



immidem

MMSE translation to the Genoese dialect

Overcoming linguistic barriers in advance cognitive impairment

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An “Endogenous” cultural barrier

Patients who never left home, yet they feel like foreigners in their own country



Regression alla Lingua Madre

Pazienti con decadimento avanzato che tornano istintivamente al dialetto per comunicare.



La "Scena Muta"

Incapacità di rispondere ai test cognitivi in italiano, spesso scambiata per apatia.



Segnali Sottili

Intercalari o parole sussurrate al coniuge rivelano una competenza linguistica ancora attiva.

“Apathy and a resigned attitude often mask a simple linguistic comprehension barrier”

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Regression to the mother tongue (first-in last-out phenomenon)

Patients with advanced cognitive impairment instinctively fall back on their dialect to communicate



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Failure to perform on Italian-language cognitive assessments is frequently mistaken for apathy or aphasia



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Hidden signals

Fillers or words whispered to a spouse reveal that linguistic competence is still active

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Patient “Zero”

A simple “Goodbye” in the Genoese dialect shifts the clinical dynamic

1 MMSE: N/A

Male patient, 86 y.o. with AD classified as “unassessable” due to apathy and a resigned attitude during standard testing

2 Typical Signs

Does not respond to questions, looks to spouse for help, responds only in monosyllables

3 The Dialect Approach

The patient lights up, smiles and shakes hands: a sharp drop in anxiety levels is observed



“As if for the very first time, he had woven a meaningful connection”

Using Genoese numbers for calculations drastically reduced the patient’s inhibition

From Clinical Case to Systematization

The idea of translating the MMSE test into Genoese dialect



The Standard Tool

The Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) is the cognitive test par excellence, universally recognized and utilized



The Project

To transform empirical observation into a scientific and repeatable evaluation method

Project Objectives

- To provide a validated yet accessible tool
- To remove linguistic barriers during assessment
- To access the patient's actual residual abilities
- To overcome the limitations of standard communication

Cooperation with Professor Franco Bampi

Combine scientific rigor and linguistic competence



The expert profile



Prof. Franco Bampi: Full professor of Rational Mechanics (UniGe).



Genoese dialect proficient and teacher

MINI MENTAL STATE EXAMINATION

In che méize sémmo?	0-1	
Dîme a dæta d'ancheu	0-1	
In che ànno sémmo?	0-1	
In che stagiún sémmo?	0-1	
Che giòrno da setemànn-a l'é ancheu?	0-1	
Dîme in che naçión sémmo	0-1	
In quæ regiún italiànn-a sémmo?	0-1	
In quæ çitæ s'atrovémmo?	0-1	
Dîme o pòsto dôve s'atrovémmo	0-1	
A che ciàn sémmo?	0-1	
Ripetéi: "PÀN, CÂZA, GÀTTO" A primma repetiçión a vêgne valutâ co-in pontéggio. Ripête finché o sogétto o l'ézêgoe coretaménte, max 6 vòtte	0-3	
Cóntæ a-a revèrsa partindo da-o nùmero 100 (çénto) levàndo 7 pe 5 vòtte: ♂ 93 ♂ 86 ♂ 79 ♂ 72 ♂ 65 S'ò no complêta a prêuva, conpitâ a l'inderê a paròlla CARNE: ♂ E ♂ N ♂ R ♂ A ♂ C	0-5	
Domandâ a repetiçión di tréi sogétti de primma	0-3	
Mostrâ in relêuio e in lâpi domandàndo o nómme	0-2	

A che ciàn sémmo?	0-1				
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Mostrâ in relêuio e in lâpi domandàndo o nómme	0-2				
Ripetèi: "No gh'é ne `e' ne `ma' che tégne"	0-1				
Pigiæ sto féuggio co-a màn drîta, cegælo e pösælo in sciâ töa	0-3				
Lezéi l'órdine scrîto e ezegoïlo	0-1				
Scrivéi 'na frâze	0-1				
Copiaæ o diségno	0-1				
Punteggio grezzo →					
<i>Corretto per età e scolarità</i>					
Etæ → Ànni de schêua ↓	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85-89
0-4 ànni	+0.4	+0.7	+1.0	+1.5	+2.2
5-7 ànni	-1.1	-0.7	-0.3	+0.4	+1.4
8-12 ànni	-2.0	-1.6	-1.0	-0.3	+0.8
13-17 ànni	-2.8	-2.3	-1.7	-0.9	+0.3

The Study: Methodology and Sample

Comparative analysis between Italian and Genoese

The sample

- ✓ 40 patients recruited at the IRCCS San Martino Hospital
- ✓ Subjects with advanced cognitive impairment
- ✓ Confirmed native Genoese speaker

Procedure and Parameters

- Dual assessment: MMSE in Italian vs. MMSE in Genoese
- Measurement of performance anxiety using the NRS scale (0-5)
- Analysis of the ability to complete all test items
- Use of the conventional score of 10 for tests that cannot be completed in Italian

Results: Reduce Anxiety and Promote Response

Dialect as a relational "anxiolytic" in the clinical setting

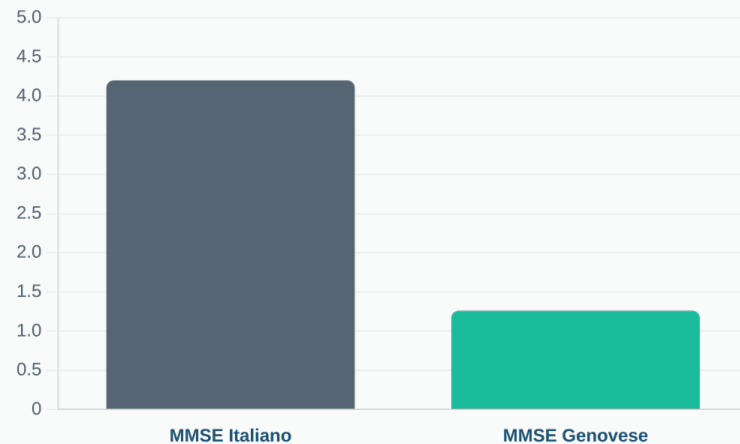
100%

Test Completion

All 38 patients evaluated were able to answer all the test questions in Genoese dialect, overcoming the "silent scene" phenomenon



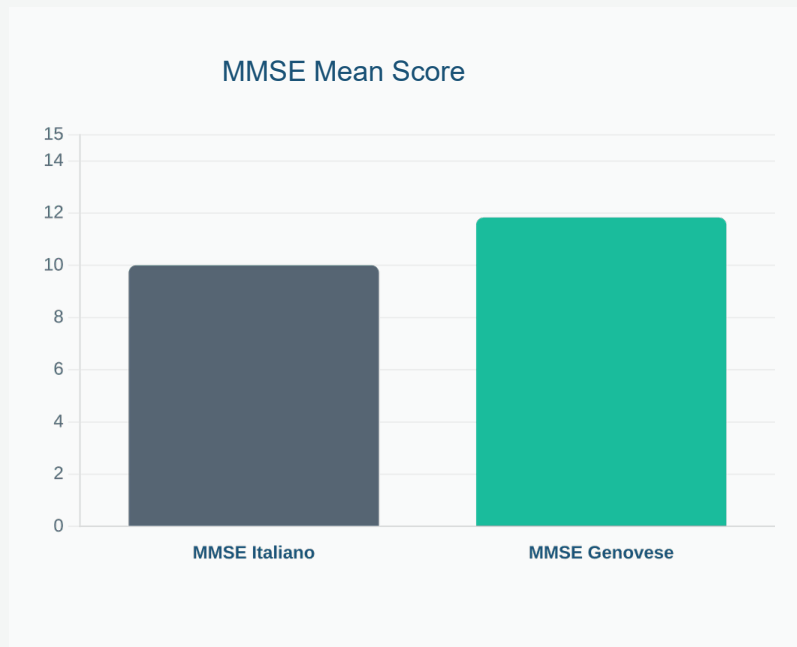
Performance Anxiety Reduction (NRS Scale)



-70% of anxious quota detected

Results: Improved Cognitive Performance

More points in the test, more dignity in the clinical evaluation



+ 1.83 Points

- 📈 Significant average increase in total score
- 🔓 Removing the language barrier unlocks answers
- 👤 It better reflects the patient's actual residual capabilities

"The cognitive deficit persists, but patients are finally able to provide an answer, allowing for a real evaluation."

Dialect in Italy: What's Happening?

This is not an isolated case, but an emerging trend in cognitive stimulation

Scientific Evidence

"Knowledge and use of multiple languages or dialects acts as a protective factor, delaying the onset of dementia symptoms."

— Studio Bialystok et al., Università di York (2007)

One of the most important benefits of bilingualism is that dementia symptoms appear later than in monolingual individuals, on average five years later.

--- Perani et al, Università di Padova, 2017

Parlare in siciliano, scudo contro la demenza



VIDEO SUGGERITO

Al come strumento di didattica inclusiva

13 AGOSTO 2018 12:40

Parlare due lingue protegge dall'Alzheimer e i sardi ce lo dimostrano

Essere bilingue protegge dall'Alzheimer e dalle altre forme di demenza legate alla neurodegenerazione. Lo dimostrano i sardi, una delle popolazioni più sane e longeve in Italia, proprio grazie al fatto di avere una propria lingua, oltre all'italiano. Il sardo, infatti, non è considerato un 'semplice' dialetto.



Conclusions: Beyond the Test, the Person

Dialect as a tool for care and clinical dignity



Clinical Duty

Finding a new communication channel is not an option, but a must to ensure effective care



The Key to the Mind

Dialect is not folklore, but a biological and cultural "key" to access the patient's mind



Evaluative Equity

Reducing anxiety allows for a more fair, humane assessment that is more in line with actual residual capabilities

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Validation of the study on larger samples

Systematic integration of dialect in geriatrics

Training healthcare workers in linguistic sensitivity

Development of dialectal cognitive stimulation protocols



Università
di **Genova**

Thank you for your attention

"A se vedemmo!"

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Università degli Studi di Genova

