



Article

Istro-Romanian Subjunctive Clauses

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Abstract: This paper aims to define the featural composition of the complementizers that introduce subjunctive complements in Istro-Romanian, and to identify the internal organization of the subjunctive clause in terms of subject positions, verb movement, clitic placement and constituent fronting. In a nutshell, the observation is that the complementizer *neca* replaces *se* within the syntactic pattern of Old Romanian; that is, a pattern that displays intra- and inter-language variation with respect to the distribution of complementizers within the subjunctive CP. Tests of word order also indicate intra-language variation in the parametric settings for clitic placement (either high or low), for the argumental subject position (either in Spec,TP, yielding SVO, or in Spec,vP, yielding VSO) and for constituent movement under discourse triggers (either scrambling or fronting to CP).

Keywords: Istro-Romanian; subjunctives; complementizers; Old Romanian

1. Overview

Speakers of Istro-Romanian are bilingual, having Croatian as their native language as well. In their Istro-Romanian grammar, there are two subjunctive complementizers: *neca*, which is productive—see (1)—and *se*, as in (2), which is unproductive.¹ *Neca* is borrowed from Croatian, whereas *se* is inherited from Old Romanian. In root clauses, these complementizers head imperative surrogates—see (1a). In embedded clauses, they head adjuncts (mostly of purpose) or conditionals—see (1b,c). They also head selected clauses that qualify as direct objects to verbs or to other lexical categories—see (1d).

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|-----|----|--|-------------|------------------|----------------------|----------|-------------|
| (1) | a. | Neca | ste | srečen. | (SF, p. 90) | | |
| | | SBJV | be.SBJV.3sg | happy | | | |
| | | ‘Let him be happy.’ | | | | | |
| | b. | Atunče | l-a | zdrenit | din mașuna fără ... | | |
| | | then | it=have.3PL | taken.out | from stable out. ... | | |
| | | neca | păscu | pâr la sera. | (K 1971, p. 192) | | |
| | | SBJV | feed.3PL | until at evening | | | |
| | | ‘Then they took it [the horse] out of the stable so that it would feed until the evening.’ | | | | | |
| | c. | Neca știu | care-s. ... | (SF, 151) | | | |
| | | SBJV | know.1SG | who are. ... | | | |
| | | ‘If I know who they are. ...’ | | | | | |
| | d. | Si-l’ | zițe | neca-s | țevă | cumpare. | (SI, p. 32) |
| | | and=him.dat.3 | says | SBJV-REFL.3 | something | buy.3sg | |
| | | ‘And he tells him to buy something.’ | | | | | |

The two complementizers are functionally equivalent. This is attested in coordination structures as in (2): clause coordination signals equivalent syntactic status for their complementizers.



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- (2) Ie-vo tunțe roge neca-l lăie cu sire
 he=her.ACC.F.3.SG then ask.PRES.3SG SBJV = him.ACC.F.3.SG take.3SG with self
 si se nu lu nițur spure. (SI, p. 33)
 and SBJV NEG DAT no-one tell.3sg
 ‘Then he_i asks her, to take him_j with her and not to tell anyone.’

The replacement of infinitive complements with subjunctives (which is a Balkan Sprachbund property—[Mišeska-Tomić 2006](#)) is incomplete in Istro-Romanian, to the extent that infinitive complementation remains the default option ([Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2020](#)). For Old Romanian, [Frâncu \(2009\)](#) shows that, statistically, the replacement of infinitives with subjunctive clauses begins with verba voluntatis/iussives, and advances gradually to verba dicendi, then to modals and, finally, to aspectuals. In this paper, we notice that, following the same axis, the replacement of infinitives in Istro-Romanian remains optional and restricted to verbs that require irrealis interpretation, with no attestation of subjunctive complementation for aspectual verbs. From a formal perspective, this paper will show that: (i) the subjunctive complements preserve the CP structure seen in Old Romanian; (ii) the subjunctive clauses display parametric variations in the word order, clitic placement and, possibly, verb movement; and (iii) Croatian does not significantly impact the syntax of Istro-Romanian subjunctive clauses.

2. Background

2.1. Sources and Methodology

The data for this paper come from an Istro-Romanian corpus that includes texts recorded after the 1900s: texts from Traian Cantemir, recorded between 1932 and 1933; [Pușcariu \(1906\)](#) and [Sârbu and Frătilă \(1998\)](#), the latter recorded between 1982 and 1996, both in the north (Žejane area) and in the south (Šušnjeвица area). Some examples are also taken from [Kovačec \(1971\)](#) and from the published volumes of [Neiescu \(2011\)](#).

The Istro-Romanian data will be compared with the Old Romanian data for the following reason: Istro-Romanians split from the Daco-Romanian population sometime between the 10th and 13th centuries ([Caragiu Marioțeanu et al. 1977](#); [Pușcariu et al. 1926](#), a.o.). Hence, the data provide an opportunity to assess the path of change in the two branches of Romanian since that time. In particular, we are interested in the options for parametric settings that were unstable in Old Romanian (i.e., intra- and/or inter-language variation) even by the 16th century but became stabilized in modern Daco-Romanian. The question is: how did the changes fare in Istro-Romanian?

2.2. Framework

The formal framework adopted in this paper assumes that clauses are built from the bottom up, according to a hierarchy organized over three fields ([Chomsky 2008](#)), as in (3a).

- (3) a. CP < TP < vP

CP maps the discourse and pragmatic features, together with the clause typing features. TP is the field for inflectional features, comprising agreement and TAM (tense, aspect, mood), while vP maps the argument structure of the verb (basically, the thematic roles). Each field can be further split. Thus, roughly, vP maps the theta-roles over several projections that license the direct object (in VP), the indirect object (in vP) and the subject (in VoiceP), as in (3b).

- (3) b. VoiceP < vP < VP

For the TP field, we adopt the cartography in [Cinque \(1999\)](#), consisting of the TAM features distributed as in (3c). The AspP and ModP fields can be further split according to the type of modal or aspectual features involved.

- (3) c. TP_{past/fut} < ModP < AspP < TP_{ant} < AspP < VoiceP

For the CP field, we adopt the cartography in Rizzi (1997), shown in (3d). Force maps the clause typing feature, and Fin maps the features that select a certain type of verb inflection (tense, modality/mood, agreement). Constituents with topic or contrastive focus readings may be fronted to the middle of this field.

(3) d. ForceP < TopP < FocP < FinP

In this framework, clausal negation in Old Romanian occurs at the field border between CP and TP (Hill and Alboiu 2016), as in (3e).

(3) e. CP < (NegP) < TP < vP

Word order is the main criterion for assessing the hierarchical organization of the subjunctive clause. In this respect, it has been established for indicative clauses that Istro-Romanian is predominantly SVO and has unstable options for clitic placement and verb movement (Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2018, 2020, 2021). SVO arises either from subject movement to Spec,TP (argumental position) or to Spec,TopP (non-argumental position). VSO, which is the predominant word order in Old Romanian and modern Daco-Romanian, is not excluded either. VSO is typical for Balkan languages and arises from a derivation in which the subject remains in situ (Spec,VoiceP), whereas the verb moves to the TP field.

In this paper, subjunctive clauses will be analyzed according to the framework presented, with the understanding that their classification as such depends on the syntactic features, not on the morphology of their verbs. From this perspective, there is no difference between subjunctive and infinitive clauses as long as they occur in the same syntactic position (i.e., selected by a matrix verb as its complement). That is, they both have anaphoric tense and may encode irrealis modality. The anaphoric tense is encoded as a [-finite] feature (the term non-finiteness will refer to this feature), whereas modality is encoded as [-realis] in the C system.

3. Morphology

The morpho-syntactic analysis of Istro-Romanian subjunctives relies on a comparison with Old Romanian as a criterion for determining the direction of language change. In Old Romanian, the subjunctive forms are parasitic on the present indicative forms in the first and second persons, but they generally remain distinct in the third person. Istro-Romanian ceased to make that distinction, as the difference between present indicative and subjunctive forms was neutralized in favor of the indicative forms (Caragiu Marioțeanu et al. 1977, p. 225). Thus, the subjunctive verb paradigm, shown in Table 1, is systematically identical to the present indicative, irrespective of the subjunctive marker (which may be either *neca* or *se*).

Table 1. Verb inflection.

	Indicative	Subjunctive	
3SG	(<i>îe</i>) <i>vîre</i> he comes	(<i>îe</i>) <i>neca vîre</i> // he SBJV come	(<i>îe</i>) <i>se vîre</i> he SBJV come
3PL	(<i>îel'</i>) <i>pôtu</i> they can	(<i>îel'</i>) <i>neca potu</i> // they SBJV can	(<i>îel'</i>) <i>se pot</i> they SBJV can

One exception to this regularization concerns the verb 'be', which retains special subjunctive morphology for all persons, as was also the case in Old Romanian.

Despite the morphological identity between indicative and subjunctive verbs, the clauses they derive remain distinct due to different clause-typing devices. Indicative clauses have no complementizers in the root context and a *che* complementizer in the subordinate context, whereas subjunctive clauses have the complementizer *se* (Lat. *si* 'if') or *neca* (Croat. *neka* 'let/may/SBJV') in any syntactic context (Caragiu Marioțeanu 1975, p. 205; Kovačec 1971, pp. 123, 150; Hurren [1981] 1999, p. 105; Geană 2017, p. 210). Notably,

che is also possible in combination with *neca/se* when the clause is selected, as shown in this paper. The complementizer *se* is inherited from Old Romanian and, with some phonetic variations, occurs in other Romanian languages in similar contexts (see Alboiu and Hill 2023). On the other hand, *neca* is idiosyncratic to Istro-Romanian, being borrowed from Croatian (Corbeanu and Geană 2022).

Subjunctive complementizers constitute one of the Balkan Sprachbund properties, so it is also present in Balkan Slavic, including Croatian, with which Istro-Romanian is in language contact, in a situation of bilingualism.² The texts of our corpus display free alternation between *se* and *neca*, as it was shown in (2). The difference between the two complementizers is one of frequency not of function: *neca* is much more productive than *se* (Corbeanu and Geană 2022).

Economy conditions in grammar avoid redundancies and free optionality. As such, the existence of two syntactically identical subjunctive complementizers in the same language requires a closer look. The analysis proposed in this paper is that the borrowing of *neca* arises as a replacement for *se*, as the latter is also used as a conditional complementizer, and this function became the preferred option for *se* over its subjunctive one. The analysis has to establish to what extent this replacement impacts the syntax of the subjunctive CP.

4. Old Romanian *să*

The oldest preserved texts written in Daco-Romanian date from the 16th century. The group of Istro-Romanian speakers had split from the speakers of Daco-Romanian at least two centuries before that (Pușcariu et al. 1926). Hence, whatever changes we see in the grammar of 16th-century Old Romanian must have been at less advanced stages at the time of the split.

When it comes to subjunctive clauses, Old Romanian grammar displays contexts that indicate five stages of reanalysis for the complementizer *să* (=IR *se*), as shown in the remainder of this section, by adopting the analysis developed in Hill and Alboiu (2016, chp. 8). Needless to say, these stages appear concurrently in texts (mostly inter-language variations), and the free alternation was gradually reduced to dominant tendencies.

Just for clarification, philologists argue that Old Romanian *să* has a different etymology in conditional versus subjunctive clauses, i.e., Lat. *si*-conditional versus Lat. adv. *sic* or Lat. verb *sit* (see Sava 2012 for overview and references). While we respect these findings, we also consider that this is irrelevant to the learners from the 10th century onward (i.e., since groups of Romanian speakers started to immigrate into the Balkan Peninsula). That is, children acquire language only based on the available input data, and the data around them provided a homophonous *să* with the same syntactic status (i.e., complementizer). The children had to figure out what features this complementizer checked (those in Force or Fin, with or without operators).

The information available in the 16th century for language acquisition was the following: a complementizer *să* (=IR *se*) introduces mostly imperative, conditional and adjunct clauses and, less frequently, complement (selected) clauses. In these constructions, *să* is not constrained to pairing with subjunctive verb forms but can also introduce clauses that have indicative and conditional verb forms. Imperative, conditional and adjunct clauses that display subjunctive verb forms have two common properties: an irrealis modality (mapped to Fin) and a clause typing operator (mapped to Force); *să* could check them both. This situation is the starting point for the diachronic assessment of the complementizer in Hill and Alboiu (2016, chp. 8), so it is considered here as Stage 1. Adopting a development by stages, we follow their analysis, which argues that:

In Stage 1, *să* merges in Fin to check [-realis] and moves to Force to check the clause-typing operator (be it imperative, conditional or adverbial).

- Stage 1
Force/OP < *să* < Fin/[_{-realis}] < *să* > < TP

Notably, the checking mechanism in Stage 1 was unstable in the 16th century, as the data indicate intra- and inter-language variation: in the same text, and in the same type of clauses, *să* could also remain in Fin, in which case the operator is checked through long-distance Agree from Fin; hence, Stage 2. The telling sign was the possibility of fronting constituents to Topic, above *să*, in imperative and conditional clauses (i.e., ForceP < TopP < FocP < Fin- *să*)

- Stage 2
Force/OP(*să*) < Fin/[_{-realis}] -*să* < TP

Less than a century later, *să* was stripped of the operator properties and was reanalyzed as exclusively a Fin complementizer, i.e., as irrealis only, by being left in situ. This reanalysis triggers the use of concurrent items that check the clause typing operator, so complex complementizers occur, such as *cum să*, *ca să* in adjunct clauses of purpose or consequence, and *de să* in conditionals, that is, Stage 3:³

- Stage 3
Force/OP-*cum* < Fin/[_{-realis}] -*să* < TP

By the 17th century, the bulk of clauses headed by *să* was the subjunctive complements selected by verba voluntatis and iussives (Frâncu 2009). This indicates a specialization of *să* for irrealis Fin and its independence from Force features. However, the subjunctive Fin also has a [_{-finite}] feature (on a par with the replaced infinitivals), while *să* had been used with [_{+finite}] Fin in root and adjunct clauses. Hence, the ambiguous clues for the finiteness of *să* are resolved in Stage 4 by splitting Fin so that *să* checks only the irrealis feature, unambiguously associated with it, whereas another complementizer checks [_{-finite}]. Thus, for a relatively short time, complex complementizers, such as *de să* or *ca să* head subjunctive complements in contexts with or without obligatory control, that is, Stage 4.⁴

- Stage 4
(Force) < Fin1-*de* < Fin2-*să* < TP

Eventually, in Stage 5, *să* is reanalyzed as [_{-finite}] as well (by moving *să* from Fin2 to Fin1). Fin reemerges, and its exclusivity for subjunctive clauses is stabilized, leading to the extension of the subjunctive complementation to all the classes of relevant verbs and to the complete replacement of the infinitive complements in the standard register.⁵ That is:

- Stage 5
(Force) < Fin- *să* < TP

This summary of the development of *să* subjunctives in Old Romanian provides a starting point for assessing the status of *se* in Istro-Romanian in this paper. More precisely, this indicates that at the time of the dialectal split, the use of *să* in Old Romanian was very unstable, preceding Stage 1 above, and the direction of reanalysis for *să* is expected to display feature stripping and specialization in the sense of systematic use for checking only a certain feature, as it is attested for Old Romanian. The specialization brought stabilization in Daco-Romanian (i.e., no more placement variations), so the distribution of *să* changed from being an operator in Force plus modal and finite to being just a non-finite complementizer. Thus, the grammar eliminated the use of *să* in conditional clauses and/or with verbal mood forms other than the subjunctive.

5. Istro-Romanian *se*

Within 100 pages of Cantemir (1959), there were 92 tokens of the complementizer *se* distributed as follows: 68 occurrences as a conditional complementizer; 13 occurrences as a complementizer in adjunct clauses (mostly of purpose), and 11 occurrences as a complementizer of selected clauses, as subjunctive complements. This distribution indicates that Stage 1 is dominating the analysis of *se*, that is, it is strongly associated with the clause typing operator in Force, while its use in complement clauses is minimal. We did not find evidence for Stage 2 in the Istro-Romanian data. That is, there were no root clauses

(imperatives) headed by *se* that would display constituents higher than *se* in TopP or FocP. Hence, *se* is systematically in Force.

The tendency of analyzing *se* as Force rather than just Fin extends to selected clauses. This is attested by its cooccurrence with *che* ‘that’, as in (4a,b). *Che* ‘that’ is the non-operator complementizer (in declaratives) that merges in Force (equivalent to Romance *che*, *que*). In Istro-Romanian, it may also appear in Fin in the doubly filled COMP of clauses with indicative verb forms. For example, Corbeanu and Geană (2022) provide data with *wh*-phrases (in Spec,FocP), where, under selection, Istro-Romanian *che* may occur either in Force, above the *wh*-phrase, or in Fin, lower than the *wh*-phrase. Crucially, *che* may also cooccur with *se* in subjunctive complements with subject obviation (hence, ForcePs), and the result is a flipping order, as in (4a,b).

- (4) a. Verit-a rumunu ca și voi și zis-a
 come-has Romanian like too you.PL and told-has
se che va ii cu ie. (SF, p. 63)
 SBJV that will go.3SG with him
 ‘This Romanian_j came just like you and said he_k should go with him_i.’
- b. Cl’eme gospodăru **che se** re fi bur scula-se (DDI-I, p. 38)
 called master.the that SBJV would be.INF good wake.INF-REFL.3
 ‘He called to his master that it would be good for him to wake up.’

The flipping order means that either complementizer can check the features of Force or of Fin, taking turns. It follows that *se* is reanalyzed as a possible Fin complementizer, not exclusively Force, as in root and adjunct clauses, but not exclusively Fin either. The Fin reanalysis of *se* provides evidence for Stage 3: when in Force (4b), *che* is a clue for the learner that *se* may be independent of Force in complement clauses; that is, *se* can be stripped of the clause-typing operator feature and left with the irrealis feature in Fin. This is the Old Romanian pattern. On the other hand, the *se che* sequence does not occur in Old Romanian. Old Romanian does not use *ca* if *să* is in Force, because *ca* in Fin1 would block the movement of *să* from Fin2 to Force. Thus, *se che* is another confirmation that Istro-Romanian continues to treat *se* as merged directly in Force, so the status of this complementizer is not stabilized at Fin.⁶

Furthermore, when we look at the classes of verbs that may select *se*-subjunctives, we notice that all of them require an irrealis Fin, as shown again in (5). There is no evidence that *se* subjunctives reached the aspectual verbs, which would require a realis interpretation. Aspectuals select only infinitive clauses in Istro-Romanian.

- (5) Cârle va pre lume-mnă, trebe **se** segav fiie. (SI, p. 44)
 who will on world=GO.INF must SBJV smart be.SBJV.3SG
 ‘Whoever will travel the world has to be smart’

Against this background, we must conclude that the reanalysis of *se* followed the same direction as Old Romanian *să* but has not touched all the stages and has not finished the replacement of the infinitive competition. In fact, the distribution of *se* in 20th century Istro-Romanian displays a fluctuation of its featural make up comparable to the 16th–17th-century Old Romanian *să*, being either directly merged in Force or directly merged in Fin2, with or without movement to Fin1 and Force.

In sum, the clues for *se* as a subjunctive Fin complementizer were and are weak in the primary linguistic data. From this perspective, the incomplete replacement of the infinitive with the subjunctive receives a language-internal motivation (in addition to language contact or language isolation): Fin-*se* was not a strong enough competition for the Fin checked by an infinitive verb in selected clauses.

6. Istro-Romanian *neca*

The reanalysis of *se* proceeded in a bilingual situation, where the dominant language also uses a syntactically similar complementizer, i.e., Croatian *neka*, whose features and distribution resemble those of *se* (i.e., it serves for checking the features of Force/Fin with clause typing operators and irrealis modality). This similarity is unexceptional within the Balkan Sprachbund, and so is the possibility of transferring this complementizer to Istro-Romanian. (Vrzić and Doričić 2014, p. 110) show that *neca* is a free morpheme that qualifies as a complementizer in Istro-Romanian.⁷

The transfer of the complementizer must be motivated by more than bilingual opportunity. In this particular set up, the use of *se* as a complementizer in selected subjunctives remained unproductive for centuries (compared with its use in root clauses), whereas *neca* is productive in Croatian subjunctive complements. *Neka* is transplanted in all the environments compatible with *se*, since it is a clause-typing operator as well as a marker of irrealis modality (Pavešić and Finka 1967–1976, p. 701). Thus, in Istro-Romanian, *neca* can introduce imperative, conditional and adjunct clauses, and it is compatible with the subjunctive mood in irrealis contexts (see examples in Corbeanu 2023).

The data indicate adjustments of *neca* to the Istro-Romanian syntax. First, there is no evidence of person restriction. In Croatian, *neka* can be used only in the first person (expressing an exhortation for the joint completion of an action in which the speaker will participate) and the third person (expressing permission, tolerance, concession, request), making it the most restrictive modal particle (Kramer 1986, p. 74). In Istro-Romanian, it is generalized over the person paradigm, and it is found with verbs inflected for the second person, as in (6).

- (6) Ti-ŭam zis neka ŝtepti. (TC, p. 17)
 you.2SG.DAT=AUX say.PPLE SBJV wait.2SG
 ‘I told you to wait.’

Second, the use of *neca* with selected subjunctive clauses is extended to constructions with obligatory control in Istro-Romanian, as in (7), whereas obligatory control allows only infinitive complementation (no *neca*) in Croatian (Mišeska-Tomić 2002–2003, pp. 355–56).

Furthermore, the features of *neca* are readjusted or stripped in selected clauses: In root and adjunct clauses, this complementizer selects finite TPs. However, subjunctive complements are non-finite, which requires the recognition that *neca* is compatible with [-finite] Fin. This is similar to the reanalysis of *să* in Old Romanian (Stage 4): as a clue for the learner that *să* is compatible with the subjunctive Fin (despite the fact that subjunctive Fin has a [−finite] value), Fin was split so that a different complementizer checks [-finite], while *să* checks only [-realis]. This pattern also applies to *neca*, as in (7), where *che* is used as a prop to solve the ambiguity (i.e., that *neca* here is in Fin not in Force).

- (7) Ie-l’ gane che neka-l’ dăie
 they.NOM=him.DAT tell.PS.3.PL that SBJV=him.DAT give.3SG
 corner lir.
 forty pounds
 ‘They told him to give him forty pounds.’

In (7), obligatory control entails that the subjunctive complement does not project a ForceP, so only one analysis is available for the sequence *che neka*, that is, a split Fin: *che* checks [-finite], whereas *neca* checks [-realis]. As predictable, *neca* is concurrently reanalyzed from [+finite] to being underspecified for finiteness (it can check Fin with either + or [-finite]), so Fin reemerges and *neca* checks it with no further props, as seen in (6) and further in (8).

- (8) Domnu fățe neka vire âpa ântru. (SI, p. 26)
 God.DEF make.3SG. SBJV come.3SG water.DEF inside
 ‘God makes the water come inside.’

The single occurrence of *neca* with subjunctive complements, as in (8), is the most productive option in the corpus.

Nevertheless, the analysis of *neca* as a Fin complementizer in subjunctive complements is not systematic. Hence, examples as in (9) are still found, where *neca* is a Force complementizer preceding the wh-element in Spec, FocP.

- (9) A lui zăpisei neca țe-m dă
 has CL.3SG.DAT wrote SBJV what-me.1SG.DAT give.2SG
 ‘He wrote to him what you would give to me’ (TC, p. 143)

Formally, the replacement of *se* with *neca* has no syntactic impact on the properties of subjunctive CP, and the rate of replacing infinitive complements with subjunctives has not increased. The intra-language and inter-language variation in the featural makeup of *neca* is similar to what was observed for *se* and it is still strong. However, one tendency transpires: while *neca* replaces *se* in subjunctive embedded clauses, *se* remains strong as a conditional complementizer. Thus, *se* is not eliminated from the grammar but reassigned to a particular syntactic environment where it is systematically in Force.

7. Clause Structure

This section focuses on the internal structure of subjunctive complements. The main criterion for assessment is the word order, insofar as it indicates the hierarchical structure conforming to (3). No discrimination is made between clauses headed by *se* and *neca* complementizers since the derivational pattern is the same.

7.1. Clitic Pronouns

The verbs of subjunctive clauses are inflected for phi-features (number and person). Since phi-features are a property of T (the [phi] set is transferred from C-to-T; Chomsky 2008), it is expected that the verb is moved to the TP field. In subjunctive clauses, there is no clear evidence for the degree of verb movement within the TP field: constructions as in (10) suggest V-to-T, because of the obligatory preverbal clitic adjacency (10a), or at least V-to-Asp, since the verb may occur higher than subjects in VoiceP, as in (10b) below.

- (10) a. Rugat lu Martin neca l’i lase chia. (TC, p. 18)
 asked DAT Martin SBJV him.DAT.3SG leave.3SG key.DEF
 ‘He asked Martin to leave him the key.’
 b. Neca vire cășu ȳust. (SF, p. 66)
 SBJV become.3SG cheese.DEF dense
 ‘The cheese should become dense.’

When it comes to clitic pronouns, their surface location varies, as shown in (11).

- (11) a. Se nu-l cadu (SF, p. 26)
 SBJV NEG=him.ACC.3SG fall.3SG
 ‘Lest it should fall on him.’
 b. Roge neca-l ȳevă neputę. (SI, p. 35)
 ask.3SG SBJV=him.ACC.3SG something suggest.3SG
 ‘He asks him to suggest something to him.’
 c. Lui a fost vol’a neca ănsură-se. (TC, p. 60)
 he.DAT AUX be.PPLE wish SBJV marry.INF=REFL.3SG
 ‘He wanted to get married.’

In (11a), the clitic is T-oriented: the negation marks the clause border between Fin and TP, and the clitic is lower than the negation but higher than the verb. This clitic placement is unexceptional for Romanian languages (and for most Romance languages). On the other hand, in (11b), the clitic is separated from the verb by the scrambled DP *ȳevă* and takes as its host the complementizer on its left. So, this seems to be a C-oriented clitic. C-oriented clitics generally go hand in hand with Wackernagel law, which is not

observed in Istro-Romanian, but it is in Croatian (Mišeska-Tomić 1996; Stjepanović 1998). Instances of clitics at C have been signaled in various contexts in Istro-Romanian (see data in Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2020), and the subjunctive clauses make no exception. Finally, in (11c), the clitic is lower than the inflected verb, which indicates a location nearing vP. Ledgeway (2018) and Dragomirescu and Nicolae (2020) point out the exploitation of this location in Old Romanian, as well as in other types of Istro-Romanian clauses. In the framework of (3c), this would be T_{anterior} : since clitic pronouns are agreement markers in Romanian and phi-features are mapped to T, nothing can theoretically prevent the spellout of clitics in either of the T heads or even in both of them (see the multiple clitic spellout in Ledgeway 2018).⁸

In sum, the default placement for clitic pronouns in Istro-Romanian is at T and pre-verbal. Post-verbal clitics are also productive. This is also a particularity of Old Romanian (Hill and Alboiu 2016; Nicolae 2019). The least productive is the placement of clitics at C, which we attribute to the unsystematic negative transfer from Croatian. Crucially, the variation in clitic placement indicates instability in the setting of this micro-parameter even with the same speaker.

7.2. Subjects

Istro-Romanian is a null subject language across the board, including the subjunctive complements, as in (12), with subject obviation for non-lexical subjects.

- (12) Mai bire ra fi neca mejeṭ din a me
 more well AUX.COND.3SG be SBJV go.2PL from POS.1SG
 iâpa.
 mare
 'It would be better for you to go after my mare.'

Various clause types display genuine preverbal subjects in Istro-Romanian (Spec,TP; Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2021). In subjunctive clauses, both SV and VS are attested, as shown in (13a) and (13b), respectively.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|------|----|---|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| (13) | a. | Iel'i
they
neca
SBJV | măi vișe
more
noi
we | a nostre
our
cântăm.
sing.1PL | jeiănske cânte
Žejane songs | zahtevuis
ask.PRES.3PL | (SF, p. 301) | |
| | | 'They ask more that we sang our local songs.' | | | | | | |
| | b. | Zițe
say.3SG | Domnul
God | neca
SBJV | vire
come.3SG | ie
he | făre.
outside | (SI, p. 37) |
| | | 'God tells him to come outside.' | | | | | | |

Again, intra-language variation is at work, this time for the word order settings (e.g., the speaker of (13b) also produces subjunctives with SVO). Free alternation in the argumental position for subjects (i.e., either Spec,VoiceP or Spec,TP) is unproductive in the Old Romanian texts of the 16th century. By that time, the Balkan VSO was generalized (Alboiu and Hill 2017). However, the existence of the examples with free alternation for subjects indicates the tail end of a Romance parametric setting that must have been productive in the previous centuries, possibly at the time of the Istro-Romanian emigration. From this perspective, Istro-Romanian has preserved the unstable parameter for the subject position up to now, while Old Romanian and the other Romanian languages generalized VSO.

7.3. Constituent Movement

Istro-Romanian syntax intensively maps discourse features, on a par with other Balkan languages and old Romance languages. Discourse features trigger constituent movement to designated slots, either within CP or within TP. Constituent movement under discourse triggers in Istro-Romanian is illustrated in (14): In (14a), the direct object is postverbal, and the reading is neutral, whereas in (14b), the direct object is moved to a preverbal position, and the reading places it in the spotlight.

- (14) a. Roge neca-l nepute țevă. (SI, p. 34)
ask.3SG SBJV=him.ACC.3SG suggest.3SG something
'He asks him to suggest something to him.'
- b. Roge neca-l țevă nepute. (SI, p. 35)
ask.3SG SBJV=him.ACC.3SG something suggest3SG
'He asks him to suggest something to him.'
- c. Grofu urdineit-a lu pechi neca fornu zarescu. (TC, p. 53)
count.DEF ordered=has DAT bakers SBJV oven heat.3PL
'The count ordered the bakers to turn on the oven.'

Constituent movement, as in (14b,c), targets a discourse-motivated position within TP, amounting to scrambling. There is no evidence for an OV parametric setting in Istro-Romanian (i.e., leaving the direct object postverbal does not trigger ungrammaticality); this is a discourse-oriented language, similar to the rest of Balkan languages. As for the syntactic structure, a subjunctive clause, as in (14c), with obligatory control, is a FinP (versus ForceP), so the complementizer *neca* is necessarily in Fin. Hence, the moved constituent is lower than Fin, within TP. Scrambling, as in (14b,c), is productive in subjunctive clauses in the corpus.

However, movement to the CP field is also possible, as in (15), produced by the same speaker who produced (14a,b).

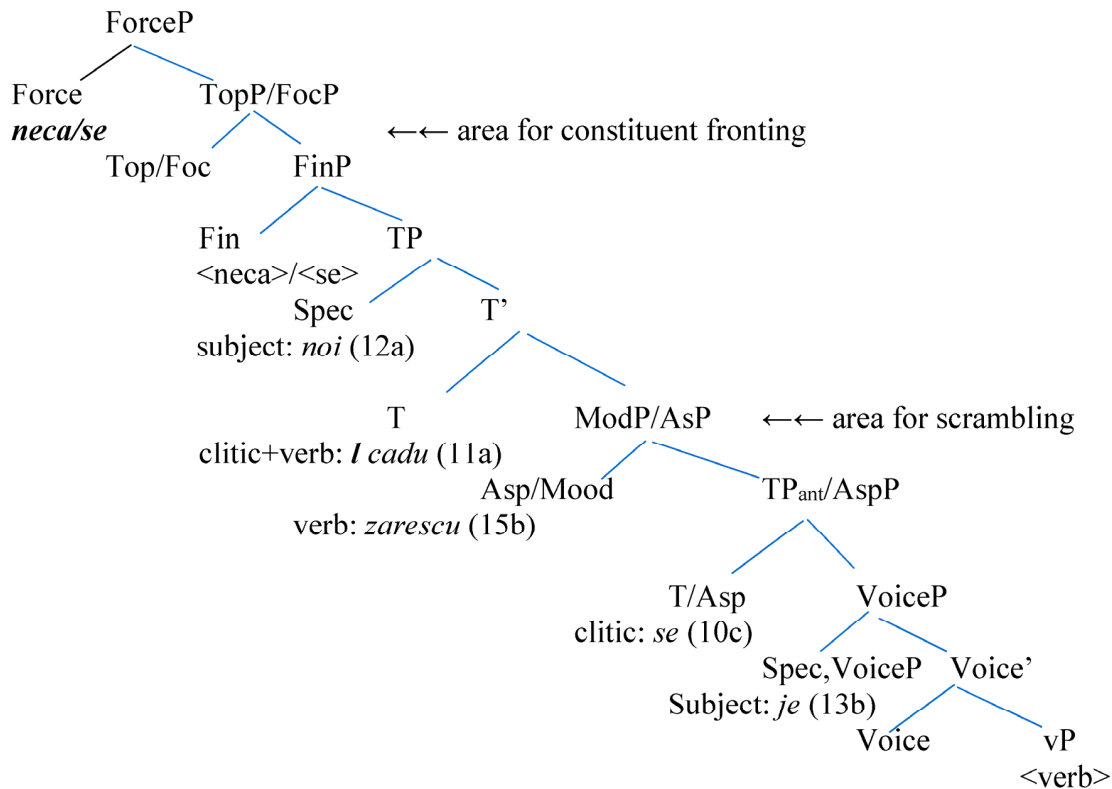
- (15) Trebe **se** segav fiie! (SI, p. 44)
must.3SG SBJV smart be.SBJV.3SG
'It is necessary that he be smart.'

In (15), the adjective has a contrastive focus reading that signals constituent movement to FocP, within CP, not scrambling. This is plausible because the subjunctive complement displays subject obviation, so it is a ForceP, and *se* can be in Force. Hence, the adjective phrase can target Spec,FocP.

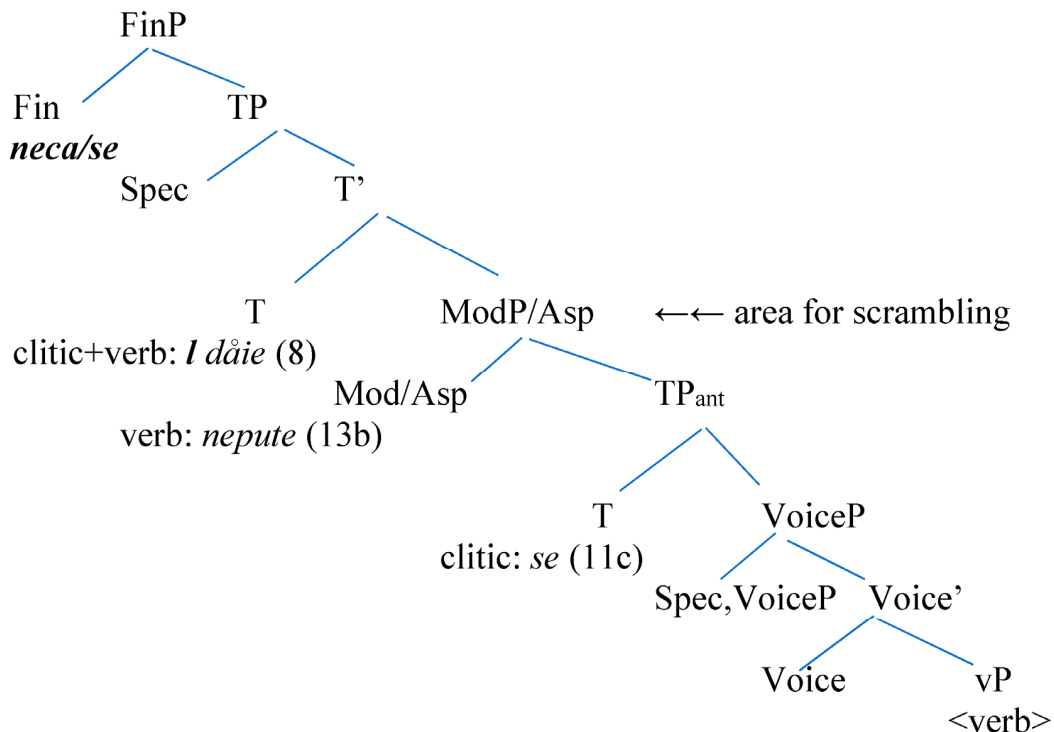
Again, there is intra-language variation, this time concerning the field for mapping the discourse features. Scrambling is attested in Old Romanian texts as a tail end of a type of grammar that also had non-clitic auxiliary verbs and preverbal (Spec,TP) subjects (Alboiu and Hill 2017). These properties were unproductive in 16th-century texts, as the CP field was the most exploited option for discourse-motivated movement. The productivity of scrambling in Istro-Romanian is another sign that this is a very conservative language, since the source of scrambling seems to be the pre-attested Old Romanian. On the other hand, Croatian also displays the possibility of scrambling, which raises the question of a language contact transfer to Istro-Romanian (Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2021). Nevertheless, the scrambled constituents in Croatian are mostly adverbs, whereas in Old Romanian, the scrambling of direct objects is as productive as the adverbs, and so it is in Istro-Croatian.

Summing up the information so far, the structure of a subjunctive complement in Istro-Romanian has the representations in (16a) and (16b).

(16) a. Subject obviation



b. Obligatory control



In (16a), the complementizers merge in Fin and move to Force. The subject merges in Spec, VoiceP, where it may remain at Spell Out, or it moves to Spec, TP. Notably, these are both argumental positions, so movement applies only if licensing is not available in Spec, VoiceP. It seems that sometimes it is and sometimes it is not. If the DP is licensed in

Spec, VoiceP for theta-role and Case, then the subject remains in situ and the parametric setting is VS, i.e., Balkan. If the DP checks the theta-role in Spec, VoiceP but has to move to Spec, TP to receive Nominative Case, then the parametric setting is SV, i.e., Romance.⁹ Similar alternatives seem to have been available in Old Romanian previously to the attested 16th-century texts (Alboiu and Hill 2017; Nicolae 2019).

7.4. Taking Stock

Verb movement seems to be unstable, judging by the linear order in Istro-Romanian subjunctives. That is why two possible landing sites are assigned in (16a,b): T, when no scrambling takes place, or Asp, in the presence of scrambling. However, it is remarkable that we could find no example that would contain a preverbal subject in the presence of scrambling in subjunctive clauses (negative evidence). Hence, it is possible that Spec, TP is used alternatively as either argumental, for subjects, or non-argumental, for scrambling (Alboiu 2002 argues that, in modern Daco-Romanian, Spec, TP is available as a non-argumental position for constituent movement under discourse triggers). In that case, verb movement may be stabilized to T in subjunctives; i.e., scrambling to Spec, TP situates the constituent higher than the verb in T.

The location of clitic pronouns also displays variability, occurring at C, T and T-anterior in (16a,b). Clitics at C is a parametric setting found in Balkan Slavic, where it goes by the Wackernagel law. This is not the case in Istro-Romanian, where clitics are rather distributed in lower positions. The most productive option in subjunctive clauses is for clitics at T, generally pre-verbally, but post-verbal clitics are also found (shown in T-anterior in (16a,b)).

Constituent movement for discourse purposes is productive, especially by scrambling, rather than by fronting to the CP area. This is also attested in Old Romanian, as a tail end of what may have been a productive construction sometime before the 16th century (together with non-clitic auxiliaries; Alboiu and Hill 2017; Nicolae 2019). The disappearance of scrambling from Old Romanian (and from Daco-Romanian) went hand in hand with the increased productivity of constituent fronting to the CP area (Alboiu and Hill 2017). Scrambling under discourse triggers appears well preserved in Istro-Romanian, not only in root declaratives and the presence of non-clitic auxiliaries (Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2020, 2021) but also in selected clauses, such as the subjunctives discussed here. The presence of scrambling in Croatian did not challenge this parametric setting of Istro-Romanian.

In sum, Istro-Romanian subjunctive complements display unstable word order options for all the criteria of this assessment: clitic placement, the argument position for subjects, constituent movement under discourse triggers and, possibly, verb movement. The variation is seen at intra- and inter-linguistic levels, amounting to generalized instability in parametric settings.

8. Conclusions

Subjunctive clauses in Istro-Romanian display a distribution consistent with their counterpart in other Romanian languages: they are imperative surrogates in root clauses, direct complements when selected, and adverbial adjuncts when not selected. There are two complementizers introducing the subjunctive clause (*neca* and *se*), both displaying a similar variation in their syntactic behavior: they are compatible only with irrealis modality, they may directly merge in either Fin or Force, and they may or may not be reanalyzed as [-finite]. In addition, the same complementizers head conditional clauses, where the verb is not in a subjunctive mood. The variation in the feature set associated with *neca/se* yields derivations whose CP is not always equivalent to infinitive complements, so the replacement of infinitives with subjunctives is possible but not systematic.

When it comes to the internal structure of subjunctive clauses, the general observation is that, in contrast to other Romanian languages, Istro-Romanian displays fluid parametric settings: there is free alternation between genuine SVO and VSO, the clitic pronouns may be spelled out either at C, T-pr/future or T-anterior, while the degree of verb movement within TP is unclear. This is a general observation arising from the available written corpus.

In terms of diachronic change, the impact of Croatian is minimal for the structure of subjunctive clauses: lexical borrowing of *neca*; some clitics at C; and convergence for scrambling (Dragomirescu and Nicolae 2021). Most properties of these constructions are inherited from Old Romanian. Notably, the instability of parametric settings noticed in Istro-Romanian matches the observations for 16th-century Old Romanian, especially in constructions that illustrate the tail end of a grammar with more Romance characteristics that preceded the preserved documents: the disappearing genuine SVO, the predominant analysis of *să* as a clause-typing operator and non-specialization for subjunctive clauses, the extended use of infinitive complements (i.e., with subject obviation) and constituent scrambling for discourse effects. In Old Romanian, these properties were replaced through balkanization by the 16th century: genuine VSO, complete reanalysis of *să* as an irrealis Fin complementizer, complete replacement of infinitive complements with subjunctives and constituent movement to CP for discourse effects. In other words, these parametric settings for Istro-Romanian remained unchanged for more than 600 years, with the addition of the occasional clitic at C as a transfer from Croatian.

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Abbreviations

DDI-I	(Neiescu 2011)
K 1971	(Kovačec 1971)
SF	(Sârbu and Frătilă 1998)
TC	(Cantemir 1959)
SI	(Pușcariu 1906)
SOR	(Dindelegan 2016)

Notes

- ¹ In this paper, *productive* is used to indicate whether a construction is preferred over another construction. This is different from the technical term used in derivational morphology.
- ² The subjunctive marker inherited from Old Slavic is *da*, which was a demonstrative adverb (SOR: 15).
- ³ These complex complementizers evolved differently, concurrently with the stabilization of *să*: conditionals discarded *să* and continued with *de* (then *dacă*), *cum* was dropped while *ca să* is still productive with adjunct clauses.
- ⁴ For selected subjunctive clauses, the complementizer *ca* in standard modern Daco-Romanian optionally merges in Force only in constructions with subject obviation, whereas Old Romanian *ca* was a Fin complementizer orthogonal for (non)-obligatory control.
- ⁵ The modal *putea* ‘can’ in constructions with verb restructuring yields a monoclausal structure, by selecting an AspP with an infinitive form, not a ForceP or a FinP subjunctive. The bare infinitive in this construction remained invisible for subjunctive replacement because the replacement applied to clauses, not to fragments of the TP field or vPs. Alternatively, *putea* could also select a FinP infinitive clause in Old Romanian, where Fin is spelled out as *a* (Hill and Alboiu 2016, chp. 7). This is a biclausal structure (in contrast to the *putea*+bare infinitive), and subjunctive replacement took place. For more details on the configuration for replacement with *putea*, see Hill (2011).
- ⁶ Phonetically, Old Romanian differentiates between the complementizer *că* in declaratives and *ca* in subjunctives, while in Istro-Romanian, *che* is homophonous for the two types of clauses.
- ⁷ The spelling *neka* indicates the Croatian version, whereas *neca* is the Istro-Romanian version.
- ⁸ The placement of enclitics inside vP is unlikely for Romanian varieties since clitic pronouns do not qualify as theta-role or Case checkers, they are only agreement markers. For example, Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (2000) show that Kayne’s (1999)

generalization does not apply in Balkan CD, i.e., CD does not trigger the insertion of a preposition in front of the doubled noun, so it has no impact on Case assignment to the noun: clitic pronouns are just the spellout of phi-agreement in these languages. From this perspective, it is theoretically undesirable to locate a phi-agreement spellout inside vP. Crucially, the data show that the clitics surface higher than postverbal subjects in VoiceP in both Old Romanian and Istro-Romanian, see example (13b), so they are in the TP field, albeit very low.

- ⁹ We are aware that some Romance languages may also display subjects in situ in alternation with subjects moved to Spec,TP, but they do not have generalized VSO (i.e., subjects in situ as the main option, with the loss of Spec,TP as the argumental position).

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