



The Palgrave Handbook of Romani Language and Linguistics

Edited by
Yaron Matras · Anton Tenser

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Yaron Matras is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Manchester. He has published widely on Romani linguistics, including the titles *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge, 2002), and *Romani in Britain: The Afterlife of a Language* (Edinburgh, 2010), and has led a series of large-scale research projects and international research consortia devoted to Romani linguistics and Romani studies in general. He served as Editor of the journal *Romani Studies* from 1999 to 2017 and was co-founder of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies. His interests include contact linguistics and multilingualism, and he is the author of *Language Contact* (Cambridge, 2009; second edition 2019) and the founder of the Multilingual Manchester research unit.

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Anton Tenser holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Manchester and a docentship in Romani Studies at the University of Helsinki. He is the author of a monograph on the grammar of *Lithuanian Romani* as well as several academic articles on Romani linguistics and ethnography. Anton has contributed to a number of large-scale Romani linguistics projects, including RMS, RomLex, Helsinki Romani project and the Russian Romani Corpus. In the past, he has taught at the University of Chicago, University of Helsinki and Vanderbilt University. He currently works as an analytical linguist at Google, Pittsburgh.

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Abbreviations

1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
A	Agent-like argument
ABL	Ablative
ACC	Accusative
ADD	Additive connector
ADJ	Adjective, adjectivizer
ADV	Adverb
AGR	Agreement
AOR	Aorist
ART	Article
BCE	Before Current Era
CAUS	Causative
CE	Current Era
COMP	Complementizer
COND	Conditional
COP	Copula
CORR	Correlative particle
DAT	Dative
DEF	Definite article
DEM	Demonstrative
DIM	Diminutive
DMS	Dental modal subordinator
DO	Direct object
F	Feminine
FREQ	Frequentative

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FUT	Future
GEN	Genitive
GER	Gerund
IMP	Imperative
IMPF	Imperfect
IND	Indicative
INDF	Indefinite
INF	Infinitive
INS	Instrumental
IO	Indirect object
ITR	Intransitive
LOAN	Loanword adaptation
LOC	Locative
M	Masculine
MID	Middle
N	Noun
NEG	Negative
NEUT	Neuter
NOM	Nominative
NOUN	Nominalizer
NP	Noun phrase
NPFV	Non-perfective
NPOS	Non-positive
NREM	Non-remote
NUM	Numeral
O	Object
OBL	Oblique
P	Patient-like argument
PFUT	Present–future
PFV	Perfective
PL	Plural
PLPF	Pluperfect
POSS	Possessive
PRF	Perfect
PRIV	Privative
PROG	Progressive
PRS	Present
PST	Past
PTC	Perfective participle
PTCP	Participle
Q	Questions
QNT	Quantifier

R	Recipient-like argument
REFL	Reflexive
REL	Relative pronoun
REM	Remote
RMS	Romani Morpho-Syntax database
ROMLEX	Romani Lexical database
S	Single argument
SG	Singular
SOC	Sociative
SOV	Subject-object-verb
SUBJ	Subject
SUBJ	Subjunctive
SUP	Superlative
SV	Subject-verb
SVO	Subject-verb-object
T	Theme argument
TAM	Tense-aspect-mood
TR	Transitive
TRN	Translative case
Txt	Text
V	Verb
VERB	Verbalizer
VO	Verb-object
VOC	Vocative
VS	Verb-subject
WALS	WORLD Atlas of Language Structures

Database Abbreviations

AL	Albania
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czech Republic
FIN	Finland
GR	Greece
HU	Hungary
LT	Lithuania
LV	Latvia
MK	Republic of North Macedonia
MX	Mexico
PL	Poland
RO	Romania
RUS	Russia
SK	Slovakia
UKR	Ukraine
YU	Yugoslavia

Language Abbreviations

Arm.	Armenian
Bulg.	Bulgarian
CR	Common Romani
Cz.	Czech
FPS	Piedmontese Sinti of Southern France
Fr.	French
Germ.	German
Gr.	Greek
IPS	Italian Piedmontese Sinti
It.	Italian
Kurd.	Kurdish
Latv.	Latvian
M. Pers.	Middle Persian
MIA	Middle Indo-Aryan
NIA	New Indo-Aryan
OChSl.	Old Church Slavonic
OIA	Old Indo-Aryan
Oss.	Ossetic
Pasht.	Pashto
Pers.	Persian
Piedm.	Piedmontese
Prov.	Provençal
Rom.	Romanian
Russ.	Russian
SCr.	Serbo-Croatian
Slk.	Slovak
Sln.	Slovene

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1

Introduction

Yaron Matras and Anton Tenser

Popular images of the Romani language are often wrapped in the mystique that surrounds perceptions of the Romani people as supposedly hidden, withdrawn, and subversive. There is still widespread belief that Romani is an array of different languages, some of them haphazardly put together as an internal means of communication aimed primarily at concealing interaction from others, lacking in systematicity and drawing on random elements from different sources. Even some contemporary scholars speak occasionally of the ‘myth of the Romani language’ (Canut 2011) or suggest that it might have emerged as a ‘group ritual’ (Willems 1997, p. 83) or an improvised mode of communication ‘created along the trade routes’ (Okely 1983, p. 9). Still widespread is the reference to Romani in the plural, as ‘Romani languages’, despite the fact that already Pott’s (1844–1845) monumental work clearly demonstrated the diachronic unity of Romani and that political efforts since the early 1990s, in particular at the level of European institutions (see Matras 2013, 2015; Halwachs et al. 2013), have recognized the language as a marker of Romani identity and a potential access pathway to

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education and equal opportunities. Among the aims of this collection is to add yet another reference point to help dispel such myths and give a realistic perspective on Romani. Our principal agenda is to provide an up-to-date, state-of-the-art overview of research into the descriptive-historical linguistics and sociolinguistics of Romani.

Drawing on its early roots in the nineteenth century, the linguistic study of Romani in the first part of the twentieth century produced a number of reference grammars (Sampson 1926; Sergievski 1931; Barannikov 1934) and some substantial, groundbreaking research into historical relations with other Indo-Aryan languages (e.g. Grierson 1908; Woolner 1913–1914; Sampson 1923; Turner 1926; Bloch 1932). Post-war descriptive Romani linguistics saw the completion of a number of doctoral dissertations devoted to local and regional dialects (Kostov 1963; Kenrick 1969; Kochanowski 1963–1964) alongside more descriptive grammars (e.g. Gjerdman and Ljungberg 1963; Pobożniak 1964; Ventcel 1966), and the introduction of a Balkanist areal perspective on Romani (Friedman 1985; Boretzky 1986) as well as interest in contact phenomena and language attrition (Hancock 1970; Kenrick 1979; Boretzky 1985; Iglá 1989).

The early 1990s saw growing interest in linguistic typology and the documentation of smaller and endangered languages. It was also the period of dramatic political developments surrounding the fall of communism and the opening of borders, allowing freedom of cultural and political association among the Romani communities of Central and Eastern Europe, and leading to a consequent increase in their public visibility. All this gave a new boost to interest in Romani. A new generation of doctoral dissertations examined typological features now in a theoretically informed perspective (Holzinger 1993; Matras 1994; Halwachs 1998), and new concepts were introduced into the study of contact and Romani-based mixed languages (Bakker and van der Voort 1991; Boretzky and Iglá 1994). New forms of participatory research emerged, with linguists supporting language revitalization programmes, the development of literacy and educational resources, Bible translations, and various civil society and activist initiatives. The first International Conference on Romani Linguistics took place in Hamburg in 1993, bringing together specialist researchers from various countries. It has since been convening on a bi-annual basis, the thirteenth such event having taken place in Paris in late 2018. Enabled through grants from national and international research councils and partly in conjunction with a rising number of doctoral dissertations devoted to both individual Romani varieties and comparative studies, Romani has become the subject of considerable digital documentation work. Romlex, an online comparative dictionary of Romani dialects, was launched in 2001. The Romani Morpho-Syntax

(RMS) database, launched in 2006, remains one of the most comprehensive online dialectological resources for any language, offering structural sketches of well over a hundred varieties of Romani based on first-hand fieldwork, accompanied by audio files and search functions. The online Atlas of Central Romani combines detailed maps with extensive analytical commentaries on the structural distribution of forms. Online lexical database resources also exist for so-called Angloromani and Scandoromani (the use of Romani-derived lexicon in varieties of English and Scandinavian languages, respectively). Further online resources document Romani language publications and serve as repositories for literacy and education materials in Romani.

In the absence of historical records of the language that pre-date early modern times, the growing corpus of comparative dialect material has allowed researchers to substantially expand our understanding of the historical development of Romani. The study of Romani has also enriched general linguistic discussion. It has had a considerable impact on the study of language contact, in particular the postulation of borrowing hierarchies (see Matras 1998; Elšík and Matras 2006; Elšík 2009; see Matras and Adamou, this volume), and on our understanding of the formation and functions of so-called mixed languages (see Bakker 1998; Matras 2010; see Bakker, this volume). While formal linguistic theory has taken little interest in the language (but see McDaniel 1989), consideration has been given to Romani in various cross-linguistic typological compilations (e.g. van der Auwera 1998; Kortmann 2003; Hansen and de Haan 2009; Boye and Kehayov 2016). Romani linguistics has made prolific contributions to the field of language standardization and language policy, with specialists noting the ‘paradigm shift’ that is exemplified by plurilingual and trans-national standardization practices in Romani (see, e.g., Matras 2015). The geographical diffusion, the impact of contact, and the exceptional historical journey of Romani as an Indo-Aryan language spoken in Europe have prompted attention to Romani in discussions of phylogenetics and the interface of genetics and language (see Pereltsvaig and Lewis 2015).

While anchored primarily in linguistic methodology, contemporary research in Romani linguistics has also informed and engaged with the cross-discipline discussions in the field known more generally as Romani Studies. Work in linguistic ethnography (e.g. Leggio 2015; Abercrombie 2018) lies in the immediate interface of linguistics and anthropology. For many anthropologists, their own knowledge of Romani not only facilitated their immersion in Romani-speaking communities but also opened an avenue towards an interpretation of the symbolic value of particular Romani concepts (see Sutherland 1975; Stewart 1997; Tauber 2006; Engebriksen

2007). Other researchers in the social sciences have drawn on epistemological notions from Romani linguistics to address issues such as the performance of identity narratives (Lemon 2000; Silverman 2012) or group boundaries and community affiliation (Marushiakova and Popov 2004), or have illuminated historical aspects of language policy from a critical social science perspective (O’Keefe 2013; Marushiakova and Popov 2017). Language has also begun to figure in approaches to the educational integration of Roma (Payne 2017; New et al. 2017).

For more than a decade and a half, Matras’s (2002) introductory overview of Romani linguistics has served as a principal reference work, outlining the language’s historical origins, offering the first modern comparative discussion of its structural composition in phonology, morphology, and syntactic typology, and integrating a model of dialect differentiation and a discussion of contact behaviour and sociolinguistics including language policy. The present volume sets a new milestone in a similar trajectory. For the first time, we bring together a set of contributions in a joint effort to give an up-to-date state of the art that incorporates the most recent research findings in the field as well as the individual insights of authors with specializations in distinct sub-fields. The historical and structural aspects are covered by chapters on origins (Beníšek) and historical sources (Adiego), as well as lexicon (Scala), phonology (Baló), morphology (Elšík), and syntactic typology (Adamou and Matras). The extraordinary role of language contact is addressed in chapters on the impact of key contact languages, namely Turkish (Friedman), Slavonic (Meyer), and Hungarian (Bodnávora and Wiedner), as well as an overview of contact developments (Matras and Adamou) and a discussion of Para-Romani or ‘mixed’ varieties (Bakker). These contributions all set the scene for an integrated discussion of dialect differentiation (Elšík and Beníšek) and of language policy endeavours (Halwachs). We then expand the coverage to a number of novel themes that have not been explored before in the context of integrated discussions of Romani language and linguistics and which reflect not just new areas of research but in some cases also new domains of language activity that are connected to globalization and the expansion of media technology and trans-national connections: particular features of child-directed speech in Romani (Kubaník), Romani Bible translations (van den Heuvel), Romani on the Internet (Leggio), and Romani literature (Zahova).

The descriptive chapters draw heavily on the Romani Morpho-Syntax (RMS) database, now a standard reference in Romani linguistics, and readers will have the opportunity to refer to the online resource to follow up on

examples provided in the text, adding to the volume's coherence as a joint exploration and discussion platform. The RMS project began in 2000 with the compilation by Viktor Elšík and Yaron Matras, working together at the University of Manchester, of an overview of Romani dialect features based on published sources. From this, a questionnaire template emerged, in 2001, tailored to cover morpho-syntactic and some lexical and lexico-phonetic variation in a typologically informed perspective, which has since become a standard tool for the compilation of dialect descriptions in Romani (see Matras and Elšík 2006, Matras et al. 2009). A team of around fifty fieldwork and transcription assistants, technical assistants, and researchers contributed to the compilation of questionnaire-based elicitation as well as the collection of free speech samples from speakers in over 120 locations across Europe, giving in many cases first insights into dialect types and forms that had been largely unknown to the research community before. The resource has also transformed language documentation practices, introducing for the first time the model of the descriptive grammar in electronic form, accompanied by audio files and tag-searchable phrase transcriptions matched systematically to the cells of tables displaying inflectional paradigms and analytical features, with key structural categories marked for etymology and 'depth' of borrowing (from current or earlier contact languages).

While many of the authors are thus able to draw on a shared comparative resource, openly accessible to the readers and the public, this collection also highlights debates and current gaps in the study of Romani. For a start, the periodization of Romani into 'Proto-Romani' (the pre-European precursor), 'Early Romani' (the form of the language spoken in contact with medieval Greek, possibly in Anatolia), and 'Contemporary Romani' (as known to us today in its dialectal variation) appears to remain consensual yet new terms are being introduced for some of the phases (see Beníšek, this volume). The unique position of Romani as a non-territorial Indo-Aryan language that developed into its present shape in contact with European languages prompts reflection on models of language divergence as well as convergence. The tension between so-called genetic or phylogenetic models of dialect differentiation and language divergence, and models of feature diffusion through contact and repertoire complexity still requires careful attention at least for certain dialect clusters and regions, as Elšík and Beníšek (this volume) flag for central Europe; it will, without a doubt, also require cross-discipline collaboration in order to better understand the historical circumstances that may have shaped contacts between Romani-speaking communities and their mobility and migrations in the past. And while we

are now able to draw on a rich comparative descriptive corpus of structural material, extensive documentation of natural discourse and larger-scale surveys of variation are still lacking. The application to Romani of variationist sociolinguistics, discourse and conversation analysis, studies of language socialization, and critical sociolinguistic approaches to language repertoires, identity, and place is still at its very early beginnings. Some authors also point to the absence of a reliable modern etymological dictionary.

Discussions of language policy and the politics of language, language and faith, the use of language in the formation of online communities, and the links between literary production and activism, all serve to flag issues of agency in the shaping of language practices and their description and analysis. Interest in Romani linguistics emerged as the enlightenment brought about a quest for an understanding of origins, primordial connections, and divergence pathways. It was subsequently inspired, if not directly driven, by emerging methods and traditions of orientalism and colonial studies, both in respect of the Indo-Aryan connections of Romani and in regard to the marginalized social status of Romani-speaking communities in Europe and related communities in Western and Central Asia. In many countries, compilation of language samples for Romani was part of a law enforcement agenda from early modern times (see Adiego, this volume; Matras 1999), embedding the scientific study of the language into forensic services and a policy of control and containment. Our collection appears at a time when there is much discussion around the notion 'critical Romani studies' as a platform for a symbolic assertion of agency, with implications for a new epistemology (for a critical discussion, see Stewart 2017). Romani linguistics remains embedded into mainstream linguistics, and it draws on the mainstream discipline for its agenda and methods, seeking to uncover general and universal patterns, pertaining for instance to the mapping of cognition onto language, and to different forms of managing communication in different social contexts and units. While it has long broken away from both law enforcement and socio-political containment agendas, it has become attuned to issues of social justice and the responsibility to reach out to support and inform communities. We hope that this volume will be of interest both to linguists and to language enthusiasts including authors, translators, educators, and policy makers, as well as to specialists in neighbouring disciplines in the social sciences and humanities more generally. We wish to thank the contributors for publishing their work in this forum and Palgrave Macmillan for accommodating this collection in their programme of academic handbooks.

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Part I

History