

# ADJECTIVES IN ISTRO-ROMANIAN. ON THE INFLUENCE OF LANGUAGE CONTACT ON WORD ORDER<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** In this paper we investigate a novel set of data showing that a Romance variety (Istro-Romanian) manifests a strong preference for the prenominal placement of adjectives. We first provide a description of the position of Istro-Romanian qualifying and classifying/relational adjectives with respect to the head noun, and of the ordering of complement-taking adjectives. Taking stock of this corpus analysis and corroborating it with previous research on the word order of adjectives in old Romanian, we show that the word order patterns of adjectives found in Istro-Romanian can be explained either (i) as an (internal) archaic feature preserved from an older phase of Romanian or (ii) as an effect of the Croatian influence in a language contact setting (external feature); (iii) other features are, however, found both in old Romanian and in Croatian, yielding ‘convergence’.

**Keywords:** Istro-Romanian, adjective, word order, language contact, convergence.

## 1. INTRODUCTION. THE STATE OF THE ART

The position of adjectives in Istro-Romanian is among the interesting features pertaining to word order in this dialect, Istro-Romanian syntax being a unique mixture of Romance and Slavic features. More precisely, the syntactic properties of Istro-Romanian reflect both 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 10<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries), and language contact, especially with Croatian, but also with the dialects spoken in the north of Italy.

Previous literature discusses certain peculiarities of word order in Istro-Romanian, highlighting either the Romance-Slavic mixture or the apparently free word order, which actually reflects the fact that two grammars are at play:

“Word order is unusual and does not preserve a well-delineated stability, because it wavers between the Latin and the Slavonic” (Popovici 1914: 111, *our translation*)

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“Accustomed to the relatively free word order of Croatian, where syntactic functions are more frequently expressed morphemically, the speakers of Istro-Romanian, all of whom are bilinguals, often transfer into their language this free word order of Croatian even 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, *our translation*)

This variation in word order also characterises adjectives: although Istro-Romanian is a Romance variety, there are many contexts where adjectives are (unexpectedly) prenominal. The ordering of adjectives in the Istro-Romanian nominal phrase has been previously discussed by Zegrean (2012), who argues that Istro-Romanian adjectives are prenominal as a result of the influence of the Čakavian dialect. Zegrean (2012) also identifies the special conditions under which Istro-Romanian adjectives can be (but are not necessarily) postnominal: (i) the adjective expresses a general (or intrinsic) characteristic (“quality”) of the noun (1a); (ii) the adjective is contrastive (2b); (iii) more than one adjective occur in the nominal phrase (1c)<sup>4</sup>; (iv) two or more adjectives are coordinated (1d); (v) the adjective denotes an ethnonym and is derived with the suffix *-an*<sup>5</sup> (1e); (vi) the adjective is restrictive, probably originating in a relative clauses (1f); (vii) the adjective is participial (1g); (viii) the adjective takes a prepositional object (1h)<sup>6</sup> or a comparative complement (1i).

- (1) a. *negrę pâre / pâre negrę*  
black bread bread black  
'black bread'
- b. *Bevu viru âb, ne viru negru.*  
drink.IND.PRES.1SG wine.DEF white not wine.DEF black  
'I am drinking white wine, not black wine'
- c. *tirer mușat fečor / tirer fečor mușat*  
young handsome boy young boy handsome
- d. *Mę (mușata șî märe) cåsa (mușata șî märe)*  
my beautiful and big house beautiful and big  
*ei prope de märe.*  
is close to sea  
'My big beautiful house is close to the sea'
- e. *Io cunosc ur fečor taljan.*  
I know.IND.PRES.1SG a boy Italian  
'I know an Italian boy'

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, Zegrean (2012) notices that the cases in which the noun is sandwiched between two adjectives are difficult to assimilate to Croatian, where all adjectives are prenominal.

<sup>5</sup> Zegrean (2012) also argues that nationality adjectives ending in *-ski*, borrowed from Croatian, are obligatorily prenominal, a fact which is not supported by our data.

<sup>6</sup> This is also attested in the Čakavian dialect:

*oriži pomeșani s krvun* (Čakavian – Kovačec 1971: 77; Zegrean 2012)  
rice mixed with blood  
'rice mixed with blood'

- f. *Io-m*                    *vezut*    *doi (otrovni)*    *șarpel'i*            *(otrovni)*.  
 I=AUX.PERF.1SG see.PTCPTwo poisonous    snakes.DEF            poisonous  
 'I have seen two poisonous snakes'
- g. *(uscâte)* *lēmne*    *(uscâte)*  
 dry    wood    dry
- h. *orižile*    *zmișeite* *cu sânže*  
 rice.DEF mixed    with blood
- i. *hlêbe*    *de pâre*    *âbe*            *ca ši*            *lâptele*  
 loaves    of bread white    as            milk.DEF  
 'loves of bread white as milk'

When both the prenominal and the postnominal position are possible, the speakers seem not to associate different meanings with them (1f, g). As Zegrean (2012) mentions, classifying/relational adjectives can occur either preminally (2a) or postminally (2b).

- (2) a.            *osnovna*                                    *școla*  
                   primary                                    school
- b.            *besereca*                                    *catolica*  
                   church                                    Catholic

Therefore, the previous literature notes the variation in word order and the fact that Istro-Romanian adjectives, although often placed preminally, do not perfectly mirror the Croatian placement.

In what follows, we will present the data we have collected and we will bring into discussion the importance of old Romanian data, given that Istro-Romanian – a historical dialect which most probably separated from Daco-Romanian around the 10<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries – preserved in some respects certain archaic features of Romanian (see also Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2018, 2021). Our hypothesis is that the current word order of Istro-Romanian adjectives generally manifests itself as a 'convergence' feature (determined both by internal factors, i.e. features inherited from early Daco-Romance, and external factors, i.e. contact with Croatian) in the sense defined by Hickey (2010).

## 2. CORPUS STUDY

In this section we present the data collected mainly from Petru Neiescu's dictionary (in which all available written Istro-Romanian corpora have been included) alongside certain pieces of data collected during our fieldwork in August–September 2021. We focus on the placement of qualifying and classifying/relational adjectives in the nominal phrase (2.1), and then we look at the position of complement-taking adjectives (2.2).

### 2.1. The position of adjectives in the nominal phrase

#### 2.1.1. Qualifying adjectives

Qualifying (including participial) adjectives show an obvious preference for the prenominal position. The examples in (3) mainly reflect the data extracted from the available written corpus.

- (3) a. *amânânat* *jir* (DDI-I: 19) / *amânânaș* *frut* (DDI-I: 19)  
 overripe fruit overripe.PL fruits  
 ‘overripe fruit’ ‘overripe fruits’
- b. *Vire* *mai apoi o betare* *babe* (DDI-I: 26)  
 come.IND.PRES.3SG more late an old old-woman  
 ‘An old lady comes afterwards’
- c. *Un betar carstijan mes-a ribe*  
 a old man go.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3SG fish  
*lovii cu barca* (DDI-I: 230)  
 catch.INF with boat.DEF  
 ‘An old man went fishing by boat’
- d. *Lu me mul'ere rabei saca zi*  
 DAT my wife need.IND.PRES.3SG every day  
*nov bahrhan.* (DDI-I: 101)  
 new dress  
 ‘My wife needs a new dress every day.’
- e. *Cand a zelit [tuketita], maia*  
 when AUX.PERF.3SG water.PTCP zucchini.DEF mother.DEF  
*l'a dat*  
 CL.DAT.3SG=AUX.PERF.3SG give.PTCP  
*un musat bahrhan* (DDI-I: 101)  
 a beautiful dress  
 ‘After mother watered the zucchini, she gave her a beautiful dress’
- f. *anmestite-n musate birhane* (DDI-I: 101)  
 dressed=in beautiful dress  
 ‘dressed in a beautiful dress’
- g. *a coșata beca* (DDI-I: 290)  
 a branchy willow  
 ‘a branchy willow’
- h. *cuheita apa* (DDI-I: 319) / *cuheita carne* (DDI-I: 319)  
 boiled water boiled meat  
 ‘boiled water’ ‘boiled meat’
- i. *deștard ca* (DDI-II: 74)  
 restive horse  
 ‘restive horse’
- j. *uscât yarm* (DDI-II: 201)  
 dry bush  
 ‘dry bush’
- k. *Je l'au dat hladne ape* (DDI-II: 265)  
 he CL.DAT.3SG=AUX.PERF.3SG give.PTCP cold water  
 ‘He gave him cold water.’
- l. *masna zema* (DDI-III: 91)  
 oily soup  
 ‘oily soup’

- m. *De ml'ăcân lâpte lucra se cășu* (DDI-III: 141)  
of warm milk make.INF CL.REFL cheese-curd  
‘Cheese curd is made of warm milk’
- n. *nebumbeța bâcva* (DDI-III: 202)  
swollen barrel  
‘swollen barrel’
- o. *necârstî fečór* (DDI-III: 203)  
unbaptized child  
‘unbaptized child’
- p. *Čă n-ă fost običnile că* (DDI-III: 249)  
that not=AUX.PERF.3SG be.PTCP ordinary horse  
‘That was not an ordinary horse’
- q. *Sveta Obitel'* (DDI-III: 250)  
Holy Family  
‘the Holy Family’
- r. *óblačen čer* (DDI-III: 251)  
cloudy sky  
‘cloudy sky’
- s. *delavsca jensca* (DDI-II: 67)  
industrious woman  
‘industrious woman’

The data in (4), recently collected, support the same idea: the prenominal position of qualifying adjectives is also preferred in present-day Istro-Romanian:

- (4) a. *după novu leto, după nou ân* (2.09.2021, Žejane)  
after new year after new year  
‘after the New Year’
- b. *cesta mai betâr fil'u* (2.09.2021, Žejane)  
this more old son  
‘the oldest son’
- c. *Șúla ă făcut betârii omeri* (2.09.2021, Žejane)  
school AUX.PERF.3PL make.PTCP old people.DEF  
‘The school was built by the old people’
- d. *Io am betâra căsa* (1.09.2021, Šušnjevíca)  
I have old house  
‘I have an old house.’
- e. *Mușâta mul'ere aveț* (30.08.2021, Šušnjevíca)  
beautiful.F.SG wife have.PRES.2PL  
‘You have a beautiful wife.’

There are several adjectives which may occur both prenominally and postnominally, without any visible difference in interpretation:

- (5) a. *Noi dulče café bem* (SF 94)  
we sweet coffee drink.IND.PRES.1PL  
‘We drink sweet coffee.’

- a'. *Io ıda volės* *ıcār* *i ai dıle* (SF 94)  
I a.lot want.IND.PRES.1SG sugar and tea sweet  
'I want a lot of sugar and sweet tea.'
- b. *Av avut doi mici feciorici* (TC 128)  
AUX.PERF.3SG have.PTCP two little children  
'they had two little boys'
- b'. *ke-mi pur-um pul mic* (DDI-III: 124)  
that=CL.DAT.1SG put.IND.PRES.2SG=a chick little  
'you have to put a little piece (= a little chick) for me (in the snuff-box)'
- c. *De o bnd de pol', mice arb,*  
of a part of field small grass  
*de te bnd, mre arb* (DDI-III: 85)  
of other part big grass  
'In one part of the field there was small grass, whereas on the other side there was tall grass.'
- c'. *Tu ti un haiduc mare* (DDI-III: 86)  
you be.IND.PRES.2SG a outlaw great  
'You are a great outlaw.'
- d. *O vota fost-a um boyt cmet* (DDI-I: 132)  
once be.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3SG a rich peasant  
'There was once a rich peasant.'
- d'. *Untrt c-a fost un conte bogt* (DDI-I: 131)  
once that=AUX.PERF.3SG be.PTCP a count rich  
'There was once a rich count.'
- e. *i fino atnce-vo splu*  
and well then=CL.ACC.F.SG wash.IND.PRES.1SG  
*din curta pa* (SF 127)  
with clean water  
'And then I wash it well with fresh water.'
- e'. *Lu cui fusere pa curte va*  
DAT who.DAT be.FUT.3SG water.DEF clean AUX.FUT.3SG  
*f sr* (DDI-I: 334)  
be.INF healthy  
'He whose water is clean will be healthy'
- f. *re bra pnzie, bra* (SF 142)  
has good pension good  
'She has quite a good pension.'
- f'. *N-m... pnzie bra...* (SF 100)  
not=have pension good  
'I don't have a good pension.'
- g. *Oa abe negru ml'e zlez* (DDI-III: 209)  
sheep.DEF white black lamb give.birth.IND.PRES.3SG  
'The white sheep delivers a black lamb.'
- g'. *negra cra* (DDI-III: 208)  
black bitch  
'black bitch'

- h. *E țâsta mârșava cârma se zdrobșavo* (DDI-III: 104)  
and that lean meat CL.REFL crush.IND.PRES.3SG  
'And this lean meat gets crushed.'
- h'. *blâga mârșave* (DDI-III: 104)  
cattle weak
- i. *blaxoslovita âpa* (DDI-I: 124)  
blessed water  
'holy water'
- i'. *âpe blagoslovite* (DDI-I: 124)  
water blessed  
'holy water'
- j. *Verit-mň-a-n câsa*  
come.PTCP=CL.DAT.1SG=AUX.PERF.3SG=in house  
*necunoscut cârștișan* (DDI-III: 204)  
unknown man  
'There came an un unknown man in my house'
- j'. *un om necunoscut* (DDI-III: 204)  
un man unknown  
'an unknown man'

Our recent data seem to indicate a preference for the prenominal order of these adjectives in present-day Istro-Romanian:

- (6) a. *Aș avut o mică casă* (2.09.2021, Žejane)  
AUX.PERF.2PL have.PTCP a small house  
'You had a small house.'
- b. *Avș miči fečior* (30.08.2021, Šušnjevică)  
have.IMPF.3PL little children  
'They had small children.'
- c. *negru vir* (2.09.2021, Žejane)  
black wine  
'red vine'

However, a considerable number of qualifying (including participial) adjectives occur in postnominal position:

- (7) a. *fečor âmflât* (DDI-I: 55)  
child obese  
'obese child'
- b. *boșii âmpoloviț* (DDI-I: 58)  
oxen.DEF yoked.PL  
'yoked oxen'
- c. *pușe âncârgeșta* (DDI-I: 63)  
rifle loaded  
'loaded rifle'

- d. *nevęasta* **ęcrunęta** (DDI-I: 65)  
 wife.DEF crowned.F.SG  
 ‘a crowned wife’
- e. *frúnzele* **cazute** (DDI-I: 219)  
 leaves.DEF fallen.F.PL  
 ‘the fallen leaves’
- f. *besęde* **conoscute** (DDI-I: 270)  
 word known.F.SG  
 ‘known words’
- g. *Vęca* **crepęta** *fosta a lu* *ęela om* (DDI-I: 303)  
 cow.DEF dead.F.SG be.PTCP GEN that man  
 ‘The dead cow belonged to that man.’
- h. *and’elit’u* **ęuvarit’u** (DDI-II: 48)  
 angel.DEF guardian  
 ‘guardian angel’
- i. *viru* **faturęit** (DDI-II: 144)  
 wine counterfeit  
 ‘counterfeit wine’
- j. *viru* **meşturęit** (DDI-III: 121)  
 wine counterfeit  
 ‘counterfeit wine’
- k. *cęrne* **frigeęta** (DDI-II: 181)  
 meat roasted.F  
 ‘roasted meat’
- l. *őja* **męrhasta** (DDI-III: 102)  
 sheep ragged.F  
 ‘ragged sheep’
- m. *peri* **navidęit** (DDI-III: 196)  
 hair curly  
 ‘curly hair’
- n. *do ęebule* **opęręite** (DDI-III: 278-279)  
 two onions fried.F.PL  
 ‘two fried onions’
- o. *oşór* **oplodit** (DDI-III: 279)  
 egg fertilized  
 ‘fertilized egg’
- p. *slanina* **ostaręita** (DDI-III: 289)  
 bacon rancid.F  
 ‘rancid bacon’
- q. *mora* **nenacl’eptita** (DDI-III: 211)  
 mill unlocked  
 ‘unlocked mill’



### 2.1.2. Classifying/Relational adjectives

Classifying adjectives also occur more frequently in prenominal position:

- (8) a. *cându cuvintu* *ân čacavski dijalekt* (DDI-II: 7)  
when speak.IND.PRES.1SG in Čakavian dialect  
'when I speak the Čakavian dialect'
- b. *dalmatinske pesme* (DDI-II: 52)  
Dalmatian songs  
'Dalmatian songs'
- c. *caj în hârvâțca limba* (DDI-III: 89)  
like in Croatian language.DEF  
'like in the Croatian language'
- d. *dêlavnic ali dêlavna zi* (DDI-II: 67)  
working.day or working day  
'workday or working day'
- e. *Io sâm grad'evinski stroiac* (DDI-II: 228)  
I be.IND.PRES.1SG of.building engineer  
'I am a construction engineer'
- f. *letni carnaval* (DDI-III: 32)  
of.summer carnival  
'summer carnival'
- g. *Lâje morski puz* (DDI-III: 151)  
take.IND.PRES.3SG of.sea snail  
'he takes sea snails'
- h. *Pacl'enske use s-a rescl'ide* (DDI-III: 304)  
hellish door CL.REFL=AUX.FUT.3SG reopen.FUT  
'The hellish door will reopen'
- i. *pășnile care* (DDI-III: 320)  
shepherd dog  
'shepherd dog'
- j. *liva mâra* (DDI-III: 42)  
left hand  
'left hand'
- k. *si-mestit-s-a-n muske robe* (DDI-III: 172)  
and=dress.PTCP=CL.REFL=AUX.PERF.3SG=in manly suit  
'she put on a men's suit'
- l. *mutast omir* (DDI-III: 173)  
mute men  
'mute men'

Our recent data support the claim that the prenominal position is the preferred one in the present-day language:

- (9) a. *în privatnîi cåse* (2.09.2021, Žejane)  
in private houses  
'in private houses'

- b. *Avem a noastră zvončasca grupa* (2.09.2021, Žejane)  
 have.PRES.1PL GEN our bell.ringing group  
 ‘We have our bell ringing group.’
- c. *Lucra în șcuole rumânska limbe* (30.08.2021, Šušnjevice)  
 work.IMPF.3SG in school Romanian language  
 ‘She was teaching the Romanian language in school.’
- d. *mineralnaia apă, nu* (1.09.2021, Šušnjevice)  
 mineral water no  
 ‘sparkling water, no’

However, there are a significant number of classifying adjectives which occur in postnominal position:

- (10) a. *Ăm mușcaraț dalmatinaț* (DDI-III: 171)  
 have.IND.PRES.1SG husband Dalmatian  
 ‘I have a Dalmatian husband.’
- b. *slóvele kírilske* (DDI-II: 355)  
 letter.DEF Cyrillic.F.PL  
 ‘the Cyrillic letters’
- c. *Dus-l’-av-o la șterna comunske* (DDI-I: 268)  
 take.PTCP=CL.DAT.3SG=AUX.PERF.3PL=CL.F.ACC.3SG at  
 șterna communal  
 ‘They took it to the communal șterna for him.’
- d. *ocli čeleste* (DDI-II: 21)  
 eyes of.sky  
 ‘sky-like (=blue) eyes’
- e. *brecu lovski* (DDI-III: 42)  
 dog hunting  
 ‘hunting dog’

We therefore observe a propensity for classifying adjectives to occupy a prenominal position.

### 2.1.3. Two adjectives

When there are two adjectives in the nominal phrase, two options appear to be available: they either occur both prenominally (11a-d), staked or coordinated, or one is prenominal, and the other one is postnominal (11e-g)<sup>7</sup>:

- (11) a. *ân lung râvân pâr* (DDI-III: 57)  
 a long straight hair  
 ‘a long straight hair’

<sup>7</sup> In the examples in (11f-g), there is a comma in front of the postnominal adjective; as these examples are from a written corpus, it is not clear whether this comma signals an intonational pause and, therefore, a parenthetical/appositive (or a reduced relative clause) reading of the adjective, or whether the comma is just conventional.

- b. *prin mar și șcur boșche* (DDI-III: 86)  
in large and dark forest  
'in the large and dark forest'
- c. *novę partizânske vojske* (DDI-III: 316)  
new of.partisans army  
'the new army of the partisans'
- d. *Io âm făcút italiânsca ósnova scóla* (SF 56)  
I AUX.PERF.1SG make.PTCP Italian primary school  
'I have studied in the Italian primary school.'
- e. *Ța fost-a un märe om negru* (DDI-III: 208)  
that be.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3SG a big man black  
'This was a big black man.'
- f. *Iă fost-a o märe gospę, bogäte* (DDI-I: 132)  
she BE.PTCP=AUX.PERF.3SG a great lady rich  
'She was a great rich lady.'
- g. *Are mușăt per, navidęit* (DDI-III: 196)  
have.IND.PRES.3SG beautiful hair curly  
'He has beautiful curly hair.'

## 2.2. The word order of complements to adjectives

In complex adjectival phrases, with complements realized as prepositional phrases, adjectives show a preference for the postnominal position (12a, b), but the prenominal one is also possible (12c); with verbal complements, only postnominal adjectives appear to be possible (12d):

- (12) a. *câsa coprite cu slâme* (DDI-I: 274)  
house.DEF covered with straw.PL  
'the house covered with straw'
- b. *Ĭuve furu boĭi ocruniț cu rózele* (DDI-III: 261)  
where be.FUT oxen.DEF crown.PTCP with roses.DEF  
'where the oxen will be crowned with roses'
- c. *dupa tesâru maritäte jenske* (M. & R. Doričić, p.c.)  
with emperor marry.PTCP women  
'a women married to the emperor'
- d. *Tu nu ști ânmeņăt mere*  
you not be.PRES.2SG accustomed go.INF  
*drumí amanât* (DDI-18: 6)  
sleep.INF late  
'You are not accustomed to going to sleep late.'

### 3. OLD ROMANIAN AND CROATIAN

#### 3.1. Old Romanian

As mentioned in section 1, there are many similarities between old Romanian (roughly 1500 to 1780) and Istro-Romanian; most probably, Istro-Romanian separated from the common branch of Romanian between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, which explains the commonalities between old Romanian and Istro-Romanian and the preservation of certain archaic features in Istro-Romanian.

Although modern Romanian, like the modern Romance languages, shows a clear preference for postnominal qualifying adjectives and allows only postnominal classifying/relational adjectives (Cornilescu and Nicolae 2016), in old Romanian the word order restrictions were not yet established (see Brăescu 2016, Brăescu, Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2015, Nicolae 2019).

The most salient feature of old Romanian adjectives is the possibility for relational adjectives to occur in prenominal position (13) (Brăescu 2016: 401-402). This ordering is far from being accidental, since the ratio of prenominal relational adjectives can go up to 73% in texts such as CL.1570 (for details, see the quantitative evidence in Brăescu 2016: 402).

- (13) a. *glăsi* *evreiasca* *limbă* (CV.1563–83: 18<sup>v</sup>)  
 speak.PS.3SG Hebrew.F.SG.DEF language  
 ‘he spoke the Hebrew language’
- b. *cu* *catholiceasca* *besearică* (BB.1688: XXXI)  
 with Catholic.F.SG.DEF church  
 ‘with the Catholic church’

Moreover, in old Romanian the noun could also be ‘sandwiched’ between two adjectives (14a), a possibility which is also attested in Istro-Romanian (see (11e-g)). Yet another relevant feature of old Romanian complex adjectival phrases is the possibility of prenominal adjectives taking complements (which are placed either before (14b) or after (14c) the adjective):

- (14) a. *ce* *pămentești* *suflete* *drăcești* (CV.1563–83: 63<sup>v</sup>)  
 but earthly souls devilish  
 ‘but earthly devilish souls’
- b. *de Dumnezeu* *purtători* *părinți ai noștri* (CC<sup>2</sup>.1581: 182)  
 of God bearer.PL parents GEN our  
 ‘of God-bearer our parents’
- c. *făcătoare* *de minuni* *icoane* (GCond.1762: 288)  
 making.F.PL of wonder.PL icon.PL  
 ‘wonder-making icons’

#### 3.2. Croatian

Discussion of Croatian is relevant when analysing word order issues in Istro-Romanian because of the extensive language contact between Istro-Romanian and Croatian, which, historically, has had two dimensions: contact with standard Croatian, the official

language also used in school, and contact with the Čakavian dialect (the local dialect spoken in Istria), in a bilingual setting (Maiden 2016: 91).

In Croatian, both qualifying (15a, b) and relational (15c, d) adjectives usually appear prenominally (Mateusz-Milan *et al.* 2011, Mihalicek 2012):

- (15) a. **dobro** *dijete* (Mateusz-Milan *et al.* 2011: 32)  
good child
- b. **novi** *auto* (Mihalicek 2012)  
new car
- c. **drvena** *klupa* (Mateusz-Milan *et al.* 2011: 32)  
wooden bench
- d. **kozje** *mlijeko* (Mateusz-Milan *et al.* 2011: 33)  
of.goat milk  
'goat's milk'

The postnominal position is also available, but is less common, as is the case for all South Slavic languages (Siewierska and Uhlirová 1998: 134). Complement-taking adjectives appear postnominally (Mateusz-Milan *et al.* 2011: 43). With non-complement-taking adjectives, the postnominal order is primarily a stylistic marker used in a lofty, literary style (see Mateusz-Milan *et al.* 2011: 44 and references). The postnominal order seems to be available to most scalar and deadverbial adjectives – i.e. those which are compatible with this type of style. It may also be used to express emotional involvement using the vocative case (16a,b) and various biblical references (16c,d) (Mateusz-Milan *et al.* 2011: 44)

- (16) a. *prijatelju* **stari**  
friend.VOC old.VOC  
'my old friend'
- b. *svinjo* **pokvarena**  
scoundrel.VOC dirty.VOC  
'you dirty scoundrel'
- c. *život* **vjecni**  
life eternal  
'eternal life'
- d. *Duh* **sveti**  
spirit holy  
'Holy Spirit'

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

This brief survey of Istro-Romanian data has focused on the nominal-phrase internal position of adjectives, as compared to old Romanian and Croatian, and allows us to formulate the following conclusions:

(i) In Istro-Romanian, the position of the adjective (qualifying or relational) with respect to the nominal head is either prenominal or postnominal, with a clear preference for the prenominal;

(ii) This type of word order variation is also attested in Croatian (the language with which Istro-Romanian has been in contact for several centuries) and in old Romanian; thus, the word order options available in Istro-Romanian represent a ‘convergence’ feature, with external and internal sources; the placement of adjectives appears to be dictated overwhelmingly by syntactic factors, since we cannot identify semantic differences between the prenominal and the postnominal placement of adjectives.

(iii) The fact that Istro-Romanian allows relational adjectives to occur prenominally is unexpected for a Romance variety; in this respect, Istro-Romanian resembles (without behaving identically) both old Romanian (where prenominal relational adjectives were attested, but less frequent) and Croatian (whose relational adjectives are prenominal).

(iv) The fact that Istro-Romanian allows prenominal adjectives to take complements is a feature shared only with old Romanian, since Croatian only allows non-complement-taking adjectives in prenominal position. With reference to old Romanian, the existence of heavy APs in prenominal position has been interpreted as one of the effects of a residual head-final grammar in DPs (Brăescu, Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2015, Nicolae 2019: 151–154); thus, heavy APs in prenominal position in Istro-Romanian can be interpreted as a residual syntactic archaism from a previous Common/Proto-Romanian phase. This represents an important piece of evidence for the *limits* of Croatian influence on the syntax (in particular, on the word order) of Istro-Romanian: although many of the word order patterns of Istro-Romanian word order have a counterpart in Croatian, some of them do not, and this goes to show that Istro-Romanian has its own “syntactic watermark”. This result corroborates our previous research on scrambling, interpolation and the position of clitics in Istro-Romanian (Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2018, 2021), where we have found that, beside the many convergent features of Istro-Romanian and Croatian, there are some word order patterns either found in Istro-Romanian and old Romanian, or idiosyncratic to Istro-Romanian.

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