point for future critical work in this relatively new area. Kuitunen’s paper chronicles the interesting history of Italian studies at the University of Toronto. Gebbia’s article outlines the history, goals and achievements that make up the very recent field of Canadian literary studies in Italy. Codignola’s paper is a companion work on Canadian historical studies in Italy. Two book reviews by Adele Wiseman of Caroline Di Giovanni’s Italian Canadian Voices (1946-1983): An Anthology of Poetry and Prose, pp. 78-80; and by Bruno Ramirez of Robert F. Harney’s, Dalla frontiera alle Little Italies: Gli italiani in Canada, 1800-1945, pp. 81).

In sum, this first issue of Italian Canadiana sketches a broad picture of a field which is necessarily interdisciplinary. This is indeed a welcome publication that will provide an important forum for the documentation of the Italian immigrant experience in Canada.

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The appearance of these two books along with the recent publication of the Danesi-Villa book on applied linguistics encourages one to hope that Canada may be starting to achieve in the production of pedagogical materials a place more nearly corresponding to the flourishing of Italianist scholarship and the vigor of Italian language study in this country. There is a clear need for Canadian-produced introductory textbooks (or at least Canada-oriented revisions of our U.S.-produced textbooks), and perhaps they will soon appear. The two works under review here are, of course, not general introductory textbooks, as their titles clearly indicate. Their titles do not clearly indicate what they are, however. They could be analytical, theoretical studies. In fact, they are wholly practical, non-theoretical textbooks/workbooks.

The two works are very similar in format, in manner of presentation, level of language proficiency addressed, assumptions about language learning, etc.; but there is no overlap in what they set out to teach, so it is not a question of choosing between them. On the contrary, a teacher who finds one of them useful will probably find the other useful also.

The books are printed on letter-size paper, reproduced from typescript (a single typeface in Interferenze, three typefaces plus some handwriting in Uso). Although only Uso states it explicitly, both books are designed for the intermediate level and to be used not as main texts but as supplements to other materials. Each deals with only a limited aspect of the lan-
guage, and both are based on the assumption that interference from the students’ native language is a principal cause of errors.

To evaluate these works we may ask: (1) Do the problems they address merit attention? (2) Do the authors’ assumptions and procedures lead to the solution of those problems?

The need for entire textbooks dealing with the specific problems of lexical interference and the use of prepositions may be questioned. That the topics are important is clear, but many other topics (e.g., the use of tenses, the use of subjunctive, the forms of irregular verbs) are also important. We obviously cannot use as many textbooks as there are important difficulties in Italian. My own opinion is that, rather than being treated in separate works, these topics should be better and more thoroughly treated in general textbooks; but until they are, it is probable that many Italian teachers will find that Interferenze and Uso fill a need.

Concerning assumptions, the authors are to be commended for having the courage to be “out of date.” Several years ago it became fashionable to discount almost to zero the importance of native language interference, and now the dernier cri in language pedagogy, the Natural Approach, adds that correction of errors is useless.¹ These absurd tenets are implicitly rejected by the authors of both the books in question. As the title of Interferenze implies, it is dedicated to contrasting Italian-English “look-alikes“ (which the author misnames calchi omofoni — they are neither calchi nor omofoni) like ricoverare—recover, novella—novel. Uso does not deal exclusively with interference, but its authors note (p. VII) that they have “tenuto conto delle difficoltà che incontrano sia gli studenti anglofoni che quelli che conoscono un dialetto italiano,” and a great part of it is dedicated to structures where English interference is the cause of errors (e.g., “Il dottore consiglia a [no preposition in English] Roberto di [to in English] nuotare”) although explicit comparisons with English are not made unnecessarily.

In both books the material to be learned is drilled/tested by fill-the-blank exercises and translation from English. In addition there are write-original-sentences—using—the—following—word exercises in Interferenze and write—another—example—of—the—same—construction exercises in Uso. These exercises are good, and teachers will be greatful to the authors for the hours of effort they must have devoted to their preparation.

The presentation of what is to be learned is less satisfactory, especially in Uso. Repeatedly the student is presented with a problem but given no means to solve it. Lesson after lesson begins with a list of verbs which are to be relisted in groups according to which prepositions (or no prepositions) follow them. How is the student supposed to know (unless he is expected to have learned previously, in which case he does not need the lesson at all)? If he uses a dictionary he will in many cases not find the answer. (E.G., a dictionary as complete and well provided with examples as Migliorini’s Vocabolario will not tell him whether one says trascurare di or a fare qualcosa). In the cases where the student is in fact given what he is expected to learn, it is generally in the form of lists. For example, p. 15 lists 55(!) verbs that are followed by a + infinitive and 18 that are followed by di + infinitive. This material should not be presented in lists but in example sentences, preferably forming coherent passages.
Another aspect of *Uso* is the absence of aid to the student for acquiring a native speaker’s *Sprachgefühl* for Italian prepositions. Although there are the usual low-level generalizations found in all textbooks (“*a* follows verbs of motion”), there are no general discussions that might help the student toward a native-like intuitive understanding of the overall semantic range of words like *a*, *con*, *da*, *di*, *in*, *per*. I find this a shortcoming, but others may feel that no useful generalizations are possible.

In *Interferenze* a typical lesson begins:

![Diagram](image)

That is, an Italian word and an English word that one might wrongly suppose to have the same meaning are contrasted or explained only by the supposedly correct translation into the other language. Then, without having seen examples of any of the words in sentences, the student is expected to use them in exercises. Here again I would greatly prefer presentation of the words in meaningful contexts.

There are two other problems I find in *Interferenze*. The first is that there is no discussion of what these “false friends” are and how they came to be false friends. Everyone recognizes that the relationship between *attendere* and *attend* is different from that between *saltare* and *salt*. The second pair are unrelated and merely happen by chance to look alike whereas the first pair (like all the others presented in *Interferenze*) come, ultimately, from the same source and therefore once had the same meanings. As a linguist, I feel strongly that the study of a foreign language should impart to the student not only a mechanical mastery of that language but also some understanding of language in general, and so I think it should be explained how meanings of words change — by metaphorical usage, by specialization or generalization, sometimes by calquing from other languages — and that because different metaphors occur to different people, words acquire different new meanings in different places.

And that leads to the other point. Although polysemy appears in almost every lesson, there is no recognition of the fact that the problem in lexical interference is not only that some words are similar in form and different in meaning but that practically *every* word in *every* language is polysemous and that a word in one language never covers exactly the same semantic range as its “literal” translation into another. (If *perdere* is ‘to lose,’ why, the Italian wonders, did people laugh when he said, “I lost the train”? If ‘son’ means *figlio*, why did my students laugh when I said, “I have two sons, one boy and one girl”?) So the problem is not pre-
cисely that, e.g., classe does not mean class but rather that classe and class (and also perdere and lose, fare and make, etc. etc.) each have several meanings, only some of which are similar.

If my comments about this pair of books have been more critical than laudatory it is not because I think they are bad but because I think they could be better. Both books are pioneering efforts, and perfection cannot be expected on a first try (if ever). Many North American Italian teachers may find one or both books useful as supplementary texts to a review grammar and/or reader, and others may want to have them on hand for reference.

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NOTES
1 Cf. T.D. Terrel "The Natural Approach to Language Teaching: An Update," Modern Language Journal 66 (1982), 126: "Five years of experience in classes in which speech errors are not corrected have convinced me that the practice of correcting speech errors directly is not just merely useless but actually harmful to progress in language acquisition." One might as well say, "Five years of not eating oranges have convinced me that eating oranges will cause my hair to fall out," or, "Not reading the novels of Moravia has convinced me that Moravia is a bad author." If language students learn faster when their errors are not corrected, then one should expect that students of mathematics, music, history, gymnastics, etc. would also learn faster without correction. We know that such is not the case.