

Alberto Frasson¹

University of Wrocław

'Slavicus' Centre for Corpus and Experimental Research on Slavic Languages

EXISTENTIALS, LOCATIVES AND INVERSE LOCATIVES IN ŠTIVORIAN

Abstract: The present study investigates syntactic and interpretive properties of existential, locative and inverse locative constructions in Štivorian, a northern Italo-Romance variety spoken in north-eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. I discuss the definiteness effect (Milsark, 1974), focusing on cross-linguistic properties of locative and existential constructions, both at the structural and interpretive level. On the one hand, existentials show default agreement with a post-copular indefinite pivot in existentials; on the other hand, locatives show full agreement with a pre-copular definite pivot. In addition to this opposition, Štivorian displays inverse locatives, exhibiting mixed properties of existential and locative constructions. The goal of the present study is to show that existential and locative constructions have distinct underlying structures; inverse locatives allow for a structural analysis that parallels that of existentials, with additional interpretive properties that make them akin to regular locative constructions.

Keywords: existential, locative, agreement, clitic, Štivorian, Romance, syntax.

1. Introduction

This study investigates syntactic and interpretive properties of three types of copular constructions in Štivorian: existential, locative and inverse locative constructions.

Štivorian is a variety of Venetan, a northern Italo-Romance variety, spoken in north-eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina since the second half of the 19th century, following a migration from its native geographical area in north-eastern Italy.

The phenomenon discussed in this study is the well-known cross-linguistic distinction between properties of locative and existential constructions. The

¹alberto.frasson@uwr.edu.pl

difference between the two constructions is exemplified by the following English sentences:

- (1)
a. There are cats in the room.
b. The cats are in the room.

The existential construction in (1a) exhibits an expletive (locative-like) subject and a post-copular indefinite nominal, the pivot. Conversely, the locative construction in (1b) exhibits a pre-copular definite pivot. In addition to this opposition, Štivorian displays a third type of sentence, exhibiting mixed properties of existential and locative constructions; I will refer to this type of structure as inverse locatives.

Section 2 presents the variety discussed in the study, providing a short overview of its current status. Section 3, discusses the three types of Štivorian constructions. In Section 4, I introduce some necessary theoretical background on the syntax of Štivorian, in comparison to previous analyses of Italo-Romance varieties. Section 5, presents a syntactic analysis of the three constructions in the minimalist syntactic framework; arguing that existential and locative constructions represent different agreement patterns; inverse locatives allow for a structural analysis that parallels that of existentials, with additional interpretive properties that make them akin to regular locative constructions. Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. A heritage Italo-Romance variety in the Balkans

Štivorian (called *štivoriano* or *štivoroto* by its speakers) can be defined as a long-standing heritage Italo-Romance variety (Frasson 2022) spoken in Štivor, a village located in Prnjavor municipality in north-eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. Štivorian can be classified as a variety of the Sugana Valley dialect of the Venetan language, whose native settings are found in the north-eastern Italian region of Trentino.

In order to understand the peculiar conditions in which Štivorian developed and the type of linguistic contact it underwent, a little historical background is in order: in 1882, a mass emigration took place from Trentino to present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, both part of the Austrian Empire at that time, after a catastrophic flood in the Sugana Valley. The newly arrived immigrants from Trentino settled in the Štivor area, in the Northern part of present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Štivor inhabitants retained the Italian citizenship until relatively recently and were recognised as a national minority in Yugoslavia (Rosario, 1979). However, the use of the Romance dialect has been diminishing over the years: at present,

Štivorian qualifies as a moribund variety and is no longer passed to new generations (D'Alessandro et al., 2021). Communication in the village is predominantly conducted in Serbian², with Štivorian being used by a handful of third generation immigrants, the descendants of the original settlers. Štivorians are now part of the Italian minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of the officially recognised minority ethnic groups in the country.

The data discussed here was collected during a short stint of fieldwork conducted in Štivor in November 2018, when two native speakers of the variety (one male and one female speaker, aged 75-80, born in Štivor and still living in the area) were interviewed. The interview was carried out entirely in Venetan: the interviewer used a Central Venetan variety to ask questions. The examples used in the discussion of the phenomena under analysis were extracted from the full transcription of spontaneous production data (around 3 hours), collected during the fieldwork and transcribed based on the orthographic rules used for Venetan in Benincà (1994), Poletto (1993, 2000), representing a neutral pronunciation that does not account for a local dialectal phonological variation.

3. Existential and locative constructions in Štivorian

In the present study, I discuss the properties of Štivorian existential and locative constructions. Existentials are copular constructions that express a proposition about the existence or the presence of someone or something in a context (McNally 2011). Previous research (Bentley et al., 2015; Francez, 2007; Haspelmath, 2023; Kampanarou, 2023; McCloskey, 2014; Moro, 1997) showed that this is true for locatives as well, but there are a number of morphosyntactic properties that set the two types of constructions apart.

Štivorian, in line with other Venetan varieties, exhibits clear formal distinctions between existential and locative constructions, as shown in Casalicchio and Frasson (2019). Locative constructions (2) exhibit a pre-copular definite pivot³ and a complex copula formed with a *be* form and a subject clitic that agrees in person and number with the pivot.

²The variety was referred to as Serbian by the informants.

³I motivate the distinction between definite and indefinite pivots at a morphological level, by means of the presence of a definite article. A reviewer suggested that the pivots in (2) and (4) may be interpreted as generic. While this is true, it may not affect definiteness properties of the pivot. As noted, among others, in Ojeda (1991), definite generics refer to elements of the discourse universe that may not be uniquely identified.

(2)

I todesch-i i=era qua.
 DEF.PLM German-PL 3PLM=be.IMP.3 here
 ‘The Germans were here.’

Conversely, existential constructions (3) exhibit a complex copula formed by a locative-like clitic *gh(e)* and a *be* form, with an indefinite post-copular nominal, the pivot. The copula is marked for third person, but there is no marking of number (and gender) agreement on the copula.

(3)

Gh’=è ucrain-i (qua) ncora.
 CL=be.PRS.3 Ukrainian-PL here still
 ‘There are still Ukrainians here.’

The location is obligatorily expressed in locative constructions (2), by means of a locative adverb or prepositional phrase, while it is optional in existential constructions (3).⁴

Štivorian allows for a third possibility, with mixed properties of existential and locative constructions. This type of sentence exhibits the same agreement pattern of existentials, with a copula made up of a dummy clitic *l’* and a *be* form; the pivot is generally post-copular. In this construction too, the copula is marked for third person, but there is no number (and gender) marking.

(4)

L’=è stà sempre i serbi là.
 CL=be.PRS.3 be.PTCP.SGM always DEF.3PLM Serb-PL there
 ‘There have always been Serbs there.’

The post-copular pivot in (4) is definite; the presence of a definite pivot in *l’*-constructions is at odds with previous literature on Italo-Romance varieties (see in particular Bentley et al., 2015), according to which existential constructions are expected to exhibit indefinite post-copular pivots, a restriction known as *definiteness effect* (Milsark, 1974). Conversely, locative constructions allow definite pivots, as shown in (2).

In other words, Štivorian exhibits two types of constructions with post-copular pivots. The restriction to the post-copular placement holds in both *gh(e)*- and *l’*-

⁴In the present analysis, I refer to the overt morphological marking of location inside the sentence as a way to distinguish between existential and locative constructions; as correctly pointed out by a reviewer, location can be already known as a contextual and discursive information; while I do not exclude that this information may also play a role in the distribution and use of the different constructions, I leave this question for future research.

constructions. However, the definiteness effect applies only to *gh(e)*-constructions, which require an indefinite post-copular pivot (5). Conversely, the data⁵ shows that the *l'*-construction allows only for post-copular definite⁶ pivots, as demonstrated in (6).

(5)
 Gh'è un / *el paese.
 CL=be.PRS.3 IND.SGM DEF.SGM village
 'There is a village.'

(6)
 L'è là el nostro sentro.
 CL=be.PRS.3 there DEF.SGM our center
 'Our centre is there.'

A further difference between the two constructions is represented by the expression of location. The sentence with a *l'* clitic in (6) seems to be more strongly correlated with the exact location of the centre and requires an overt locative expression; conversely, the sentence with *gh(e)* (5) simply states the existence of a village, without specifically referring to its location.

In sum, the Štivorian data discussed in this section indicates that, besides the distinction between locative and existential constructions, a third construction

⁵ Due to the limited amount of data, I cannot exclude a possible use of indefinite pivots with *l'*-constructions, which is attested in other Venetan varieties. In the present paper, the discussion is limited to what can be empirically shown based on the Štivorian data.

⁶ An anonymous reviewer pointed out that the distribution of definiteness markers could affect definiteness restrictions. The presence of a definite article in Štivorian is not exactly predictable on the basis of traditional approaches to the expression of definiteness in Italo-Romance languages. The determiner is sometimes dropped in contexts where it would be expected (i) and added where it would not be expected (ii).

(i)
 Ø Valsugana la=era soto Ø Austria-Ungaria.
 Valsugana 3SGF=be.IMP.3 under Austria-Hungary
 'The Sugana Valley was part of Austria-Hungary.'

(ii)
 Prima de la questa guera.
 Before of DEF.SGF this war
 'Before this war.'

An analysis of definiteness in Štivorian is beyond the scope of the present work and is not possible based on the currently available data; I tentatively argue that examples like (i) and (ii) result from an instability in the expression of definite markers due to contact with Slavic varieties, which are traditionally assumed to lack determiners altogether. More research is needed in this respect.

exists, that exhibits mixed properties of both copular construction types. The properties discussed in the present section, which I will analyse in the present study, are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Properties of existential and locative constructions in Štivorian.

	<i>gb(e)</i> -constructions	locative constructions	<i>l'</i> -constructions
Agreement	Default	Full	Default
Pivot position	Post-copular	Pre-copular	Post-copular
Definiteness	Indefinite	Definite	Definite
Location	Optional	Obligatory	Obligatory

On par with *gb(e)*-constructions, *l'*-constructions do not exhibit number agreement on the copula, which I preliminary define as a form of *default* agreement. Besides, both constructions require a post-copular pivot. Conversely, on par with locative constructions, *l'*-constructions require a definite pivot and an overt locative expression.

4. Theoretical background: subject clitics, locative *pro* and inverse locatives

In this section, I discuss some necessary theoretical background that will allow me to argue for two separate analyses for the *gb'* and *l'* constructions in Štivorian. First, I define the two clitics as parts of verbal morphology, realised on the functional head hosting the copula; second, I discuss the role played by contextual information on the distribution of the two patterns identified in Štivorian; finally, I present additional cross-linguistic evidence that the two constructions do not allow for the same analysis: crucially, only the *gb(e)*-construction can be analysed as a real existential; the *l'*-construction is better analysed as an inverse locative construction.

4.1 *gb(e)* and *l'* as subject clitics (inflection markers)

Examples (3) and (4) show that *gb(e)* and *l'* are normally realised in contexts in which the pivot is in a post-copular position; when the sentence includes a pre-copular nominal, as shown in (2), a fully agreeing subject clitic is used. Since *gb(e)* and *l'* are used in complementary distribution with agreeing subject clitics, depending on the position of the nominal, I assume they occupy the same structural position.

This assumption is supported by previous studies on northern Italo-Romance varieties, which showed that both *gb(e)*, *l'* and the subject clitics can be analysed as parts of verbal morphology (cf. Brandi & Cordin, 1981, 1989; Rizzi, 1986).

This analysis is confirmed by their distribution: subject clitics do not behave as regular pronominal subjects, but as parts of verbal inflection, as shown by the fact that they mandate doubling of tonic subject pronouns:

- (7) Central Venetan⁷
 Ti te=canti sempre.
 You 2SG=sing,2SG always
 ‘You are always singing’.

Early generative approaches to the syntax of subject clitics of the Venetan type (Brandi & Cordin, 1981; Rizzi, 1986) related the obligatory doubling with the nature of the subject clitic as an inflection marker. Different theoretical analyses were proposed about the exact nature of such elements. In Poletto (1993), subject clitics like *te* in (7) are defined as heads generated in the specifier position of VP and then moved to I, a complex head where they are realised together with the verb. The minimalist approach discussed in Roberts (2010, 2014) similarly suggests that subject clitics are bundles of φ -features realised on a T head together with the verb, as a result of the fission or copy of a subset of agreement features, which are realised as a head.

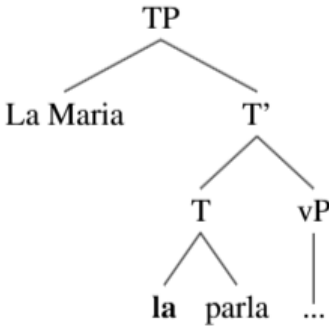
What these analyses have in common is the definition of Venetan (and other Italo-Romance varieties with comparable subject clitic paradigms) as a null-subject language: subject clitics do not occupy the subject position, which, at the same time, does not have to be filled by an overt subject:

- (8)
 (La Maria) la=parla.
 DEF.SGF Mary 3SGF=speak.PRS.3
 ‘Mary is speaking’.

The lexical subject *La Maria* in (8) can be dropped in Venetan varieties, which can therefore be analysed as null subject languages. A simplified representation of the construction with an agreeing subject clitic is shown in (9).

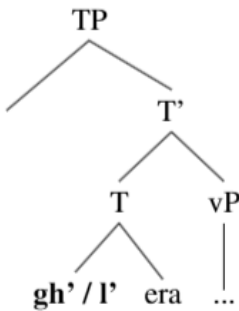
⁷The Central Venetan examples refer to Trevisiano, a variety spoken in the Treviso province, Italy. Venetan (including Štivorian) is a spoken variety, it exhibits dialectal variation and currently lacks standard spelling rules. The spelling used here is a simplified transcription based on the one used in Benincà (1994), Poletto (1993, 2000). It represents a neutral pronunciation without accounting for local phonological variation.

(9)



This analysis could be extended to Štivorian *gh(e)* and *l'*. Just as subject clitics, they do not occupy the subject position, but they are realised on a functional head together with the verb, behaving as inflectional markers. In other words, *gh(e)* and *l'* can be considered as expletive clitics; unlike these forms, they are not syntactically represented as heads of an independent functional phrase, but as inflectional heads realised on T:

(10)



As shown by example (8), subject clitics are expected to fully share the same agreement features with the overt or null element realised in the subject position; if *gh(e)* and *l'* are analysed as expletive subject clitics, the question is whether a null expletive element occupies the subject position in (10) and what type of features this element carries.

A relevant proposal about the presence of a null element in the subject position of constructions involving *gh(e)* and *l'* clitics is discussed in Tortora (1997) with respect to Borgomanerese, a north-western Italo-Romance variety. Crucially, Borgomanerese exhibits a parallel agreement pattern to the one discussed for Štivorian existentials in Section 3, but in the context of unaccusative constructions with post-verbal subjects. In such constructions, a *ngb* clitic alternates with *l'*.

(11) Borgomanerese (Tortora, 1997:p.51)

a. Ngh=è rivà=gghi na fiola.

LOC.CL=be.PRS.3 arrive.PTCP.SGM=LOC a girl

'A girl has arrived.'

b. L'=è rivà na fiola.

CL=be.PRS.3 arrive.PTCP.SGM a girl

'A girl has arrived.'

The *ngh* clitic in (11-a) corresponds to the Štivorian *gh(e)* form in (3), while the *l'* clitic in (11-b) corresponds to the Štivorian homophonous form in (4).

Building on the idea that the clitics realised in Borgomanerese unaccusative constructions behave like subject clitics, Tortora (1997) argues that they also represent agreement markers with a phonologically null subject in Spec-IP (Spec-TP in the minimalist framework adopted in the present paper). In other words, the presence of *ngh* and *l'* on the verb signals the presence of a coindexed null subject. Given the locative nature of the *ngh* clitic, Tortora (1997) argues that the element occupying the subject position is a null locative, which functions as the external argument of the construction.

The author further defines the lack of number and gender agreement in Borgomanerese existentials as a form of *default* singular agreement, resulting from the impossibility for the post-copular pivot to agree with the copula.

The presence of a null element in sentences like (11 a-b) discussed in Tortora's analysis can be extended to Štivorian existentials⁸, but the locative nature of *pro* in Spec-TP is challenged by a number of empirical facts.

Firstly, the *l'* clitic in Štivorian is homophonous with third person singular masculine subject clitics, as shown in (12) and it is used in other copular constructions with post-copular subjects too⁹ (13).

(12) Štivorian

Me fradel l'=è rivà casa.

my brother 3SGM=be.PRS.3 arrive.PTCP.SGM home

'My brother arrived at home.'

(13) Štivorian

L'era tute tere de stato.

CL=be.IMP.3 all lands of state

'They were all state-owned lands.'

⁸ By assuming the presence of a null expletive in Štivorian existentials, I am not implying that they are to be assimilated to unaccusative constructions.

⁹ The clitic *l'* is analysed by Poletto (1993) as an 'auxiliary clitic', a specific form of the third person singular masculine subject clitic realised exclusively with third person singular forms of BE.

The analysis of *l'* as a marker of agreement with a locative *pro* is therefore entirely speculative. I argue that the *l'* clitic rather signals agreement with an expletive *pro* valued as third person singular masculine. This confirms that, besides the referential context (12), *l'* is used in non-locative copular constructions with post-copular subjects (13), as well as the existential constructions discussed in this study.

As for *gb(e)*, this form is defined as a multifunctional clitic (Frasson, 2023), in that it can be used to pronominalise a variety of PPPs, including locatives (14) and datives (15).

(14)

Ghe son ndà.

LOC.CL be.PRS.1SG go.PTCP.SGM

'I went there.'

(15)

Ghe gavea dito na roba.

DAT.CL have.IMP.1SG tell.PTCP.SG a thing

'I told him/her something.'

The locative value of *gbe* is clearly present in (14), but not in (15). As argued in Benincà (2007), the same is true for the *gb(e)* clitic used in existentials; in this case, the clitic cannot be defined as a real locative, in that it has lost its original locative meaning and has rather a deictic function: it locates the verbal form in space or time with respect to speaker and hearer and generally encodes proximity¹⁰. In other words, the clitic *gb(e)* in (3) adds a deictic value to the third person singular verb in the present tense, providing location coordinates for the pivot with respect to the speaker. In line with the idea that subject clitics and *l'* double features of a constituent located in Spec-TP, I argue that *gb(e)* doubles features of a deictic *pro* in Spec-TP, encoding proximity. The exact nature of this element and the agreement relationship holding with *gb(e)* is discussed in Section 5. Before that, I will account for the difference between the pure existential behaviour of *gb(e)*-constructions and the mixed existential/locative behaviour of *l'*-constructions.

4.2 Existential and inverse locative constructions

As shown by the data in Section 3, Štivorian exhibits two similar types of copular constructions: one uses *gb(e)*, the other uses *l'*. The former exhibits many formal

¹⁰ This proposal is consistent with the analysis of existential *ci* in Italian, discussed, among others, in Cruschina (2012:p.96), as a locative clitic whose locative properties have been partially bleached and can no longer function as locative pronouns. Conversely, it expresses a contextual location, providing spatial parameters about the presence or existence of the entity referred to by the pivot.

properties that are generally associated with existential constructions: the copula lacks number agreement with the post-copular pivot, which must be indefinite, the location needs not be overtly expressed; the latter exhibits the same type of agreement pattern, but it has a more pronounced locative flavour and allows for definite post-copular pivots.

Before moving to the formal analysis, some considerations on the nature of these two constructions are in order. According to Francez (2007), the location in existentials is expressed by the coda, which is optional and does not have to be specified. This proposal is compatible with the idea, discussed in Lambrecht (1994), that the interpretation of existential constructions is different from that of locative constructions; existentials have a presentative interpretation, they report about the existence of a newly introduced referent (the post-copular pivot) and do not commit to its existence in a specific place. Conversely, locative structures are predicative constructions, in that they predicate the actual existence of a previously introduced referent, occupying a definite location.

In Section 5, I argue that the two structures allow for different syntactic analyses, capturing the two instances of agreement with different null elements (see Longenbaugh 2019 for a similar proposal, applied to French and Italian existentials). This proposal builds on the idea that only *gb(e)*-constructions are real existentials, while the *l'*-constructions sentences represent a special type of locatives, defined by Cruschina (2012) as inverse locatives, in line with Moro's (1997) analysis of inverse copular constructions. From an interpretive perspective, inverse locatives are equivalent to the locative constructions with a pre-copular nominal, like the one in (2), but have additional information-structural properties.

A canonical example of inverse locative constructions is represented by languages like Serbian (as well as other Romance varieties, such as Sardinian, cf. Remberger, 2009); here, the difference between existential and inverse locative constructions is signaled by the use of different copulas, a special agreement configuration and different case properties of the post-copular pivot, as shown in Frasson and Vaikšnoraitė (forthcoming):

- (16)
- a. Ima mačaka (tamo).
 have.3SG cat.GEN.PL there
 'There are cats (there).'
- b. Tamo su mačke.
 there be.PRS.3PL cat.NOM.PL
 'The cats are there.'

Both constructions have a post-copular pivot, which receives a genitive case (associated with an indefinite reading and lack of existential commitment, as shown in Partee and Borschev 2004, Kagan 2009) in the existential in (16-a) and nominative in the inverse locative in (16-b); the existential construction uses a *have*-copula, which does not agree in numbers with the pivot, while the inverse locative uses a *be*-copula that fully agrees with the post-copular pivot. As already shown for Štivorian, the location is obligatorily expressed in locatives, but is only optionally expressed in existentials.

Comparing the Serbian examples with the Štivorian ones discussed in Section 3, we notice some similarities: the post-copular pivot in the existential example receives an indefinite interpretation in both languages; the two structures use different copulas (different lexical items in Serbian, combinations of two different clitics with a *be*-copula in Štivorian). A crucial difference between the two varieties regards agreement. Both Serbian and Štivorian do not exhibit agreement between the copula and the pivot in existentials; however, Serbian exhibits full agreement in the inverse locative construction, while Štivorian does not.

In Section 5, I will capture this difference by arguing for different Agree operations holding between the copula and the pivot in the three constructions under analysis.

5. A formal analysis of Štivorian existentials and locatives

I contend that existential and inverse locative constructions in Štivorian result from an agreement operation with a *pro* in Spec-TP. While lacking the true status of an argument, such *pro* carries features that trigger the realisation of a *gh(e)* or a *l'* clitic on the copula; the choice of either *gh(e)* or *l'* depends on the properties of the null element in Spec-TP.

As already introduced in Section 4, I assume a pragmatic distinction between *gh(e)*- and *l'*- constructions, building on the partition betweenthetic and categorical structures discussed in Sasse (1987). The *gh(e)*-constructions qualify as athetic (presentative) structure, which consist of new information, while *l'*-constructions are categorical (predicative) structures, involving a previously introduced referent. This is reflected in the definiteness effect exhibited by existential constructions (the post-copular pivot has to be indefinite, in view of its new-information status), and the lack thereof in inverse locative constructions (the pivot can be either definite or indefinite). In the remainder of this paper, I will describe the agreement relationship holding between the copula and the different types of pivots: a pre-copular definite pivot in locative constructions, a post-copular indefinite pivot in existential constructions and a post-copular definite pivot in inverse locatives. The

lack of full agreement in the latter constructions, suggests that a different (null) element occupies the pre-copular subject position.

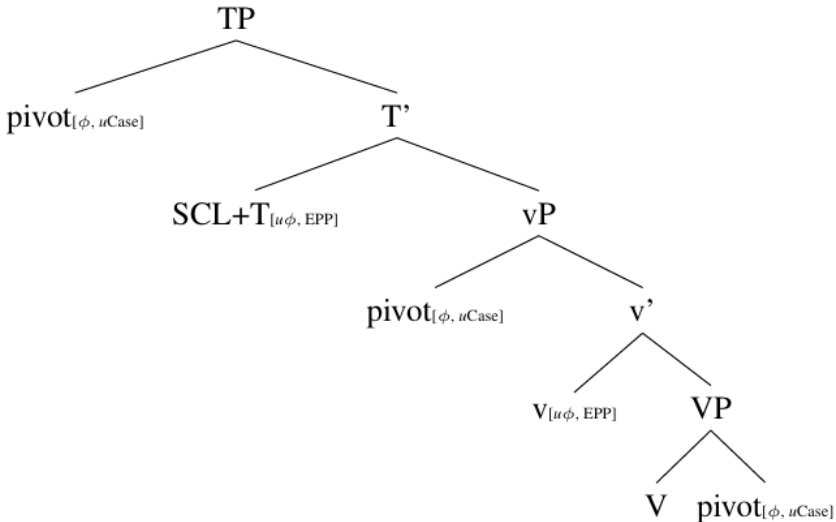
5.1. The structure of locative and existential constructions

The agreement operation adopted in this paper, follows the one discussed in detail in Frasson and Vaikšnoraitė (forthcoming) for existential constructions in Serbian. In line with such analysis, I build on the type of agreement discussed in D’Alessandro and Roberts (2008) for past participle agreement in Italian, representing a minimalist version of Kayne (1989) and Belletti (2006) analysis. While D’Alessandro and Roberts (2008) finally argue for an alternative phase-based approach, I propose that the type of minimalist version of Kayne’s and Belletti’s analysis they initially discuss in their study is preferable for existentials.

The steps of the minimalist agreement operation I adopt are exemplified by the case of regular locative copular constructions with a pre-copular pivot, like the one in (2), repeated here as (17).

- (17)
 I todesch-i i=era qua.
 DEF.PLM German-PL 3PLM=be.IMP.3 here
 ‘The Germans were here.’

The derivation of locative constructions such as the one in (17) is represented in (18):



I assert that locative constructions are derived in two steps, represented in (18):

a) *v* has unvalued φ -features and an EPP feature; it probes the VP-internal nominal in order to have its features valued. This nominal has valued φ -features and is an active goal because of its unvalued case feature, so it moves to Spec-vP, where it values the EPP and φ -features on *v*;

b) T has unvalued φ -features too, as well as an EPP feature. It probes for the nominal in Spec-vP in order to have its features valued. Besides, I assume that only T can assign a nominative case to the pivot. Therefore, an additional movement is required: the nominal moves to Spec-TP, it values the EPP and φ -features of T and receives a structural nominative case.

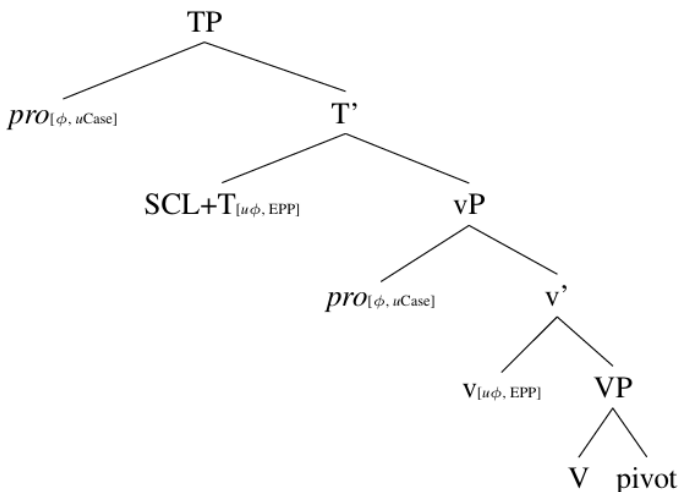
Notice that Štivorian displays φ -agreement with the pre-copular nominal by means of a proclitic subject *i*, which does not represent a subject pronoun, but a bundle of φ -features realised on the verb, as shown in Section 4.

The same type of agreement operation can be adopted for the existential construction with post-copular pivots, such as (3), repeated here as (19).

- (19)
 Gh'=è ucrain-i (qua) ncora.
 CL=be.PRS.3 Ukrainian-PL here still
 ‘There are still Ukrainians here’.

In this case, the presence of the non-agreeing *gh(e)* clitic signals the presence of a null subject in Spec-TP.

- (20)



I confirm that the null element in Spec-TP is a deictic *pro* (a semantically bleached locative, with the properties of a ‘null demonstrative’, as discussed in den Dikken, 2005; see also Giorgi, 2010; Zanuttini, 2017), valued as third person singular; the deictic *pro* is merged in Spec-vP, it satisfies v’s EPP and φ -features and blocks agreement with the VP-internal pivot. *pro* is then raised to Spec-TP, satisfying the EPP on T and valuing its φ -features. *pro* finally receives nominative case from T.

The case of *l'*-constructions with post-copular pivots is discussed in detail in the next section.

5.2. The structure of inverse locative constructions

At this point, it is still not clear why Štivorian inverse locatives do not exhibit an agreement between the copula and the pivot, on par with existential constructions and unlike regular inverse locative constructions, as described for Italo-Romance in Cruschina (2012) and for Serbian in Frasson and Vaikšnoraitė (forthcoming). In Cruschina’s (2012) cartographic analysis, inverse locative constructions are assumed to be the result of a dislocation process, related to information structure: the pivot is realised in a post-copular functional projection, dedicated to focalised constituents. As shown by the Serbian examples in Frasson (2024), dislocation does not trigger any changes in the agreement pattern: the copula still fully agrees with the dislocated pivot.

This is not the case for Štivorian, where the copula in inverse locatives fails to agree with the pivot, on par with true existentials with *gb(e)*. This was shown in example (6), repeated here as (21):

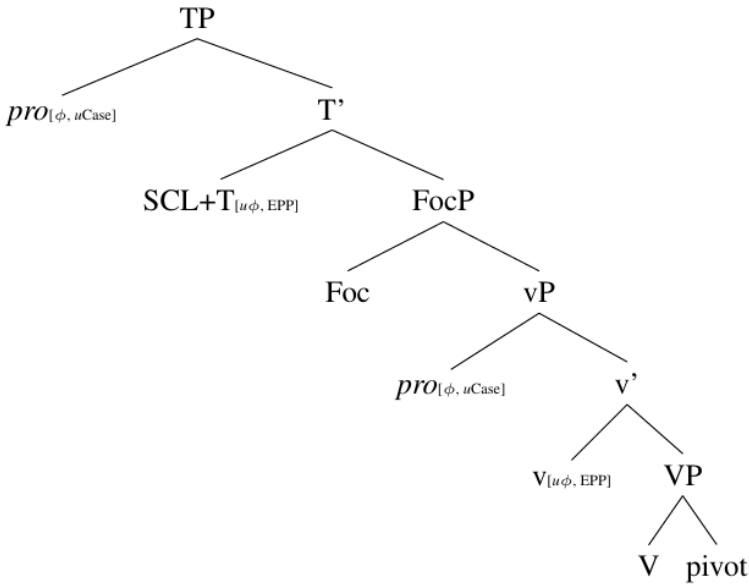
- (21)
- | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|---------|--------|---------|
| L’è | là | el | nostro | sentro. |
| CL=be.PRS.3 | there | DEF.SGM | our | center |
- ‘Our centre is there’.

The *l'* construction exhibits the same type of singular agreement, which allowed me to analyse the *gb(e)* construction as an instance of agreement with a deictic in Spec-TP. Following Moro (2009), Cruschina (2012) argues that the pivot moves to a clause internal FocP in order to have its [focus] feature valued.

Štivorian inverse locatives involve a FocP position, in line with Cruschina (2012), but the pivot does not move there: it is left in situ; at the same time, the locative marker gets focalised. In this respect, the structure of Štivorian inverse locatives closely resembles the structure of existentials: the pivot remains in situ, below TP, and is therefore unable to establish an agreement relationship with the

copula in T. In this case, an expletive *pro* is merged in Spec-vP to satisfy v's EPP and φ -features. The null expletive is then raised to Spec-TP, satisfying the EPP on T and valuing its φ -features. *pro* finally receives the nominative case from T.

(22)



This analysis captures the default agreement pattern displayed by the *l'*-constructions in Štivorian. While an extension of this analysis to other structures exhibiting the same clitic, such as the copular sentence in (13), is outside the goal of the present study, one should notice that this pattern is consistent with the generalised lack of agreement with post-verbal subjects in Venetan, which may therefore receive a parallel analysis (see Benincà, 1994; Poletto, 1993, 2000).

6. Conclusion

This study discussed the syntactic properties of existential and locative constructions in Štivorian, an Italo-Romance variety spoken in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I distinguished three types of constructions: existentials, locatives and inverse locatives. The three constructions exhibit different properties. Existentials exhibit a complex copula that does not agree in number and gender with an indefinite post-copular pivot; locatives exhibit full agreement between the copula and a definite pre-copular pivot; inverse locatives exhibit mixed properties, in that the copula does

not agree with the post-copular pivot (like in existentials), which must however be definite (like in locatives).

I proposed a minimalist syntactic analysis, whereby the three structures are derived with an agreement relationship holding between the copula and the pivot (in regular locative constructions) or a null subject (in existential and inverse locative constructions). The null element qualifies as a deictic *pro* in existentials and as an expletive *pro* in inverse locatives.

The analysis discussed in the present study reduces the structural difference between existentials and inverse locatives to the presence of an additional clause-internal FocP in the latter construction, which triggers the focalisation of a locative marker, favouring the locative reading over the existential one.

Abbreviations

CL	Clitic
DAT	Dative
DEF	Definite
F	Feminine
GEN	Genitive
IMP	Imperfect
IND	Indefinite
INF	Infinitive
LOC	Locative
M	Masculine
NOM	Nominative
PART	Partitive
PL	Plural
PRS	Present
PTCP	Participle
SCL	Subject Clitic
SG	Singular

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Marija Runić and all the colleagues at the University of Banja Luka for hosting me in 2018 and for the valuable help with data collection. This research was supported by the Polish National Science Centre (NCN) grant SONATA BIS-11 HS2 (2021/42/E/HS2/00143).

References

1. Belletti, A. (2006) *(Past) participle agreement*. In Everaert, M. and van Riemsdijk, H. (eds), *The Blackwell companion to syntax*. 493–521. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470996591.ch48>
2. Benincà, P. (1994) *La variazione sintattica*. Il Mulino, Bologna.
3. Benincà, P. (2007) *Clitici e ausiliari: gh'ò, z'è*. In Bentley, D. and Ledgeway, A. (eds), *Sui dialetti italo-romanzi. Saggi in onore di Nigel Vincent. Supplement to 'The Italianist'* 1(27), 27–47.
4. Bentley, D., Ciconte, F., Cruschina, S. (2015) *Existentials and locatives in Romance dialects of Italy*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198745266.001.0001>
5. Brandi, L., Cordin, P. (1981) *Dialetti e Italiano: un confronto sul Parametro del Soggetto Nullo*. *Rivista di Grammatica Generativa* 6, 33–87.
6. Brandi, L., Cordin, P. (1989) *Two Italian Dialects and the Null Subject Parameter*. In Jaeggli, O.A. and K. J. Safir (eds), *The Null Subject Parameter*. Dordrecht: Springer. 111–142.
7. Casalicchio, J., Frasson A. (2019) The syntax of spatial anchoring: logophoricity in a heritage Italo-Romance variety. Presented at Going Romance XXXIII, Leiden.
8. Cruschina, S. (2012) *Focus in existential sentences*. In Bianchi, V and Chesi, C. (eds), *Enjoy linguistic. Papers offered to Luigi Rizzi on the occasion of his 60th birthday*. 77–107.
9. D'Alessandro, R., Roberts, I. (2008) *Movement and agreement in Italian past participles and defective phases*. *Linguistic Inquiry* 39 (3), 477–491. <https://doi.org/10.1162/ling.2008.39.3.477>
10. D'Alessandro, R., Natvig, D., Putnam, M. T. (2021) *Addressing challenges in formal research on moribund heritage languages: A path forward*. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.700126>
11. Den Dikken, M. (2005) *Comparative correlatives comparatively*. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 36 (4), 497–532. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002438905774464377>
12. Francez, I. (2007) *Existential propositions*. Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University Stanford, CA.
13. Frasson, A. (2022) *The syntax of subject pronouns in heritage languages: innovation and complexification*. Amsterdam, LOT.
14. Frasson, A. (2023) *Brazilian Venetan is going leista: Clitic doubling and resumption in a heritage Romance variety*. *Isogloss*. *Open Journal of Romance Linguistics*. 9(1)/8, 1–23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/isogloss.316>
15. Frasson, A., E. Vaikšnoraitė. (forthcoming). There is more about existentials: agreement and case assignment in Serbian and Lithuanian there-constructions. To appear in *Journal of Slavic Linguistics*, FASL 32 Issue.

16. Giorgi, A., Pianesi, F. (1997) *Tense and aspect: From semantics to morphosyntax*. Oxford University Press, USA. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sl.24.1.11gel>
17. Giorgi, A. (2010) *About the speaker: Towards a syntax of indexicality*. Oxford University Press. 10.1007/s11185-009-9051-x
18. Haspelmath, M. (2023) *On existential and predlocative construction-functions and construction-strategies*. Paper presented at 56th meeting of SLE, Athens.
19. Kampanarou, A. (2023) *Argument Structure across Grammatical Categories: Existential, Possessive, and Copular constructions*. PhD dissertation, University of Crete.
20. Kayne, R. (1989) *Facets of past participle agreement in Romance*. Foris: Dordrecht. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110869255-005>
21. Lambrecht, K. (1994) *Information structure and sentence form: Topic, focus, and the mental representations of discourse referents*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620607>
22. McCloskey, J. (2014) *Irish existentials in context*. *Syntax* 17 (4), 343–384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/synt.12020>
23. McNally, L. (2011) *Existential sentences*. In Maienborn, C., von Stechow, K., Portner, P. (eds.), *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*, vol. 2. De Gruyter Mouton. 1829–1848.
24. Milsark, G. L. (1974) *Existential sentences in English*. Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
25. Moro, A. (1997) *The raising of predicates: Predicative noun phrases and the theory of clause structure*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511519956>
26. Moro, A. (2009) *Rethinking symmetry: a note on labeling and the EPP*. *Snippets* 19, 17–18.
27. Longenbaugh, N. (2019) *On expletives and the agreement-movement correlation*. Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
28. Ojeda, A. (1991) *Definite descriptions and definite generics*. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 367–397.
29. Partee, B., Borschev, V. (2004) *The semantics of Russian genitive of negation: The nature and role of perspectival structure*. *Semantics and Linguistic Theory* 14, 212–234. 10.3765/salt.v0i0.2908
30. Penello, N. (2003) *Capitoli di morfologia e sintassi del dialetto di Carmignano di Brenta*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Padua
31. Poletto, C. (1993) *La sintassi del soggetto nei dialetti italiani settentrionali*. Padova: Unipress.
32. Poletto, C. (2000) *The higher functional field: evidence from Northern Italian Dialects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 10.1093/oso/9780195133561.001.0001
33. Remberger, E. (2009) *Null subjects, expletives and locatives in Sardinian*. In Kaiser, G., Remberger, E. (eds.) *Null subjects, expletives and locatives in Romance*. Konstanz:

- Universität Konstanz, Konstanzer Arbeitspapiere des Fachbereichs Sprachwissenschaft, 123: 231–261.
34. Rizzi, L. (1986) *On the Status of Subject Clitics in Romance*. In Jaeggli, O.A., Silva-Corvalan, C. (eds), *Studies in Romance Linguistics*. Dordrecht, Foris. 391–419.
 35. Roberts, I. (2010) *Agreement and head movement: Clitics, incorporation, and defective goals*. MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262014304.001.0001>
 36. Roberts, I. (2014) *Subject clitics and macroparameters*. *Diachrony and dialects: Grammatical change in the dialects of Italy* 8, 177–201.
 37. Rosalio, M.R. (1979) *Studi sul dialetto trentino di Štivor (Bosnia)*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia.
 38. Sasse, H. J. (1987) *The thematic/categorical distinction revisited*. *Linguistics* 25 (3), 511–580.
 39. Tortora, C. (1997) *The syntax and semantics of the weak locative*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Delaware.
 40. Zanuttini, R. (2017) *Presentatives and the syntactic encoding of contextual information*. In Aboh, E., Haeblerl, E., Puskás, G., Schönenberger, M., *Elements of comparative syntax: Theory and description*. 221–255. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501504037-008>

Alberto Frason
Univerzitet u Vroclavu
Istraživački centar “Slavicus”

EGZISTENCIJALNE, LOKATIVNE I INVERZNE LOKATIVNE KONSTRUKCIJE U ŠTIVORSKOM DIJALEKTU

Rezime

Ovaj rad istražuje sintaktičke i interpretativne osobine egzistencijalnih, lokativnih i inverznih lokativnih konstrukcija u štivorskom dijalektu, severnom italo-romanskom jeziku koji se govori u severoistočnoj Bosni i Hercegovini. Analiziran je *definiteness effect* (Milsark, 1974), fokusirajući se na osobine lokativnih i egzistencijalnih konstrukcija, kako na strukturnom, tako i na interpretativnom nivou. Na formalnom nivou, u lokativnim konstrukcijama se kopula slaže sa određenim pivotom; međutim, u egzistencijalnim konstrukcijama se kopula ne slaže sa neodređenim pivotom. Pored ove opozicije, štivorski dijalekt prikazuje inverzne lokativne konstrukcije, koje pokazuju mešane osobine egzistencijalnih i lokativnih konstrukcija. Cilj ovog rada je da pokaže da egzistencijalne i lokativne konstrukcije imaju različite sintaktičke strukture; inverzne lokativne konstrukcije omogućavaju strukturnu analizu koja je paralelna sa analizom egzistencijalnih konstrukcija,

sa dodatnim interpretativnim osobinama koje ih čine sličnim regularnim lokativnim konstrukcijama.

► *Ključne reči*: egzistencijalne rečenice, lokativne rečenice, klitike, štivorski, romanski jezici, sintaksa.

Preuzeto: 26. 11. 2023.

Korekcije: 2. 6. 2024.

Prihvaćeno: 8. 6. 2024.