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## **CAN ALL ITALIANISMS IN SERBO-CROATIAN BE CONSIDERED ALIKE? THE HISTORICAL INFLUENCE AND THE LONG-LASTING IMPACT OF ITALIAN LOANWORDS IN THE BCMS LANGUAGES WITH A CLOSER INSIGHT INTO THE CROATIAN-ISTRIAN CASE**

### **Summary**

This article explores the extensive presence of Italian lexical borrowings—Italianisms—within the BCMS (Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian) language area, focusing on their historical development, structural features, and regional variations. The study begins with a broad overview of loanwords in BCMS, emphasizing their diverse origins, including Turkish, German, Hungarian, Greek, and French influences. The core analysis then examines Italianisms, classifying them into Venetianisms, Tuscanisms, cultural Italianisms, and new cultural Italianisms. Special attention is given to the spoken vernacular of Istria, a historically multilingual and multiethnic region where the interaction between Venetian dialects and local Slavic languages has resulted in unique linguistic phenomena. Drawing from documented examples and personal experience, the article highlights the complex assimilation process of Italianisms, questioning whether they can be treated as a homogeneous category. By analysing phonetic and morphological adaptations, as well as the socio-historical factors shaping linguistic influence, this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of lexical borrowing in the Balkans and the intricate legacy of Italian linguistic influence.

**Keywords:** Italianisms, loanwords, BCMS, Venetian, Istria, lexical borrowing, language contact, Balkans, historical linguistics.

## Introduction

The Serbo-Croatian language, or as I will mostly refer to it throughout this text, BCMS – a technical all-encompassing term including all four standardised versions, namely Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian<sup>1</sup> – is likely to be one of the richest languages one could think of when it comes to loanwords and their assimilation across the centuries. Having established this, the fascinating multi-layered structure of loanwords is an extremely revealing factor to look at while studying a language and this led me to the idea of creating a sort of linguistic journey across the Balkans, thereby enabling a better understanding of lexical borrowings across this wonderful geographical region wedged between the eastern and western worlds. Besides, this allowed me to take a closer look at an example out of my own personal life I had paid little to no attention to until I began studying Slavistics: the Italian-speaking linguistic minorities and the influence of Italian lexical borrowings. Due to its highly diverse history of foreign influence throughout its linguistic and social development process, it is hard to find a better-suited example than the Serbo-Croatian language for this purpose. By setting off from an overview of what the linguistic landscape of loanwords in BCMS actually looks like, I aim to highlight the essential, must-know features of these lexical borrowings, ultimately demonstrating the linguistic richness I have mentioned earlier in this foreword. Nevertheless, since the main purpose of this article is to go through the history and structure of Italianisms, this article will be laid out with a historical foundation to better understand the question I brought up in the title: Can all Italianisms be considered alike? This text aims to raise awareness about the complexity and intricacy of the term Italianism which might seem, at first glance, relatively straightforward and self-contained. In fact, due to its centuries-old history, Italy features a huge and wide-ranging linguistic landscape which, in my opinion, must be analysed bearing in mind its numerous dialects and variants. It is not a matter of questioning the term Italianism itself but rather relativising its meaning and purpose to eventually highlight its complexity. Therefore, by providing documented examples as well as some out of my own experience where I address the specific case of the so-called Istro-Venetian language, I will seek for an answer to the question I have put forward at the very beginning of this introduction.

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<sup>1</sup> P.L. Thomas, *L'intraduisible du BCMS*, [in:] *Propos sur l'intraduisible*, ed. O. Artyushkina, C. Zaremba, Aix-en-Provence 2018.

## An outward overview of the linguistic landscape of loanwords in the BCMS-speaking region

Had we the chance to travel back through history to trace back each linguistic step, we would realise how, depending on the region and the historical period we talk about, one can run into all kinds of words whose roots would lead us to an astonishingly diverse linguistic panorama. Since giving a full-length review of all the major groups of lexical borrowings would be time-consuming and would eventually veer us off from our primary purpose, I will briefly touch on the main groups. Being perhaps one of the populations that influenced the most the Balkans over centuries, Serbia found itself under Ottoman rule from the conquest of Smederevo in 1459 until 1804 when the demands for self-government escalated into a war for independence by 1807<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, as one might well expect, it is no surprise that numerous Turkish lexical borrowings have been integrated and ultimately assimilated into the speaking system not only in Serbia but also in several other countries within the Balkans and further afield. Words such as *šećer* – *şeker* (sugar), *bašta* – *bahçe* (garden), *čarapa* – *çorap* (sock), *džep* – *cep* (pocket), *kašika* – *kaşık* (spoon), *makaze* – *makas* (scissors), *rakija* – *rakı* (liquor), *sat* – *saat* (clock, hour), *boja* – *boya* (colour)<sup>3</sup> and other numerous examples are relatively simple terms employed on a daily basis that have endured the political and social changes of history up to now.

Moving on to another great section of loanwords, we cannot avoid spending a couple of words on all those coming from German and, by and large, German-speaking countries, although they can vary quite a lot. As a matter of fact, since a great number of them have reached the BCMS through Austria, it is rather common to encounter terms found only in certain Austrian or German regions which might lead to difficulties in comprehension, even for native speakers, the further one moves away from the former Austro-Hungarian territories. Again, we find a great number of common terms, for instance *flaša* – *Flasche* (bottle) and *kofer* – *Koffer* (luggage)<sup>4</sup> as well as multiple grammatical patterns like

<sup>2</sup> Ottoman Serbia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ottoman\\_Serbia&oldid=1246019735](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ottoman_Serbia&oldid=1246019735) [16.09.2024].

<sup>3</sup> P. Radić, *On the Oriental Lexicon in the Serbian Language*, [in:] *The Serbian Language as Viewed by the East and the West: Synchrony, Diachrony, and Typology*, ed. Lj. Popović, M. Nomachi, Sapporo 2015, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> J. Kostić-Tomović, *Germanizmi u savremenom srpskom jeziku, u germanoslavističkoj literaturi i u romanu „Semper idem” Đorđa Lebovića*, “Komunikacija i kultura online” 8(8), 2017, pp. 48–87.

in the formation of some verbs ending in *-irati*<sup>5</sup> which, despite being employed in Serbia as well, tend to be more commonly used the closer one gets to the Slovenian and Austrian borders.

As one moves on through the sometimes-mazy categories of words, it is to be expected that, along with the terms I have just listed, Hungarian also contributes some quite interesting-looking examples. A word only a handful of people might guess comes from the Magyar speaking is for example the term *soba* – *szoba* (room)<sup>6</sup>.

Greek, being by far, along with Latin, one of the major influential languages in pretty much every single idiom one can possibly think of, plays a crucial role too. However, not only with terms whose roots can be traced back to ancient Greek, but also with several other easy-to-find words one can run into even in common conversations like, for example, the word *bre*<sup>7</sup> **which is a non-descriptive lexeme, or signalative; unlike descriptive lexemes, signalatives do not communicate the information in an objective way but incorporate the Speaker's take on the content of the utterance**<sup>8</sup>. Largely employed in Serbian-speaking areas, it gets almost unknown elsewhere in the northern parts of Croatia. Despite being of Greek origin, it has allegedly come into Serbian through Turkish, showing us how sophisticated the assimilation processes can actually get.

Upon analysing the main categories, one quickly realises how French has also brought a long list of words, ranging from practical terms such as *fotelja* – *fauteuil* (armchair), *košmar* – *cauchemar* (nightmare), *frižider* – *frigidaire* (fridge), *šofer* – *chauffeur* to more abstract ones like *nivo* – *niveau* (level), *žanr* – *genre* or lesser-used ones like *atelje* – *atelier* (workshop).

This brief introduction to loanwords serves as a foreword thus enabling us to gain insight into the diverse landscape of the BCMS language. As for the assimilation of loanwords, it happens that words, verbs and expressions are carried around sometimes by means of other languages. These languages might be called carrier-languages or, if we created a neologism, “lexicarrier”. Eventually, these words blend in, often differing quite a lot from their original form, and

<sup>5</sup> M. Alanović, *Germanismen im Serbischen: von systemeigenen zu abweichenden morphosyntaktischen Eigenschaften*, [in:] *Slavic and German in Contact: Studies from Areal and Contrastive Linguistics*, ed. E. Kaczmarek, M. Nomachi, Sapporo 2014.

<sup>6</sup> *Soba*, <https://en.wiktionary.org/w/index.php?title=soba&oldid=81950198#Serbo-Croatian> [27.09.2024].

<sup>7</sup> M. Mišković-Luković, M. N. Dedaić, V. Polomac, *The Meaning and Interpretation of the Serbian Discourse Marker BRE*, “Journal of Pragmatics” 87, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Mišković-Luković, Dedaić, and Polomac, para. 1 Abstract.

ultimately becoming part of the target language itself. Speaking of words reaching the target language, in this case being Serbo-Croatian, among all the examples I have mentioned thus far, the word **bre** might be an expletive model to look at.

### Italianisms – an overall analysis

After this brief general synopsis concerning the broad categories of loanwords in Serbo-Croatian, we move on to the next section dedicated to those words belonging to the Italian linguistic background. As you may guess, Italianisms make up a quite substantial bit of the bigger group of loanwords in the BCMS-speaking regions. Ranging from words belonging to the spoken language which occupy a central role in nearly each everyday interaction such as the **ćao** – **ciao** (*hello*), or the verb **kapirati** – **capire** (*to understand*)<sup>9</sup>, up to other terms which, on the other hand, are more refined like for instance **adado** – **adagio** belonging to the field of music. However, because there is a great number of words that could be classified as Italianisms, this group can be divided up into smaller sections, enabling us to get a better overview of them all. As a result, four categories should be taken into account and analysed separately: Venetianisms, Tuscanisms, cultural Italianisms and new cultural Italianisms<sup>10</sup>. Even though Venetianisms definitely make up the biggest group among them especially in certain regions, since the substantive Venetianism – term referring to all those words coming from the Venetian language and assimilated in the local vernacular speech of those regions where the authority was exercised by the Republic of Venice – will be thoroughly analysed in the next sections, I will now move on to the following group.

Tuscanisms are primarily drawn from the literary field of the Italian Renaissance whose beginning can be dated back to the period between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. This period later further evolved into the broader Renaissance culture that spread across Western Europe, marking the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity<sup>11</sup>. Words such as **sonet** – **sonetto** (*sonnet*) or **kancona** – **canzone** (*lyric*), **madrigal** – **madrigale** (*madrigal*)<sup>12</sup> are derived from the Renaissance age.

<sup>9</sup> Н. Д. Вученовић, *Италијанизми у српском језику и утицај културних контаката на језик*, “Филолог – часопис за језик, књижевност и културу” 18, 2018, p. 307.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 308.

<sup>11</sup> *Italian Renaissance*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Italian\\_Renaissance&oldid=1250880072](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Italian_Renaissance&oldid=1250880072) [13.10.2024].

<sup>12</sup> Н. Д. Вученовић, *Италијанизми у српском...*, p. 310.

Next up are cultural Italianisms which are essentially words from the fields of music, theatre, literature and arts and here are a couple of examples, among which are also some interesting-looking cases which raise the question of derivation. Oddly enough, sometimes, whilst looking at the Italian word one can easily realise that if we were to bring it close to the French equivalent, they will almost perfectly match up (*highlighted in yellow*) except for a few letters. This obviously raises the issue of certainty as to the actual origin and development of the lexical borrowing. Understandably, it is utterly impossible to be absolutely sure about the origin of all terms since throughout history both Italian and French have participated a lot in this process of assimilation especially in the Balkans. This does not happen in many cases where the term literally or phonetically coincides with the Italian equivalent like for example with words such as: **forma** – **forma** (form), **fašista** – **fascista** (fascist), **valuta** – **valuta** (currency), **torta** – **torta** (cake), **volja** – **voglia** (wish, desire) and so on.

*амбасада* ('дипломатско представништво у иностранству') < фр. *ambassade*  
< итал. *ambasciata*;  
*аларм* ('бујалавик', 'знак за узбуну') < фр. *alarme* < итал. *allarme*;  
*аркада* ('лучна чевона кост', 'ходник из сводове', 'низ лукова из стубовима')  
< фр. *arcade* < итал. *arcata*;  
*балон* ('аеростатички ваздухоплов без властитог погона', играчка напуњена хелијумом) < фр. *ballon* < итал. *pallone*;  
*барикада* ('вјештачка прспрка') < фр. *barricade* < итал. *barricata*;  
*батљон* ('основна тактичка јединица копнене војске') < фр. *batallion* < итал. *battaglione*;  
*бригада* ('тактичка јединица копнене војске') < фр. *brigade* < итал. *brigata*;  
*фасада* ('спољна страна зграде') < фр. *façade* < итал. *facciata*;  
*костим* ('сценска одјећа') < фр. *costume* < итал. *costume*;  
*маринада* ('врста умака') < фр. *marinade* < итал. *marinata*;  
*маскарада* ('бал са маскама') < фр. *masquerade* < итал. *mascherata*;  
*медаљон* ('вслика споменица', 'врста украсног привјеска') < фр. *medallion*  
< итал. *medaglione*;  
*парада* ('свечана приредба', 'смotra') < фр. *parade* < итал. *parata*;  
*параван* ('заклон', 'завјеса') < фр. *paravent* < итал. *paravento*;  
*перика* ('валезуља', 'украш за косу') < фр. *perruque* < итал. *parrucca*;  
*пиједестал* ('умјетнички изграђено постоље') < фр. *piédestal* < итал. *pedestallo*;  
*профил* ('лице, предмет гледани са стране') < фр. *profil* < итал. *profilo*;  
*салон* ('просторија у стану, углавном свечаније намјештена') < фр. *salon* < итал. *salone*.

Picture 1: University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Philology and Vucenovic, 'Italian Loanwords in Serbian and the Influence of Cultural Encounter on Language', page 313

Looking down at a more down-to-earth context, Italy is synonymous with great cuisine and excellence in fashion and hand-made products, which implies a large usage of terms like *pica* – *pizza*, *pasta* – *pasta*, *špageti* – *spaghetti*, *mocarela* – *mozzarella*, *espresso* – *espresso* and many others. As you can see, a typical feature about the Serbo-Croatian language, which definitely stands out when it comes to this kind of examples, is the fact that double consonants are dropped in the transliterated version. This peculiar phenomenon is more common in Serbian-speaking areas than in northern parts of the BCMS-speaking area such as Croatia where the original spelling is mostly kept as it is without any phonetic transliteration. Undoubtedly, this is due to the long-lasting relationship with Italy which has left behind some significant traces that can still be seen nowadays. Among these, a number of examples can be found in another category of loanwords which are names used for restaurants and hotels. Especially in Croatia you will very often find restaurants and hotels named with some Italian-sounding names, as it is synonymous with luxury and quality. However, since this cultural phenomenon does not apply to every region, it is important to bear in mind that, its occurrence can vary significantly depending on the historical events of a given region. Yet, although English is definitely gaining on importance, we will notice that overall the number of Italian- and French-sounding names in this branch of business is overwhelmingly higher than that of others. In broader sense, one can state that Italianisms have affected the Serbo-Croatian language with vocabulary and expressions belonging to different domains ranging to ballet and arts to food and cuisine according to the historical period and the respective impact of the country, exerting the influence on the region. Nevertheless, the word Italianism must be carefully nuanced. In fact, given that Italy had been a country split up into different small states for centuries, even after its unification it has struggled to reach a proper national consciousness. Thus, an overwhelming majority of the Italianisms we have not yet discussed comes from Venice and its surrounding region. Furthermore, we will notice how these words and expressions are widely used on the coastal regions by communities affected by the historical heritage of the Republic of Venice and how, on the other hand, they tend to get more sporadic and even totally unknown the further away we get from the coastline. This brings us to the next section where we will tackle the topic of Italianisms and their usage in these regions I have just mentioned. In these areas, Italian loanwords must be analysed in a completely different manner, as many would be difficult to decipher even for a native Italian, owing to the cultural and linguistic traits specific to the Venetian region and its culture.

### Usage of Italianisms in spoken vernacular language in Istria

As a descendant of one of the many Istrians who quit Yugoslavia at the end of WWII and settled down in the Venetian Region where I also have grown up and spent my whole childhood until I moved to France, I have always sensed a strong bond to my family still living over there. Unlike many Italians back then, who had been forced out of their homes, my family has made the choice to keep in touch with our relatives who did not leave Yugoslavia. My great-grandfather, despite being a Croatian himself, had worked as a police officer in Venice and afterwards decided to settle down and build a family there. The historical events affecting the Italian community after WWII de facto did not touch directly my family because, despite speaking both the Istrian dialect, Italian and Croatian, like many back then (*see image on the right*), they were ethnical Croats, and my great-grandfather had already built up his family abroad. Even so, after Fascists had been pushed out by Tito's partisans, a sort of "namnatio memoriae" – a term of roman origin for a form of punishment whereby a deceased public figure identified as an enemy of the state was erased from public record<sup>13</sup> – against specifically Fascists but also Italians overall was carried out across these regions. As a result, even though the situation has changed since then, Italians as well as the fact of speaking Italian have been badly perceived by locals for quite a while. All the names of the villages and cities now have a respective translation in Italian which is not used anymore. More than once one can stumble across some intense conversations between elderly people arguing about this topic. As far as I am concerned, I often happened to overhear interesting conversations over politics and the role of Italian which is mostly a second language still present on the coasts of Istria and Dalmatia.

If we were to divide up the linguistic landscape of Istria – which might be classed as a small-sized region of about 2820 km<sup>2</sup><sup>14</sup> – we would find, along with the three standard languages present in the region – Croatian, Italian and Slovenian – five other idioms, three among which are Romance and two Slavic<sup>15</sup>.

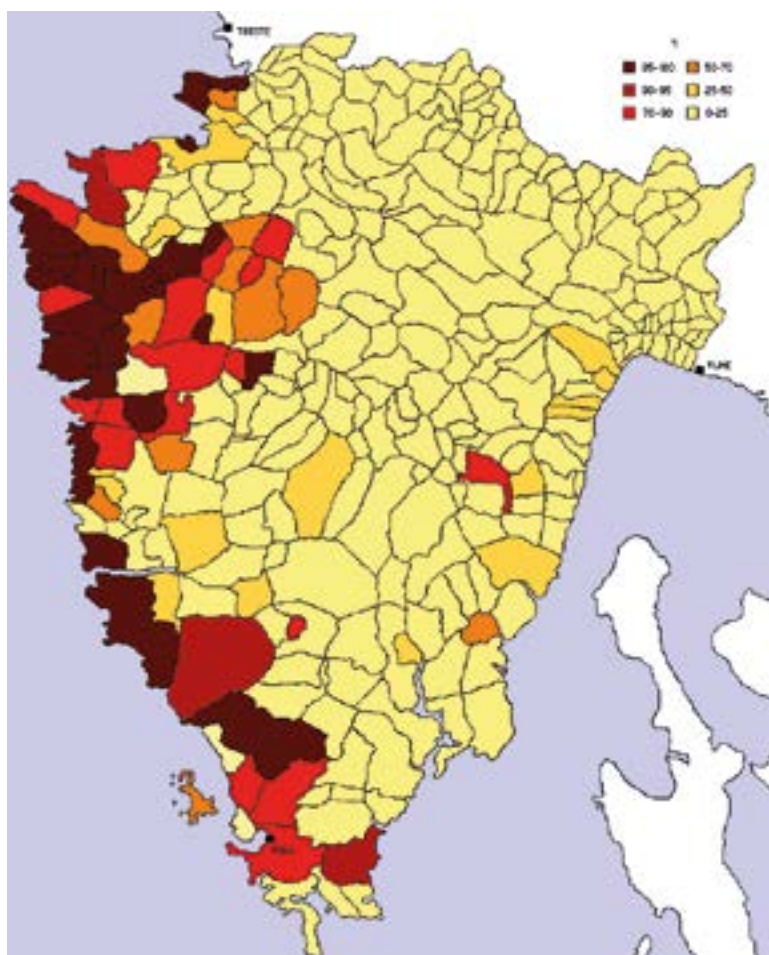
<sup>13</sup> *Damnatio Memoriae*, [in:] *Oxford English Dictionary*, [https://www.oed.com/dictionary/damnatio-memoriae\\_n](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/damnatio-memoriae_n) [16.10.2024].

<sup>14</sup> *Istrie*, <https://fr.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Istrie&oldid=219431222> [13.10.2024].

<sup>15</sup> G. Stojnić, *Istroveneto a Torre e il suo repertorio lessicale nel campo semantico dell'abbigliamento*, "SPONDE" 3(1), 2024, p. 74.



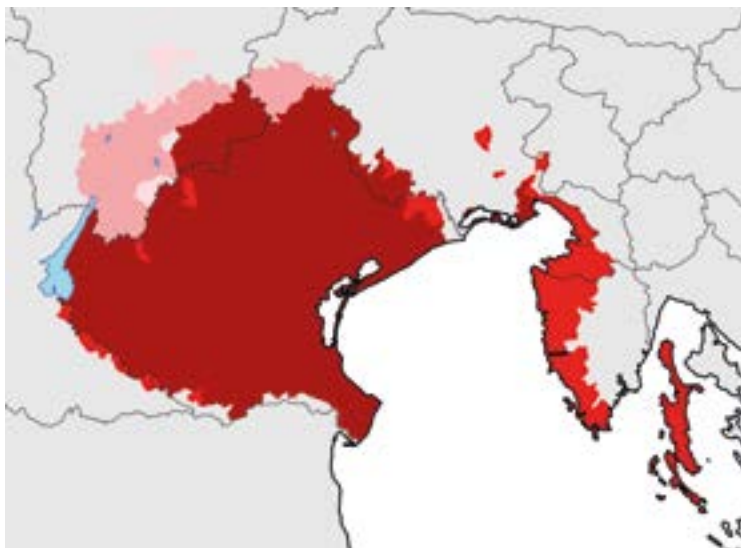
- *The Istrovenetian or Istrian Venetian (also Istrovenetian), considered the koiné or lingua franca of the Italian-speaking population of Istria;*
- *The Istriote or Istroromanian dialects, increasingly limited to certain localities in southwestern Istria, though they were likely more widespread in the past;*
- *The Istroromanian dialects, in northeastern Istria, to the north and south of Mount Učka;*
- *The Chakavian Croatian dialects, throughout Istria, except in the Slovenophone regions;*
- *The Slovenian dialects, in northeastern Istria in the border areas.*



Picture 2: 1910 census, percentages of the population who used Italian as the main language, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Istria\\_census\\_1910.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Istria_census_1910.PNG)

As you can clearly see, even in such a small area, the quantity of dialects is astonishingly big and diverse despite the historical changes that affected the population. Although lately the situation has certainly developed towards a more homogenic linguistic landscape and dialects are being evened out by time and movements of the population that has blended together in the last decades, this linguistic richness has endured until now. I still remember a curious anecdote which I have come across in one of the long conversations I have had with my family and relatives in Opatija or Abbazia – according to the former Italian names – about Italian words. Based on the story I was told back then, a fire broke out in an apartment in the same neighbourhood my relatives used to live in and the whole building quickly caught on fire. An elderly woman tried to call the firefighters multiple times but did not manage to find the number on the Yellow Pages, the problem being that she was actually looking up for the letter “p” (Italian: **Pompieri**) instead of “v” (Croatian: **Vatrogasci**). Nonetheless, it is essential to underline the difference between the Istrian context and the other Dalmatian dialects whose vocabulary does not fully coincide with the one in Istria. In fact, when it comes to vocabulary and in-depth linguistic analysis, despite having much in common, there are still some remarkable differences. However, the role played by Italian lexical borrowings conveyed by the Republic of Venice must certainly be acknowledged. (see image)

A map showing the territories under the rule of the Republic of Venice:



Picture 3: Venetian language distribution in Triveneto, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Venetian\\_Language\\_distribution.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Venetian_Language_distribution.png)

## Structural linguistic features – their development and usage across the regions formerly under Venetian rule



Picture 4: Maximilian Dörrbecker (Chumwa), CC BY-SA 2.5  
 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>>, via Wikimedia Commons

As for the dialect, based on my personal experience, while speaking, one can quite easily spot words and expressions shared with Venetian-speaking people. People tend to mix them up a lot with Croatian according to so-called linguistic moulds – standard patterns according to which words are created and new ones can be formed – sometimes even ending up with some extremely interesting mash-ups like for example: *kikarica* – *šolja* (SRB) *šalica* (HR)<sup>16</sup> which comes from the word *chicara* in Venetian and it means cup. By adding the suffix *-ica* which indicates the diminutive form in Serbo-Croatian to the transliteration of the original Venetian stem according to the phonetic spelling, you can derive this example which is just one among the many terms born from this linguistic blending. A pattern that can be seen over and over again in the word-construction process specific to this dialect.

<sup>16</sup> Osnovna Škola Turnić Rijeka – Čakavski Rječnik, [http://os-turnic-ri.skole.hr/cakavski-rjecnik?dict\\_kat=5297&kat=5297&dict\\_without\\_search=&dict\\_search=kikarica&x=0&y=0](http://os-turnic-ri.skole.hr/cakavski-rjecnik?dict_kat=5297&kat=5297&dict_without_search=&dict_search=kikarica&x=0&y=0) [18.10.2024].

We will now have a look at the actual grammatical features and patterns one can easily find in vocabulary and sentences.

| Changing of the letters <b>S</b> and <b>SS</b> in Italian to <b>Š</b> <sup>17</sup> |       |
|---|-------|
| <i>cas<b>s</b>etta</i> → ka <b>š</b> eta  | case  |
| <i>fe<b>s</b>ta</i> → fe <b>š</b> ta  | party |
| <i>fre<b>s</b>co</i> → fre <b>š</b> ko  | fresh |
| <i>scatola</i> → <b>š</b> katola  | box   |
| <i>pa<b>s</b>ta</i> → pa <b>š</b> ta  | pasta |
| <i>scodella</i> → <b>š</b> kudela   | bowl  |

| Italian <b>T</b> changes to <b>D</b>  |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| arma <b>t</b> ura → arma <b>d</b> ura | armour – rebar (reinforcing seteel) |
| gra <b>t</b> ella → gra <b>d</b> ela  | grid – grille                       |

| Italian <b>CCIA</b> changes to <b>CA / ZA</b> |      |
|---|------|
| fa <b>cc</b> ia → fa <b>c</b> a               | face |

| Italian <b>O</b> changes to <b>U</b>   |         |
|--|---------|
| bo <b>t</b> tega → bu <b>t</b> iga     | shop    |
| po <b>l</b> enta → pu <b>l</b> enta    | polenta |
| faz <b>z</b> oletto → fa <b>c</b> ulet | tissue  |

| Italian <b>E</b> changes to <b>A</b> |                  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| cam <b>e</b> ra → kam <b>a</b> ra    | bedroom          |
| me <b>r</b> enda → ma <b>r</b> enda  | afternoon snack* |
| terraz <b>e</b> → tar <b>a</b> ca    | terrace          |

\*The Istrian “marenda” comes from the Italian habit of having a snack in the afternoon but has later developed towards a richer meal which in this region usually replaces lunch and dinner in the midst of the afternoon. It is made up of any kind of food: meat or fish and vegetables as the main dish and then sweet cakes and coffee as desert mostly accompanied with Rakija or wine.

<sup>17</sup> D. J. Ivočić, *Italijanizmi u govornom jeziku Bara i okoline*, „Matica: časopis za društvena pitanja, nauku i kulturu” 14(54), 2013, p. 206.

Another important feature is the shortening of Italian words by removing the last vowel of the word:

|                             |   |                                |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| contratto – kontrat         | } | the letter <b>o</b> disappears |
| cuscin <b>o</b> – kušin     |   |                                |
| sacchet <b>to</b> – saket   |   |                                |
| belvedere – belveder        | } | the letter <b>e</b> disappears |
| canton <b>e</b> – cantun    |   |                                |
| stazion <b>e</b> – štacijun |   |                                |
| lampadina – lampadin        | } | the letter <b>a</b> disappears |
| polpet <b>ta</b> – polpet   |   |                                |
| camomill <b>a</b> – kamomil |   |                                |

Another interesting characteristic is the usage of verbs and one of the main examples is the replacement of the infinitive verb suffix **-ARE** in Italian with **-ATI** in Serbo-Croatian.

**Lavare** → **Lavati** (to wash) *HR: opratiti*, **Navigare** → **Navigati** (to sail) *HR: ploviti*

As you can see in the following example taken from an article about Italianisms in Montenegro, the verb **PASSARE** in Italian has become **PASATI** (*Pass by*):

**Pasao** je prije pola sata. È **passato** mezz'ora fa.<sup>18</sup>

*He passed by half an hour ago.*

Upon inspection of the main linguistic features, there are some must-know characteristics one cannot overlook such as the phonetic transliteration of the Italian word or verb and its adaptation to the Serbo-Croatian grammar which implies declensions and conjugations according to the context.

To better understand the vocabulary and the proximity of the Istrian language to Venetian, the table below provides a helpful comparison of Italian,

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. 205.

Istrian from Rovinj – on the western coast of Istria – and Venetian<sup>19</sup> with a translation in English. Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that these words below in the chart belong to an Italian dialect whose words slowly and partially entered the Slavic idiom and were adapted and later used, to some extent, even by Croatian-speaking people.

| Italian                | Istriot (Rovignìj)   | Venetian            | English         |
|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| <i>chiave</i>          | <b>ciàve</b>         | <i>ciave</i>        | <i>key</i>      |
| <i>notte</i>           | <b>nuòto</b>         | <i>note/not</i>     | <i>night</i>    |
| <i>cantare</i>         | <b>cantà</b>         | <i>cantàr</i>       | <i>to sing</i>  |
| <i>capra</i>           | <b>càpra, càvara</b> | <i>càvara</i>       | <i>goat</i>     |
| <i>lingua</i>          | <b>lèngua</b>        | <i>lengua</i>       | <i>language</i> |
| <i>piazza</i>          | <b>piàsa</b>         | <i>pia-sa</i>       | <i>square</i>   |
| <i>ponte</i>           | <b>pònto</b>         | <i>pon̄te/pon̄t</i> | <i>bridge</i>   |
| <i>chiesa</i>          | <b>cièfa</b>         | <i>cexa</i>         | <i>church</i>   |
| <i>ospedale</i>        | <b>uspadàl</b>       | <i>ospital</i>      | <i>hospital</i> |
| <i>formaggio/cacio</i> | <b>furmàio</b>       | <i>formajo</i>      | <i>cheese</i>   |

Conclusion

In light of the above, the examples I have mentioned earlier in the article are extremely meaningful to the question I brought up at the beginning. Are all Italianisms alike? Overall, many of the above-mentioned examples of Italian lexical borrowings are extremely close to the Venetian dialect spoken even nowadays in the northeastern regions. However, what I wanted to raise awareness about is that if an average Italian who does not have any linguistic knowledge

<sup>19</sup> *Istriot Language*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Istriot\\_language&oldid=1246573992](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Istriot_language&oldid=1246573992) [19.09.2024].

of the Venetian dialect nor the one spoken in Friuli-Venezia Giulia – Italy's north-easternmost region –, were to have a conversation where many of these expressions are employed, this person would struggle to have a completely transparent understanding. For this reason, I would argue that one should keep in mind that *Italianisms* is an extremely broad term that can sometimes include a great number of words that might be even completely unknown to several mother-tongue speakers. Hence, I believe that it is ultimately needed to have a more detailed overview of the all-encompassing term *Italianisms*, which may, in some instances, serve as an oversimplified and deceiving solution overlooking some key aspects that I have tried to bring attention to in this text.

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