

Review Ph.D. dissertation

**Zuzana Bodnárová**

***Vend Romani: grammatical description and sociolinguistic situation of the so-called Vend dialects of Romani***

Zuzana Bodnárová's Ph.D. dissertation is an outstanding descriptive analysis of *Hungarian Vend Romani*; i. e. a bundle of *Romani* varieties respectively dialects of Western Hungary that are highly endangered. Although used on Hungarian territories since centuries and known to various, some of them prominent researchers, these varieties have been sidelined so far in *Romani* linguistics, and, so to speak, treated as a footnote. With the present thesis, *Vend Romani* is finally well positioned within the context of modern *Romani* linguistics.

With 353 pages, the thesis is extensive, comprehensive, and well structured. Two introductory chapters deal with the data corpus and the sociolinguistic situation. The following four chapters, which form the main part, present the structural aspects of *Vend Romani*. The seventh chapter is a conclusive summary. An appendix provides a detailed and extensive glossary of some 3,500 entries.

The sociolinguistic analysis of Chapter two concentrates on vitality and is based upon the guidelines for the assessment of *Language Vitality and Endangerment* that have been developed and are recommended by UNESCO; most likely the most extensive and reliable tool for the description of language vitality. The nine evaluative features of this framework are discussed in detail on the basis of demographic data, content analysis of sample texts, and participatory observation. The general vitality index of two – severely endangered – is well argued and readily comprehensible.

The corpus of data, which is presented in Chapter one, consists of all the reliable previous materials and, for the most part, of transcribed texts that result from extensive fieldwork conducted by the author in 28 locations that are distributed over six counties of Western Hungary. The well-documented corpus is an excellent basis for the genuine analysis of *Hungarian Vend Romani*.

The grammatical description, which covers chapters three to five, follows the traditional threefold division into phonology, morphology, and syntax. The use of the most vital variety, the one spoken in the village of *Kisbajom*, as the primary basis of the structural analysis is a sensible decision and an elegant solution regarding the handling of varieties and variants. Furthermore, the grammatical description considers the latest findings in *Romani* linguistics as presented and summarised, first of all, in the works of *Matras*.

Chapter three on phonology discusses all relevant phenomena in detail: sounds and sound changes, phonotactics and phonological processes. It provides a comprehensive account of the phonological system describing the bandwidth of features from *Early Romani* to recent contact phenomena. The latter relate to the Hungarian influence that, among others, establishes quantity – consonant gemination and vowel length – as a characteristic feature of *Vend Romani*.

Just as the account on phonology, the description of morphology in chapter four competently deals with variation within the dialects. Again, features are discussed on the background of their origin; an excellent strategy to link *Vend Romani* with its contact languages and with other *Romani* varieties. The discussion of inflectional patterns, derivational strategies, and the integration of loan words is highly elaborated and demonstrates the author's competence. The whole approach reflects the state of the art in Romani linguistics.

The same holds true for the presentation of the syntactic structures in chapter five. The subdivision in four parts – case marking, particles and interjections, complex structures, word order – is logically comprehensible. It allows the author to discuss all relevant phenomena in a competent and professional manner.

Chapter six is a short but exhaustive analysis of the lexicon and its internal composition. It competently deals with etymology and semantic domains. The associated vocabulary, which is presented as an appendix, illustrates the structural descriptions of both lexicon and grammar. Furthermore, it is another index for the high empirical quality of the present Ph.D. dissertation.

If there is a critical aspect, it relates to the fact that the analysis is narrowed to Romani linguistics. Phenomena of language contact, the discussion of grammatical features, and sociolinguistic aspects are not presented in a wider, general context. However, this is inherent to this type of description that deals with a single language or a single variety of a language. Thus, it is not really a shortcoming at all.

Overall, Zuzana Bodnárová's Ph.D. dissertation on *Hungarian Vend Romani* is an excellent descriptive work that demonstrates extraordinary empirical and analytical skills in language documentation.

The work submitted by far meets the standard customarily required by a doctoral thesis. Thus, the general grading is "pass" and, consequently, the dissertation is fully recommended for public defence.



(Dieter W. Halwachs)