

Introducing Cimbrian.  
The main linguistic features  
of a German(ic) language in Italy

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### 1. Introduction: Historical background

The denomination ‘Cimbrian’ (sometimes *Cymbrian* or *Cimbro*) refers to a group of German-based varieties that has been spoken for many centuries in the northeastern Italian Alps, in the area between the cities of Trento, Verona, and Vicenza, within the Province of Trento (the high plateaus of Folgaria, Lavarone, and Luserna), and in the Veneto Region (the so-called Seven and Thirteen Municipalities)<sup>1</sup>.



Fig. 1: The Cimbrian-speaking territories

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the main geographical and historical questions on the formation and evolution of the Cimbrian colonies, see Bidese (2004a).

It is estimated that, in the past, there were as many as 20,000 – 30,000 speakers in this area.

When the settlers actually arrived, and the regions of the German-speaking areas from which they originally migrated, have long been controversial issues. Medieval sources, such as rental agreements or notarial instruments refer to them only as *Teutonici* or *To(d)ischi*; that is, Germans (see Stolz 1927, Rapelli 1983 and Baum 1983). The settlement of the Cimbrian territories was part of the great colonization that took place in Europe after the turn of the first millennium, and led to significant deforestation in the Alps, and the extension of cultivation to the highest zones. It began in the eleventh century, reached its peak in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, decreased during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and finally ended in the middle of the sixteenth century. The appellation *Cimbri* – and sometimes even *Goths* – was used by some humanists in the Renaissance to refer to these German settlers in the mountains, thus establishing a connection with the Germanic tribes of the *Cymbri* who had come from Jutland at the end of the second century BCE and were defeated by the Romans in 101 BC near Vercelli.

Cimbrian is both one of the oldest German-based minority languages and one of the most studied. It is also one of the best documented minority languages: The first text was published in 1602 in Vicenza (see Meid 1985), thus beginning a long-written tradition that includes not only religious works and translations, but also lyrics (see Heller 1988 and Meid 1984), tales (see Meid 1982), and other texts in prose (see Stefan 1998).

Linguistics and German philology turned to Cimbrian as an object of investigation in the early days of the scientific study of language (see Bidese 2010b); it was being examined from a philological-comparative point of view as early as the eighteenth century. In the year 1732, the Veronese scholar Scipione Maffei (1675-1755) carried out fieldwork among the Cimbrians of the Thirteen Communities and outlined a first philological comparison between Cimbrian and other German varieties (see Maffei 1732: 114). Although Maffei's methods were rudimentary and his results inaccurate, they anticipated subsequent research and acquainted an erudite readership with the Cimbrian language. In 1763, the Cimbrian priest Marco Pezzo (1719-1794) published the third edition of his essay *Dei Cimbri veronesi, e vicentini* (On the Cimbrians of Verona and Vicenza) with the addition of a Cimbrian glossary with headwords in Italian, and a comparison to German words (see Pezzo 1763). The essay and the glossary were translated into German by Ernst Friedrich Sigmund Klinge, and were published in 1772 in the famous scientific journal *Magazin für die neue Historie und Geographie* by Anton Friedrich Büsching (see Klinge 1772). Pezzo's vocabulary was republished twice more: Two years later in Büsching's *Magazin* with headwords in Cimbrian (see Büsching 1774), and in 1778 by Friedrich Carl Fulda and Johann Nast, with

headwords in German. In this edition, Fulda and Nast appended the Lord's prayer in the Cimbrian of the Seven Municipalities and a translation of the fifth ode (*Le Rétablissement de l'Académie*) of the *Œuvres du Philosophe de Sans-Souci* of Frederick II of Prussia (1712-1786) from French into the Seven Municipalities' Cimbrian and inserted the words of the ode into Pezzo's vocabulary (see Fulda & Nast 1778).

Johann Andreas Schmeller (1785-1852), one of the fathers of German philology and the founder of dialectology, learned about Cimbrian through these translations, and began to become interested in investigating the language, expressing a desire to carry out fieldwork in the Cimbrian enclaves (see Schmeller 1811). This wish was finally fulfilled via two research trips in 1833 and 1844. Schmeller's investigations produced two contributions that remain fundamental for the scientific description of Cimbrian grammar and its lexicon (see Schmeller 1838 and 1855). His interest in the language was motivated by its conservative nature, and by the need to test his system for the description of German varieties. Schmeller's research meant that the investigation of Cimbrian became a key part of German dialectology and, due to the importance of dialectological investigations in the German and Austrian philological tradition, of linguistic studies in general (see Rowley 2010). In fact, Cimbrian has often been considered to be excellent example for use in testing the application of new technologies for the investigation of minority languages. As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, the exponents of the Wiener School of Dialectology, Primus Lessiak and Anton Pfalz, recorded Cimbrian language samples (*Sprachproben*; sentence and speech recordings) onto wax master plates using a phonograph, in the town square of Asiago in the Seven Municipalities (see Lessiak & Pfalz 1918, and the re-edition by Schüller 2003). In 1941, Bruno Schweizer carried out his fieldwork in the same way, using a Magnetophon (model K4) developed by AEG in 1938 that allowed for the production of 20-minute recording tapes.

Later, one of Primus Lessiak's students, Eberhard Kranzmayer (1897-1975), later Professor of German Linguistics at Vienna University and one of the most important scholars in German dialectology, investigated the phonology and morphology of Cimbrian in his dissertation (see Kranzmayer [1923] 1981-85), and the lexicon in his later works (see Kranzmayer 1956, 1960, and 1963). Kranzmayer's research on Cimbrian was mainly driven by his historical interest, and was also an attempt to reconstruct the supposed original morphological forms using Neogrammarian methods. His interest in lexical archaisms was rooted in his conception of the Cimbrian worlds as "historical sources" (see Kranzmayer 1971: 23, Rowley 2010) that revealed the stage of the language at the time when these territories were settled during the Middle Ages. Archaisms in Cimbrian are one of the most important topics in the dialectological tradition, and also appear in later studies;

see, for example, Heller (1976) and Hornung (1984), who was a student of Kranzmayer.

A third line of scientific interest is represented by the investigations of the Bavarian linguist Bruno Schweizer (1897–1958). His work on Cimbrian is mainly characterized by a comparative approach to the different Cimbrian varieties. He collected an enormous amount of empirical data and provided the most complete description of the grammar of the Cimbrian dialects ever made (see Schweizer [1951-1952] 2008), which also contains a long section on syntax<sup>2</sup>.

These three lines of scientific interest – as found in the works of Schmeller, Kranzmayer, and Schweizer – produced three different hypotheses about the origin of the Cimbrian settlements. Schmeller was initially convinced that the Cimbrian territories were originally connected to those regions in the north but were then isolated from the German-speaking territories in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by the Romanization of the intervening valleys. However, in 1850, he published a document from the Abbey of Benediktbeuern in Southern Bavaria that he had discovered, in which the departure, perhaps the breakout, of a group of peasants between 1053 and 1064 from Benediktbeuern to the territories of the Abbey of St. Maria in Organo near Verona is attested (see Schmeller 1850); these are the same territories in which the Cimbrian communities of the Thirteen Municipalities would later be established (see Schmeller 1852: 49-50, Baum 1983). In fact, in this publication, Schmeller acknowledged that the expression “ad Verona civ[itatem]” indicating that the destination of the migrants (or fugitives) in the manuscript was probably an additional correction that refers only to the last two names on the list (see Schmeller 1850: 40). However, unlike the explanation of 1838, he now considered the possibility that the Cimbrian communities may have been established following the settlement of German colonists in the eleventh century who came from the regions that would later become Tyrol, or directly from Bavaria (see Schmeller 1850: 38-39).

In the same vein as Schmeller’s later opinion, Kranzmayer also assumed medieval immigration as the origin of the Cimbrian enclaves, although he dated the period of the settlement to the twelfth century. Furthermore, he provided linguistic evidence that the settlers were west Tyrolians who may have come from the Austrian side of the Upper Valley of Loisach, in the border area between Austria and Germany. In contrast to both Schmeller’s Bavarian and Kranzmayer’s Tyrolean hypotheses, Bruno Schweizer claimed a different origin for the Cimbrian colonies. According to him, they originated in the border settlements of the *Arimanni*, who were originally Lombard soldiers posted to safeguard frontiers and/or strategic

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2 For the specific characteristics of Schweizer’s approach compared to that of Kranzmayer, see Rowley (2013).



areas (see Schweizer 1948 and [1951/52] 2008: 5-9, Dow 2004, 2005 and 2008). Schweizer never denied the ‘Bavarization’ of Cimbrian due to the contribution of new settlers in the Middle Ages; nevertheless, he maintained that this later immigration could not have been the only cause of the formation of the Cimbrian territories, since it failed to explain the differences between Cimbrian and Bavarian German. Few other scholars have shared his opinion; nonetheless, his enormous collection of empirical data pertaining to the Cimbrian enclaves is one of the most important sources for investigating this language in all its varieties (see also Schweizer [1951-52] 2008, Bidese 2011 and Schweizer [1954] 2012).

## 2. Sociolinguistic aspects

At present, only about 1000 speakers remain<sup>3</sup>, most of whom live in the small village of Luserna / Lusérn (see Figure 1, above), or are scattered throughout the province of Trento and the neighboring provinces. In the so-called Seven Municipalities above the city of Vicenza (see the orange-colored areas in Figure 1, above) and in the Thirteen Municipalities above Verona (see the darker areas in Figure 1, above), this German dialect is only spoken by a few old people; there is no longer any natural intergenerational language transmission in these areas of the Veneto. However, Cimbrian survives due to the efforts of local cultural associations, in traditional songs, and in folklore events. It is also transmitted to interested people through Cimbrian-language courses and continues to be used in internet forums and groups. Despite all these activities, no revival of the language is yet apparent. In the territories between the Seven and the Thirteen Municipalities, in which Cimbrian has not been spoken for two centuries, only the toponymy and family names are evidence of people’s Cimbrian origins (see Figure 2).

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<sup>3</sup> According to the 2011 census in the province of Trento, 1,072 people declared themselves to belong to the Cimbrian minority group (see Lanzafame 2014). There are no statistics for the provinces of Verona and Vicenza in the Veneto region.



Fig. 2: The original Cimbrian-speaking territory and its progressive contraction over the centuries, according to Klein & Schmitt (1965).

In Lusérn, however, Cimbrian is spoken by 85,3% of the population (279 inhabitants as of the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2011, see Lanzafame 2014), predominantly by the middle-aged and older generations, for whom Cimbrian can still be considered to be their first language. The situation has changed considerably for the subsequent generations (see Morandi 2008; Kolmer 2012: 65-69), largely because of a dramatic decrease in Lusérn's population (-47% over 30 years: 1971-2001, see Figure 3) and the lack of new, young speakers.



Fig. 3: The demographic change of the population in Lusérn between 1931 and 2011

Cimbrian is usually still well known by people who were born at the end of the 1970s, but Italian has progressively gained influence. At present, families in which Cimbrian is still transmitted naturally in the family setting are an exception. On the other hand, local administrative bodies and cultural institutes have launched many initiatives in recent decades with the aim of combating the decline of Cimbrian among the younger generations, and supporting intergenerational language transmission<sup>4</sup>. In 1987, the Cimbrian and Mòcheno Cultural Institute was founded to safeguard and promote the minority culture and language (later divided into a Cimbrian and a Mòcheno institute). It has carried out language planning projects such as producing a grammar and a vocabulary, introducing an official orthography, and creating neologisms to allow for lexical innovation. In addition, the Cimbrian Institute has set up several major initiatives aimed at ensuring intergenerational language transmission. These include a Saturday Cimbrian-language kindergarten for toddlers and young children (*spilstube*), a summer camp for older children (*zimbarkolònia*) in which the operators use only Cimbrian, an integrated nursery and preschool educational project in cooperation with the Commune of Luserna (*klummane lustege tritt*), in which the operators speak Cimbrian while engaging with the children, and many publications in Cimbrian aimed at children, such as folk tales, an illustrated glossary, and cartoons. The Cimbrian Cultural Institute broadcasts a 15-minute television news show weekly, which is entirely in Cimbrian (*Zimbar Earde*) and is also available online and produces a page in Cimbrian (*Di Sait vo Lusérn*) in a local newspaper<sup>5</sup>.

Despite some evidence of the success of all these activities, the future of Cimbrian remains worrying concern. Newly published studies (see Ciccolone 2014 and Schöntag 2014) suggest that, unfortunately, the number of speakers may continue to decrease.

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<sup>4</sup> Historical language minorities are protected in Italy by Article 6 of the constitution: “The Republic safeguards linguistic minorities by means of appropriate measures” and by Law no. 482 of the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1999 entitled “Norms on the protection of the historical linguistic minorities”. In addition, the Autonomous Province of Trento promulgated the provincial Law no. 6 “Norms on the protection and promotion of the local linguistic minorities” concerning the province’s minorities, namely the Ladins, the Mòcheni, and the Cimbrians in 2008. For the impact of the norms introduced by this law and how they can be measured, see Busatta (2015).

<sup>5</sup> Many initiatives of the Cimbrian Cultural Institute and its most important projects concerning the safeguarding of the Cimbrian language can be retrieved from the institute’s homepage (see <http://www.istitutocimbro.it>). Digital content about Cimbrian is similarly available on the multimedia page of the same institute (see <http://mediateca.istitutocimbro.it/home.page>).



### 3. Phonology, morphology, and lexis of the Cimbrian of Lusérn

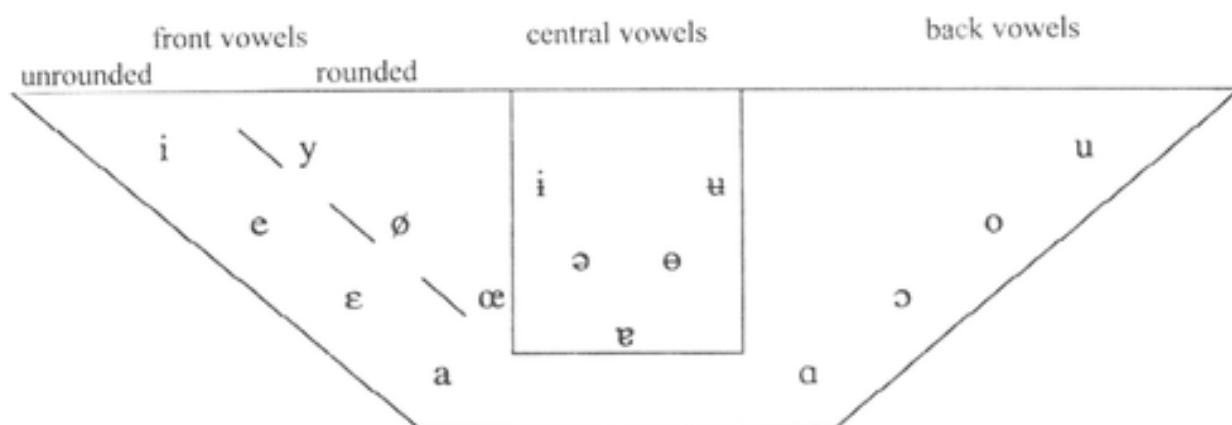
The phonology and morphology of Cimbrian have been studied and described frequently and thoroughly, both in the past and more recently. In addition to the above-mentioned ‘classical’ studies of Cimbrian, see, in particular, for the Lusérn variety, Tyroller (1994), and especially (2003); also see Morandi (2008), Kolmer (2010, 2012: Chapter 3), Hall (2012), Alber (2015), and Alber & Meneguzzo (2016). For the varieties of the Seven and the Thirteen Municipalities, see the following: Panieri (2005, 2008 and 2010), Alber, Rabanus & Tomaselli (2012), and Alber (2014). For the inflectional, derivational, and compositional morphology, lexicon, and semantics, see the classic study by Gamillscheg (1912) and, more recently, Tyroller (1990, 1992 and 1994: 136-139, as well as 2003: 183-198) and Panieri et al. (2006: 116-122).

#### 3.1 The sound system

Cimbrian shares the main features of its sound system with the other varieties in the south-Bavarian group. In this chapter, I refer to the precise description of the synchronic phoneme system provided by Tyroller (2003: 29-86).

The main characteristics of the phoneme system of Lusérn Cimbrian are the High German consonant shift and the New High German diphthongization. As in the Bavarian and Swabian-Alemannic varieties, Cimbrian does not display the New High German monophthongization.

The vowel system is characterized by a quadripartite configuration that distinguishes between front, central, and back vowels. In addition, almost all vowels are quantitatively differentiated into long and short, as they are in Bavarian. However, unlike Bavarian, Cimbrian has maintained the vowel roundedness of Middle High German (MHG). According to Tyroller (2003: 33), the vowel inventory of Cimbrian is as follows:



*Fig. 4: The vowel inventory of Lusérn Cimbrian*

The highest level of phonemic distinction is represented by the vowels [i], [y], and [u], which act as phonemes: /i/, /y/, and /u/, with the allophones [i] and [u]. They all show an opposition between long and short, illustrated by means of the phonemes as follows (see Tyroller 2003: 55-56):

- (1) Phonemic distinction between /i/ and /i:/  
[biʃɛn]<sup>6</sup> versus [bi:sɛn] *bissan* 'to know' versus *bisan* 'meadows'
- (2) Phonemic distinction between /y/ and /y:/  
[myl] versus [my:l] *müll* 'mule' versus *mül* 'mill'
- (3) Phonemic distinction between /u/ and /u:/  
[kukɳ] versus [ky:kɳ] *kukkng* 'to peep' versus *kukkn* 'to cuckoo'

The second level includes the phonemes /e/, /ø/, and /o/, and their subphonemic variants /ə/ and /œ/. The distinctive opposition between long and short is illustrated based on /e/ (see 4) and /o/ (see 5) (see Tyroller 2003: 52-54):

- (4) Phonemic distinction between /e/ and /e:/  
[ɛft] versus [e:ft] *est* 'branches' versus *est* 'now'
- (5) Phonemic distinction between /o/ and /o:/  
[bol] versus [bo:l] *boll* 'wool' versus *bol* 'well'

At the third level, only /ɛ/ is a phoneme. The opposition between long and short is illustrated as follows (see Tyroller 2003: 52):

- (6) Phonemic distinction between /ɛ/ and /ɛ:/  
[kxɛɾn] versus [kxɛ:ɾn] *kbèrn* 'seed, stone' versus *kbern* 'to sweep'

The phoneme /a/ and its allophones represent the deepest level, which also shows a distinctive opposition in the vowel quantity (see Tyroller 2003: 51):

- (7) Phonemic distinction between /a/ and /a:/  
[naʃ] versus [na:s] *nazz* 'wet' versus *nas* 'nose'

The Cimbrian of Lusérn displays both rising and falling diphthongs (see Tyroller 2003: 35). The rising diphthongs can be traced back to the New High German diphthongization of the long MHG vowels /î/, /û/, and /iu/. In addition, they show the 'Verdumpfung'; that is, the change of the vowel /a/ to a sound between

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<sup>6</sup> I have used the symbol /ʃ/ to indicate the post-dental articulation of the coronal sibilant /s/ (see below).

/a/ and /o/ before nasal consonants. The variant series that result are the following (see Tyroller 2003: 33):

(a) Series without ‘*Verdumpfung*’: /ai/, /ay/, and /au/

- |     |          |                      |                     |
|-----|----------|----------------------|---------------------|
| (8) | [ba:ibe] | <i>baibe</i> ‘woman’ | (MHG <i>wîp</i> )   |
|     | [lay:te] | <i>laüt</i> ‘people’ | (MHG <i>liute</i> ) |
|     | [hau:ʃ]  | <i>haus</i> ‘house’  | (MHG <i>bûs</i> )   |

(b) Series with ‘*Verdumpfung*’ (a nasal follows): /ai/, /ay/, and /au/

- |     |          |                         |                     |
|-----|----------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| (9) | [sai:n]  | <i>soin</i> ‘to be’     | (MHG <i>sîn</i> )   |
|     | [nay:ne] | <i>noïne</i> ‘nine’     | (MHG <i>niun</i> )  |
|     | [lau:nə] | <i>loune</i> ‘listless’ | (MHG <i>lûnec</i> ) |

(c) Nasalized variants (elision of the nasal): /ɜi/, /ɜy/, and /ɜu/

- |      |         |                     |  |
|------|---------|---------------------|--|
| (10) | [bɜi:]  | <i>boi</i> ‘wine’   | (MHG <i>wîn</i> )                                    |
|      | [tsɜy:] | <i>zoü</i> ‘fences’ | (MHG <i>ziune</i> )                                  |
|      | [frɜum] | <i>froum</i> ‘plum’ | (MHG <i>pblume</i> , Old High German <i>pfruma</i> ) |

It is interesting to note that this phenomenon also affected Italian loan words; according to Gamillscheg (1912: 24), this suggests that the New High German diphthongization was likely to still be occurring at the time of the Cimbrian settlement:

(11) New High German diphthongization in borrowed words (see Tyroller 2003: 34)

- |            |   |                                   |
|------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| [bo'da:il] | <i>bodâil</i> ‘shovel’                        | (Italian <i>badile</i> )          |
| [pu'vɜi]   | <i>povòi</i> ‘quark’                          | (Regional Italian <i>povina</i> ) |
| [ka'mɜu]   | <i>kamou</i> ‘municipality, local government’ | (Italian <i>comune</i> )          |

The development of the falling diphthongs ([ɛɐ], [œɐ], and [ɔɐ], as well as [iɐ], [yeɐ], and [ueɐ]), is much more complicated. Similar to the south-Bavarian dialects, the first group resulted from the MHG long vowels /ê/ (see *snea* [ʃnɛ:] ‘snow’, MHG *snê*), /œ/ (see *öade* [œɛ:de] ‘uncultivated’, MHG *æde* ‘uncultivated’), and /ô/ (see *groaz* [grɔɛ:ʃ] ‘big, tall’, MHG *grôz*) with some interferences. For example, the word *eapar* [ɛɛ:pɛr] ‘clear of snow’ derives from the MHG *æber*, that is, from /æ/. Many words that contain [ɔɐ], such as *gloam* [glɔɛ:m] ‘to believe’ (MHG *glouben*) and *goaz* [gɔɛ:ʃ] ‘goat’ (MHG *geiz*) actually came from

the MHG /ou/ and /ei/. The second group, which includes the high falling diphthongs [iɐ], [yɐ], and [uɐ], is the result of the development from the MHG diphthongs /ie/ (see *diarn* [diɛ:rn] ‘girl’, MHG *dierne*), /üe/ (see *büatn* [hyɛ:tn] ‘to mind sb/sth’, MHG *büeten*), and /uo/ (see *gruabe* [gruɛ:be] ‘pit’, MHG *gruobe*), on one hand, and from the diphthongized MHG long vowels /ê/ and /œ/ before nasal consonants, such as *gian* [giɛ:n] ‘to go’ (MHG *gên*) and *schüa* [ʃy̥ɛ:] ‘beautiful’ (MHG *schœn*). The following table summarizes the diphthongs in Lusérn Cimbrian, according to Tyroller (2003: 35):

Table 1: Rising and falling diphthongs in Lusérn Cimbrian

rising diphthongs			
unrounded		rounded	
i		y	
e	↖	ø	↖ ↗
ɛ	ei ↖ ↗ oi	œ	↖ ↗ oy ou
a	ai au oi		ay au

falling diphthongs			
unrounded		rounded	
i	ie	y	ua
e	↘	ø	yə ↘
ɛ	ɛə	œ	↘ œə
a	↘ a		a ↘

The Cimbrian consonant system, as described by Tyroller (2003: 49), is represented in the table below, in which the phonetic characters in brackets indicate sounds that appear in Italian loan words:

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Table 2: The consonant inventory of Lusérn Cimbrian

		plosive	nasal	affricate	fricative	trill	lateral	semivowel
bilabial	v.	b			β			
	vl.	p	m					w
labiodental	v.			bf	v			
	vl.			pf	f			
dental/alveolar	v.	d			z			
	vl.	t	n		s	r	l	
retroflex	v.							
	vl.				ʂ			
palatoalveolar	v.			ɟʃ				
	vl.			tʃ	ʃ			
palatal	v.							
	vl.		(ɲ)				(ʎ)	j
velar	v.	g						
	vl.	k	ŋ	kx	x			
uvular					ʁ	ʀ		
glottal					h			

As noted in Table 2, although Tyroller (2003) stated that some Cimbrian obstruents displayed a complex “dental/alveolar” articulation, he did not acknowledge a phonematic opposition between a “rein dental” [mere dental] (Schweizer [1951-52] 2008: 250) articulation of the fricatives and a more alveolar one. However, Panieri et al. (2006) observed three different places of sibilant articulation (post-dental, alveolar, and post-alveolar/palatal), and proposed three different graphematic representations accordingly, namely <z>, <s>, and <sch> (see the examples in 12):

- (12) *grüazan* ‘to greet’ versus *rüasan* ‘to rummage’ versus *beschän* ‘to wash’  
*èzzan* ‘to eat’ versus *khüssan* ‘to kiss’ versus *èschan* ‘ashen’  
*i boaz* ‘I know’ versus *boas* ‘orphan’ versus *bisch* ‘wipe!’  
*mezz* ‘measure!’ versus *miss* ‘mass’ versus *misch* ‘mix!’  
*baz* ‘what’ versus *bas* ‘clod (of earth)’ versus *baschpulvar* ‘washing powder’  
*bizzan* ‘to know’ versus *bisan* ‘meadows’ versus *bischan* ‘to wipe’



Both Kranzmayer ([1923] 1981–85: 33) and Schweizer ([1951–52] 2008: 247–251, 318–331) ascribed the threefold system of Cimbrian sibilants to the evolution of the Germ. /t/ for [z] – usually written as <z> or <3> in OHG/MHG texts –, Germ. /s/ for [s] and Germ. /sk/ for [sch]. As is well known, OHG [3] converged later into [s], thus resolving the original tripartition in the opposition between an alveolar and a palatal articulation of the sibilants. Panieri et al.’s (2006) graphematic system was proposed in close connection to medieval German. Recently, Alber & Rabanus (2018) confirmed the phonematic distinction among the three articulation places of Cimbrian sibilants, albeit ascribing it less to the maintenance of the old tripartition and more to both the preservation and the revival of the original system due to the influence of contact with the Romance varieties.

### 3.2 Selected aspects of Cimbrian morphology

The morphological system of Cimbrian is only slightly influenced by Italian (see Tyroller 2003: 88). Despite the heavy lexical borrowing of Italian and Italo-romance words that conserve their original endings, such as *nevódo* ‘nephew’, *fada* ‘fairy’, and *djuditze* ‘judge’, the Cimbrian plural forms usually differ from the Italian (*nevón* versus the Regional Italian *nevodi* ‘nephews’, *fan* versus the Regional Italian *fade* ‘fairies’, and *djuditze* versus the Italian *giudici* ‘judges’), thus clearly indicating the morphological integration of the words; nor did these Italian endings ever become productive in Cimbrian.

With regard to the flectional morphology, the following morphemes for the formation of the plural of the substantives are still productive in Cimbrian:

(13) Morphemes for the formation of the plural forms of substantives:

- n        *dar konfî* ‘boundary’, *di vedar* ‘feather’: *di konfin*, *vedarn*;
- an       *dar djoch* ‘runner, skate’, *di burtz* ‘root’: *di djochan*, *burtzan*
- en       *dar mânn* ‘man’, *di diarn* ‘girl’: *di mânnen*, *diarnen*
- (d)ar    *’z vich* ‘cattle’, *’z kbinn* ‘child’, *’z mezzar*: *di vichar*, *kbindar*,  
              *mezzardar*
- e        *dar segretàrdjo* ‘secretary’, *di âmeda* ‘aunt’: *di segretàrdje*, *âmede*

The morphemes -en and -le (plural -la) are used for the formation of the feminine (see 14) and the diminutive forms (see 15), respectively; they are both still highly productive:

- (14) *dar arbatar* ‘worker’, *di arbataren* ‘female worker’;  
*dar bimmar* ‘grape-picker’, *di bimmaren* ‘female grape-picker’;  
*dar bruntlar* ‘a man who grouches incessantly’, *di bruntlaren* ‘a woman who grouches incessantly’;

- (15) *dar libar* 'book', *'z libarle* 'the small book';  
*di diarn* 'girl', *'z diarnle* 'the little girl';  
*'z baus* 'house', *'z baūsle* 'the small house'

Case morphemes in substantives do not occur in Lusérn Cimbrian, as case is typically marked by the different definite or indefinite articles in the singular form, with an evident syncretism of forms between the masculine dative and accusative (see Table 3):

Table 3: Declension of the definite and indefinite articles in Cimbrian

Case	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Nominative	<i>dar mǎnn / a mǎnn</i>	<i>dī diar / a diarn</i>	<i>'z khinn / a khinn</i>
Dative	<i>in mǎnn / inan mǎnn</i>	<i>dar diarn / inar diarn</i>	<i>in khinn / inan khinn</i>
Accusative	<i>in mǎnn / an mǎnn</i>	<i>dī diarn / a diarn</i>	<i>'z khinn / a khinn</i>

Despite the absence of case morphemes in present-day Cimbrian, some vestigial forms remain; for instance, traces of an ancient genitive flection (-s) in the fossilized, now only adverbial expressions such as *in tages* 'during the daytime between noon and the afternoon work' (see the German *untertags*), *az abas* 'in the evening', and *az morgas* 'in the morning' (see the German *abends* and *morgens*). Moreover, Bacher (1905: 180) pointed out that the morpheme -n in the following fossilized expressions also indicated a relic of a flection for the dative plural: *zo bāntn* 'in the hands' (for example, in the expression *nemmen zo bāntn* 'to tease'), *zo kbopfan* 'at the front end', and *zo vuasan* 'upright' (see *legn zo vuazan* 'to put something up'). The case morpheme -n for the dative plural also appears with substantives when their plural forms end with the liquids /l/ or /r/: *dī quintél* 'quintals' – *in quintéln*, *dī kbindar* 'children' – *in kbindarn*.

However, the strong declension of the adjective preserves the case system (see Table 4):

Table 4: Strong declension of the adjective in Cimbrian

Case	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Nominative	<b>-ar</b> <i>a guatar vatar</i> ‘a good father’	<b>-a</b> <i>a guata muatar</i> ‘a good mother’	<b>-z</b> <i>a guatz khinn</i> ‘a good child’
Dative	<b>-n</b> <i>vonan guatn father</i> ‘of a good father’	<b>-n</b> <i>vonaran guatn muatar</i> ‘of a good mother’	<b>-n</b> <i>vonaran guatn khinn</i> ‘of a good child’
Accusative	<b>-n</b> <i>vor a guatn father</i> ‘for a good father’	<b>-a</b> <i>vor a guata muatar</i> ‘for a good mother’	<b>-z</b> <i>vor a guatz khinn</i> ‘for a good child’

In the dative plural the case ending **-n** is also maintained: *pit saubarn lãilecharn* ‘with clean sheets’.

It is interesting that Cimbrian verbs display two morphological forms of the infinitive: the simple form represented by the allomorphs **-an** (see *graivan* ‘to touch’), **-en** (see *drenen* ‘to turn’) and **-n** (see *böarn* ‘to hear’), and the form **-a**, which occurs when the infinitive is syntactically selected by *zo* ‘to’ (see 16).

- (16) Dar hatt vorhoazt zo graiva / zo drena / zo höara  
 he has promised to touch / to turn / to hear  
 ‘He promised to touch / to turn / to hear.’

Tyroller (2003: 90) noted a connection between the infinitive form selected by *zo* and the so-called inflected infinitive in OHG (*-anne/-enne*) and MHG (*-ene*). Kolmer (2012: 141-148), however, explained the infinitive form opposition (*-a* versus *-an/-en/-n*) differently, as the functional differentiation of a variation that was originally only allomorphic.

In Lusérn Cimbrian, the indicative present tense conjugates as follows (see Tyroller 2003: 91):

Table 5: The conjugation of the indicative present tense in Lusérn Cimbrian

	singular	plural
1 <sup>st</sup> person	<b>-ø</b> <b>-e</b> [e]	<b>-n</b> [n] <b>-e-n</b> [ən]
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	<b>-st</b> [ʃt] <b>-e-st</b> [əʃt]	<b>-t</b> [t] <b>-e-t</b> [ət]
3 <sup>th</sup> person	<b>-t</b> [t] <b>-e-t</b> [ət]	<b>-n</b> [n] <b>-e-n</b> [ən]

Cimbrian also has a subjunctive mood. However, unlike German, it does not encode reported speech, but rather a wish, a hypothetical situation, or a possibility. Like English, it differs from the indicative present in the absence of the ending of the third person singular. The subjunctive is usually selected by non-factive verbs and introduced by the conjunction *az* ‘that’ (see 17), or used in final sentences, as in (18):

- (17) I bill    azz=ar    lirn    zo reda azpe biar  
 I want    that=er.CL learn.SUBJV to speak ‘as we (do)’  
 ‘I want him to learn to speak Cimbrian.’
- (18) ... zoa    azta    niamat stoal    ’z holtz  
 ... so that=da nobody steal.SUBJV the wood  
 ‘... so that nobody steals the firewood.’

A last special verbal form that deserves to be mentioned is the present participle **-an(t)e** which, in Cimbrian, has the functions of the Italian gerund (see 19 for a temporal sentence, 20 for a causal sentence, and 21 for a conditional one):

- (19) Gianante pa    balt,    hânn=e    gesek in has    (Panieri et al. 2006: 354)  
 going through wood, have=I.CL seen    the.ACC hare  
 ‘As I was walking through the woods, I saw the hare.’
- (20) Hâbante=de    bokhent    pinn=e kontént  
 having=you.ACC.CL run (into) am=I.CL happy  
 ‘I’m happy that I ran into you.’
- (21) Légante smaltz,    dar turt    khint linnar  
 putting dripping, the.NOM cake goes softer  
 ‘If one puts dripping in the cake, it gets softer.’

Derivational morphology in Lusérn Cimbrian displays a wide range of possibilities. The table below lists the morphemes that are still productive, with their subcategorization rules, according to Tyroller (2003: 183-198):

Table 6: Derivational morphemes in Lusérn Cimbrian

	Prefix	Suffix
Noun [X → N]	<p><b>ge-</b> (-a): [_N]: <i>geāmaza</i> ‘tingle’ <i>gehūnta</i> ‘tat’</p> <p>[_V]: <i>gebèzzra</i> ‘oozing pus’ <i>gehicha</i> ‘neighing’</p>	<p><b>-ar</b>: [_N]: <i>futschar</i> ‘botscher’ <i>vaschomar</i> ‘carnival jester’ <i>korschenzar</i> ‘pizza maker’ <i>Möknar</i> ‘Fersentaler [from the Fersina valley]’ <i>Slegar</i> ‘who comes from Slege / Asiago’</p> <p>[A_]: <i>narratar</i> ‘lunatic’ <i>surdatar</i> ‘deaf person’</p> <p>[V_]: <i>bruntlar</i> ‘grumbler’ <i>tchöttrar</i> ‘who talks stupidly or about futile things’</p> <p><b>-e</b>: [A_]: <i>berme</i> ‘warmth’ <i>khelte</i> ‘cold’ <i>ebene</i> ‘plain’</p> <p><b>-iar</b>: [_N]: <i>botegiar</i> ‘shopkeeper’ <i>inzeniar</i> ‘engineer’ <i>kassiar</i> ‘cashier’</p> <p><b>-om</b>: [V_]: <i>laigom</i> ‘loan’ (<i>in laigom</i> ‘on loan’) <i>zalom</i> ‘payment’ <i>roatom</i> ‘bill’ <i>auzlegom</i> ‘exhibition’ <i>innladom</i> ‘invitation’</p> <p>[A_]: <i>vo djūngom</i> ‘when I was jung’ <i>vo eltom</i> ‘when someone is old’ <i>vo natigom</i> ‘again’ <i>vo velom</i> ‘by mistake’</p>
Adjective [X → A]	<p><b>un-</b> (on-): [_A]: <i>ungekhennt</i> ‘unknown’ <i>unguat</i> ‘mean’</p>	<p><b>-ran</b> (-n, -en, -an): [_N]: <i>linnan</i> ‘made of linen’ <i>èschan</i> ‘ashy’ <i>patatan</i> ‘of potato’ <i>sboinarn</i> ‘of pork’</p> <p><b>-at</b>: [_N]: <i>müffat</i> ‘mouldy’ <i>kafèdat</i> ‘brown’ <i>quadrat</i> ‘square’ <i>binthauvat</i> ‘snow-blown’</p> <p><b>-e(g)</b>: [_N]: <i>liachte</i> ‘light’ <i>pöne</i> ‘even’</p> <p>[V_]: <i>slipfe</i> ‘slippery’</p> <p>[Italian A_]: <i>listessege</i> ‘equal’</p> <p><b>-isch</b> (-esch): [_N]: <i>huamesch</i> ‘domestic’ <i>lusérnesch</i> ‘of/from Lusérn’ <i>zimbrisch</i> ‘Cimbrian’</p>
Verb [X → V]	<p><b>â-</b>: [_V]: <i>âpèchan</i> ‘to glue on’ <i>âvorsan</i> ‘to require’</p> <p><b>abe-</b>: [_V]: <i>abevazzan</i> ‘to unload’ <i>abelirnen</i> ‘to train [sb]’</p>	<p><b>-àrn</b>: [Italian V_]: <i>asfaltàrn</i> ‘to pave’ <i>fodràrn</i> ‘to line sth [with sth]’</p> <p><b>-eg</b>: [A_]: <i>ōadegen</i> ‘to leave uncultivated’ <i>gerēdegen</i> ‘to straighten’</p>



<p><b>au-:</b> [_V]: <i>auroatn</i> ‘to number’  <i>auslapparn</i> ‘to lap up’</p> <p><b>auz-:</b> [_V]: <i>auzdarbékhan</i> ‘to wake up’  <i>auzgesbélln</i> ‘to go down’</p> <p><b>bo-:</b> [_V]: <i>bogram</i> ‘to bury’  <i>bokhemmen</i> ‘to meet’</p> <p>[_N]: <i>bolöcharn</i> ‘to punch holes’  <i>bonebl</i> ‘to be foggy’</p> <p>[_A]: <i>bohintarn</i> ‘to keep back’  <i>boschrovln</i> ‘to roughen’</p> <p><b>dar-:</b> [_V]: <i>darniezzan</i> ‘to get wet’  <i>dartüan</i> ‘to manage [to do sth]’</p> <p>[_A]: <i>darkhränkan</i> ‘to fall ill’  <i>darplintn</i> ‘to go blind’</p> <p><b>ge-:</b> [_V]: <i>gehöarn</i> ‘to belong, to be  able to endure’  <i>gesbélln</i> ‘to swell’</p> <p><b>hintar-:</b> [_V]: <i>hintarhalten</i> ‘to with-  hold’  <i>hintarlazzan</i> ‘to be-  queath’</p> <p><b>in-:</b> [_V]: <i>intrükhan</i> ‘to ruminate’  <i>inslävan</i> ‘to fall asleep, to put  [sb] to sleep’</p> <p><b>inn-:</b> [_V]: <i>innbaing</i> ‘to consecrate’  <i>innkhaichan</i> ‘incarcerate’</p> <p><b>nā-:</b> [_V]: <i>nālemparn</i> ‘to molest’  <i>nāstian</i> ‘to take care of’</p> <p><b>nidar-:</b> [_V]: <i>nidargem</i> ‘to administer’  <i>nidarkratzan</i> ‘to grate’</p> <p><b>obar-:</b> [_V]: <i>obarleng</i> ‘to cover with’  <i>obarkhön</i> ‘to speak ill of  [sb]’</p> <p><b>un- (on-):</b> [_V]: <i>onsinnen</i> ‘to rave’  <i>onbitarn</i> ‘to storm’</p> <p><b>vor-:</b> [_V]: <i>vordrenen</i> ‘to twist [sth]’  <i>vorkhöchan</i> ‘to boil away’</p> <p><b>vort-:</b> [_V]: <i>vortdjukhan</i> ‘to throw  away’  <i>vortsbentzan</i> ‘to dismiss’</p> <p><b>vür-:</b> [_V]: <i>vürschupfan</i> ‘to push for-  ward’</p>	<p>[N_]: <i>klutzege</i> ‘to hiccup’  <i>kraützege</i> ‘to crucify’</p>
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	<i>vürvängen</i> ‘to take up’  <b>zor-</b> : [_V]: <i>zormaln</i> ‘to grind [sth]’ <i>zormachan</i> ‘to unravel [sth]’  <b>zuar-</b> : [_V]: <i>zuarbotonàrn</i> ‘to button up’ <i>zuarlesan</i> ‘to collect’	
Adverb [X→Adv]		<b>-bart</b> : [Adv_]: <i>abebart</i> ‘downward [in the direction of the speaker]’ <i>hintarbart</i> ‘rearward’

With regard to compositional morphology, in Cimbrian, compounds with prepositional combinations are in the majority (as in *tüar von baus* ‘front door’, *stiage vo holtz* ‘wooden stair’, and *bea in khopf* ‘headache’). Nevertheless, evidence indicates that the German-like typology in which the head of the compound (*Grundwort*) follows the determinative element has also been possible (as in *öpfpuam* ‘apple tree’, *abasstèrn* ‘the evening star’, and *pultnlukh* ‘polenta cutting board’), and is still quite productive (as in *kamouhaus* ‘town hall’, and *trippbürst* ‘trip sausage’). There have been some very recent attempts to improve this form of compounding, particularly in the formation of neologisms related to public administration (for example, *kamoutafl* ‘official noticeboard of the municipality’, *toatzertifikat* ‘death certificate’, and *büro vor di pürgardianste* ‘register office’). Of interest, Cimbrian also has a genuine compounding typology that makes use of the attributive adjective instead of the prepositional genitive: *boatzamel* ‘wheat flour’, *sürchamel* ‘cornflour’, and *patâtana pult* ‘polenta [made] of potatoes’ (see Tyroller 2003: 196) and reverts to the OHG/MHG suffix *-in* (as in *gulđin* ‘golden’ or *weitzin* ‘made of wheat’; see Panieri et al. 2006: 131, footnote 41).

### 3.3 Lexicon and semantics

In the lexical domain, we find two interesting – and to some degree contrasting – phenomena: On one hand, archaic features connecting Cimbrian to its German(ic) roots are apparent and, on the other, the strongest and most evident influence of the surrounding Romance languages is revealed. With regard to the former, consider the following extremely conservative characteristics of the Cimbrian lexicon: *khön* ‘to say’, see Got. *quiþan*, OHG *quēdan*, late old Bavarian (late eleventh – twelfth centuries) *choden* ‘to say’; *öbe* ‘sheep’, see the Germanic *\*awi-*, OHG *ou*, *ewi* ‘ewe’; *taidn* ‘to suckle’, see the Germanic *\*dējan*, OHG *tāen* ‘to suckle’.

With regard to the second phenomenon, Gamillscheg (1912) reconstructed four different stages of lexical borrowing in the history of Lusérn Cimbrian on the basis of the phonological structure of Romance loan words that had found their way into Cimbrian.

1) In the first stage, the Romance loan words imported from the contact language into Cimbrian displayed the main properties of an early phase in the evolution of the surrounding Romance language from Latin. Gamillscheg (1912) labeled this the Rhaeto-Romance phase due to its main characteristics. These words may conserve the nexus 'consonant + l': in the toponym *Plaif* 'Calceranica' (see the Latin *plēbe*, 'the village with the parish church' versus it. *pieve*) or in the loan words *glér* 'gravel' (see the Latin *glarea* versus it. *ghiaia*), for example. According to Gamillscheg (1912), another feature of this early stage of borrowing, which – in the Romance varieties – displayed the characteristics of a transition phase from Latin, was the diphthongization of the long vowel *ē* > *ai*, as in the toponyms *Folgràit* 'Folgaria' (see the Latin *filicarētum* 'the place of the ferns') or *Rovràit* 'Rovereto' (see the Latin *roburētum* 'oak forest'), and in the old loan words *tschoi* (with nasalization from *tschai*) 'evening meal' (see the Italian *cena* with the same meaning). The same is true for the long *ō* > *ou*; for example, in the Cimbrian village name of 'Lavarone' *Lavrou*, or in the terms *kantòu* 'cant' (see the Regional Italian *canton* with the same meaning), and in the old term *ronkòu* 'billhook' (see the Italian *roncola*, and the Latin *runcāre* 'weed, thin out'), which designates a tool used by the immigrants to clear the land for their first farms. Furthermore, the elision of the final vowel is an indication of this first stage of borrowing: Consider, for example, *manestar* 'soup' (see the Italian *minestra*) or *polestar* 'chicken' (see the Regional Italian *polastro*; see Gamillscheg 1912: 33-34). This stage corresponds almost exactly to the period during which the Cimbrian immigrants arrived in the thirteenth century.

2) In the second stage, a new wave – originating in the Lombard Plain in the southwest – gained influence and established a new language form in the Romance varieties surrounding the Cimbrian enclaves (see Gamillscheg 1912: 52-53). This trend can be identified in the stratum of borrowed words that Cimbrian adopted during this period. Whereas the vowel *u* had remained unchanged from the Latin *ū*, under the Lombard influence it now shifted from *ū* to *ü*, as in *baül* 'chest' (see the Italian *baule*), *distrüdjarn* 'to destroy' (see the Italian *distruggere*), *rüge* 'caterpillar' (see the Latin *erūca*), and many other examples. The palatal *a* changed to *e* before palatals, as in the borrowed word *gelbar* 'wooden shoe with a leather sole' (see the Regional Italian *galmara*). During the same period, the vowel *a* in the suffix *-arius* / *-aria* underwent a similar development; consider *kornér* 'a sack for the ricotta cheese that was fixed on a circular wooden framework and in which the raw whey was poured into' (see the Regional Italian *cròna* 'platband', see Latin *\*coronaria*), or *zikeler* 'discharge pipe' (see the Regional Italian *seciar* / *secèr* 'sink (with pails)', and the Latin *\*sitularium*). With regard to the unit 'consonant + l' in this period, the vowel *a* was usually inserted between the consonant and the *l*, as in *sbalékat* 'lopsided' (see the Regional Italian *(s)balengo* 'distorted').

3) The third stratum clearly shows the influence of the Venetian variety, contemporaneous with the political and economic rise of the Republic of Venice (see Gamillscheg 1912: 53). The Romance words transferred into Cimbrian during this period do not show any sign of the Lombard *ũ*, but rather of the Venetian *ũ*, as in *bruska* ‘lot’ in the expression *ziagn di bruske* ‘to draw lots’, or in the words *dūbio* ‘doubt’, *lūna* ‘mood’, and *ũso* ‘custom’. Words with the suffix *-arius/-aria* no longer enter Cimbrian with the form *-er*, as they did under the Lombard influence, but with *-ar*, as in the following examples: *febràro* ‘February’ (see the Latin *februarius*), *mortar* ‘mortar’ (see the Regional Italian *mortaro* and the Latin *mortarium*) and *pontar* ‘rise’ (see the Regional Italian *pontara*, and the Latin *\*punctuaria*). The unit ‘consonant + l’ can now be seen in the Venetian correspondence of the original unit *kl*; that is, *č*, as in *kanotschàl* ‘telescope’ (see the Regional Italian *canociale*), *spètscho* ‘mirror’ (see the Latin *speculum*), and *retschbì* ‘earring’ (see the Latin *\*auriculinum*).

4) The last level of loan words, according to Gamillscheg (1912: 53), included words that show the influence of the Romance variety of the city of Trento. For example, this is the case when – with regard to the unit ‘consonant + l’ – Romance words that again contained this consonant group were borrowed, such as *flota* ‘fleet’ (see the Italian *flotta*) or *plaka* ‘trace of a stroke on the trunk, bald head’ (see the Regional Italian *placa* ‘bald head’), or the typically Italian palatalization of the *l*, as in the borrowed words *fiòkk* ‘tassel’ (see the Latin *floccus*) or *piatzer* ‘favor’ (see the Regional Italian *piazer*).

Cimbrian has also borrowed from Standard German, although to a much lesser extent. Consider the following: *augel* ‘tax’ (see the Austria German *Aufgeld* with the same meaning), *pürgarmaistar* ‘mayor’ (see the German *Bürgermeister*), *bichte* ‘important’ (see the German *wichtig*), *aisenpân* ‘railway’ (see the German *Eisenbahn*) and *luft* ‘air’ (see the German *Luft*).

#### 4. Selected syntax phenomena in the present research

In this chapter, I focus on four main areas of syntax research in which Cimbrian has been taken into account for the theoretical discussion:

- a) Language change in the tension between conservatism and innovation (see § 4.1);
- b) Linguistic variation (see § 4.2);
- c) Language contact and contact-induced language change (see § 4.3); and
- d) Theory of grammar (see § 4.4).

##### 4.1 Language change in the tension between the preservation of conservative features and innovation: The development of a new subject expletive

Focusing on the syntax of the subject, Cimbrian clearly differs from the Romance

varieties, as it does not allow for the subject to be phonologically unexpressed. The most recent normative grammar of Lusérn Cimbrian refers to this feature as follows: “Im Zimbrischen wird das Subjekt immer ausdrücklich genannt” (Panieri et al. 2006: 285) (“In Cimbrian [of Lusérn] the subject always has to be explicitly expressed”)<sup>7</sup>. In more formal terms, this means that Cimbrian realizes a negative value of the so-called *pro-drop* parameter (Chomsky 1981, Rizzi 1982 and, for a recent overview, Biberauer et al. 2010; see also the literature in Cognola & Casalicchio 2018), since it does not allow a referential *pro*, thus behaving similarly to just like a non-*pro-drop* language like English (see 22a and 23a versus 22b and 23b; also Bidese & Tomaselli 2018: 57, from whom the following examples were taken):

- (22) a. Haüt izz=**ar** gânt ka schual  
           today is=**he.cl** gone to school  
           ‘Today, he went to school.’  
       b. \*Haüt iz gânt ka schual  
           today is gone to school
- (23) a. (I sperar) azz=**ar** sai gânt ka schual haüt  
           (I hope) that=**he.cl** are,**SUBJV** gone to school today  
           ‘I hope he went to school today.’  
       b. \*(I sperar) azz sai gânt ka schual haüt  
           (I hope) that are,**SUBJV** gone to school today

Although Cimbrian does not display the ‘core’ phenomenon of the *pro-drop*, it allows one of its correlates, the so-called ‘free’ inversion of the nominal subject (the sequence VP-DP; see Chomsky 1981 and Rizzi 1982), in which the DP-subject follows the entire verbal complex remaining in a low position in the sentence structure; this is also typical of Italian (see 24a and its Cimbrian counterpart 24b):

- (24) a. Oggi è arrivato a Luserna il nonno (Italian)  
           today is arrived to Luserna the grandpa  
           ‘Today, grandpa arrived in Luserna.’  
       b. Haüt iz=**ta** khent atz Lusérn dar nono (Cimbrian)  
           today is=**da.cl** arrived at Lusern the,**NOM** grandpa

Unlike in English, no specific restrictions depend on either the ‘definiteness effect’ or specific verbal classes in Cimbrian. For example, the subject can also

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<sup>7</sup> My translation: EB.



occur with focalized DPs, as in (25a) with a new information focus, or as in (25b) with a contrastive focus. The crucial condition for Cimbrian sentences is that the sequence VP – DP is only possible with the co-occurrence of the subject expletive *-da/-ta* encliticized onto the finite verb (see Bidese & Tomaselli 2018: 58):

- (25) a. Gestarn in balt hatt=\*(ta) gesek in has *DI DIARN*  
 yesterday in-the forest has=da.CL seen the.ACC hare the.NOM girl  
 ‘Yesterday, it was the girl that saw the hare in the forest.’  
 b. Gestarn in balt hatt=\*(ta) gesek *DI DIARN* in has  
 (nèt dar pua)  
 yesterday in-the forest has=da.CL seen the.NOM girl the.ACC hare  
 (not the boy)  
 ‘Yesterday, it was the girl that saw the hare in the forest (and not the boy).’

Moreover, *-da* cannot act as an impersonal (quasi-argumental) subject like ‘z’ it’ with meteorological verbs (see 26) or as a correlate of an extraposed subject clause (see 27); this shows that *-da* never occurs alone:

- (26) a. \*Pan bintar snaibet=(t)a  
 in-the winter snows=da.CL  
 a.’ Pan bintar snaibet=z  
 in-the winter snows=it  
 ‘Usually, it snows in winter.’  
 b. \*Haüt hatt=(t)a gesnibet  
 today has=da.CL snowed  
 b.’ Haüt hatt=z gesnibet  
 today has=it snowed  
 ‘Today, it snowed.’  
 (27) a. \*In a boch bart=(t)a soin hoatar [*ke dar dokhtor kbint nèt*]  
 in a week will=da.CL be clear that the.NOM doctor comes not  
 a.’ In a boch bart=z soin hoatar [*ke dar dokhtor kbint nèt*]  
 in a week will=it.CL be clear that the.NOM doctor comes not  
 ‘Next week it will be clear that the physician will not arrive.’

Crucially, the syntax of *-da* always requires co-occurrence with a non-raised DP-subject. In this regard, compare the sentence in (28a) in which the DP-subject is in a pre-verbal position with (28b), which shows a post-verbal subject. While the presence of *-da* would definitely degrade the grammaticality of the sentence

in the former case, *-da* is obligatory in the latter:

- (28) a. Haüt *dar*      *nono*      *khint*=(*\*ta*)    atz Lusérn  
           today the.NOM    grandpa    arrives      at Luserna  
           ‘Today, grandpa will arrive in Luserna.’  
       b. Haüt *khint*=(*\*ta*)      atz Lusérn    *dar*      *nono*  
           today arrives=*da*.CL    at Lusern    the.NOM grandpa

In embedded clauses, the particle *-da* is also mandatory, regardless of whether the DP-subject is in a pre- or a post-verbal position, thus confirming that the occurrence of this expletive element is structurally required every time the DP-subject remains in a low position in the sentence; that is, in the vP-projection. This occurs in embedded sentences introduced by the complementizer *az* ‘that’ (see 29), with a restrictive relative clause introduced by the relative particle *bo* (see 30), and with an indirect interrogative selected by *be/bi* ‘whether’ (see 31):

- (29) I bill    *az*=(*t*)a      [*dar*    *maurar*] baizar      di schual    [*dar maurar*]  
           haüt<sup>8</sup>  
           I want that=*da*.CL the.NOM worker    whites.SUBJV the school the.NOM worker  
           today  
           ‘I want the construction worker to whiten the school building today.’  
  
 (30) ‘Z proat, *bo*=*da*      hatt gekhoaft    *dar*      *nono*,    iz müffat  
           the bread that= *da*.CL has bought    the.NOM grandpa is moldy  
           ‘The bread that grandpa bought is moldy.’  
  
 (31) I vors=*mar*,    zega    *bi*=*da*      [*dar maurar*]    baizart    di schual  
           [*dar maurar*] haüt  
           I ask=*me*.DAT to-see    whether=*da*.CL the.NOM worker    whites    the school  
           the.NOM worker today  
           ‘I wonder whether the construction worker will whiten the school building  
           today.’

There are several restrictions on and further details about the use of *-da*, which I am now setting aside for the purpose of this contribution<sup>9</sup>. In fact, this aspect of

8 The curly brackets indicate possible oscillation between the two positions in the sentence.

9 For an analysis of this phenomenon, see Bidese, Padovan & Tomaselli (2012), Bidese & Tomaselli (2018), and Bidese, Padovan & Tomaselli (2020).

Cimbrian syntax is still being investigated. In brief, the hypothesis based on which we are working<sup>10</sup> is that *-da* acts as a subject expletive (see also Kolmer 2005a) for an agreement relationship between the probing head (= C or Fin in a split COMP configuration) and the goal, that is, the non-raised DP-subject, resulting in the assignment of the nominative to the latter, which is structurally too low to absorb case by itself. This holds even when the DP-subject is superficially very close to the probing head, as in (29) or (31) (see Bidese, Padovan & Tomaselli 2020 for a detailed analysis).

Irrespective of how this phenomenon should be interpreted, the key point here is that it clearly shows that Cimbrian syntax has both retained some conservative features that are in continuity with its German(ic) origin (the negative value of the *pro-drop* parameter), while also developing an aspect of the *pro-drop* parameter ('free subject inversion') that is similar to the contact language, but – and this is the crucial point – in a way (with the subject expletive *-da*) that represents genuine innovation with regard to both other German(ic) varieties and to the contact language itself.

## 4.2 Linguistic variation

Another important aspect that researchers of Cimbrian have pointed out is that of linguistic variation; in other words, the structured distribution of variants within a system. Some investigations have shown that the variability of forms or of word order patterns depends not on sociolinguistic factors (such as orality or low standardization), but on a highly specialized distribution strategy according to which a particular form corresponds to a specific syntactic position<sup>11</sup>. The paradigm of personal pronouns can be taken as an example of this (see Bidese 2008, 2011; Kolmer 2012: Chapter 3).

At the morphological level, Lusérn Cimbrian displays a three-way system of personal subject pronouns, which – according to Weiß' (2015) classification – can be distinguished in the following forms: a) full; b) reduced; and c) clitic:

10 For different, although not fully incompatible, approaches, see also Grewendorf & Poletto (2015) and Cognola & Hinterhölzl (2020).

11 Studies of Möcheno have obtained the same results with regard to both the OV/VO word pattern and the pronominal system (see Cognola 2013a, 2013b; Cognola & Bidese 2016), as well as regarding phonological patterns (see Alber & Meneguzzo 2016).

Table 7: personal subject pronouns in Lusérn Cimbrian

	full forms	reduced forms	clitic forms
1. Sg.	<b>i</b> <sup>1</sup> /i:/	<b>i</b> /i/	<b>-e</b> /=-ə/
2. Sg.	<b>du</b> /du:/	<b>du</b> /do/	<b>-do</b> /=-dɔ/
3. Sg. Masc.	<b>er</b> /ɛ:r/	<b>dar</b> /dɛr/	<b>-ar</b> /=-ɛr/
3. Sg. Fem.	<b>si</b> /si:/	<b>si / di</b> <sup>2</sup> /si/ /di/	<b>-se</b> /=-sə/
3. Sg. Neut.	<b>iz</b>	<b>'z</b>	<b>-z</b>
1. Pl.	<b>biar / berândre</b> /bigr/ /ber'andrə/	<b>bar</b> /bɛr/	<b>-bar</b> /=-bɛr/
2. Pl.	<b>iar / erândre</b> /igr/ /ɛr'andrə/	<b>dar</b> /dɛr/	<b>-ar</b> /=-ɛr/
3. Pl.	<b>se / seândre</b> /se:/ /sə'andrə/	<b>sa / da</b> /sɛ/ /dɛ/	<b>-sa</b> /=-sɛ/

<sup>1</sup> For the orthographic form, I follow Panieri et al. (2006: 168-170), for the IPA representation (in brackets) I refer to Kolmer (2012: 81).

<sup>2</sup> The form *di* for the III. Sg. Fem. shows up in neither Panieri et al. (2016) nor Kolmer (2012). However, it is reported by many speakers as a variant of *si*.

Full forms express strong (or stressed) pronouns and must be realized in a syntactic position in which they receive a marked or focused interpretation. This is the case when they are pre-verbal, irrespective of whether they are adjacent to the finite verb (see 32a) or separated by another phrase (see 32b):

- (32) a. Haüt *er* *iz* gânt ka schual  
today he.FULL is gone to school  
b. *Er* haüt *iz* gânt ka schual  
he.FULL today is gone to school  
‘Today, he went to school.’

Full forms may also appear post-verbally; for example, isolated in a right dislocation (see 33a) or with a focus particle (see 33b). In both cases, they must be doubled by a clitic pronoun in the *Wackernagelposition*:

- (33) a. Haüt *iz=ar* gânt ka schual, *er*  
today is=he.CL gone to school he.FULL  
‘It was he who went to school today.’

- b. Haüt iz=ar gânt er o ka schual  
 today is=he.CL gone he.FULL too to school  
 'He, too, went to school today.'

Reduced forms must only be realized in a pre-verbal position immediately to the left of the finite verb; that is, in the pre-field, and, crucially, without any other constituents before or after them (see 34a to 34b and 34c):

- (34) a. *Dar* iz gânt ka schual  
           he.RED is gone to school  
           'He went to school today.'
- b. \*Haüt *dar* iz gânt ka schual  
           today he.RED is gone to school
- c. \**Dar* haüt iz gânt ka schual  
           today he.RED is gone to school

The syntactic position of clitic forms is the *Wackernagelposition* at the left edge of the middle field, where the pronouns encliticize onto the finite verb or the subordinate conjunction (see 35a and 35b):

- (35) a. Haüt izz=*ar* gânt ka schual  
           today is=he.CL gone to school  
           'He went to school today.'
- b. (I sperar) azz=*ar* sai gânt ka schual haüt<sup>12</sup>  
           (I hope) that=he.CL is.SUBJV gone to school today  
           'I hope he went to school today.'

12 Notice that, if the subordinate conjunction ends with a vowel or with the liquids /l/ and /r/, the consonant /d/ is interposed between this vowel and that of the pronoun in order to avoid a hiatus (see i, ii, and iii) (Tyroller 2003; Kolmer 2012). This should not be confused with the reduced pronominal form *dar*:

- (i) 'Z proat bo=d=*ar* hatt khoaft iz müffat  
       the bread that=HA=he.CL has bought is moldy [HA = hiatus avoidance]  
       'The bread he bought is moldy.'
- (ii) Bal=d=*ar* iz khent sai=bar vortgânt  
       when=HA=he.CL is arrived are=we.CL away-gone  
       'We left as soon as he arrived.'
- (iii) Vor=d=*ar* iz khent sai=bar vortgânt  
       before=HA=he.CL is arrived are=we.CL away-gone  
       'We left before he arrived.'

In summary, the use of subject pronominal forms in Cimbrian follows a sophisticated internal distribution system according to which every form is allowed for a specific syntactic position. From an interlinguistic perspective, it is noteworthy that Cimbrian shows a perfect correspondence between syntactic position and morphological form. In fact, the tripartite syntactic distinction is also found in the German dialects (see Weiß 2015: 84); however, at the morphological level, most (if not all) dialects display a two-way distinction, having only two pronominal forms. With regard to this, Weiß (2015) proposed the following typological classification:

- (i) 'Distinct clitic' dialects, such as Bavarian (see 36), which show a distinction between clitic (in the *Wackernagelposition*) and non-clitic forms (in the pre-field); and
- (ii) 'distinct reduced form' dialects, such as Central Hessian (see 37), that distinguish between full (in the pre-field) and reduced forms (in the pre-field and in the *Wackernagelposition*):

- (36) a. Gesdan    han'*e*'da'n    scho    zrugg    geem    (Bavarian, Weiß 2015: 80)  
          Yesterday have=I=you.DAT=it    already    back    given  
       b. I    han'*da*'n                gesdan    scho    zrugg    geem  
          I    have=you.DAT=it    yesterday    already    back    given  
       c. Dia        han'*e*'n    doch    gesdan    scho    zrugg    geem  
          YOU.DAT    have=I=it    but    yesterday    already    back    given  
          'I already gave it back to you yesterday.'

- (37) a. *SÄI*    singd unn daazd de gannse Doag    (Central Hessian, Weiß 2015: 80)  
          SHE sings and dances the whole day  
       b. *Se*    singd unn daazd de gannse Doag  
          she    sings and dances the whole day  
       c. Dai    Kist    hodd*se* de Inge gegäwwe  
          Your box    has=she the Inge given  
          'She gave your box to Inge.'

Unlike the two-way morphological distinction of the German dialects, Cimbrian shows a tendency toward a clearer differentiation of form in all three syntactic contexts:

- (i) Pre-field together with other constituents;
- (ii) pre-field alone; and
- (iii) *Wackernagelposition*.

Typologically, this special status of Cimbrian with regard to the pre-field position

is clearly linked to Cimbrian's particular instantiation of Verb Second (V2), which is not linearly restricted to one constituent before the finite verb, as will be shown in §4.4. The process of form differentiation has been favored by the fact that more than one position is available at the left periphery of the clause.

### 4.3 Contact-induced language change

Language contact, and contact-induced grammar change in particular, are currently of great interest in linguistics<sup>13</sup>. In the past, minority languages were often examined from the perspective of their skewed grammatical phenomena, considered to be abnormal due to development caused by language contact. Muysken (2013: 271) addressed the heart of the issue:

Odd results of language contact were brought in as trophies to be shown to incredulous colleagues, just as in the era of European colonial expansion odd objects, preserved plants, sea shells, and stuffed animals were brought back to be shown to friends and business relations.

In fact, recent research has shown that contact varieties are certainly not exceptional – or even unnaturally developed – languages (see DeGraff 2005 for creole and Corrigan 2010: 108), and that their image as items for a *Raritätenkabinett* must be abandoned (see Muysken 2013: 271). Work on Lusérn Cimbrian, as well as on the varieties on the verge of disappearance, such as those of the Seven and Thirteen Municipalities (cf. §1), has obtained the same results: The diachronic development of these languages with regard to single syntactic phenomena has been shown to be anything but exceptional (see Poletto & Tomaselli 2004). Moreover, research has pointed out that minority languages, such as the Cimbrian varieties, provide the ideal environment for the investigation of language variation and change, since they provide evidence of these phenomena and processes in condensed, accelerated forms (see Padovan et al. 2016). On one hand, isolation both strengthens the preservation of conservative features and accelerates the development of new ones. On the other hand, language contact, particularly the fact that minority languages usually have to integrate two linguistic sources, allows us to approach syntactic phenomena from a perspective that is different and theoretically more complex and insightful than a mere language-internal view of the phenomena.

Thus, the important question for language contact is not which features – at the E-language level<sup>14</sup> – are similar to Italian and the Italo-romance dialects, and which therefore may have been induced by the influence of these surrounding

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13 See, among many others, Hickey (2010: 1) or Schrijver (2014: 1).



varieties, but rather which language-internal processes – at the I-language level – govern the combination of features that come from two different language sources<sup>15</sup>. An example in Cimbrian is the integration of the complementizer *ke* ‘that’, borrowed from the Italian. Remember that the borrowing of functional elements such as subordinating conjunctions is a sign of the strong influence of the Italo-romance varieties, since the fact that they belong to a closed class of structural elements makes them less easy to integrate into the grammar of the receiving language (see Moravcsik 1978 and, more recently, Winford 2010: 176). Furthermore, according to Muysken (1981), who proposed an implicational hierarchy of the borrowability of structural elements, subordinating conjunctions are the most resistant to transfer.

As both traditional grammar descriptions (Tyroller 2003, Panieri et al. 2006) and formal studies have pointed out<sup>16</sup>, the syntax of declarative subordination in Cimbrian is structured by two different complementizers, *az* and *ke* (both meaning ‘that’), each of which is selected by different verbs in the main clause and triggers a specific, non-interchangeable word order pattern (see 38 versus 39). In fact, in sentences introduced by *az*, the negation usually appears pre-verbally (see 38), whereas in those introduced by *ke*, it is only post-verbal (see 39). Moreover, personal pronouns are always realized as clitics to *az* (see 38), whereas *ke* never hosts a clitic form (see 39); in this case, the subject pronoun must display the reduced (or the full) form (see §4.2 above):

- (38) I speràr *azz=ar nèt gea ka Roma mòrng* (COMP=CL – NEG VFNT)  
 I hope that=er.CL not go.SUBJV to Rome tomorrow  
 ‘I hope that he will not go to Rome tomorrow.’

14 I refer here to the well-known distinction between E- and I-language introduced by Chomsky (1986). The concept of I-language defines the language knowledge that allows every speaker of a given natural language to produce and understand sentences in this language. It is innate, internal, and intentional; that is, governed by rules that operate on abstract representations (see also Isac & Reiss 2008: 14). It represents a mental property of the mind/brain of the speaker; the theory about this knowledge is the grammar of a specific language, which ‘explains’ a person’s capacity to produce an infinite number of sentences. It is distinguished from the E(xternal)-language, which defines grammar as the description and cataloguing of the external, directly observable elements of a given natural language.

15 For the approach to language contact from the I-language perspective, see Aboh (2015).

16 See Grewendorf & Poletto (2009, 2011), Padovan (2011), Kolmer (2012), Bidese, Padovan & Tomaselli (2012, 2014), and Bidese & Tomaselli (2016).

- (39) I boaz *ke dar geat nèt ka Roma mòrng* (COMP PRON – V<sub>FINT</sub> NEG)  
 I know, that he<sub>RED</sub> goes not to Rome tomorrow  
 ‘I hope that he will not go to Rome tomorrow.’

It is also clear that *az* selects the subjunctive mood in the embedded clause, while *ke* selects the indicative. A last difference concerns the selecting verbs in the main clause: According to Padovan (2011), *az* acts as a kind of ‘modal complementizer’ since it is usually selected by non-factive (volitional) verbs such as *bölln* ‘to want’ and non-assertive (affective) verbs such as *speràrn* ‘to hope’, or by negative forms such as *nèt gloam* ‘not believe’ and *nèt vorstian* ‘not understand’, as well as by adjectives used as a predicative to introduce a completive clause, such as *’z iz schümme / bichte az* ‘it is beautiful / important, that + subjunctive’. On the other hand, *ke* is usually selected by assertive verbs such as *kbôn* ‘to say’ or *bizzan* ‘to know’, perceptive verbs such as *seng* ‘to see’, and weak assertive ones such as *pensàrn* ‘to think’ (see also Bidese 2017).

However, although it is easy to trace the Cimbrian *ke* back to the Italian declarative complementizer *che* ‘that’, it is more difficult to identify that the word order pattern of the sentence introduced by *ke* is, in fact, different from that selected by *az*, and that it does not simply correspond to the Italian word order pattern, but rather to that of Cimbrian main clauses. Comparing (39), here repeated as (40b), to the main clause in (40a) reveals no differences with regard to the word order pattern:

- (40) a. *Dar geat nèt ka Roma mòrng* (V<sub>FINT</sub> NEG)  
 he goes not to Rome tomorrow  
 ‘He will not go to Rome tomorrow.’  
 b. I boaz *ke [dar geat nèt ka Roma mòrng]* (V<sub>FINT</sub> NEG)  
 I know, that he goes not to Rome tomorrow  
 ‘I hope that he will not go to Rome tomorrow.’

The same is also true when the subject inverts with the finite verb due to the topicalization of the adverbial phrase, as in (41):

- (41) a. *Mòrng geat=ar nèt ka Roma* (V<sub>FINT</sub> NEG)  
 tomorrow goes=he<sub>CL</sub> not to Rome  
 ‘Tomorrow, he will not go to Rome.’  
 b. I boaz *ke [mòrng geat=ar nèt ka Roma]* (V<sub>FINT</sub> NEG)  
 I know, that tomorrow goes=he<sub>CL</sub> not to Rome  
 ‘I know that he will not go to Rome tomorrow.’

Here we see that, even when a functional element such as *ke* is borrowed, there is no transfer of structural patterns; in fact, the word order pattern of the sentence introduced by *ke* is Cimbrian, and not Italian (see the post-verbal position of the negation and the enclisis of the subject clitic onto the finite verb in 41). The fact that *ke* does not simply reproduce the word order pattern triggered by *az* is further confirmation of the validity of our analysis: *ke* cannot replace *az* because it is not endowed with the same selecting properties (clitic hosting, asymmetric word order, and subjective mood). It is borrowed as an inert element and inserted at the very top of the sentence; in other words, in an unintegrated position. This is borne out by the fact that there is space for a complete main sentence after the *ke*, and the indicative mood, which can be considered a type of ‘default’, is used in the embedded sentence. Moreover, there are other (autochthonous) subordinating conjunctions that select the same word order pattern as in main clauses; for example, *umbrómm* ‘because / why’ (see 42)<sup>17</sup>:

- (42) a. I pin gerift      pazaitn,      **umbrómm** *i hân*      *nèt* vorlórt di koràra  
(VFNT NEG)  
 I am arrived on-time, because      I have not missed the bus  
 ‘I arrived on time, because I did not miss the bus.’  
 b. I vors=mar      **umbrómm** *dar iz nèt* khent pazaitn      (VFNT NEG)  
 I ask=(to)me.cl. why      he is not come on-time  
 ‘I wonder why he did not come on time.’

This seems to suggest that the word order pattern triggered by *ke* represents an internal development path of Cimbrian syntax that dismisses the asymmetric word order represented by *az* (see 38) and extends the word order pattern of the main clause to the embedded clauses (see 39 and 42) (see Kolmer 2012; Bidese & Tomaselli 2016) and is not connected to the borrowing of *ke*. In fact, the borrowing of *ke* was only possible because of internal developments within Cimbrian syntax that paved the way for the insertion of an element from a different linguistic source. With regard to the dynamics of language contact, the Cimbrian data seem to support the explanation that posits grammatical change as always being a (possible) language-internal phenomenon in the ‘receiving’ language, which may be supported and reinforced by pressure from the ‘giving’ language (see Abraham 2013 Bidese, Padovan & Tomaselli 2013, 2014, and particularly Bidese 2017).

17 For a typological classification of the subordinating conjunctions on the basis of selected word order patterns, see Panieri et al. (2006: 338), Grewendorf & Poletto (2011), Bidese, Padovan & Tomaselli (2014), and Bidese & Tomaselli (2016).

#### 4.4 Theory of grammar

The last area of interest for linguistic research on Cimbrian concerns syntax theory. The particular situation of Cimbrian has given rise to peculiar constructions that are interesting not only from the points of view of comparative and contact linguistics, but also for theoretical linguistics, at both diachronic and synchronic levels. One phenomenon that has attracted researchers is the distinguishing typology of V2<sup>18</sup> that characterizes Cimbrian and differentiates it from German and other Germanic languages<sup>19</sup>. As reported in both traditional grammar descriptions and in several formal contributions (see Bidese & Tomaselli 2007; Bidese 2008, Grewendorf-2010; Grewendorf & Poletto 2011; Poletto 2013; Grewendorf 2013; Bidese, Padovan & Tomaselli 2020), Cimbrian does not have the so-called ‘linear restriction’ that is considered to be the core aspect of the V2 phenomenon; that is, the realization of only one constituent before the finite verb in the main declarative sentence. Compare, for example, the Cimbrian example in (43a) and its (syntactically not well-formed) translation into Standard German in (43b):

- (43) a. [*Gestarn*] [*dar pua*] hatt gesek in has [Panieri et al. 2006: 310]  
yesterday the.NOM boy has seen the.ACC hare  
‘The boy saw the hare yesterday.’  
b. \*[*Gestern*] [*der Junge*] hat den Hasen gesehen<sup>20</sup>  
yesterday the.NOM boy has the.ACC hare seen

Unlike in German, the structural position for the DP-subject (*dar pua* in 43a) is, in fact, the pre-verbal (see Bidese & Tomaselli 2018 and Bidese, Padovan & Tomaselli 2020), which can be realized together with other constituents. With DPs, the subject inversion – one of the correlates of the V2 phenomenon – is banned in Cimbrian (compare 44a to the German example in 44b)<sup>21</sup>:

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18 For a general up-to-date description of the status of research on V2, see Holmberg (2015) and, more recently, the contributions in Woods & Wolfe (2020).

19 To my knowledge, other German-based minority languages in Italy characterized by the same phenomenon are Mòcheno (Fersentalerisch) (see Bidese, Cognola & Padovan 2012 and Cognola 2013a), Sappadino (Plodarisch) (see Poletto & Tomaselli 2002, 2004), and Saurian (Zahrisch), as reported by Denison (1988). For Saurian, see also Bidese (2019).

20 In the comparison between Cimbrian and German I set aside from the difference between the VO word order of Cimbrian and the OV one of German which are not relevant for the discussion here.

21 As seen in §4.1, the DP-subject can invert with the entire verbal complex, in which case the particle *-da* is mandatory.

- (44) a. \*Gestarn hatt dar pua gesek in has  
 yesterday has the.NOM boy seen the.ACC hare  
 b. Gestern hat der Junge den Hasen gesehen  
 yesterday has the.NOM boy the.ACC hare seen  
 'The boy saw the hare yesterday.'

However, when the subject is a pronoun, subject inversion is still realized: The subject inverts with the finite verb, cliticizes on the right of the finite verb and eventually occupies precisely the syntactic position that is inaccessible for subject DPs (compare 45 and 44a):

- (45) Gestarn hatt=*ar* gesek in has  
 yesterday has=*he*.CL.NOM seen the.ACC hare  
 'He saw the hare yesterday.'

This suggests that the finite verb in Cimbrian is realized in a syntactic position that is similar to that in German, in which the finite verb precedes the subject but, unlike German, it expands the left sentence periphery, allowing for more than one constituent before the finite verb and specifying one position within the left periphery for the DP-subjects (see Bidese & Tomaselli 2018).

A third well-known correlate of V2 is the complementary distribution of the finite verb and the subordinating conjunction; that is, the fact that the finite verb and the subordinating conjunction compete for the same position. In embedded clauses introduced by the declarative subordinating conjunction *az* 'that', the raising of the finite verb is blocked by the presence of the complementizer, resulting in a lower position of the finite verb in the sentence. This is precisely the case in Cimbrian as, in sentences introduced by *az*, the verb appears after the negation (see 46b), in contrast to what happens in the main clause (see 46a):

- (46) a. Mòrng geat=*ar* nèt ka Roma  
 tomorrow goes=*he*.CL not to Rome  
 'He will not go to Rome tomorrow.'  
 b. I speràr azz=*ar* nèt gea ka Roma mòrng  
 I hope that=*er*.CL not go.SUBJV to Rome tomorrow  
 'I hope that he will not go to Rome tomorrow.'

In summary, Cimbrian realizes a different form of V2 that goes together with the possibility of having an expanded left sentence periphery, in which more than one constituent can be realized. This form of "relaxed V2" (see Bidese, Cognola & Padovan 2012) is different from both the 'strict' V2 of the Germanic languages

and the ‘residual’ V2 of English (see Rizzi 1990) and represents an instantiation of this phenomenon that needs to be integrated into its theoretical explanation (in this regard, see Bidese 2008; Grewendorf & Poletto 2011; Grewendorf 2013; Bidese, Padovan & Tomaselli 2020). Thus, the classification of Germanic V2 needs to be extended in order to comprehend the typology of Cimbrian.

## 5. Conclusion

Research on Cimbrian can thus be seen to have a long tradition of studies that can be ascribed to specific scientific paradigms. Since the 1990s, a new line of research, which pays particular attention to the investigation of syntax phenomena, has been developing. This new interest in Cimbrian within modern linguistics is strongest in the field of generative grammar, particularly in the study of ‘microvariation’, which has been developing in generative linguistics since the 1980s, as a complementary perspective to macroparametric variation. Several studies have been dedicated to specific phenomena in the syntax of dialects, which had been largely neglected by traditional dialectology (Scheutz 2005: 292; Grewendorf & Weiß 2015<sup>22</sup>). This research has opened the door to a new view of Cimbrian, within which the Cimbrian data have been related to theoretical studies of main syntax phenomena, such as the V2 (see Poletto & Tomaselli 2000 and Bidese & Tomaselli 2005 and 2007), the null subject (see Poletto & Tomaselli 2002), the syntax of interrogatives (see Benincà & Renzi 2000; Poletto & Tomaselli 2004), the syntax of dislocation (see Pili 2001), the verbal bracket (*Satzklammer*) in subordinate clauses (see Bidese 2004b), the VO/OV word order pattern (see Grewendorf & Poletto 2005), and the syntax of pronominal elements (see Kolmer 2005b; Bidese 2008; Poletto & Tomaselli 2009, Abraham 2012), to mention some of the many studies conducted since 2000.

Another new line of investigation on Cimbrian falls within the study of language contact phenomena; the effects of language contact on the grammar of Cimbrian have long been studied (see Schuchardt 1884). However, these have usually been understood as a sign of language corruption and decay due to the massive influence of the surrounding Italian dialects (see, for example, Schmeller 1838: 698). By contrast, recent investigations are less interested in identifying what should be traced back to Italian influence as an external source of speakers’

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22 In Romance studies, the following works (among many others) should be mentioned: Benincà (1989), Brandi & Cordin (1989), Poletto (1993; 2000), and Manzini & Savoia (2005). In German studies, the works of Bayer (1984) and Weiß (1998) on Bavarian syntax, Haegeman & van Riemsdijk (1986) on West-Flemish and Zürich German, Haegeman (1992) on West Flemish, and the specific issue of dialect studies and generative grammar by Abraham & Bayer (1993) stand out.



linguistic behavior, preferring instead to identify the internal dynamics at work when two linguistic sources are integrated within one language system (see Grewendorf & Poletto 2005, 2009, 2011; Kolmer 2012; Bidese, Padovan & Tomaselli 2013 and 2014, Bidese 2017), as shown in § 4.

The shrinking of the Cimbrian-speaking community in recent decades has not led to a decrease in the research interest in this isolated Germanic variety, which is now also being studied from an innovative perspective that investigates the language's internal dynamics. Cimbrian was used in the past as a testing ground for verifying new approaches, methods, and research tools<sup>23</sup>. Continuing this tradition, this introduction has shown how this isolated variety, between Germanic and Romance (see Bidese, Dow & Stolz 2005), can still be regarded as a test case for linguistic variation from both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective (see Tomaselli 2004 and Agosti et al. 2010).

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<sup>23</sup> For new developments within the field of geolinguistic linked data, see also Di Nunzio & Rabanus (2014).



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