



morepress

morepress.unizd.hr

SPONDE

RIVISTA DI LINGUE, LETTERATURE E CULTURE TRA LE DUE SPONDE DELL'ADRIATICO

ČASOPIS ZA JEZIKE, KNJIŽEVNOSTI I KULTURE IZMEĐU DVIJU OBALA JADRANA

A JOURNAL OF LANGUAGES, LITERATURES AND CULTURES BETWEEN THE TWO ADRIATIC COASTS

ISSN: 2939-3647

3/1 | 2024

SOME ASPECTS OF LEXICAL VARIATION IN NA-NAŠO/-U (MOLISE, ITALY)

LUCIJA ŠIMIČIĆ

University of Zadar
lsimicic@unizd.hr

UDK: 811.163.42'282.4(450.67)
Professional paper
Primljen / Ricevuto / Received: 31.5.2024.
Prihvaćen / Accettato per la pubblicazione
/Accepted for publication: 1.7.2024.

Molise Croatian is a Štokavian Ikavian variety brought from the East Adriatic coast to the region of Molise at the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century. Today it is spoken in three out of four officially recognized Croatian Molise villages in the region of Molise in south Italy, namely those of Mundimitar / Montemitro, Kruč / Acquaviva Collecroce, and Filič / San Felice del Molise, but even there its use has been declining, and intergenerational transmission is interrupted in some parts of the community. The aim of the paper is to present and discuss aspects of diatopic variation in lexicon between the three local varieties on the basis of the terms collected in a local language documentation project and published in *Vocabolario polinomico* (Sportelli linguistici 2020).

KEY WORDS:

Na-našo/-u, Molise (Italy), lexicon, language variation, language shift

1. On language variability in minority contexts

Variation is an inherent aspect of any language, both in terms of language structure and language use. Any entity conceived of and perceived as a single language varies along several dimensions – geographic (diatopic), social (diastratic), stylistic (diaphasic) and temporal (diachronic) (Berruto 2010), and this variability may be evident at various levels: in the way words and utterances are pronounced (referred to as ‘accent’ in Anglo-American sociolinguistic literature), in word formation and inflection, in the choice of lexical items and different meanings assigned to them, in the way phrases and sentences are formed, in the selection of discourse markers, and even in conversation structure.

While the size of a language community, its status and heterogeneity may contribute to a greater intralinguistic variation, some studies suggest that variability can be relatively high even in small, stigmatized and/or endangered varieties (e.g. Dorian 1994, Hornsby 2015). Because the latter are often at some stage of an undergoing language shift, their structure may be more or less influenced by a dominant language / variety their speakers are in contact with. Once a larger part of such speech communities becomes bilingual, and the use of either one of the two languages becomes acceptable even in informal and private domains, it is likely that elements from a dominant language will start ‘leaking’ into a minority language. If the ‘leaking’ of lexical items in the form of loanwords to either fill in the lexical gaps or to replace native terms may be the most visible aspect of an ongoing language shift the speakers (and some linguists) are aware of, the erosion of other levels of linguistic structure, while less evident, often has long-term effects on the future of such a minority language / variety. Furthermore, the effects of language contact may not necessarily be evenly spread across the whole speech community. This is also the reason why increased variation in language is not only found in large and complex societies. It can also be a sign of a declining vitality of a language in which competing lexical variants from (a) minority and (a) dominant language(s) are frequent or grammatical forms and constructions are becoming unstable as they are gradually falling out of use. In such cases they may be used variably even within small and geographically concentrated communities (Šimičić & Bilić Meštrić 2018).

It is well known from contact linguistic studies that not all linguistic elements or features are equally prone to borrowing or loss. According to the borrowing scale (Thomason & Kaufman 1988: 74-76), any form of language contact, either direct or indirect, often results in the borrowing of content words, in particular



nouns, especially those that refer to cultural vocabulary (regardless of how it gets defined). More intense forms of contact will result in the borrowing of function words at the level of lexicon and borrowing (or transfers) at other levels of linguistic structure. Although Na-našo/-u exhibits a broad range of different type of transfers and structural borrowing (as defined in Thomason & Kaufmann 1988) from local Romance varieties and the Standard Italian, the paper is limited to the discussion of some examples of diatopic lexical variation in this language of a historical minority in southern Italy. The discussion is based on the data collected and published by Rivista Kamastra (Sportelli linguistici 2020), but takes into account two other studies published previously.

2. Speakers of Na-našo/-u as a speech community

Na-našo/-u is a language spoken by a small community of Štokavian-Ikavian speakers who migrated from the southern Makarska Coast and Neretva Valley region in southern Dalmatia (Croatia today) to the territory which nowadays belongs to the Italian region of Molise. Upon their arrival, about five hundred years ago, the settlers inhabited several villages abandoned after earthquakes and plague. Out of many initially established settlements, today only four villages – Mundimitar / Montemitro, Kruč / Acquaviva Collecroce, Filič / San Felice del Molise and Tavela / Tavenna¹ – where the language survived longest are officially considered as a territory of a historical minority and hence symbolically recognized by a few legal documents, including the National Law No. 482 from 1999 (*Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche*) and the Regional Law No. 15 from 1997 (*Tutela e valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale delle minoranze linguistiche nel Molise*).

The language, which the local population refers to as Na-našo (in Mundimitar) and Na-našu (in Filič and Kruč)², although it is more widely known by its official glottonym Molise Croatian (*croato molisano*, in Italian), has been preserved in Mundimitar, Kruč and only among eldest speakers in Filič. However, even in these three villages it has been undergoing a rapid language shift. While the language used to be transmitted to children in Mundimitar, the demographic situation has

¹ In the rest of the paper only the place-names in the local language will be used.

² A specific local variant is mentioned when discussing a particular variety of Molise Croatian, and both are listed when discussing the minority language in general.



worsened in the past ten years, and there are very few children in the village nowadays who could form their own micro speech community as in the case of earlier generations, which greatly reduced the use of Na-našo among youth. A similar demographic issue has affected Kruč where the use of Na-našu and the interruption of intergenerational language transmission caused a more intense language shift than in Mundimitar. Kruč is, however, somewhat bigger than Mundimitar, easier to reach, and the school there functioned as the only Molise Croatian place where Croatian language classes are still offered.³

3. Some features of Na-našo/-u

Na-našo/-u is a high-contact variety (considered a language by its speakers, for a more detailed discussion see Šimičić & Škevin Rajko, in press). In five centuries since the physical separation from other Croatian varieties spoken in Dalmatia at the time, its development diverged considerably. A prolonged and intense contact with the neighboring dialects of Abruzzo and Molise, and the Standard Italian since the 20th century, the language nonetheless preserved numerous Slavic (mostly Štokavian, and much fewer Čakavian) features in phonetics, morphology and lexicon, which were lost in Croatian in the meantime (Barone 1995).

Linguistic divergence from other Eastern Adriatic varieties was also confirmed by two earlier studies which focused on analyzing relative lexical and/or aggregate distances (Sujoldžić 1990, Šimičić et al. 2013). According to the study by Sujoldžić (1990) the Molise Croatian varieties cluster with either Štokavian or Čakavian-Štokavian dialects in South Dalmatia. However, in the analysis of lexical distances of 85 varieties along the Eastern Adriatic coast and the three Molise Croatian varieties, they form a separate cluster and behave as a sort of an 'isolate' among other varieties of Croatian spoken in the region (Šimičić et al. 2013). Although the main focus of both studies was similar, the difference in the results is due primarily to the application of different statistical procedures in the two studies.⁴

Although other varieties in the Adriatic region are imbued with Romance influence, especially at the lexical level, the amount and the type of borrowings on

³ In Kruč, the school was closed in September 2019, and it exceptionally reopened in 2022/23 due to an increased number of children. After the school closed, the Croatian language classes were offered as optional afternoon classes. For a more detailed account of the geographical, historical and socio-political context of the community, see Račić (2018), Šimičić & Škevin (2018), Šimičić & Škevin Rajko (in press), etc.

⁴ For a more detailed description of methodology, see Šimičić et al. (2013).



the two sides of the Adriatic coast differ greatly. Besides, Molise Croatian retains many archaic lexemes, etymologically non-transparent lexemes not found elsewhere (e.g. *keja* ‘yes’) or morphologically unusual forms (e.g. *ljud* ‘man’). The aggregate distance analysis in Šimičić et al. (2013) confirmed the closest resemblance of Molise Croatian varieties to those „spoken in the western part of the Pelješac peninsula as well as the speech of Krilo on the Makarska coast and that of Kolan on the island of Pag“; although they lack some of the innovations found in the latter „such as the reduction of short vowels and the loss of tone on short stressed vowels, these varieties [Molise Croatian] have retained an ikavian reflex of jat as well as characteristic accentuation patterns in those lexemes which were not replaced by Italian loanwords“ (Šimičić et al. 2013: 30).

4. Local linguistic differences and their perception

Despite their geographic vicinity and belonging to a single historical minority territory, the three varieties of Molise Croatian do exhibit a certain level of diatopic variation as mentioned by several scholars (Sujoldžić et al. 1987, Breu 2007, Marra 2002). The most prominent differences in the three varieties can be observed at phonetic and lexical levels, while there seems to be less divergence in their morphosyntactic structure.

As far as the distance between the three Molise Croatian varieties is concerned, the results may vary due to generally statistically low level of differentiation on the basis of vocabulary only (Sujoldžić et al. 1987, Šimičić et al. 2013). A dialectometric study based on the calculation of aggregate distances by means of the Levenshtein algorithm showed a remarkable similarity between the varieties of Kruč, Mundimitar and Filič compared to the rest of the Croatian speaking territory, even the Štokavian Ikavian varieties of South Dalmatia (Šimičić et al. 2013). A more comprehensive comparative analysis based on a lexical dataset of over 400 items showed a slight tendency towards the grouping of Filič and Mundimitar varieties (Sujoldžić et al. 1987). However, in most cases the variants given are cognates. There are very few true lexical variants in cases where an elicited lexeme was documented in all three varieties (around 5%), and most of the variation is phonetically based. Also, there are very few cases in which the variation is due to the presence of the Romance influence in only one or two varieties, while a Croatian lexeme is preserved in the rest. In such cases the varieties of Kruč and Filič seem to exhibit a somewhat higher number of loanwords (according to the dataset reported in



Sujoldžić et al. 1987).⁵

Barone (1995) refuses the idea of three separate varieties of Na-našo/-u claiming that the convergence between them has been stronger than their divergence. In the early 2000's, however, the varieties of Mundimitar and Kruč were described and partly codified in the respective dictionaries (*Dizionario dell'idioma croato-molisano di Montemitro / Rječnik moliškohrvatskoga govora Mundimitra*, Piccoli & Sammartino 2000, and *Dizionario croato molisano di Acquaviva Collecroce: Dizionario plurilingue della lingua slava della minoranza di provenienza dalmata di Acquaviva Collecroce in Provincia di Campobasso – dizionario, registri, grammatica, testi*, Breu & Piccoli 2000) and grammar books (*Grammatica della lingua croato-molisana / Gramatika moliškohrvatskoga jezika*, Sammartino 2004, and a grammatical part added to the dictionary of Kruč, Breu & Piccoli 2000). Although this fact may have aided their divergent developments, a recent study based on a fieldwork carried out in 2016 and 2022 shows that even the speakers themselves do not perceive linguistic differences beyond accent, pronunciation, and occasional lexical terms and phrases, especially if they are part of 'cultural vocabulary' (Šimičić & Škevin Rajko, in press).

A more recent study of lexical differences related to traditional crafts and local territory was undertaken by the Association Rivista Kamastra, with the help of local employees of Sportelli linguistici who carried out the fieldwork. The result of this locally based project was published in *Vocabolario polinomico e sociale italiano-croato molisano* (Sportelli linguistici 2020). Based on detailed interviews with eldest fluent speakers in the three Molise Croatian villages (about 5 in each), a list of terms and their local variants for around 150 concepts referring to the semantic domains of public space, professions and crafts was created. Although the speakers of the three varieties use the same lexemes for most concepts regarding the semantic fields of interest in this language documentation project, etymologically different terms were recorded for the following concepts⁶:

⁵ Such a conclusion should be interpreted very carefully though and only in the context of a specific study. A more general perception among the speakers themselves is that the variety of Kruč retained many Slavic lexemes which were replaced by Romance counterparts in the variety of Mundimitar (e.g. *pisat* 'to write', *pivac* 'rooster' or *njiva* 'field' in Kruč, while in Mundimitar commonly used lexemes for the same concepts are of Romance origin: *skrivit*, *galo*, *largo*) (Šimičić & Škevin Rajko, in press).

⁶ All examples are taken from *Vocabolario polinomico e sociale italiano – croato molisano* (Sportelli linguistici 2020) using the orthography employed by its authors. The three varieties are marked by acronyms: K refers to the variety of Kruč, M of Mundimitar and F stands for the variety of Filič. Although Tavela became the fourth officially recognized Molise Croatian town in 2017, it was not included in this project since there have not been any native speakers there since mid-19th century.



buta (K), *sutit* (M), *ark* (F) ‘arc’
košta (K), *salita* (M), *merca* (M, F) ‘climb, uphill’
livit (K), *masline* (K, M, F) ‘olive grove’
basa (K), *štala* (M, F), *paljiar* (F) ‘stable’
basa (K, M, F), *kandina* (K, referred to a specific osteria, otherwise also *basa*) ‘basement, cellar’
njiva (F, K), *largo* (M) ‘field’
ruha (K), *dota* (M, F), *kored* (F) ‘dowry’
štar (M, K), *sprta* (F) ‘basket’
kandželarija (K), *kumun* (K, M, F) ‘town hall’
merca (K, M, F), *košta* (M) ‘slope’
artišta (K), *artidžan* (M, K) ‘artisan, craftsman’
nona (K, F), *marela* (M) ‘grandmother’
did (K, F), *taton* (K, F), *tarela* (M, K) ‘grandfather’
mamina (K, F), *levatriča* (M) ‘midwife’
tata (K), *otac* (M, F), ‘father’
vršit (M), *treskat* (K, F) ‘thresh’
nevista (K), *cita* (M), *matrimonij* (F) ‘wedding’

The use of etymologically different lexemes is however less common compared to the use of phonetically different variants of the same lexeme, such as:

kapela (K, M, F), *kapala* (K) ‘chapel’
put (K, M), *puta* (F) ‘road’
brda (K, F), *brdo* (M) ‘hill’
mista (K, F), *misto* (M) ‘place’
martikun (K), *mertikun* (M, F) ‘shaded side’
trsja (K), *trsje* (M), *tersje* (F) ‘vineyard’
pajiz (K, M, F), *pajiza* (M) ‘land, field’
mulinar (K), *malinar* (M, F), ‘miller’, but *malin* (K, M, F) ‘mill’
notar (F, K), *nutar* (M) ‘notary’
mašatur (F, K), *mbašatur* (M) ‘best man’
guardjin (K), *guardja* (M), *guardija* (F) ‘guard’
vukat (K, F), *vukato* (M) ‘lawyer’
fabrikatur (K), *frabikatur* (M, F) ‘bricklayer’
falinjam (K, M), *falenjam* (F) ‘carpenter’
kjaca (K, F), *tjaca* (M) ‘square’



jima(n) (K), *ime* (M), *ima* (F) ‘name’

kanja (K, F), *tkanje* (M) ‘loom’

tinjar (M, F), *tinjar* (M) ‘wine cellar’.

A combination of an etymologically different term and/or the use of the variants of the same term is also documented, e.g.

magarica (M), *magar* (F), *vištica* (K) ‘sorcerer, witch’

mačalar (K, F), *mačelaj* (K), *mesar* (M, F) ‘butcher shop’

pastir (M), *pegurar* (F), *pigurar* (K) ‘shepherd’

namurata (K), *cita* (M), *namureta* (F) ‘fiancee’

cit (K, F), *cito* (M), *namurat* (F) ‘fiancé’.

The concepts for which one or more terms are documented in only one or two local varieties are also frequent. This does not imply that there is necessarily a lexical gap in other varieties of Na-našo/-u but rather that a certain concept was not spontaneously mentioned by local interviewees for a variety of possible reasons, including the fact that the term might have fallen into oblivion, the absence of a specific place or function in a local micro-setting, but it is also possible that some terms have been replaced by a loanword, e.g. *biškup* (K, M), *vescovo* (F) ‘bishop’. Some such terms include the following:

burga (K), / (M, F) ‘borough’

kapelica (K, M), / (F) ‘small chapel’

kazin (K, M), / (F) ‘farm house’

fabricat (K, F), / (M) ‘building’; there is however the term *edifič* ‘edifice, construction, house’ in all three varieties

propita (K, M), / (F) ‘property’

kvartir (K, M), / (F) ‘neighborhood’

landa (K, M), / (F) ‘strip of land’

kumbanj (K, M), / (F) ‘mate, buddy’

štalj (K), / (M, F) ‘piece work’

brig (K), / (M, F) ‘cliff’

jaram (K, M), / (F) ‘yoke’

mačeja (M), / (K, F) ‘slaughterhouse’

artija (K), *meštir* / *teg* (M), / (F) ‘craft, job’.

The project was focused on documenting parts of the lexicon, and only very few phrasal expressions that differ in the speech of Kruč, Mundimitar and Filič were



noted in *Vocabolario polinomico*, e.g. *stat po zarkom* (K), *potj pozarkom / se fidanzat* (M), *mečat pozarkom* (F) ‘to get engaged’, *pokj na skol* (F, K), *hot na skol* (M, K) ‘to go to school’ and similarly *pokj van* (K), *hot van* (K, M) ‘to work in the field’.

Causes of lexical differentiation in the three varieties can be attributed to a variety of factors. It is generally known that languages diverge, among other things, because of limited communication between speech communities. Molise Croatian villages are geographically very close (between 10 and 20 km), but because of the absence of easily accessible road connections throughout much of the history and poor road conditions once they were built a few decades ago (Šimičić and Škevin 2018), the transfer between them is still relatively difficult and slow, which hinders more frequent communication on everyday basis including participation in common activities. Furthermore, each village is part of a different municipality and is oriented toward a different larger settlement nearby. The consequences of such an unfavorable administrative division are especially evident in education since the closing of local schools and redirecting of elementary school children from Mundimitar to Montefalcone, and those from Kruč and Filič to Castelmauro and Palata, which further severed communication among local youth. While it is possible that some linguistic (lexical) differences existed between different groups of Na-našo/-u speakers even at the time of settlement, some form of local rivalry typical of the south Italy and Mediterranean region in general (Perinić Lewis 2017) might have enhanced them as a way of marking the specifics of local identification. Finally, a different pace of language shift and degrees of language vitality in the three speech communities imply that varying impact of Italian influence, both in lexicon and structure, will be increasingly more visible between them. Finally, the absence of standardization is especially visible in some more recent loan translations from Italian, such as the translation of the Italian term *sportello linguistico* (Ital.), which entered only after the passing of the National Law 482 in 1999, and which is translated variably in the four Molise Croatian towns. While *sportij do grada za jezik* is the term used in public and digital spaces of Kruč, Mundimitar and Filič, a direct translation (calque) *sportija linguistik kumunal* is used in Tavela (Šimičić & Škevin Rajko, in press).

5. Concluding remarks

Languages are rarely if ever uniform and homogeneous, but the level and form of variability depends on a range of factors including the size of a specific speech community, its written tradition or the absence of it, the extent to which the lan-



guage has been standardized, its status in a broader social context and the level of endangerment in the case of minority languages and/or stigmatized varieties, etc. One of the basic tenets of variationist sociolinguistics is that language variability and change are related because language variability usually precedes language change or a complete disappearance of a certain variant or feature (although not all variation in language necessarily leads to change). While languages can vary in space, time, among social groups, in terms of style and depending on the medium of communication employed, the aim of this brief contribution was to discuss only one aspect of linguistic variation, namely the diatopic variation between the varieties of Mundimitar, Kruč and Filič. Due to their similarity in morphosyntactic terms, the focus was on lexical variation discussed on the basis of two earlier dialectometric studies, and a more recent language documentation project undertaken by local Sportelli linguistici (2020). It is therefore by no means an exhaustive account of lexical variation in the three varieties of Na-našo/-u because the analysis is based on already compiled and very much limited wordlists. It is true though that a comprehensive account of lexical differences would be impossible at this stage because the dictionary of Filič has never been published, and the dictionaries of Kruč and Mundimitar varieties, published around two decades ago, may not reflect the actual language use nor the variation present nowadays.

The fact that small languages at the verge of endangerment are prone to a rapid change poses an inherent limitation to the analysis based on a corpus of interviews with only the eldest and probably some of the most fluent speakers, which is the case of *Vocabolario polinomico* (Sportelli linguistici 2020). It is therefore possible that even active speakers in younger generations would either not be familiar with some of the recorded terms because of the adoption of loanwords from Italian, or alternatively that their speech would contain a more recent level of lexical variation caused by different ways of filling in lexical gaps to address a more contemporary reality that surrounds them. However, no corpus has been collected nor study carried out yet to research lexical variation in a more comprehensive way. It is also quite unlikely that such an endeavor can be completed in the future for the simple fact that the language has been almost lost in Filič, is losing ground in Kruč, and the same is happening in Mundimitar albeit at a slower pace.



REFERENCES

- BARONE, Charles. 1995. *La parlata croata di Acquaviva Collecroce. Studio fonetico e fonologico*. Firenze: Olschki.
- BERRUTO, Gaetano. 2010. "Identifying dimensions of linguistic variation in a language space" in Peter AUER and Jürgen Erich SCHMIDT (editors) *Language and Space: An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation, Vol. 1: Theories and Methods*. Berlin / New York: De Gruyter Mouton. 226–241.
- BREU, Walter. 2007. "Il sistema degli aspetti verbali dello slavomolisano e l'influsso dell'italiano come L2" in Carlo CONSANI and Paola DESIDERI (editors) *Minoranze linguistiche. Prospettive, strumenti, territori*. Roma: Carrocci editore. 186–204
- BREU, Walter. 2019. "Morphosyntactic Change in Slavic Micro-languages: The Case of Molise Slavic" in Andrii DANYLENKO and Motoki NOMACHI (editors) *Slavic on the Language Map of Europe*. Berlin / Boston: de Gruyter. 385–432.
- BREU, Walter, Giovanni PICCOLI. 2000. *Dizionario croato molisano di Acquaviva Collecroce*. Acquaviva Collecroce: Naš jezik.
- DORIAN, Nancy C. 1994. "Varieties of variation in a very small place: Social homogeneity, prestige norms, and linguistic variation" in *Language* 70 (1994). 631–696.
- HORNSBY, Michael. 2015. *Revitalizing minority languages: New speakers of Breton, Yiddish and Lemko*. Berlin / New York: Springer.
- MARRA, Antonietta. 2000. "Il repertorio logonimico nel nanaš dei croati molisani" in Cristina VALLINI (editor) *Le parole per le parole. I logonimi nelle lingue e nel metalinguaggio*. Roma: Il Calamo. 545–569.
- MARRA, Antonietta. 2002. "Il lessico alimentare del croato molisano: Persistenze e interferenze" in Domenico SILVESTRI, Antonietta MARRA, Immacolata PINTO (editors) *Saperi e sapori mediterranei: la cultura dell'alimentazione e i suoi riflessi linguistici*. Il Torcoliere / Istituto Universitario Orientale. 735–762.
- PERINIĆ LEWIS, Ana. 2017. *Otoci otoka Hvara. Pluralizam lokalnih otočnih identifikacija*. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada.
- PICCOLI, Agostina, Antonio SAMMARTINO. 2000. *Dizionario dell'idioma croato-molisano di Montemitro / Rječnik moliškohrvatskoga govora Mundimitra*. Montemitro / Zagreb: Fondazione "Agostina Piccoli" / Matica hrvatska.
- RAČIĆ, Marta. 2018. *Revitalizacija moliško-hrvatskog identiteta*. Doctoral thesis [unpublished]. Zagreb: Sveučilište u Zagrebu.
- SAMMARTINO, Antonio. 2004. *Grammatica della lingua croato-molisana /*



- Gramatika moliškohrvatskoga jezika*. Montemitro / Zagreb: Fondazione “Agostina Piccoli” / Profil.
- Sportelli linguistici comunali, di A. C., Montemitro, San Felice del Molise (editors). 2020. *Vocabolario polinomico e sociale italiano – croato molisano*. Montecilfone: Associazione Redazione Rivista Kamastra.
- SUJOLDŽIĆ, Anita, Božidar FINKA, Petar ŠIMUNOVIĆ, Pavao RUDAN. 1987. “Jezik i porijeklo stanovnika slavenskih naseobina u pokrajini Molise, Italija” in *Rasprave Zavoda za jezik*, 13. 117–145.
- SUJOLDŽIĆ, Anita. 1990. “The analysis of population historical and cultural (linguistic) microevolution of the Slavic settlements in Molise, Italy” in *HOMO*, 41/1. 1–15.
- ŠIMIČIĆ, Lucija, Peter HOUTZAGERS, Anita SUJOLDŽIĆ, John NERBONNE. 2013. “Diatopic patterning of Croatian varieties in the Adriatic Region” in *Journal of Slavic Linguistics* 21/2. 259–302.
- ŠIMIČIĆ, Lucija, Ivana ŠKEVIN. 2018. “L’insularità come prerequisito della conservazione linguistica e culturale: Il caso del na-našo / na-našu” in Lucija ŠIMIČIĆ, Ivana ŠKEVIN, Nikola VULETIĆ (editors) *Le isole linguistiche dell’Adriatico*. Rome/Zadar: Aracne / Sveučilište u Zadru. 199–226.
- ŠIMIČIĆ, Lucija, Klara BILIĆ MEŠTRIĆ. 2018. *Arbanaški na raskrižju: Vitalitet i održivost jednog manjinskog jezika* [„Arbanasi at the crossroads: Vitality and sustainability of a minority language]. Zagreb: Srednja Europa.
- ŠIMIČIĆ, Lucija, Ivana ŠKEVIN RAJKO (in press). „Ovo je jezik ke govoremo – na-našo“: *Otpornost i opstanak moliškohrvatske zajednice* [„This is the language we speak – na-našo“: Resilience and survival of the Molise Croatian community]. Zagreb: Srednja Europa
- THOMASON, Sarah Grey, Terrence KAUFMAN. 1988. *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.



Some Aspects of Lexical Variation in Na-Našo/-u (Molise, Italy)

SUMMARY

The paper provides a brief discussion of some aspects of lexical variation in three varieties of Molise Croatian or Na-našo/-u. As a Štokavian Ikavian variety, which has been in 'absolute' language contact (Breu 2019) with different Romance varieties for almost half a millenium, it displays a range of Romance features at all levels of linguistic structure. While earlier studies of linguistic variation between the three varieties point to convergent rather than divergent linguistic tendencies (e.g. Barone 1995), some differences between the varieties of Mundimitar / Montemitro, Kruč / Acquaviva Collecroce, Filič / San Felice del Molise are evident, especially at the lexical level. The most recent study of lexical differences related to traditional crafts and local territory was undertaken by the Association Rivista Kamastra, with the help of local employees of Sportelli linguistici who carried out the fieldwork. The result of this locally based project is published in *Vocabolario polinomico e sociale italiano-croato molisano* (Sportelli linguistici 2020), which contains a list of terms and their local variants for around 150 concepts referring to the semantic domains of public space, professions and crafts. Although the speakers of the three varieties use the same lexemes for most concepts regarding the semantic fields of interest, different forms of variation between the three varieties were recorded. Some of the differences can be due to variable influence of the varieties Na-našo/-u speakers came in contact with in the past, while some may be caused by varying levels of language shift under way in these communities.

KEY WORDS:

Na-našo/-u, Molise (Italy), lexicon, language variation, language shift



Alcuni aspetti della variazione lessicale in na-našo/-u (Molise, Italia)

RIASSUNTO

Il contributo fornisce una breve discussione su alcuni aspetti della variazione lessicale in tre varietà del croato molisano o na-našo/-u. Essendo una varietà štokavo-ikava che da quasi mezzo millennio è in contatto linguistico “assoluto” (Breu 2019) con diverse varietà romanze, na-našo/-u presenta una gamma di caratteristiche romanze a tutti i livelli della struttura linguistica. Mentre studi precedenti sulla variazione linguistica tra le tre varietà indicano tendenze linguistiche convergenti piuttosto che divergenti (ad esempio Barone 1995), alcune differenze tra le varietà di Mundimitar / Montemitro, Kruč / Acquaviva Collecroce e Filič / San Felice del Molise sono evidenti, soprattutto a livello lessicale. Lo studio più recente sulle differenze lessicali legate ai mestieri tradizionali e al territorio locale è stato intrapreso dall'Associazione Rivista Kamastra, con l'aiuto dei dipendenti locali degli Sportelli linguistici che hanno svolto il lavoro sul campo. Il risultato di questo progetto, pubblicato nel *Vocabolario polinomico e sociale italiano-croato molisano* (Sportelli linguistici 2020), contiene un elenco di termini e le loro varianti locali per circa 150 concetti riferiti ai domini semantici dello spazio pubblico, delle professioni e dei mestieri. Sebbene i parlanti delle tre varietà utilizzino gli stessi lessemi per la maggior parte dei concetti riguardanti i campi semantici di interesse, sono state registrate diverse forme di variazione tra le tre varietà. Alcune differenze potrebbero essere dovute all'influenza variabile delle varietà con cui i parlanti di na-našo/-u sono entrati in contatto nel passato, mentre altre potrebbero essere causate da diversi livelli di deriva linguistica che è in corso in queste comunità.

PAROLE CHIAVE:

na-našo/-u, Molise (Italia), lessico, variazione linguistica, deriva linguistica

