

Institution: University of Manchester
Unit of Assessment: 28 (Modern Languages and Linguistics)
Title of case study: Promoting recognition and status of the Romani language
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This research by Professor Yaron Matras produced tools to promote awareness of the Romani language through popular websites, online documentation, learning resources and audio-visual educational materials. It also produced policy papers which prompted the launch of a European Language Curriculum Framework for Romani. This led to the consistent monitoring and reporting by governments on policy to promote Romani through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Professor Matras was responsible for establishing the first-ever online multi-dialectal dictionary in any language. 'Romlex' currently offers an online lexical database of 25 Romani dialects with search and translation facilities in 14 different target languages.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research programme was started by Professor Yaron Matras in 1995 at The University of Manchester. It was supported by a research team at the university between 2000 and 2012. Key external collaborators were:</p> <p>Dieter Halwachs, the University of Graz, Austria Peter Bakker, Aarhus University, Denmark</p> <p>The key research steps were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An assessment of written usages and participant observations on use of the Romani language in the public domain was carried out. Professor Matras concluded that a bottom-up process of the expansion of written Romani is taking place. He found it has a polycentric and pluralistic character which is being aided by new technologies to allow the co-existence and efficient communication in multiple forms. [3.1, 3.2] 2. Data was then collected in over 150 varieties of Romani in 22 different countries. The results were compiled and presented in a universally accessible online database http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/rms/. The evaluation focused on the extent and nature of structural variation among the dialects of Romani and the insights that this offers for a reconstruction of the language's historical development history. [3.3] 3. Research into lexical variation in Romani was carried out from 2001-2005. The procedure involved an evaluation of major published dictionaries of Romani, supported by targeted lexical elicitation among native speakers and an evaluation of a body of electronic texts. The project created the first-ever online multi-dialectal dictionary in any language called 'Romlex' http://romani.uni-graz.at/romlex/. It currently offers an online lexical database of 25 Romani dialects with search and translation facilities in 14 different target languages. The targeted documentation of 'new vocabulary' has provided further insights into the codification process in Romani. <p>Professor Matras and his research team then studied the emergence of a mixed variety of Romani called 'Angloromani'. This is based on Romani-derived vocabulary among English and Welsh Gypsies. A number of recorded interviews with users in over 40 locations in England and Wales took place between 2006 and 2008 and the historical, structural and conversational features of Angloromani were assessed [3.4].</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

3. References to the research (AOR - Available on Request)

The outcomes of the research were published in peer-refereed journals with leading academic publishers in linguistics and social sciences, such as Cambridge University Press, Edinburgh University Press, and Mouton de Gruyter. The research was supported by funding won in peer-refereed competition.

- 3.1 Matras, Y. 1999. Writing Romani: The pragmatics of codification in a stateless language. *Applied Linguistics* 20-4, 481-502. DOI: 10.1093/applin/20.4.481
- 3.2 Matras, Y. 2002. *Romani: A linguistic introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (AOR)
- 3.3 Elšík, V. & Matras, Y. 2006. *Markedness and language change: The Romani sample*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. (AOR)
- 3.4 Matras, Y. 2010. *Romani in Britain: The afterlife of a language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. (AOR)

Grants:

- 3.5 Place, mobility and dialect differentiation in Romani. ESRC Research Grant Scheme. Jun 2005-May 2008. £338,000. (AOR)
- 3.6 The role of language in the transnational formation of Romani identity. Humanities in the European Research Area (European Science Foundation). 2010-2013. €370,000. (AOR)
- 3.7 The mixed Angloromani speech of British Gypsies'. Arts and Humanities Research Council Research Leave Scheme. Sept 2008-March 2009. £45,000. (AOR)
- 3.8 'A description of Angloromani'. Economic and Social Research Council Large Grant. June 2006-June 2008. £180,000. (AOR)
- 3.9 'Documenting the English Romani speech of Lancashire and Cheshire'. British Academy Small Grant. January-July 2006. £7,500. (AOR)

4. Details of the impact**Context**

Professor Matras' research has made a major contribution to raising awareness and promoting the study of the Romani language among general audiences worldwide. The Romani are one of the most vulnerable and marginalized populations in Europe and the UK and little research has been carried out into their language. The work of Professor Matras fills a significant gap and directly contributes to education by informing individuals and authorities about Romani cultural heritage and language. He has also influenced policy making in European organisations in regard to the status, regulation and promotion of Romani.

Pathways to Impact

The results of Professor Matras' research have been disseminated through a number of online education tools, DVDs and broadcasts on the BBC. The main pathways to policy impacts are to be found at the European level and are based on research published in a peer-refereed journal and in a monograph, among other outlets. The importance and visibility of the results made European policy makers aware of its potential impact. In October 2005 the Expert Committee for the European Charter on Minority or Regional Languages adopted Matras' recommendations to encourage the recognition of Romani by member states and to support regional codification [5.1]. The results of Professor Matras' research into linguistic pluralism in Romani were also disseminated widely within the community of Romani cultural activists via the publication *Roma Rights Quarterly*.

Reach and Significance

International impact on Romani language education and preservation

In 2006 Professor Matras launched the Romani linguistics website [5.2] to preserve the endangered language and culture of one of the world's most marginalised and maligned populations. The site contains transcriptions of the many Romani dialects for the first time and allows people to locate different dialects on a world map and listen to examples of them. Since the launch it's been accessed by an average of 25,000 individuals every year and visitors have IP addresses from over 40 countries.

An educational DVD-ROM called 'Romani: An interactive journey' was created by Professor Matras and his team. Over 8,000 hard copies have been sent to educational outlets in the UK and abroad including 6,500 since January 2008. Over 35,000 have been directly downloaded from the website since January 2008 and overall 40,000 have been downloaded since its publication in May 2007.

The online Romani dictionary 'Romlex' which was developed in collaboration with partners at Graz University in Austria has become the major reference resource for writers and learners of Romani. It has been accessed by an average of 70,000 users each year since its launch in 2005. By simultaneously covering multiple dialects, Romlex has supported the process of de-centralised, regional codification and language planning by lending support to teachers, translators and interpreters of the Romani language. The Romlex project also ran a trainee programme between 2003 and 2007 which saw more than 40 individuals of Romani origin receive training through work placements on projects at the universities of Manchester and Graz. Two of these trainees continued to postgraduate studies at The University of Manchester in 2007 and around 10 continue to work as part-time research and fieldwork assistants for both universities. They set an example and a precedent for the integration of young people of Romani background into academic research on Romani themes at the highest level.

Impact on national Romani language education and preservation

Professor Matras' research into Angloromani has raised the awareness and promoted the inclusion of information on Romani in the media and the education curriculum in the UK. In 2007 the BBC published a contribution by Professor Matras on Romani on its 'Voices' website [5.3]. The Audio-CD 'Romani Soundbites' produced by Professor Matras and associates was broadcast by BBC Three Counties Radio in December 2008.

From 2008 to 2009 outlets of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit and the Traveler Education Services adopted Professor Matras' audio-visual educational tools to promote awareness of the Romani language for use in schools and other educational and training activities. Many thousands of pupils have since had access to these tools [5.4]. Testimonies from English Romani Gypsies collected during the annual fair at Appleby in June 2012 [5.5] document the impact that Professor Matras' CDs and CD-ROM productions have had on encouraging members of the community to explore the origins, history and structure of their ancestral language.

Impact on Policy

The main impact on policy has been at a European level. As a direct outcome of the Expert Committee's adoption of Matras' recommendations, annual reports submitted as part of the monitoring process by national governments of member states who are signatory to the Charter have since 2008 made regular reference to Romani.

The Council of Europe's Language Policy Division adopted Professor Matras' recommendation to support ongoing polycentric and pluralistic approaches to the codification of Romani. This includes using written forms based on different dialects and with a variety of spelling conventions [5.1]. In response to Professor Matras' report to the Language Policy Division, it set up a working group which delivered the European Curriculum Framework for Romani in 2008 [5.6]. The Framework is currently serving as a basis for the development and delivery of Romani language programmes in 10 different countries. The European Union has sponsored two separate implementation projects devoted to the design of teaching and learning materials on the basis of the Framework via its Lifelong Learning Programme: RomaniNet (2010-2012) and QualiRom (2011-2013) [5.7, 5.8].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact.

All claims are referenced in section 4.

- 5.1 Council of Europe: European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Expert Committee; policy hearing on Romani language, October 2005:
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/publications/ReportLanguagePolicyHearing_en.pdf. Matras one of three external experts. Discussion and adoption of Matras, Y. 2005. The status of Romani in Europe. Report submitted to the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division.
- 5.2 Romani linguistics website at the University of Manchester:
<http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/>
- 5.3 BBC voices information text on Romani language:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/multilingual/romani.shtml>, authored by Matras.
- 5.4 Department for Children, School and Families: Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Achievement:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100202100434/http://standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/raising_achievement/gypsy_travellerachievement/. Access point for learning tools whose development Matras's project has contributed to.
- 5.5 Digital archive of testimonies of English Gypsies, Romani Project, University of Manchester. Domained at Faculty of Humanities IT Services.
- 5.6 Council of Europe, Curriculum Framework for Romani. 2008.
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/minorities_romani_en.asp
- 5.7 RomaniNet website landing page: <http://www.romaninet.com/?sec=goals>
- 5.8 QualiRom website landing page: <http://qualirom.ecml.at/>