terms to denote jobs or professions associated with women. The author contends that the introduction of these new feminine nouns should not be construed as a coercive imposition on the language but rather as a linguistic adaptation reflecting contemporary societal norms, wherein women occupy roles parallel to men. Critics may argue that language, despite its malleability and fluidity, should not be subjected to arbitrary mandates or the mere fabrication of grammatical conventions. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that in this case, the emergence of the new grammatical norm initially appeared in written form, even if not yet fully integrated into spoken language. While historical linguistic norms often transitioned from oral to written forms, the contemporary paradigm exhibits an alternative dynamic. Present-day society, resembling the ancient agora, functions as the modern public square where linguistic phenomena frequently debut in written formats before disseminating into oral discourse.

In 2019, Eugenio Salvati's work, *Il Parlamento Europeo. Tra crisi del processo di integrazione e politicizzazione dell'Unione Europea* (The European Parliament: Navigating the integration process crisis and the politicization of the European Union), undertakes a comprehensive exploration of the developmental trajectory of the European Parliament and its evolving role within the European political landscape. Through a historical retrospective that meticulously examines the transformative shifts undergone by the Parliament, encompassing both its robust legislative capacities and its nuanced representative functions, the book provides readers with the requisite insights for comprehending the multifaceted role of the European Parliament. Salvati's meticulous analysis contributes to a profound understanding of the European Parliament's potency, as well as its ability to wield influence across diverse spheres encompassing economic, social, cultural, and political domains within each member state. By

charting the Parliament's trajectory and delving into its core mechanisms, Salvati crafts a comprehensive narrative that resonates with the nuanced interplay between European governance, integration dynamics, and the intricate fabric of national and regional governance systems (Salvati, 2019).

Results and Discussion

The authoritative influence of the European Parliament has engendered shifts in Italian grammar and language through the imposition of novel regulations and lexicon. In 2018, the European Parliament, in collaboration with various European and international entities such as the World Health Organization, UNESCO, and the European Commission, embraced a series of recommendations advocating for the utilization of nonsexist language. Additionally, the Parliament released explicit guidelines EU Parliament (2018) delineating the implementation of neutral linguistic constructs, positioning them as a strategic instrument aimed at reinforcing its dedication to fostering gender equality and eradicating gender-based discrimination. Due to the binding nature of the European Parliament's mandates for all member states, Italy was also compelled to align itself with these directives (Maddalena, 2019). Consequently, the Italian language underwent significant transformations, predominantly characterized by the introduction of novel terms carrying feminine gender references. It is noteworthy that all of these linguistic alterations not only received endorsement from the *Accademia della Crusca* - the oldest Italian linguistic academy, established in Florence in 1582, whose institutional task is to take care of the language's purity (Daniel & Di Battista, 2020) - but were also officially incorporated into the most preeminent Italian dictionaries.

The use of the Italian article

Italian grammar encompasses various forms of articles that are placed before nouns, including those of individuals' names and surnames. This grammatical structure underwent revisions owing to the influence of the 2018 guidelines set forth by the European Parliament. As a result, the Italian definite article is no longer permissible before the surnames of female politicians, a change that was implemented to convey a sense of respect. Expressions such as *la Moratti* (referring to the surname of the former female Mayor of Milan) or *la Meloni* (alluding to the current female Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni) have been replaced, omitting the feminine article "*la*". Under the modified guidelines, their names are now to be composed in their entirety, including both the first name and the surname (e.g., *Letizia Moratti*, *Giorgia Meloni*). Numerous instances within the annals of Italian literature, spanning from historical figures like Dante Alighieri and Lorenzo il Magnifico to contemporary writers such as Bruno Cicognani, illustrate the prevalent use of the feminine article "*la*". Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in the northern regions of Italy, a well-established practice involves employing the article "*la*" before both male and female first names, surnames, and family names, irrespective of their gender (e.g., *la Lina* - female first name -, *la Melandri* - female surname -, *il Riccardo* - male first name -, *gli Agnelli* - family name -, *la Regina Elisabetta* - Queen Elizabeth (Zaccaro, 2023). The definite article in written and spoken Italian is still commonly used today, not only with personal names but also with those referring to: 1) Cities (*Il Cairo*, *L'Avana* - Havana, Cairo); 2) Islands (*le Filippine*, *le Canarie* - Philippines, Canary islands); 3) Rivers and lakes (*il Mississipi*, *il lago Vittoria* - Missisipi river, lake Victoria); 4) City Boroughs or Neighborhood (*il Bronx*, *il Queens*, *la Garbatella* - the Bronx and the Queens in New York City, the Garbatella in Rome); 5) Days of the week (*il lunedì*, *il sabato*, *la domenica*

- Monday, Saturday, Sunday); 6) Public Holidays (*il Natale, la Pasqua* - Christmas, Easter); 7) Years and centuries (*il 1970, il ventesimo secolo* - 1970, the twentieth century); 8) Car brands (*la Ferrari, la Lamborghini, la Bentley* - Ferrari, Lamborghini, Bentley); 9) Possessive pronouns (*il mio amico, la mia casa, le mie sorelle* - my friend, my house, my sisters); 10) Countries (*la Spagna, la Norvegia, la Polonia* - Spain, Norway, Poland); 11) Ingredients (*la cipolla, il pepe, la panna* - onion, pepper, cooking cream); 12) Fresh fruit (*la banana, la pesca* - banana, peach). Italian definite articles are extensively employed in both written and spoken language, and speakers consistently utilize them. Admittedly, comprehending the rationale behind the European Parliament's decision to eliminate definite articles in the Italian language can be somewhat intricate (De Conto, 2023).



Figure 1: Year 2024. It depicts the linguistic practice observed in Italian newspapers, wherein the feminine definite article *la* precedes female surnames. For instance, the incumbent Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni is referred to as *la Meloni*. Source: <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/due-piedi-due-campi-prodi-contro-meloni-2299713.html>



Allarme nel Pd: "Sorpasso avvenuto", perché la Schlein trema prima delle Europee

Figure 2: In the context of the year 2024, it illustrates the leadership role of Elly Schlein within the Italian Democratic Party. Notably, Italian newspapers adhere to the convention of including the definite article before her surname, rendering it as *la Schlein*, aligning with established linguistic customs in Italian discourse. Source:

<https://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/politica/38856143/pd-guerra-iscritti-5-stelle-sorpasso-preoccupa-schlein.html>

The Generic Masculine Form

For several decades, the Italian language has employed the convention known as the *maschile neutro, non marcato o generico* (neutral, non-marked, or generic masculine) structure. This linguistic approach has historically been utilized to indicate a group of individuals consisting of both women and men, as seen in phrases like *gli studenti americani* (American students), or in singular instances like *l'uomo della strada* (ordinary man). Despite utilizing the masculine form, it is implicit that women are encompassed within these expressions even if they are not overtly mentioned. This form serves to designate all human references, regardless of gender distinctions (Coluccia, 2021). This approach to composing (or speaking) Italian is no longer deemed acceptable, as it is now obligatory to explicitly include women when discussing them. Nonetheless, using a neutral masculine term to refer to a woman is not considered a form of sexist language, as affirmed by Luca Serianni, a professor of the Italian language at the University of Rome *La Sapienza* and a member of the advisory board of the *Accademia della Crusca* (Buffo, 2022). Numerous accomplished women continue to favor the use of masculine generic nouns when being addressed (for instance, the newly appointed Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has opted to be referred to as *il Presidente del Consiglio* - Prime Minister with the masculine article *il* preceding the title - during official events Terranova (2022), as opposed to *la Presidente* (using the feminine article *la*).

Substitution of the generic masculine with gender-neutral alternatives: principles and examples

The need for replacing the generic masculine with gender-neutral forms arises from the aim to foster inclusivity and equality in language usage. Instances where terms like *Uomo* (Man) or *Uomini* (Men) are employed in a universal context, encompassing both genders, necessitate a shift to alternative expressions such as "human species" or "population".

- 1) It is imperative to consistently utilize the formulation *Donne e uomini* (Women and men) to avoid reinforcing hierarchical gender connotations. Placing the masculine term before the feminine one inadvertently implies male superiority. Opting for expressions like *i diritti umani* (Human rights), *della persona umana* (of the human person), or *dell'essere umano* (of the human being) in lieu of *i diritti dell'uomo* (Men's rights) is required.
- 2) Phrases such as *il corpo dell'uomo* (man's body) and *il lavoro dell'uomo* (man's work) should be substituted with *il corpo umano* (Human body) and *il lavoro degli esseri umani* (the work of human beings) to emphasize a broader perspective.
- 3) *L'uomo primitivo* (Primitive man) ought to be revised to *le popolazioni primitive* (Primitive populations) to accurately reflect the collective nature of human history.
- 4) Transforming *caccia all'uomo* (Manhunt) into *caccia alla persona* (Person hunt) aligns with an unbiased approach that acknowledges both genders.
- 5) *L'uomo della strada* (Common people) should be rephrased as *la gente comune* (Ordinary people) to encompass a wider array of individuals. In this vein, several terms such as "humanity", "people", and "individual" demonstrate linguistic neutrality, promoting a sense of equality between genders (Giordano, 2022). Adhering to these principles facilitates a linguistic environment that is conducive to both gender inclusivity and equity.

When Addressing Individuals, Categories, and Groups

- 1) Terms like *i Britannici* (the British) and *gli Italiani* (the Italians) in their masculine plural forms are replaced with gender-neutral alternatives such as *il Popolo Britannico* (the British people) or *la Popolazione Italiana* (the Italian population).
- 2) Expressions such as *i bambini* (children), *i ragazzi* (boys), and *i vecchi* (old people) in their masculine plural forms should be transformed into more inclusive language. For example, *i bambini e le bambine* (male and female children), *i ragazzi e le ragazze* (boys and girls), and *le persone anziane* (the elderly) offer a more balanced and encompassing approach.
- 3) Terms like *i medici* (doctors) and *i magistrati* (judges) in their masculine plural forms are modified to better reflect gender inclusivity. Adopting phrases like *i medici di ambo i sessi* (male and female doctors) and *i magistrati di ambedue i sessi* (female and male judges) aligns to acknowledge gender diversity within these professions (Vitiello, 2022).

Political Leaders

When referring to political leaders, it is essential to maintain parity between males and females (Paci, 2022). For instance, a consistent approach can involve addressing both genders by their full names and last names, such as *la Signora Clinton e il signor Putin* (Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Putin), or utilizing solely their last names: *Clinton e Putin* (Clinton and Putin). Deviating from this consistency in addressing leaders would contradict the principles of gender-neutral language and inclusive communication.

The Neologism of Feminine Gender Nouns

The European Parliament has enacted guidelines stipulating that all Italian nouns denoting qualified professions, occupations, titles, or elective positions must possess the corresponding feminine form. The Italian language has embraced a plethora of newly

introduced feminine nouns, many of which remain unfamiliar to a significant portion of Italians. These nouns fall under the category of mobile gender nouns, capable of transitioning between masculine and feminine genders (see Gheno, 2023). This transition can be achieved by altering the noun's ending, incorporating a suffix, or modifying a segment of the noun's root (Coletti, 2021). Presented here is a compilation of such nouns, structured as follows: the first noun denotes the masculine form, while the second signifies its corresponding feminine counterpart: *maresciallo, marescialla* (military marshal) *capitano/capitana* (captain), *ammiraglio/ammiraglia* (chief navy officer), *carabiniere/carabinieri* (Italian police officer), *sindaco/sindaca* (mayor), *ministro/ministra* (minister), *sottosegretario/sottosegretaria* (deputy minister), *ingegnere/ingegnera* (engineer), *filosofo/filosofa* (philosopher), *perito/perita* (technical expert), *chirurgo/chirurga* (surgeon), *architetto/architetta* (architect), *medico/medica* (medical doctor), *pretore/pretora* (municipal court judge), *magistrato/magistrata* (judge), *avvocato/avvocata* (Attorney at Law), *deputato/deputata* (MP), *lettore/lettrice* (lecturer), *notaio/notaia* (notary public), *ispettore generale/ispettrice generale* (general inspector), *allenatore/allenatrice* (coach), *ambasciatore/ambasciatrice* (ambassador), *consigliere di Corte d'Appello/consigliera di Corte di Appello* (Court of Appeal magistrate), *direttore d'orchestra/direttrice d'orchestra* (orchestra conductor), *amministratore delegato/amministratrice delegata* (CEO), *Procuratore della Repubblica/Procuratrice della Repubblica* (public prosecutor), *senatore/senatrice* (senator), *presidente/presidentessa* (president), *vicequestore/vicequestora* (deputy police commissioner), *infermiere/infermiera* (nurse), *fisico/fisica* (physicist), *scrittore/scrittrice* (writer), *vigile/vigilessa* (traffic cop).

In contemporary times, each masculine noun now has its corresponding feminine form; however, these newly introduced terms are not commonly adopted by the general population due to their lack of integration into the vernacular of everyday Italian and their limited presence within the communication-focused linguistic community (see Vasallo, 2023). Within Italy, the consensus among linguistic experts predominantly maintains that languages naturally undergo autonomous evolution and do not require directional guidance. Linguistic developments are shaped by socio-cultural contexts, rather than the reverse (Meloni, 2021). Nevertheless, the widespread and rapid proliferation of a multitude of newly introduced feminine terms implies that the European Parliament has intervened in the natural evolution of the Italian language from a political perspective. The feminine noun *Ministra* - denoting a female Minister - officially exists in Italian, yet the term remains underutilized as female ministers persistently continue to be referred to as *Ministro* - the masculine noun for Minister (Borgonovo, 2023). Similarly, the feminine noun *Presidentessa* - signifying a female President - is officially recognized, but women in such leadership roles are still addressed using the masculine noun *Presidente* - male President (Coviello, 2022). This pattern continues with the feminine noun *Sindaca* - representing a female Mayor - while the masculine noun *Sindaco* - male Mayor - is commonly employed to denote a woman occupying that position (Cenni, 2023).



Figure 3: In the year 2024, Anna Maria Cisint assumes the position of Mayor in Monfalcone, Gorizia, Italy. Notably, despite being female, she is addressed using the masculine noun *Sindaco*, reflecting a linguistic convention observed in this context. (Source: <https://www.gruppotv7.com/notizie/friuli-venezia-giulia/monfalcone-centri-islamici-comune-attende-udienza-2624>)



Figure 4: In the chronicle of 2023, Deputy Home Minister Wanda Ferro is portrayed with the title of *Sottosegretario*, denoting the masculine form in Italian parlance. (Source: <https://www.9colonne.it/451332/terzo-mandato-ferro-nessuna-spaccatura-a-livello-di-governo-e-maggioranza>)

Even in the case of Wanda Ferro, the female Deputy Home Minister within the present Italian government, she is designated as *Sottosegretario* - the masculine noun for Deputy Minister - rather than *Sottosegretaria* - the corresponding feminine form (Redazione, 2023). Viviana Del Tedesco, a female Public Prosecutor, is referred to as *Magistrato* - male Judge - and *Procuratore della Repubblica* - male Public Prosecutor - instead of the feminine forms *Magistrata* and *Procuratrice della Repubblica* (Sicilia, 2023). Antonella Zedda, a current member of the Italian Senate, is addressed as *Senatore* - male Senator - rather than *Senatrice* - the female form of Senator (Pucci, 2023).



Figure. 5: In the annals of 2023, female Senator Antonella Zedda is depicted. Notably, she has articulated a preference to be addressed as *Senatore*, opting for the masculine noun over *Senatrice*, the feminine form, in alignment with her chosen linguistic preference. (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gN9a4ByfSiA>)



Figure 6. It illustrates a snapshot from February 14th, 2024, featuring Daniela Santanché, the Italian Tourism Minister, during her visit to the city of Naples, Italy. She is addressed as *Ministro del Turismo* (Tourism Minister), using the masculine form *Ministro* rather than the feminine form *Ministra*. (Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwfJdEyim_o)

This underscores the persistent usage of masculine terms in these professional titles, contributing to a broader discourse on gender-neutral language and societal conventions.

Conclusion

The European Parliament's involvement in matters concerning the Italian language underscores yet again how the supranational institution tends to divert its attention towards issues of limited relevance. The Italian language has now embraced a completely gender-neutral structure; however, the new terminology remains unfamiliar and largely unused among speakers. The language of a democratic nation cannot undergo abrupt transformations solely due to external imposition. Comprising a left-wing political coalition, the European Parliament appears to display a lack of concern for the pressing and immediate

challenges experienced by both Italian and EU citizens. Instead, its attention seems directed towards matters of gender symbolism and the enforcement of politically correct language. In doing so, it seems to overlook the significant issues that genuinely impact Europe and its populace (Del Vigo, 2023). Western Europe is currently navigating a tumultuous and uncertain phase, characterized by a range of geopolitical and economic challenges. These include the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the potential for a new global confrontation, nuclear concerns, economic downturn, a distressing surge in energy expenses, inflation reaching double digits, and the rapid rise in borrowing costs spurred by the European Central Bank's political choices. Regrettably, it appears that these substantial problems are not given the highest priority by Brussels politicians (see Salvati, 2019). Despite these pressing concerns, the European Parliament allocates its time and efforts to compelling Italy to adopt a gender-neutral language (Benignetti, 2022). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the outcomes of a recent poll reflect a lack of trust in the European Parliament among Italians (Diamanti, 2023). Only 33% of respondents express confidence in the institution. A significant 64% perceive the European Union as bureaucratic, with 57% believing it fails to adequately protect the interests of EU citizens, and a mere 33% considering it efficient. The issues Italians believe the EU should address are ranked as follows, in order of importance

The issues	%
Immigration	34
Terrorism	22
Economic situation	19
Unemployment	14
Climate change	12
Cost of living	10
Crime rate	9
Pollution	5
Taxes	4

It is noteworthy that inclusive and gender-neutral language is conspicuously absent from this list of priorities.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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