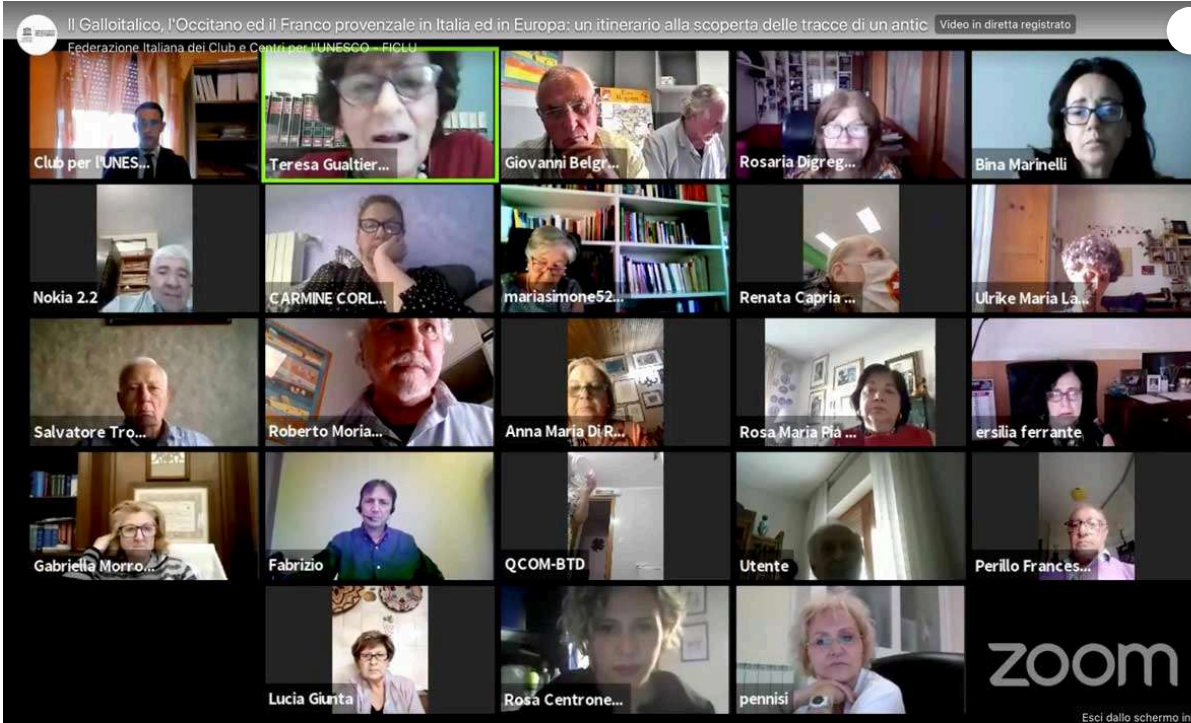


The Italian Federation of UNESCO Clubs for the enhancement of linguistic diversity



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An important initiative of the Clubs for UNESCO, belonging to the FICLU in the context of the protection and safeguarding of linguistic minorities, a conference entitled “Gallo-Italian, Occitan, Franco-Provençal in Italy and in Europe: an itinerary to discover of the traces of an ancient heritage.” was held.

Thanks to the usual method of telematic communications, it was possible to contact numerous experts and researchers, all directed towards the defense of linguistic diversity in a real journey of discovery that is promoted by the Clubs of Piazza Armerina, Enna, Acicastello, Giarre-Riposto, Sciacca, Sanremo, Udine, Altamura, Cerignola, and Vulture in collaboration with FICLU, chaired by Arch. Teresa Gualtieri, and coordinated by Anna Maria Di Rosa Placa, president of the Club for Unesco in Piazza Armerina and Vice President of the Euro-Mediterranean Federation.

The FICLU National President, Arch. Teresa Gualtieri, opened the meeting and emphasizing that starting from that moment, the FICLU will devote an increasing attention to the theme of linguistic diversity, considering this is a priority for UNESCO which has its ultimate goal: the construction of peace and implement it by protecting diversities, and organizing them in a single world human community. “In this context”, the National President continued, “languages are a fundamental cultural heritage to be protected and stimulating the study of the local language in schools through tools such as the UNESCO atlas of languages – created to identify and protect the languages that are disappearing. As a heritage of diversity, in which for Italy the Galloitalico, the Occitano and the Franco Provençal are included.”

Prof. Salvatore Trovato, linguist and president of the Association for the Knowledge and Protection of the Gallo-Italic dialects of Sicily, explored the inherent importance of the dialect as a vehicle for a culture. He underlined the need to involve the new generations to bring them closer to dialects, promoting their knowledge. In this regard, he spoke of the Galloitalico of San Fratello, brought in the Middle Ages by the Normans and Aleramici, who contributed to making this language strong in southern Italy, especially in Sicily, where there are numerous linguistic islands in alloglot. In addition, the illustrious speaker highlighted how the words describe the trades practiced by the new colonizers, thus helping to better understand a people and its social structure. Finally, he explained that the etymology also allows us to go back to the history of a people, in the absence of written documents, to explain some characteristic elements of that given period.

Subsequently, Prof. Patrizia del Puente, director of the International Center for Dialectology, intervened, “you reported that at the University of Basilicata, there are already dialectal literacy courses, a project linked to the Centre and carried out together with Cambridge, Oxford, Pisa, Udine and Palermo. You spoke of languages as a treasure trove of the identity of a people, of the importance of teaching them also in schools, but through mother tongue experts; you underlined the contact with Palermo by the great Lucania, where the Gallo Italici came rebounding from Sicily, bringing the language still present today in a vast area of the Potenza province, as the eminent dialectologist Rohlfs had already claimed and demonstrated.” In conclusion, the professor also supported the importance of maintaining a diversity that is enriching.

Very interesting was the interlude in which it was possible to listen to Eleonora Bordonaro, singer-songwriter in Galloitalico, who had the opportunity to know a series of poems of San Fratello, the so-called Lombard songs, containing facts connected to that culture. Coming from the plain of Catania in the Sanfratellana area, in an attempt to keep the roots alive, she dedicated herself to listening to local speakers, assisted by them to learn the language and enliven it with new significant contributions.



For the Galloitalico, a large contribution was offered to us in the Potentino by Antonio Cuccaro, who recently published the booklet “Unpublished Galloitalico. Dialect, speakers and peasant civilization in Basilicata”, with the aim of arousing greater involvement in this linguistic phenomenon through research, ideas, intuitions and dialectal comparisons. Formerly an official of the APT of Potenza, he was coordinator of the project “The Gallo-Italic dialects of Basilicata” created by Prof. Maria Teresa Greco of the University of Potenza, with the establishment of a network between the municipalities of Potenza, Picerno, Pignola , Trecchino and Vaglio.

The ideal journey among linguistic minorities then moved north to Occitan territory, between Liguria and Piedmont, where Occitan is still spoken. The first to speak was Prof. Franco Bronzat, Occitanic, who, in his brief speech, spoke of this language not of immigration, but which has always been present in both the Italian and French Alpine areas. There are over 12 million inhabitants of which three or four million are still speaking the language. Despite the still large number, however, there is no university chair and he hopes that this language, the first to be written and sung, can find at least some itinerant teacher.

Another speaker from the same area was Dr. Gianni Belgrano, president of the “A Vastera” association of the land of Brigasca who, together with Prof. Roberto Moriani, author of the Vocabulary of Brigasque culture, spoke about the attempt to preserve the present language in various centers in France and Liguria and became entirely French after the rectification of the borders in 1947. In this context it is a real attempt to recover the roots of a people and, Roberto Moriani himself, spoke of how much the brigasco is saved despite being a further minority within the Occitan landscape. A language that straddles the Gallo novel and the Galloitalico.

Prof. Rosa Talia, member of the Cerignola UNESCO Club, took part in the conference with a speech entitled “The Franco-Provençal area in Puglia: Faeto and Celle di San Vito.” Once again the language recalls a particular historical fact: with the arrival of Charles of Anjou, 200 soldiers settle in the area, between two Benedictine monasteries, who fortify a castle and are later joined by families. It goes without saying that the spoken language, in this case an archaic Franco-Provençal, remains alive in the area. The recovery of this experience is still witnessed today by a Franco-Provençal branch in the province.

Fabrizio Di Salvo, President of the Euro-Mediterranean Federation of Ancient Medieval Migrations, spoke instead of his great interest as a free researcher in the migration of peoples. Starting from the history of our species, homo sapiens, he highlighted how much the nature of the traveler has also characterized the predisposition to create numerous forms of linguistic admixture. Going into the specifics of migrations in Italy, he wanted to emphasize the various linguistic islands of alloglot: the Walser of Germanic origin in Piedmont and Valle d’Aosta with their language Titsch; the Ladins in the Dolomite areas between the provinces of Trento, Bolzano and Belluno; the Albanian minority Arbereshe in southern Italy (in Calabria and in Piana degli Albanesi in the province of Palermo); the Croatian one in Molise; the Franco Provençal in Puglia in the territory of Valmaggione, on the Daunia Mountains in the province of Foggia; the Waldensian Occitan’s at Guardia Piemontese in Calabria; Salento Greece; up to the Galloitalico in Sicily and Basilicata. Just to mention the best known. An extraordinary mixture and fusion, a mixture that for every researcher is a splendid opportunity for observation. Noting that these components make it possible to break down barriers and bind peoples with greater tolerance, he spoke of the importance of the Federation as an experiment to keep alive the interest in the union of peoples and the defence of minorities.

Concluding the work, Prof. Maria Simone, FICLU councillor, hoped that the clubs continue this path with support from the universities and that an action protocol be defined for the enhancement of the territories. Languages preserve, like a casket, the traces of our history and our identity, preserving and enhancing them, according to a perspective of inclusion, helps to promote integration between peoples.