

Vegliote is, perhaps, the least known of the Romance languages. This language maintains its anonymity through the simple means of being extinct. However, Roger L. Hadlich, in his doctoral dissertation, posited a Serbo-Croatian influence upon the development of Vegliote, based on studies of the work of Matteo Bartoli. Through his studies, Hadlich attempted to explain many of the unanswered questions concerning the vowel and consonant development of Vegliote.

Robert A. Hall, Jr. reviewed the publication of this dissertation and stated;

Hadlich's arguments in favour of Serbo-Croatian influence are as convincing as any superstratum theory can be: he demonstrates the likelihood of contact, the similarities in the systems, and the parallelism of outcome which must be shown in order to render any sub- or superstratum influence likely.¹

Hadlich's arguments have not convinced everyone, however, including the present author. One must be cautious concerning statements about language influences, since languages rarely borrow sound features from another language. It is equally unlikely that they borrow grammatical features.

In Uriel Weinreich's Languages in Contact, he analyses in great detail the processes involved in speaking a second language and the resultant phonic interference caused by the native language structure. He established four basic types of phonic interference as follows:

1. Under-differentiation of phonemes, where two phonemes in the second language system are not distinguished in the first or primary language system;
2. Over-differentiation of phonemes where distinctions are made in the second system although they are not required in the primary language;
3. Phone substitution, where a speaker uses a phoneme of the primary language as if it were identical to a phoneme in the second language. Interference occurs when the primary phoneme is closely similar to but different in at least one feature from the second language's phoneme;
4. Reinterpretation of distinctions, where the speaker in the second language system distinguishes phonemes by means of features which are redundant in that system but which are significant in the primary system.

Although these terms were established primarily in reference to synchronic interference, they also apply to the structural effect of one language on another in their historical development, because this external influence is viewed as the transfer to the second language of those features arising from the interference in the speech of bilinguals.

Hadlich seems to believe that it is the speech of the bilingual that is important in language influence but, clearly, such is not the case. The monolingual, I feel, is more important as his speech habits constitute and dominate the language and he is less likely to incorporate sounds from another language. If the monolingual begins to use features of another language in his own speech, there will then be a case for language influence. I do not feel that claims about language influence based solely on the speech of bilinguals can be effectively revelatory of language influence.

In order for one to claim that one language has been influenced by another, certain criteria must be met. Contact between the two languages must be shown for if there is no contact, there can be no influence (except in cases involving the lexicon where borrowing is sometimes made through intermediary systems). If a loss of a feature in one language is claimed, one must show that the language had the feature in question to begin with and then lost it, while the other language did not have it as well. It is also necessary to follow the development of both languages to see if the feature (lost or acquired) may have been internally developed. Furthermore, one must state in what types of words the borrowed phonemes were used; i.e. either borrowed or native stock; and whether a bilingual or monolingual uses it.

In his dissertation, The Phonological History of Vegliote, Hadlich makes no reference to the types of words the phonemes were used in, nor does he state whether they were used by bilingual or monolingual speakers. Using modern structural techniques to trace the development of this language, Hadlich posits this Serbo-Croatian influence which I will trace point by point.

The Latin of Veglia

The vowel system of Vegliote Vulgar Latin was similar to the Vulgar Latin vowel system of many other areas. It was composed of seven vowels /i e ε a ɔ o u/ and two semi-vowels, /j, w/. By the time of the Slavic migrations, all vowels in this system had a long variant in free syllable and a short variant in checked syllable. /e/ and /o/ had the off-glides /j/ and /w/, respectively and /ε/ and /ɔ/ had the on-glides /j/ and /w/, respectively, in both free and checked position.

The consonants in this system were /p t k b d g f s r l m n/. It is probable that the system also contained the palatalized phonemes /l' n' ts/ and /dz/ which had developed out of the fusion of /l n k g/ with a following /j/. (/k/ and /g/ maintained their stop articulation before the front vowels /i/, /e/ and /ε/.) The consonant system featured phonemic consonant length in that there were geminates of the consonants.

The Vowel System of Proto-Serbo-Croatian (PSCr)

The vowel system of PSCr as it was spoken by the Slavic invaders flowing into Dalmatia in the seventh century and thereafter, was an eight vowel system. It had the contrasts of high/low, front/back/ and long/ short.

	Front Unrounded		Back Unrounded		Back Rounded	
High	i	ɪ	ɛ	ɛ̃		
Low	a	æ			ɔ	ɔ̃

Labialization was a marginal feature in this system, although the phoneme /æ/ was manifested as [jæ].

The only feature of the consonant system of interest here is the lack of phonemic consonant length, in which PSCr contrasted with Vegliote Vulgar Latin.

It is at this point that Hadlich posits the first Serbo-Croatian influence on Vegliote Latin. He states that the merger of /a/ and /ɔ/ was due to an under-differentiation on the part of PSCr speakers. Hadlich states:

A comparison of the vowel systems of Vegl. Lat. and PSCr during the early period of contact reveals that the native speakers of PSCr had but two phonemes with which to interpret the three Vegl. Lat. phonemes /a/, /ɔ/ and /o/. As a result, when attempting to speak Latin, native speakers of PSCr would have difficulty making the distinction between the three Vegl. Lat. phonemes. After generations of bilingual contact, the result was the transfer of this lack of distinction to Vegl. Lat. and the merger of /a/ and /ɔ/.²

My first counterargument against this claim is one that I will use repeatedly throughout this paper. It is a basic element in language influence claims that I feel Hadlich has over-looked. It runs:

The loss of a feature, opposition or category which is non-occurrent in the contact language is neither necessary nor sufficient reason for hypothesizing a substratum claim.³

By extension, we can substitute 'influence claim' instead of 'substratum claim', as Hadlich makes no reference to whether the influence is sub-, ad-, or super-stratum. The point in quotation underlies my position of the inadequacy of this and all future claims of influence posited by Hadlich.

Another point that Hadlich fails to mention is that Vegliote Latin had two other phonemes which were non-occurrent in PSCr. These were /e/ and /ɛ/. He does not give any reason why neither of these merged with something or moved towards either of the PSCr /æ/ or /æ̃/. If one posits an influence in one feature of the language, he must also state why there was no influence in another feature.

The third counterargument deals directly with the two PSCr phonemes /ɔ/ and /ɔ̃/. The latter of these is long. Lengthening of a vowel invariably lowers it and therefore one can posit an [a] allophone of the /ɔ̃/ in some environments. But Hadlich does not give the environments of any of these phonemes so that the hypothesis of PSCr influence is not completely convincing.

My fourth point is that phonemic similarity is not as important in selection as are similar conditioning factors. An example of this occurs when French Canadian borrows the word team /tim/ into their language. One would imagine that it would be heard as /tim/

as well in French. But in checked syllables, French Canadian has an /ɾ/ allophone of /r/. This word is therefore pronounced as /tɾm/ or /tɾim/. As we can see from this example, environment and conditioning factors are important when making an influence claim.

The second PSOr influence claim that Hadlich makes is the loss of phonemic consonant length in Vegliote Latin. He states:

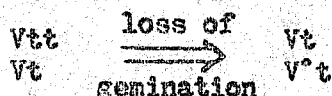
Since PSOr lacked phonemic consonant length, native speakers of PSOr would find it difficult to distinguish Vegl. Lat. long consonants from the corresponding short consonants. By a structural transfer, identical to the one just described Vegl. Lat. suffered a loss of phonemic consonant length, long consonants merging with the corresponding short ones.⁴

Always keeping in mind the original counterargument, i.e. "The loss of a feature, opposition or category,..." I would like to state again that Hadlich does not specify in what type of word this degemination occurred. It is possible that the Vegliote Latin speaker may have shown no gemination in words of Slavic origin but it is quite a different matter to believe that he would lose it simply due to the lack of this feature in PSOr. Moreover, it may be noted that many of the other Romance languages, i.e. French and Spanish, lost their phonemic consonant length with no aid or abetment from Serbo-Croatian. Is it necessary to posit an external influence when the feature in question could have developed internally?

The next claim that Hadlich makes is in reference to vowel differentiation.

Speakers of PSOr could distinguish between Vegl. Lat. */atta/ and */ata/ but they would hear them phonemically as /ata/ and /aːta/. Because this would be the form taken by the production of such a minimal pair by a native speaker of PSOr, it was possible it was possible for the phonemic feature of vowel length to be transferred to Vegl. Lat.⁵

The immediate result of the loss of phonemic consonant length in Vegliote Latin was vowel differentiation. Since Vegliote Latin long consonants blocked a preceding vowel and conditioned a short allophone, (short consonants conditioning a long allophone, when long consonants merged with short, the previous long and short allophones occurred in contrastive position and therefore attained the status of separate phonemes. This can be shown in the following diagram:



One important feature of this new system of phonemic vowel length is that the previous allophones with respect to on- and off-glides continue in the corresponding positions in the new system.

/e/ and /o/ are manifested as [eː] and [oː]; /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ by [jɛː] and [jɔː]; /ɔ/ and /ɔ/ by [wɔː] and [wɔː].

There are five changes in the Serbo-Croatian system that Hadlich says are important to the development of Vegliote. These are as follows:

1. Labialization becomes a distinctive feature in this system.
2. The simplification of the diphthong /ow/ brings a new phoneme /u/ into the system.
3. The former phoneme /č/ is fronted to an /t/.
4. Former /k/ and /i/ are lost in certain positions and merge into /a/ in others.
5. Phonemic length is lost from the system, vowel quality replacing the previous phonemic quantity.

Hadlich seems to believe that since a jod and a vau appear in the Serbo-Croatian system at this time that it can be stated that the /j/ and /w/ in Old Vegliote became phonemes. With the loss of phonemic vowel length, which I shall turn to later, there occurred a merger of vowels such as /e/ and /e/. But in this merger /e/ was manifested as /e:j/ and /e/ was manifested simply as /e/. These sounds were now distinguished minimally by the off-glide. The only problem is that I feel it not to be possible to separate the elements of a diphthong which is exactly what the /e:j/ is. It is not the /j/ which has become a phoneme but rather it is the diphthong /e:j/. This same argument can be used in association with the /j/ in the diphthong /jē/ and also with the /w/ in the diphthongs /wō/ and /o:w/.

The next feature change that Hadlich attributes to Serbo-Croatian influence is the loss of phonemic vowel length in Old Vegliote. Many languages around the world which at one point had phonemic vowel length, have lost this feature, (including most of the Romance languages) so why must one claim a Serbo-Croatian influence in this instance? (Remember the first argument of this paper.)

Hadlich then goes on to explain the fronting of the Vegliote Latin /u/, forming the Old Vegliote /ū/. He states;

Modern Vegliote shows at some time in its history Vegliote Latin /u/ had a palatal articulation. The evidence for this articulation is that the Modern Vegl. equivalent of Latin /u/ is /oj/ which shows the palatal consonant /j/ rather than /w/, and that Vegl. Lat. /k/ has the same palatal result /č/ in Mod. Vegl. before both former /u/ and /i/;

e.g. Vegliote Latin	Modern Vegliote
/kalkina/	/kalčajna/
/oakuro/	/sčojr/

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The point hits its mark until he goes on to say:

Since Vegl. Lat. /u/ and PSCr /č/ must have been equated in bilingual speech from the earliest contact onward, (each represents the high, back phoneme of its respective system), the fronting of Vegl. Lat. /u/ to /ū/ must be associated with the fronting of PSCr /č/ to /t/.

A similar type of fronting can be cited in many other languages such as the fronting of the Gallo-Roman Vulgar Latin /u/ to the Modern French equivalent /y/. Both cases involve the

fronting of a high, back rounded vowel to a high, front rounded vowel.

One argument that can be raised against this claim is that it entails two different types of fronting. The fronting in Serbo-Croatian is from a back, unrounded vowel to a mid or neutral vowel while in Old Vegliote, it is from a back rounded vowel to a front one. Clearly it is evident that these two did not front in the same manner as their results are completely different.

One possible explanation I would like to make, differs somewhat from Hadlich's chronology of events in the development of the Vegliote system. Hadlich correctly points out that the phoneme /ɔ/ (phonetically /wɔ:/) changed to become /uɔ/. If this change occurred at an earlier time than that which Hadlich suspects, i.e. before the fronting of /u/ to /ü/, this may have caused a low margin of tolerance between the high, back vowels /u/, /o/ and /uɔ/. This low margin of tolerance would then force the phoneme /u/ to front thus allowing /uɔ/ to take its place which it did.

Hadlich then shows various phonemic mergers which can be seen on the charts at the end of this paper. He shows developments in the Serbo-Croatian system which he says have an influence on Old Vegliote to produce Modern or New Vegliote.

In these changes, Serbo-Croatian /a/ ([jǝ]) disappears through a merger with /i/. He states that this merger was restricted to the I-dialects of Serbo-Croatia and that these dialects were spoken in the area around the Isle of Veglia. Serbo-Croatian /ɔ/ disappears from the system also through a merger with /i/. Finally, Serbo-Croatian /ɔ/ and /ə/ merge into a new phoneme /a/.

There occurred at this time several changes in Vegliote, such as:

1. Old Vegliote /iɛ/ simplifies to Modern Vegliote /i/ but does not merge with the Old Vegliote /i/.
2. Old Vegliote /uɔ/ simplifies to Modern Vegliote /u/ and merges with /o/ which also shifts to /u/. (I have posited that this change occurred earlier, probably not with the merger of it with /o/ however.)
3. Old Vegliote /e/ lowers to Modern Vegliote /a/.
4. Old Vegliote /ɔ/ lowers to Modern Vegliote /a/ where it merges with the Old Vegliote /e/.
5. Old Vegliote /ü/ shifts to Modern Vegliote /o/.

Hadlich says that further insights into these Vegliote changes can be gained by observing the close relation between them and the Serbo-Croatian shifts of the same period. The first one to be examined is the Vegliote development of /ɛ'>/iɛ/>/i/. This is paralleled by the Serbo-Croatian change of /a' ([jǝ])>/i/. Hadlich says, "It would be very difficult to deny a causal relationship between the two changes."

By looking at the charts of the development of vowels in the two systems, one can make some interesting comments concerning this claim. Firstly, the two developments are quite similar in that they both result in /i/. But their paths in getting to this point are different. /iɛ/ in Vegliote does not merge with the /i/ in its system nor with a neutral vowel as there is not one. This may be due to an earlier shift of the /i/ to the Modern Vegliote /e/.

This may be coincidental or it may well be a valid influence as at this time Vegliote was on the verge of extinction. But one may bring up the point that if the Serbo-Croatian influence was strong enough to cause a change in one phoneme along its own lines, why did it not influence the /o/ in Vegliote to retain its quality as did the Serbo-Croatian /o/?

It has been shown that the early bilingual identification of Vegl. Lat. /u/ and PSocr /ʊ/... caused Vegl. Lat. /u/ to front to /ü/ when PSocr /ʊ/ fronted to /ɪ/. Consequently when this Socr correlate of Vegl. /ü/ is removed from the system, the bilingual support for this phoneme disappears, permitting the shift of /ü/ to /o/.⁸

As we have seen earlier, I feel that the fronting of the Vegliote /u/ to /ü/ was caused by a low margin of tolerance in the high, back vowel area. As no other fronting resulted from this movement, it seems logical to assume that this fronted phoneme would be lost to maintain equipollence within the vowel system. As the phonemes /u/ and /o/ merged into the new phoneme /u/, the high-mid back area was left open into which the /ü/ moved.

The last Serbo-Croatian influence upon Vegliote vowels, claimed by Hadlich, is the merger of /ɔ/ and /e/, both lowering to give Modern Vegliote /a/. He states;

When Socr /ɔ/ and /e/ merge, the original PSocr contrast of back/front in the low area is destroyed. This back/front contrast was considered an important factor in the backward shift of Vegl. Lat. /a/ and its merger with /ɔ/. Conversely, the loss of this contrast and the shift of /ɔ/ to /a/ in Socr causes a shift of /ɔ/ to /a/ in Vegl. The loss of the back/front contrast also aids the merger of Old Vegl. /e/ with /ɔ/ into Mod. Vegl. /a/.⁹

I do not feel that this back/front distinction was completely lost as it was a merger of a back vowel with a neutral vowel, not a front one in Serbo-Croatian. Furthermore, it is not uncommon to find a great deal of movement between low vowels, be they back or front. This is evident through observations of various dialects of French Canadian, demonstrated in the following diagram;



In the foregoing pages, I have attempted to show various reasons why Hadlich's claims of Serbo-Croatian influence on Vegliote Latin may not be correct or at least that they do not sufficiently answer all the questions that need be asked when one considers language influence claims. I commend Hadlich's work in reconstructing both the Vegliote and Serbo-Croatian systems but I feel that he had decided "a priori" that there was indeed an influence factor in the development of the vowels of Vegliote.

The Development of Vowels in Vegliote

(from The Phonological History of Vegliote)

Vegliote Latin

Syllable

Phonemes

Phonetic Values

Period II

Phonemes

Phonetic Values

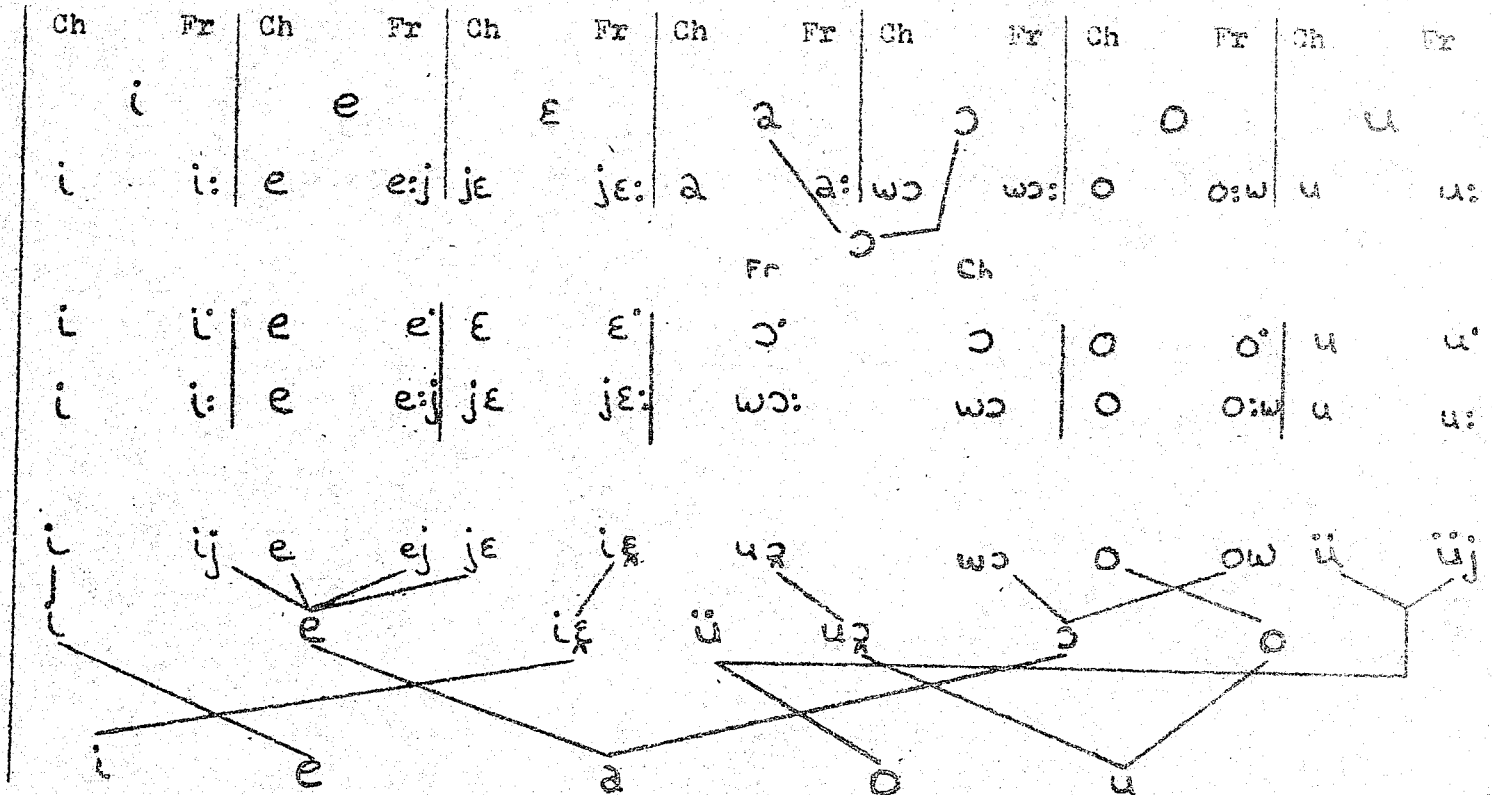
Old Vegliote

Phonemes

Phonemes

Modern Vegliote

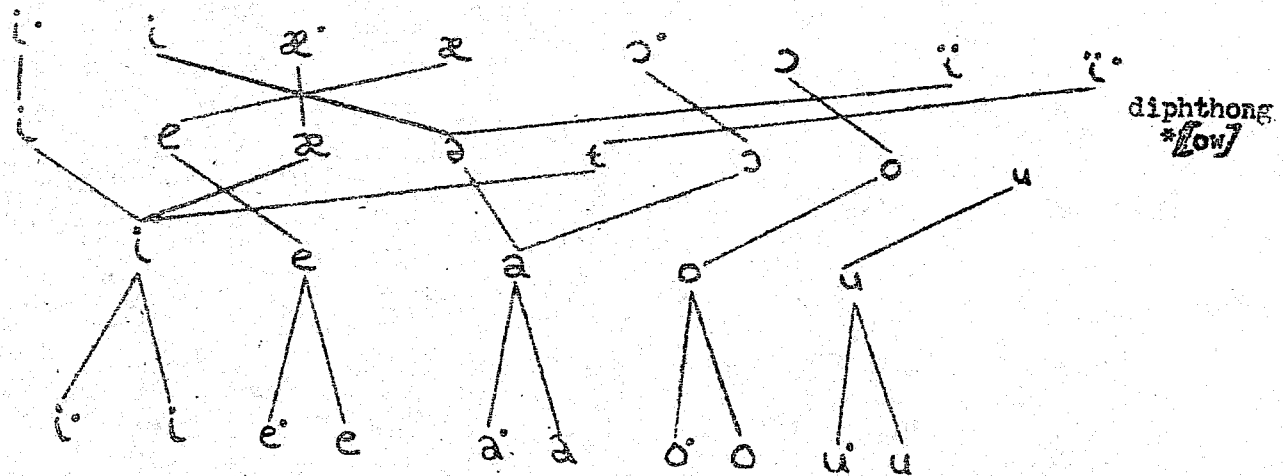
Phonemes



The Development of Vowels in Serbo-Croatian

(from The Phonological History of Verliote)

Proto-Serbo-Croatian



Modern Serbo-Croatian

Footnotes

1. Robert A. Hall, Jr., "Review of 'The Phonological History of Vegliote'", Language, Vol. 42, (Baltimore, Md., 1968) p. 132.
2. Roger L. Hadlich, The Phonological History of Vegliote, (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1965) p. 43.
3. Paul V. Cassano, (personal communication, Feb., 1975.)
4. Hadlich, op. cit. p. 43.
5. ibid. p. 44-45.
6. ibid. p. 47.
7. ibid. p. 47.
8. ibid. p. 48.
9. ibid. p. 52.

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- Weinreich, U., Languages in Contact, (The Hague, Mouton, 1964)