

STANDARD RESIAN: CHARACTERISTICS AND USE

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Standardna rezijanščina, uvedena leta 1994, se le počasi uveljavlja v govorni skupnosti. Uradna podpora niha med navdušenjem in zavračanjem, medtem ko pravopisnih pravil standardne rezijanščine domači govorci ne obvladajo zlahka. Iz političnih razlogov se je od leta 2009 promovirala spremenjena različica standardne rezijanščine, ki je manj stabilna in sledi nekaterim pravilom, ki niso bila izrecno opisana.

rezijanščina, standardizacija, načrtovanje statusa, pravopis, sociolingvistika

Standard Resian, introduced in 1994, is only slowly gaining ground within the speech community. Official support oscillates between enthusiasm and refusal, and standard Resian spelling rules are not easily mastered by native speakers. For political reasons, since 2009 a modified version of standard Resian has been promoted, which is less stable and follows some rules that have not been explicitly described.

Resian, standardization, status planning, orthography, sociolinguistics

1 Introduction

The Resian speech community consists of a small group of closely related linguistic varieties, mainly differing phonetically, phonologically, and morphologically. The numerically most important varieties are those of the villages of San Giorgio (Sln. *Bila*), Gniva (Sln. *Njiva*), Oseacco (Sln. *Osojane*), and Stolvizza (Sln. *Solbica*). Other varieties are to be found in the hamlets of Lipovaz (Sln. *Lipovec*) and Ucea (Sln. *Učja*), but this enumeration is by no means complete. As an aggregate, these varieties are locally referred to as *te rozajanski langäč*, *te rozajanski jazek*, or *tö rozajanskë rumuninjë*, and in dialectological literature as the Resian dialect of Slovenian.

Within the community, the need for a normalized manner of writing in the vernacular arose during the 1970s. A first attempt to find such a norm, in the sense of a uniform orthography, was a conference held in September 1980. However, during the 1980s writing in Resian continued as before, with each author using a system of his or her own. The main obstacle was, and still is, of a political nature, relating the phonetic value of some graphemes to questions of identity and ethnic allegiance.

2 Designing the standard

The purely linguistic problem that had to be solved was actually twofold, although discussion had only centered on one of them; that is, a uniform set of graphemes as

an alternative to individual proposals. The other problem, a uniform written language as an alternative to writing in a specific local variety, was introduced during a second conference in December 1991. Uniformly written Resian would put it, at least in certain domains, on par with other socially accepted standard languages. Elevating the status of Resian in the eyes of its own speakers and in those of the outside world would counter the tendency toward language loss, so it was hoped.

The concept of a uniform written language (a.k.a. standard Resian, SR) met with no opposition, and in February 1992 Mayor Luigi Paletti entrusted the author with the task of developing such a standard. The original project called for an orthography, a three-volume description of morphology, and a dictionary. Among these, the volume on the morphology of the verb is still lacking.

The slow progress characterizing the project is due to two main factors, one being the procedure used to arrive at SR forms and the other being the fluctuating level of political support. The mayors that followed Paletti (1990–1999) supported the project either half-heartedly (Sergio Barbarino, 1999–2009) or not at all (Sergio Chinese, 2009–2019). It was only Mayor Anna Micelli (2019–present) that again pushed for completion of the project.

As for the procedure, it was decided that SR should strike a balance between the major local varieties, making thorough knowledge of these varieties a prerequisite for establishing SR forms. The group of informants was limited to elderly female speakers born before the Second World War because at the start of the project these persons were regarded by the speech community as being the most proficient speakers. The details of the procedure have already been explained in Slovenian publications (see Šekli 1999, 2018; Steenwijk 2000), and so I do not repeat them here.

The volume on Resian orthography contains SR forms and the corresponding forms in the major local varieties. The reasons for including the latter were, first, to show in a transparent manner how the SR forms had been established and, second, to allow native speakers to write in one of those varieties in a normalized form, if they so preferred. It was not to be expected that a speaker would master the intricacies of SR right away, whereas the normalized varieties (NVs) could be of immediate use.

The ensuing volumes on morphology followed this setup. They offer a description of SR and of the four NVs, each presented contrastively with respect to SR. The 2005 orthographical dictionary also takes SR forms as the headword, followed by the forms for the NVs. Indexes make it possible to search by one of the NVs.

Because the mayor at the time signaled his interest in the project less than twelve months before election day, the dictionary had to be produced before the morphological description was completed. As a consequence, it does not offer as much morphological information as was originally planned. Resian contains quite a few specific types of alternation, especially vowel gradation, which obscure the relations between the surface forms of a single stem.

3 Problems in writing according to the standard

Because SR differs from any local variety, it is only inevitable that interference may show up in texts written according to the standard; for example:

- (1) *Kors će počnet satemberja litos an će se rivet dan drügi bot maja.* (NM 28/34, 2001: 3)
 ‘The course will start in September this year and will end in May next year.’

SR forms such as m. acc. sg. *drügi* ‘next’ and gen. sg. *maja* ‘May’, occur alongside the NV (S) forms *litos* ‘this year’ and *rivet* ‘to end’. As proficiency in SR grows, such mixing of varieties becomes less frequent and may disappear altogether.

Another source of spelling errors is the phonetic realization of unstressed vowels. Although the grapheme <ä> occurs in SR forms only when stressed, sometimes it is also used in unstressed syllables; for example, *pomagät* ‘to help’, *plesät* ‘to dance’ (NM 29/27, 2002: 3), 3rd pl. pres. *däržijo* ‘they hold’ (NM 32/24, 2005: 9), and loc. sg. *märzlinu* ‘cold’ (GR 30/3, 2019: 2).

Language change aggravates this problem. Starting with the generation born after the Second World War, final unstressed *-i* and *-ë* tend to merge in San Giorgio, Lipovaz, and Stolvizza, triggering variation in texts written in SR; for example:

- (2) *te rozajanski Ekomuzeo jë naredil dän mali librinčëc* (GR 30/2, 2019: 8)
 ‘The Resian Ecomuseum has produced a little booklet’
 (3) *jë ga naredil te rozajanskë Ekomuzeo* (GR 30/2, 2019: 4)
 ‘the Resian Ecomuseum produced it’

Another pair of mergers creating spelling problems concerns the high and mid central vowels, /i/ versus /ü/ becoming a single high central vowel, and /ë/ versus /ö/ a single mid central vowel. The first postwar generation maintains the two oppositions rather well, but younger speakers do not make these distinctions anymore, and so one encounters spelling variation such as n. sg. *l-ptcp. spomanilo* (NG 15/1, 2019: 12) / f. sg. *l-ptcp. spomanüla* (NG 15/1, 2019: 9) ‘remembered’, and acc. pl. *butëgan* / dat. pl. *butögan* ‘shops’ (GR 30/3, 2019: 2)

A third phonetic change, possibly under the influence of Italian, is voicing of voiceless sibilants followed by a sonorant, likewise triggering spelling variation; for example, m. sg. *l-ptcp. se wgaznul / se wgasnul* (NM 33/8, 2006: 6) ‘spent’, *pozvitë* ‘abroad’, and n. gen. sg. *riznaga* ‘true’ (GR 30/2, 2019: 8)

As long as the project is not completed, uncertainty may arise in non-standardized parts of the grammar. For instance, at present the only source for information on case government by prepositions is the 1992 dialect grammar for San Giorgio. It states that selecting the accusative is independent from semantic considerations of motion versus state, and that the same case can also occur with *ziz/z* with an instrumental and comitative meaning. The postwar generation continues to innovate heavily in these matters, leading to the impression that in prepositional phrases the case system is falling apart (Šekli 1999: 134). This development may be reflected in writing; for example:

- (4) *an jë wlizal tu-w isimu progëto* (GR 30/2, 2019: 8)
 ‘he entered the project’

Here the locative is used for motion, something the prewar generation shunned. The next example goes one step further still because the instrumental is used with the preposition *ta-na* ‘on’:

- (5) *tu-w tet ta-na semi* (GR 30/2, 2019: 6)
 ‘when going on these’

With comitative *ziz/z* the genitive is used in:

- (6) *wkop ziz toga rozajanskaga čirkola Rozajanski dum* (GR 30/3, 2019: 11)
 ‘together with the Resian cultural club Rozajanski Dum’

However, this can also be interpreted as an accusative if animacy is extended to collectives. The last example has a severative *ziz/z* taking the instrumental instead of the genitive:

- (7) *kej ki to jë prawzeto z librinon »Pagine di storia«* (GR 30/3, 2019: 11)
 ‘something that is taken from the book *Pagine di Storia*’

In several respects then, SR differs notably from the language actually spoken by the postwar generation, and therefore the standard can only be mastered by actively studying it.

4 Spread of the standard

The 1994 orthography appeared almost simultaneously with its first application, to wit, on place-name signs. Two things became immediately clear: the thorny question of using <c> for [ts] as opposed to <z> in observance of Italian spelling habits, and the strong preference for writing according to an NV as opposed to SR. For the former matter, Mayor Paletti assured himself of the backing of the author and Roberto Dapit, two young outside specialists that did not happen to be of Slovenian descent (see GR 5/2, 1994: 3) and were therefore allegedly politically neutral. This did not make the problem go away, and the signs were soon vandalized by erasing <c> or replacing it with <z>. For the place names, NV forms were chosen, and so instead of SR *Osojanë* and *Sulbica* they displayed NV (O) *Osoanë* and (S) *Solbica*. These two matters, [ts] = <c> vs. <z> and SR vs. NV, remained important features of the events that followed.

Apart from the signs, using normalized forms in print got off to a slow start, and in the first years Steenwijk and/or Dapit were always involved as consultants, joined by Matej Šekli in 1999: the proposed norm could not be put into practice by the speakers without assistance. The first print work containing stretches of text in NV (Va) is the booklet for the 1996 CD *Šmarnamiša!*, but this was produced by non-Resians and was published in Japan.¹ In the years up to 2000, some books in SR and NV were produced locally, intended as demonstrations of the concept of using normalized forms.² SR forms probably first appeared in print in the Resian calendar for 1998:

- (8) *kolindren – nadeja – pundijak – tarok – srida – čatertäk – petäk – sabota* (1997)
 (9) *kolindrin – nadëja – pundijak – tarok – srida – čatärtak – petak – saböta* (1998)

1 The CD is still available online, so get this collector’s item while you can!

2 These publications are enumerated in Steenwijk (2000: 139, footnote 8).

Some 1997 forms still exhibit phonetic spelling of final unstressed vowels (*kolindren* ‘calendar’, *čatertäk* ‘Thursday’, and *petäk* ‘Friday’), and none have the dieresis (*pikice*) to indicate stressed centralized vowels (*nadeja* ‘Sunday’, *čatertäk* ‘Thursday’, and *sabota* ‘Saturday’).

Since 2000, texts published in NV have continued to outnumber those in SR. This is largely due to their nature, mostly consisting of oral literature and testimonies that are rendered according to the local variety used in the source text. However, also an important new text such as the Resian translation of *Le petit prince* is rendered in NV (Va), the local variety of the main translator.

More telling about the spread of the standard is its use in authored articles in the local and regional press. Here it can be tested whether the standard succeeded or failed in becoming a means of communication instead of merely remaining a goal in itself.

The first author to use SR was the non-native speaker Matej Šekli, in his weekly series in *Novi Matajur* on Resian grammar, »Kotić za dan liwči jazek.« This series ran from October 1999 to June 2001, a time at which Resian authors were still writing in NV. Then, in September and October 2001 editions of *Novi Matajur* (NM 28/34: 3; NM 28/41: 5), Luigia Negro published a paragraph each in SR that accompanied a much longer Italian text on the same subject, followed by her first article exclusively worded in SR in *La Vita Cattolica* (February 2nd, 2002: 26). From then on, she has alternated between SR and NV in her publications.

Another author, Catia Quaglia, uses exclusively NV in her signed publications, but she may also edit texts in SR. All in all, since the first decade of the twenty-first century, four native speakers, either as authors, editors, or translators, have been involved in producing texts in SR: Paola Coss, Angela Di Lenardo, Luigia Negro, and Catia Quaglia, later joined by Virna Di Lenardo. If SR texts are signed by other persons, such texts have in fact been edited by one of the aforementioned writers.

The spread of SR stands in direct connection with the teaching activities of Matej Šekli. Having first presented his »Kotić za dan liwči jazek« on radio, he taught a course on standard Resian orthography and grammar for adults that ran from September to June during 2000/01 and 2001/02. After Šekli, Angela Di Lenardo took over the course for the 2002/03 through 2005/06 seasons. It is hard to underestimate the importance of Šekli’s endeavor: without his teachings as well as his own writings in SR, practical use of the standard by native speakers probably would have been much more limited. In fact, out of the five creators in SR mentioned above, the former four were pupils of Šekli’s, whereas the latter took lessons from Luigia Negro at a later point.

5 The competitor to the standard

Acceptance of SR and NV has never been general, which is mainly expressed by adhering to the equation <z> = [ts], necessitating a different grapheme for [z], for which <ś> was chosen. For instance, SR <zec> ‘hare’ is written <sez>. The most prolific author to adopt this in his writings, which started to appear from 1994 on, is Sergio Chinese. As Dapit (2001: 69) acutely observed: »Certain articles and contributions written using other spelling conventions are also understood as a

negative response to the proposal for a standard regional language.« During the 1999 local elections, the <c> spelling on place-name signs was singled out as a campaign topic used to prove that incumbent Mayor Paletti had a »Slovenianizing« tendency. As a representative for the municipality under Mayor Barbarino, Chinese gave a different direction to local language policy. When the Province of Udine convened a committee for installing bilingual direction signs on its provincial roads in 2004, Chinese blocked the outcome of the committee's recommendations with respect to Resia to prevent NV spelling being used. Toward the end of that year, the Province of Udine distributed flyers to promote bilingualism, for which Chinese had provided the Resian texts. This provoked an open letter of protest by Luigia Negro to Marzio Strassoldo, head of the provincial government, which was co-signed by representatives of various Resian cultural organizations (see also NM 32/4, 2005: 1, 8). Nonetheless, instead of taking a back seat, the Province of Udine continued to support Chinese. After having been elected mayor himself in 2009, one of his first actions was to have this alternative orthography officially adopted. The aim of his reform was »to define Resian spelling for the municipality's acts as follows: the system outlined by Prof. Steenwijk with replacement of the letter *c* with the letter *z*, and of the letter *z* with the letter *ś*« (NG 6/1, 2010: 4).

Thus, an automatic modification of the norms laid out in the original project was introduced, which would theoretically manifest itself as modified standard Resian (SR-M) and as modified normalized local varieties (NV-M). In the following years, the municipality produced several publications in which this modification was put into practice: an exercise book of Resian grammar, a dictionary for elementary school, and texts drawn from oral literature. After substituting the previously installed place-name signs in NV with new ones in NV-M, by the end of 2011 provincial direction signs in NV-M now also appeared, followed by a host of local direction signs and street-name signs.

Since 2011, the use of written Resian has also extended to individual articles in the official municipality information bulletin *Il Giornale di Resia*, a feature that remains present until today. In 2010 a municipality guide had already appeared, a sixteen-page booklet that, apart from the title and colophon, was exclusively worded in Resian. Since 2017, the municipality's website has also contained a section with short notices in Resian. Because the pool of persons that have learned to write in normalized Resian is rather small (see above), familiar names show up as the translators and editors of these texts: Paola Coss, Angela Di Lenardo, and Catia Quaglia.

Mutatis mutandis, one would expect the characteristics of this modified written norm to be the same as those that were previously discussed in Section 3, but this is not the case. Some problems recur more frequently, and additional problems arise.

Interference from one or more local varieties can be so prominent that it becomes difficult to determine which variety a given text has actually been written in, be this SR-M or NV-M. The 2010 booklet may serve as an example: 1) NV-M (G, Lp) *utrök* and *bujë*, but also (SR-M) *otrök* and *bojë* 'child', 'more'; 2) NV-M (Lp) *tu-w Munizipihö* / *Ta-w munizipö* 'in the town hall'; 3) NV-M (O, S) f. acc. sg. *valiko*, but

also (SR-M) f. nom. sg. *vilika* ‘big’; and 4) NV-M (S) loc. sg. *orizi*, *ta-mi ošdë*, m. loc. sg. *isamo*, and *rivet*, but also (SR-M) *Eko-gurica*, *tu-w göšde*, m. loc. sg. *isimo*, and *rivät* ‘square’, ‘in the wood’, ‘this’, ‘to end’. In addition, there are hybrid forms (i.e., neither NV-M nor SR-M), such as m. pl. l-ptcp. *prahajali* ‘came’ and *hodili* ‘went’, as well as *dolg* ‘long’, and *puklizet* ‘to call’.

Some further types of deviation contradict the statement that the spelling reform was restricted to the simple substitution of two graphemes. The use of <ä> for unstressed vowels to bring out phonetic detail has been systematically applied to the local varieties of San Giorgio, Lipovaz, and Prato; compare the following enumeration:

- (10) . . . *ka to so Bilä, Ravanzä, Njüwa, Osoanë, Solbiza ano Učja. So pa druge male vasize ka to so Lipaväz, Križaze, Göst, Liščaze, Šamlin, Tapod Klanzon anu Ladina.*
 ‘. . . such as San Giorgio, Prato, Gniva, Oseacco, Stolvizza, and Uceca. There are also other small villages such as Lipovaz, Crisacis, Gost, Lischiazze, Samlin, Tapoclanzon, and Ladina.’

The grapheme <ï> now also appears in unstressed position, again for phonetic reasons: *naredit*, *se branit*, *ta-w munizïpiho*, and *rošajanskï*, but also *naredit*, *branit*, *tu-w Munizïpihö*, and *rošajanski/Rošajanskë* ‘to do’, ‘to protect’, ‘in the town hall’, ‘Resian’.

As a result of interference from earlier spelling habits, the grapheme <u> is also used in a consonantal function, alongside <w>: *ulëst*, *usak*, *uśdignan*, and m. sg. l-ptcp. *umuarl* but also (SR-M) *wlëst*, *wsaki*, *wśdignut*, and m. pl. l-ptcp. *wmärl* ‘to enter’, ‘every’, ‘to lift’, ‘died’.

For final short *-i, the grapheme <ë> may occur, which in Steenwijk’s (1994: 43) vowel correspondence 12 appears neither in SR nor in any NV: *asëk* ‘language’, *Ćanën* ‘Canin’, *ša bët* ‘to be’, *ša tët orë* ‘to go up’, and *dujtët*, ‘to arrive’.

Moreover <ğ>, a grapheme replacing SR <ğ>, alongside the prepalatal voiced plosive [j] also represents the velar voiced plosive [g] occurring in recent loans: m. acc. pl. *friđe* ‘fridge’ and *tu-w Spilimberđi* ‘in Spilimbergo’, but also (SR-M) [j] *gornal* ‘newspaper’, *ođan* ‘opened’, and f. acc. pl. *pagine* ‘pages’.

The explanation for the variation attested is that more than one creator, each from a different village, was involved in the text for the 2010 booklet and that a final edit was not carried out. The hybrid forms arose out of an incomplete understanding of SR.

By and large, the Resian contributions in *Il Giornale di Resia* up to 2019 show a similar type of written language, including further hybrid forms such as acc. pl. *utruke* ‘children’, although <u> in a consonantal function and <ï> for unstressed vowels become rare. When that project started, it was clearly understood that the texts should be written in SR-M, just as the 2010 booklet and the notices on the website were intended to be (for an analysis of the latter, see Steenwijk 2018). In independent publications of oral literature in NV-M, one can expect less variation because the native variety of the narrator serves as a point of departure.

The 2014 publication *Nawüčimö se po näs!* is quite a different matter. In fact, it is the only publication that adheres to the 2009 spelling reform without the additional

deviations enumerated above.³ After two introductions signed by Cristina Buttolo in NV-M (SG) and Sergio Chinese in SR-M, both with relatively few spelling irregularities, the main body follows, consisting of an exposition of chapters of SR-M grammar and four sections with the same material in NV-M, each for a different local variety. This main body is practically free of spelling errors. Although their names are not mentioned anywhere, the main body stems from Šekli's Resian course for adults, which was edited and formatted by Angela Di Lenardo and Catia Quaglia. They also acted as editors of the two introductions.

6 Postscript: The present state of affairs

With the installation of a new mayor in 2019, it was decided to go back to the use of SR in *Il Giornale di Resia* and for event announcements. This change did not last longer than two issues because a fiery attack by Cristina Buttolo (GR 31/1, 2020: 14) warned that this move was illegal now that the official decision made in 2009 was in place. To prevent further »mass protests,« the municipal bulletin reverted to SR-M. In the workflow presently adopted for articles in Resian, authors such as Virna Di Lenardo submit their texts in SR, after which it is the task of the editor to transliterate them into SR-M.

Abbreviations

- G = Gniva (Sln. *Njiva*)
GR = *Il Giornale di Resia*
Lp = Lipovaz (Sln. *Lipovec*)
NG = *Náš glas*
NM = *Novi Matajur*
O = Oseacco (Sln. *Osojane*)
S = Stolvizza (Sln. *Solbica*)
SG = San Giorgio (Sln. *Bila*)
SR = standard Resian
SR-M = standard Resian, modified 2009
NV = normalized local variety
NV-M = normalized local variety, modified 2009
Va = Varcota (Sln. *Varkota*)

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3 It even silently restores the grapheme <y> for San Giorgio and Stolvizza, eliminated by accident in the 2009 reform.

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