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Vitality of the Krk Venetian (Veian) dialect

Summary

Throughout history, the town of Krk was the only Romance enclave on the namesake island, first as a town where the Dalmatic (Vegliot) dialect was spoken, and then a town where the Krk Venetian dialect (Veian) was used. Today only a small number of (mostly elderly) people in the town of Krk still speak the Venetian dialect (Veian), while others use a kind of a Chakavian koiné that manifests general Chakavian features of the island of Krk. This paper aims to evaluate the vitality of this dialect according to nine UNESCO evaluative factors of language endangerment via a sociolinguistic questionnaire. The results show that once a prestigious dialect and symbol of urbanity of the town of Krk, this dialect is nowadays a communication code of mostly elderly, bilingual Krk residents. The dialect appears to still be part of their identity and tradition, although its status decreases from generation to generation. The participants in our study are aware that their dialect is disappearing but, with few exceptions, they generally do not insist on its preservation. This research aimed to show the vitality of the Krk Venetian dialect (Veian) in the 21st century.

Keywords: Krk Venetian dialect (Veian), UNESCO Programme, language death, language maintenance

1. INTRODUCTION

The town of Krk is the only place on the island with over 2000 years of uninterrupted urban status, which is why it has always had a particular place in the culture of the island (see Bolonić & Žic Rokov, 2002; Bonifačić, 2004/2005; Matijević & Đurđević, 2009; Suić, 2003). When the Slavs colonized the island of Krk in the late 6th and early 7th century, the Roman population retreated within the walls of the town of Krk, where subsequently the Vegliot Dalmatic language gradually developed (about Vegliot/Dalmatic, cf. Bartoli, 1906/2000; Muljačić, 2000; Spicijarić Paškvan, 2014; Vuletić, 2015). This marked the beginning of the period of cultural, social and linguistic Romance-Croatian dualism, which is manifested in the development of literature in Croatian (in Glagolitic and Latin scripts) and Latin languages (Raukar, 1997). With the strengthening of Venice as a naval and trading power, the Venetian language spread along the eastern Adriatic coast as early as in the 10th century. The bilingual population in the areas with which Venice had business connections also spoke this language (Cortelazzo, 2000). Although spoken only by minorities and concentrated in urban centres (Trieste, various Istrian towns, Rijeka, Mali Lošinj, Krk, Zadar, etc.), where it actually prevailed over the local Dalmatic or Slavic languages, the Venetian language had a great influence on the speech of the people who came in contact with it (see Bidwell, 1967). It is assumed that in the 16th century, the language of the family along the Eastern Adriatic coast (including the island of Krk) was Slavic (women mostly spoke only Slavic), and Venetian, being the language of trade and administration, was used mainly by men and the nobility (Metzeltin, 1988). However, in the town of Krk, Venetian (about the dialect name in question, see § 4) was also the communication code of the family and was used in everyday communication (for the linguistic situation in the town of Krk, see Ljubić, 1877).

The 19th century saw the awakening of national consciousness throughout Europe, including the Risorgimento in Italy and the National Revival in Croatia. In the town of Krk, the term Italians started to denote the population that spoke the Venetian dialect of Krk. Namely, between 1880 and 1910 the descriptions of the residents of the town of Krk and their affiliation to an ethnic group were based on an indirect method of determining ethnicity according to their mother tongue or spoken language (Božić, 2014). The first half of the 20th century was marked by two world wars, the political events in Europe and Croatia resulting in a marked polarization of the Krk population (Italians and Croats) (Božić, 2014).

Numerous changes in political structures and various political and social upheavals led to migrations. While, on the one hand, a significant number of speakers who used the Venetian dialect left the town, an also significant number of people who did not speak it came to live in Krk. By analysing the answers obtained by means of a sociolinguistic questionnaire, our goal was also to determine the vitality of this dialect according to nine UNESCO factors for assessing language endangerment.¹

2. THEORY OF LANGUAGE DEATH

It is estimated that between 4,500 and 6,000 languages are currently spoken in the world, with one language dying out every two weeks (Matasović, 2011: 17). There are three groups of causes of language extinction: physical, economic/social and political (Hagège, 2000/2005), some of these leading to a sudden disappearance of a language. Other causes affect gradual extinction of a language and very often the voluntary language abandonment under the pressure of a more prestigious language, and the cessation of the language transmission to own descendants. In this regard, it is important to point out two phenomena, in terms of language maintenance and language shift. Language maintenance refers to a situation in which speaker(s) continue to use their language in most domains within their bilingual/multilingual community, while language shift is the gradual abandonment of the less dominant language in the community. The death of a language occurs when the entire community stops using it (Grenoble, 2011; Pauwels, 2004).

Throughout history, there have been four capital waves that have led to the extinction of languages (cf. Matasović, 2011). The last wave is related to the emergence of nations, nation-states and standard languages, and its indirect consequences are still being felt today. In other words, due to the idea of national unity, in the 19th and 20th centuries the importance of the standard language was constantly emphasized at the expense of dialects. As a result, due to a "higher" goal, speakers of a language often resorted to another code, i.e., the national language (depending on their language competence), and passed on such habits to their descendants, which resulted in a gradual reduction in the number of dialect speakers. A language disappears/dies when no one speaks it anymore, which means that when

¹ Cf. UNESCO's document for easier understanding of the text and analysis: http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Language_vitality_and_endangerment_EN.pdf

only one speaker of a language remains, that language as a tool of communication is, in fact, dead and the last speaker is a kind of archive of that language (Crystal, 2000).

The question that arises is why even try to do something with endangered languages. In this regard, Crystal (2000) makes five arguments. According to him, we need to take care of languages because: 1. we need diversity; 2. languages express identity; 3. languages are repositories of history; 4. languages contribute to the sum of human knowledge, and 5. languages are interesting in themselves.

In this paper, we explore the Venetian dialect of the town of Krk (Veian), which is a variant of the colonial Venetian dialects/Venetian *de là da mar* (cf. Baglioni, 2019; Cortelazzo, 2000). The term colonial Venetian was chosen (by Bidwell, 1967) due to the fact that it was not an autochthonous language originating from Latin but it was imported from Venice, overpowering Slavic or Dalmatic autochthonous languages. The second term Venetian *de là da mar* is in use because denotes the language of the city of Venice which, at the time of the Venetian Republic, spread through maritime routes to eastern Adriatic coast as well, i.e. on the other side of the sea (Folena, 1968–1970). However, within this group of dialects, the Krk dialect stands out by its characteristics due to the geographical, cultural, historical and linguistic situation of the island of Krk, which is why it is considered separately when assessing the degree of endangerment. Thus, the starting point of this paper are Crystal's 2nd and 3rd arguments for the preservation of language, namely, the fact that the Krk Venetian (Veian) dialect represents its speakers' identity,² and is the dialect in which the history of the town of Krk is recorded.³ In other words, its disappearance would erase a part of the history and culture of the inhabitants of the town of Krk. That already happened at the end of the 19th century when part of the history and culture of the town of Krk disappeared with the death of Antonio Udina Burbur, the last speaker of Vegliot.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using a pre-prepared sociolinguistic questionnaire, the answers to which were analysed according to nine UNESCO factors for assessing the degree of language endangerment. The questionnaire consists of closed-ended and

² "A language is the emblem of its speakers" (Dixon, 1997, as cited in Crystal, 2000: 39, 40), "Language ... is not only an element of culture itself; it is the basis for all cultural activities" (Bloch & Trager, 1942, as cited in Crystal, 2000: 39, 40).

³ "Language is the archives of history" (Emerson, 1844, as cited in Crystal, 2000: 40–43), "When you lose your language, ... you exclude yourself from your past" (van Hoorde, 1998, as cited in Crystal, 2000: 40–43).

open-ended questions and was completed through direct interviews with the Krk Venetian (Veian) speakers and by their filling it in without the presence of the examiner (at the request of the participants).⁴

Field research did not differentiate between sociolinguistic variables of gender or social status because Krk's Venetian dialect has a small number of, mostly elderly, speakers. Therefore, given the very small number of potential participants, this research collected and processed a total of 20 questionnaires. Most participants were born in the 1930s and 1940s (14; $p = 0.7$), five participants were born in the 1950s ($p = 0.25$), and only one participant is less than 50 years old ($p = 0.05$), but he no longer uses the Krk Venetian dialect (since the death of his grandparents he has no longer communicated in the Veian dialect). Since this is an extremely small sample (< 50) of participants, the proportions with the obligatory indication of absolute numbers will be used in this paper to express the frequency of the answers obtained (for statistical methods, see Petz, Kolesarić, & Ivanec, 2012).

4. ANALYSIS

The first question asked in the questionnaire, not included in the central analysis, was how the participants call their dialect, both in the dialect itself and in the Croatian language. It should be noted that the term Croatian language in this paper implies a kind of a Chakavian koiné that manifests general Chakavian features of the island of Krk. We recorded a few answers: *parlar vezzan*; *parlemo in vesan*, *alla vezzana*, *a la vesana*, *in dialeto*; *vejanski*; *domaći talijanski*; *krčki*; *venecijana*. Actually, the Chakavian speakers on the island of Krk call the town of Krk *Veja*, hence the adjective hr. *vejanski* (in Venetian dialect *vesan*), which refers to both the locality and its residents (Vea, Veia > *Veja* > *vejanski* (*vesan*), analogous to Fiume > *fijumanski* (*fuman*)). The English variant used in this paper will be the Veian dialect (analogous to the Fiuman dialect).

In 2003 UNESCO (i.e. UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages) prepared a document with the Program for the Preservation of Endangered Languages, which contains nine essential factors that can be used to determine the status of vitality, i.e. endangerment of a particular language.⁵ It is emphasized that these factors should be considered as a unity, and not separately. The first three factors are related to the number of speakers of the language and its

⁴ Special thanks to Ana Marija Fabijanić and Marija Frleta for their great help during the field research.

⁵ The term vitality in this paper differs from the term inaugurated by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977).

distribution through generations and population (1. intergenerational language transmission; 2. absolute number of speakers; 3. proportion of speakers within the total population). Factors 4 to 6 determine how and where the language is used via observations of language domains (4. trends in existing language domains; 5. response to new domains and media; 6. materials for language education and literacy). These first six factors are defined in the document as major evaluative factors of language vitality. The next two factors (7 and 8) determine language attitudes and policies (7. governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies (including official status and use), and 8. community members' attitudes toward their own language), while factor 9 determines the urgency for documentation (amount and quality of documentation). The UNESCO document proposes a grading system from 0 to 5 for each factor – the higher the degree, the better is the language position within a single factor. The Veian dialect will be valued in the same way.

4.1. Intergenerational language transmission

"The most commonly used factor in evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next" (Fishman, 1991, as cited in UNESCO, 2003: 7), i.e. "Without intergenerational mother tongue transmission (or the transmission of a written or spoken second language, if that should be the societal goal) no language maintenance is possible. That which is not transmitted cannot be maintained." (Fishman, 1991: 113).

It is with this factor, as the most relevant one for assessing the vitality of a language, that the UNESCO document begins, listing in this regard six different degrees of vulnerability (on a scale between (5) *safe language*, spoken by all generations including children, and (0) *extinct language*, without speakers).

In order to place the Veian dialect on this scale, the participants in the research were asked in which dialect they used to speak to their parents, grandparents, siblings and their own children. Thirteen of them ($p = 0.65$) claim to speak Veian dialect with their grandparents, ten of them claim to speak it with their mother ($p = 0.5$) and 11 with their father ($p = 0.55$). Today they mostly claim to use Croatian and a combination of Veian and Croatian.

As regards communication with siblings, only seven participants ($p = 0.35$) claim to use Veian, while in their conversations with children it is the Croatian language predominates (12 of them claim to speak Croatian with children, $p = 0.6$), which is only in some cases used in parallel with Veian.

They were also asked whether their children understood Veian, to which 14 participants ($p = 0.7$) answered positively, but when asked whether their children were using it, only four of them answered positively ($p = 0.2$). Participants who claim that their children use Veian are older adults.

From the answers obtained, it follows that Veian belongs to the *severely endangered languages* (2) since it is evident that it is spoken only by grandparents and older generations without transmission to younger generations. As stated above, the participants were mostly born in the 1930s and 1940s (a total of 14 participants).

4.2. Estimation of the absolute number of speakers and their proportion within the total population

The following two factors are closely related to the first because they consider the number of speakers of the observed language, namely the total number of speakers and their proportion within the total population.

Although it is difficult to determine the absolute number of speakers of a particular language, it is clear that a community with a small number of speakers is at greater risk. Endangered languages are mainly the languages of a multilingual community in which the less dominant language is gradually abandoned through the shift to a dominant one (Grinevald & Bert, 2011).

In addition to the total number of speakers of a non-dominant language, their proportion within the total population is also an important factor. Concerning this factor, UNESCO proposes a 6-point threat scale on which (5) is a *safe language*, which everyone speaks, and (0) is an *extinct language*, i.e. without a speaker.

The decrease in the number of the Veian speakers can be seen in the participants' opinions on the number of its speakers, respectively, in the first half of the 20th century and today. In 1910, the town of Krk had 1,778 inhabitants (Božić, 2014). Thirteen participants ($p = 0.65$) who answered the question agree that at the first half of the 20th century, 70–100% the town of Krk residents spoke the Veian dialect. When asked how many speakers of the Veian dialect there are today, half of the participants gave an estimate of 20 to 60 speakers. Five of them ($p = 0.25$) did not answer the question at all, while another five ($p = 0.25$) gave an estimate of 100 to 200, stating that they also included people who only understand Veian (therefore, do not actually speak it). Here has to be pointed out that a certain number of Veian speakers live in Italy, the United States etc., but they are not taken into account here. For more accurate results, further analysis is required.

Furthermore, the analysis of the following series of answers proved a gradual shift to a more dominant language. The questions in this section were: What is your mother tongue? and Which language are you most attached to, i.e., What is your favourite language?

Half of the participants consider Veian as their mother tongue ($p = 0.5$), while nine of them consider Croatian to be their mother tongue ($p = 0.45$). One participant did not answer the question. It is interesting to note that only four participants ($p = 0.2$) stated that they are most attached to the Veian dialect, while 12 of them ($p = 0.6$) consider Croatian to be "their" language. One participant stated English as the most favourite language, while three did not answer the question. Even though a large number of participants used mostly the Veian dialect in communication in the past (often without speaking Croatian), today they generally do not consider it as "their" and "favourite" language. The proportion of these answers shows the low level of Veian use; indeed, its speakers use it so rarely that they do not consider the Veian dialect to be "their" tongue. According to the 2011 census, the town of Krk has 6,281 inhabitants (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). However, if we take the stated estimates of the number of Veian speakers (20 to 60) and those who only understand the language (100 to 200), it is evident that the Veian dialect is classified as a *severely endangered language* (2).

4.3. Domains of language use

In order to examine the vitality of a single language, it is necessary to consider the domains of its use. The more stable and vital the language, the more domains of use it covers. The following three factors are related to the domains of use of the target language. The first factor refers to existing language domains, the second to the use of language in new domains and the media, while the third is related to the domain of education.

4.3.1. Trends in existing language domains

In a bilingual/multilingual community, it is significant to observe the domains of language use that are closely related to language maintenance and language shift (Fishman, 1966; Pauwels, 2004). It is precisely the range of domains and situations in which a particular language is (not) used that is directly related to the transmission and vitality of the language. Fishman's question (1965) "who speaks what language

to whom and when?" is closely related to domains, so it is necessary to answer it when assessing the vitality of the language in question.

According to the use of languages in certain domains, UNESCO distinguishes 0 to 5 degrees of endangerment, with (5) referring to the language used in all domains and for all functions (as the language of interaction, identity, thinking, creativity, entertainment etc.), and (0) representing the language that is not used in any domain and for any function.

In order to assess the degree of vulnerability of the Veian dialect concerning domains, the participants were asked questions about the language use in the 20th century and today.

A group of answers about the use of dialect in communication within the family circle, i.e. with parents, descendants and siblings was already observed in section 4.1. Besides, questions were asked about the language of communication with friends and neighbours today. From the answers obtained, it can be concluded that the degree of use of Veian decreases in conversations with siblings, friends and neighbours, where it is mostly a combination of language codes. Moreover, the Veian is the least represented in conversations with children, which means that there is a kind of a deadlock, i.e., a point where the traditional Krk dialect ceases to be transmitted to descendants.

One of the reasons which explains the lack of communication in Veian dialect in the immediate family circle is marriage in which only one member is a speaker of Veian. In that regard the participants in the research were asked whether their spouse was originally from Krk and was a Veian speaker. The answers showed that 19 participants ($p = 0.95$) live in a mixed marriage in which only one member is a speaker of Veian. One participant didn't answer the question. Thus, it can be concluded that this dialect is no longer used in the family domain.

The analysis of the questionnaire showed that the domains of Veian use were reduced to a minimum, i.e., today this dialect is used when communicating with "old" Krk inhabitants (living in Krk or those coming from Italy). The youngest participant (born in 1974) stated that since the death of his grandparents, he has no longer communicated in the Veian dialect.

Most participants date a more active communication in Veian before the 1960s, i.e., the 1970s. On the one hand, this is probably related to the negative perception of Veian dialect (associated with "Italianity" which didn't have positive connotations)

after the Second World War and on the other, to the establishment of ferry lines with the mainland (Črišnjeva – Voz in 1964), which resulted in more frequent migrations between Krk and the mainland. In addition to the above, school and media also contributed to the gradual reduction of communication in Veian.

Apart from interpersonal communication, language is also used in human "internal conversations", which means that this is also one of the domains of its use. Participants were asked in which language they count, think, swear, dream and pray. This group of questions aimed to get a picture of the extent to which the Veian dialect is a natural language at the unconscious level of the speaker's world. Only five of them claim to count in Veian ($p = 0.25$), one participant claims to swear in it ($p = 0.05$), two of them claim to dream ($p = 0.1$), and the same number claims to think ($p = 0.1$) and pray in it ($p = 0.1$).

According to the above, it can be assumed that Veian belongs to the languages with a highly limited number of domains (1) because it is used in very restricted domains at special occasions, usually by very few individuals in a community. Older speakers use it in their mutual communication and in their own "internal conversations", whilst younger people may understand the dialect, but they do not speak it.

4.3.2. Response to new domains and media

With the emergence of new technologies and media, new domains of language use are opening up. The use of newer media such as radio, television and the internet can contribute to improving the vitality of a particular language. If, on the other hand, a language does not expand into new domains, there is a decrease in the relative number of its domains (even in the case when the absolute number of domains remains steady) (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006: 9).

The Veian dialect belongs to the latter group, i.e. among inactive languages (0). However, in order to evaluate the openness of its speakers towards new media, they were hypothetically asked if they would like to listen/watch the news or some shows in Veian. Fourteen participants answered this question ($p = 0.7$). Nine of them ($p = 0.64$) answered affirmatively, explaining their answer by the sort of return to their childhood/youth and the desire not to forget the dialect.

4.3.3. Materials for language education and literacy

Grenoble and Whaley (2006) associate the existence of a national or regional program for learning an endangered language with an increase in its vitality. Otherwise, that language gradually disappears as a less important communication code. It is also important to note that it is easier to maintain the language in which literacy is developed. UNESCO provides six levels related to the availability of written material in a particular language, with (5) languages in which orthography is established (there is a tradition of literacy: grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature, media; the language is used in administration and education), while (0) includes society and language for which orthography is not known.

The Veian dialect is not present in either the administration or the schools, but is rather limited to a narrow circle of elderly bilingual people who use it in communication with each other. Only two participants ($p = 0.1$) stated that they use Veian in their messages, records and personal notes. Eight participants answered that they were able to read Veian ($p = 0.4$), and the two of them answered that they could write ($p = 0.1$) in it. Moreover, the majority of the participants in this questionnaire do not know whether there exist texts written in this dialect, but some believe that certain private works and letters are in possession of some Krk inhabitants.⁶ Besides, Fiorentin (1993) brings some poems, rhymes, jokes and anecdotes recorded in the Veian dialect.

Thus, according to the UNESCO table, the language of the first degree (1) is observed, i.e. practical orthography is known to the community (mainly the orthography of the Italian language and Venetian dialects is used). Some written material possibly exists in private notes, letters and works, but only a small part of it has been published.

4.4. Language attitudes and policies

One of the important factors for assessing the vitality of an individual language and the perspective for its preservation are the people's attitudes towards that language. According to Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 11), these attitudes exist on several levels: national and governmental, within the majority population and within the local community itself.

⁶ This was also confirmed in the course of field research during which I got access to some poems and stories from a private collection, recorded in that dialect.

4.4.1. Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies

The attitude of the dominant language culture and the ruling politics has a great influence on language maintenance, or a shift to the dominant language. On the one hand, the government can encourage the maintenance of a language and influence a positive opinion about non-dominant languages, while on the other hand, it can prohibit the use of certain languages. Institutional support plays a crucial role in language maintenance. In this regard, it is important to mention minority associations and their activities that should encourage the use of a minority language. In this case as well, UNESCO has made a scale of six degrees, with (5) denoting equal support, i.e. the *protection of all languages*, while (0) refers to *the prohibition of minority languages*. As for this factor, our participants were asked if they are familiar with any activity that encourages the use of the Veian dialect. Only one positive answer was obtained ($p = 0.05$) without precising concrete activity, eighteen of them gave a negative answer ($p = 0.9$), and one participant did not answer the question ($p = 0.05$). It can be observed that the dominant language in the town of Krk is Croatian and that there is no explicit policy towards Veian, i.e. the government and the population are mostly indifferent to what will happen to this dialect, which actually represents passive assimilation (3).

4.4.2. Relationship nationality – Veian language and community attitudes towards it

According to Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 11, 12), it is the governmental attitudes that directly influence the attitudes of minority speakers towards their language. Likewise, Matasović finds that "Stav (je) govornika prema vlastitom etničkom i jezičnom identitetu presudan činilac ubrzavanja ili usporavanja jezičnih promjena" [The attitude of speakers towards their own ethnic and linguistic identity is a crucial factor in accelerating or slowing down language change] (Matasović, 2011: 236). If speakers see their language as a barrier to affirmation within the major community, they are likely to develop negative attitudes toward their own language, which leads to its gradual extinction. Thus, positive attitudes of its speakers are necessary to preserve a language, which is closely related to the attitudes of the official policies.

Also, in this case, UNESCO proposes six degrees, where (5) is related to a language that is valued by all speakers with the desire to work on its preservation, and (0) refers to a language that no one cares about and whose speakers prefer to use a dominant language.

Languages are generally considered to be the symbols of the identities of their speakers, but the postmodernist view sees identities as changing realities (cf. Castells, 2004; Omoniyi & White, 2006), from which it follows that language is only one of the speaker's identities. This thesis can explain the paradox, i.e. the endangered language speaker's identification with that language, but also the lack of intergenerational transmission (Austin & Sallabank, 2011). This is one of the reasons, along with other sociolinguistic factors, that Veian speakers do not transmit their dialect to their children, although they feel proud of their urban identity.

This strong urban and local identity of the Krk residents was placed ahead of their ethnic identity (Italian or Croatian), which has already been proven by two studies conducted during the 20th century (Bonifačić, 2004/2005; Königes, 1933). At the end of the 20th century, the natives of Krk – Croats and Italians – formed a homogeneous community and called themselves "old Veians", "true Krk residents" or "original Krk inhabitants" (*stari Vejani, pravi Krčani* or *originalni Krčani*). "Smatrali su se *signorima* i *cittadinima* (gospodom i građanima), naspram *contadina* (seljaka), kako su nazivali otočane izvan grada Krka. Svjesno su se, također, željeli razlikovati od (većinom hrvatskih) *pridošlica*, koji su grad Krk naselili nakon Drugoga svjetskog rata..." [They considered themselves *signori* and *cittadini* (lords and citizens) in opposition to *contadini* (peasants), as they called the islanders outside the town of Krk. They also consciously wanted to differentiate themselves from (mostly Croatian) *newcomers*, who settled the town of Krk after the Second World War ...] (Bonifačić, 2004/2005: 61).

The presence of this difference and the pride of the citizens of the town of Krk is proved by the Krk saying about the patron saint of the town of Krk – Saint Quirinus: "Je gránda fésta, el kontadin no tién, noi sí" [It is a big celebration, a peasant doesn't have it, but we do] and saying "Viéna, Véia, Venésia, Veróna sóno kuátro čitá prinčipáli" [Vienna, Krk, Venice and Verona are four principal cities] (Königes, 1933: 15). This homogeneity of Italians and Croats was disturbed at the beginning of the 20th century due to political and other events. The participants state the emigration of the people of Krk after the Second World War as one of the most important reasons for the gradual disappearance of the Veian dialect, the second reason being the immigration of the population from other parts of the island and the former Yugoslavia, and the third the death of older people.

Despite these events, usage of the Veian dialect was related to the urban identity of the town of Krk and not to the affiliation of an individual speaker to either the

Italian or Croatian national community. This can be also seen from the following statement: "Vegliának olasz anyanyelvű polgárai legyenek ezek olasz, vagy jugoszláv honosok, a politikai nehézségek ellenére sem akarják megtanulni a horvát nyelvet és azt a néhány családot mely gyermekét jövője érdekében és kellemetlenségek elhárítása miatt horvát iskolába járattja, megvetik a többiek." [Despite political difficulties, the citizens of Krk, either Italian or Yugoslav, do not want to learn Croatian and despise the few families who sent their children to Croatian schools for the sake of their children's future and to avoid inconveniences.] (Königes, 1933).

It is also evident from the answers obtained with this questionnaire that the speakers' nationality and use of Veian are not related, which was confirmed by 14 participants ($p = 0.7$). Three participants ($p = 0.15$) think that they are related, one thinks that they are related in some particular cases ($p = 0.05$), and two of them did not answer the question ($p = 0.1$). If we look at their nationality, 14 participants reported Croatian ($p = 0.7$), two Italian ($p = 0.1$), the individual answers being Krk Italian, *Vežan* and Croatian Veian, and one person did not answer the question. As for the grandparents, participants cited Croatian and Italian nationality in the same proportion, while Austrian nationality was cited for their ancestors being the island of Krk part of Habsburg Monarchy. An interesting remark is made by a participant whose grandmother (i.e. a woman who lived in Krk in the first half of the 20th century) stated: "*Mi so krovata (croata) de madre lingva (lingua) italiana.*" [I am a Croat, and my mother tongue is Italian.] Thus, it can be stated that this dialect as a symbol of the urban identity of Italians and Croats was used as an opposition to the Croatian dialects present on the rest of the island.

Our respondents' attitudes toward their dialect are positive: they are proud of their dialect as a symbol of their urban identity and being a part of Veian community. They relate their dialect to Krk's origin, tradition and the fact that the Veian dialect is their mother tongue as the reason for speaking it. On the one hand, they see their dialect as a key symbol of group identity, and on the other, they do not promote it and are plagued by the fact that it will disappear/it has already disappeared.

This questionnaire examined the speakers' attitudes on their dialect maintenance. They were asked whether they thought something should be done to preserve that dialect and whether the Veian vocabulary should be recorded, and a dictionary and grammar made. Besides, they were asked if they were willing to participate in the project. Although 14 participants ($p = 0.7$) believe that something should be done about preserving this dialect, i.e. that it should be recorded, only eight

of them ($p = 0.4$) are willing to participate in data collection. They also state that they are not doing anything about preservation and some participants think it is too late to do anything.

The willingness of the respondents to participate in this research with their frequent expressions of scepticism is also a weak indicator of this dialect maintenance.

According to the analysed answers, it can be concluded that although "many" speakers do support language maintenance, some of them are indifferent, which means that it is at the third level (3) of the UNESCO scale.

4.5. Language documentation

Due to the rapid decline in the number of languages, i.e. the prognosis of linguists that most languages will become extinct in a few decades, more and more work is being done on documenting and musealizing languages (Kolbas, 2011). The need for urgent language documentation depends on the number of speakers of the language and on the existing material, which includes written texts and audio and visual recordings of natural speech. Given the quantity and quality of the existing documentation, the UNESCO scale contains grades 0 to 5, with (5) representing a well-documented language (with grammars, dictionaries, texts, audio and video materials), and (0) representing an undocumented language.

If the Veian dialect is seen as part of the Venetian language group, then written material (dictionaries, grammars, language descriptions etc.) and audio and video recordings do exist. This is a mitigating circumstance in documenting the Veian dialect. The Veian dialect as a part of a larger language community is on a higher level with all UNESCO factors, which is certainly helpful in research. But in this paper, it is seen as a separate unit. But if we look at this dialect as a separate unit, then the materials are almost non-existent except for the already mentioned private notes, a few poems and anecdotes. Thus, the Veian dialect can be classified as an inadequately documented language in the UNESCO scale (1), which means that it should be documented as soon as possible.

5. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to show the vitality of the Veian dialect in the 21st century. Once a prestigious dialect, a symbol of the urbanity of the town of Krk, it is nowadays the communication code of only a few dozen mostly elderly, bilingual Krk residents. Its

gradual disappearance is proof of the thesis that the prestige of language depends on economic, social and political factors. The town of Krk – a Romance enclave or Romance language island within a Slavic language community, which it has been for more than a millennium – is today a town where a Romance dialect is a communication code for only a small community of people within the majority Croatian-speaking community.

In order to show the vitality of the Veian dialect, the participants' responses given according to the factors proposed by UNESCO as guidelines for language vulnerability assessment (scale 0–5) were considered and analysed.

Table 1. The Veian dialect on the UNESCO endangerment scale (0–5)
Tablica 1. Vejanski dijalekt na UNESCO-ovoj ljestvici ugroženosti (0 – 5)

| | |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Intergenerational language transmission / Međugeneracijsko prenošenje jezika | 2 |
| 2. Absolute number of speakers (estimation) / Ukupan broj govornika (procjena) | 20–60 (200) |
| 3. Proportion of speakers within the total population / Udio govornika u ukupnome broju stanovnika | 2 |
| 4. Trends in existing language domains / Trendovi u postojećim jezičnim domenama | 1 |
| 5. Response to new domains and media / Odgovor na nove domene i medije | 0 |
| 6. Materials for language education and literacy / Materijali za poduku jezika i pismenost | 1 |
| 7. Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies including official status and use / Vladini i institucionalni stavovi i politika prema jeziku, uključujući službeni status i uporabu | 3 |
| 8. Community members' attitudes toward their own language / Stavovi članova zajednice prema vlastitome jeziku | 3 |
| 9. Amount and quality of documentation / Količina i kvaliteta dokumentacije | 1 |

It can be concluded that Veian is still part of the identity and tradition of its speakers, but all parameters show that its status decreases from generation to generation and that its speakers gradually move towards the use of the more dominant language. It is used mainly within a limited group of people, which was proven by field research, since the participants mostly listed the same people who use this dialect during the research, and the circle eventually closed.

One of the most important indicators of language maintenance is the intergenerational language transmission, which is not the case in the town of Krk. The descendants of the speakers of Veian generally understand this dialect, but they do not speak it, which has led to the point where it is no longer transmitted to new generations. Our respondents are aware that their dialect is disappearing, but, with few exceptions, they stated not being enthusiastic about working on its preservation. Namely, it is up to the speakers of each language, together with the authorities, to work on language preservation, and linguists are the ones who should warn of the problem of language extinction, document languages before the disappearance and point out the importance of linguistic diversity (Matasović, 2011). This research was an attempt in this direction, aiming to point to the problem of the disappearance of one language in Croatia and awake and raise the awareness of the local community that with the disappearance of this language, part of the history and culture of the town of Krk will also disappear. Furthermore, this research was intended as a preliminary study for recording and describing the Veian dialect so that it would nevertheless remain documented.

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Hrvatska

Prilog vitalnosti krčkoga mletačkoga (vejanskoga) dijalekta

Sažetak

Grad Krk je tijekom povijesti bio jedina romanska enklava na istoimenome otoku. Isprva kao grad u kojemu se govorio dalmatoromanski (veljotski) jezik, a zatim grad u kojemu se rabi(o) mletački (vejanski). Danas tek nekolicina (starijih) ljudi u gradu Krku još govori mletačkim dijalektom, dok ostali mještani rabe neku vrstu čakavskoga koinea, u kojemu se očituju opće čakavske značajke otoka Krka. Cilj je ovoga istraživanja, na temelju rezultata dobivenih usmjerenim sociolingvističkim upitnikom, procijeniti vitalnost krčkoga mletačkoga (vejanskoga) dijalekta prema devet UNESCO-ovih faktora za procjenu ugroženosti jezika. Analiza upitnika je pokazala da je nekada prestižni dijalekt, simbol urbanosti grada Krka, danas komunikacijskim kôdom tek manjega broja, uglavnom starijih, bilingvalnih Krčana. Također je pokazano da je i dalje dio njihova identiteta i tradicije, ali i da se taj njegov status iz generacije u generaciju smanjuje. Ispitanici su svjesni da njihov dijalekt nestaje, ali, uz iznimke, uglavnom ne inzistiraju na njegovu očuvanju. Ovim se radom željela pokazati vitalnost krčkoga mletačkoga (vejanskoga) dijalekta u 21. stoljeću.

Ključne riječi: krčki mletački (vejanski), UNESCO-ov program, umiranje jezika, očuvanje jezika
