

R.E.D.-RROM (Restore the European Dimension of Rromani): the first comprehensive IT learning tool for the unified Rromani language

Red-Rrom (www.red-rrom.com) is a transnational web portal designed for school teaching of Rromani as target language, simultaneously using Rromani as a medium of instruction. The project is carried out in 7 navigation languages so far but expected to be developed in 10 further languages. A self-learning system has been developed which combines the classic content of textbooks with interactive resources such as audio-reading texts and videos with synchronized subtitles, different kinds of interactive exercises and more. The portal is divided into three macro-sections: an introduction; a course in Rromani language; a level devoted to Rromani culture at large (including Rromani literature, history, history of Rromani music, ethnology, linguistics, and European communication).

The whole course is basically intended for university students but it was devised in an everyday vocabulary so that any person with middle studies and a real wish to learn may master and enjoy it. Both native speakers and beginners can undertake the task, implying that the former will start from at least an average knowledge of 300-400 words in Rromani, while the latter are lacking this knowledge.

The first introductory section consists of positioning the student within the dialect system of Rromani - first off, answering the crucial question: what a dialect is and how it is the structure of Rromani from this point of view.

The real course in Rromani language begins in the second section with a series of 35 lessons, called *padmadă* "steps". The core of each lesson is a short dialogue which is given in the four dialects of the Rromani language and played as a short scene in a video-clip. This part combines the "immersion" method (since the scenes are inspired to real-life situations) with an analytic approach (a further outline explains the functioning of the elements in the text).

The third section, the culture part, is finally aimed at providing the student with reliable data in the concerned areas but first of all for training using Rromani as a language of elaborated and intellectual exchanges, beyond everyday home speech.

In fact, the final aim of the portal is to demonstrate to a broad audience that Rromani language can be used as a formal and literary exchange language. This issue concerns all minority languages but it is perhaps far more critical with Rromani, because of the widespread paternalistic approach towards Roma people, which promotes assimilation at all costs. Moreover, the portal supports the conviction that Rromani can be still considered a single language at present, against the common belief that modern European Roma speak numerous corrupted dialects, not inter-comprehensible anymore.

To disprove this belief, the second and the third section contain audios and videos in which students can combine the dialect of hearing and the dialect of the subtitles, in order to get used to the dialectal variation and to notice they can understand all dialects while actively using their own. In our presentation, we will illustrate this process in detail and show how it has been achieved with the support of some specific ICT technologies.

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