

PARTICULAR FEATURES OF ISTRO-ROMANIAN PRONOMINAL CLITICS

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ABSTRACT. *Particular Features of Istro-Romanian Pronominal Clitics.* Istro-Romanian is a 'historical dialect' of Romanian, a severely endangered linguistic variety, spoken in the Istrian peninsula (Croatia) as an endogenous language, and in USA and Canada as an exogenous language. Using the data extracted from the available corpora, the paper offers a descriptive account of the main features of pronominal clitics in Istro-Romanian, focusing on empirical phenomena such as interpolation, verb(-auxiliary)-clitic inversion, (absence of) clitic climbing, and the position of clitics with respect to other elements of the verbal cluster. Some parallels with Croatian are also drawn, and the importance of old Romanian/old Romance inheritance is also briefly assessed. Future research will concentrate on more closely determining what plays a more important role in the syntax of Istro-Romanian: preservation of archaic Romanian/Romance features or language contact?

Keywords: *Istro-Romanian, Croatian, old Romanian, pronominal clitics, interpolation, inversion, clitic climbing.*

REZUMAT. *Trăsături specifice ale pronumelor clitice în istroromână.* Istroromâna este un „dialect istoric” al limbii române și reprezintă o varietate lingvistică pe cale de dispariție, vorbită în peninsula Istria (Croatia) ca limbă endogenă, precum și în SUA și Canada ca limbă exogenă. Folosind date excerptate din corpurile disponibile, lucrarea oferă o prezentare descriptivă a principalelor trăsături ale cliticelor pronominale în istroromână, concentrându-se asupra unor fenomene

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empirice precum: interpolarea, inversiunea verb(-auxiliar)-clitic, ridicarea cliticelor (sau absența acesteia) și poziția cliticelor în raport cu alte elemente din nucleul verbal. Se identifică paralele între istroromână și croată (limbă cu care istroromâna a fost în contact prelung și intens) și importanța elementelor moștenite din româna veche/fazele vechi ale limbilor romanice este pe scurt evidențiată. Cercetările viitoare se vor concentra asupra determinării cu mai mare exactitate a elementului care joacă un rol mai important în sintaxa istroromânei: prezervarea unor trăsături arhaice din româna veche/fazele vechi ale limbilor romanice sau contactul lingvistic?

***Cuvinte-cheie:** istroromână, croată, româna veche, clitice pronominale, interpolare, inversiune, ridicarea cliticelor.*

1. Introduction

1.1. 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). The label ‘**historical dialect**’ of Romanian refers to the fact that, according to the most widely accepted historical hypothesis (see also the comments below), the population separated from Daco-Romanian core probably not before the 13th century and migrated in Istria before the 16th century. Currently, Istro-Romanian is a Romance variety which shows little mutual intelligibility with Romanian, due to the preservation of archaic features and to the fact that it underwent extensive Croatian and Italian influence, especially in the vocabulary, but also in the grammar.

It is important to stress that Istro-Romanian is a purely **spoken** idiom, with no orthographic conventions. In the area where Istro-Romanian was originally spoken, schooling is in Croatian. Istro-Romanian is also a severely **endangered** language, with currently no more than 150 L1 speakers in Istria and 1000 in the world (New York, Canada).

As for the **origin** of Istro-Romanians (Kovaček 1971: 30–31, Sârbu and Frățilă 1998: 14–19), several hypotheses have been put forward:

(i) The standard view is that 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. The main argument is that they left before the Hungarian invasion because there

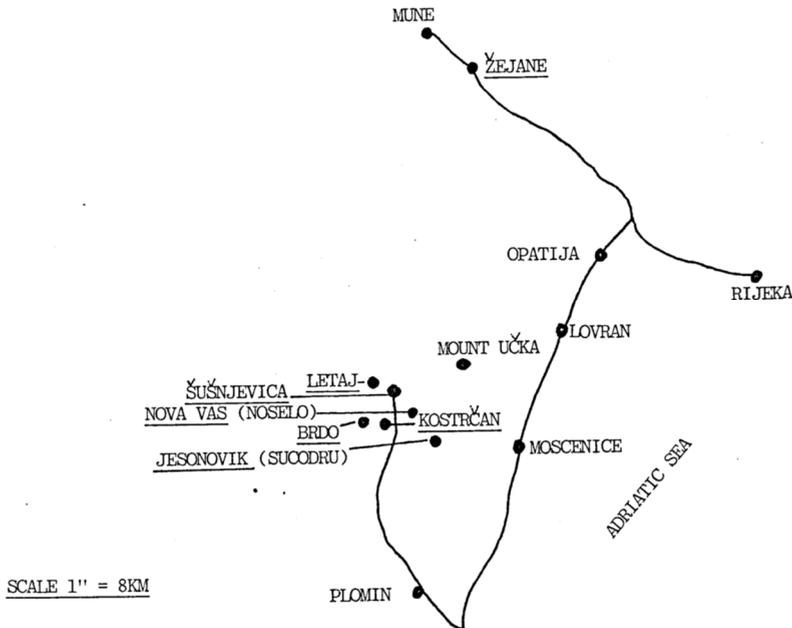
are no Hungarian elements in Istro-Romanian (O. Densusianu, Al. Rosetti, N. Drăganu, E. Vasiliu, I. Coteanu).

(ii) The second hypothesis is that the Istro-Romanians are a local Balkan Romance population (S. Pușcariu, Th. Capidan, S. Dragomir). A strong counterargument for this scenario is that there are no old Serbian/Croatian elements in Istro-Romanian.

(iii) The third hypothesis is that the Istro-Romanians originate at the South of the Danube, where Bulgarian varieties were spoken (E. Petrovici).

Istro-Romanian has **2 dialects** in Istria: the northern one (Jeiän/Žejane) and the southern one (Šušnjeвица, 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), however, there are features which differentiate them.

ISTRO-ROMANIAN VILLAGES
UNDERLINED



(Hurren 1999: II)

Istro-Romanian has been subject to intense linguistic contact with **Croatian**, the Čakavian dialect (in a bilingual setting – Maiden 2016: 91) and with **Romance varieties** spoken in (especially the north of) Italy; the

German influence might also have played a role in the north. Therefore, if we take for granted the first hypothesis of the origin of the Istro-Romanian population, 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. Thus, the syntax of present-day Istro-Romanian seems to be the result of preserving convergent features (in the sense of Hickey 2010) found both in old Romanian, and in Croatian, illustrated by phenomena such as: the V-Aux word order, interpolation, pronominal genitives and possessives, a higher frequency of the infinitive and a very limited usage of the subjunctive, etc. (see Dragomirescu 2018, Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2016, 2017, 2018a,b,c).

1.2. Aim of the paper

Using the data extracted from the available corpora, in this paper we only aim to offer a descriptive account of the main features of pronominal clitics in Istro-Romanian (except what we consider ‘subject clitics’, which have been discussed in more detail in Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2020). As this paper is explicitly descriptive, our future research will focus on the formal analysis of these structures involving clitics, in order to decide whether they illustrate the preservation of archaic Romance features and/or mixed (Romance and Slavic) linearization properties in the verbal cluster (position viz. auxiliaries and other elements of the verbal cluster) – or even a mixed system, idiosyncratic to Istro-Romanian, which emerged in this language contact setting.

2. The main features of pronominal clitics in Istro-Romanian

2.1. Interpolation

Several constituents may intervene between the pronominal clitic and its verbal host, a phenomenon known in the literature as interpolation since Chénery (1905):

- (1) a. *reĭ* *te* *tu maritǎ*
 AUX.COND.2SG CL.ACC.2SG you mary.INF
 dupa mire? (AK, 338)
 after me
 ‘Would you marry me?’

- b. *Mântese* *văca* *pomije* *álióia* (SF, 66)
 before CL.REFL.PASS cow milk.PRES.3SG or sheep
 ‘Before one should milk the cow or the sheep’
- c. *La voi* *se* *cum zíče?* (SF, 72)
 at you.PL CL.REFL.PASS how say.PRES.3SG
 ‘How do you say it in your language?’
- d. *Ur lic* *âl* *ósele dóru* (SF, 159)
 a bit CL.ACC.M.3SG bones hurt.PRES.3PL
 ‘his bones hurt a bit’
- e. *Me* *tu* *coností?* (TC, 8)
 CL.ACC.1SG you.SG know.PRES.2SG
 ‘Do you know me?’
- f. *cum ăț* *io* *zic* (TC, 35)
 how CL.DAT.3SG I tell.PRES.1SG
 ‘how I tell you’

2.2. Inversion

Also, certain clitics occur in inverted structures, namely they are placed after the verb in two configurations: V-CL (2a-c) and V-AUX-CL (2d).

- (2) a. *Clâma* *se* *Mírco* (SF, 93)
 call.PRES.3SG CL.REFL.3SG Mirco
 ‘He is called Mircu’
- b. *Vedét-âl?* (SF, 134)
 see.PRES.2PL=CL.ACC.M.3SG
 ‘Do you see him?’
- c. *io-m* *zis* *ke* *reș* *vrę*
 I=AUX.PERF.1SG say.PPLE that AUX.COND.1SG want.INF
maritâ-me *dupa fil’u lu jardińeru* (SP, 9)
 marry.INF=CL.REFL.1SG after son GEN gardener
 ‘I said that I would like to marry the gardener’s son’
- d. *și* *pus-a* *vo* *ăn*
 and put.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3SG CL.ACC.F.3.SG in
cadere cuhej (TC, 81)
 bucket boil.INF
 ‘and he put in the bucket to boil’

2.3. Cliticization on infinitives

Cliticization in typical restructuring contexts actually shows variation, with two patterns being available: either the clitic is hosted by the short infinitive (3), it raises to the domain of the main verb and adjoins

to the auxiliary (4) or it attaches to the lexical verb (9b). Restructuring thus appears to be optional. We should also underline the fact that Istro-Romanian allows restructuring with a lexical motion verb such as *a merge* ‘go’, a pattern which is not attested in old and modern (Daco-)Romanian.

- (3) a. *Pa a mes cl'emă-I* (TC, 51)
 then AUX.PERF.3SG go.PPLE call.INF=CL.ACC.M.3SG
 ‘then he went to call him’
- b. *av iă mes ăntrebă-I*
 AUX.PERF.3SG she go.PPLE ask.INF=CL.ACC.M.3SG
ce jeleş de ciră (TC, 134)
 what wants of dine.INF
 ‘she went to ask him what he wanted for dinner’

2.4. Clitic climbing

Whereas in standard modern Romanian only the verb *putea* (‘can, be able to’) typically occurs in restructuring configurations, Istro-Romanian has a bigger set of verbs which can undergo restructuring. Restructuring involves two verbs, the second of which is in the infinitive, and is diagnosed by clitic climbing from the lower verb to the higher verb. Thus, in Istro-Romanian, several verbs can trigger restructuring besides the modal verb *can* (6a): the motion verb *go* (4) and the modal verbs ‘want’ (5a-c) and ‘must’ (5d), and the epistemic verb ‘know’ (5e)³.

- (4) a. *L-a mes cl'emă.* (TC, 52)
 CL.ACC.M.3SG=AUX.PERF.3SG go.PPLE call.INF
 ‘then he went to call him’
- b. *iă I'-a mes țere* (SP, 16)
 she CL.ACC.M.3PL=AUX.PERF.3SG go.PPLE look.for.INF
 ‘she went to look for them’
- c. *je zițe ke-o mēre vedē* (SP, 32)
 he says that=CL.ACC.F.3SG goes see.INF
 ‘he says that he is going (there) to see it’

³ The example in (i) features clitic climbing from an infinitival relative selected by the verb *know*; while this is not a typical restructuring context, it can be assimilated to restructuring as the embedded verb is a bare short infinitive, just like in the typical restructuring situations.

- (i) *Ie-ț va ști ce spure* (TC, 27)
 he=CL.DAT.2SG AUX.FUT.3SG know.INF what tell.INF
 ‘He will know what to tell you’

(i) AUX-CL-VERB:

- (7) a. **ău** **se** **duș** *la ea* (SF, 96)
 AUX.PERF.3SG CL.REFL.PASS take.PPLE at her
 ‘they were taken to her’
- b. *măia* **av-o** **sprocâlnit** (AK, 327)
 mother AUX.PERF.3SG=CL.ACC.F.3SG curse.PPLE
 ‘Her mother cursed her’
- c. **Veț-âl** **cunoste?** (SF, 55)
 AUX.FUT.2PL=CL.ACC.M.3SG know.INF
 ‘Will you know him?’
- d. *Se nu,* **voi** **te** **ucide** (TC, 90)
 if not AUX.FUT.1SG CL.ACC.2SG kill.INF
 ‘If not, I will kill you’
- e. **voi** **o** **lă** *cu mire* (TC, 40)
 AUX.FUT.1SG CL.ACC.F.3SG take.INF with me
 ‘I will take her with me’
- f. *iel’* **vor-o** **țere** (SP, 1)
 they AUX.FUT.3PL=CL.ACC.F.3SG ask.INF
 ‘they will ask it’

(ii) VERB-AUX-CL:

- (8) a. *și* **pus-ă** **vo** (TC, 81)
 and put.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3SG CL.ACC.F.3SG
ăn cadere *cuhej*
 in pot cook.INF
 ‘and he put her [the woman] in the pot, in order to cook’
- b. *și* **lăt-av-o** *căse*
 and take.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3SG=CL.ACC.F.3SG home
cu sire (SP, 11)
 with himself
 ‘and he took her home with himself’

(iii) VERB-CL-AUX:

- (9) a. *lăt-a* *iel’* *băstele* *dispre* *ăsiri*
 take.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3PL they saddle.PL out.of donkey.PL
si **legăt** *l’a* *de marún* (AK, 331)
 and tie.PPLE CL.ACC.M.3PL=AUX.PERF.3PL of chestnut tree
 ‘they took the saddles of the donkeys and they tied them up of the chestnut tree’
- b. **Mes-l-a** *cl’emă* (TC, 52)
 go.PPLE=CL.ACC.M.3SG=AUX.PERF.3SG call.INF
 ‘he went to call him’

(iv) CL-VERB-AUX:

- (10) a. *Cum vo scapul'eit-a?* (TC, 91)
 how CL.ACC.F.3SG save.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3SG
 'How did he save her?'
- b. *lât-a Madalena ân brăț mortę*
 take.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3SG Madalena.ACC in arm dead.F.SG
și vo dus-a la ușa lu
 and CL.ACC.F.3SG carry.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3SG at door GEN
Petru (TC, 98)
 Peter
 'he took Magdalena in his arms and carried her at Peter's door'
- c. *Ontrat pus-a Madalena ân bărșę*
 once put.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3SG Madalena in bag
și vo legât-a (TC, 98)
 and CL.ACC.F.3SG tie.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3SG
 'At once he put Magdalena in the bag and tied her up'
- d. *vo ve'zut-a nușkarlji* (AD, 42)
 CL.ACC.F.3SG see.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3SG someone
 'someone saw her'
- e. *je-vo zegl'edit-a*
 he=CL.ACC.F.3SG view.PPLE=AUX.PERF.3SG
și ȳă l'-a zis (SP, 23)
 and she CL.ACC.M.3SG=AUX.PERF.3SG say.PPLE
 'he saw her and she told him (...)'

(v) AUX-VB-CL:

- (11) a. *pac av cărstît-o* (SF, 136)
 then AUX.PERF.3PL christen.PPLE=CL.ACC.F.3SG
 'then they christened her'

(vi) CL-NEG-AUX:

- (12) *tu-m n-ai fost poredneș* (SP, 29)
 you=CL.DAT.1SG not=AUX.PERF.2SG be.PPLE bad
 'you did not was bad to me'

This degree of variation in the placement of pronominal clitics is virtually unknown in old and modern Romanian. Variation with respect to the position of the auxiliary is particularly relevant, as it preliminarily indicates that, in Rivero's (1997) terminology, two cliticization sites are active in Istro-Romanian, a C-oriented site, specific to Wackernagel, 2nd position clitics, and an I-oriented site, the general option of the Romance languages.

3. Conclusions

This paper has presented an empirical description of the most important distributional features of Istro-Romanian pronominal clitics. It is easy to notice that Istro-Romanian shares features, on the one hand, with old Romanian/old Romance languages – for example, interpolation and V-CL inversion are attested both in old Romanian, and in the older (and, under very limited circumstances, modern) phases of other Romance languages (see Nicolae 2019: ch. 2 and ch. 3) – and, on the other hand, with neighbouring Croatian (e.g. cliticization on bare short infinitives in typical restructuring contexts; Čamdžić and Hudson 2002). It is the chore of future scholarship to determine more exactly the importance of language contact and the share of old Romanian/old Romance inherited features in the syntactic make up of Istro-Romanian.

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