

Dynamics of cultural and linguistic diversity in the multicultural city of Pula

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Aim, theory and methods

- urban public spaces constructed by social and linguistic practices of individuals
 - historical overview of intercultural dynamics
 - dynamics of contemporary (multi)cultural and linguistic diversity of the city

- speech acts as „acts of identity“ (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985)
- Bourdieu - forms of capital: cultural, social, economic (1986)
 - language as an instrument of power (1977)

„linguistic transactions depend on the structure of the linguistic field, which is itself a particular expression of the structure of the power relations between the groups possessing the corresponding competences“ (Bourdieu 1977: 647)

- Methodology: - ethnographic approach, qualitative methodology
 - semi-structured interviews; observation of language practices

Istria – a multicultural and multilingual region



border region: Croatia, Slovenia, Italy



Mediterranean → Continental Europe
eastern ↔ western Adriatic

Austro-Hungarian Empire

1867 – 1918

- urban, economic and demographic development
- 1853: Pula - main naval port
- **new waves of immigration**
- Pula as cosmopolitan city

- German (official language)
- Italian (prestigious language)
- local varieties (rural population)
- Croatian (national movement)



Italy

1920 – 1943

- **emigration of Slavic population**, forced italianisation
- prohibition of Croatian and Slovenian language
- Italian culture and language very present and influential

- Italian (prestigious language)
- local Croatian varieties (rural population)

Yugoslavia

1943 – 1991

- **emigration of Italian population** (*esuli*) → minority
- Pula as military city
- shipbuilding industry
- **immigration from other parts**
- „little Yugoslavia”



Republic of Croatia

1991 –

- 1990's: **immigration due to war**, mixed families
- common Yugoslav citizenship → national minorities (9 in Pula)
- Italian population → indigenous minority (special rights)
- tourism: second home buyers

Contemporary linguistic situation

- ▶ official level: standard Croatian and standard Italian bilingualism
- ▶ everyday language use: **plurilingualism**
 - **different local non-standard idioms:**
South-Slavic and Romanic
 - **minority languages** (e.g. Albanian, Macedonian, Serbian)
 - **code-switching, code-mixing, receptive multilingualism**

- „Since we are here in Istria, we have a mixed language, we have Italian and Croatian words. (...) We have Italian, Italian-Croatian. Istrian, it is a kind of mix. A mixture of everything, of people, of languages and, I mean, of culture, of ways of life, ways of cooking.”
- „Depends with whom they mingle. If the friends are Istrians, they speak Istrian Croatian. If the friends are Italians, they speak Italian. At home we speak Italian. Italian and Croatian. With my wife I speak Croatian“.
- „I speak to them [the fishermen] like this, a little bit of Italian, when I don't know how to say something in Italian, if I don't remember right away, I say it in Croatian and then go on in Italian.“
- “When I was in high school, there were people who by their last names were not Italians, although some of them were, but a lot of them spoke Italian at home. But you do not even notice that, they speak Croatian and Italian without any problems. They can even mix (the two languages), in a way that they speak Italian and then insert a Croatian word”.

- „Let's take for example me and her – she can speak Italian to me, I will speak Croatian. And everything will flow...“
- „The situation is interesting in our house. Dad has always spoken Italian, and my mom spoke Istrian, Chakavian. Which means Croatian-Chakavian. And I know that he used to reply in Italian and she would speak Croatian. And they always understood each other.“
- „You greet an Italian, ‘Buon giorno’, and he says ‘Dobar dan’. It’s a sign of respect.“
- Q: Did your parents speak Italian?
A: Yes, they did. My dad spoke German as well because he was in the Austrian Army. He knew German and Italian. We all got by very well. It was like that and that was it.
Q: But you always spoke Chakavian with your mum and dad?
A: Yes, yes, we spoke the local, Istrian language.
Q: And with your grandmother and grandfather?
A: The same. And with my husband Italian.

Local varieties

- considered inferior in the past; spoken in rural areas
- 1990's: reappreciation, positive attitude (regional policy)
- importance for **individual and group identification**

- perceived as **mother-tongue**

„Yes, we always speak Istro-Venetian. Never the standard, never. I can count on my fingers, maybe three or four persons who normally use the standard [Italian] language“ (F, 1982, Pula)

„I see that those people who once didn't bother, today they try more to speak Chakavian. That's very positive. I think it's very good because it positively affects the local identity“

BUT ...

"They will accept you only after it becomes certain that you live whole-heartedly here, which means being integrated in the whole system, and not just formal integration in different institutions and so forth, but also in communication with people and in private communication."

"If they [the newcomers] spoke Chakavian, it would be easier to accept them as Istrians. For me it is inconceivable to consider someone an Istrian if he doesn't speak Chakavian."

"They just stubbornly stick to their ways, they do not learn our dialects and should adapt to our ways..."

Concluding remarks

- historical trajectories → contemporary urban cultural and linguistic diversity
- fluid group boundaries and identities; changing and relative concept of minority
- hierarchy of languages dependent on symbolic power relations between the groups
- language perceived as a form of capital (social, economic)
- specific linguistic practices and multilingual forms of communication → acts of Istrian identity → co-existence and intercultural dialogue limited and exclusionary



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!