

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 6 : 9 September 2006

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1. Introduction

Gypsies in Europe and in USA call themselves Roma and their language – Romani. Romani is an Indo–European language related to the new-Indian languages and the most similar to it is the contemporary Hindi.

In their way from India to Europe the Gypsies settled for some 200 years during the Middle Ages in Greece and a lots of Greek words entered their language. Nowadays, the contemporary Romani contents many Greek loanwords. Somewhere in the 14th century the Gypsies spread all over Europe and latter-all over the world, but they kept the Indian origin and the Greek influence in their language. Those of them who remain in the Balkan area got some changes in their language, which make it related to the other Balkan languages like Romanian, Bulgarian, Greek and Albanian. Romani is not a standard language and being in a contact with other languages it has some influence from them as well, but nevertheless it has its own structure and rules, which make it totally different from other languages.

In East European countries Roma people live mainly in ghetto type of settlements and the every day language for communication is Romani, although they would know at least 2-3 other languages as well, spoken in the society where they live. In one village or town could live 2-3 different groups which speak different dialects, but still they will have no problems understanding each other.

Roma in Bulgaria are mainly concentrated in the surroundings of big towns and cities and their total number is approximately 800 000, although the official census says that their number is approximately 350

000. The differences between the Bulgarian Romani dialects are on vocabulary level and it depends also from the surrounding population. The Roma groups, which have contacts with Turkish minority, have Muslim religion and the influences on their dialect are from Turkish. The groups, which have contacts with Bulgarians, have Orthodox Christian religion and their dialects are mostly influenced by Bulgarian language. However, there are cases when a Roma group had a Muslim religion in the past and nowadays it has Orthodox Christian religion, but the change of religion did not influence the language so much. Another grouping of Roma is based on the professions, which they had some 50-60 years ago. However one can find different professional groups to have the same dialects, which means they belong to same dialect group. Number of studies and publications on different dialects appeared in last 20 years but the most general and coherent one, presenting the Romani as a system is by Y. Matras (2002). The work of Matras presents the Romani language on different grammatical level - phonological, morphological and syntactic, which shows the whole grammatical structure of the language.

The study here aims to show how Roma children acquire a particular Romani dialect in their home environment. The study here does not have the goal to describe the structure of the dialect but rather to show how Roma children learn Romani from everyday communication with parents and with other adults in the community. The dialect, which the study is focused on, is from Sofia- Bulgaria and it is called *Erlija dialect* (from Turkish “yerli”- settled). This is a dialect of settled Roma. Nowadays Roma in Bulgaria do not have nomadic life anymore.

2. Roma Child Directed Speech

From the literature it is known that there are two alternative models of language development (Bloom et al. 1996: 3154):

"The first model builds the *intentionality* perspective for explaining language development that was introduced by L. Bloom (1993). In this model, the child's role is primary, and language learning depends more on the mind of the young child and its development than on the conversational skills of an adult in an interaction. The child provides the driving force for language, in general, and for conversations in particular, from beginning of word learning. The second model emphasizes the social context of language use and in particular, *scaffolded* linguistic formats constructed by caregivers for interacting with young children. This model is built on two main assumptions. The first is that the adults control these interactions, providing the format and structure of exchange, and the second is that the learning language depends on such formatted interactions. In this view, the adult's role is primary for both the discourse process and language learning. The intentionality and scaffolding models make fundamentally different predictions about the form and function of early conversations and the relative contributions that children and their caregivers make to them."

The *scaffolding model* was presented most cogently by Bruner (1983a, 1983b) in his description of the social discourse that mothers construct in providing young children with a "language acquisition support system". In accounts of scaffolding, a child's contributions to interactions and to learning are secondary to the "very considerable role" given to the adult. The evidence for scaffolding has come primarily from studies of interactions in particular situational formats like picture book reading, games and plays, and the original theoretical model of scaffolding has its roots in Vigotsky (1962), who stressed the importance of what a child

first does only with guidance from other persons. This was taken up by Ninio and Bruner (1978) for the case of word learning in language development and by Bruner and others for tutoring and learning more generally. A subsequent source of support for scaffolding came from Vigotsky's extension of his original theory to learning in the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) – the distance between a child's actual developmental level and the level of potential development possible "under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vigotsky 1978: 86).

The scaffolding/ZPD account of language learning has been challenged, in general, in several ways. First, such context-specific learning is culturally determined and may well be culture specific (Ochs and Scieffelin, 1984). Mothers and children in different cultures and even within the same culture differ in the extent to which they participate in highly structured and conventional routines, games, and joint picture book reading. In a scaffolding model, early word learning occurs in communicative exchange and depends on an adult or more competent partner to format and frame the interaction, to begin with, and to provide further language models in succeeding turns.

The *intentionality model* leads to a different set of expectations for children's early conversations as potential contexts for word learning. First, if expression of intentionality is primary, we would expect children to initiate most of their conversational exchanges using words they already know, and their mothers to respond more often to a child's opening turn than to take the first turn. Second, when responding in a conversation, we would expect mothers to be more likely to acknowledge, what the child had said, to provide assurance that a message was shared than to press the child to say or provide more explicit language input for learning. And third, when initiating conversational

exchanges, we would expect mothers to make as many or more statements for sharing their own contents of mind than to ask questions in order to begin a format for scaffolding the exchange. The interactions predicted by the intentionality model would indicate that the children do not depend on hearing the words they learn in the scaffolding linguistic formats that have been described for early word learning.

The language development of Roma children in Romani community follows the *scaffolding model* where the child learns the language from the formatted and framed child directed speech. In the Romani family the language is learned not only from the communication with the mother, but also with older children and the other members of the family. Snow (1986) introduced the term *Child Directed Speech* (CDS) and in our study we will use this term instead of the term *Mother-Child Interaction*, because as I already said very often in the conversations with the Roma children participated members and relatives of the family as well.

The studies focused on research with West European children learning to speak showed the importance of semantic contingency as a major social facilitator of language acquisition. However, in some societies according to Snow (1986) like the Kipsigis of Kenya and rural Blacks of Louisiana (Ward 1971) children's comprehension skill is valued much more highly than their verbal production, and most of the speech addressed to children consists of directives and explanations, rather than questions or comments on their activities. Among the Kaluli of Papua-New Guinea and among Samoans, semantically contingent responses to children are extremely rare, and indeed would be considered inappropriate within the culture, for a variety of reasons (Ochs and Schieffelin 1984).

The conversation between the adult and the child in the Romani community has the features of not only a "semantic contingency", but it

has also the features of imitation. In some communities the children are thought how to interact through repetitions and imitation. Schieffelin (1985) describes the Kaluli mother, who use an elicited-imitation strategy ("say after me") for early language socialization.

The CDS in Romani community has the features of scaffolding model, where the adult play an important role in the social discourse with the child, providing a system for language acquisition using the semantic contingency and imitation strategies.

Reger (1994) reported about a "conversation" between father and a few months old boy, where the father promises to buy him a horse, and when he grows up will be able to get a wife for himself with the horse. These examples show the so-called "semantic contingency" of language acquisition. However, other examples show the "say after me" strategy used by the mother.

1) MOT: Saly, penta da-da!

% eng: saly, say da-da

% com: baby

CHI: (Saly; 13:3) da-da

MOT: Čoko

% com: name

CHI: Čoko

MOT: te-te

% com: ant

CHI: te-te

In another Child Directed Speech the mother teach her 16 months old son to sing a song, where again the imitation strategy takes place.

2) MOT: Giljabe, giljabe!

% eng: sing, sing

CHI: (Atanas, 16:0): lo-lo

MOT: Kerta čuka: O-O-O

% eng: make like this: O-O-O

So, as one can see the child directed speech in the Roma community plays language development role using the “say after me” strategy. It is known that this strategy is popular among poor communities with cultures different from western cultures.

In his classical work on early social interaction and language acquisition Bruner (1997) reported that the knowledge about the world is acquired through the joint actions between the parents and the child. The mother will give an object to the child naming it and will expect that the child will repeat the name of the object. By the age of 12 months usually the child is familiar with the Give and Take game.

In western culture the process of language acquisition is prefaced as: a result of a process of interaction between **mother and child and the simplified speech** register is one of the communicative skills.

Let's see is this the way that the language is acquired in the Roma family. For the Roma the child becomes an equal member of the whole community since his birth. The linguistic and social knowledge are acquired at the same time. These are not two separate phenomena as it is in western culture. In the western culture the mother is the one who is taking mainly care of the child and the child acquires the language through the conversation with her. In large and extended families where usually brothers and sisters live together in the language socialization of the child is participating everyone – male and female, older children. Visits of neighbors and friends are part of the every day life of the family and usually they also will interact with the child. Usually the newborn baby

will be addressed as an adult and the topics of conversations of the adults will be “discussed” with the children.

This adult – child interaction in Roma community is done in very special way: the words of the adults are performed with a melody and it sounds like a singing. During my visit to Thessalonica, Greece in Roma community a few weeks old baby was addressed by his grandmother in Romani addressed. She was “singing” to the child whose father is a soldier in the army, that when he grows up he also will become a soldier as his father.

In fact this way of child directed speech is very close to the oral history of Roma and in Romani language acquisition the oral history takes a strong part. The Roma children get the knowledge about the world not from the books and not with/through toys but from fairytales and songs and from the natural life. Very rarely Roma family will buy a book to show to the child and this to be a tool for language development.

The names of the object usually are acquired not from pictures, but asking the child to bring it to the adult: “Bring me that” is the most used request by the parents when the children learning the objects names.

Comparing Roma community with other illiterate communities like the Kurdish community for example one can see that the illiterate Kurdish parents will buy children books for their children in order to learn to speak, while the Roma families will teach Romani using the oral history and the environment as a tool. During my visit to India and my field work among Gypsies in India the mothers sing children songs called “lori” and teach the children those songs. And in fact the language is acquired through the oral traditions.

Another approach used by Roma parents to teach Romani to young children is reported by Reger (1996) is language teasing. Through language teasings the child gets the whole complex features of Romani.

3. Research design and Methodology

3.1. The children and their setting

The aim of the study here is to present different aspects of early Romani language acquisition. For this purpose 5 Roma children - speakers of Erlija dialect from Sofia, Bulgaria were researched.

The method used for data collection in this study is known from previous studies in the area of child language acquisition. It is a longitudinal audio and video recording. One Roma child (boy-Boris) from Filipovtsi settlement in Sofia and 4 Roma children (2 boys – Kocho and Atanas and 2 girls- Saly and Silvia) from Fakulteta settlement from Sofia were involved in the study. The two settlements are ghetto type of settlements and they are based in the surroundings of Sofia. Filipovtsi has some 15 000 Roma population and Fakulteta-some 35 000 Roma inhabitants. Boris was recorded for 7 months (between the 0;5 – 12;0 months). Once per month the house of the child was visited and 1 hour video recording was done by the researcher or the recordings resulted in total in 7 hours video tapes. The recordings were involving different activities of the child and his extended family: playing, giving him food, singing him to sleep and etc. The recordings were done in the natural home environment of the child between December, 2004 and July, 2005.

The other 4 children are from the Fakulteta settlement and the recordings with them were done between October 1995 and February 1997. The age of the children during the period of recording was between 12;0 and 36;0 months. All the children were tape-recorded in their home environments and the recordings were done by a young Roma woman member of the community trained how to do the recordings. During some of the sessions – one-hour spontaneous mother-child and adult-child

interaction, the woman brought some books or toys to make the children interested in speaking. The number of the recordings resulted in 136 hours.

Boris is the first-born child in the family of young Roma couple. The father has high school (11 years) education and the mother has secondary school (8 years) education.

Kocho si a second-born child and the parents have secondary school education. Atanas is also a second-born child and the parents have secondary school education as well. Sally is a first-born child and the father is with high school level education and the mother with secondary level education. Silvia is a first-born child and the parents are with secondary level education.

All the families are with low socio-economic status usually they live together with elder people in the same house or in the same yard. During the recordings of the children very often other members of the extended family are present as well.

3. 2. Data and coding

All the mother child conversations are transcribed and typed in a computer format. The speech of the adults as well as the speech of the children is divided into utterances. The places where the text is non-comprehensive I use the XXX sign.

3.3. The research questions and hypothesis

The present study will try to describe the way how the children acquire Romani on different aspects-phonology, morphology and syntax and it

will try to answer the question: Does the process of acquisition of Romani differs from other languages and if yes - in which ways.

The Hypothesis used here is similar to one that Berko Gleason (1975) introduced and it is so-called “Bridge theory”. In her study she found that the fathers communicating with young children introduce new linguistic skills, which often are more complex than those, which the mothers use in the communication with their children. The fathers are the bridge to more complex language skills. My hypothesis is that Roma children growing up in extended families and having around adults who communicate with them using more complex sentences will learn earlier more complex Romani.

4. Acquisition of Romani phonology

The phonology of Erlija dialect is described by several authors (K. Kostov, 1963; N. Boretzky, 1998; H. Kyuchukov, 2003; K. Kostov and D. Iliev, 2004). Here I will present the vowel and the consonant systems of the Erlija dialect.

4.1. The vowel system

The Erlija dialect from Sofia contents the following vowels:

a y e i o u

i – is a front high vowel, pronounced as in the word *thr̄in* “three“

u – is a back high vowel, pronounced as in the word *dur̄* “fare”

y – is a mid central vowel, pronounced as in the word *vakyti* “time”

e – is a front central vowel, pronounced as in the word *perel* “fall”

o – is a back central vowel, pronounced as in the word *so* “what”

a – is a low central vowel, pronounced as in the word *kan* “ear”

4.2. The Diphthongs

The diphthongs, which exist in this dialect, are the following:

aj oj uj ja je jo ju

They are pronounced as follows:

aj – is pronounced as in the word *kaj* “where”

oj – is pronounced as in the word *roj* “rabbit”

uj – is pronounced as in the word *duj* “two”

ja – is pronounced as in the word *jakha* “eyes”

je – is pronounced as in the word *jevend* “winter”

jo – is pronounced as in the word *lijom* “took”

ju – is pronounced as in the word *juto* “spicy”

4.3. The consonant system

The consonant system of the *Erlj* Romani dialect of Sofia can be divided into following groups:

Fricatives	Nasal Stops	Stops	Liquids
/f/ <i>f<u>o</u>ro</i>	/m/ <i>ma<u>s</u>ek</i>	/p/ <i>pa<u>p</u>in</i>	/r/ <i>ro<u>m</u></i>
/s/ <i>sa<u>r</u></i>	/n/ <i>na<u>n</u>aj</i>	/t/ <i>ta<u>t</u>o</i>	/l/ <i>la<u>v</u></i>
/ʃ/ <i>ʃ<u>u</u>kar</i>			/k/ <i>ka<u>n</u></i>
/v/ <i>va<u>s</u>t</i>			/tʃ/ <i>ča<u>r</u></i>
/z/ <i>za<u>r</u></i>		/b/ <i>ba<u>l</u></i>	
/ʒ/ <i>ža<u>m</u>ba</i>		/d/ <i>da<u>v</u></i>	
/c/ <i>ci<u>k</u>no</i>			/g/ <i>ga<u>v</u></i>
/dz/ <i>dz<u>u</u>ralo</i>			/dʒ/ <i>dža<u>v</u></i>

The *Erlj* dialect contains also the aspirate consonants as *kh*, *ph*, *th*, which are typical for most of the Romani dialects. These sounds are

pronounced with light aspiration of the *h* part, like in the words *kher* “house”, *phuro* “old man” *than* “place” and etc.

There exist also two sounds /h/: laringal /h/ in the word *hyv* “hall” and velar /x/ in the word *xav* “eat”.

4.4. Features of acquisition of Romani phonology

Clark (1993:21) estimates that “Children utter their first recognizable word around age one. In the first few months, they tend to produce words one at a time, often with considerable effort, and with pauses in between. Early word productions may be hard to recognize because children take time to master adult pronunciation, even though they have as their targets the conventional adult forms they hear in input “. In our case the observed children are exactly at the age when they start producing their first words. From previous publications on the topic it is known that different children differ from each other in their first word stage development – some are quicker in their vocabulary development and other stay longer period on this stage. The prolongation of the stage depends on the way, how the children take the sound system of their language.

4.5. Motor development

Piaget was who developed the idea about sensory-motor development of the child. Latter the researchers on the child language development improved this idea (Clark, 1993 : 27) and suggested that the “motor development may be a major factor a one-word stage. This stage has often been regarded as the product of a cognitive-linguistic limit on what children can say, linked to their degree of knowledge about what language can be used for. But it is also partly a product of motor development”. The motor development of the children helps them to establish and develop their articulatory skills. As quick are the children in

their proper articulation of their “first words” so quickly develops their vocabulary.

4.6. *Patterns of words-sounds*

Jakobson (1941) suggested that the languages are acquired on the base of phonemic distinctions between vowels (V) and consonants (C). Developing their own articulation the children acquire the vocabulary of the language. In the initial stages of the language development it seems easier for children to acquire and produce the vowels of the languages system. Going through the data I found that two children (Kocho and Silvia) are on a stage when they produce vowels and combinations of sounds forming first words. The other two children (Saly and Atanas) are on a higher stage – they produce their first words.

Gentner (1982) states that the children initially learn object names rather than names for relations of properties because object concepts are acquired pre linguistically. However, on a level when a sound means “word” (nouns, verbs, adjectives etc.) the children use sounds for noun, verb, adjectives and etc. For example in a conversation with the mother the child uses few vowels for different meanings:

3) MOT: So si davka, so si?

% eng: what is this, what is

% com: shows a pen

CHI (Silvia ;12 : 2) : y-y-y-y-y

4) MOT: De e bebes te xal **papa**.

% eng : give the baby to eat

% com: **papa** means “meal” in the “baby-talk” register

MOT: De o bebes

% eng : give to the baby

CHI (Silvia ; 12 : 2): e-e-e-e

5) MOT: Uhti thay mar les harička!

% eng: stand up and beat him a little bit

MOT: Uhti ker les **ta**

% eng : stand up make him **ta**

% com: **ta** means “beat” in the “baby-talk” register

MOT: Mar e Alis

% eng : beat Ali

CHI (Silvia;12: 2): a-a-a-a-a

From the examples is obvious that the child uses different sounds for different words, which shows that she can differentiate the words, which has to produce. The input of the mother in examples **3**, **4** and **5** illustrates simplification of some of the words-phenomenon very typical for the “baby-talk” register (Cruttenden, 1994). Her words can be a combination of CV, CVC, CVCV. The simplified words introduced to the child are patterns for acquisition of the sound and morphological systems of the language. The observations on the data show that the child first acquire the vowels of the language. It seems that the consonants are developed and acquired on a latter stage.

Bates (1979) reported that a child Charlotte pronounced the sound –complex “bam”, when she was playing with her toys. Another Italian child Marta was using the sound “da”, when she was giving or getting something from someone. In the age of 13 months the children start to realize the referential acts (the connection between words and objects)

and use the names of the objects. The sound-complex “mao-mao” is used when the child see a cat in different contexts. It is the same with using the sound-complex “wou-wou” when the child see a dog. Bates claims that in the age of 13 months the children understand the relation between “language” and reference in the sounds-complex production. In our case Kocho (12; 2) uses the sound-complex “ge-ge” from Romani word *grast* (horse) in different contexts, although he does not see it. According to the Bates’ statements the understanding and the use of the different words when the child does not see the referent shows the development of the child memory. These kinds of examples we found in the whole data and the next mother-child conversation illustrated it as well.

6) MOT: Pištine e babake, e Lenake!

% eng : call to the grandmother, to Lena

MOT: Pištine baba!

% eng: Call grandma!

CHI (Atanas;12: 3): ba-ba, ba-ba.

% eng: grandma, grandma.

In this case the child does not see the grandmother. She is not present in the room. The child understands the words of the mother and reacts properly.

Another strategy of language development in this stage is the imitation. The mother makes the child to imitate her sound-complexes, as it is shown in the following example.

7) MOT: Saly, penta **da-da**!

% eng: saly, say da-da

% com: **da-da** means “baby” in the “baby- talk” register

CHI (Saly;13:3): da-da

MOT: Čoko

%com: name

CHI : Čoko

MOT: te-te

% com : **te-te** means ”ant“ in Romani

CHI: te-te

It is known that in some communities the children are thought how to interact through repetitions and imitation. Schieffelin (1985) describes the Kalulu use of an elicited-imitation strategy (“say after me”). For Romani community in Bulgaria this phenomenon is also very typical.

5. Acquisition of Romani morphology

The Romani morphology as many other Indo-European languages (e.g. English) is suffix oriented. Very often from the verbs can be formed the nouns adding some suffixes to the stems. For example, the verb *bašalav* “play an instrument” and the suffix *-no* (has masculine ending *-o*), is formed a new word *bašalno*, however the suffix could be also *-ni* (for feminine) and then there will be a new word *bašalni* “musician” who is a female. In general the Romani masculine nouns and adjectives have suffix *-o* or the words end with a consonant and the feminine suffix in Romani is *-i*. The suffixes for Singular masculine and feminine are different as they are different for Plural.

For example:

1) *kher – khera* (house, -s) – m.

- 2) *čšavo* – *čšave* (boy, -s) – m.
 3) *luludi* – *luludja* (flower, -s) – f.
 4) *čšaj* – *čšaja* (girl, -s) – f.

The verb suffixes in Plural in Erlija dialect are as shown in the following example (*bašalav* 'to play an instrument'):

Sg.	Pl.
<i>me baš-alav</i>	<i>ame baš-alas</i>
<i>tu baš-ales</i>	<i>tume baš-alen</i>
<i>ov baš-alel</i>	<i>ol baš-alen</i>
<i>oj baš-alel</i>	

5.1. Case markers

Romani has a case system and there are eight cases with different case endings and the personal pronouns get different suffixes depending on the case. There are differences in the case endings of the cases for singular and plural as well for an animate and inanimate object. For example "singing boy" and "singing girl" in singular and in plural will be like the following:

	singular	
Nom.	<i>o bašalno čšavo</i>	<i>i bašalni čšaj</i>
Gen.	<i>o bašalno čšaveskoro</i>	<i>e bašalne čšajakeri</i>
Dat.	<i>e bašalne čšaveske</i>	<i>e bašalne čšajake</i>
Acc.	<i>e bašalne čšaves</i>	<i>e bašalne čšaja</i>
Instr.	<i>e bašalne čšavesa</i>	<i>e bašalne čšajasa</i>
Abl.	<i>e bašalne čšavestar</i>	<i>e bašalne čšajatar</i>
Loc.	<i>ko bašalno čšavo</i>	<i>ki bašalni čšaj</i>
Voc.	<i>bašalne čšaveja</i>	<i>bašalni čšaje</i>

plural

Nom.	<i>o bašalne čšave</i>	<i>e bašalne čšaja</i>
Gen.	<i>e bašalne čšavengere</i>	<i>e bašalne čšajengere</i>
Dat.	<i>e bašalne čšavenge</i>	<i>e bašalne čšajenge</i>
Acc.	<i>e bašalne čšaven</i>	<i>e bašalne čšajen</i>
Instr.	<i>e bašalne čšavenca</i>	<i>e bašalne čšajenca</i>
Abl.	<i>e bašalne čšavendar</i>	<i>e bašalne čšajendar</i>
Loc.	<i>ko bašalne čšave</i>	<i>ke bašalne čšaja</i>
Voc.	<i>bašalne čšavalen</i>	<i>bašalne čšajalen</i>

5.2. The verb tenses

The verb tenses are as in many other languages: Present tense, Past tense, Past Continuing tense, Future tense.

5.3. Features of acquisition of Romani morphology

There are no studies about acquisition of Romani morphology in the literature on child language development. However, the area of acquisition of morphology in different languages is one of the most investigated. A classical example is Brown's (1973) study describing the order of acquisition of 14 grammatical morphemes in English. Recently the Austrian Academy of Science and the University of Vienna finished an International Project on "The Acquisition of Pre- and Protomorphology". Dressler and Merlini (1994) introduced the term *extragrammatical morphological operations*. It comprises a heterogeneous set of either early acquired primitive or of late acquired sophisticated operations (of an analogical or rule-like nature) which resemble morphological rules, but whose only unifying property is that some principle of morphological grammar is violated. According to

Dressler and Karpf (1994:101) examples of extramorphological operations performed by small children are:

- blends, as in frequent German *Hallophon* 'phone' < *Hallo* 'hello' & *Telephon* 'phone';
- back-formations, as in Slovene *mama*, *baba* < *mamica* 'mother', *babica* 'granny' as if they were diminutives in *-ica* ;
- surface analogies, as in German *Papapia* < Italian *mamma mia* ;
- truncations/abbreviations of various kinds, e. g. in unpredictable hypocoristics of the type *Elisabeth* < *Liz*, *Bet(h)/Betty* ;
- reduplications as in German *Gaga* = *Vogel* 'bird' *Wawa Tschutschu*, *pipi*. Most of these reduplications neither serve the function of lexical enrichment nor the motivation of complex words via simplicia, the normal functions of grammatical word formation.

These extragrammatical morphological operations seem to be (or at least among) the first morphological operations children acquire.

All phenomenon described above can be found in the development of Romani child language as well.

5.3.1. Acquisition of Plural Forms

My hypothesis is that the children are acquiring plural forms on a later stage, and first they acquire the singular forms. However, the adults introduce the singular and plural forms at the same time. Of course the adults much more rarely use the plural forms, but nevertheless they exist in the CDS. In the process of communication and different activities the mother and the other adults introduce to the child the plural forms of nouns and verbs as it is shown in the following examples from book reading activities:

8) MOT: *Žarta*, *ela ta te dikhes*.

% eng: wait, come to see

% com: looking book together

MOT: A-u-u i rakli thaj o raklo katka pašlyon

% eng: a-u-u the boy and the girl here are sleeping

The verb *pašlyon* “sleeping” here is with plural suffix.

9) MOT: Manges li te žas te pazaruvinas, me čšajasa?

% eng: do you want to go shopping, with my daughter

The verb *pazaruvinas* 'shopping' is again with plural suffix.

The examples with plural verbs are much rarer than the examples with plural nouns:

10) MOT: Sikavta e tetake te danda, mamo!

% eng: show your teethes to the ant

ADU: Kay te danda?

% eng: where are your teethes

MOT: Bala kay?

% eng: where are the hair

MOT: Kay me čšakere bala?

% eng: where are the hair of my daughter

All these inputs from the mother and the adults start when the child is on the age of 1 month. However, the child starts to use the plural forms much later around the age of 24–26 months.

5.3.2. Acquisition of Case Markers

There are different studies for acquisition of case markers in different languages. In the study of Dressler and Karpf (1994) is reported about the use of inflections by a Polish girl Ania (1;4). In declension, Ania uses only nominatives freely. They are presumably rote-learned, with the

exceptions of feminine in *-a*, which are analogically (MacWhiney 1978) extended, as in *balloon* “ball” → *bala, lala* (back-formation from diminutive *lalka*) used as a direct object, *buba* ‘cup’ (back-formation of pseudo-diminutive *kubek*) used as a direct object (as if it were genitive-accusative of animate masculine /*kub/*).

In the study, investigated Roma children also use nominatives freely at early stages (between 12–18 months). For example, Kocho (12:3) uses the word “gege” (from the Romani word *grast* “horse”) in different contexts in Nominative case, analogically to the Polish girl Ania.

Together with the acquisition of Nominative case the child gets an input from the adults in other cases also as it is shown in the next example:

11) MOT: De e bebes te xal papa.

% eng: give the baby to eat food.

MOT: De o bebes (Dative)

% eng: give to the baby

In fact the mother uses here the short form of Dative suffix – *bebes* instead of the longer form *bebeske*, as it is in this dialect. However, in latter stages when the children are between 24:0–28:0 months old they start to respond to the input from the adults.

12) MOT: Sikavta akana e tetke e Dančake o snimkes.

% eng: show now here to the ant Danche the pictures

% com: the mother and the child are looking photos

MOT: Penta e tetake e Dančake koj si akana katka.

% eng: say to the ant Danche who is now here

CHI (Saly; 26:0): ake i alis

% eng: here is saly

ADU: Kaj si?

% eng: where is it

CHI: i alis.

% eng: saly

% com: shows picture

5.4. Discussion

Clark (1993) classified the children's first words in the following 4 categories, which are found in the Romani data as well:

- Naming things
- Actions/Events
- Personal/Social
- Modifying things

From the analyzed data it is shown that the observed Roma children are still in the first and second categories when they are naming the objects and the actions/events.

In the literature on child language development one of the most often discussed problem is the problem of individual differences. According to Bates et al. (1988) the individual differences can be grouped in three main areas:

1. *Sequencing and timing of different forms.* An excellent example here is Brown's work on the sequence of acquisition of fourteen basic English morphemes.
2. *Intermediate stages in the acquisition of single forms.* For example a child studied by Slobin and Welsh (1973) was asked to imitate embedded sentences like "A boy who cried came to my party", she reproduced the target sentence with two simple conjoined clauses: "A boy cried and he came to my party".
3. *Error patterns.* In the process of language acquisition the children begin to make creative errors that seem entirely unrelated to their

language input. All kinds of errors due to overgeneralization are well known from the literature.

Acquiring Romani all 4 children in this study have differences in the sequences and time for acquisition of different morphological forms. The forms for plural are acquired simultaneously with the forms for singular from very early age (12:0). However, the case markers are acquired much latter, when the children are between 26:0–28:0 months, although that there are cases of input from earlier age.

6. Acquisition of Romani syntax

From developmental psychology it is known that the development of a language during the very first stages is due to the mother-child interaction. The child directed speech of the mother/adult is the main stimulator, which motivates the child to try different combinations of sounds until the moment the child pronounces the first real words. The language of the child is connected with the processes of the development of the thinking. The first words of the children show their contact with the surrounding world. The transformation from the one word stage to the stage of the syntax is a complex process-psychological and physiological factors influence it. In general we know that the main object of syntax is the structure of the sentence. At the first stages the children cannot form grammatically correct sentences. They start with one-word sentences and go through two words sentences coming to the stage when they have three- and more words in the sentences and start to build more complex ones.

6.1. The word order in Romani

The word order in Romani is flexible. There is a little information on the structure of the sentence in Romani, in generally.

Grumet (1986) presents the word order in Kalderash from elicited data from native speakers. From the following examples it is obvious that the word order can be SVO, VSO, VOS and etc.

1) *O rom diklea e romnea.*

S V O

The man saw the woman- ACC

2) *Diklea o rom le romnea.*

V S O

Saw the man the woman- ACC

3) *Dikhlea le romnea o rom.*

V O S

Saw the woman-ACC the man

4) *E romnea dikhlea o rom.*

O V S

The woman- ACC saw the man

5) *E romnea o rom dikhlea.*

O S V

The woman-ACC the man saw

6) *O rom e romnea dikhlea.*

S O V

The man the woman-ACC saw

According to Grumet's (1986) informants, five out of six possible word orders are grammatical. Only SOV structure is ruled out.

Word order with only two constituents is also possible as in the following examples: (Grumet, 1986:147)

7) *Gelotar o phuro.*

V S

Went the old man.

8) *Me zhyav.*

S O

I go

9) *Astardea jekh mashyo*

V O

(He) catch- PASS T one fish

10) *E romes tradel*

O V

The man- ACC (he) sends

Grumet concludes that the comparison of the word order from conversational speech with the word order from narrative texts, mainly folktales, show some differences. Sentences of OSV type do not occur in the text, but they do occur in the speech.

The same conclusion is also reached by Zatta (1986). Her data from Croatian Romani narratives (folktales) show the following type of construction:

11) *Gelo ando veš o čhavo*

V O S

Went to the forest the boy- N

In conversational speech the sentence will have another type of construction:

12) *O čhavo gelo ando veš*

S V O

The boy-N went to the forest

More or less the same type of constructions are found in Sofia Erija dialect as well (K. Kostov, 1963):

13) *O čhavo sovel*

S V

The boy sleeps

14) *O čalo na pakjal e bokhales*

S V O

The satisfied (man) do not believe to the hungry (man)

15) *Vikine mange e thagareske rakles*

V O S

Call for me the king's son-ACC

Boretzky (1996) discusses the word order in conservative Romani dialects in South-east Europe (the so-called Balkan dialects and Vlax dialects) like in the following example:

16) *Kerel o manuš buti trin berš.*

V S O

Works the man-N three years.

As we see the different dialects have different word orders, due to the situation where the language is used (every day conversation or folktales) as well as due to the different languages which Romani has a contact with.

The *wh*-questions in Romani depend by the case system and used and they are the following:

Table 1. Questions of the Romani case system

Case	Questions- animate	Questions-inanimate
Nominative	Kon? (who?)	So? (what?)
Accusative	Kas? (whom?)	So? (what?)
Dative	Kaske? (to whom?)	Soske? (why? to what?)
Ablative	Kastar? (from whom?)	Sostar? (from what?)
Locative	Kaste? (where?)	Soste? (in what?) kate? (where)
Instrumental	Kasa? (with whom?)	Sosa? (with what?)
Genitive	Kasko(ro)?-m. Kaske(ri)?-f. (whose?)	Savesko(ro)?-m. Saveski(ri)?-f. (whose)
Vocative	-	-

6. 2. Features of acquisition of Romani syntax

Number of studies show how children - speakers of different languages- acquire the structure of a sentence. I have to mention here the classical study of Bowerman (1973) which shows the acquisition of Finnish and examines the so-called “pivot – grammar” in child language development. The pivot grammar is the combination of two words in utterances. A word, which is in an initial position and other words are attached to it; or a word is in the second position and other words will occur in the initial position. For example: “all gone outside”, “all gone shopping” or “bandage on”, “blanket on”. The position of the pivot word is generally fixed. Each month few new pivots enter the vocabulary of the child. All other words form so-called “open class” and they occur as single word utterances.

In Peters' (1995: 464) opinion the "pivot constructions" in English "tend to be combinations of a closed-class item with an open class one". The author presents also cross-linguistic strategies for acquisition of grammatical morphemes.

Ceytlin (2000) reports about the acquisition of one-word utterances by Russian children and all children acquiring their first language pass through a stage where they have one-word utterance. In the area of child language development the similar stages, which the children pass through, are known as universals in language acquisition. However, Russian being a language which contains case system is interesting for comparison. Ceytlin (2000: 98) reports: "in the stage of one word utterance there are some rules acquiring the case system. The nouns, which are acquired, first are playing a role of Nominative case and in one-word utterance often the nouns function as:

- addressing someone
- presence of an object or a person
- object used as an instrument
- person doing something etc."

When the children start to combine the words and get two-words utterance often the sentence does not have any "case grammar". The terminology Ceytlin (2000) uses is proto-case and proto-grammar. Among Russian children the first acquired sentences are in Nominative, and later are acquired Accusative, Dative, Locative and Genitive. The child cannot differentiate animate from inanimate nouns and often in the Accusative the animate nouns get suffixes as in the inanimate. The instrumental case in Russian is acquired last.

6.2.1. Acquisition of wh-questions

The spontaneous acquisition of *wh*-questions by young children is an area which is well investigated by different researcher. Otsu (1981) and Phinney (1981) studied the nature of barriers to *wh*-movement in acquisition. Roeper, Rooth, Mallis and Akiyama (1984) studied the empty categories in *wh*-questions of young children's grammar and Stromswold (1988) studied the paths in production of *wh*-questions.

In 1990-s and later on the focus to acquisition of questions increased and studies with well-designed experiments were organized. Different authors were doing deep work with big groups of children and number of cross-linguistic studies and publications with evidences on Universal Grammar appeared (de Villiers, Roeper and Vainikka (1990); Maxfield and Plankett (1991); Meisel (1992); Crain (1991); de Villiers and Roeper (1993); Radford (1994); Roeper and de Villiers (1994) and etc.)

Most of the publications in the field of *wh*-questions are focused on the order of acquisition of argument and adjunct questions. The publications of Bloom, Merkin and Wooten (1982) and Stromswold (1988) show that *what*- and *who*-questions appear earlier than *how*- and *when*-questions. Stromswold in his work proved that *wh*-phrase would occur in argument position earlier than in adjunct position. For example, *where*-argument questions such as *Where is the book?* would occur earlier than *where*-adjunct questions like *Where did Mary meet John?*. Ervin-Trip (1970), Tyack and Ingram (1977) found that *what*- and *who*-questions are understood earlier than *when*- and *how*- questions. The publications also support that *where*-argument questions are among the earliest acquired.

Previous studies have identified the syntactic position of the *wh*-phrase as an important factor in the language acquisition. Stromswold (1988) found that object-questions are acquired earlier than subject-

questions. Stromswold agree that *what*-object questions are acquired earlier than *what*-subject questions. However, Ervin-Trip (1970) shows that *who*- subject questions are acquired at the same time as *who*-object questions.

My hypothesis is that Roma children will acquire earlier the *where*-adjunct questions, *what*-subject questions and other *wh*-questions features typical for adult Roma, due to the fact that the children communicate more often with adults who do not use *baby-talk* register speaking to them. Roma children who are raised up in extended families in their everyday communication, together with the parents they have contacts with different generations- elder siblings, grandparents, extended family members, neighbours...

From the analyses of the data it is obvious that by the age of 2 years and 1-2 months the Roma children already acquire some of the grammatical cases in Romani. As in Russian the first acquired grammatical case in Romani is Nominative.

For example:

13) MOT: so si davkha?

% eng: what is this?

Saly (26:0): kinčes

% eng: pants

MOT: a?

% eng: what

Saly: kinčes

% eng: pants

However, together with the Nominative case the so-called “pivot grammar” or “proto grammar” develops as well as is shown in the next example:

14) MOT: so si davka?

% eng: what is this

Kocho (25:0): okono xal = o rikono

% eng: the dog eats

Analyzing the word order in this sentence we see the following type of sentence:

O rikono xal

S V

The dog eats

Perhaps these types of sentences are easier for children at such an early age of their language development. Further, together with the Nominative case the children also acquire the other grammatical cases, as it is shown in the following examples:

15) ADU 1: kaj i mama i Saža?

% eng: where is the mother Sazha

Silvia (25:0) nate =bukjate

% eng: at work

ADU1: a?

% eng: what?

ADU 2: pen bukjate

% eng: say at work-LOC

Silvia: butate

% eng: at work-LOC

16) MOT: kate bešel i maika thaj Salis? Phen Ljulin (missing LOC suffix)

% eng: where lives the mother and Saly? say Lyulin

Saly: Ljuli-Ø.

% com: the name of the quarter

These examples show that Locative is acquired. Lets look at examples using other grammatical cases. The next examples show the acquisition of Genitive.

17) MOT: so ka pišines? kaskoro alav ka pišines?

% eng: what you will write? whose name you will write?

Silvia(25:0) teta (missing G suffix)

% eng: ant

MOT: teta- N, aver ?

% eng: ant, what else?

Silvia: teta maneti = tetakiri magneti

% eng: the tape recorder of the ant

MOT: aver?

% eng: else?

Silvia: mama maneti = mamakiri magneti

% eng: the tape recorder of mama

18) MOT: tere li bala si po sukar, ili e Natiskere?

% eng: who has more beautiful hair you or Nati?

Saly: Alis =Saliskere

% eng: Saly's

MOT: e Natiskere?

% eng Nati's

Saly: Alis- Saliskere

% eng: Saly's

In the first example with Silvia the two word utterance and the pivot grammar are clearly shown. It is clear that the child has acquired the Genitive case, but without the necessary suffixes. This is similar to the pivot grammar described by Bowerman (1973). In the second example the mother is teasing the child that another child Nati has more beautiful hair and in this way again the acquisition of Genitive is practiced.

6. 2. 2. Order of input of wh-questions

The first observation of the data is to find the order of input of the *wh*-questions and types of the questions. Bloom et al. (1982) reported that first acquired are the *what*, *where* and *who* questions followed by *when*, *why* and *how* and lastly *which* and *whose* as most complex questions. It means that this is more or less the order of the input as well.

The results, which I am going to present from mother-child and adult-child conversations from the first recorded hour, in order to get idea about the types of questions which are used by adults. The first recordings are done when the children are 1;1 years old. The used questions are shown in the next table 2.

Table 2. Questions used by mothers and adults communicating with children

Children	So? What?	Kaj? Kate? Where?	Kon? Who?	Kana? When?	Soske? Why	Sar? How?	Savo? Which?	Kasko? Whose?
<i>Saly-f.</i>	4	8	5	0	0	6	4	4
<i>Silvia-f.</i>	2	6	4	0	0	5	5	3
<i>Nasko-m.</i>	6	8	3	0	0	4	3	2
<i>Kocho- m.</i>	7	6	2	0	0	5	4	3

The questions in the table present the order of acquisition of *wh*-questions, which Bloom et al. (1982) introduced. The data with Roma children although that only the first transcripts are analysed shows that the Roma parents also use *where?* *what?* and *who?* questions and the expectations are that these questions will be acquired firstly. But the data shows that the parents use also *how?*, *which?* and *whose?* questions and this is a prove that the Roma parents use more complex questions as well, although the children are 13 months old. However it is very interesting that no any single parent or adult used *when?* and *why?* questions.

Let us observe the types of the questions. Stromswold (1988) proves that whit English speaking children *what*-object questions are acquired earlier than *what*-subject questions. However in my data during the first recording session there is no any single question, which is *what*-object question. All sentences with the question *what* are *what*-subject questions?

For example:

1. So kergjas o Čokos?
 what do-3sg.PT the Choko
 What Choko did?

2. *So xas?*

what eat-1sgPRES.T

What do you eat?

3. *So ka anel me čhe-ske o tates?*

what will bring-3sg. my son-to the dudy

What daddy will bring to my son?

Together with *what*, also *where* and *who* questions are very often used.

For example:

4. *Kaj o tates?*

where the dudy

Where is dudy?

5. *Kaj te danda?*

where yours teeth-pl.

Where are your toots?

6. *Kon dingjas tut?*

who give-3 sg.PT you-ACC.

Who have beaten you?

7. *Kon avel?*

who come-3sgPRES.T

Who is coming?

More complex questions containing *how*, *which* and *whose* are also used in the communication with the children.

8. *Sar kergjan kaka ti bluza?*
how make-2sg.PT dirty you-GEN. blouse
How did you make dirty your blouse?

9. *Kaskeri čhaj sijnjan?*
who-GEN girl are-2sg.PRES.T
Whose doter are you?

6.2.3. Where-argument and where-adjunct questions

Most of the examples in the data are where-argument structure. However, there are also questions, which have where-adjunct structure.

For example:

where-argument Q

Kaj o dedos?
where the grandpa
Where is the grandpa?

where-adjunct Q

Kaj gelo?
where go-3sg.PT
Where did he go?

Kate kergjan kaka?
where do-2sgPT dirty
Where did you make yourself dirty?

6.3. Discussion

From the examples given above it is clear that the word order in most children's sentences are with the SVO structure, or sentences with ellipses. The children are still in a stage when they combine the words in two word sentences and this is the reason why we cannot see different types of sentences.

From the analyses of the data it is clear that by the age of 25:0 – 26:0 months the children acquire first the three cases from Romani: *Nominative, Genitive and Locative*. The explanation for the acquisition of those cases is as follows: *The Nominative case* is acquired first because the names of objects from the surrounding world of the child are learned first. The child learns first the names of objects and later the names of the motions of these or omit the objects. *The Locative case* is derived from Sanskrit (Friedman, 1991) and Erlija being a conservative non-Vlax dialect in the Balkans still keeps it alive. *The Genitive case* in most of the examples is presented as a possessive adjective. However, the children still do not pronounce correctly the suffixes of Locative and Genitive case although it is clear that they have the concept of the Genitive case and they understand it.

The study presented here shows that Roma children follow the universal rules of language development during the stage when they acquire syntax.

The Roma children also go through the so-called “pivot grammar” as the Finnish children acquiring the Finnish grammar as it is described by Bowerman. In Roma children's language every month new words enter and they use them in combination with previously learned words.

Romani being a language with a case system as in Russian it is clear that the Roma children learn first the Nominative case and after the

Genitive and Locative. In the study of Ceytlin the same cases are acquired first, which again proves the universality of language development in Roma children.

7. Conclusion

Concluding, I must say that the process of language development of Roma children on different linguistic levels follows the universal stages of language acquisition of any child, learning any language. However, the language acquisition, the language use, and language socialization amongst the Roma children is different from the western child development. It is close to the process of language acquisition among cultures described by B. Schieffelin (1985). There are cultural strategies used by the adults in the child directed speech.

Romani adults having culture very different from the western culture also show different attitude towards language learning. The communication with the children is done in such a way as it is with Roma adults. The input, which the Roma children receive, shows that the Roma adult's concept on language acquisition is a complex one from very early age. In terms of Gleason's bridge theory in Roma community not only the fathers but also the mothers and other adults present the complex language to the children.

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