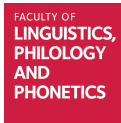# Aspectual Suppletion in Istro-Romanian: Fact or Fiction?

Fabian Matthias Helmrich, Dr Oana Uță Bărbulescu

Faculty of Linguistics, Philology and Phonetics, University of Oxford
Arts and Humanities Research Council, Open-Oxford-Cambridge DTP

17/10/2023

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Open-Oxford-Cambridge
Doctoral Training Partnership

FACULTY OF LINGUISTICS, PHILOLOGY AND PHONETICS

Aspectual
Suppletion

F. Helmrich

What is Istro-
Romanian?

What is
Aspect?

Framing the
Case

What does the
Data reveal?
koče – speči
uskå – osuši
bę – popi

Conclusions

References

Genealogy

Romance
  Daco-Romance
    Romanian
    Aromanian
    Megleno-Romanian
    Istro-Romanian
      Vlåški
      Žejånski

Contact

Aspectual
Suppletion

F. Helmrich

What is Istro-
Romanian?

What is
Aspect?

Framing the
Case

What does the
Data reveal?

koče – speči

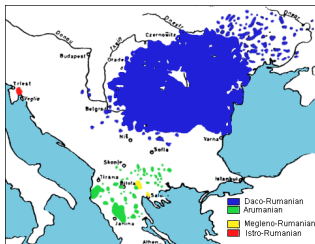uskă – osuši

bę – popi

Conclusions

References

Languages spoken in Istria (Kalsbeek 2011):

Čakavian Croatian (Slavic)

Slovene dialects (Slavic)

Montenegrin (Slavic)

Istriot (Romance)

Istro-Romanian (Romance)

(Istro-)Venetian (Romance)

(...)

A Note on the Data

Aspectual
Suppletion

F. Helmrich

What is Istro-
Romanian?

What is
Aspect?

Framing the
Case

What does the
Data reveal?
koče – speči
uskă – osuši
be – popi

Conclusions

References

Popovici, Pușcariu, Kovačec, Sârbu & Frațilă, etc.:

- Dialectal texts

- Atlases

- Glossaries

- the Istro-Romanian dictionary (Neiescu et al. in progress)

- recent archives

A Note on the Data

Documentation of the Vlashki/Zheyanski Language (Vrzić 2018):

- Oral history interviews

- Collected between 2007 and 2012

- Corpus of ca. 390,000 tokens

    - Vlåški: 186,000 tokens
    - Žejånski: 204,000 tokens

A Note on the Data

Table: Orthography

Vrzić	IPA	Vrzić	IPA
â	ə ~ ɨ	j	j
å	ɔ ~ u̯ɔ	k	k
c	ts, never k	lj	ʎ
č	tʃ	nj	ɲ
ć	tʲ	š	ʃ
ę	æ	ž	ʒ

Defining Aspect

Aspectual
Suppletion

F. Helmrich

What is Istro-
Romanian?

What is
Aspect?

Framing the
Case

What does the
Data reveal?
koče – speči
uskă – osuši
bę – popi

Conclusions

References

- "[N]umber and definiteness or specificity of the arguments are thereby decisive for so-called boundedness; bounded states of affairs have an inherent boundary and are referred to as telic" (Gvozdanović 2012:782)

- the telic/atelic distinction is used for "aspectual domain proper", and bounded/unbounded is used for "lexical oppositions available in the Slavic languages" (Bertinetto & Delfitto 2000:192), which has led us to consider the dichotomy [±telic] "as a typical actional discriminator", and a dichotomy [±terminative] "as an aspectual discriminator" (Bertinetto & Delfitto 2000:194)

- regarding grammatical aspect, we have considered the analysis proposed by Barentsen (1998) which is based on three hierarchically ordered features: telicity, totality, and sequential connection, but we have especially taken into account the analysis proposed by Klein (1995), which is based on internal temporal constituency

Aspect in Croatian (Form)

Marking of perfective and imperfective aspect through derivational
morphology (and suppletion)

***pis-* 'write'**:
pisati^{IMP} → na-pisati^{PRF}

↪   u-pisati^{PRF} → upisivati^{IMP} 'enroll'

Aspect in Croatian (Form)

Table: Aspectal Pairs in Croatian

Gloss	Perfective	Imperfective
answer	*odgovoriti*	*odgovarati*
say	*reći*	*kazati*
drink (up)	*popiti*	*piti*
come	*doći*	*dolaziti*
imagine	*zamisliti*	*zamišljati*

Aspect in Istro-Romanian (Form)

Table: Aspectual Pairs in Istro-Romanian

Gloss	Perfective	Imperfective
answer	*odgovori*	*odgovaruj*
say		*ziče, spure*
drink (up)	***popi***	***bę***
come		*veri*
imagine	*zamisli*	*zamišljuj*

Suppletion: Previous accounts

- Popovici (1909): No mention of the phenomenon
- Pușcariu (1926): Phenomenon is briefly mentioned, no indication of its frequency
- Kovačec (1971): Aspectual suppletion is a common phenomenon
↪ A simplex Romance verb is paired up with a prefixed Croatian-derived verb, which are always perfective
↪ The simplex verb Romance verb thereby becomes imperfective, in alignment with simplex Croatian-derived verbs.

Suppletion: Suspects

Table: Proposed Suppletive Pairs in IR

Gloss	Romance[IMP]	Croatian-derived[PRF]
eat	*mânkå*	*po-jdi*
drink	*bę*	*po-pi*
plough	*arå*	*z-ori*
dry	*uskå*	*o-suši, ra(z)-suši*
grind	*mačirå*	*s-melji*
cook	*koče*	*s-peči*
dig (Vlåški only)	*sapå*	*s-kopę̦j*

Is this Aspectual Suppletion?

– Previous accounts of the phenomenon lack explicit empirical evidence

– Most Romance verbs in IR lack viewpoint-aspect distinctions

– Phenomenon seems marginal at best (very few verbs involved)

+ Lack of simplex Croatian-derived verbs to form a pair in these cases

+ Existence of aspectual suppletion in Croatian (and much of Slavic)

+ Profound impact of Croatian on IR

(1) a. *pâre s   -a*   **kopt**   *ân fugera (Dianich)*
          bread REF AUX.3SG bake.PP in fugera
          'Bread was baked under the *fugera*.'

      b. *ân ura se   pâra* **speče**   *(ELAR)*
          in hour REF bread bake.PRF.3SG
          'Bread is baked within an hour.'

(2) a. *ši   n-av   namažit. Bože ma   nogo*
         and REF.1PL -AUX.3SG apply. God.VOC REF.1SG much

         *av   **pečit**! (ELAR)*
         much AUX.3SG bake.PP

         'And s/he applied it. God, it burned a lot!'

     b. *saka zi se fačęja   po do vote forši*
         every day REF make.IPF.3SG each two times probably

         ***pečija**   pâra (ELAR)*
         bake.IPF.3SG bread

         'Every day they probably made bread and baked it twice.'

? Difference in telicity

– Some semantic specialization

– Attestation of simplex Croatian-derived *peči*

Aspectual
Suppletion

F. Helmrich

What is Istro-
Romanian?

What is
Aspect?

Framing the
Case

What does the
Data reveal?

koče – speči

uskå – osuši

bę – popi

Conclusions

References

(3) a. *neka se jårba bire osušę*   (ELAR)
     COMP REF grass well dry.PRS.3SG
     'so the grass dries well'

   b. *neka se jå dåro uska*   (ELAR)
     COMP REF she much dry.PRS.3SG
     'so it dries well'

   c. *jo usku   jårba* (Filipi 1047 J)
     I dry.PRS.1SG grass.
     'I dry the grass.'

   d. *kobasice, pâršutele -n   uskåt* (ELAR)
     sausage.Pl, ham.PL.DEF AUX.3PL dry.PP
     'We died sausages and ham.'

uskå – osuši

Aspectual
Suppletion

F. Helmrich

What is Istro-
Romanian?

What is
Aspect?

Framing the
Case

What does the
Data reveal?
koče – speči
uskå – osuši
bę – popi

Conclusions

References

+ No attestation of simplex Croatian-derived *suši*

– Overlap in telicity

– Semantic specialization

bę – popi

Aspectual
Suppletion

F. Helmrich

What is Istro-
Romanian?

What is
Aspect?

Framing the
Case

What does the
Data reveal?

koče – speči

uskă – osuši

bę – popi

Conclusions

References

(4) a. *zos   a   fost oštarija, zos   s*
   downstairs AUX.3SG be.PP tavern, downstairs REF
   -a   bejut (ELAR)
   AUX.3SG drink.PP

   'so the grass dries well'

 b. *ši pote   se bę   åpa (ELAR)*
   and can.3SG REF drink.INF water

   'and the water is potable'

 c. *vrut   -am   ke   rem   ân dec*
   want.PP AUX.1PL COMP AUX.FUT.1PL one decilitre
   de vir popi,   såkile. (ELAR)
   of wine drink.INF every.

   'We wanted to drink a decilitre of wine each.'

 d. *je zåjno   mižęja   čija čevå   popi.*
   he immediately go.IPF.3SG there something drink
   (ELAR)

+ No attestation of simplex Croatian-derived *pi*

? Difference in telicity

? Difference in frequency and quantification of patients

Conclusions

Aspectual
Suppletion

F. Helmrich

What is Istro-
Romanian?

What is
Aspect?

Framing the
Case

What does the
Data reveal?

koče – speči
uskă – osuši
bę – popi

Conclusions

References

- Evidence for aspectual suppletion is weak
- Different mechanisms at play in different surveyed verbs
    - Semantic specialization
    - Synonymity: Croatian-derived pair v. Romance verb
    - Telicity distinction
- Most Romance verbs do not participate
↪ Salient telicity distinction motivates borrowing
↪ Viewpoint distinction secondary
↪ Does IR have Slavic-style viewpoint distinctions? Or have viewpoint distinctions been mapped onto telicity distinctions?

Hvåla mušåta!

fabian.helmrich@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk

📄 Barentsen, Adrian. 1998. "priznak "sekventnaja svjaz " i vidovoe protivopostavlenie v russkom jazyke", in: m. ju. čertkova (ed.), tipologija vida: problemy, poiski, rešenija, moscow, škola "jazyki russkoj kul tury", 43–58. In M. Ju. Chertkova (ed.), *Tipologija vida: problemy, poiski, reshenija*, 43–58. Moscow: Škola "Jazyki russkoj kul tury".

📄 Bertinetto, Pier Marco & Denis Delfitto. 2000. Aspect vs. Actionality: Why they should be kept apart. In Östen Dahl (ed.), *6 Tense and Aspect in the Languages of Europe*, 189–226. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton.

📄 Gvozdanović, Jadranka. 2012. Perfective and imperfective aspect. In Robert I. Binnik (ed.), *The Oxford handbook of tense and aspect*. Oxford: OUP.

References II

Aspectual
Suppletion

F. Helmrich

What is Istro-
Romanian?

What is
Aspect?

Framing the
Case

What does the
Data reveal?

koče – speči
uskā – osuši
bę – popi

Conclusions

References

📄 Kalsbeek, Janneke. 2011. Contact-induced innovations in Istrian Čakavian dialects. In Cornelius Hasselblatt, Peter Houtzagers & Remco van Pareren (eds.), *Language contact in times of globalization*, 133–154. BRILL.

📄 Klein, Wolfgang. 1995. A time-relational analysis of Russian aspect. *Language* 71(4). 669–695.

📄 Kovačec, August. 1971. *Descrirea istroromânei actuale*. Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republici Socialiste România.

📄 Popovici, Iosif. 1909. *Dialectele romîne din Istria*. Halle an der Saale: Self-Published.

📄 Pușcariu, Sextil. 1926. *Studii istroromâne*. Vol. 2. Bucharest: Cultura Națională.

📄 Vrzić, Zvjezdana. 2018. Documentation of the Vlashki/Zheyanski language ('ruo'). *Endangered Languages Archive.*