



## THE ISTRIAN CROSS-CULTURAL SYNCRETISM AND ITS DIASYSTEMIC AND HETEROGLOSSIC DIVERSITY

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Istria is a historically multiethnic, multinational, multicultural and multilingual region deeply marked by geopolitic specificities, sociohistorical peculiarities and the centennial cohabitation of the Slavic and Romance (and Germanic) ethnic/sociocultural components. The paper aims to describe the main features of the complex and fragmented Istrian multilingual environment characterized by cross-cultural syncretism, with special emphasis on the linguistic repertoire of the Istrian italoophone speaking community and the unique linguistic macrosystem, which is shaped by asymmetric and imperfectly polyglossic relations among three national standard languages, macro-regional dialects, micro-regional dialects and local dialects.

**Keywords:** Bilingualism, Diglossia, Polyglossia, Istria, Italian national community.

### Introduction

Istria is a historically multiethnic, multinational, multicultural and multilingual region deeply marked by geopolitic specificities, sociohistorical peculiarities and the centennial cohabitation of the Slavic and Romance (and Germanic) ethnic/sociocultural components. The complex and fragmented sociolinguistic context and the linguistic macro-system is shaped by the coexistence and mutual influence of more languages and dialects, and it is marked by peculiar asymmetric diasystemic diglossic/polyglossic relations among three national standard languages (Croatian, Slovenian, Italian)<sup>1</sup>, macro-regional dialects

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<sup>1</sup> The geographical area of the Istrian peninsula is under the administration of three sovereign states (Croatia, Slovenia and Italy), but in this paper the focus is put on the Croatian area (the Istria County). According to Filipi's (1989a) spatial division of the Istrian language system/repertoire and the presence of the typical speakers, the Istrian peninsula is divided into five zones and marked by territorial bilingualism/multilingualism. As the autor reports, in the first zone, which belongs to Slovenia (Slovenian Istria), the Slovenian language and the Istro-Venetian dialect are used and the typical speaker is an Istro-Venetian-Slovenian or a Slovenian-Istro-Venetian bilingual speaker. The second zone covers the bordering parts between Croatia and Slovenia, where Slovenian, Croatian and Istro-Venetian are used. The typical speaker is trilingual (Croatian, Slovenian and Italian). The third zone belongs to the Croatian Istria, where the typical speaker is a bilingual speaker of Croatian and Italian nationality. The fourth and fifth zones do not form a geographical continuum. In these areas Istro-Romanian (mostly bilingual speakers) and Istriot (mostly trilingual speakers) are used. Croatian is considered the absolute koine (the language that everyone understands and almost everyone speaks) in all the five zones, and it is potentially used in almost all the communication situations and sometimes even as a trans-regional or pan-territorial koine in interactional contacts abroad (e.g. sellers in Slovenia and Trieste). Although it is present in all the zones, the Istro-Venetian dialect is no longer an absolute pan-Istrian koine or lingua franca, as it was before the World War II. That role is given today to Croatian and/or

(the Istro-Venetian and the Chakavian koine), micro-regional dialects (Chakavian, Kaikavian, Shtokavian) (Orbanic, 1999), and local dialects (the Istriot dialects of Rovinj, Bale, Vodnjan, Galizana, Fazana and Sisan; the Istro-Romanian dialects<sup>2</sup> in the villages of Susnjevica, Zejane, Jesenovica, Kostrceni, Nova Vas, Brdo, Brig, Dolinscina, Perasi, Zankovici, and the Montenegrin Shtokavian-Ikavian dialect of Peroj) (Blagoni, 2001; 2007). The number of residents who are actively using the Istriot and the Istro-Romanian dialects is less than a thousand. Thus, these idioms are included in the UNESCO's Red Book of Endangered Languages as Seriously Endangered languages in high risk of extinction.

The institution of the Istrian County self-government in charge of minority issues, the Department of the Italian national community and other ethnic groups (*Assessorato alla Comunità nazionale italiana e altri gruppi etnici*), recognizes and registers as legal entities the Italian, Serbian, Bosnian, Albanian, Slovenian, Montenegrin, Rom, Hungarian and Macedonian minority communities. Besides the social majority of Croats, the Italian autochthonous national community - the only recognized national community in the Istria County - and the other ethnic minorities, which perceive themselves in terms of an allochthonous typology, there are also four linguistic minorities: the Istro-Venetian, Istriot, Peroian and Istro-Romanian linguistic minority. The first two are listed in the Italian minority national context, the Peroian linguistic minority is listed in the Montenegrin minority national context and the Istro-Romanian linguistic minority is included in the majority national context (Blagoni, 2002).

### **The Italian National Affiliation and Sociolinguistic Framework**

According to the Austrian censuses of the years 1880, 1890, 1900 and 1910, the percentage of Italians in the overall Istrian population was from 40.25% (in 1910) to 41.66% (in 1880). They were concentrated especially in the coastal Western parts of the Istrian peninsula and in some localities it is stated that they represented as much as 90% of the total population. According to the Italian census of 1921, the Italians made up the 58.22% of the total population (which amounted to 199,942) and in 1945 they made up the 27.50% of the total population (which amounted to 337,408 inhabitants)<sup>3</sup> (Giuricin L., 2008; Perselli, 1993).

In the year 1948 Istria counted 34,722 Italians, out of the total amount of 161,527 Istrian residents (21.50%) while in the year 1953 18,981 Italians, out of the total amount of 158,220 inhabitants (11.00%) declared their affiliation to the Italian nationality (with the exclusion of the North-Western towns of Buje-Buie, Umag-Umago, Novigrad-Cittanova and their surroundings, that belonged to the Zone B)<sup>4</sup>. Even though in 1961 the former Zone B was annexed to the rest of Istria, a drastic drop was recorded compared to the year 1953, due to the exodus of the population and the immigration of the residents from the rest of Yugoslavia, especially from the Forties to the Sixties. In fact, the 1961 census counted 14,354 Italians, out of the total amount of 176,838 inhabitants (8.12% of the total population). The following census of the year 1971 registered 11,502 Italians, out of 175,199 inhabitants (6.56%), and in 1981 a historical minimum of Italian residents was registered: only 7,726 Italians, out of the total amount of 188,318 inhabitants (4.10%). Ten years after, in 1991, the number of Italians doubled. There were 15,306 Italians out of 204,547 (7.48%).

It is interesting to notice that, in accordance with the Act called *Decreto Legge Boniver* (1992), many residents of Istria signed up in the local Italian communities (*Comunità degli Italiani*), which allowed them to acquire the *Permesso di soggiorno* that guaranteed them the right to stay and work in Italy. Given

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Chakavian in the Istria County and to Slovenian and/or Slovene Chakavian idioms in the Slovene Istria. The linguistic situation in the Italian Istria have not changed (much) through time (Filipi, 1989a).

<sup>2</sup> See Filipi (2004); Kovacec (1967; 1998); Orbanic (1995).

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed overview of population counts see Giuricin E. & L. (2008); Giuricin L. (2001); Medica (1998); Perselli (1993).

<sup>4</sup> For a historic overview of the Istrian peninsula see Benussi (1924); Bertosa (1985; 1989; 1993); Beuc (1975); Crevatin (1975); Darovec (1996; 1998); Dukovski (2004); Ivetic (1997; 1999; 2009); Matijasic (1993); Petacco (1999).

the fact that their names were not cancelled from the membership list afterwards, a paradoxical situation developed and the number of inhabitants enrolled in the local Italian communities grew to 30,000-40,000 while barely fifteen thousand inhabitants declared their affiliation to the Italian nationality in the 2001. In fact, according to the 2001 census (when the County of Istria counted 206,344 inhabitants), 14,284 inhabitants declared their affiliation to the Italian nationality (6.92% of the total population) and there were 23,665 members enrolled in the local Italian communities (Forlani, 2001) (11.47% of the total population). In the same year census, 15,867 Istrian inhabitants declared that their mother tongue was the Italian language (7.69% of the total population)<sup>5</sup>.

The following table (table 1) provides an overview of the presence of the Croatian and Italian population in the Istrian localities of Pula-Pola, Pazin, Porec-Parenzo, Rovinj-Rovigno, Labin, Vodnjan-Dignano, Umag-Umag and Buje-Buie<sup>6</sup> (the two latest belonging to the Zone B till 1961), according to the censuses of the years 1948, 1953, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011.

**Table 1.** The presence of the Croatian and Italian population in the censuses from the year 1948 to the year 2001.

	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Pula-Pola	20.869	28.512	37.403	47.498	56.155	62.378	58.594	57.460
Croatian population	11.955	18.110	25.979	31.411	31.979	33.902	41.984	40.302
Italian population	7.178	5.427	2.967	2.648	1.886	3.495	2.824	2.490
Vodnjan-Dignano	3.485	5.147	3.623	3.636	3.566	3.678	5.651	6.119
Croatian population	456	3.535	2.343	2.336	2.111	1.742	3.156	3.160
Italian population	3.017	1.300	1.154	986	668	750	1.133	950
Rovinj-Rovigno	9.134	6.885	7.155	8.871	11.272	12.910	14.234	14294
Croatian population	3.120	4.313	4.630	5.935	7.030	7.136	9.386	9.054
Italian population	5.782	2.199	1.858	1.652	1.275	1.761	1.628	1.485
Porec-Parenzo	4.106	5.996	3.006	4.328	6.418	7.585	17.460	16.696
Croatian population	1.802	3.903	2.454	3.388	4.335	4.336	13.164	12.492
Italian population	2.244	1.279	339	328	159	403	738	607
Labin	5.568	12.176	6.266	5.584	8.530	9.036	12.426	11.642
Croatian population	4.192	10.061	5.179	4.312	5.955	4.116	8.436	7.270
Italian population	918	533	211	152	109	223	367	319
Buje-Buie	0	0	1.955	1.967	2.824	3.200	5.340	5.182

<sup>5</sup> A difference of 1,583 (0,77%) residents was registered if the comparison of the declared Italian national affiliation and the declared (Italian) mother tongue is taken into consideration.

<sup>6</sup> The town denominations are monolingual or bilingual (Croatian-Italian), according to the official name of each town and the implementation of the statutory monolingualism/bilingualism. For instance, Pazin is a monolingual town even though it is part of a bilingual County, while Rovinj-Rovigno, Buje-Buie and others are statutory bilingual towns, and their name is, therefore, bilingual.

Croatian population	0	0	1.100	1.120	1.650	1.398	2.408	2.525
Italian population	0	0	727	622	460	758	1.587	1.261
Umag-Umago	0	0	2.644	3.192	3.838	4.838	12.901	13.467
Croatian population	0	0	1.965	2.346	2.357	2.321	7.694	8.128
Italian population	0	0	260	309	222	475	2.365	2.526
Pazin	4.967	11.994	3.003	3.462	4.842	5.282	9.227	8.638
Croatian population	4.272	11.001	2.789	3.179	4.171	4.043	7.982	6.792
Italian population	639	263	31	25	16	61	114	101

According to the last census (2011), there are 12,543 Italians in the Istria County, where they make up the 6,03% of the total population<sup>7</sup>. As for the distribution of the presence of the Italians in the Istria County towns and municipalities, the last census shows an interesting situation. Most Italians are located in the former sites belonging to the Zone B: in Groznjan-Grisignana there are 416 Italians (nota bene: 56.52% of the total population of 736 residents – so the Italians represent the majority of the inhabitants, not the minority); in Brtonigla-Verteneglio there are 647 Italians (39.79% of the total population of 1,626 inhabitants); in Oprtalj-Portole there are 244 Italians (28.71% of the total population of 850 inhabitants). Besides the high presence of the Italians in the North-Western parts of the Istria County (the former Zone B), the highest numbers are recorded in Bale-Valle (a South-Western locality). Bale-Valle counts 219 Italians out of the total population of 1,127 inhabitants (19.43%) and it is followed by Tar/Vabriga-Torre/Abrega (in the Central-Western part of the peninsula), which counts 432 Italians out of 1,990 inhabitants (21.71%). The town of Buje-Buie counts 1,723 Italians out of 5,182 inhabitants (33.25%), Vodnjan-Dignano counts 950 Italians out of 6,119 inhabitants (15.53%), Umag-Umago counts 2,526 Italians out of 13,467 inhabitants (18.76%), Novigrad-Cittanova counts 542 Italians out of 4,345 inhabitants (12.47%), Rovinj-Rovigno counts 1,485 Italians out of 14,294 inhabitants (10.39%), Pula-Pola counts 2,490 Italians out of 57,460 inhabitants (4.33%), Porec-Parenzo counts 607 Italians out of 16,696 inhabitants (3.64%) and Labin counts 319 Italians out of 11,642 inhabitants (2.74%). In Pazin there are 101 Italians out of 8,638 inhabitants (1.17%) and in Buzet there are 70 Italians out of 6,133 inhabitants (1.14%). In other municipalities the situation is as follows: Motovun-Montona counts 117 Italians out of 1,004 inhabitants (11.65%), Vizinada-Visinada counts 90 Italians out of 1,158 inhabitants (7.77%), Visnjan-Visignano counts 136 Italian out of 2,274 inhabitants (5.98%), Kastelir/Labinci-Castelliere/Santa Domenica counts 82 Italians out of 1,463 inhabitants (5.60%), Lizinjan-Lisignano counts 210 Italians out of 3,965 inhabitants (5.30%), Medulin counts 215 Italians out of 6,481 inhabitants (3.32%), Vrsar-Orsera counts 58 Italians out of 2,162 inhabitants (2.68%) and Funtana-Fontane counts 23 Italians out of 907 inhabitants (2.54%). In Kanfanar the 2.20% of the total population is Italian while in Svetvincenat, Tinjan, Sveti Lovrec, Sveta Nedelja, Rasa, Pican, Cerovlje, Zminj, Gracisce, Karojba about 1-2% of the total population is Italian. In other municipalities the percentage is less than 1%.

The statement of national affiliation happens to be a complex issue in the specific Istrian socio-territorial multiethnic reality, marked by its bordering position, mobile administrative boundaries especially through the last century and socio-cultural and ethnic-national hybridity, according to specific modalities of historical, socio-political, demographic and economic developments in the domains of three

<sup>7</sup> The last census (2011) recorded the following situation according to the national affiliation of the inhabitants of the Istria County: Croats (68.33%), Italians (6.03%), Serbs (3.46%), Bosniaks (2.95%), Albanians (1.15%), Slovenians (0.86%), Roms (0.41%), Montenegrins (0.36%), Hungarians (0.23%), Macedonians (0.24%), Germans (0.11%), Austrians, Bulgarians, Czechs, Poles, Romanians, Slovaks, Turks and Ukrainians (less than 0.06% each).

ethnic groups cohabitating in the area for centuries and participating in symbiotic exchanges (e.g. mixed marriages)<sup>8</sup>, which resulted in the construction of a *culture of coexistence/cohabitation* in which individuals and groups recognize(d) and identified/identify themselves (Suran, 1992a; 1992b; 1993a; 1994-1995; 2003; 2008). A clear-cut statement of a clearly defined national affiliation may, therefore, be problematic due to the dominant mobile, dual integrated, mixed non-monolithic sociocultural identity/identification. Furthermore, the specificities of the political and historical events, a common past, common language and communicative realities led to the creation of a peculiar typology of regional ethnic identity of the indigenous population affiliated to a group of Italians (Istro-Venetian)-Istrians and a group of Slavic (Chakavian)-Istrians (Bogliun Debeljuh, 1988b). The regional expression of geographic significance of Istranism marks the regional identification in Istria, implicating several parallel identification guidelines of selected and integrated reference factors in the consciousness of individuals and groups, of contiguity and incoherence, taking into account the *problematic* non-monolithic identification categories of mixed individuals: problematic not because they are one and the other but because they are neither one nor the other (Blagoni, 2009)<sup>9</sup>.

As for the (socio)linguistic official quantifications, according to the last census (2011), the mother tongue of the Istria County population (208,055 total inhabitants) is as follows: Croatian (86.78%), Italian (6.83%), Bosnian (1.38%), Albania (1.02%), Serbian (0.93%) (Serbo-Croatian 0.36% and Croatian-Serbian 0.06%), Slovenian (0.79%), Rom (0.38%), Macedonian (0.21%), Hungarian, German (less than 0.2%), Slovak, Russian, Montenegrin, Czech, Polish, Romanian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Ukrainian (less than 0.07% each). The official quantifications do not record certain internal heteroglossic diversities. For instance, the Italian language encompasses the whole Italian dialectophonic system, although Italian (the official language of the Italian national community) is just one of the codes of the Istrian Italophone speaking community repertoire. According to the mother tongue, the situation in the Istrian towns and municipalities is as follows (see table 2):

**Table 2.** The mother tongue of the inhabitants of the Istrian towns and municipalities, according to the last census (2011).

<i>Town/Municipality</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Croatian</b>	<b>Italian</b>	<i>Municipality</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Croatian</b>	<b>Italian</b>
<b>Istria County</b>	208.055 (100%)	180.543 (86,78%)	14.205 (6,83%)	<b>Kastelir/ Labinci – Castelliere/S. Domenica</b>	1.463 (100%)	1.328 (90,77%)	82 (5,60%)
<b>TOWNS:</b>							
<b>Buje - Buie</b>	5.182 (100%)	3.026 (58,39%)	1.723 (33,25%)	<b>Krsan</b>	2.951 (100%)	2.800 (94,88%)	24 (0,81%)
<b>Buzet</b>	6.133 (100%)	5.833 (95,11%)	70 (1,14%)	<b>Lanisce</b>	329 (100%)	320 (97,26%)	2 (0,61%)
<b>Labin</b>	11.642 (100%)	10.449 (89,75%)	319 (2,74%)	<b>Liznjan - Lisignano</b>	3.965 (100%)	3.552 (89,58%)	210 (5,30%)
<b>Novigrad -</b>	4.345	3.444	542	<b>Lupoglav</b>	924	909	3

<sup>8</sup> See Bogliun Debeljuh (1985, 1994); Milani Kruljac (1990, 2001, 2003); Orbnic (1999); Petrovic (1985).

<sup>9</sup> In the bibliography that interprets regional identity (Medica, 1995; 1998; Medica & Orbnic, 1993; Orbnic, 1993; Suran, 1992a; 1993a; 1994/1995; 2001; 2003; 2008) fundamental characteristics of stigma and idealisation, trans-regionality and campanilistic localization are discussed (Blagoni, 2009).

<i>Town/Municipality</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Croatian</b>	<b>Italian</b>	<i>Municipality</i>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Croatian</b>	<b>Italian</b>	
<b>Cittanova</b>	(100%)	(79,26%)	(12,47%)		(100%)	(98,38%)	(0,32%)	
<b>Pazin</b>	8.638 (100%)	8.392 (97,15%)	101 (1,17%)		<b>Marcana</b>	4.253 (100%)	4.112 (96,68%)	32 (0,75%)
<b>Porec - Parenzo</b>	16.696 (100%)	14.865 (89,03%)	607 (3,64%)		<b>Medulin</b>	6.481 (100%)	5.730 (88,41%)	215 (3,32%)
<b>Pula - Pola</b>	57.460 (100%)	50.576 (88,02%)	2.490 (4,33%)		<b>Motovun - Montona</b>	1.004 (100%)	810 (80,68%)	117 (11,65%)
<b>Rovinj - Rovigno</b>	14.294 (100%)	11.600 (81,15%)	1.485 (10,39%)		<b>Oprtalj - Portole</b>	850 (100%)	577 (67,88%)	244 (28,71%)
<b>Umag - Umago</b>	13.467 (100%)	9.877 (73,34%)	2.526 (18,76%)		<b>Pican</b>	1.827 (100%)	1.797 (98,36%)	8 (0,44%)
<b>Vodnjan - Dignano</b>	6.119 (100%)	4.434 (72,46%)	950 (15,53%)		<b>Rasa</b>	3.183 (100%)	2.860 (89,85%)	55 (1,73%)
<b>MUNICIPALITIES:</b>					<b>Sveta Nedelja</b>	2.987 (100%)	2.789 (93,37%)	36 (1,21%)
<b>Bale - Valle</b>	1.127 (100%)	863 (76,57%)	219 (19,43%)		<b>Sveti Lovrec</b>	1.015 (100%)	972 (95,76%)	17 (1,67%)
<b>Barban</b>	2.721 (100%)	2.680 (98,49%)	17 (0,62%)		<b>Sveti Petar u Sumi</b>	1.065 (100%)	1.057 (99,25%)	2 (0,19%)
<b>Brtonigla - Verteneglio</b>	1.626 (100%)	878 (54,00%)	647 (39,79%)	<b>Svetvincenat</b>	2.202 (100%)	2.121 (96,32%)	37 (1,68%)	
<b>Cerovlje</b>	1.677 (100%)	1.643 (97,97%)	22 (1,31%)	<b>Tar/Vabriga - Torre/Abrega</b>	1.990 (100%)	1.478 (74,27%)	432 (21,71%)	
<b>Fazana - Fasana</b>	3.635 (100%)	3.302 (90,84%)	140 (3,85%)	<b>Tinjan</b>	1.684 (100%)	1.645 (97,68%)	17 (1,01%)	
<b>Funtana - Fontane</b>	907 (100%)	819 (90,30%)	23 (2,54%)	<b>Visnjan - Visignano</b>	2.274 (100%)	2.086 (91,73%)	136 (5,98%)	
<b>Gracisce</b>	1.419 (100%)	1.409 (99,30%)	3 (0,21%)	<b>Vizinada - Visinada</b>	1.158 (100%)	1.037 (89,55%)	90 (7,77%)	
<b>Groznjan - Grisignana</b>	736 (100%)	275 (37,36%)	416 (56,52%)	<b>Vrsar - Orsera</b>	2.162 (100%)	1.951 (90,24%)	58 (2,68%)	
<b>Kanfanar</b>	1.543 (100%)	1.442 (93,45%)	34 (2,20%)	<b>Zminj</b>	3.483 (100%)	3.392 (97,39%)	39 (1,12%)	
<b>Karolja</b>	1.438 (100%)	1.413 (98,26%)	15 (1,04%)					

If we take into consideration the comparison of the number of speakers who stated that Italian is their mother tongue and the number of residents declaring their affiliation to the Italian nationality<sup>10</sup>, it is possible to notice that there are some quantitative discrepancies. Italian is the mother tongue of 14,205 Istrian inhabitants (6.83% of the population of the Istria County and 0.43% of the total population of Croatia - 18,573 Croatian residents) while 12,543 Istrian inhabitants (6.03%) declare their affiliation to the Italian nationality (17,807 inhabitants of Croatia – 0.42% of the total Croatian population). The percentage of the population stating that Italian is their mother tongue (even through history) happens to be higher than the percentage of those who identify themselves as Italians, thus the possibility of socio-cultural selection on micro levels is confirmed as one of the consequences of centuries of multiethnic cohabitation of two heterogeneous indigenous ethnic-national communities in an area of historical administrative (not always clearly defined) mobile borders and bidirectional cultural and linguistic influences (Bogliun Debeljuh, 1988a).

Multicultural and multilingual balances are expressed within cultural cosmopolitanism which in Istria does not have clearly defined neither national nor cultural limits and is, therefore, impossible to speak about the real identity with a strong conceptual semantic meaning. It is more appropriate to talk about a common Istrian dimension that was claimed in the context of unity of bordering segments of active coexistence and cohabitation, which is not based on the national and nationalist values, nor it negates the original nationality of the individual (his heritage, traditions, language, folklore, etc.), but it emphasizes *complementarity* (Suran, 2001; 2003; 2008). This specific *modus vivendi*, a unicum of the ethnic-territorial mixed identity is shaped in symbiotic dynamics of unity and common life experiences, in the alternation of historical, socio-cultural, economic exchanges, and in linguistic and cultural mixing in the process of re-structuralization and de-structuralization of the collective identification in terms of recognition of socio-cultural resources, values and richness of diversity.

### **Diasystemic and Heteroglossic Diversity: the Istrian Italophone Linguistic Repertoire**

The position of the Italian national community and the Italian language in the Istria County is determined by the historical presence and time-shaping strings within two bilingual communities in Istria: the italophone indigenous language community and the croatophone indigenous language community. The Statute of the Istria County (voted on the 30th March 1994) resumes the main issues regarding the legislative regulations of minority rights and the protection and valorization of the Italian language and the Croatian-Italian bilingualism<sup>11</sup>. The Croatian and the Italian standard languages are *de iure* recognized as official languages and their equal official use in the County governing bodies and activities is statutory prescribed. Depending on the historical presence of the Italian national community, the official Croatian-Italian bilingualism is prescribed even in the single statutes of bilingual towns and municipalities.

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<sup>10</sup> See also the note N. 5.

<sup>11</sup> The practical implementation of the bilingual policy within the Statute of the Istria County is regulated by the provisions of local towns and municipalities Statutes, and the status and rights of the Italian national community are guaranteed by the provisions of the Constitutional Law on Human Rights and the rights of ethnic and national communities of the Republic of Croatia, and a number of European and international agreements (Memorandum of Agreement between Croatia, Italy and Slovenia on the protection of the Italian minority of 1992; the Agreement between the Republic of Italy and Croatia; the Croatian minority rights of 1996, etc.). For a sociolinguistic and sociological overview of the Croatian-Italian bilingualism in Istria and the sociolinguistic features of the Italian national community in Istria and see Benjak (2009); Bergnach & Radin (1995); Blagoni (1999; 2001; 2002; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2009); Bogliun-Debeljuh (1985; 1988a; 1989b; 1989b; 1989c; 1991a; 1994); Borme (1991); Filipi (1987; 1989a; 1989b; 1990; 1996); Giuricin E. & L. (2008); Giuricin L. (1984); Jahn (1996; 1998/1999; 1999; 2003); Milani Kruljac (1995; 1984a; 1984b; 1985; 1986; 1989; 1990; 1992; 1996; 2001; 2003); Milani Kruljac & Orbanic (1989a; 1989b; 1995); Missan (2003); Orbanic (1993; 1995); Mocinic & Ambrosi-Randic (2012); Orbanic & Musizza-Orbanic (1992); Simicic (2012); Radin (1995); Radin & Radossi (2001); Suran (1992a; 1992b; 1993a; 1993b; 1994/1995; 1995; 2001; 2003; 2008); Tremul & Zilli (2001).

The members of the Italian national community are guaranteed the right to use publicly their national language, as well as to attend educational and other minority institutions, organizations and associations for preserving their national and cultural identity in terms of culture, education, informative and publishing activity, and so forth<sup>12</sup>. The position of the Italian national community and the Italian language in Istria is also determined by the durability of the institutional recognition of the Italian language as the language of the social environment on the peninsula and the (parallel) education system in Croatian and Italian (Hrzica, Padovan and Kovacevic, 2011)<sup>13</sup>.

According to Blagoni (2001), despite the fact that the sociolinguistic model of the Italian repertoire cited by Berruto (1997) is not applicable in its entirety to the linguistic variation of the Italian language in use by the Istrian italoophone community in Istria, other models proposed by Pellegrini (1960), De Mauro (1980) and Sabatini (1985) could offer an appropriate description of the Istrian reality. The Italian language, the sole and exclusive (national) language of the Italian-speaking community in Istria, has not managed to achieve the sociolinguistic capillarity typical for an official standard (literary) language (not today, nor in the Fascist era) (Blagoni, 2007). Due to social, historical and political dynamics it reached the degree of institutionalization, although its application is considerably narrowed and limited to only certain communicative domains such as formal administrative and political, formal educative and mass-mediated communications, cultural events and scientific activities (especially in terms of written language and for literary purposes)<sup>14</sup>, cross-border communications and interactions with Italian tourists. The sociolinguistic (diaphasic and diamesic) variation of the Italian language in Istria is, therefore, defined by only two varieties<sup>15</sup>: the literary-scientific-mediatic mostly written, seldom oral but never conversational Italian<sup>16</sup>; the Italian of educated individuals achieved in formal contexts and the Italian used in occasional

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<sup>12</sup> The members of the Italian national community are given the statutory right to bilingual (Croatian-Italian) issuance of public documents and forms used for official purposes. Furthermore, the right of consensus is guaranteed to the Committee for issues and protection of rights of the autochthonous Italian national community, as a permanent working body of the Assembly in the self-governing domain of the Istria County.

<sup>13</sup> In the so-called Croatian schools all the subjects are taught in Croatian while in the so-called Italian schools all the subjects are taught in Italian. The right to attend the education system in the (minority) Italian language (the national language of the members of the Italian national community) is guaranteed to the members of the Italian national community by provisions of the Croatian Constitution; the Constitutional Law on national minorities; the Law on education in the language and script of national minorities and by the County, town and municipalities Statutes. The Italian education system in Istria includes kindergartens, pre-schools, primary and secondary education (elementary and high schools) and two university departments where Italian is the principal means of instruction. For more details about the (role of the) Italian education system in Istria and the italoophone childrens' linguistic competence see Ambrosi-Randic (2003); Bogliun (1988b; 1991b); Forlani (2003); Milani Kruljac (1987; 1988; 1990/1991); Milani Kruljac & Orbanic (1989c); Milotti (2011); Monica (1983; 1989; 1990/1991; 1991; 1996); Moscarda Mirkovic (2003); Musizza-Orbanic (1990/1991); Pellizzer (1987); Scotti Juric (1993; 1995; 1996/1997; 1998; 2001; 2003); Scotti Juric & Ambrosi-Randic (2010); Scotti Juric & Lalli Pacelat (2010).

<sup>14</sup> Written Italian is present in the media (newspapers: *La Voce del Popolo*; journals: *Panorama*, *La Battana*, *Arcobaleno*; the publications of the Centre for Historical Research in Rovinj, *Pietas Iulia*, *CIPO*, and so forth) and in the literary works (many of them presented at literary competitions such as *Istria Nobilissima*, *Mailing List Histriae*, etc.).

<sup>15</sup> On the sociolinguistic features and varieties of the linguistic repertoires see Berruto (1974; 1985; 1987; 1995; 1997).

<sup>16</sup> Oral Italian is considered primarily the main code of pre-school and school institutions in which all the classes are taught in Italian (so it is the principal means of communication in formal teacher-student interactions in the Italian schools), and of cross-border communication and cultural heritage. Italian is, therefore, limited to rare interactional occasions of vivid language production and it is used in a tapered area of oral communication. Outside these main settings, there might be a few exceptions, but it is mainly linked to the receptive, passive and unproductive everyday language activity. The communication clash between Italian and Istro-Venetian is so much pronounced that according to Scotti Juric (2003) the use of the Italian language in informal conversational domains is considered as inappropriate, strange or even ridiculous.

and episodic communication, characterized by numerous traces of linguistic contact, which is typical for dialectophone and croatophone speakers that attended Italian schools (Blagoni, 2007)<sup>17</sup>.

The range of factors for measuring the ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles et al., 1977) determines the viability of certain bilingual communities as entities in an environment where coexist several communities (Hrzica, Padovan and Kovacevic, 2011) within the study of the relationship between language and identity, the ethnolinguistic vitality of the italoophone language islands in Istria has an important role as part of the linguistic and political features that shape the hierarchy within the sociolinguistic relevance whose achievement is determined by structures, power and stability of ethnic groups as a collective entity in the interaction and interdependence of the contact context<sup>18</sup> (Blagoni, 2002). Unlike the Italian language institutionalized status and its institutional preservation ensured although it does not have a communicative prestige and ethnolinguistic vitality, the Istro-Venetian dialect, the first and favourite language of the Istrian italoophone speaking community, is not institutionally protected (nor is the Istriot). The existing diasystemic conflict between Italian and Istro-Venetian is expressed through the conflicting idealization of Istro-Venetian and the simultaneous condemnation of its adverse impact on the quality of the use/presence of Italian, as well as its communication worthlessness in contact with non-dialectophone italoophone speakers and croatophone speakers (Blagoni, 2007).

In terms of realization of the model of identification of the language with the nation and the language with the speech community (Blagoni, 2002), the statutory care and protection is directed only to the official languages of national minorities (in this case the Italian national community) and the language policy is negligent towards the inner diasystemic and heteroglossic diversity. There is a lack of protection of linguistic diversity and of a stronger institutional (juridical) demarcation and communication status and prestige that the Italian language possesses. In other words, according to Blagoni (2002) the right to [use the Italian language is] realized with the possibility to use it, while the possibility is completely independent from the right to [use the Italian language].

The Istro-Venetian dialect<sup>19</sup>, built as a substrate based on the mixing of indigenous Istrian Romance and Venetian varieties, is the most widespread Romance idiom of the italoophone repertoire in the Istrian peninsula. Although some authors present the hypothesis of its indigenous nature (Lauro de Carli, 1976 in Filipi, 1989a), the *Veneto coloniale*, as Crevatin (1982) calls it, as an integral part of the Venetian cross-border speech, was imported by the historic arrival of the Venetians, covering all the other Romance idioms present throughout the area. The sociolinguistic dynamics led to the establishment of a single Istro-Venetian dialect, which functioned as a regional linguistic resource that enabled communication at a higher level overcoming the specificities of local (romance) idioms<sup>20</sup>. The Istro-Venetian dialect is today the first language or mother tongue and the privileged language among the Istrian italoophone speakers, the language of their identity, traditions and intergenerational transmission, as an expression of the whole (micro)cosmos of intangible cultural heritage (Bursic Giudici, 2011: 66). In other words, it is the main

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<sup>17</sup> Additionally, its use is characterized by innovative features that came out from contact and exchange relationships in particular with the Croatian language, (Chakavian) and the Istro-Venetian dialect (Bogliun Debeljuh, 1985; Milani Kruljac, 1990; 2003; Orbanic, 1999). Given the fact that a considerable number of present words and structures in one code derived from the other code (and vice versa), the bidirectional (socio)linguistic exchanges confirm specific social interaction and mutual understanding that define and influence language variation patterns, so some authors talk about colloquial regional substandard varieties of Croatian and Italian that have developed through time (Orbanic, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Relevant is the role of: demographic and demolinguistic variables; achieved social, linguistic, communication and language-political position, status and prestige of the language/idiom and culture of a particular area; sociolinguistic domains of use; relations between the minority and the majority; relations between the minority and majority language; relations of languages in terms of the manifestation of bilingualism/diglossia; degree of social and institutional support and presence of languages in the administration, culture, education, media; speaker's perception of themselves, their language and culture and so forth (see Appel & Muysken, 1987; Clyne, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> See Bursic Giudici & Orbanic (2009); Dussich (2008); Filipi & Bursic Giudici (2012); Glavinic (2000).

<sup>20</sup> A linguistic diasystem was shaped between different levels: dialect (I), regional koine (II) and standard language (III) (see Milani Kruljac, 1990).

means of expression of the sense of belonging and auto identification within the specific autochthonous cultural traditions and the ethnolinguistic sphere of the Istrian italoophone speaking community. Besides the Istriot dialects, Istro-Venetian is used in literary and poetic settings as the language of remembrance, sentimental expressions and, therefore, serves as a valuable instrument for nostalgic invoking and achieving mimesis with past times.

Besides the Istro-Venetian macro-regional koine, even Istriot local dialects held ethnolinguistic vitality especially in the past. As it has been already mentioned, today they are seriously endangered in high risk of extinction. The Istriot dialects include a group of indigenous pre-Venetian romance idioms used in the South-Western Istrian localities of Rovinj, Vodnjan, Bale, Galizana, Fazana and Sisan (they are respectively called: *Rovignese, Vallese, Bumbaro, Gallesanese, Fasanese, Sissanese*). They preserved the Latin stratum in situ and to the present day the linguists have not agreed yet on their position and classification within the Romance language family<sup>21</sup>. It is not possible to determine with absolute accuracy if there were other additional pre-Venetian Romance idioms that are now extinct, besides Istriot, the dialect of Triest (called *Tergestino*), Muggia (called *Muglisano*) and the island of Krk (called *Veglioto*). Unfortunately, Istriot written texts preceding the translation of the *Parabola del figliol prodigo* (1873) are not preserved. Therefore, the linguistic evolution of Istriot through the centuries is not easily and clearly detectable. There are many philological researches dedicated to the Istriot dialect<sup>22</sup> (Deanovic, 1955; 1962; Filipi, 1993; 1994; 2004; Filipi & Bursic Giudici, 1998; Muljacic, 1991; Tekavcic, 1967; 1971a; 1971b; 1976; 1988), which are today used by a very limited part of the older italoophone residents, whose proficiency is more or less high (most of them understand it, but they use it seldom) and, therefore, his condition and survival are threatened. However, it is difficult to define precisely the quantitative demographic data regarding the active and passive speakers of Istriot (and Istro-Venetian), since the census does not provide not even indicative guidelines.

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<sup>21</sup> In 1873 Graziadio Isaia Ascoli used for the first time the term Istriot (*Istrioto*) in his publication entitled *Saggi Ladini*, where he compared it to Friulian and Venetian. Linguists proposed different hypothesis about the derivation of the Istriot dialects (see Filipi, 1989a). For instance, Ive and Merlo stated that Istriot derived from Friulian (abandoned hypothesis) while Bartoli put the Istrian idioms in relation to the Italian dialects of the Central-Southern coast of Italy. Bartoli, Vidossi, Battisti, Pellegrini and Tagliavini reported that Istria, a coherent area where the presence and influence of Venice are undisputed, is a peninsular extension of Northern Italy, and that Istriot is actually an archaic Venetian idiom. Skok proposed the name Istro-Romance (*Istoromanzo*) and he attributed independence to the code within neo-Latin language structures, presenting the hypothesis of an original romance stratum positioned below the superstratum of Byzantine, Venetian and Friulan idioms (hypothesis accepted by Slavic linguists) while Tekavcic believed that, even in the earliest stages, Istriot was alike the Dalmatian idiom and that it has Illyrian and Romance foundations (as well as Dalmatian) to which Friulian and Venetian superstrata were added (Filipi, 1989a). Consequently, due to the waves of immigration of Slavic speakers (from the end of the 6th century onwards) and due to the geographic discontinuity, it can be assumed that there was a division of the speakers of this unique pre-Latin vulgar speech in Dalmatia, Istria and Furlania, and each idiom developed in its own individual linguistic direction: Dalmatic in the South, Istriot in Istria and Furlan in the North (Bursic Giudici, 2011). Deanovic (1954) argued the impossibility of the inclusion of Istriot in the system of any other neo-Latin language. The assumption of the establishment of Istriot as part of a single Romance language that developed from Vulgar Latin is also possible. As Filipi (1989a) concluded, the truth is partially hidden in all the reported assumptions; no one is completely right nor wrong (Milani Kruljac, 1996: 5). On Istriot see: Deanovic (1954; 1955; 1960); Cernecca (1967; 1976); Crevatin (1999); Filipi (1989a; 1993; 1994; 1996); Filipi and Bursic Giudici (1998); Ive (1975); Muljacic (1991); Tekavcic (1967; 1971a; 1971b; 1976; 1988).

<sup>22</sup> Since the late Seventies of the last century, a few dictionaries of the Istriot dialects of Rovinj-Rovigno, Vodnjan-Dignano, Bale-Valle have been published, such as: *Vocabolario del dialetto di Rovigno d'Istria* (Pellizzer A. & G., 1992), *Vocabolario dignanese-italiano* (Dalla Zonca, 1978), *Dizionario del dialetto di Valle d'Istria* (Cernecca, 1986; Cergna, 2015). Relevant is the publication of the Istriot linguistic atlas – *Atlante linguistico Istrioto* (Filipi & Bursic Giudici, 1998) and the literary production in Istriot of Ligio Zanini, Giusto Curto, Vlado Benussi, Libero Benussi, Loredana Bogliun-Debeljuh, Maria Sciolis, Romina Floris, and so forth.

### Bilingualism with (Double) Diglossia and (Imperfect) Polyglossia

The repertoire of the Italian (or better Istro-Venetian) speaking community in Istria is characterized by the symbiosis of bilingualism and diglossia/polyglossia<sup>23</sup>. Bilingualism assumes the coexistence of two language codes occupying an identical (equal) sociolinguistic status while diglossia actually implicates a functional or systemic form of bilingualism. According to Ferguson's definition (1959), diglossia denotes a linguistic situation in which the speech community has two language codes (e.g. a language and a dialect) with different functions, in accordance with the applied interactional rules shared by the speaking community. There is a sociolinguistic hierarchy between a superior code (High variety) and a subordinated code (Low variety), and between the two varieties there is a functional division of complementarity (Ferguson, 1959; 1977; Kalogjera, 2009). There is no uniformity of usage possibilities of both codes in all the situations, as implicated by a bilingual situation. Although it is possible to use both codes in certain settings, the High variety is normally used in formal, official, (elevated) public, situations and never in informal, private, family domains (in which the Low variety is used)<sup>24</sup>.

So, the phenomena of bilingualism and diglossia are not mutually exclusive: they can manifest simultaneously and complement each other (Fishman, 1967). Fishman's (1967) traditional distribution<sup>25</sup> is not fully applicable to the Istrian situation. The linguistic reality of the Istrian italoophone speaking community generally belongs to the category of bilingualism with diglossia, involving functional differentiation of diglossic relations between the Istro-Venetian dialect (the subordinate Low variety) and the Italian language (the High variety), or involving double diglossic relations between Istro-Venetian and Italian on one side, and the Chakavian dialect (Low variety) and the Croatian language (High variety) on the other. Taking into account that bilingualism is socially conditioned (or imposed) in the daily repertoire of the italoophone speakers, Croatian is necessarily socially present. Therefore, generally the social interactions in the Istrian italoophone framework are shaped not only by double diglossic but even by imperfectly polyglossic relationships (Milani Kruljac, 1990; 2001; 2003; Skubic, 1984), since there are complex relationships in terms of complementary sociolinguistic distributions and hierarchical distinctions between the Istrian italophony and croatophony, and an alternation of two or more High varieties and two or more Low is implicated. Croatian, the (first) official High code with undeniable social prestige covers (almost) all the functional communicative ranges. Italian, the (second) official High code (or medium variety), which is not ethnolinguistically vital in everyday conversation terms, covers only certain formal interactional situations. Istro-Venetian, the (unofficial) Low variety that has a very high communicative prestige and ethnolinguistic vitality, is (considered to be) the L1 of the members of the Italian national community<sup>26</sup> and is their primary communicative choice and the privileged code of their community identification. If everyday conversational praxis include the local Istriot dialect, and/or

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<sup>23</sup> Although it is often useful to use the dichotomy bilingualism/diglossia in sociolinguistic research, since in reality there are many different possibilities of symbiosis between the two idioms, from the linguistic point of view there is a tendency to use the term bilingualism, which covers a wider range of circumstances (Kovacec, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> In other words, diglossia is characterized by a vertical relationship and systematic/functional distinction between the use of the linguistic codes in certain interactive settings (each code has its specific sociolinguistic complementary functions and is, therefore, suitable or not suitable for specific communicative domains) (there is a so-called aut-aut relationship between linguistic codes). Bilingualism implicates a horizontal relationship between sociolinguistically equal language systems (there is a so-called et-et relationship between linguistic codes) (Milani Kruljac, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> Diglossia with bilingualism, bilingualism without diglossia, diglossia without bilingualism, and the absence of diglossia and bilingualism (or monolingualism).

<sup>26</sup> According to Milani Kruljac (1990), the situation of the Istrian italoophone speakers may be defined as dialectal bilingualism, since the vast majority of the members of the italoophone language community acquire primary the Istro-Venetian dialect (first language – L1), and later masters the Italian standard language (second language – L2), usually when enrolling in kindergarten or school. If Croatian is acquired simultaneously or after the acquisition of Istro-Venetian (and before enrolling in the educational institutions), Italian is in that case considered to be their third language (L3).

the Chakavian dialect, and/or another allochthonous idiom, then triglossic, tetraglossic, pentaglossic or multilingual relations may arise.

In relation to the fundamental domains of the family, school, and society of the italoophone speaking community in Istria, the Istro-Venetian dialects represents the dominant code (L1) of the family domain (which is, therefore, a dialectophone domain); Italian is only ideally dominant in the school domain if the speakers are attending Italian schools (so Italian is the main means of communication in formal teacher-student interactions; and on the other hand Croatian is dominant in the school domain if they are attending Croatian schools), while Croatian language is the dominant language in the social environment. It is the code of social cohesion that has an undeniable social prestige as it covers almost the entire range of functional communication ranges (Milani Kruljac, 1984b; 1990; 2001; 2003; Milani Kruljac & Orbanic, 1989a; Strukelj, 1986)<sup>27</sup>.

Since the opportunities and possibilities of using the Italian language are limited, Milani Kruljac (1990; 2001; 2003) talks about double diglossia with potential bilingualism, which applies only to a limited number of speakers, mostly students attending Italian schools over the duration of the education process: after the end of the educational process, the situation might convert into diglossia with latent bilingualism<sup>28</sup>. Milani Kruljac (1990) reports the assumption of the possibility that the average italoophone speaker, after completing school education (in Italian or Croatian), could no longer use the Italian language due to the fact that he will not find the need for its everyday active use (which of course depends on each individual speaker), with the exception of various forms of cross-border communicative cooperation, interactions with Italian tourists and a (very) few other circumstances. Many authors (Bogliun Debeljuh, 1985; 1988a; 1988b; 1989a; 1994; Borme, 1990/1991; Milani Kruljac, 1988; 1990; 2001; 2003; Orbanic, 1999; Scotti Juric, 2003) point out the lack of the Italian language in terms of

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<sup>27</sup> The specificities of the Istrian bilingualism are not uniform and universally valid for all the italoophone speakers in a diachronic perspective. The generational stratification and the characteristics related to the sociolinguistic circumstances and experiences have changed significantly in the generational succession in the last sixty years. In the framework of a division into three generations (see Milani Kruljac, 1996), Istro-Venetian is the mother tongue, the dominant code and the social language of grandparents (the first generation – linear diglossia); their children (the second generation) are generally bilingual and they know Croatian, Istro-Venetian and Italian (and possibly Chakavian); the grandchildren (the third generation) are bilingual speakers if they grow in an environment where Istro-Venetian is present and required. There is even a fourth generation (the grand-grandchildren), but no systematic sociolinguistic research has been made yet. Apparently, it is possible to notice that the linguistic situation among the fourth generation can no longer be defined with the Ferguson's notion (1959) of diglossia, due to the fact that besides the strong vitality of Istro-Venetian and the contraposition and separation in the use of High and Low codes, it can not be claimed that Italian is never used as a conversational tool in informal sectors (which was largely unusual for the members of the first and second generation) (Milani Kruljac, 1996). In the last decade a growing number of croatophone speakers became able to use Italian to a certain extent due to the exposure to Italian television programs. Such examples (and the outcomes of such exposure, which does not necessarily guarantee linguistic mastery of the Italian language) have not been explored yet, so they will not be considered. The media partially enhance the continuity of the Italian language (mostly in the form of passive receptive exposure) and affect the maintenance of social bonds and exposure to cultural cross-border models, but they fail to influence sufficiently the design and creation of productive habits of the Italian language use (even though we cannot deny their immediate effect in the promotion of linguistic enrichment) (Milani Kruljac, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Filipi (1989b) states that the introduction of the Italian language as a compulsory or elective subject in the majority Croatian schools is a very important issue which with no doubt helps the logical integration of newly arrived residents in the Istrian community. However, the author notes that in this sequence a paradoxical situation could develop: a situation in which Dante's language would be used only by the non-italophone speakers in Istria (the new comers), in the settings in which their peers born in Istria (the italoophone/bilingual speakers) would use Istro-Venetian. In other words, Filipi reports that the italoophone speakers whose dominant language is Istro-Venetian and the croatophone speakers whose dominant language is Croatian (and who learn Italian in the school settings) do not use the same Italian variant, which is one of the main reasons why the interaction and integration process takes place through the (joint) Croatian language. At the same time, the reduced presence (or absence) of the Italian language in informal social interactions represents an aggravating factor for learning and using the Italian language for the croatophone speakers.

conversational functional use and Scotti Juric (2003: 38) calls it *una lingua scaduto d'uso*, having merely an instrumental character, due to the fact that it became a vehicular language in an institutional sense of the word, not as a form of social integration in the interactive socio-cultural dimension (Milani Kruljac, 1988).

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