VOICE IN ISTRO-ROMANIAN. EVIDENCE FROM CORPUS ANALYSIS

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1. The Istro-Romanian variety

Istro-Romanian forms two (once large) groups: the northern group – the village of Žejane, and the southern group made of several villages, most prominently Šušnjevica. Istro-Romanians live at the Croatian-Italian border, in a multi-ethnic and multilingual environment and language contact especially with Croatian is widely accepted (for details, see Caragiu Marioțeanu (1977: 213-5), Kovačec (1984: 550-4), Vrzić & Singler (2016: 51)).

Typologically, it is an Eastern Romance variety, alongside Daco-Romanian, Aromanian and Megleno-Romanian. The name to designate their language differs according to the region; it is usually a word derived from the name of the community or village where they live, thus those of the northern group call it *Zheyanski* [ʒe'jʌnski], whereas in the south, they call it *Vlashki* ['vlaʃki] (for current research, see Vrzić & Singler (2016: 51-5)). The term *Istro-Romanian* (for both the language and the population) has been culturally established, mainly to show its connection to Romanian; traditionally, it has been considered a dialect of Romanian (Caragiu Marioțeanu 1977: 213, Kovačec 1984: 550-1). In the sense of this article, the word *language* refers to what Istro-Romanians speak, and has no intention whatsoever of going into the language/dialect dispute.

2. Voice in Istro-Romanian

The same with the other (Eastern) Romance languages and varieties, Istro-Romanian follows the traditional pattern distinguishing mainly between active vs. passive constructions. There is no synthetic passive in tensed forms, and the particularity of the southern varieties of Istro-Romanian is the use of the auxiliary *veri* 'come', under the influence of Italian:

(1) Vaca   ***virit-a***   uțisę
     cow.DEF   come.PART-has.AUX   killed.F
     "The cow was killed"

(Kovačec 1984: 577)

The dimensions of voice in the grammatical system of Istro-Romanian do not differ from standard Romanian, in the sense that it is organized as active (default, unmarked, as in (2a)) vs. passive (marked either with tensed BE forms + participle, as in (2b), or with SE, as in (2c)) – for transitive verbs, and active/personal vs. impersonal – for intransitive verbs (for Romanian data, see Pană Dindelegan 2010: 264-8).

(2) a. Cum **kemåţ**   voi?
        how   call.2.pl   you
        "What do you call it?"

(Sârbu & Frățilă 1998: 52)

     b. Čel'i miseţ **zabraneno**   **-åv**   **fost**   de   lovi.
        those   months forbidden   has   been   DE   hunt
        "Hunting was forbidden those months"

(Sârbu & Frățilă 1998: 300)

     c. Și   cum   li   **s-åv**   muiåra   **kemåt**?
          and   how   his.DAT.POS   SE-has.AUX   woman.DEF   called
        "What was his wife's name?"

(Sârbu & Frățilă 1998: 48)

Given the exclusive oral use of Istro-Romanian and the pragmatic value of the passive voice, the corpus barely shows any examples of passive constructions with tensed BE + participle. Thus, the example provided above in (2b) is particular, to the extent that the form of the adjective does not resemble a typical Istro-Romanian participle, is included more for semantic and analogic reasons under BE passive constructions. As of now, I have not identified any proper examples in the literature, but I will write down some I have recorded myself during the field work session carried out at Istro-Romanian communities in June 2016.

3. Conclusions

Voice in Istro-Romanian shows many similarities with standard (and regional) Romanian, mainly due to their Easter Romance status. Although not bringing methodological or scientific breakthroughs, my contribution based on corpus analysis brings evidence on the vitality of voice as a pragma-syntactic category in Istro-Romanian.

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