

Verbal agreement in Istria: a long-ignored topic

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Istriot is a Romance variety still spoken in the south-western part of the Istrian peninsula, nowadays Croatia. Leaving apart the delicate question about its position in the Romance area which have been discussed for over a century (about this issue see Holtus & Kramer 2002), the goal of this paper is to give a description of verbal agreement in Sissanese, an Istriot variety spoken in Sissano. Venetian will be taken in comparison because it has been influencing Istriot since the 13th century under the pressure of its prestige, and the progressive linguistic venetianization of Istria is indisputable (see Crevatin 1982, 1989).

The lack of data about the verbal agreement (and agreement *tout court*) in the dialects of Istria is quite impressive, since each description of the Romance varieties present in this area, even the more recent ones, do not deal with it (cf. Ive 1900; Deanović 1954; De Carli 1985; Benussi 2015). Only Tekavčić faced a specific part of this topic over fifty years ago, describing the lack of agreement in two Istriot varieties (Dignano and Rovigno), between the verb and the subject if the latter was postponed.

zi viňow la karisteya (Dignano, Tekavčić 1967: 162)
be.PRS.3SG arrived.M.SG DEF.F.SG famine(F).SG

The first observation that arises when we are talking about Istriot dialects is the use of the auxiliary ‘to have’ instead of ‘to be’ with reflexive and intransitive verbs, feature shared with a considerable number of Italo-Romance varieties (cf. Tekavčić 1975: 64; Rohlfs §731; Benincà&Parry&Pescarini 2016: 203-204):

al se=jo recordà (Dignano)
SBJ3M.SG REFL=have.PRS.3SG remembered.PPT.3SG

In Sissano, it is present too and the agreement is satisfied if the auxiliary BE is used:

Quei vazi se=jo roto
DEM.DIST.M.PL jar(M).PL REFL=have.PRS.3SG broken.M.SG.

Those jars have broken

vs.

Quei vazi xe roti.
DEM.DIST.M.PL jar(M).PL be.PRS.3PL broken.M.PL.

Those jars are broken

Another analogy that Istriot shares with the Northern Italo-Romance dialects is the syncretism of the 3rd and 6th persons in the verbal paradigm (see Rohlfs §532). However, the distinction of gender and number is guaranteed by the presence of subject clitic pronouns (as we may see in the aforementioned example from Dignano).

The main aim of this presentation is to describe the inflection of the past participles in compound sentences and its agreement with the subject and the object, considering the thorough studies that appeared in the last decades (see Loporcaro 1998). The Table 1 shows the possibilities of inflection in Sissanese:

	M	F
SG	<i>ligà/ligado</i>	<i>ligada</i>
PL	<i>ligadi</i>	<i>ligade</i>

Table 1: Past Participle in Sissanese (‘to tie’)

In the first part, I will present new data collected in Sissano from the inquiries I recently conducted, offering a first analysis of the verbal agreement concerning an Istriot variety. The second part will consist in considering Venetian as a term of comparison, since it shows similarly the same features, for example the agreement if past participle is preceded by a direct object (cf. Ferguson 2007: 140).

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