

Romance Stories and Tales: Enhancing Cultural Heritage, Linguistic Repertoire of the Romance Area, and Forays into British Territories

Field of Study : Linguistics

SUPERVISORS

	First name	LAST NAME	University	Research Domain
Supervisor	Sandra	Garbarino	UNITO	Educational linguistics - Intercomprehension
<input type="checkbox"/> Co-Supervisor	Laurence	Constanty-Roussillon	UPPA	The Voice in Literature and the Arts, Literary studies

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to promote and preserve the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Gallo-Romance and Ibero-Romance regions by rediscovering stories and folktales from the oral tradition, narrated in the regional languages of their respective areas of origin, and supplemented by any available versions from different countries. These tales, often found across various regions with more or less significant variations, represent a rich repertoire that can contribute to a deeper understanding of the history and development of these territories. Additionally, they can help to raise awareness of, and provide greater visibility to, regional languages that are often little known and whose number of speakers is in decline.

To this end, the project seeks to collect a substantial number of stories and folktales in order to create an accessible website, which will serve as an open, updatable, and expandable archive—a kind of ‘Wiki’ dedicated to the traditional narratives of the Gallo-Iberian regions. In light of the historical and cultural connections between Romance and English-speaking areas, the research will also extend to British territories, with the aim of identifying tales from the Romance tradition that have been incorporated into English-language stories and novels.

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Research aims and methodology

Aims

In light of the lack of easily accessible archives containing audiovisual materials related to the Gallo- Romance and Ibero-Romance traditions, particularly local folktales, this research aims to undertake a comprehensive effort to recover and catalogue a wide range of stories. In order to preserve these tales and make them accessible, the research will focus on creating an easily accessible online repository of audiovisual materials, searchable by "subject," "language," or "geographical area of distribution," among other criteria, depending on the capabilities of the selected digital platform.

At a later stage, this repository of stories, which will primarily focus on audiovisual resources, can be promoted as an archive of original materials for the study of non-national Romance languages. It will cater to a diverse audience across various contexts, such as the multilingual audience of adult education centers (CPIA) or school-aged children.

Methodology

The stories will be collected from the archives of local museums and television networks, such as the Rai Teche, the archives of France 3 Occitanie, Spanish local television and English novels, as well as through testimonies from speakers of various languages. The acquired resources will be catalogued, classified, and organized based on a set of parameters that will make them easily retrievable and accessible. Before being published online, they will be shared within the UNITA University Alliance to verify their accessibility and relevance. Subsequently, they will be made available through an open-access website that users can update after identification (similar to Wikipedia).

In addition to the audio and video materials, transcriptions will be provided, and their accuracy will be verified with the help of experts in the orthographies of the various local languages. To enhance comprehension of these languages without relying on translations, "interproduced" versions will be provided. These versions will be adapted for Romance language readers using strategies derived from the intercomprehension approach.

Relevance and added-value of the proposed research in relation to the current state of knowledge

Despite numerous research studies on the minority languages of the Gallo-Romance and Ibero-Romance areas, to date, there is no available archive that compiles audio and video recordings of stories in these languages and presents them to the wider public, with the aim of connecting the stories told in different regional languages and showcasing their various versions. Most research has focused on the linguistic characteristics of the different Gallo-Romance dialects, their regional variations, sociolinguistic studies, or the presence of language minorities in specific territories. What is still lacking is a well-organized repertoire of audiovisual resources that provides authentic materials and serves as an accessible archive for scholars, researchers, and also for the general public and schools. Furthermore, there is an absence of audiovisual material that has been selected and classified based on the difficulty of comprehension, aimed at fostering pluralistic language-learning approaches.

Interdisciplinary nature of the research together with the alignment with the CHORAL programme and complementarity expertise of the teams

The preceding research is interdisciplinary because it integrates methodologies, theories, and approaches from several academic fields. It combines **linguistics**—particularly sociolinguistics, dialectology and intercomprehension—with **cultural studies** by focusing on the preservation and dissemination of minority languages and oral traditions from Gallo-Romance and Ibero-Romance regions. The research also intersects

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with **media studies** through the collection, analysis, and presentation of audiovisual materials, ensuring that modern technological resources are leveraged to preserve these languages and their stories. Additionally, it draws on **digital humanities** by creating an online platform that archives and organizes the stories, utilizing digital tools to make the materials accessible and interactive for a diverse audience.

Moreover, the research engages with **education** by developing resources that can be used in schools and educational settings, promoting pluralistic approaches to language learning. It also touches on **anthropology** and **history** by examining the oral traditions within their cultural and historical contexts, providing insight into how these stories reflect the social and linguistic evolution of their regions. This interdisciplinary framework allows the project to reach a broader audience, including scholars, educators, and the general public, while fostering a deeper understanding of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage.

Output plan including publication and dissemination activities

Year 1: Research and Data Collection Phase

1. Data Collection:

○ Months 1-12:

- Collect audiovisual materials from archives (e.g., Rai Teche, France 3 Occitanie, Spanish local television) and conduct interviews with native speakers of Gallo-Romance and Ibero-Romance languages.
- Begin collaboration with linguistic and cultural experts to verify the accuracy of transcriptions and translations.

2. Database Development:

○ Months 6-12:

- Develop the architecture of the online platform to host and catalog the audiovisual materials.
- Work with web developers to design a user-friendly, open-access interface, enabling searching by subject, language, and geographic area.

3. Initial Dissemination:

○ Conference Presentations:

- Present initial findings and objectives at relevant conferences such as the **International Conference on Minority Languages and Sociolinguistics Symposium**.

○ Workshops:

- Organize workshops with UNITA University Alliance partners to test platform usability and collect feedback.

4. Publications:

○ Journal Article Submission:

- Submit an article to **Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development** or **International Journal of Heritage Studies** detailing the project's methodology and the importance of preserving oral traditions.

Year 2: Digital Platform Launch and Outreach

1. Platform Launch:

○ Months 13-18:

- Officially launch the online repository with a substantial collection of categorized audiovisual stories, accessible to researchers, educators, and the general public.
- Incorporate feedback from workshops and expert reviews to enhance usability and accessibility.

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2. Educational

Outreach:

○ Months 16-24:

- Collaborate with local schools and **CPIA** (adult education centers) to integrate the repository as a language-learning tool.
- Create teaching materials and guides for using the archive in classroom settings, particularly focusing on multilingual approaches to language learning.

3. Public Engagement:

○ Public Lectures and Talks:

- Host public talks and lectures on regional languages and oral traditions in collaboration with cultural institutions such as museums and libraries.

○ Community Collaborations:

- Engage local communities by hosting storytelling events where native speakers share their stories and experiences with a broader audience.

4. Publications:

○ Conference Papers:

- Present at international conferences, such as the **Association for Language Awareness (ALA)** and the **European Society for the Study of Literature and Culture**.

○ Journal Article Submission:

- Submit a second article focused on the interdisciplinary nature of the research to journals like **Digital Humanities Quarterly** or **Journal of Romance Studies**.

Year 3: Expansion and Long-term Impact

1. Platform Expansion:

○ Months 25-36:

- Expand the repository to include more stories, incorporating contributions from the user community following the "Wiki-style" model.
- Implement advanced search features (e.g., difficulty levels of comprehension for language learners) and intercomprehension tools for Romance language readers.

2. International Collaborations:

○ Months 28-36:

- Establish partnerships with international research groups in the fields of linguistics, folklore, and digital humanities to further enhance the platform's offerings and reach.
- Collaborate with universities and institutions outside the UNITA network to widen the scope of the project, potentially incorporating Romance languages from other areas.

3. Publications and Reports:

○ Comprehensive Research Report:

- Publish a comprehensive report detailing the project's impact on language preservation and education, as well as the technical and academic challenges encountered during the process.

○ Book Proposal:

- Propose and draft an edited volume or monograph with contributions from linguists, digital humanities experts, and sociolinguists, to be published by a

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leading academic publisher (e.g., **Routledge** or **Cambridge University Press**).

4. Public Engagement and Visibility:

- **Media Outreach:**
 - Engage in media outreach, including radio interviews, podcasts, and features in digital humanities and language preservation forums.
- **Documentary or Video Series:**
 - Produce a short documentary or video series showcasing the project's success in preserving and promoting minority languages and their oral traditions.

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