



ROMANI | LANGUAGE

Factsheets on Romani Language: General Introduction

0.0

Romani-Project Graz / Dieter W. Halwachs

The *Roma*, *Sinti*, *Calè* and many other European population groups who are collectively referred to by the mostly pejorative term “gypsies” refer to their language as *Romani*, *Romanes* or *romani čhib*. Linguistic-genetically it is a New Indo-Aryan language and as such belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European languages. As an Indo-Aryan diaspora language which occurs only outside the Indian subcontinent, Romani has been spoken in Europe since the Middle Ages and today forms an integral part of European linguistic diversity.

The first factsheet addresses the genetic and historical aspects of Romani as indicated. Four further factsheets cover the individual linguistic structural levels: lexis, phonology, morphology and syntax. This is followed by a detailed discussion of dialectology and a final presentation of the socio-linguistic situation of Romani.

1_ ROMANI: AN INDO-ARYAN LANGUAGE OF EUROPE

deals with the genetic affiliation and with the history of science and linguistics of Romani and Romani linguistics.

2_ WORDS

discusses the Romani lexicon which is divided into two layers: Recent loanwords from European languages are opposed by the so-called pre-European inherited lexicon. The latter allowed researchers to trace the migration route of the Roma from India to Europe.

3_ SOUNDS

describes the phonology of Romani, which includes a discussion of typical Indo-Aryan sounds and of variety-specific European contact phenomena.

THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS WORK ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS
AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE OFFICIAL POLICY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be translated, reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic (CD-Rom, Internet, etc.) or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without the prior permission in writing from the Publishing Division, Directorate of Communication (F-67075, Strasbourg cedex or publishing@coe.int)

4_ FORMS

is a description of the morphology according to its traditional division into nouns, verbs and particles and again deals with the dichotomy between European and pre-European elements.

5_ SENTENCES

presents the syntax of Romani which is syntactic-typologically classified as an SVO language due to its subject-verb-object sequence in a neutral declarative sentence.

6_ DIALECTOLOGY

deals with the plurality of Romani which manifests itself in a variety of dialects and varieties. The rather static representation of the dialect groups in Factsheet 6.0 is verified by a more dynamic view in Factsheet 6.1.

7_ SOCIOLINGUISTICS

deals with the socio-political and socio-cultural situation of Romani and discusses both its position and its functionality in the collective linguistic repertoire of different groups of speakers.

The open form of factsheets was also selected for the description of Romani to allow extensions and additions both in the thematic areas and other areas, such as to provide detailed descriptions of individual varieties or dialects. As with the other topics covered, this constitutes an initial step and a basic first presentation and is by no means an exhaustive, final presentation of the subject area.

LITERATURE

In addition to Matras, Yaron. 2002. *Romani: A linguistic introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, the standard work on Romani and Romani linguistics which is also repeatedly cited and referenced in the individual factsheets, we would like to refer you to the websites of the two Romani projects involved in the preparation of the factsheets:

<http://romani.uni-graz.at/romani/> and <http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted to all the authors who contributed actively to the factsheets and the passive contributors who are cited as sources. We are grateful that we could rely on the expertise and support of Mozes F. Heinschink, who i.a. made the *Romani Project at the University of Graz* possible – and as a consequence also the factsheets – and who has been and still is of great help in all activities related to the topic.

THE LANGUAGE FACTSHEETS' TEAM

editing: *Romani Project Graz* | translation: Ulla & Henry Briscoe | layout and design: Marcus Wiesner | coordination: *Romani Project at the University of Graz* in close cooperation with the *Romani Project at the University of Manchester* and the *Council of Europe project Education of Roma Children in Europe*