

Review by Dana-Mihaela Zamfir

Does the paper make a novel contribution to the understanding of the topic under investigation? [max 250 words]*

The paper discusses a feature of the Istro-Romanian morphology which has as yet never been mentioned: it is undisputable that under the influence of Croatian, Istro-Romanian speakers should try to associate an internal Romanian variation with the Slavic variation of the plural forms preceded by numerals. But it is characteristic for the Romanian language that a considerable number of nouns show – historically as well as synchronically – an instability in the „choice” of plural endings; and in the particular case of what is traditionally called neuter, many nouns display an oscillation between two variants of the plural, one in -e and the other in -uri. In the Istro-Romanian tendency to associate this general Romanian feature with the Slavic variation of the plural forms preceded by numerals, there is such a general instability (observable in all the Istro-Romanian examples provided by the authors), that it is beyond question that this variation is purely fortuitous; the „arithmetical” value of any numeral has no relevance in Istro-Romanian: what the Istro-Romanian speakers do is to give the internal possibilities of their own language a signification copied after the Slavic pattern of plural variation in accordance with a quantification via a numeral. There is no „reorganization of the Istro-Romanian nominal system” (p. 16). The authors themselves observe that „There is very great variation in the use of forms after numerals both between the two varieties of Istro-Romanian and between individual speakers, which means that the innovation is far from being concluded.” (p. 19; our underlining)

Is the empirical content of the paper sound (i.e. the data are collected and presented properly, the experiments are well designed, the statistics is well done, the examples contain no spelling mistakes, etc)? [max 400 words]*

The dialectal material is certainly rich and the paper has the undeniable quality of enriching what has been known until now with recently acquired musters (provided by the Hurren archive in Oxford as well as by recent fieldwork). There is notwithstanding a very inconstant manner of rendering the Istro-Romanian forms throughout this article – a combination between the Romanian system of phonetic transcription (as used in the Romanian dialectology; e.g. trej, p. 8), the standard Romanian spelling (e.g. vâr, p. 8) and the International Phonetic Alphabet (e.g. pɔr, bitʃ, p. 9). What is called in Romanian “semi-vocalic u” is rendered sometimes by ɥ (as in the Romanian dialectology) and sometimes by w (as in the IPA); I highlighted many such spellings on the pdf. Romanian palatal l is rendered as in the IPA, by ʎ (see p. 14), whereas Romanian palatal n is never rendered as in the IPA (by ɲ), nor as in the Romanian dialectology (by ɲ) – it is something of a compromise with the Slavic spelling (see p. 14, table 13, where it appears repeatedly as nj). The note 9 on page 3 displays a mixture of Slavic letters (or letters used in the manner of the Slavic spelling with Latin alphabet: š, ž, k, j) and characters used as in the Romanian dialectology (such as ă for the open back vowel, [ɔ])

Is the argument coherent and sound, with no major flaws and/or shortcomings, within the context of the theoretical assumptions made by the author? [max 500 words]*

The paper has the flaw already mentioned, of exaggerating the Croatian influence on the Istro-Romanian dialect to the point of maintaining a „reorganization of the Istro-Romanian nominal system” (p. 16). It underlines a tendency emerged from the general characteristics of the Romanian morphology; but such a tendency, which is a pure instance of trying to associate in

internal variation with what the Istro-Romanian speakers perceive as the source of similar variation in the major language they are dealing with, does by no means lead to a "reorganization" of the Romanian morphological system.

Are there any relevant scholarly works that have been overlooked by the author? If the answer is YES, please provide the full references.*

NO

Have you seen this paper, its content, the proposed analysis, or the conclusions published in other venues? [If your answer is YES, please add the relevant reference.]*

NO

If you suggest to accept the paper with (minor) revisions, please list the revisions you would advice (you are not required to proofread the paper) [max 500 words]

1. 1. I would strongly suggest that the expression „Daco-Romance variety / varieties” be dismissed. Likewise other regional divisions in Romania, Daco-Romania refers to what became of the Latin language in the Roman province of Dacia. To refer to Istro-Romanian as a „Daco-Romance variety” would imply that Istro-Romanian is surely the result of an idiom which was originally spoken within the limits of Dacia. I do not think this is the place to argue such a point of view; I would therefore suggest „dialect of Romanian” – which the Istro-Romanian really is.

2. I also would suggest that the preference for the designation of the neuter as „genus alternans” be less exclusivist. The author(s) may use this designation by explicitly defining it as their option for referring under that name to what is traditionally called neuter in Romanian; the arguments for the „misleading” and „doubtful” character of the traditional designation are really disputable.

3. I made some other non-systematic observations on the pdf.