The Typology and Dialectology of Romani

Edited by Yaron Matras, Peter Bakker and Hristo Kyuchukov

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LINGUISTIC FORM AND CONTENT IN THE
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VICTOR A. FRIEDMAN
University of Chicago

0. Introduction

The Republic of Macedonia has one of the most significant Romani populations in Europe. According to the 1994 census 43,732 people or 2.3% of the total population declared themselves to be of Romani nationality (Novi Makedonija 15.IX.94:1). The figures were 52,103 and 2.7% in the 1991 census. Romani nationality thus constitutes the fourth largest in the Republic after Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish. The figures for the relationship of declared nationality to first or other language are not yet available, but given discrepancies in the categorization of nationality and language (e.g. Muslim constitutes a nationality category but not a linguistic one), it is not unreasonable to assume that -- despite the fact that some individuals declaring Romani nationality will have a non-Romani first language -- the total number of Romani speakers is higher than available figures indicate. The fact remains that Romani is both statistically and legally a significant language in Macedonia. It was one of the six languages used in the 1994 census and is the language of television and radio broadcasts coming out of Skopje, Tetovo, and Kumanovo. Like other languages of Europe that have emerged as vehicles of public life during the past two centuries, Romani in the Republic of Macedonia (as in other countries) has been the subject of efforts at literary standardization. Unlike the case with some other languages, however, the standardization of Romani is taking place in both a national and a transnational context. On the one hand, there have been efforts such as Jusuf and Kepeski’s Romani gramatika (1980, henceforth, RG), which, while having in mind that transnational context, was nonetheless directed primarily at the Romani audience in Macedonia, as evidenced not only by the choice of dialects but also by the fact...
that it was published bilingually in Romani and Macedonian. Similarly, the standardization conference of November 1992 sponsored by the Board of Education of the Republic of Macedonia and the University of Skopje, while explicitly aware of the efforts at creating an international Romani literary language as specifically mentioned in the resulting document, nevertheless had as its goal a standardization of Romani as a language of study in schools in the Republic of Macedonia (see Friedman 1995).

On 17 November 1993 the first issue of a Romani monthly newspaper, Romani Sumnal/Romski Svet ‘Romani World’ (hereafter RS), was published in Skopje under the editorial leadership of Oskar Mamut, who is also employed in the Romani-language division of Radio-Television Skopje.3 The newspaper is bilingual, with all material in both Romani and Macedonian. The issue of the codification of a Romani standard language is explicitly addressed on the first page of the first number, where the editorial board states that one of the tasks they have set themselves is contributing to the development and use of literary Romani. As such, the paper can be taken as a measure of the progress and ongoing concerns of the standardization of Romani in the Republic of Macedonia. The role of the mass media is potentially of great importance in language standardization. Taking as its background RG (cf. Friedman 1985), the Skopje Standardization conference of 1992 (cf. Friedman 1995), and international efforts such as the standardization conferences of 1971 and 1990 (cf. Kenrick 1981, Cortiade et al. 1991), this paper will examine issues of RS’s orthography, phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon as they relate to on-going problems and discussions in the standardization of Literary Romani in the context of the Romani dialectal situation in the Republic of Macedonia with passing reference to other countries, e.g. Romania, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and member states of the EU.4

1. Orthography and phonology

1.1 Orthography

Choice of orthography is often connected with ethnic and political symbolism. The choice among the Arabic, Greek, and Latin alphabets was a key issue in the quest for Albanian unity at the beginning of this century (cf. Skendi 1967:366-90). In Croatia, Franjo Tuđman’s decree that bialphabetic Latin-Cyrillic signs be replaced by monoalphabetic Latin ones helped alienate the Serbian population of Croatia on the road to subsequent war (Glenny 1992:14). In Macedonia, the specification of the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet as official at the federal level in article 7 of the constitution has led to conflicts over public signs, particularly with the Albanian minority (Nova Makedonija 94.07.28, Rilindja 94.08.03, Flaka e vëllezëritit 94.08.13).

In the case of Romani, there are at present a variety of competing trends in those publications utilizing Romani and aimed at whole or in part at Romani audiences (cf. Friedman 1985, §1.0). The international orthography approved at the Fourth World Romani Congress held in Warsaw in 1990 (Cortiade et al. 1991), which uses the IPA yohg (ɔ) for the voiced dental affricate and the acute for the strident palatals, is currently in use in publications funded by organizations such as the Commission of European Communities (e.g. Hill 1994, and the newsletter Interface).5 The magazine Patrn resembles the Fourth World Romani Congress in its use of the acute accent where most Latin-based orthographies use a ha će k, but in other respects its orthography resembles the First World Romani Congress (Kenrick 1981) orthography. In the Czech Republic, a Czech-based orthography, similar to that proposed at the First World Romani Congress (Kenrick 1981), is in use (e.g. Hübshmannová et al. 1991), while in Bulgaria there are several orthographies: one based on Cyrillic (e.g. Malikov 1992, Kjučukov 1993b, Marushiakova and Popov 1994), one using English spelling conventions (e.g. Kjučukov 1993a), and one similar to Kenrick (1981; e.g. Marushiakova and Popov 1994). As has been noted elsewhere, the problem with the Fourth World Romani Congress orthography is that in other East European orthographies (notably Polish and former Serbo-Croatian), the acute is used to indicate mellow palatals (cf. de Gilla Kočanowski 1994:81, who has proposed an orthography based on the standard transliteration of Devanagari into the Latin alphabet but without diacritics, in which the palatals are represented by š, ž, c, j). RS follows standard East European practice of using the wedge (hač k, čirč klo) to indicate the strident palatals (š, ž, ĉ, d). In this it continues the standard Latinization practice for Macedonian and other Slavic languages.

1.2 Schwa

Schwa (used here as a cover term for central vowels ranging in realization from the low i to high i) is a marginal phoneme in many Romani dialects and is generally restricted to words of foreign origin (cf. discussion in Friedman 1985, §1.1). It is excluded from the Fourth World Romani Congress orthography as well as the document produced at the 1992 Skopje conference (Friedman 1995), although RG proposed <š> (Kjučukov 1993a uses <š>). In RS, schwa is indicated in the same manner as in Macedonian orthography -- where it is also
marginal -- by means of an apostrophe: g'ndinaja 'we think', s'kli'diba 'care, concern', c'kni'de 'nights', sak'zi 'chewing gum'. In the case of schwa plus sonorant (or vocalic sonorants), there is hesitation between zero and the apostrophe: s'kli'diba, fr'dingie 'directed, sent, led', pr'co 'goat', but v'rd'a 'wagons', also gndinela as well as g'ndinela. These can to some extent be treated as loan-vowels in the same manner as <ors> and <ors> in those dialects that have borrowed unadapted lexical items from languages such as Albanian, Turkish, and Hungarian.

1.3 The palatal quality of velars/dentals

The palatalization or palatal mutation of dentals and/or velars before front vowels and /i/ (cf. Friedman 1985, §1.4), continues to be problematic. In the Fourth World Romani Congress orthography, the problem is obviated in case endings (treated there as postpositional clitics), which are represented by the morphophonemic symbols 'q' and '6', although the same phenomena occur elsewhere. Thus for example, the same variation found in phonetic realizations of the dative suffix '-ke' occurs in roots such as ker- 'do' (cf. Friedman 1995). In RS, there is considerably less inconsistency in the representation of velars and dentals before front vowels and jot than in RG. Thus, although the principle of phonetic versus phonemic versus morphophonemic spelling is not consistently applied throughout RS, there is a tendency for certain lexical items and endings to follow one or another principle. For example, the verb vaker- 'say' is consistently spelled with <q>, while the root ker- is generally spelled <k> but also <q>, e.g. kerel and kerel 'does'. Aspirated <kh> is never combined with <j>; either aspiration is not indicated or <j> is not written, e.g. khere 'at home', khelela 'plays' but makjen 'they leave' vs makhel pes 'he is left', dikhlo 'seen', dikhlikam 'we saw', dikhena 'they see [long form]' but dikjen 'they see [short form]'.

The voiced variant of the dative suffix shows variation, e.g. amenge - amenje, but the voiceless variant and all other case affixes as well as roots only rarely indicate a palatal, palatalized, or joitated quality in spelling: lenger, gele, etc., but muzikakjere 'musical/of music' - angujkipakere 'progressive/of progress'. The root kin- 'buy' is consistently spelled kijn-, but the root gil- 'song/song' occurs as both gil- and gil-, similarly mangel 'wants' but mangelin 'while wanting'. Elsewhere fronting before /i/ is not indicated, e.g. lakiri 'her', ki Republika Makedoniya, etc.. The morphophonemic fronting of dentals before joitation is consistently spelled out: buti-bukja 'work sg/pl', rat - rakja 'night sg/pl', kjerdi - kjerja 'done - did'. Elsewhere, there is no graphic indication of frontal dentals. Thus the orthographic treatment of these phenomena, while gradually standardizing, remains problematic.

1.4 Jotation in feminine substantives

Romani dialects show variation in the jotation of oblique and plural forms of feminine stems, especially those with the nominative singular ending in a consonant (cf. Friedman 1985, §2.1). Moreover, oblique feminine stems in -āju frequently show contraction, e.g. daijake - deke 'mother (dat.).' RS is consistent in the jotation or nonjotation of individual lexical items, e.g. ēlı́'b 'tongue' is regularly jotted (čhī́bškiri 'F-gen') while jak 'eye' is not (jakha [pl]). RS is also consistent in its use of uncontracted obliques of stems in -āju, e.g. daijākiri čhī́b 'mother tongue' (f. gen.), ple čhajaja 'with his own daughter'.

1.5 The opposition əj

Although RS displays more consistency than RG in distinguishing vocalic /i/ from non-vocalic /j/, there is still some confusion (cf. Friedman 1985, §1.3). Thus, daj 'two' is consistently spelled but sai occurs alongside sāj. Vocalic /i/ is spelled in leindor 'while taking', leindor 'while giving', roipje 'weeping', sašošine 'social' but leje - leje 'taking', asažje 'laughter/humor', hasjje 'food/nourishment'.

1.6 The opposition həx

The etymologically unmotivated distinction between /h/ and /x/ (cf. Friedman 1985, §1.2) is not made in Arli or Burgudži, although it occurs in Džambaz, e.g. has 'laugh', xas- 'cough'. While RG prescribes the distinction, it is not consistently followed, e.g. both hiv and xiv 'hole'. RS reflects Arli practice using only the letter /x/, e.g. ējlovela pes 'it is understood/of course' (< h), hošinel 'feel, please' (< Tk. ho), huvja 'holes' (< x), ha (< x) 'eat'. Only the root Kramer, e.g. xramenipe 'writing', xramone - hramone 'written' (< hram - < Gk. gram-), cf. Boretsky & Igra 1994) occurs, but this may be an editorial oversight. Macedonian influence seems to appear in some items in the loss of /h/ or its passage to /v/ intervocally: asaša 'laughs' (< hasala), hovaven (< xojaxen) 'deceive'. Note also the loss of intervocalic /l/ as in Macedonian in siklobo alongside siklovibe 'studying'.

1.7 /r/, /r/ (rr, R, etc.)

As in most Macedonian Romani dialects, the distinction between plain /l/ and marked /l/ (long, uvular, etc.) is not present and therefore not indicated. This is the practice in RS as well as RG and Kenrick (1981) (cf. also Friedman 1995), but not in Cortiade et al. (1991) where <rl> is used for the marked member.

1.8 Clear, dark, and palatal /l/

In Macedonian Romani dialects, as in Macedonian, /l/ is clear before front vowels and dark elsewhere (cf. Friedman 1985, §1.5). It also contrasts with palatal /l'/. Unlike RG, where <lj> is sometimes used for clear and elsewhere for palatal /l/, in RS the sequence <lj> is reserved for palatal or jotted /l'/, e.g. l'il 'letter', l'el 'one takes', l'eljum 'I took', milje 'thousand', stikl'ovibe 'study', stikl'ijum 'I studied'. The graphic combination <lj> for final dark /l/, e.g. dell 'gives' occurs as if in imitation of Albanian graphic conventions, however these are probably simply errata. The form moll (pl. mollia) 'value/price' is apparently a Vlaxism (i.e. a word recently borrowed from a Vlax dialect for purposes of vocabulary enrichment).

1.9 Aspiration

As Boretzky (1993) observes, there is some variation in the realization of aspiration in individual lexical items, and it is generally neutralized word finally. This neutralization is generally reflected in spelling in RS: jek 'one' but jekkip 'unity', jekhfar 'once', jak 'eye' but jakha 'eyes', etc. Some roots, however, display inconsistency, e.g. pučen - pučava 'ask' (2 pl. imp. - 1 sg), luči - bi- luči/bilači 'good - harmful', makha 'we leave' - maka 'they leave' (cf. 1.3 above). There are also several Indicisms written with unadapted voiced aspirates as in RG: bhagia 'consciousness awareness', dhămjhjerbe 'threat', labhakjeren 'use', adhinet 'depend'.

1.10 Intervocalic -s/- in grammatical affixes

The treatment of original intervocalic /s/ and final /s/ in affixes (cf. Friedman 1985, §1.3) is consistently modeled on Arli, i.e. with two exceptions /s/ is generally lost, and in intervocalic position the resulting hiatus is spelled with <j> medially: mangaj 'we want', šunaj 'we hear', kasetaj 'with a cassette', ple čhaja 'with his own daughter', Ačhoven Devlejaj 'Good-bye', njiametaj 'with justification' (he lack of /j/ in e čhava 'with the child' could be simply a typographical erratum) finally: dikha 'we see', kjerja 'he did', ka la 'we will take'. Džanena romanest 'they know Romani', Me dikhava e manše sar manus 'I look at a person as a person', is i o le - ole - le 'bešt has'. The first of the two exceptions is is i 'is', there is' (cf. the foregoing example). Although there is an alternative form in Arli without /s/, viz. is, only is is used in RS. The other exception is original final /s/ in the reflexive accusative pronoun pes, which is important in the formation of various types of intransitives (on the model of Macedonian se). In RS, this final <s> is spelled with considerable inconsistency: hajvela pes 'it is understood/ of course', džanela pes 'it is known', bistrela pes 'is forgotten' but kjerje pes 'they pretended', g'ndnela pes 'it is thought of', kumela pes 'is liked, is wanted'. The three numbers of RS that appeared in 1993-94 displayed an apparent difference in editorial policy. Final <s> tended to be spelled with great frequency in the first number, omitted in the second, and spelled again in the third, although omission was not uncommon. 8

1.11 The combination n+s at morpheme boundaries

The affixation of the instrumental -satr[s] to the oblique plural stem in -n results in a delayed release perceived as /l/ resulting in spellings such as manšencar 'with people', iencar 'with them' etc. Elsewhere, however, the combination /ns/ is spelled although it may be pronounced [nts], e.g. sansara 'peace'.

1.12 Combinations of preposition + definite article & obl. 3 sg. pronouns

In the Fourth World Romani Congress orthography, prepositions are connected to definite articles by means of a hyphen, as in Romanian, e.g. k-o, k-i, tar-o, tar-i, baš-o, p-o 'to the' (masc., fem.), 'from the' (masc., fem.), 'about the', 'on the' (cf. Friedman 1985, §2.3). In some orthographies, an apostrophe is used in place of a hyphen. The typical Arli initial o- and third person oblique pronouns are written togehe: if at all: Fourth World Romani Congress orthography olesqe, olare, olenqe, etc. RS follows the practice of RG: prepositions of postpositional origin as well as underlying /p/ 'on' write the article with the preposition as one word: ko Roma 'to the Rome', ki Japonija 'in Japan', tari...
tiknipe ‘from childhood’, turi dar ‘from fear’, dëg ki kasarna ‘toward the baracks’, dëg ko gay ‘toward the village’.

The tendency is to write initial third person pronounal o- separately, especially in the genitive. Elsewhere there is some hesitation, e.g. ola ~ o la ‘her, them’, ucal olende ‘besides them’ but mashkar o lende ‘among them’, Kjeren o leja lafi thaj pučen ona akala pučiba ‘Talk with him and ask him these questions’, O čhavo valjian te ovel o le plo than ‘The child should have its own place’. Although this o- is etymologically part of the pronoun (see Sampson 1926:161-63), it is sometimes interpreted as a type of definite article. This not only affects orthographic representation, but sometimes even results in grammatical reinterpretations, e.g. bašt i lakiri kariera ‘about her career’ (see 2.3).

2. Morphology

2.1 Nominative third person pronouns

The shape of the third person nominative pronouns (Friedman 1985, §2.3) is consistently Arli: ov, aj, and ola ~ o la ‘be, she, they’, which latter is used for both genders, e.g. in reference to masc. pl. nouns such as manula, as opposed to masc. pl. on, which occurs only rarely. In other dialects, the shape can be voj, vaj, etc. (Džambaz, Gurbet, Kalderas) or jov, joj, etc. (central and northern Europe).

2.2 The nominative plural definite article

The nominative plural definite article (Friedman 1985, §2.4) is consistently the Arli o rather than e as found in other dialects, e.g. o Roma ‘the Romans’.

2.3 The genitive marker

The long forms of the genitive (-koro, -kiri, -kere; cf. Friedman 1985, §2.3) are used with almost complete consistency: bašt i lakiri kariera ‘about her career’, bašt o lakere uștipa ‘about her heights’, bašt o lakoro feniks ‘about her phoenix’, partijakere liderija ‘party leaders’, e romane poezijakoro dad ‘the father of Romani poetry’, duje chavengiri daj ‘mother of two children’, o leskiri antropologiški, socijalakiri, thaj kulturaški dimenzija ‘its anthropological, societal and cultural dimension’, e minoritetengeri dživipaskeri praktika ko Balkani ‘the reality (practicality) of life of minorities in the Balkans’. The one short genitive in -ki also shows a different shape in the internal vowel of a long form: E civiltaciakëri asimilaciakë balval ‘the civilizing wind of assimilation’; cf. also ki belgradeskëri TV. The form ko kher e Sakipenko ‘at the house of the Sakips’ is the only other short genitive.

2.4 Possessive pronouns

The singular possessive pronouns or Romani (Friedman 1985, §2.2) show a variety of shapes, among which the most common in the Balkans are (taking the masculine first person as exemplary): miro, mlo, mro, moro, mo (for details, see Boretzky and Igl 1994:388). Of these, the first two are markedly Arli, the third is Burgudži, the fourth is shared by Burgudži and Džambaz (Gurbet), while the last is common throughout Macedonia. Nonetheless, RS is distinctly Arli in its favoring forms of the type mlo and makes infrequent concessions by occasionally using forms of the type mo, e.g. Dikindor ma ne našaven plo muj, našavje pi bul ‘Taking care to save their face, they lost their butt.’

2.5 Aorist person markers

The shape of the first person aorist marker (Friedman 1985, §2.5) is a diagnostic feature separating the so-called Vlax from the Non-Vlax dialects of Romani.9 The former are characterized by -em, the latter by a back rounded vowel, -om or -um. All three endings occur in the Romani dialects of Macedonia, in Džambaz, Burgudži, and Arli, respectively. RS consistently uses the Arli -em, e.g. ačhiljum ‘I remained’, bistergium ‘I forgot’, geljum ‘I went’, khelgium ‘I danced’, leljum ‘I took’ g’ndingium ‘I thought’. There is not much dialectal variation in the markers of the other persons (aside from 2 sg -al (vs -an) in Sinti and some other dialects of former Austria-Hungary).10 RS, however, has a peculiar first person plural aorist marker, viz. -em rather than the expected -am, e.g. bašaljjen ‘we played’, glelem ‘we went’, giljavjem ‘we sang’, kjergjem ‘we did’, lelem ‘we took’, manglem ‘we wished’, vakjerjem ‘we spoke’, dikhlem ‘we saw’. On rare occasion, the expected -am is used: ačhiljam ‘we remained’, diklijam ‘we saw’. In the conjugated forms of ‘be’, which constitute the historical source of these affixes, RS consistently has the expected 1 sg stijum and 1 pl stijam. This may be an attempt to incorporate a Džambaz feature with an altered meaning, but at present it remains unclear.
2.6 Imperfect/Pluperfect

RS is consistently Arli in its formation of the imperfect (Friedman 1985, §2.5) adding the analytic preterit auxiliary sine (functioning as a particle) rather than by suffixing -as to the conjugated present.1 Ko adava vakti kherea sine pes vakti [sic! = lafi!] baš o bet love, a aj mi šorori na džanela sine te čorelu. ‘At that time it was said that it was a matter of a lot of money, but she, poor thing, did not know how to [= would not have thought of] steal.’ A sako dive o la avena sine ko pobaro numero, pa akhal avito pes dži ko adava o la te čiven pes ki privatkanie khera. ‘But every day they came in greater numbers, and thus it came to this: they had to be put [up] in private houses.’ Sa džala sine šukar dži na aqorkjerjum o fakultet. ‘Everything went/was going fine until I finished college.’

2.7 Long versus short present tense forms

RS almost always follows the practice articulated in RG of limiting short present forms (Friedman 1985, §2.5) to modal constructions sensu largo, i.e. subordination to the future marker ka and the modal (conjunctive/subjunctive/ optative/conditional) marker te. The following examples are typical: na mangaja te vakera ‘we don’t want to talk’, tergiola thaš ka tergiol ‘it remains and will remain’. The following two sentences constitute exceptions to this practice: Te perena tumara bala masirnen o la lomeja o pali odova thoven o len sar sakana. ‘If your hair is falling out, rub it with salt and then wash it as usual’. Ja ka ačhava belijaver mlo dikhiše - bi cenzurakoro. ‘But I will leave my uncensored view for another time.’ The first of these is explicable either as a progressive (Saip Jusuč, pć) or as conditional versus conjunctive (Boretžky and Igl 1994:402).

2.8 Adjective comparison and agreement

This is an area of grammar in which RS reflects dialectal compromise (cf. also Friedman 1985, §2.2). The comparative is formed using the Arli/Burgudži prefix po- (from Macedonian) while the superlative is formed using the Đambamb prefix maj- (from Romanian, as opposed to Arli naj- [ < Macedonian] or em- [ < Turkish]), e.g. baro, pobaro, majbaro ‘big, bigger, biggest’. The one remnant of the old synthetic comparative in -eder is the item pobuter ‘more’ (<but ‘very’), which is used more frequently than pobut. RS shows ordinary adjective agreement, except for borrowings from Macedonian, which are taken over in the Macedonian neuter, which looks like the Romani masculine (-o) but are then treated as indeclinables in RS, e.g. socijalno buti ‘welfare’ (literally ‘social work’, in which buti is feminine. If the adjective were made to agree, it would be socijalnati [which would be identical to the Macedonian plural].

2.9 Derivation of abstract nouns

RS uses both -be and -pe for the derivation of abstract nouns from verbs and adjectives (Friedman 1985, §2.1). It appears that -be is restricted to deverbal nouns, while -pe is used for both deverbal and deadjectival nouns: akharipe ‘invitation’, bipakjarenipe ‘distrust’, čalipe ‘truth, reality’, manuštipe ‘humanity’, naripe ‘destitution’, šajlipe ‘possibility’, dikhiše ‘view’, fikstrube ‘establishment’, kelihe ‘playing’, pučhe ‘question’, s’kldib ‘cares’, prandibe ‘weddings’, mariba ‘wars’, hardzhibe ‘expenses’. In at least one instance, the affixes are used to distinguish meaning in a single stem, viz. mang- which has such diverse but related meanings as ‘want, wish, love, seek, beg, need, demand’ etc., whence mangiopa ‘needs’ but mangibe ‘desire’; cf. also namangibe ‘hatred’.

3. Syntax and lexicography

3.1 Modal constructions

RS consistently uses the Arli modal construction of te + aorist to express fulfillable hypothetical conditions: Te gelem ničča, ka džana ka o dišanija, uzač e religiengerger anava isin len specifikane anava ‘If we go in order, we will discover that all peoples, alongside religious names, have [their] particular names’; Te phirjeri hari ki historija ka dikhe o darhija e komplekseske tari hari molt, ‘If we go a little into history, we will see the roots of the inferiority complex’, Te gndinjeo pes hari pohar, pakjave ka ka vaščenje: Amen sijam... ‘If one thinks a little deeper, I believe that they will say: We are...’

On rare occasion, te plus long present is used: Te perena tumara bala masirnen o la lomeja o pali odova thoven o len sar sakana ‘If your hair is falling out, rub it with salt and then wash it as usual’. Otherwise te + present or kana express fulfillable expectative conditions: Kana šaj ov, soske našti me?/Kana šaj ov, soske me te našti?/Kana šaj ov, thaš me ka kjeras adava/kana šaj o la, soske na amen ‘If he can, why can’t I? If he can, why can’t it be me? If he can, then I will do this/if they can, then why not us?’
The borrowed Slavic conditional marker *bi* also occurs for fulfillable conditions, but only rarely: *Salde na bi mangaja te ovel kaj sijam majbare Romane Don Kihotija*. ‘Only we would not like it to be the case that we become the greatest Romani Don Quixotes’. Macedonian *ako* is extremely rare although the partial calque *thaj ako* ‘although’ does occur.

3.2 ‘be’ and ‘have’

Unlike many other problematic areas of dialectal variation, where RS shows some hesitation, albeit not as much as in RG, in matters of the copula RS shows great editorial consistency despite the great dialectal variation (cf. Boretzky and Igl 1994:403-406). The paradigm of the present copula is strictly Arli, of the Baroči type (Figure 1):

*Figure 1: The RS copula*

The 3 sg./pl. past tense is *sine*, which also functions as marker for all other past forms (see 2.6 above). The possessive/existential is always formed with *isi*, and the negative possessive/existential is consistently the general Non-Vlax *nana*, e.g. *Sakoja dujo diz isi la pli ‘Roma Unija’ numa, o la nana len nisave vjavaharija ‘Every second town has its ‘Romani Union’, but (literally ‘only’) they have no connection with one another’. *MJaj akja klašno socijalno arka isi pandu jek tari 1992-to berš pendjardi sar programa baš e džajdaspoko standardeskoro arakhibe ‘Beside this classic welfare, there has been (lit. ‘is’) a program since May 1992 for the protection of the standard of living’. The third person present copulative functions of ‘be’, including passive participle constructions, are consistently rendered by *tanoāndi tane; o gendo e manaukengoro so pherena o usuila baš socijalakoro arakhibe tano sa majbaro ‘the number of people fulfilling the conditions for social welfare is greater than ever’, *sxamone tane bigjende rigore ‘numberless pages have been written’.

3.3 Negation

Expressions of negation is an area where RS shows dialectal compromise. The negative existential *nana* and the distinction between the modal negator *ma* and the indicative negator *na* are all consistent with Non-Vlax (Arli, Burgudži) usage. The negative pronoun, however, *khausik ‘nothing’, khonik ‘no one’, as well as negative adverbs such as *nikana ‘never’ reflect Vlax usage, as opposed to Arli *ništo ‘nothing’, niko ‘nobody’ etc. RS also uses *cipota ‘nothing’, which appears to be a Džambaz treatment of a Hellenism (Greek *tipota ‘nothing’).

3.4 Vocabulary

The vocabulary of RS displays many of the trends in current efforts to establish literary Romani in Macedonia: the use of neologisms, Indicisms such as *ražtra ‘state’, sansara ‘peace’ (cf. also 1.9), ‘internationalisms’, calques on Macedonian, etc. In terms of vocabulary choice within the everyday lexicon of the various Romani dialects of Macedonia, as in grammar, RS tends to favor Arli but makes occasional compromises by selecting from the other dialects. Thus, for example, the following consistently uses Arli *ojja ‘yes’ (vs. Džambaz and Burgudži *so*), Arli *javer ‘other’ (vs. *aver*), Arli *ajasa ‘tomorrow’ (vs. *tehara or javine*), Non-Vlax *lajf ‘word’ (vs. Vlax *vornha*) but also non-Arli *thaj ‘and’ (vs. Arli *hljem) and Vlax *luongo ‘long’*. In some cases synonymous items from different dialects are used, e.g. Arli *agjaar, akhal and Džambaz agaja ‘thus’, Arli *biz “without” but also the more widespread *bi, Non-Vlax salde ‘only’ but also Vlax *numa*. Motivations for individual choices varies, thus for example *thaj* is apparently preferred to *hljem because the former is Indic whereas the latter is from Turkish, but *bizo* is influenced by Slavic whereas *bi* is not. Both *salde* and *numa* are borrowed (from Turkish and Romanian, respectively), but the same situation holds for *lajf and vornha*.

The name of the newspaper itself is peculiar. *Sumnal* in the Vlax dialects of Romani means, among other things, ‘holy’. The Macedonian word for ‘holy’ is *svet*, which is homonymous with the word for ‘world’. In the meaning ‘world’ Macedonian *svet* is derived from an original meaning of ‘light’. The semantic equation of ‘light’ and ‘world’ was calqued from South Slavic into Romanian, where the word for ‘world’ is *lume (definite lumea). The Romanian word was borrowed into the Vlax Romani dialects, whereas Non-Vlax dialects in the Balkans use other borrowings such as the Turkism *dowo*. The use of *sumnal* to mean ‘world’ is based thus on a complex of misunderstandings.
4. Conclusion

In its basic principles, RS represents a development in the direction described by the decisions reached at the 1992 Skopje conference and indicated in RG, namely an Ati base with elements from other dialects using a Latin orthography of the type in wide use in Eastern Europe, including RG, and recommended at the 1971 standardization conference (cf. also Hancock 1993, 1995). Nonetheless, specifics of the solutions reached by RS differ from those seen elsewhere. Taken as a whole, RS clearly represents a step forward in the standardization of Romani in the Republic of Macedonia. The editors are aware of standardization issues and are attempting to make concrete contributions towards a consistent and usable norm.

Endnotes

1. According to Svetlana Antonovska, head of the Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Macedonia, the difference in the 1991 and 1994 figures is due primarily to the fact that in 1991 Yugoslav citizens residing abroad for more than one year were included in the census figures, while in the 1994 Macedonian census – in keeping with international norms – citizens residing abroad for more than one year were not included (personal communication).

2. Because nationality and mother tongue (first language) constitute separate census categories, it is possible, for example, for an individual to declare Romani nationality but Turkish mother tongue or vice versa.

3. Although the newspaper was intended as a monthly, it has so far appeared only thrice: 17 November 1995, 10 December 1995, and 1 April 1994.

4. We are accepting here as a useful heuristic device the distinction between the so-called Vlax and Non-Vlax dialects of Romani. Although the Romani dialectal situation in the Republic of Macedonia is quite complex, the majority of speakers use dialects of a Non-Vlax type that are described by the self-ascriptive cover term Arli (< Turkish yerli 'local'). Next in importance for Macedonia is Džambaz (< Turkish kambaz 'acrobats, horse-dealer', known elsewhere as Gurbet, related to Kolder, Covari, Covari, Mavran, etc.), which is a Vlax type dialect that has undergone Non-Vlax influence. Also of significance for Macedonia is Burguzi or Burgži (< Turkish burguz 'gimlet-maker', also known as Rabadiži (< Turkish rabdiz ‘draumlan’)) or Kovčaja (< Slavic Kočor 'blacksmith', a name which is also used for other groups including the non-Romani speaking Gjiuci of southwestern Macedonia), which is also a Non-Vlax dialect. The term Vlax refers to the fact that speakers of these dialects sojourne in Romani and have a number of Romanian lexical elements in their vocabularies. See also Borisčzy and Igl (1994).

5. This orthography is also used in Sarhu (1991, 1992).

6. This phonemic distinction is not inherited from an earlier distinction (see Sampson 1926:47, 49-51).

7. The change of Roamni ls to Ăp (with subsequent loss or realization as ăp) in general or in certain restricted grammatical environments is well known in certain Romani dialects including Sinti and Bosnian Gurbet (Ventsel & Čerenkov 1976:285-88). In Ati this change is restricted to a few grammatical morphemes, and the phenomenon does not occur in the other dialects of Macedonia.

8. It is not clear what the motivation was for this apparent shift in editorial policy, but given the dialectal saliency of this feature, it seems to represent a vacillation between dialectal compromise (presence of ăp) and a more consistent Arli base (lack of ăp).

9. On the dialectal distinction, see note 4. Following Paspaut (1870), I use the term aorist to refer to the simple pretetir based on the partecipial stem.

10. There is considerable variation in the third person endings in all of Romani, a topic beyond the scope of this paper (see also Matras 1995). For additional details see Friedman and Dankoff (1991) and Borisčzy and Igl (1994:355-56).

11. Although not occurring in RS, the pluperfect is formed in the same manner in each dialect as its respective imperfect, but with the aorist rather than the present as the base.

12. The homonymy is a coincidence of historical development. The ă/ of sver 'boly' is from a Common Slavic front nasal, whereas the ă/ of sver 'world, light' is from a Common Slavic *tę.

References


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