Introduction to Romani linguistics

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Romani is an Indic language of the Indo-European stock. As such, it displays a number of typological features commonly encountered in languages of Eurasia. However, Romani syntactic features have been greatly shaped through contact with non-Indic languages during the past ten centuries. For example, Romani exhibits accusative alignment, whereas morphological ergative alignment is found in many Indic languages and can also be reconstructed for Proto-Romani. Language contact has further shaped the typological features of specific Romani varieties. For example, Romani first developed a definite article through contact with Greek, a feature that is absent from most Indic languages. The Romani article was later lost in some dialects following long-term contact with languages that lack definite articles. In conclusion, Romani illustrates the importance of the geographical distribution of typological features over genetic affiliation. Classes 1 and 2 will present an overview of the basic Romani syntactic features (for noun phrase, verb phrase, and complex clauses).

Classes 3, 4 and 5 will then focus on language contact and present case studies. Romani speakers are frequently bi/multilingual in the languages of the populations with which they interact in their everyday lives. Such bi/multilingual profiles in combination with positive attitudes with respect to bi/multilingual identities result into frequent codeswitching and borrowing. For example, in a sample of 41 languages, Romani appears to be the highest borrower (Elšik 2009). Romani borrowing and codeswitching phenomena have attracted attention in contact linguistics as they are sometimes rare in a cross-linguistic perspective, but can be found in distinct language pairs and contact settings involving Romani, e.g., oikoclitic and xenoclitic morphology (Elšik & Matras 2006). In general, the study of Romani offers a unique opportunity to compare the language contact outcomes in a variety of language pairs that always involve the same L1, Romani. It therefore becomes possible to evaluate the relative weight of the typological and the sociolinguistic factors that shape bilingual practices and outcomes (Elšik & Matras 2006).

The seminar will take place at the Institute for Linguistics, Meister-Ekkehart-Straße 7, Seminarraum links/rechts on the following dates:

24. Juli, 12.00–13.30: Class 1. Syntactic typology: basic features and differences between dialects

25. Juli, 12.00–13.30: Class 2. Syntactic typology (continued)

25. Juli, 17.45–19.15: Class 3. Language contact I: An overview

26. Juli, 10.00–11.30: Class 4. Language contact II: Corpus and experimental evidence from Romani-Turkish codeswitching (Greece)

26. Juli, 16.00–17.30: Class 5. Language contact III: Complexification and simplification processes in Mexican Romani

In preparation for the seminar, students are asked to visit and familiarize themselves with the Romani Morpho-Syntax Database (http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/rms/) and the World Loanword Database (http://wold.clld.org/), and to read the references below. A full syllabus and extended list of references will be made available through ILIAS.

Studierende können sich das Blockseminar in EM 1 mit 2 CP anerkennen lassen (1-F-MA Linguistik & 2-F-MA Linguistik und Phonetik).
Anmeldung mit Angabe der Matrikelnummer bitte über sprachwissenschaft@uni-koeln.de.

Databases:
RMS database (Romani Morpho-Syntax Database):
http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/rms/
World Loanword Database: http://wold.clld.org/

References:
Adamou, Evangelia. 2013. Replicating Spanish estar in Mexican Romani. Linguistics 51(6): 1075–1105.
Adamou, Evangelia & Kimmo Granqvist. 2015. Unevenly mixed Romani languages. International Journal of Bilingualism 19(5): 525–547.
Matras, Yaron. 2002. Romani: a linguistic introduction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Matras, Yaron. 2005. The classification of Romani dialects. A geographic-historical perspective. In D. Halwachs & B. Schrammel (eds.), General and applied Romani linguistics, 7–26. Munich: Lincom Europa.