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**THE 24th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS**
Approaches to Language: Data, Interpretations, Theories

Workshop 2:
Romanian as a heritage language

Date: 15 November 2024

Venue: Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest, 5-7 Edgar Quinet St., Bucharest, Romania (hybrid)

Convenors: Alexandru Mardale (Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris), Elena Soare (Université de Paris 8 & CNRS)

In the present context of an accelerated migration, a very important area of study is the one of heritage languages. According to the definition of Valdes (2000), Benmamoun et al. (2013), Polinsky (2018), these languages are learned and spoken outside the boundaries of the native country, and crucially they are not the majority language of the hosting society. Children acquire these languages at home with their family and caretakers, but when they grow they become more and more fluent in the majority language. They are early bilinguals with a special profile, inasmuch the majority language (their L2) is dominant, while the heritage language (L1) is weaker, often affected by the attrition of certain structures and by transfer phenomena.

Studying these heritage varieties is particularly interesting not only from a linguistic, theoretical point of view, but also from a sociolinguistic, pedagogical point of view and from the perspective of language acquisition. Heritage languages thus offer a very interesting window for the study of L1 and L2 acquisition and of linguistic contact. The properties of their grammars are the transfer from the dominant language, but also other general phenomena which may appear in the creolization process. The properties which are retained or lost in these grammars may help us to better understand the phenomena of attrition and linguistic change. From a sociolinguistic point of view, this domain offers new varieties to study and a better understanding of multilingualism at a reduced scale. From a pedagogical point of view, exploring heritage languages is important in order to develop curricula adapted for this type of speakers.

The importance of heritage languages is reflected in the diversity of programs developed in the United States (<https://www.cal.org/heritage/research/briefs.html>). In the last years, UCLA has organized a summer institute devoted to this topic, which brings together researchers from the entire world. However, in Europe, research on heritage languages is still at its beginning. One may mention two important projects: Helping in Tromsø (<https://site.uit.no/castl/2018/11/19/a-major-new-project-at-castl-led-by-jason-rothman/>) led by Jason Rothman, and the ERC Microcontact in Utrecht (<https://microcontact.sites.uu.nl/>), coordinated by Roberta d'Alessandro. For obvious reasons, the study of heritage languages in Europe is thus an important and precious research goal. The density and the diversity of the languages spoken on this continent and the numerous forms of linguistic contact make Europe

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a huge laboratory for the understanding of linguistic diversity and of language evolution in the context of migration. Approaching this topic in linguistics, by identifying the vulnerable areas in the grammar or by exploring the attitudes towards heritage languages will lead to a better understanding of linguistic dynamics at the social and the individual level, and to a solid ground for developing new curricula.

Romanian as a heritage language has been very little studied; however, such a study is urgent in the context of a growing diaspora, and especially of the growing number of Romanian children born outside the country, but also given the amplification of the returnee phenomenon. The evolution of Romanian in the diaspora is an extremely interesting and actual phenomenon. The diversity of linguistic contact offered by the situation of Romanian especially in Europe (the countries in which Romanians have immigrated cover actually the whole European Union) is an incredible field of study, a true linguistic laboratory, because it offers the possibility to compare varieties influenced by very diverse languages. Romanian has been chosen as a pilot language in a project entitled *Heritage Languages in Europe* led by Elena Soare at the University of Paris 8 and CNRS in France. This project brings together researchers interested in heritage Romanian, and the organization of the present workshop continues this enterprise.

The workshop will bring together researchers from Romania, different European countries and Canada working on Romanian as a heritage language. It will take place at the University of Bucharest within the annual Colloquium of the Linguistics Department of the Faculty of Letters, in a hybrid format, on November 15th.

The session will be open also to non-presenting attendees.

Participants

Larisa Avram (Universitatea din București)
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Monica Irimia (Università di Modena è Reggio Emilia)
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References

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Polinsky, M. 2018. *Heritage Languages and Their Speakers*. Cambridge University Press.
Valdés, G. 2000. Introduction. In *Spanish for native speakers, volume i*. 1–32. New York, NY: Harcourt College.