Word Order in Istro-Romanian. New data

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Acknowledgements

Team projects:


• *Contrasting contexts of language contact in synchrony and diachrony*, PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2019-0832, PI: dr. Alexandru Nicolae

-> a descriptive syntax of Istro-Romanian
Background

• Istro-Romanian is a ‘historical dialect’ of Romanian, a severely endangered linguistic variety, mainly spoken in Istria, Croatia (Coteanu 1957, Kovaček 1971, Hurren 1981/1999, Maiden 2016, etc.)

• ‘historical dialect’ of Romanian (the population separated from the Daco-Romanian core probably not before the 13th century and migrated to Istria before the 16th century)

• currently, a Romance variety which shows little mutual intelligibility with Romanian; extensive Croatian and Italian influence, especially in the vocabulary, but also in the grammar
Background

• a purely **spoken** idiom; no orthographic conventions; schooling is in Croatian

• an **endangered** linguistic variety:
  • now: 100 L1 speakers in Istria + 1000 (?) in the world (SUA, Canada, Australia)
  • 1990: 400 speakers
  • 1960: 1500 speakers
  • end of the 19th century: 3000 speakers
Background


  1. *(standard view)* they are Romanians who left the area of the Apuseni Mountains, Banat and Bihor (the South-Eastern part of present-day Romania) around the 10th century or later; main argument: (they left before the Hungarian invasion because) there are no Hungarian words in Istro-Romanian (O. Densusianu, Al. Rosetti, N. Drăganu, E. Vasiliiu, I. Coteanu); I. Popovici: 2 migration waves -> the reason for the **comparison with old Romanian**

  2. Istro-Romanians are a local Balkan Romance population (S. Pușcariu, Th. Capidan, S. Dragomir); counterargument: there are no old Serbian/Croatian elements in Istro-Romanian

  3. Istro-Romanians originate in the South of the Danube, where Bulgarian varieties were spoken (E. Petrovici)
Background

• **2 dialects** in Istria:
  • northern (Jeiăn/Žejane)
  • southern (Valdarsa region: Šušnjevica, Brdo, Noselo, Letaj, Sucodru – in the last two villages, the knowledge of the language is only passive)
    • separated by Mount Učka/Monte Maggiore
• the dialects are mutually intelligible (Hurren 1999: III), a fact also confirmed by our recent fieldwork
Background

- Istro-Romanian
- intense linguistic contact with *Croatian*
  - the Čakavian dialect (in a bilingual setting – Maiden 2016: 91)
  - the standard language (the official language/schooling)
- contact with the *Romance varieties* spoken in (especially the north of) Italy (Venetan)
- the *German* and the *Slovenian* influence might also have played a role in the north
Background

● the syntactic properties of Istro-Romanian reflect both:

(i) a conservative stage of Romanian (given that Istro-Romanian separated from the other ‘historical dialects’ of Romanian [Daco-Romanian, Aromanian, and Megleno-Romanian] somewhere between the 10th and the 14th centuries), and

(ii) language contact, especially with Croatian, but also with the dialects spoken in the northern half of Italy.
Aim of the presentation

• The main issues related to Istro-Romanian word order:
  - conservative dialect
  - language contact
  - the internal make-up of the grammar
  - dialectal differences between the North and the South

• New data
  - with respect to what we have already presented
  - data collected in 2021 during a fieldwork session
  - the ISTROX database – Hurren’s recordings
The 2021 fieldwork session
Word order. The view from the literature
The nominal phrase
   Adjectives
   Possessives
   Other modifiers
The verbal phrase
   Auxiliary inversion
   Scrambling and interpolation
   Adverbs
   Subject clitics
   VP-ellipsis
   V-final structures
Conclusions
Fieldwork session August-September 2021

- Šušnjevica and Žejane
- approx. 9 hours of recordings
- Insight information about the number of speakers for the Southern variety (216 in 2008)
Word order. The view from the literature

“Topica e neobicinuită și nu păstrează o stabilitate bine pronunțată, deoarece balanțează între cea latină și cea slavă.” (Popovici 1914: 111)

“Word order is unusual and does not preserve a well-delineated stability, because it wavers between the Latin and the Slavonic one” (Popovici 1914: 111)
Word order. The view from the literature

“Obișnuiți cu ordinea relativ foarte liberă a cuvintelor în croată, unde funcțiile sintactice sunt exprimate mult mai frecvent morfematic, vorbitorii istroromânei, bilingvi, transpun adesea în limba lor această topică liberă din croată și acolo unde istroromână, din cauza posibilităților mai reduse de exprimare morfematică, ar trebui să exprime funcțiile sintactice prin ordinea elementelor din enunț.” (Kovačec 1971: 174)

“Accustomed to the relatively free word order of Croatian, where syntactic functions are more frequently expressed morphemically, the speakers of Istro-Romanian, bilinguals, often transfer into their language this free word order of Croatian also in contexts in which Istro-Romanian, due to its reduced ability to express relations morphemically, should express syntactic functions through the word order of constituents.” (Kovačec 1971: 174)
"With the exception of the word order of the personal pronoun, full sentences and texts can be translated word by word (or, more exactly, phrase by phrase) from Istro-Romanian into Čakavian Croatian and vice versa. Many of the syntactic differences between Istro-Romanian and the other Romanian dialects are the result of Croatian (and Italian) syntactic influence." (Kovačec 1984: 579)
Another area deeply influenced by the Croatian language is word order. Word order in Croatian is relatively fixed, because syntactical functions are generally expressed morphematically, and Istro-Romanian often uses this free word order even where the syntactical functions should be expressed by word order. One of the effects of this free word order is the dislocation of the auxiliary from the verb [...]. One should also mention the frequent use of elliptical forms by Istro-Romanians and by Croatians.” (Sârbu 1998: 42)
The nominal phrase. Adjectives

- prenominal adjectives, also attested in old Romanian, and following the Croatian pattern

(1) ău stâra țârcva, stâra
AUX.PERF.3PL old.F.SG church old.F.SG
besèrenta, betâra besèrenta (SF, 54, Z.)
church old.F.SG church
‘They have an old church’

Croatian
Moj stari prijatelj
my old friend
je ovdje.
is here
‘My old friend is here.’
The nominal phrase. Adjectives

- Adj + N
(2) noi důlče café bem (SF, 94, Z.)
  we sweet coffee drink.PRES.1PL
  ‘we drink sweet coffee’

- discontinuous structure
(3) lá, důlče bévu café
  yes sweet drink.PRES.1SG coffee
  ‘Yes, I drink sweet coffee’ (SF, 95, Z.)

- N + Adj
(4) Io čúda volés ťúcăr și čái důlče (SF, 94, Z.)
  I a.lot want.PRES.1SG sugar and tea sweet
  ‘I want a lot of sugar and sweet tea’

- Adj + N
(5) Åre búra pénzie, búra (SF, 142, Z.)
  has good pension good
  ‘She has a good pension’

- N + Adj
(6) n-ám... pénzie búra... (SF, 100, Z.)
  not=have pension good
  ‘I don’t have a good pension’

- variation
(7) Dupá novu leto, după nou ăn
  after new year after new year
  ‘after the New Year’ (2.09.2021, Žejane)
The nominal phrase. Adjectives

- Adj + N – qualifying adjectives

(8) Și fino atunce-vo spélù din curåta ăpa (SF, 127, Z.)
and well then=CL.ACC.F.SG wash.PRES.1SG with clear water
‘and I wash it well with clean water’

(9) ke de câpra-i isto bur lâpte (SF, 126, Z.)
that of goat=is this good milk
‘that this good milk is of a goat’

(10) negru vir (2.09.2021, Žejane) [-> relational]
black wine
‘red vine’
The nominal phrase. Adjectives

- Adj + N – qualifying adjectives

  (11) Åre muiåra și-o mica fetița
  has wife and=a little girl
  ‘He has a wife and a little girl’ (SF, 146, Z.)

  (12) av avut doi
  AUX.PERF.3SG have.PTCP two
  micî fecioricî (TC, 128, Z.)
  little children
  ‘they had two little boys’

  (13) aț avut o
  AUX.PERF.2PL have.PTCP a
  mică căsă (2.09.2021, Žejane)
  small house
  ‘you had a small house’

  (14) avê mići fečîór
  have.IMPF.3PL little children
  ‘they had small children’
  (30.08.2021, Šušnjevica)

  (15) Åstaz ie musăta vręme (SF, 56, S.)
  today is beautiful weather
  ‘today it is a beautiful weather’

  (16) Mușåta mul’ere aveț
  beautiful.F.SG wife have.PRES.2PL
  ‘You have a beautiful wife’
  (30.08.2021, Šušnjevica)
The nominal phrase. Adjectives

- Adj + N – qualifying adjectives

(17) Cesta mai betâr fil’u (2.09.2021, Žejane)
this more old son
‘the oldest son’

(18) şúla å făcut betârii omerii (2.09.2021, Žejane)
school make.old people
‘The school was built by the old people’

(19) Io am betâra câsa (1.09.2021, Šušnjevica)
I have old house
‘I have an old house’
The nominal phrase. Adjectives

- Adj + N – relational adjectives

(20)  він приватних случаях (2.09.2021, Жежане)  
in private houses  
‘in private houses’

(21)  Aвеm a наша звонькаса grupa (2.09.2021, Жежане)  
have.PRES.1PL GEN our dance.bell group  
‘We have our dance bell group’

(22)  Lucra він шктуле румънасka limbe (30.08.2021, Шушневича)  
work.IMPF.3SG in school Romanian language  
‘she was teaching Romanian in school’

(23)  mineralнаia апа, нu (1.09.2021, Шушневича)  
mineral water no  
‘sparkling water, no’
The nominal phrase. Possessives

- The **results of the corpus study** (Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2018)
  - N + Poss and Poss + N

(24) **me nóna** (SF, 57, S.)
    my grandmother

(25) **frátele mev** (SF, 57, S.)
    brother my

- the *a* marker precedes the possessive in the north (Zejane); in the south (Šušnjevica) there is no analytic (*a*) marker

(26) **cu-å mev**
    with GEN my

(27) **ómu-a meu**
    husband GEN my

**Croatian**

ljubav **moja**
love  my
moje  dvije  crvene jabuke
my  two   red   apples
The nominal phrase. Possessives

- The new data collected in 2021
  (i) preference for Poss + N – in the North

(28) a me măr’are din Rika (2.09.2021, Žejane)
  GEN my wife of Rijeka
  ‘my wife is from Rieka’

(29) a me måie a lucrat prestë veër saca zi
  GEN my mother AUX.PERF.3SG work.PTCP
  ‘during the summer, my mother used to work every day’ (2.09.2021, Žejane)

(30) a mel’i fili cuvintu (2.09.2021, Žejane)
  GEN my sons speak.PRES.3PL
  ‘my sons speak (the language)’

(31) a me fili s-a înveţat (2.09.2021, Žejane)
  GEN my sons CL.REFL.PASS=AUX.PERF.3PL learn.PTCP
  ‘my sons have been taught’
The nominal phrase. Possessives

(i) preference for Poss + N – in the South

(32) Che vostra limba, originala limba romana (30.08.2021, Šušnjevica)
that your language original language Romance
‘that your language, an original Romance language’

(33) Fost-a cu me nono (30.08.2021, Šušnjevica)
be.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3SG with my grandfather
‘he was with my grandfather’

(34) storia de nostri betâri (30.08.2021, Šušnjevica)
story of our old.people
‘the story of our predecessors’

(35) Ma sòrç âre Dacia Sandero (30.08.2021, Šušnjevica)
my sister has Dacia Sandero
‘My sister has Dacia Sandero’
The nominal phrase. Possessives

(ii) in the North, the use of *a* can be explained phonologically (a-a)

(36) mire întrebat-a voștri profesori (2.09.2021, Žejane)
    me ask.PTCP=AUX.PERC.3PL your teachers
    ‘your teachers asked me’

(37) la meu fil’a (2.09.2021, Žejane)
    at my daughter
    ‘at my daughter’

(38) ali dița lor (2.09.2021, Žejane)
    or children their
    ‘or their children’
The nominal phrase. Modifiers (to explore)

(39) zapelés de foc lămne din códru (SF, 79, Z.)
    bring.PRES.1SG of fire wood.PL from forest
    ‘I bring fire wood from the forest’

(40) Doi fraț ău fost pilí lămne de foc (SF, 128, Z.)
    two brothers AUX.PERF.3PL be.PTCP cut.INF wood of fire
    ‘Two brothers went to cut fire wood’
The verbal phrase

Many word order features related to the verbal phrase can be explained by:

(i) low verb movement
(ii) the non-clitic nature of IR auxiliaries (Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2021)
(iii) the existence of subject clitics (Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2018)

Features:
- auxiliary inversion (V-to-C movement)
- Scrambling (auxiliary – XP – lexical verb) and interpolation (clitic – XP – lexical verb)
- the subject position in interrogatives
- the position of the Cinquean adverbs
- auxiliary licenced VP-ellipsis
- V-final structures
The verbal phrase. Auxiliary inversion

- a very frequent structure in the IR corpus
- less frequent in the recent recordings, at least in the North (intuition)
- attested (but less frequent) in old Romanian and in Croatian

Croatian
a ubio sam psa (AK: 325)
and kill.PPLE be.AUX dog
‘And I have killed the dog’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>AUX-VERB</th>
<th>INTERPOLATION</th>
<th>VERB-AUX</th>
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<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>46.87%</td>
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<td>TC</td>
<td>52.15%</td>
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<td>SF</td>
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<td>AK</td>
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<td>41.28%</td>
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Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2017
The verbal phrase. Auxiliary inversion

- in main clauses

(41) **Avzit-åv** ke-s uånč rumuń (SF, 188)
    hear.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3PL that=are here Romanianas
    ‘They heard that there are Romanians here’

(42) **Sęra veri-voi** (SF, 122)
    evening come.INF=AUX.FUT.1SG
    ‘I will come in the evening’

- in embedded clauses

(43) cân me fråte **lasât-a** pre jåpe scočí (AK, 338)
    when my brother allow.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3SG on mare jump.INF
    ‘when my brother allowed him to jump on the mare’
The verbal phrase. Auxiliary inversion

- main clauses
  (44) **Fost-au** omerii din Rumânska
      be.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3PL people from Romania
      ‘People from Romania have been here’ (2.09.2021, Žejane)

  (45) întru șapte zile **fost-a** la noi ura profesorița
      in seven days be.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3SG at us a teacher.F
      ‘Seven days ago, a teaches was at us’ (30.08.2021, Šušnjevica)

- embedded clauses
  (46) după ce **verit-a** doi de iel’
      after what come.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3PL two of them
      ‘after two of them came’ (30.08.2021, Šušnjevica)
The verbal phrase. Scrambling

- attested (but less frequent) in Old Romanian and in Croatian

(47) ke s-a cosîtele pletít (AK, 327)
that CL.REFL.3SG=AUX.PERF.3SG ponytails braid.PLEE
‘that she braided her ponytails’

si je pletenice plela (AK:328)
CL.REFL.3SG is.AUX ponytails braid.PAST

Juče mi je Marija nešto ispričala.
yesterday me is Marija something told
‘Marija told me something yesterday.’ (in Stojanović 1997:307)
The verbal phrase. Scrambling

- unspecialized positions for scrambling with auxiliaries (corpus)

(48) Când ă cesaru doznei (TC, 23)
when AUX.PERF.3SG emperor.NOM find.out-PTCP
‘when the emperor found out’

(49) Când au mul’era lu cesta ūom verit
when AUX.PERF.3SG wife GEN this man come.PTCP
‘When this man’s wife brought food’

cu merinda (TC, 146)
with lunch

(50) morta s-a
death.NOM CL.REFL.3SG=AUX.PERF.3SG
“death prayed to Martin” (TC, 17)

lu Martin rugat
DAT Martin pray.PPLE
The verbal phrase. Interpolation

- unspecialized positions for scrambling with auxiliaries (fieldwork data)

(51) c-å omirii târguit (2.09.2021, Žejane)
    what=AUX.PERF.3SG people sell.PTCP
    ‘what have the people sold’

(52) A prin podure durmit omirii (2.09.2021, Žejane)
    AUX.PERF.3PL in attics sleep.PTCP people
    ‘People slept in attics’

(53) nu ştiu, pe selişte trecutu? (2.09.2021, Žejane)
    not know.PRES.1SG AUX.PERF.2PL in village pass.PTCP
    ‘I don’t know, did you pass through the village?’
The verbal phrase. Interpolation

- with clitics

(54) La voi se cum zíče?
at you.PL CL.REFL.3SG how say.PRES.3SG
‘What do you call it in your language?’ (SF, 72)

(55) saca câsa se nuṣcum cl’ama (2.09.2021, Žejane)
each house CL.REFL.3SG somehow call.PRES.3SG
‘Each house had a certain name’

Croatian
Jelena me stalno nešto zapitkuje.
Jelena me always something asks
‘Jelena is always asking me something.’ (in Stojanović 1997:313)
The verbal phrase. Adverbs

- adverbs placed between the clitic or auxiliary and the lexical verb, an option available in Croatian

Croatian
Jelena me _stalno_ zapitkuje _nešto_  
Jelena me always asks something
‘Jelena is always asking me something.’ (in Stojanović 1997:314)
The verbal phrase. Adverbs

- with analytic forms

(56) cum ūam io bire zis (TC, 45)
    as AUX.PERF.1SG I well say.PTCP
    ‘as I said well’

(57) nu m-a bire înțeles (2.09.2021, Žejane)
    not CL.ACC.1SG=AUX.PERF.3SG well understand.PTCP
    ‘He did not understand me well’

(58) vor atūnče cuvintă (SF, 158)
    AUX.FUT.3PL then speak-INF
    ‘they will speak then’

(59) io n-âm colę fos (SF, 155)
    I not=AUX.PERF.1SG there be.PTCP
    ‘I wasn’t there.’
The verbal phrase. Adverbs

- adverbs placed before the verb in synthetic forms

(60)  ke    voi   bîre  știț (SF, 177)
that   you.PL  well   know.IN.D.PRES.2SG
‘that you know well’

(61)  și    mușat  zehvales (TC, 11)
and   beautifully   thank.IN.D.PRES.1SG
‘and I thank you a lot’

(62)  Dialectu nostru  chiaro  bire
dialect  our  very  well
vorbiter-a Petru Neiescu (30.08.2021, Šušnjevica)
speak.REF.PTCP-AUX.PERF.3SG Petru Neiescu
‘Petru Neiescu spoked very well our dialect’
The verbal phrase. Subject clitics

- attested in Northern Italian dialects (Poletto and Tortora 2016)

Florentino
Te tu parli.
you SCL speak.2sg
You are speaking

Trentino
No te ghe l’hai dit.
not SCL him it=have said
‘You did not say it to him’

Croatian
Šta on radi?
what he does
‘What is he doing?’

Gde on ide?
where he goes
‘Where is he going?’

Šta Jovan radi?
what Jovan does
‘What is Jovan doing?’

Šta je on radio?
what he do.3SG
‘What did Jovan do?’

Šta je Jovan radio?
what Jovan do.3SG
‘What did Jovan do?’
The verbal phrase. Subject clitics

- special position in interrogatives

(63) Cúmo **voi** zíčeț? (SF, 136)
How **you** say.PRES.2SG
‘How are you saying?’

(64) Cum **iel’-a** fos? (SF, 103)
How **they=**AUX.PERF.3PL be.PTCP
‘How have they been?’

(65) și ce **ie** zice (2.09.2021, Zejane)
and **what** he do.PRES.3SG
‘And what is he saying?’

(66) Cân **åți** **voi** verit? (30.08.2021, Šušnjevica)
When **you** come.PTCP
‘When did you come?’

(67) Ce **tu** bei? (1.09.2021, Šušnjevica)
what **you** drink.PRES.2SG
‘What do you want to drink?’

(68) E **iuve** **tu** fost? (1966, ISTROX, Šušnjevica)
and where **you** be.PTCP
‘And where have you been?’
The verbal phrase. Subject clitics

- in embedded clauses

(69) cărle l-av ăntrebåt șuve îe mère
which CL.ACC.M.SG=AUX.PERF.3SG ask.PTCP wherehe goes
‘who asked him where he was going’ (SP, 131)

(70) Șa-i bire, cum tu spuri (TC, 10)
like.this=is well how you say.PRES.2SG
‘It is well like this, how you say’
The verbal phrase. Subject clitics
- data supporting the subject clitic interpretation (other constituents, other clitics, negation)

(71) Ce tu ţancea lucr. (TC, 71)
what you here work.PRES.2SG
‘What are you working here at?’

(72) Cum te tu cl’emi? (2.09.2021, Žejane + LM, 71)
how you call.PRES.2SG
‘What’s your name?’

(73) Cân te-ai tu ţ ansurat? (1.09.2021, Šušnjevica)
when you marry.PTCP
‘When did you get married?’

(74) De ieri nu t-ũai fost case (TC, 44)
since yesterday not you=AUX.PERF.2SG be.PTCP home
‘You haven’t been home since yesterday’
The verbal phrase. VP-ellipsis

- not specifically related to word order, but to the nonclitic nature of auxiliaries

(75)  – Ūai
     AUX.PERF.2SG  dus?
     bring.PTCP
 – Ŭam v. (TC, 8)
     have=AUX.PERF.1SG
     ‘– Did you bring/take away?/– I did.’

(76)  – Rei
     AUX.COND.2SG  borebit  pocini?
     maybe  rest.INF
 – Reş v. (TC, 57)
     AUX.COND.1SG
     ‘– Would you rest?/– I would.’

(77)  – Cuheit-ûai?
     cook.PTCP=AUX.PERF.2SG
     le zis-a che a v, ma
     he say.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3SG  that  AUX.PERF.3SG  but
     c-a zadurmit şi nuşcarle... (TC, 71)
     that=AUX.PERF.3SG  fell.asleep.PTCP  and  someone...
     ‘– Did you cook?/He said that he did cook, but he fell asleep and someone... ’
The verbal phrase. VP-ellipsis

(78)  - Cire va mai cuvinta jeianski?
who AUX.FUT.3SG more speak.INF Jeianski
‘Who is going to speak the Jeianski language?’
- Nuş’ cire va, nuş cire va.
I.don’t.know who AUX.FUT.2SG I.don’t.know who AUX.FUT.2SG
‘I don’t know who will’

(2.09.2021, Žejane)
The verbal phrase. V-final structures (to be explored)

(79) Io pușca nu cu mire portu. (TC, 66, Noselo)
I riffle not with me keep.PRES.1SG
‘I don’t keep the riffle with me’

(80) Nu ren che cu noi meri (TC, 77, Noselo)
not want.PRES.1PL that with us go.PRES.2SG
‘We wouldn’t want you to come with us’
Conclusions

- a selection of features related to the word order of constituents in the NP and VP
- overlap between old Romanian and Croatian – “convergence” (Hickey 2010)
- the Croatian influence on the syntax of Istro-Romanian
  – sometimes at a superficial syntactic level (for auxiliary inversion and scrambling and interpolation – the Croatian pattern supported the proliferation of an archaic pattern, but without preserving the rules – i.e. second position clitics)
  – sometimes, in cases of variation, it determines a choice (prenominal qualifying and relational adjectives)
- besides the preservation of archaic structures and language contact, certain features can be explained by the internal make-up of the IR grammar (low verb movement, the non-clitic status of auxiliaries → the positions of adverbs with respect to the verbal core, the position of subjects in interrogatives and relatives, the VP-ellipsis)
Corpus


ISTROX (https://istrox.ling-phil.ox.ac.uk/ora)

