

## Italian Language in Istria: Status Planning, Corpus Planning and Acquisition Planning

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### Abstract

The geopolitical features and the historical cohabitation of the Slavic and Romance ethnic and socio-cultural components in the Croatian Istria County marked the overall heterogeneity of the multicultural and multilingual Istrian territory. A particularly important issue regarding language planning and policy is the statutory official status of the Italian language, besides Croatian. This paper focuses on analyzing language policies and practices based on status planning, acquisition planning and corpus planning. Language planning in the context of the Croatian-Italian bilingualism in Istria is considered significant the role of the legal system which guarantees the preservation of the Italian language as the language of the social environment, helping to create the conditions for its use and the availability of its services, ensuring linguistic rights to the members of the Italian national community, the only (autochthonous) national community in Istria (status planning). In order to determine and increase its prestige on the social level, learning Italian as the language of the social environment is encouraged among members of the majority in Croatian language teaching schools, for broadening its knowledge and the use of available services for a wider range of users (acquisition planning). The least efforts are applied to the development of attempts to ensure and expand its use within various social language functions (corpus planning). Although Italian is institutionally protected and its teaching is widely encouraged, the goal of its application in everyday socialization remains unreached.

**Keywords:** language planning, Istria, Italian, Istrovenetian.

## 1. Introduction

The geopolitical features and centuries of cohabitation of the Slavic and Romance ethnic components in the Croatian Istria County marked the overall heterogeneity of the multicultural and multilingual Istrian territory. From 1994 the Croatian-Italian bilingualism is recognized not only *de jure*, but it is *de facto* realized at the social and institutional level. The application of the institutional Croatian-Italian bilingualism, claimed to be a part of the socio-political, socioeconomic and administrative system (Orbanic, 1999: 45), is marked by legal policy regulations and the specific sociocultural and sociolinguistic settings characterized by the autochthonous presence of the Italian national community<sup>1</sup> (Blagoni, 2001; 2007). The Istrian sociolinguistic context is thus complex and fragmented. Language planning and policy are characterized by the particular heteroglossic diversity and the complex interrelations of the Istrian linguistic repertoire. Beside the two official standard languages Croatian (the language of the majority) and Italian (the language of the Italian national minority and the language of the social environment for the majority), other national languages are used: the minority allochthonous languages such as Serbian, Bosnian, Slovenian, Albanian, Macedonian, etc. Relevant is the ethnolinguistic vitality of the macroregional or panregional dialects (Chakavian dialect and Istrovenetian dialect) (Orbanic, 1999). Besides them, microregional (Chakavian, Kajkavian and Shtokavian) dialects and local dialects (the Istriot dialect, the Istroromanian dialect, the Montenegrin dialect of Peroj) are spoken<sup>2</sup> (Blagoni, 2001; 2007).

## 2. Bilingualism and Heteroglossic Diversity in Istria

### 2.1 Bilingualism vs. diglossia

Before describing the heteroglossic diversity in Istria, it is necessary to define the fundamental distinction between bilingualism and diglossia (Ferguson, 1959; 1977; Fishman, 1967; 1970; 1971; 1972:). Bilingualism assumes the coexistence of two linguistic codes with equal status, while diglossia (or functional bilingualism) implies the complementary relation between two language varieties; each one has a specific social function, in accordance with the applied communicative rules shared by a given speaking community, and is used only in certain domains (while in bilingual settings the two varieties are equally interchangeable in all the domains and interactive situations). Diglossia

implies a sociolinguistic hierarchy between a superior or high language variety and a subordinate or low language variety. Between the two there is a functional division of complementarity (Ferguson, 1959; 1977): the high variety is usually used in formal public and official situations and never in informal, private, family and everyday domains, where the low variety is commonly used. Diglossic situations are therefore very frequent and assume a vertical relationship between the two codes of the repertoire (one or the other code is used). Bilingualism in turn provides a horizontal relationship between two language systems, both considered functionally equal and having equal rights in terms of social communication efficiency (both can be interchangeable used) (Milani Kruljac, 1990).

## 2.2 Bilingualism with (double) diglossia and imperfect poliglossia

The phenomena of bilingualism and diglossia are not necessarily mutually exclusive: they can simultaneously be manifested and mutually supplemented (Fishman, 1967). Fishman's (1967) traditional distribution (diglossia with bilingualism, bilingualism without diglossia, diglossia without bilingualism, absence of diglossia and bilingualism or monolingualism) is not fully applicable to the Istrian situation. The Istrian linguistic repertoire is characterized by specifically strong language contacts between standard languages (colloquial varieties of Croatian and Italian), koines or regional dialects (the Chakavian dialect – one of the two components of the croatophone diasystem; the Istrovenetian dialect – one of the two components of the italophone diasystem) and local dialects. When a speaker uses Croatian, Italian and Istrovenetian dialect (two languages and one dialect), bilingualism with diglossia is encountered. If Croatian, Italian, Istrovenetian dialect and Chakavian dialect are used, bilingualism with double diglossia are achieved. Further on, if a speaker uses in everyday interactions the two official languages, the two regional dialects and one or more local idioms, the state of tetraglossia or pentaglossia is manifested. If an allochthonous language or a foreign language is added to the list, multilingualism is achieved (Milani Kruljac, 1990; 1996; 2003).

The majority of interactional habits of the members of the Italian national community in Istria usually belongs to the category of bilingualism with diglossia, involving the statutory recognized equal status of Croatian and Italian and the functional diglossic differentiations between Istrovenetian dialect (subordinate low variety) and Italian (high variety). Italian is the national language of the members of the Italian national community, the language of formal education<sup>3</sup> and certain formal situations. The Istrovenetian dialect is their first language, the language of identity and sociocultural belonging, traditions and intergenerational transfers and the expression of the whole cosmos of the original and autochthonous intangible cultural heritage of the Istrian italophone microcosm (Bursic Giudici, 2011: 66). Istrovenetia is even the favorite code for private everyday communication needs. The diglossic state of italophone speakers can be even defined as dialectal bilingualism, since the majority of the members of the Italian language community acquires Istrovenetian dialect as their first language, and only later master the Italian language (their second language), usually when they enroll in kindergarten or school. If they acquire Croatian after Istrovenetian (and before enrolling in the formal educational system), Italian is considered their third language (Milani Kruljac, 1990; 2001; 2003). Unlike Italian, Istrovenetian has an enormous communication prestige and ethnolinguistic vitality. However, Italian has an institutionalized status and institutional preservation is provided for it, while Istrovenetian is not institutionally protected. So, care and protection are directed only to the official language of national minority, and the efforts are negligent towards the inner diasystemic and heteroglossic diversity (Blagoni, 2002).

In the italophone family, school and society domains in Istria, the Istrovenetian dialect represents the dominant language (L1) in the family domain, which is dialectophone; the Italian language is only ideally dominant in the school domain if the speakers attend Italian schools (where all the subjects are taught in Italian)<sup>4</sup>; the majority Croatian language, the first official language of Croatia, is obviously dominant in the wider social context (L2), as it is the code of social cohesion, essential for societal needs in all public official and informal domains (Milani Kruljac, 1984b; 1990; 2001; 2003; Milani Kruljac & Orbanic, 1989a; Strukelj, 1986), owning an undeniable social prestige because it covers almost all the communication functional ranges. Taking into account that a member of the Italian language community in Istria lives and works as a member of a minority group within the croatophone social majority, the functional use of Italian and Istrovenetian is limited to specific domains, while Croatian is the socially dominant language. Italophone speakers are required to know and use the Croatian language and become bilingual, which is not the case of croatophone speakers, because their learning of Italian is optional and depends upon the interest, motivation and attitudes (of parents and children) towards the Italian language and culture and their acquisition/learning (Orbanic, 1999).

Milani Kruljac defines the global image as imperfect poliglossia (Milani Kruljac, 1990; 2001; 2003; cf. Skubic, 1984), since the term best describes the complex relationship between the Istrian croatophony and italophony, which implies the alternation of two high varieties, between which Croatian language is considered to be the first official language (first high variety, used in formal and informal interactions), while Italian is the second official (high) variety, or

the medium variety covering only certain limited formal interaction domains, according to social role and communicative dominance relationships<sup>5</sup>. According to that limitation, Milani Kruljac (1990; 2001; 2003) talks even about double diglossia with potential bilingualism, which applies only to a limited number of speakers, mostly students of Italian schools over the duration of the educational process. When the educational process ends, it is usually converted into diglossia with latent bilingualism.

### 3. Language Planning in Istria: Status Planning and Corpus Planning

Language planning deals with the discursive creation of a language policy (Antia, 2000; Blommaert, 1996; Fishman, 1974; Haarmann, 1990; Haugen, 1966; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Rubin, 1983). Language planning is subdivided in three main interrelated and complementary focuses: status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning. Status planning regards the modifications of the societal and functional status of a language within a speaking community. Corpus planning deals with decisions and activities undertaken in order to codify and elaborate certain language functional forms and structures. Acquisition planning aims at increasing the amount of existing and/or potential speakers using a given language variety or enabling them to learn a language variety or acquire particular skills for implementing status and corpus planning (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Coopler, 1989; Haugen, 1987; Kloss, 1987).

The Italian minority is the only recognized national community in Istria that has a privileged position compared to other minorities (all reduced to ethnic groups) because of its autochthony (historical presence). The rights of the Italian national community are guaranteed by national and international acts and agreements<sup>6</sup>. The Statute of the Istria County guarantees the institutional Croatian-Italian bilingualism and the official status of the Italian language in all the Istrian areas where the presence of the Italian national community has been historically registered. Croatian and Italian are given equal rights for their usage in all the regional and local self-government settings. The Croatian-Italian bilingualism is the only Istrian bilingualism that has been institutionalized, objectified and theorized. The position of the Italian national community and the Italian language in Istria is determined by the durability of institutional recognition of the Italian language as the language of the social environment and the education system (there is a parallel system of education in Croatian and Italian) (Hrzica, Padovan and Kovacevic, 2011). Special protection is given to status planning of the Italian language (just one of the components of the Istrian italoophone repertoire), especially in the formal educational system. In fact, in the majority schools (Croatian schools, where all the subjects are taught in Croatian), the learning of Italian, as the language of the social environment, is particularly ensured and especially encouraged or mandatory in the statutory bilingual municipalities, towns and villages. Furthermore, incentivated is the creation of the conditions for the use of the Italian language and the availability of its services.

The functional use of Croatian and Italian and their literary and cultural prestige is shaped by sociolinguistic factors layering language use. Croatian, the absolute koine throughout the County, is the language that everyone understands and almost everyone speaks. Croatian might be used in all the communicative situations and is sometimes used even as a transregional or panterritorial koine (outside the borders of Croatia, in the bordering regions) (Filipi, 1989a; 1989b). speaking community) in Istria. Italian literary language, the sole and exclusive language of the Italian national community and simultaneously just one of the languages of that speaking community, has not managed to achieve sociolinguistic capillarity which an official standard literary language usually owns during the centuries (not even in the Fascist era) nor nowadays (Blagoni, 2007). Consequently to sociohistorical and geopolitical events, it has been institutionalized, although its application is considerably narrowed, restricted to certain interactive spheres and to the cross-border communication (mostly with Italian tourists coming to Istria during their holidays). Its use is characterized by innovative features resulting from linguistic contact and exchange phenomena, in particular with the Croatian language and the Istrovenetian dialect, that have shaped its specific regional substandard regional variants (Orbanic, 1999).

After the mass emigration movement after World War II, the Italian national community in Istria, as well as the dialectophone Croatian community, have experienced the impact of linguistic homogenisation of the Yugoslav language policies. Moreover, the geographical and political distance and lack of direct connection with the continuity of the social dynamics with Italy, induced the italoophone speaking community to reduce the use of Italian to reproductive schemes of educational, political and media institutions<sup>7</sup>, with only two types of sociolinguistic variation (the diaphasic and the dimesic ones). Written Italian is very present in extra-curricular domains, as well as in the media and literary competitions. Oral Italian, regarded primarily as the teaching language of Italian preschool and school (where the subjects are taught in Italian)<sup>8</sup> and the language of cross-border cultural heritage is limited to rare language production occasions and is used in a very narrow part of oral communication, limited only to several domains within formal administrative and political settings, educational and media domains, cultural events organized by the Italian national community in Istria, to the Italian literary tradition, scientific activities and cross-border communication. Hence, two varieties are in use: Italian for

literary-scientific-media purposes, which is mostly written and sometimes oral, but never conversational (used by educated individuals in formal contexts) and Italian used in occasional episodic communication, which is characterized by numerous traces of linguistic contact and is typical for speakers whose mother tongue in Istrovenetian or croatophone/chakavophone speakers educated in Italian schools (Blagoni, 2007).

#### **4. Acquisition Planning**

As already mentioned, according to the Croatian Constitution, members of national minorities have the right to be educated in their mother tongue. This right is respected only for the Italian national community in the Istria County. State educational curricula, established by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of Croatia, which apply to all school levels and commitments, are equal for Croatian and Italian schools (only the teaching language differs). In comparison to the Croatian school program implementation plan, subjects in the Italian schools possess substantial additions related to the Italian history, literature, language, art, music, geography, nature and society. The Italian educational process is considered one of the main fundamental instruments for the fostering, maintaining and supporting the institutional structure of the vitality of Italian culture, national identity and the renewal of tissues and use of the Italian language among young generations (Borme, 1990/1991).

In order to increase its prestige on the social level, the learning of Italian as the language of the social environment is particularly encouraged in majority schools (Croatian language teaching schools). The teaching of Italian in the Croatian schools is being financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of Croatia from 2006. Previously, funds were allocated from the municipal and County budgets. In bilingual towns and municipalities schools (such as Buje-Buie, Rovinj-Rovigno, Vodnjan-Dignano, etc. ), Italian became a compulsory subject in 1973 and it is being taught from the first grade of Elementary school (aprox. age 6-7). In the other (partially bilingual or non bilingual) areas of the Istria County, it became optional from the first/second or the fourth grade (Milani Kruljac, 1987).

#### **5. Conclusion**

Even if the Italian language is institutionally protected and its teaching is encouraged in the majority formal education, the goal of its oral use in everyday socialization (Blagoni, 2007) was not reached. The ethnolinguistically vital Istrovenetian is the Istrian italoophone speakers' preferred code of social communication. Consequently, Istrian croatophone speakers learning Italian in their formal education are unable of using Italian in everyday socialization with their italoophone peers, not because they are not able or inclined to do so, but because the italoophone speakers prefer to use almost exclusively Istrovenetian (Filipi, 1989b). Nevertheless, Italian is still taught in Croatian schools and there is a highly positive social evaluation of Italian language learning, since its usefulness is undeniable in the context of tourism, travel, cross-border exchanges with Italy, academic and professional opportunities. Italian language as the language of the social environment was added instrumental values becoming the main motivation for its learning, taking into account the utilitarian purposes. Affective-emotional factors act as an added value and a means of strengthening the desire for arbitrary linguistic mastery and use, which affects the development of positive attitudes (Blagoni, 2002). The Italian language, therefore, occupies a symbolic linguistic space of a national language by which the members of the Italian national community are identified, and the value and potential of its public use have symbolic functions.

#### **Footnotes**

1. According to the latest official Croatian Census (2011), the 6. 03% (12,543) of the inhabitants of the Istria County are Italian, while the Italian language is the mother tongue of 6. 83% of them (14,205). See more about the Italian national community in Istria in: Blagoni, 2004; 2005; 2006; in press; Bogliun Debeljuh, 1985; 1988a; 1988b; 1989a; 1989b; 1989c; 1991a; 1991b; 1994; Borme, 1989; 1990/1991; 1991; Filipi, 1987; 1989a; 1989b; 1990; Jahn, 1999; Milani Kruljac, 1984; 1990; 2001; 2003; Suran, 1992a; 1992b, 1993a, 1993b, 1994/1995, 1995, 2001, 2003, 2008.
2. See more in: Crevatin, 1975; 1982; 1999; Filipi, 1993; 1994; 1996; 2004; Filipi & Bursic-Giudici, 1998; 2012; Kovacec, 1967; 1998; Muljadic, 1991; Orbanic, 1995; Scotti Juric & Poropat, 2012; Tekavcic, 1971; 1976; 1988.
3. Besides the Croatian schools (where all the subjects are taught in Croatian), the members of the Italian national community in Istria have the right to attend Italian schools (where all the subjects are taught in Italian), according to the right to use publicly their language and for preserving the national and cultural identity. According to the disposition of the Croatian Ministry of Research, Education and Sports, special programmes had been designed for these schools whose teachings include notions of Italian history, geography, music, arts, literature, grammar,

- science, etc. In the Republic of Croatia there are 14 Italian elementary schools (with peripheral sections) attended by approx. 1,800 students. There are three Italian high schools (in Pula, Rovinj-Rovigno and Buje-Buie), attended by approx. 750 students. Italian schools are attended not only by children members that are members of the Italian national community but even by the members of the Croatian majority and those coming from mixed families (Croatophone father and Italophone mother, or viceversa, etc.), including other nationalities (Scotti Juric & Poropat, 2012: 423).
4. The members of the Italian national community do not necessarily attend only Italian schools. They attend even the Croatian ones.
  5. Chakavian and Istrovenetian are the two low varieties, used mainly in informal domains.
  6. Treaties between the Republics of Croatia and Italy; the Paris peace treaty (1947); Memorandum of understanding between the Governments of Italy, Great Britain and Yugoslavia (London, 1954); the Treaty of Osimo (1975); the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); the Helsinki Final Act (1975); the Document of the Copenhagen meeting (1990); the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities' Languages (1992) and other treaties, like the International Labour Organization Convention (n. 111) concerning discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation (1958); the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and documents without legal obligations, like the Declaration on Rights of Persons belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (the UN Declaration) (1992), the Hague Recommendation regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities (1996); the Oslo Recommendation regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities (1998), etc.
  7. Italian is regarded a vehicular language in an institutional sense, not owning an interactional prestige in the socio-cultural and intergenerational dimensions (Bogliun Debeljuh, 1985; 1988a; 1988b; 1989a; 1994; Borme, 1990/1991; Milani Kruljac, 1988; 1990; 2001; 2003; Milani Kruljac, 1985; 1986; 1987; 1995; 1996; 2001; Milani Kruljac & Orbanic, 1989a; 1989b; 1989c; 1989d; 1995; Orbanic, 1999; Scotti Juric, 1993; 1995; 1996/1997; 2003; Scotti Juric & Ambrosi Randic, 2010).
  8. Besides the teacher-student class interactions, it is mainly related to the receptive, passive and unproductive everyday language activity outside the educational institution. The participants of the educational process (teachers and students) do not use Italian outside the classroom (in extracurricular domains) and, taking into account the frequent everyday use of Croatian and/or Istrovenetian, it can be assumed that there is a high probability that the average Italophone speaker will no longer (have the continuous need to) use the Italian language on everyday basis (which of course depends on single individuals), except in the various forms of cross-border cooperation, in communication with the Italian tourists/friends/partners and a few other circumstances (Milani Kruljac, 1990; 2003). The media partly enhance the continuity of the Italian language (mostly in the form of passive receptive exposure) and undeniably affect the maintenance of social bonds and exposure to cross-border cultural models, but fail to influence enough, to design and create productive habits of its use (Milani Kruljac, 1990).

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