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# Perspectives for the Use of Lesser-spoken Languages in Academic Contexts: The Example of Friulian

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## **Abstract**

Friulian, a lesser-spoken European language, one of the three minority languages used in the north-eastern region Friuli – Venezia Giulia, and one of the three Retho-Romance linguistic varieties, has been, over the last few decades, in the process of revitalisation also as a means of communication within scientific circles. If on the one hand it represents a challenge merely for a limited number of nowadays' scholars, most of them preferring to use either Italian, the lingua franca of the region, or English, today's universal code creating the field of science, it is evident on the other that the number of academic texts and articles in Friulian is nonetheless increasing. The existing situation is in fact a symptom reflecting the problem of the identity of Friulian people, the question of their attitude toward their 'marilenghe' (mother tongue) and their whole cultural heritage. The problem seems a logical consequence of Friuli's historical background, particularly of the period of the independent 'Stât Patriarcjâl di Acuilee', better known under the name 'Patrie dal Friûl' (1077–1420). During that period a pattern of parallel trilingualism evolved in the country, the language of the noble class being German, Latin prevailing to a great extent in the Roman Catholic Church and religious contexts, the Aquileia Vulgar Latin vernacular (the future Friulian) finding its way of being spread by the lower classes of society.

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Therefore, the multicultural and multilingual reality of the contemporary Friuli might derive from that pattern.

**Key words:** Friulian identity, sociolinguistic situation, process of revitalisation, linguistic hybridisation, scientific literature

### The problem of the Friulian identity

This paper focuses on the linguistic reality within the contemporary Friulian society, with a special emphasis put on the situation within the academic circles, as it results from the cultural identity of the inhabitants of this economically prosperous north-eastern autonomous Italian region. This population's cultural identity, caught between the homeland's historical background and their basic needs and priorities in everyday life, undoubtedly reflects a great deal of contradictions. Many Friulians demonstrate contradictory, sometimes even illogical attitudes towards their 'marilenghe' as well as their own cultural heritage. On the one hand, the aspect of pride and honour can be noticed: their awareness of otherness in the frame of the Italian cultural and linguistic space, almost a fighting spirit. For example, they like emphasising their diverse origin, traditions and specific historical events. On the other, elements of notorious pragmatism constantly appear, connected with conformism: they do not hesitate to accept the power of the Italian state and thus the supremacy of the Italian cultural pattern as the only available option.

Such cultural bipolarity is probably due to the rich and eventful history of the Friulian territory. One should particularly bear in mind the period of the independent 'Stât patriarcjâl di Acuilee', better known as 'La Patrie dal Friûl' (1077–1420), taking part of The Holy Roman Empire. Throughout these 353 years of the medieval period the sociolinguistic situation in the country was characterised by the evolution of a concept of parallel trilingualism.

The three-dimensional linguistic evolution comprised:

- Latin, used as liturgical language, i.e. in the religious service and in most other religious contexts;
- German, the language of the noble class, also prevailing as the language of communication among members of the Parliament;
- Aquileia Vulgar Latin vernacular, the ancestor of Friulian, spread around the country by the lower class of society, which managed to be preserved for centuries in its rather archaic version, thanks to strict limits in the communication between the three classes.

The third dimension, the Aquileia Vulgar Latin vernacular, evolved over the centuries into a Rhaeto-romance language called Friulian, has been orally transmitted by its native speakers, i.e. people living in the countryside between the Livenza River in the west, the rivers Soča/Isonzo and Idrija/Iudrio in the east, the Carnic Alps in the north and the Adriatic Sea between Lignano and Grado in the south, particularly those belonging to the lower classes of society, mostly illiterate, to younger generations.

Nowadays, as regards the Friulian language, this pattern remains partly perpetuated. The belief that the term Friulian does not indicate a real language, but it refers to several varieties of a lesser developed vernacular used by rural population, persists deep in people's subconsciousness. All people in Friuli do certainly not follow such a model of thinking; yet, great part of Friulian speakers (or non-speakers) betray themselves with small ironic remarks or jokes which may at first sight first sound innocent, however, after considering them well, we can understand them as a confirmation of our hypothesis.

As for the position of German, after the end of 'La patrie dal Friûl' in 1420 the former language of the nobility was replaced by Venetian, the language of 'La Serenissima', for most of this territory had been conquered by the Venetian Republic. Later on, in 1861, the unification of Italy imposed standard Italian, first as the official language of the Kingdom of Italy, afterwards of the Italian Republic. At present both languages coexist with Friulian, Italian enjoying the status of the official national language, Venetian having a lower

legal status, that of a regional language. Still, in the German-language exclaves and Slovene-language islands respectively, German and Slovene fight for survival as minority languages.

By contrast, Latin in the Roman Catholic Church has partially survived, nowadays occupying the second position in this sphere, the major role having been taken by Italian.

In addition, a sixth language is penetrating into all spheres of life inside the Friuli area, namely English as a global lingua franca. Neither Italian nor Friulian can be exempt from the process of strong influence that the English adstratum exerts on most contemporary European languages.

Therefore, the three-dimensional linguistic situation from the Middle Ages has been transformed into a multilingual and multicultural present-day reality.

Massimiliano Verdini, an expert in Rhaeto-romance linguistics, exposes in his book *Il plui biel furlan, il friulano di San Daniele* (S.D. not being merely well-known as the capital of smoked ham in that part of Italy, but it is also considered to be the ‘Siena of Friuli’ or the heart of the Friulian language) the problem of “a wrong perception of the Friulians themselves regarding the question of their own status within the region FVG and their own attitude toward the Friulian language” (Verdini, 2016, p. 27), pointing out that “they feel like a minority even in the places where they actually represent the majority of population, despite the fact that the Friulian speaking area actually constitutes the major part of the territory in the region” (Verdini, 2016, p. 27). His words concisely illustrate the manner in which the Friulians perceive their position on their own piece of land and point out how indecisive they seem to be when confronting the question of their identity.

In his interview published under the title *Sorestants e sotans*, the Friulian historian Gianfranco D’Aronco, who dedicated his whole life to the battle for the Friulian autonomy, deeply agrees with the interviewer’s, i.e. William Cisilino’s statement, in which the latter evokes the importance of the religious and cultural event in 1992, when Pope John Paul II visited Udine, where he greeted the Friulian people, during the mess, in their mother tongue (Cisilino,

& D’Aronco, 2012, p. 132). As an additional comment, Cisilino adds that “not every minority language has been so privileged as to be used by two popes...” (Cisilino, & D’Aronco, 2012, p. 132). Through such statements just the opposite aspect, that of self-confidence, nearly a glorification of friulanity, is expressed.

## The sociolinguistic situation of Friulian at the beginning of the 21st century

Like the other two Rhaeto-romance linguistic varieties, Dolomitic Ladin in Italy and Swiss Romansh (Surselva as well as Engadine) in Switzerland, Friulian has been, over the last few decades, in the process of revitalisation. They all belong to the group of lesser-spoken languages or languages in danger. According to the *UNESCO Atlas of the World’s languages in danger* (2017), which includes in its index the names of 6,796 languages, Friulian is categorised as a ‘definitely endangered language’. This formulation represents the third or middle level of endangerment on the scale consisting of six levels of vitality: -safe, -vulnerable, -definitely endangered, -severely endangered, -critically endangered, -extinct (UNESCO’s Language Vitality and Endangerment Framework). Simone De Cia at the University of Manchester reports in his dissertation, entitled *The Vitality of Friulian in the Province of Udine: a Sociolinguistic Study* that it is classified among ‘the disappearing languages’ according to Whaley’s scale (2006), which also corresponds to the third or middle degree of endangerment: -safe, -at risk, -disappearing, -moribund, -nearly extinct, -extinct (De Cia, 2013, p. 14). The topic takes part of the branch of science for which James Matisoff proposed the name ‘Perilinguistics’ (Matisoff, 1991, p. 201, 224), occasionally he also uses ‘Thanatoglossia’ and ‘Necroglossia’, whilst David Crystal prefers the term ‘Preventive linguistics’ (Crystal, 2000, p. 124).

Talking about languages at risk of becoming extinct, it is necessary to connect their situations with the problem of identity faced by the native speakers

of these languages. Many of them are being revitalised during the last decades. It means a kind of intervention the aim of which should be, as Crystal claims in his book *Language death*, “to create opportunities for the people to improve morale so that they come to think of their language with feelings of confidence, self-esteem and pride” (Crystal, 2000, p. 149). Let us cite in this context also the following note: “The decision to abandon one’s own language always derives from a change in the self-esteem of the speech community” (Brenzinger, Heine, & Somner 1991, p. 37).

In many resources we can find idealised estimates concerning the number of Friulian speakers, i.e. approximately one million. Nonetheless, Linda Picco’s research from 2001 reveals a different reality. According to her findings the number of active speakers of this language, taking into consideration both native and non-native speakers, approximates to 430,000. She adds to this number another 140,000 speakers who use Friulian occasionally, and rounds the number up to 600,000. It is true, however, that the research involved only the speakers of Friulian in the territory of the region FVG. Since the homeland of the Friulian population covers also the eastern part of the neighbouring region Veneto, further research is needed to find out more realistic data. A new research ought to include, besides the Friulian speakers in Veneto, those few Friulian speakers who live in other parts of Italy, as well as the members of the strong Friulian diaspora, particularly in Romania and Argentina, but also in Brazil, Australia, Canada and the USA.

Furthermore, her research shows that an average speaker of Friulian is over forty years old and is a fluent speaker of this lesser-used language; still, with limited writing competencies. At this point it might be relevant to add that in the author’s opinion many a speaker has never even heard of the existence of the Friulian alphabet, not to mention the Friulian grammar or orthography.

Considering its historical background, it seems logical that Friulian is more often used in the countryside than in towns, where Venetian and Italian influenced and still influence the speakers’ choice of the language to a considerably larger extent.

Moreover, the use of Friulian is most typical of informal communication situations, which means at work or school only during the breaks, preferably outside of working hours, when socialising, during sports activities and other hobbies, over a drink in pubs and bars etc. From the author's personal experience it is possible to find, across the Friulian speaking area, even bars in which speaking Friulian automatically gives a higher status to a customer. If we paraphrase, in the eyes of bartenders and regular guests a newcomer is welcome as soon as he/she greets by saying 'Mandi!' instead of 'Buongiorno!' and then continues ordering in Friulian. Yet, on the other side, there are also places where a client risks to be somehow underestimated or even ignored by a waiter/waitress serving him/her.

Returning to Linda Picco's findings, an important conclusion of the researcher is that what reflects the biggest problem connected with the present-day, that is to say the recent sociolinguistic reality of Friulian, is a serious lack of intergenerational communication (De Cia, 2013, pp. 9–14) in this language. In other terms, the transmission of this language knowledge and skills from parents to children is on the decrease, the process of their communication normally going on in Italian, the majority and most prestigious language of the region. But in the communication between grand-parents and grand-children, on the contrary, the minority language still finds its spontaneous manner. For many young people this represents their only link with the traditional culture of the former generations.

## Friulian as a language of university classes

Like a multitude of other lesser-spoken languages across Europe, Friulian is being revitalised to a great extent through the educational process, but merely by means of optional lessons and classes. It has been introduced, although not systematically so far, into many curricula at the pre-elementary and primary school level, not only as a subject Friulian language, but also in the form

of interdisciplinary lessons (e.g. Informatics & Sports Education or other similar combinations) as part of various national or regional research and development projects. At the secondary school level we can observe, on the contrary, nearly a complete gap: very few optional lessons of and in ‘marilenghe’ are held in secondary schools across the region with a view of upgrading teenagers’ oral skills and enabling them to read and write in the language they use(d) in the dialogue with their grandparents. The main two reasons for such a situation are obviously a lack of enough qualified secondary school teachers and of interest among students’ parents, who prefer their children to learn, besides the compulsory languages, i.e. Italian and English, one or two foreign languages, choosing among German, French, Slovene, Russian, Spanish.

At the Department of Germanic and Romance Languages and Literatures of Udine University (It. l’Università degli Studi di Udine), students can opt for two graduate study programmes related to the ‘Lenghe e culture furlanis’. The first programme, called Friulian Language with Literature, which is classified in the frame of Foreign languages and cultures (Frl. *Lenghis e leteraduris forestis*), focuses on linguistics and literature, whereas the second, Primary Education Course (Frl. *Siencis de formazion primarie*), provides the formation of future teachers of Friulian in kindergartens as well as primary schools.

Between 100 and 120 students are registered in both programmes at the moment. Students’ degree papers are to be written in Friulian and after having accomplished the studies, they are conferred degree certificates, also written in Friulian.

Furthermore, a doctoral programme is available, entitled Ladin and Plurilingualism (Frl. *Ladinistiche e plurilenghisim*), dedicated to the topic known in linguistics as ‘the Ladin question’ (It. *La questione ladina*), therefore seeking convergence within the three Rhaeto-romance varieties and identifying discrepancies between them respectively.

If we consider the fact that in the late 1990-ies most university classes on Friulian linguistics, literature and culture were still given in Italian, a great progress has undoubtedly been achieved over the last twenty years as for



lecturing in Friulian, the latter having become the predominant language of the classes. This improvement is probably due to two factors: the emergence of the new language policy and a certain change in the perception of Friulian as a language (not a dialect). By the new language policy we refer especially to a strong influence of numerous international declarations on the rights of national and ethnic minorities and sets of regulations concerning the status of minority languages, whilst by a change in the perception of Friulian the author wants to emphasise that nowadays people are less afraid and ashamed, overcoming step by step their prejudice in connection with the use of Friulian in public settings, even in official institutions, something that was not approved of in the past, even though not forbidden by law.

The remarkable advances in terms of using Friulian as the language of university classes described in the above paragraphs remain unfortunately limited exclusively to the three above-mentioned study programmes.

The outcomes of the sociolinguistic investigation carried out in 2002 which Linda Picco analyses in the chapter “Opinioni ed atteggiamenti dei dipendenti dell’Università di Udine su temi inerenti la lingua friulana” of her latest book (Picco, 2013, pp. 47–72) signal that only 41,8% of professors, researchers, assistants and other members of the staff employed at various departments of the University of Udine agreed to complete the survey questionnaire asking them to express their opinion about legislative measures on the protection of Friulian and the other two minority languages and cultures in the region (Slovene and German), as well as other matters connected with the promotion of Friulian. A surprising number of those participating in the inquiry, among whom emerge the names of some highly honoured scholars, even linguists, refused to give their anagraphic data, openly expressing fear and diffidence (Picco, 2013, p. 47). What is shown from her analysis in the first place is that among the interviewees in favour of Friulian ‘non-teachers’ prevailed; secondly, the highest percentage of university teachers and professors who supported the development of Friulian belonged to the Faculties of Humanities, Jurisprudence and Economics, while most of their colleagu-

es lecturing Natural Sciences and Engineering declared either an attitude of direct opposition or indifference (Picco, 2013, p. 69). Another disappointing fact is that positive attitude towards the ‘Friulian question’ varies in accordance with academic titles, decreasing unfortunately from the lowest to the highest titles within the hierarchical ranking structure. Two other groups of participants prove to be pro-Friulian, namely non-teaching members of the staff, i.e. secretaries, technicians, administrators, especially those living in the Friuli region since their birth, and younger interviewees (Picco, 2013, p. 72).

## The role of other institutions stimulating the use of Friulian in academic contexts

The Friulian Philological Society (Frl. Societât Filologjiche Furlane/SFS), the organisation founded at Gorizia in 1919 in order to promote the Friulian language and culture, but since 1966 located at Udine, publishes two scientific reviews: *Ce fastu?* and *Sot la nape*. Both titles imply strongly symbolic meanings. *Ce fastu?* imitates Dante Alighieri’s ironic citation in his famous work *De vulgari eloquentia* (Dante 1304–1305), which stressed the divergence of the local speeches of the Aquileia area in comparison to the majority of other varieties within the Italo-romance linguistic sphere. *Sot la nape* literally means ‘around the hearth’, ‘at home’, thus expressing the idea of local people’s domestic traditions.

*Ce fastu?*, a semi-annual journal, published since 1920, is included into two European lists: ERIH PLUS (European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences) and The Nordic List (Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers). It contains articles dealing with Linguistics, Philology, History, Arts and Ethnology. Despite the fact that it is officially bilingual, Italian-Friulian, articles in Italian outnumber those in ‘marilenghe’ approximately ten to one. For instance, the latest volume, XCIV (2018) 1–2, consists only of contributions written in Italian. Nevertheless,

every article is followed by an abstract in three languages: Italian, Friulian & English (Riassunto, Sunt & Abstract).

In *Sot la nape*, a quarterly journal, launched in 1949, treating different aspects of the Friulian history, language and culture, a little more space is covered with contributions in Friulian. If we consult the latest two volumes, LXX / Lui-Setembar 2018 – n° 3 and LXX / Otubar-Dicembar 2018 – n° 4, we can find in the first one twenty-four pages out of sixty-four covered with texts in Friulian, i.e. a little more than a third of the whole journal, whilst in the second Friulian is the language of eight pages out of sixty-four, i.e. it covers one eighth of the whole volume.

Besides, the society publishes the professional journal *Scuele furlane*, addressed primarily to teachers and students of Friulian.

The Regional Agency for the Friulian Language (Frl. Agenzie Regjonâl pe Lenghe Furlane/ARLEF) is in charge of the language policy for the Friulian speaking area. They created, in 2000, 'il Grant Dizionari Bilengâl talian-furlan' / 'il GDBTF', in two versions: as an on-line and a paper dictionary (a collection of six books). It represents a real treasure for a foreign translator as well as a native Friulian speaker translating various texts into the southern Rheto-romance variety. This outstanding work, the creation of which had taken five years, the product of a group of scholars, writers and journalists, implying over 70,000 Italian entries to which correspond 68,000 Friulian entries, is very rich in abstract terminology, art and scientific vocabulary. It is elaborated according to the criteria of modern lexicography. For example, it proved to be an indispensable source of information to the author of this article when translating the theoretical chapters of a musicological textbook into Friulian. In many cases it facilitated his selection of suitable semantic units related to the topic in question. What could be considered its weakness is the fact that it involves too many Italianisms. Consequently, academic texts in Friulian risk to become a kind of hybrid between Friulian and Italian. And the linguistic hybridisation is nothing but the mirror of the cultural bipolarity of most Friulian language users.

The other essential instrument by means of which literacy in Friulian can be developed is ARLEF's *Coretôr Ortografic furlan*. Like the GDBTF, the latter is based on the rules of The official spelling system of the Friulian Language (Frl. *La grafie uficiâl de lenghe furlane*), published in Friulian in 2002 by the *Osservatori Regjonâl de Lenghe e de Culture Furlanis*.

From 2014 to 2015 four numbers of another scientific journal, *Cîl e tiere* (Eng. The sky and Earth), with the subtitle *Divulgazion sientifiche in lenghe furlane*, printed by the *Forum Editrice* within the University of Udine, were published by the Friulian Scientific and Technological Society (Frl. *Societât Sientifiche e Tecnologjiche Furlane / SSTF*) in cooperation with the ARLEF. Twenty-four scientific articles in Friulian can be read in these four volumes, covering fourteen different branches of science.

## Academic literature in Friulian

Most academic papers and articles appearing in Friulian are translations, either from Italian, the lingua franca of the whole Italo-romance linguistic sphere, or English, today's universal code in the fields of science and art. It is particularly difficult to find original scientific articles or booklets written in Friulian. There are but few, mainly analysing topics and questions related to diverse disciplines in the context of social sciences (e.g. History, Ethnology, Religion, Linguistics, Literature, Literary criticism, Jurisprudence) and other Humanities, like Philosophy and Arts. Even though not manifold, academic texts covering these branches are multiplying, for the greatest percentage of scholars who encourage the development of the Friulian usage work in this sphere. An increase of texts in Friulian is noticeable in the literature treating two other branches of Applied Science, namely the Didactics of foreign languages and Computer Science, probably thanks to their practical orientation.

By contrast, when browsing through scholars' texts displaying subjects which take part of Natural Science disciplines or Technical Engineering, we

witness a conspicuous absence of Friulian, with few bright exceptions. For instance, the four volumes of the above-mentioned *Cil e tiere* comprise four articles on Economics, including Environmental Economics and Economic Geography, likewise on Physics and Neuroscience, i.e. combination of Medicine and Biology. On the other hand, each of the following disciplines is represented by one contribution: Chemistry, Biology, Meteorology, Engineering, Energetics, Physiology, Forensic technology, Mathematics, Viticulture, i.e. a branch of Horticulture, Demography and Paleoanthropology. In addition, every volume entails an interview, with a successful scientist or businessman, and two recensions. Some contributions were written in Friulian and then revised by the Publication Committee, others were translated directly from Italian. If the users of any lesser-spoken language wish to strengthen its vitality, it is certainly very important for them to enrich its scientific, philosophic and art vocabulary. And they can only attain this goal by creating and publishing such types of texts, so that younger generations can be supplied with appropriate samples to follow. It means one in a series of necessary tools to prevent what Matisoff refers to as ‘linguistic euthanasia’ (Matisoff, 1991, p. 221).

The Friulian cultural heritage is therefore far from abounding with samples of academic writing in the frame of Natural Science disciplines. It is possible, however, to find authors from the past periods of the Friulian history whose items could or should be used as fundamentals for further creation. We can state at this point the name of Tite Quargnâl (It. Giovanni Battista Cornali, 1887–1956), one of the co-authors of *Il Nuovo Pirona*, the second bilingual Friulian-Italian dictionary. Let us read, below, a short extract from his geological description under the title *Sui marciépîs di Rive Bartuline*:

Duncie, lis pieris neris, che siarvin di marcepît in Rive Bartuline e in cualchi altri lûc, culî a Udin, ‘e partegnin a la formazion raibliane (Carnic), Trias superiôr. ‘E vegnin iù de alte Val dal Tilimènt, indulà che cheste formazion ‘e iè svilupade, in ogni so “facies”, diluncvie il Cianâl di Soclêf. Chest plan al è stât ben studiât des bandis di Dogne, dulà che al è une vore potent e ch’al è plen di fòssii.

I fòssii de nestre piere, che si presentin in sezion longitudinâl e ancje di traviârs, ‘e son Gasteropodos “holostòmiti” (cussì clamaâz parcè che àn la bocie ovâl e, abasvie, staronzade), de famee des “Pyramidellidae”. ‹E partegnin al gienar “Chemnitzia” d’Orbigny, caraterizât de conchilie bislungie, gieneralmentri grande, a ponte, cence umbrizzòn, componude di diviârs zîrs.

Lis “Chemnitzii” si puedin considerâ – al è simpri il dotôr Martinis ch’al fevele – i gigànz de faune raibliane, parcè che qualchidune di lôr, se iè interie, ‘e rive a dimensiòns bastanze grandis (...) (Verone, 1999, pp. 172–173).

(Therefore, black stones used as a paving material of the Bartuline river bank and in some other places in Udine belong to the Upper Triassic Raiblian (Carnic) formation. They originally come from the Upper Tagliamento Valley, to be preciser, they can be found along the whole Soclef Canal where it formed in all its strata. This terrain has been studied in detail in the surroundings of Dogna, where the ground is vigorous and abounds with fossils.

The fossils from our stones, which appeared in longitudinal sections and diagonally, are Gasterópodos ‘Colostomies’ (named after their oval, and underneath rounded mouth, belonging to the ‘Pyramidellidae’ family. They take part of the genus ‘Chemnitzia d’Orbigny’, a mollusc, oblong in shape, generally big, pointed, without ombilicus, composed of diverse spires.

The ‘Chemnitz’ shells can be considered, according to doctor Martinis, as the giants of the Raibl fauna, for some of them reach quite large dimensions (...))

## Prospects for the future and conclusions

D’Aronco’s statement “(...) a healing action will be necessary to prevent, first a complete fusion of the Friulian cultural patterns with the Italian ones, afterwards the predomination of English and the cultural transformation coming with it” (Cisilino, & D’Aronco, 2012, p. 47) can be understood as a clear warning for the future sociolinguistic status of Friulian. The author of this article keeps, however, more optimism: his hypothesis, based on his personal observations of the current situation, is that in the next decades Friulian is

likely to survive not only as a language of communication within lower segments of society, nor will its use remain restricted to a few practical domains, but we can expect its further evolution for academic purposes (in academic publishing, if not as an equal language of conferences, at least as one of the languages appearing in presentations, which is the case at present), though to quite a limited extent. Thus, it will presumably keep the second or third position within the academic circles of the Friuli region, continuing to cover mainly the sphere of Humanities, notwithstanding sporadic trials of individual explorers or professors, dealing with Natural Science disciplines and Engineering, who might reveal, thanks to their emotional involvement rather than other factors of motivation, that this minority language with a long literary tradition and strong spiritual dimensions is worth being used for developing academic creativity in that sphere, too. It would certainly be an illusion to expect radical changes in the near future linguistic reality of the Friulian speech community. Its evolution considerably depends on the local scholars' awareness how important it is that they overcome their own prejudice from the past and fear of being stigmatised by the authorities and that they identify themselves with the original values of their nation. They should upgrade and diversify the cultural heritage of their ethnicity by publishing research papers in the language of their ancestors. Besides, the future of Friulian is conditioned with the evolution of society in a wider sense. An important component to be mentioned at this stage is the presence of newcomers, i.e. immigrants from Africa, the Middle East, South America, who represent a potentially new category of Friulian speakers. These people are highly motivated to learn both, Italian and Friulian, with a view to a better and faster social integration. Some of them, especially younger, are supposed to become excellent students or even experts in various branches of science and arts. Finally, an effective cooperation ought to be established between all the institutions sharing responsibility for the development of Friulian, well-correlated with the language policy in vigour, so as to reverse the language shift to Italian (and English) and replace it by a well-balanced bilingualism or multilingualism

respectively. And seeing many analogies between Friulian and some other lesser-spoken languages across the world, the author's hypothesis could eventually be extended to their future realities.



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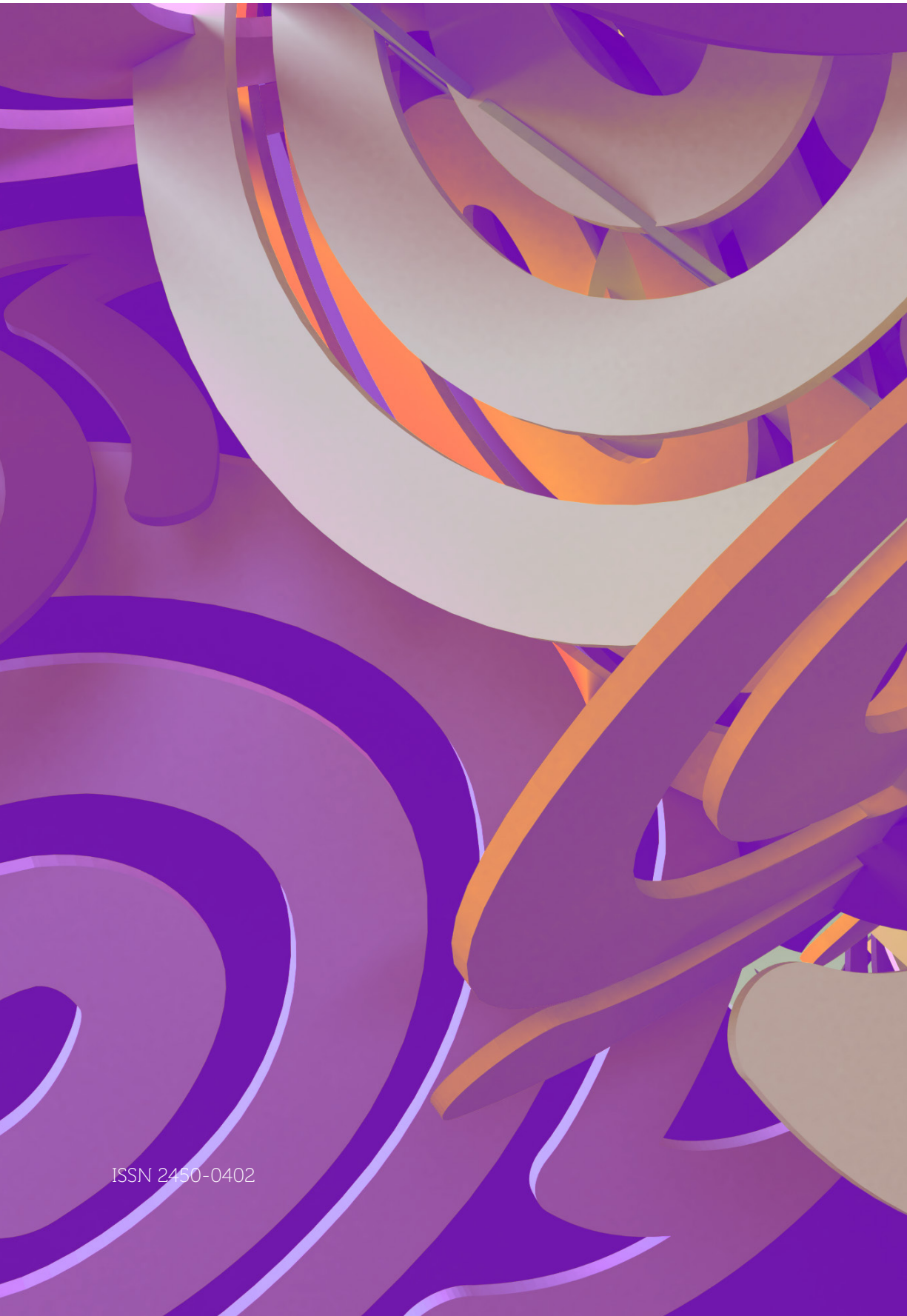
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