

## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

1. The studies in this double issue of the *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique* were first presented at the workshop *Tradiție și inovație în studiul și conservarea istroromânei*, at the twentieth *Colocviu Internațional al Departamentului de Lingvistică* (20-21 November 2020) in the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest in collaboration with the ISTROX project at Oxford University.<sup>1</sup>

The terms *tradition* and *innovation* are often seen as opposites, but a language which the *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* classifies as seriously endangered deserves better than a polemic between the traditional and the new. We have sought here to draw on the best of traditional scholarship and to integrate it with the best of new approaches. We have aimed to do this in three respects. We explore two complementary sociolinguistic perspectives: the external perspective of researchers working on the history and development of the community and the language, and the internal insights of actively involved members of the community. To these we add a linguistic element in a kind of dialogue between the (Daco-)Romanian and the Istro-Romanian languages.

2. The external perspective is adopted by August Kovačec who addresses – from a historical viewpoint and in comparison with other Istrian communities – the development of the community, discussing internal and external migration and the dramatic reduction in the number of speakers and in ethnic and linguistic identity. Kovačec also seeks to identify the social, cultural, and economic factors which caused the disintegration of the community. He assesses the language's chances of survival in conditions of asymmetrical bilingualism with Croatian and of continual shrinkage in the situations in which speakers resort to using Istro-Romanian and of rapidly diminishing intergenerational transmission of the language.

Robert Doričić and Viviana Brkarić, as members of the Istro-Romanian community give an appraisal of the dynamics of research on the Istro-Romanian community and

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<sup>1</sup> The *ISTROX* project – *The Istro-Romanian Language and the Oxford University Hurren Donation* – financed by the Oxford University John Fell fund from 2018 to 2021 and conducted by Martin Maiden, Adina Brădeanu, and Oana Uță Bărbulescu – primarily involved *recovering* and *making publicly available* the hitherto unpublished sound recordings and other materials gathered by the English linguist Tony Hurren, and generously donated to Oxford University by Tony Hurren's widow Vera. The over 30 hours of recordings were made between 1966-1967, both in Žejane and in the villages south of Mt Učka. The project developed an online dimension, using the Zooniverse platform to try to involve the Istro-Romanian community in preserving, translating, and understanding the recordings. At the same time our project was concerned with *synchronic documentation*, something made all the more urgent by the fact that the number of active, fluent speakers is, and long has been, in dramatic freefall. Consequently, we adopted a global approach to the development of *vlaški* and *žejanski* from 1966 to the present day. Here Hurren's recordings had pride of place as we opened them up to the public, but they also stimulated us to *test* how far some of the tendencies identified by Hurren in noun and verb morphology have extended and developed.

language, assessing the role that various researchers have had in documenting (and thereby preserving) not only threatened aspects of traditional life but also the language. They show how speakers from within the Istro-Romanian community view linguistic, ethnographic, and anthropological work research dating back as far as the nineteenth century, and they highlight the active involvement of members of the community in the preservation of their cultural and linguistic heritage, stressing the transition from a research framework in which speakers produce data for researchers to one in which the community actively contributes to the conservation and promotion of its own history and culture. The *Vlaški Puti* 'ecomuseum' is an example of best practice in these respects.

3. The second approach focuses on purely linguistic questions. The workshop reflected both traditional approaches (the special characteristics of the Istro-Romanian lexicon, bilingualism, the phonetic system and sound change, morphological variation), and hitherto neglected or little discussed phenomena (the phonology-morphology and morphology-syntax interfaces, syntactic (micro)variation, grammaticalization). Even in the traditionally researched areas, the approach is a modern one, and the data examined are novel. The study of the lexicon embraces psycholinguistics, etymology, etymological reconstruction, and cultural linguistics.

Richard Sârbu uses psycholinguistic principles with particular regard to code-switching between Istro-Romanian and Croatian, under conditions of asymmetrical bilingualism. Two examples from spontaneous speech are considered: synonymic reduplication and contextual induction (where a Croatian construction calls forth Croatian words even when Istro-Romanian equivalents are available). This is the basis for a discussion of the problem of cultural and linguistic survival, not just through the work of academic researchers, but especially through the efforts of the community to preserve and transmit the language and traditions to younger generations.

Victor Celac sets out the principles underpinning the *Dictionnaire Étymologique Roman*, directed by Éva Buchi and Wolfgang Schweickard and produced by an international team not only from across Europe but from further afield (America or Japan). The guiding principle is the systematic application of the comparative method and etymological reconstruction. Lexicographical entries in the dictionary bring to bear phonological, semantic, morphosyntactic, stratigraphic, and variational analyses, on the reconstruction of proto-Romance etyma. All Romance varieties, regardless of their geographical extent or degree of documentation, are treated as equally important as sources of data for etymological reconstruction. Celac illustrates these methods by showing the importance of Istro-Romanian data in etymological reconstruction in the Dictionary.

Ana-Maria Pop and Gabriel Bărdășan analyse a set of terms from the semantic field of atmospheric phenomena and heavenly bodies both from the point of view of their conceptual representation and their etymology. They observe a general tendency in this semantic field in Istro-Romanian to denote generic notions via a term inherited from Latin whilst resorting to loans from Croatian or Italian to denote specialized notions.

Larisa-Florentina Nicolaie analyses variants of the vowel /a/ in northern and southern Istro-Romanian based on the sound recordings of *Harta sonoră* (2014), *Limba de saka zi* (2011), and unpublished recordings made by Ionuț Geană in New York in 2018. Various phonological contexts are taken into account, and the realizations of /a/ in stressed and unstressed positions compared. The relation between the diphthong /wa/ of

Daco-Romanian, generally considered a monophonematic diphthong by Romanian scholars, and stressed /a/ in Istro-Romanian is examined.

Martin Maiden and Oana Uță Bărbulescu explore the viability and extension of the ending *-ure* in the southern and northern varieties. They observe that studies of Istro-Romanian morphology show a tendency to analyse nominal inflexion in terms conditioned by traditional descriptions of Romanian, where Romanian has three genders, and show that the *genus alternans* of the southern variety is not a third gender. They further establish as far as possible the temporal limits of the extension of the ending *-ure* and the loss of the *genus alternans* in the northern variety. By testing the behaviour of nouns which belong or once belonged to the *genus alternans* in simple and complex quantifier phrases, the authors identify the manner (more subtle than generally admitted) in which Čakavian / Croatian influence has worked on Istro-Romanian.

Ramona Cătălina Corbeanu addresses the functions and morphological structure of the Istro-Romanian subjunctive, drawing on a varied corpus of Istro-Romanian texts and on comparison with other Romanian dialects. The functions of the subjunctive in independent clauses, main clauses (deontic, volitional, etc.) and subordinate clauses (epistemic, conditional, etc.), and the selection of the subjunctive after different types of verb (volitional, *verba dicendi*, perception verbs, factive verbs, etc.) are analysed, identifying the preference for the subjunctive or the indicative as a function of certain characteristics of the main verb. The grammaticalization of *neca* is also discussed in comparison with Daco-Romanian *să*, in order to establish whether *neca* has remained a conjunction or whether it has also acquired the status of a subjunctive marker.

Ionuț Geană and Cătălina Ilie seek to understand the realization and morphosyntactic function of Istro-Romanian pronominal clitics, on the basis of a varied corpus of published texts and unpublished materials. Their article offers a new and detailed inventory of the clitics, their syntactic distribution, and the syncretisms between dative and accusative functions in southern Istro-Romanian, describing the characteristics of clitics in each Istro-Romanian variety but also addressing what distinguishes Istro-Romanian clitics from Romanian clitics and those of other Romance varieties. They may be attached not only to the verb, but (as in Daco-Romanian) to the noun, to subject pronouns, and to conjunctions while, in the southern variety, at least, we find syncretism between dative and accusative as in other Romance varieties.

Adina Dragomirescu and Alexandru Nicolae investigate new data on Istro-Romanian adjective position and its extremely strong preference for pre-nominal position. Their corpus analysis is supported by recent research on adjective order in old Romanian, and it is proposed that adjective ordering in Istro-Romanian may be interpreted either as an archaic (internal) inheritance from an earlier stage of Romanian or as due to contact with Croatian. There are also situations for which it is suggested that the ordering of adjectives is a 'convergent' feature.

4. The third perspective represented here reflects the results of recent dialectal surveys in Istria, the possibility of producing an integrated and thematically diversified electronic corpus, and the introduction of complementary methods such as community-sourcing, which can be especially effective when traditional dialectological fieldwork is difficult to achieve—and which become especially necessary in times of pandemic and given the scattered international diaspora of Istro-Romanian speakers.

Adina Brădeanu offers a detailed description of the main stages of development of the ISTROX pilot project at Oxford's Faculty of Linguistics, Philology, and Phonetics. She details the challenges that the project team had to meet, both ethical and Covid-related. She gives particular attention to the problems of transferring research from traditional methods to online, with the attendant change in the framework for researching communities and languages, which is all the more pressing given the small size of the community and the fact that the language is endangered.

Zvezdana Vrzić deals with the activities of documenting and conserving the Istro-Romanian varieties of Istria, called by their speakers *vlaški* and *žejanski*, as well as the varieties spoken in the international diaspora. Up-to-date information is given about the sociolinguistic situation in Istria and in the *vlaški/žejanski*-speaking communities. Vrzić describes the nature, aims, and documentation or conservation work which she carried out in Istria and in the diasporic communities in the late 2000s. This was done with sensitivity towards the community but also with respect for the scientific aims and led, among other things, to the creation of the first large-size online annotated linguistic corpus and to an assessment of the sociolinguistic status of the language. This includes a great variety of conservation and revitalization activities supported by and involving the community, such as the development of community-oriented learning material, organizing annual language festivals and language workshops, etc.

5. What follows, then, is a collection of articles whose perspective is innovatory, whose data are new, and whose analysis is open-minded and not hidebound by tradition (or by inappropriate political prejudices). The fact that we use the names which the speakers themselves give to the varieties they speak is a mark of our respect for the community.

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