

***IJSL* Special Topics Issue**

Title:

Francoprovençal: documenting a contact variety in Europe and North America

Editors:

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Conceptualization of the Issue:

In this proposed special issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, we bring together articles from an international set of authors that will situate the family of Francoprovençal dialects in terms of formal structures, contexts of contact, and positions along the cline of obsolescence.

Francoprovençal is a highly fragmented dialect grouping spoken transnationally in parts of France, Switzerland, and Italy by less than 1% of the total regional population; Martin (1991; 2002) and Tuailon (1993) report that between 120,000 and 200,000 speakers are thought to exist. Francoprovençal is also maintained by diasporic communities in the USA and Canada, though numbers are significantly smaller than in mainland Europe (Nagy 2011a, 2011b). This collection will be unusual in that contributions describing Francoprovençal in all these countries will be included.

In all its homes, Francoprovençal can accurately be described as undergoing ‘gradual death’ (Campbell and Muntzel 1989, 182-6): speaker numbers have been in terminal decline for some time, as long term language shift in the direction of the dominant national language(s) occurs, accompanied by migration out of rural areas. Francoprovençal as an obsolescent language faces many problems similar to those of other minority varieties, particularly in those states, such as France, where heavy legislation defends the national language at the cost of regional or minority varieties (see most recently Hawkey and Kasstan 2015). However, unlike most if not all of the regional or minority languages spoken in the same region, Francoprovençal is also characterised by its unique standing in the Romance linguistic literature as a language that was only recognised, with significant reticence from the academic community, at the turn of the 20th century. Since Francoprovençal was first proposed as a set of discrete and coherent linguistic varieties (Ascoli 1874; republished 1878), its status and linguistic borders have been repeatedly called into question (*cf.* Meyer 1874; Lüdtke 1971; Martin 1990; Bert 2001; Tuailon 2007); this is reflected in the label ‘Francoprovençal’, which suggests a French/Occitan hybrid. Moreover, to this day, its official status varies considerably. In France, for example, Francoprovençal was not recognised by the Ministry for Culture and Communication as a ‘langue de France’ until 1999. However, even with this recognition, it is not accorded any privileges in the national education system, as it is not deemed sufficiently different from French, in contrast to, say, Breton or Occitan (Bron 2011). In Switzerland, where multilingualism is safeguarded by the constitution, Francoprovençal remains absent from Article 116, which guarantees rights to regional languages (Camartin 1985). In the Aosta Valley, an autonomous region in northern Italy, we do find Francoprovençal in the regional education system, though this is limited to

elementary and maternal level only (Josserand 2003). Where linguistic pedagogy does exist, it varies considerably, for lack of a codified orthographical norm (Martin 2002; Kasstan 2014). The effects of its different status in different locations will be compared in this issue.

Among its traditional native speaker-base, we find a further series of challenges to language maintenance: these speakers have never known their language by the label ‘Francoprovençal’ (Sériot 1997), nor have they ever consciously embraced membership in a unified larger linguistic unit; there is no overall sense of Francoprovençal identity (Grinevald and Bert 2013). Instead, native speakers refer to their own varieties as ‘patois’ (Bert *et al.* 2009; Kasstan *in press*), the same term used to refer to other non-standard varieties. Their attitudes are focused at the highly localised level only (Kasstan 2015; Nagy 2000b), where, in the context of France at least, it has been argued that a ‘postvernacular’ culture is emerging (*cf.* Bert & Martin 2013; Pivot 2014). In short, it is perhaps unsurprising that Francoprovençal has been described as ‘une langue méconnue’, “an unknown language” (Stich 1998), or, worse still, ‘une langue oubliée’, “a forgotten language” (Tuailon 1988).

While clearly in a state of obsolescence, Francoprovençal is nevertheless also experiencing revitalisation. However, this renewed interest in the language is not being led by the traditional native speaker, but instead by predominantly L2 speakers. These speakers are very different in social and economic terms to the traditional native speakers of Francoprovençal, and as such the current sociolinguistic climate in which these varieties are spoken is beginning to change: traditional linguistic practices are in a state of flux, and issues pertaining to authenticity, legitimacy and language ownership are emerging (Kasstan *forthcoming*). The context of Francoprovençal therefore offers new ground on which to explore a series of research

questions at the interface of the sociology of language and other fields of linguistic inquiry:

- **Contrasting homeland and heritage varieties:** what observable language change can be identified transnationally? Do common patterns emerge?
- **Language contact:** do we find similar linguistic phenomena in the context of an obsolescent language in contact with one vs. two or more typologically dissimilar dominant languages? How can these phenomena be characterised?
- **Practices and representations:** Are conventional linguistic practices on the move? If so, what impact is this having linguistically? Does conflict arise between native and non-native speakers?
- **Language planning and the future:** how can a severely endangered language realistically be maintained in an increasingly globalised world? Can recent Francoprovençal practices provide a model for other varieties?

To tackle these questions, we propose this special issue to connect a number of strands of current research on Francoprovençal. While some of these strands have been represented in the literature for some time, they have not yet been united in one volume. We include here contributions to a spectrum of (socio)linguistic fields of inquiry, applying in particular modern variationist methods to the analysis of a severely endangered language. Such an approach, which remains woefully underexplored in the context of Francoprovençal, has been noted elsewhere to ‘provide a positive framework for the local community to evaluate synchronic variation and change’ (Meyerhoff 2015: 78). Invited contributions also offer formal and theoretical approaches that complement those very few available works that

already exist on Francoprovençal (e.g. Nagy and Reynolds 1997). A review of a recent book, synthesizing the impact of non-native speakers to revitalization efforts in endangered minority languages will also be included, given the relevance to the Francoprovençal context (Hornsby 2015). As Francoprovençal is heavily understudied in the linguistic literature, certainly by comparison with other Romance varieties in close proximity such as Occitan, the majority of the papers contained within this issue are presented in English, providing a much wider reach, although it will include four contributions in French. This edition follows a number of special issues of the *IJSL* that focus on lesser studied languages (e.g., #223 on Breton).

Topics addressed in the issue and (confirmed) authors:

The following authors have agreed to contribute papers with the following (working) titles. They are listed here to indicate the proposed structure of the issue:

	Title	Author(s)
1	Introduction	Nagy (Toronto) & Kasstan (QMUL)
I: Current status of the varieties		
2	An overview of Francoprovençal in Europe and North America	Zulato (Illinois), Kasstan (QMUL) & Nagy (Toronto)
3	Locating Francoprovençal on the Romance tree: a dialectometric study	Tamburelli (Bangor)
II: Structural descriptions		
4	Francoprovençal verb morphology, especially of the Aosta Valley	Hinzelin (Hamburg)
5	What can comparative variationist analysis tell us about Faetar ‘pronouns’	Heap (Western), Iannozzi (Western) & Nagy (Toronto)
6	Comparison of the phonological systems of Francoprovençal as spoken in France, Switzerland and Italy	Hinzelin (Hamburg)
7	La restructuration du système des clitiques sujets atones de la 3 ^{ème} personne en francoprovençal valaisan contemporain	Kristol (Neuchâtel)
III: Contact effects		
8	Francoprovençal in contact with Walser German	Dal Negro (Bolzano) & Angster (Bolzano)
9	Le lexique francoprovençal d’une commune alpine de Suisse romande au début du 20 ^{ème} siècle	Maître (Neuchâtel)
10	(l) as a sociolinguistic variable in Francoprovençal	Kasstan (QMUL) & Müller (LMU)
11	Sociolinguistic aspects of language contact: Evidence from Francoprovençal spoken in Apulia	Perta (Pescara)
12	On this side of the Alps: a sociolinguistic overview of Francoprovençal in north-western Italy	Regis (Torino)
IV: Practices and representations		
13	Francoprovençal as a diffuse or focused practice: A comparative study in France, Italy and Switzerland	Bichurina (Bergamo)
14	Language policy and language planning in Switzerland	Diémoz (Neuchâtel)
15	Intercompréhension et représentations identitaires dans les stratégies de la communication francoprovençal	Dunoyer (Centre d’Etudes Francoprovençal René Willien)
16	De la mort des patois à la (re)naissance du francoprovençal : les représentations d’une phénomène linguistique complexe dans la presse de Suisse romande (19 ^{ème} et 20 ^{ème} siècle)	Meune (Montréal)
Review		
17	Review of Hornsby (2015)	Costa (Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3)

Timeline for delivery of the issue (*subject to acceptance by IJSL editorial board*):

August 2015	Deadline for abstracts and titles
March 2016	Deadline for submissions (drafts to be reviewed)
May 2016	Deadline for reviews
July 2016	Deadline for delivery of individual contributions, revised per reviewer comments
September 2016	Editorial
September 2016	Delivery of issue to journal

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