

ON THE SYNTAX OF PRONOMINAL ARGUMENTS OF INFINITIVE VERBS IN SAURIAN*

FRANCESCO COSTANTINI
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI UDINE
francesco.costantini@uniud.it

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This study investigates the syntactic positioning of object pronouns (personal and reflexive) in Saurian, a Southern-Bavarian variety spoken in Sauris/Zahre, Friuli, Italy. The focus is on complex predicate structures involving modal or functional verbs and non-finite clauses. A word order pattern is identified where pronominal arguments attach in enclisis to the infinitive verb. This configuration deviates from standard German and instead converges with Romance languages. Besides this pattern, Saurian also displays a word order where pronominal arguments occur after the inflected within a verbal complex. The article investigates the two structures with respect to different functional verbs. Drawing on historical attestations and contemporary fieldwork data, the article argues that despite the *prima facie* convergent patterns, contact has at most reinforced already existing structures in the receiving language in line with general norms that constrain crosslinguistic variation.

Keywords: Saurian, Language Contact, Infinitival Clauses, Clitic Placement

1. Introduction

This paper aims to examine the syntax of object pronouns (personal and reflexive pronouns) in Saurian, a Southern Bavarian variety spoken in the language island of Sauris/Zahre, in Friuli, in structures featuring complex predicates consisting of a modal or a functional verb followed by an infinitive verb or an infinitive clause. The interest of this topic lies in the fact that occasional observations have allowed us to identify word orders that *prima facie* converge with Romance syntax and contrast with standard German syntax,

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such as the following example, taken from the Parable of the Prodigal Son (dated 1835, cfr. Frau 2012 [1984]):

- (1) *is ist ober bol pillich gebēn hoassat za mochan.*
 It is but well proper been feast to make-INF
und za ervradansi.
 and to rejoice-INF-REFL
 [But we had to celebrate and be glad.]

Looking at the last words of the example, one can notice the infinitival clause *za ervradansi* [to rejoice], where the preposition *za* [to] is followed by the infinitive *ervradan* [rejoice] (a reflexive verb in Saurian, as the corresponding, etymologically cognate, German *sich erfreuen*) and the reflexive pronoun *si*.

Comparing the Saurian infinitival clause with a corresponding structure in Standard German (see (2)a),¹ in Friulian (see (3)), a language in contact with Saurian for centuries, and in Italian (see (4)), a language of widespread use in Sauris/Zahre in the modern age and particularly in education since the nineteenth century², one can observe that the word order in the example (1) is more similar to the Romance one than to the standard German one.

- (2) a. *Es war Zeit, sich zu erfreuen.* PRON > V-INF
 it was time REFL to rejoice
 [It was time to rejoice.]
 b. * *Es war Zeit, zu erfreuen sich.* * V-INF > PRON
 it was time to rejoice REFL
- (3) *A' jere timp di indalegrāsi.* V-INF > PRON; * PRON > V-INF
 it was time to rejoice-REFL
 [It was time to rejoice.]
- (4) *Era tempo di rallegrarsi.* V-INF > PRON; * PRON > V-INF
 was time to rejoice-REFL
 [It was time to rejoice.]

¹ Infinitive and infinitival clauses in German have been widely discussed from different perspectives; just to mention a few influential studies, see for instance Bech (1955), Kiss (1995), Würmbrand (2001) on infinitives in German, Abraham (2004), Smirnova (2016) on the diachronic development of *zu*-infinitives, Schallert (2013), and, in a variationist perspective, Vergeiner and Elspaß (2025) for an overview on the infinitive constructions in Upper German.

² The linguistic repertoire of Sauris has been characterized by Denison (1968 and subsequent studies) as a “triglossia” (Denison 1979): Italian functions as the high variety, Friulian serves as the middle variety, employed when interacting with Friulian speakers and sometimes as a ‘we-code’ among a group of Sauris/Zahre inhabitants with a relatively higher socio-cultural status. Saurian primarily acts as the low variety, utilized for spontaneous conversation in the absence of outsiders, within families, and notably, often by female speakers. By the early 1990s, Denison (1992) observed a decrease in the functional rigidity of these linguistic varieties. Italian’s domains of use had expanded significantly, often at the expense of Friulian and Saurian, leading to Italian becoming the virtually exclusive code among the younger generations.

This property of Saurian is all the more remarkable since this language, a fundamentally VO language, is characterized by residual OV orders in the presence of a pronominal object complement, as the following sentences show:

- (5) a. *I on gelesen 's do puech.*
 I have read the here book
 [I've read this book.]
 b. * *I on 's do puech gelesen.*
 I have the here book read
- (6) a. *I ons gelesen.*
 I have=it read
 [I've read it.]
 b. * *I on gelesens.*
 I have read=it

While the VO order is the unmarked option when the object is a noun phrase (see (5)a, b – sentence (5)b is tendentially acceptable only if the object is focused, see Costantini 2023), pronominal objects are obligatorily attached to the right of the finite verb (see (6) a, b), in the *Wackernagel* position (den Besten 1983; Travis 1984; Tomaselli 1990; Bidese 2011; Tomaselli, Bidese 2019).

This state of affairs raises several questions. First, one might wonder whether the word order that characterizes the syntax of Saurian object pronouns relative to the infinitive verb is an evolution of this variety due to contact with Romance varieties, that is, an instance of syntactic calque or of pattern replication (Matras, Sakel 2007; Matras 2009). At the same time, it should be pointed out that the observation of a structural convergence cannot be considered in itself as the demonstration of a contact-induced language change (Costantini 2024); nothing prevents one from thinking that the observed property is linked to the evolution of Saurian towards the VO typology, similar to what must have occurred in English (De Bastiani, Hinterhölz 2020) – a Germanic language that has also evolved from an OV – into VO-language. Indeed, the presence of the investigated property in an early nineteenth-century text, a period in which the level of bilingual competence among the Saurians must have been lower than what we observe today (Costantini 2024), requires solid evidence to support the hypothesis of contact-induced change as the cause of the structure at issue.

Answering these questions requires addressing several other issues, both internal to the grammar of Saurian and from a contrastive perspective. Internally, it would be necessary to provide a detailed description of the contexts in which post-infinitival pronouns occur, whether in all infinitival structures or only in some. Moreover, on a comparative level, it would be necessary to investigate whether the properties identified in Saurian are also present in the contact languages, Friulian and Italian, and in Middle High German, the historical variety of German in whose chronological range a group from the Germanic ‘mainland’

settled in nowadays Saurian basin (Lorenzoni 1938; Kranzmayer 1960; Denison 1990; for an overview on the debate on the original area of the first colonizers, see Costantini 2019).³

To address these issues, we will first try to define to what extent object pronouns can be placed after an infinitive verb; I will therefore try to understand in the presence of which finite verbs we have a structure syntactically comparable to (1) (post-infinitival pronoun) or (6) (pronoun in the *Wackernagel* position). In doing so, I will resort to the notion of ‘restructuring’ (Aissen, Perlmutter 1976; Rizzi 1976; 1978; 1982; Wurmbrand 2003; Cinque 2006) and to verb classes that have already been discussed in the literature on this topic in order to establish whether in Saurian, infinitive verb pronominal objects exhibit a similar behavior as infinitive verb pronominal objects in the contact Romance languages. This would indeed constitute a relevant clue regarding the hypothesis of a contact-induced syntactic change: if comparative data from Friulian and Italian show an overlap between the restructuring and non-restructuring verbs in Saurian, then the idea of contact as the source of the post-infinitival placement of pronouns would be corroborated.

The article is organized as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the types of infinitives (restructuring and non-restructuring) and the types of predicates that select one or the other type of infinitive in a more consistent way crosslinguistically. Section 3 illustrates the research methodology and the results of fieldwork. Section 4 discusses the data on the placement of object clitics in infinitive structures in Saurian in comparison with the same property in the contact varieties. Section 5 concludes the article.

³ Further indications could also come from a comparison with other southern Bavarian dialect varieties that are closer to Saurian than standard German from a genealogical point of view. Post-infinitival pronouns can also be found in the other Germanic varieties spoken in the linguistic islands in north-eastern Italy. See for instance the following examples from Geyer et al. (2014):

- | | | |
|-------|---|---------------------------|
| (i) | <i>De Maria hat gaboorsat me zain khsell so aanboartan-iar.</i> | Cimbro dei Sette Comuni |
| (ii) | <i>Maria hat gavorsat in irme gaselj tze inkoun-ar.</i> | Cimbro dei Tredici Comuni |
| (iii) | <i>Maria hatt gevorst sojn tschell zo rispundranar.</i> | Cimbro di Luserna |
| (iv) | <i>'S Miele ot gevroget sain mige z' ompratanir.</i> | Saurian |
- the Mary has asked her friend to answer=3S.DAT
[Mary has asked her friend to answer her.]

Interestingly, although the translation of these sentences in Plodarisch, a variety closely related to Saurian, does not exhibit the word order infinitival verb > object pronoun (see (v)), this ordering is possible in this variety (see (vi)) (ex. also from Geyer et al. 2014):

- | | |
|------|--|
| (v) | <i>De Maria òt ihrn/sain komarot gevrok, ihr ze òmpartn.</i> |
| | the Maria has his friend asked her to answer |
| | [Mary has asked her friend to answer her.] |
| (vi) | <i>er òt se in de kuchl gelòt innargean, ohme (ze) griessn se.</i> |
| | he has her in the kitchen let enter, without (to) greet her |
| | [He let her into the kitchen without saying hello.] |

In the present paper I will focus on Saurian and leave for future research a thorough examination on other Southern Bavarian varieties.

2. *Infinitives and the syntax of pronouns: an overview*

The position of (clitic) object pronouns in structures including an infinitival verb has been the subject of much discussion, particularly in the context of ‘restructuring’. In Rizzi’s (1976; 1978; 1982) seminal analysis, ‘restructuring’ consists of the operation whereby the finite verb and the infinitive verb are (optionally) reanalyzed as a single complex verb. When this operation occurs, what is originally a biclausal structure develops into a monoclausal structure. Thus, for instance, a sentence like (7) can be either analyzed as in the simplified structures in (8)a or as in (8)b (following Cinque’s 2006 analysis on restructuring).

- (7) *Comincerò a leggere il libro.*
 begin-FUT-1S to read=it
 [I’ll begin to read it.]

- (8) a. $[_{TP1} \textit{comincerò} [_{VP1} \textit{comincerò} [_{CP2} a [_{TP2} \textit{leggere} [_{VP2} \textit{leggere} [il libro]]]]]]]$
 b. $[_{TP1} \textit{comincerò} [_{AspP} \textit{comincerò} [_{PP} a [_{VP1} \textit{leggere} [il libro]]]]]]]$

In (8)a, the infinitival clause is the complement of a lexical verb; the structure includes two verb projections (VP_1 and VP_2). This formally captures the biclausal nature of the structure. In (8)b the infinitival clause is the complement of a functional (aspectual – *Asp*) verb and there is only one verb projection (VP_1), which instantiates a monoclausal structure. For a detailed discussion on bi- vs monoclausality in restructuring structures and relative empirical properties, I refer to Cinque (2006).

A consequence of monoclausality, at least in Romance languages, is that a pronominal argument of the infinitive verb can optionally occur in proclitic position with respect to the finite verb, as example (9)b shows:

- (9) a. *Comincerò a leggerlo.*
 begin-FUT-1S to read=it
 [I’ll begin to read it.]
 b. *Lo comincerò a leggere.*
 it begin-FUT-1S to read tomorrow
 [I’ll begin to read it.]

Since the ‘restructuring verb’ (*cominciare* [to start] in (9)) and the depending infinitive can be part of a complex predicate, object pronouns can cliticize on the finite verb (see (9)b), in the same way as object pronouns cliticize (obligatorily) on the auxiliary verb in sentences having a periphrastic tense verb (where auxiliary and past participle are part of the same predicate).

Only some verbs selecting for an infinitival clause allow object clitics to be ‘extracted’ from their position after the infinitive verb to the preverbal position relative to the finite verb (this process is generally referred to as ‘clitic climbing’). Some other verbs (‘non-restructuring verbs’) do not allow restructuring, and clitic climbing results in an ungrammatical structure:

- (10) a. *Penso di leggerlo domani.*
 think-FUT-1S of read=it tomorrow
 [I'll begin to read it tomorrow.]
 b. * *Lo penso di leggere domani.*
 it think-FUT-1S of read tomorrow

Rizzi's seminal work on restructuring identified three verb classes that can be categorized as restructuring verbs in Italian: modal verbs (*volere* [want], *potere* [can], *dovere* [must]), aspectual verbs (*cominciare* [start], *continuare* [continue], *finire* [finish], *stare per* [be going to]), and motion verbs (*andare* [go], *venire* [come], *tornare* [return]). Among non-restructuring verbs Rizzi mentions *affermare* [claim], *credere* [believe], *decidere* [decide], *parere* [seem], and *promettere* [promise]. Further studies included among restructuring predicates 'conative' verbs (see [Wurmbrand 2001]; e.g., Eng. *try* – see [Cinque 2006] on It. *cercare*, *provare*, *tentare*; see also [Aissen, Perlmutter 1983] and [Moore 1990] for this class of verbs as restructuring predicates in Spanish), and 'implicative' verbs (see [Wurmbrand 2001], Eng. *dare*, *fail*, *forget*, *manage*)⁴.

It should be noted that modal and aspectual verbs are consistently included among restructuring verbs, both from a comparative point of view (these are verbal classes that demonstrate a syntactic behavior compatible with monoclausality in a cross-linguistically coherent manner)⁵ and from a variationist point of view (speakers of the same language agree regarding the syntactic properties of these verbs). For this reason, these verbs constitute the 'core' of restructuring verbs (Wurmbrand 2001). A second set of verbal classes, including conative and implicative verbs, appears less consistent in demonstrating characteristics of monoclausality both cross-linguistically and from the variationist perspective (for some speakers of the same language, these verbs behave like restructuring verbs, for others they do not – for Italian, see [Napoli 1981; Rizzi 1982]; see [Cinque 2006] about conative verbs). These verbal categories constitute the 'periphery' of restructuring (Wurmbrand 2001).

Also, it is worth noting that while there are good reasons to believe that restructuring verbs exist in different languages, the morphosyntactic indicators of restructuring can vary from language to language. Thus, for example, clitic climbing correlates with restructuring in Italian and other Romance languages such as Spanish, but not in German, Dutch, or Japanese (Wurmbrand 2001). In these languages, the morphosyntactic correlates of restructuring are of a different type (object scrambling and the long passive in German, verb climbing in Dutch, the absence of the tense marker in Japanese; see [Wurmbrand 2001]).

Getting now back to Saurian, as we have seen, this language appears to have more than one position available for pronouns with respect to the infinitival predicate of which they are an ar-

⁴ Other verb classes included among restructuring verbs are motion verbs, verbs labelled as *know-how* in Wurmbrand (2003) (see also [Rizzi 1976; 1982; Napoli 1981]), *easy*-adjectives (Rizzi 1976; 1982; Zagona 1982; Aissen; Perlmutter 1976; 1983; Wurmbrand 2003), subjectless causatives (Wurmbrand 2003) as well as – in German – *permit* and *order* (Wurmbrand 2003). For practical reasons related to the need to keep the number of experimental stimuli limited, for the purposes of this work we limited ourselves to investigating modal, aspectual, conative, implicative verbs, as well as some propositional verbs.

⁵ See Cinque (2006, 47, n. 2) for a reference list on syntactic phenomena compatible with restructuring in a rich set of languages.

gument: the *Wackernagel* position – that is, the enclitic position with respect to the finite verb (see (6)) – and the post-infinitival position (see (1)). In this sense, the placement of the object pronoun in Saurian can constitute a diagnostic tool for detecting the presence of a restructuring predicate or a complex sentence, with a finite verb and a depending verb in the infinitive.

In the following section, the properties of complex predicates in Saurian will be discussed. I will first describe the data collection methodology and then illustrate the results of the field research.

3. *The syntax of object pronouns in the Saurian infinitival clause*

3.1 Preliminary observations

The data presented in this section are the result of a field survey done in 2024–25⁶. The inquiry involved ten speakers, all of whom frequently use Saurian in conversation within family and community.

The questionnaire was originally built to include three modal verbs, ‘want’, ‘can’, ‘must/have to’, three aspectual verbs, ‘to start’, ‘to continue’, ‘to stop’, an implicative verb, ‘to manage’, a conative verb, ‘try’, and three propositional verbs, ‘to think’, ‘to hope’, ‘to decide’. Based on the bilingual Saurian-Italian dictionary (Denison, Grassegger 2007) and the Saurian grammar (Cattarin 2020), the corresponding Saurian verbs were identified:

- Modal verbs: *biln/böln* [want]⁷, *hobn(+za)* [have to], *meign* [can], *mussn* [must];
- Aspectual verbs: *onheivn* [to start], *onholtn* [to continue], *aufhearn* [to stop];
- the implicative verb *vrie genue khemen* [to manage] (lit. [to come early enough]);
- the conative verb: *pruvern/probiern* [to try];
- Propositional verbs: *deinkhn/pflechn* [to think], *houfn* [to hope], *decidern* [decide].

A series of sentences was built to explore the placement of the object pronouns relative to the infinitive verb. For each verb, four sentences were constructed, taking into account two factors: the position of the object pronoun – before or after the infinitive – and the type of pronoun – reflexive (*si*) or personal (the third personal masculine pronoun *in* [ən]⁸ was included in the target sentences). This second factor was included to assess eventual differences in acceptability depending on the type of pronoun.

Before finalizing the questionnaire, a meeting was organized with the person in charge of the language service and cultural operator of the Municipality of Sauris, Ms. Lucia Proto, to define details regarding the frequency and naturalness of use of the identified verbs. Given the process of obsolescence that characterizes Saurian, some sentences, particularly those in which the verb is clearly of Romance origin, were perceived as very marked by the

⁶ A preliminary survey was done in 2018. It included only questions about modal verbs (*mussn* [must], *biln/böln* [want]), the aspectual verb *aufhearn* [to stop], and a propositional verb (*houfn*, [to hope]). The questionnaire used in the 2024–25 survey has expanded the number of experimental tasks, as will be illustrated below.

⁷ The verb ‘to want’ has two alternative forms, *biln* and *böln*. The use of the two forms is idiolectal (Denison, Grassegger 2007, s.v. *böln*).

⁸ The pronoun is reduced to [n] after the occlusive consonant /t/, as in the examples (b) below.

linguistic consultant – a sort of literal translation of the corresponding Romance structure through an occasionalism of Romance origin (despite verbs of Romance origin perceived as non-Saurian by some speakers are lemmatized in Denison, Grassegger (2007)). The questionnaire was then reduced to 36 stimuli, including four sentences for nine verbs (*böln*, *meign*, *hobn* [za]⁹, *onheivn*, *onholtn*, *aufhearn*, *vrie genue*[kb] *khemen*¹⁰, *deinkhn/pflechtn*¹¹, *houfn*).

It is worth noticing that these verbs select for two types of infinitives: the ‘simple’ infinitive (Bech’s 1955 “1. Status”, “reiner Infinitiv”), morphologically characterized by the *-(e)n* ending (e.g., *essn* [to eat]), and the *za-an*-infinitive (Bech’s 1955 “2. Status”, “*zu*-Infinitiv”), characterized by the preposition *za* and the *-an* ending (e.g., *za essan* [to eat])¹². Modal verbs (except *hobn*) are followed by the simple infinitive; all the other verbs select for *za-an*-infinitive. As a working hypothesis, one could assume that there is a correlation between the placement of the object pronoun with respect to the infinitive and the type of infinitive, so that the object pronoun of a ‘simple’ infinitive is placed in finite verb enclisis (similar to Standard German), whereas the object pronoun of a *za-an*-infinitive is post-verbal.

The questionnaire was individually submitted to ten speakers selected with the help of the cultural operator. The ten interviewees are all fluent speakers of Saurian. They all learned Saurian as children; the oldest four interviewees, born in the 1950s, acquired Saurian as their first language and subsequently acquired Italian; the remaining six speakers, born in the 1960s or later, acquired Saurian in parallel with Italian. For both groups, Italian can be considered the dominant language. Each speaker was asked to rate the acceptability of each sentence in the questionnaire. The sentences were read and repeated by the interviewer in a random order; in some cases, the interviewer asked the interviewee to repeat the sentence containing one of the nine verbs, in order to confirm which of the variants – the one with the pronoun following the finite verb or the one with the pronoun following the infinitive verb – was more natural.

The following paragraphs present the results of the survey. Each sentence is accompanied by a number indicating the average acceptability value, where 0 means unacceptable, 1 means acceptable though not necessarily natural, 1.5 means acceptable and natural (1.5 was mainly used to signal the preference of a sentence in case both sentences in the minimal pair were considered acceptable). Since Saurian is fundamentally an oral language and is in an early stage of standardization (the grammar was only published in 2020; Denison and Grassegger’s bilingual dictionary [2007] is in many respects a descriptive work), I considered appropriate

⁹ The verb *mussn* [must] was not included in the questionnaire, as the speaker tended to prefer *hobn* (*za*) to *mussn* to express a necessity.

¹⁰ Some speakers used the form *genue*, others *genuekb*. One participant declared that he did not use these verbs to convey the meaning of ‘manage, succeed’, preferring instead the verb *rovern*, from Friulian *rivâ* [lit. *arrive*], which can be used with an implicational meaning.

¹¹ The two verbs were used freely based on the individual preferences of the interviewees.

¹² Saurian here preserves a difference present in Middle High German, in which in the construction *ze* + infinitive, the infinitive occurs in an inflected form (Paul, Wiehl, Grosse 1989, §335): e.g., *dô diu maget rehte ersuch daz ir ze sterbenne niht geschach* [when the maiden truly sought that it was not destined for her **to die**] (Hartmann von Aue, *Der arme Heinrich*, 1281–1282), even though this form is not particularly frequent, as an anonymous reviewer points out.

to request an evaluation of both acceptability and naturalness, understood as the degree of spontaneity with which a given form would be perceived as currently used by each participant.

It is worth noticing that 'naïve' speakers (where by 'naïve' speakers I refer to speakers who, despite possibly having a high level of proficiency, do not show any particular interest in deepening their knowledge of Saurian through the consultation of teaching tools) possibly have a wide margin of acceptability for certain forms (precisely because of the absence of a grammatical norm in Saurian), even while acknowledging that they would not use those forms spontaneously. Therefore, although in some cases the difference in average values between sentences within a minimal pair may be small, in reality, only the form with the highest value is in current use.

It should also be underlined that 'expert' speakers (where by 'expert speaker' I mean a speaker who, by profession or personal interest, tends to make metalinguistic reflections and deepens his knowledge of the language also through the reading of educational and scientific materials on Saurian) tend to evaluate sentence pairs more definitively. In this sense, while reporting the average values of the opinions collected in the field research, I believe that expert judgment should be taken into account to define a more precise empirical framework on the studied phenomenon.

3.2 Modal verbs

Regarding the verb *böln*, it is possible to observe that the enclisis of the reflexive pronoun and the personal pronoun on the finite verb (indicated below by the notation 'FIN > REFL/PRON') is the unmarked form (compare (11)a, b with (11)a', b'). The enclisis on the infinitive verb (indicated below by the notation 'INF > REFL/PRON') tends to be accepted by some speakers, particularly the youngest. Three interviewees, two of whom can be considered 'experts', consider it ungrammatical.

(11)	WANT						
a.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>gebilt</i>	<i>sehn</i>	<i>si.</i>	INF > REFL	0.7
	they	have	wanted	see-INF	REFL		
							[They wanted to see each other.]
a'.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>gebilt</i>	<i>sehn.</i>	FIN > REFL	1.2
	they	have	REFL	wanted	see-INF		
							[They wanted to see each other.]
b.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>gebilt</i>	<i>sehnen.</i>		INF > PRON	0.8
	they	have	wanted	see-INF=him			
							[They wanted to see him.]
b'.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>'n</i>	<i>gebilt</i>	<i>sehn.</i>	FIN > PRON	1.1
	they	have	him	wanted	see-INF		
							[They wanted to see him.]

As for the verb *meign*, it is also possible to notice that the enclisis of the reflexive pronoun and the personal pronoun on the finite verb is the unmarked form, and for most speakers the only acceptable form (compare (12)a and (12)a', as well as (12)b and (12)b'). The en-

clisis on the infinitive verb tends to be rejected; three interviewees, two of whom are the youngest of the participants, consider it as acceptable and natural as the ‘competing’ sentence when the object is a reflexive pronoun (examples (12)a and (12)a’), though not when the object is a personal pronoun (examples (12)b and (12)b’). This suggests that there may be a difference between the syntax of personal and reflexive pronouns.

(12)	CAN						
a.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>gemeiget</i>	<i>sehn</i>	<i>si.</i>	INF > REFL	0.4
	they	have	can-PP	see-INF	REFL		
	[They could see each other.]						
a’.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>gemeiget</i>	<i>sehn.</i>	FIN > REFL	1.1
	They	have	REFL	can-PP	see-INF		
	[They could see each other.]						
b.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>gemeiget</i>	<i>sehnen.</i>		INF > PRON	0.0
	they	have	can-PP	see-INF=him			
	[They could see him.]						
b’.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>'n</i>	<i>gemeiget</i>	<i>sehn.</i>	FIN > PRON	1.0
	they	have	him	can-PP	see-INF		
	[They could see him.]						

The modal verb *hobn* shows a different pattern, as expected, since in its use as a modal verb it is followed by a *za-an*-infinitive¹³, thus differing from *böln* and *meign*. In sentences including *hobn* the occurrence of the reflexive pronoun after the infinitive is deemed as acceptable by all speakers; the same holds for the occurrence of the pronoun after the infinitive, except for a speaker who did not accept the sentence (13)b. What is striking is that the sentences with pronominal enclisis on the finite verb ((13)a, b’) are also considered, on average, quite acceptable; even an ‘expert’ speaker judged these sentences as grammatical. Notice in particular the average value of sentences including the personal pronoun ((13)b, b’), which appears to indicate that finite verb enclisis is as acceptable as infinitive verb enclisis.

(13)	MUST						
a.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>gebot</i>	<i>za sehnan</i>	<i>si.</i>	INF > REFL	1.0
	they	have	have-PP	to see-INF	REFL		
	[They had to see each other.]						
a’.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>gebot</i>	<i>za sehnan.</i>	FIN > REFL	0.8
	they	have	REFL	have-PP	to see-INF		
	[They had to see each other.]						
b.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>gebot</i>	<i>za sehnanen.</i>		INF > PRON	0.9
	they	have	have-PP	to see-INF=him			
	[The had to see him.]						
b’.	<i>D'</i>	<i>ont</i>	<i>'n</i>	<i>gebot</i>	<i>za sehnan.</i>	FIN > PRON	0.9
	they	have	him	have-PP	to see-INF		
	[The had to see him.]						

¹³ As an anonymous reviewer underlines, *hobn+za+an*-infinitive can be considered as a modal periphrasis.

This suggests that clitic climbing is available in Saurian *za-an*-infinitive, at least in sentences with *hobn*¹⁴.

3.3 Aspectual verbs

The pattern of clitic pronoun placement for the aspectual verbs shows that enclisis of the reflexive and personal pronoun on the infinitive is preferred to the enclisis on the finite verb, which is considered unacceptable for most interviewees. Example (14)a', where the reflexive clitic *si* is attached to the finite verb, appears to be comparatively more acceptable than the other example displaying finite verb enclisis of the reflexive (see (15)a' and (16)a'). Moreover, examples where the personal pronoun (*i*)*n* is attached to the finite verb have a lower rating than examples where the reflexive pronoun *si* is placed after the finite verb (compare (14)a', (15)a' and (16)a' with (14)b', (15)b' and (16)b'). This aligns with an observation concerning the examples in (12)a, b, showing a partially different syntactic pattern relative to reflexive and personal pronouns¹⁵. Just as in these examples, the enclisis on the infinitive was slightly better with reflexives than with personal pronouns. In the examples with *onheivn* (see (14)) and *onholtn* (see (15)), the enclisis on the finite verb is preferred when the object is a reflexive.

(14)	BEGIN					
a.	<i>D' ont ongeheivet za sehnan si.</i>	INF > REFL	1.2			
	they have begun to see-INF REFL					
	[They have begun to see each other.]					
a'.	<i>D' ont si ongeheivet za sehnan.</i>	FIN > REFL	0.7			
	they have REFL begun to see-INF					
	[They have begun to see each other.]					
b.	<i>D' ont ongeheivet za sehnanen.</i>	INF > PRON	1.0			
	they have begun to see-INF=him					
	[The begun to see him.]					
b'.	<i>D' ont 'n ongeheivet za sehnan.</i>	FIN > PRON	0.4			
	they have him begun to see-INF					
	[They have begun to see him.]					

¹⁴ The questionnaire underlying a preliminary investigation conducted in 2018 (see footnote 6) also included the verb *mussn* [must]. Sentences with the neuter pronoun 's were tested. The data, although partial, presented the same restrictions as *biln/böln* and *meign*:

(i)	<i>I ons gemusset lesn.</i>	FIN > REFL	1.1
	I have=it must-PP read-INF		
	[I had to read it.]		
(ii)	<i>I on gemusset lesns.</i>	INF > REFL	0.6
	I have must-PP read-INF=it		
	[I had to read it.]		

¹⁵ An anonymous reviewer suggests that the preference for the reflexive after the infinitive may correlate with prosodic factors – the reflexive appears to be prosodically heavier than the third person masculine accusative personal pronoun. The latter, but not the former, is reduced in finite verb enclisis – see examples above and below.

- (15) CONTINUE
- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------------------|------------|-----|
| a. | <i>D' ont ongeholt za sehnan si.</i> | INF > REFL | 1.0 |
| | they have continued to see-INF REFL | | |
| | [The continued to see each other.] | | |
| a'. | <i>D' ont si ongeholt za sehnan.</i> | FIN > REFL | 0.5 |
| | they have REFL continued to see-INF | | |
| | [The begun to see each other.] | | |
| b. | <i>D' ont ongeholt za sehnanen.</i> | INF > PRON | 1.0 |
| | they have continued to see-INF=him | | |
| | [They have continued to see him.] | | |
| b'. | <i>D' ont 'n ongeholt za sehnan.</i> | FIN > PRON | 0.0 |
| | they have him continued to see-INF | | |
| | [They have continued to see him.] | | |
- (16) STOP
- | | | | |
|-----|--|------------|-----|
| a. | <i>D' ont aufgeheart za sehnan si.</i> | INF > REFL | 1.1 |
| | they have stopped to see-INF REFL | | |
| | [They have stopped seeing each other.] | | |
| a'. | <i>D' ont si aufgeheart za sehnan.</i> | FIN > REFL | 0.2 |
| | they have REFL stopped to see-INF | | |
| | [They have stopped seeing each other.] | | |
| b. | <i>D' ont aufgeheart za sehnanen.</i> | INF > PRON | 1.1 |
| | they have stopped to see-INF=him | | |
| | [They have stopped seeing him.] | | |
| b'. | <i>D' ont 'n aufgeheart za sehnan.</i> | FIN > PRON | 0.2 |
| | they have him stopped to see-INF | | |
| | [They have stopped seeing him.] | | |

3.4 Implicational and propositional verbs

The results related to the implicational verb *vrie genue(kh) khemen* and the propositional verbs *deinkhn/pflechten* and *houfn* will be discussed together, as the pattern that emerges from the investigation is similar. For each of these verbs, the data indicates a clear preference for enclisis of the clitic pronoun on the infinitive verb. Examples where both the clitic *si* or *(i)n* is attached to the infinitive (see (17)a and b) receive a full acceptability rating. In contrast, instances where the clitic is attached to the finite verb (see (17)a' and b') are rated as not acceptable (only one interviewee deemed sentence (17)a' as fine, although she declared to prefer sentence (17)a; another interviewee stated that sentences (17)b and b' were both acceptable).

- (17) MANAGE
- | | | | |
|-----|---|------------|-----|
| a. | <i>De seint khemen vrie genue(kh) za sehnan si.</i> | INF > REFL | 1.1 |
| | They are managed to see-INF REFL | | |
| | [They have managed to see each other.] | | |
| a'. | <i>De seint si khemen vrie genue za sehnan.</i> | FIN > REFL | 0.2 |
| | They are REFL managed to see-INF | | |
| | [They have managed to see each other.] | | |

- b. *De seint khemen vrie genue za sehnanen.* INF > PRON 1.0
 They are managed to see-INF=him
 [They have managed to see him.]
- b'. *De seint 'n khemen vrie genue za sehnan.* FIN > PRON 0.2
 They are him managed to see-INF
 [They have managed to see him.]

Examples including the propositional verbs *deinkhn* [to think]¹⁶ and *houfn* [to hope] also allow for the enclisis of the clitic pronoun on the infinitive verb as the preferred – and only, for most of the participants – option. The examples where the clitic is attached to the infinitive – (18)a, b and (19)a, b – are consistently deemed as fully acceptable. Conversely, attaching the clitic to the finite verb – (18)a', b' and (19)a', b' – results in unacceptability (notice that the same speaker who accepted clitic climbing in sentences having an implicative finite verb – (17)a' and b', also accepted clitic climbing with sentences having 'hope' as the finite verb).

- (18) THINK/PLAN
- a. *D' ont gedeinkhet za sehnan si.* INF > REFL 1.0
 They have thought to see-INF REFL
 [They have planned to see each other.]
- a'. *D' ont si gedeinkhet za sehnan* FIN > REFL 0.0
 They have REFL thought to see-INF
 [They have planned to see each other.]
- b. *D' ont gedeinkhet za sehnanen.* INF > PRON 1.0
 They have thought to see-INF=him
 [They have planned to see him.]
- b'. *D' ont 'n gedeinkhet za sehnan.* FIN > PRON 0.1
 They have him thought to see-INF
 [They have planned to see him.]
- (19) HOPE
- a. *D' ont geboufet za sehnan si.* INF > REFL 1.1
 They have hoped to see-INF REFL
 [They hoped to see each other.]
- a'. *D' ont si geboufet za sehnan* FIN > REFL 0.1
 They have REFL hoped to see-INF
 [They hoped to see each other.]
- b. *D' ont geboufet za sehnanen.* INF > PRON 1.1
 They have hoped to see-INF=him
 [They hoped to see him.]
- b'. *D' ont 'n geboufet za sehnan.* FIN > PRON 0.2
 They have him hoped to see-INF
 [They hoped to see him.]

¹⁶ Some participants preferred to use *pfichten* instead of *deinkhn*.

3.5 Provisional conclusion

The following table summarizes the data discussed in the previous sections:

Table 1

			INF > REFL	INF > PRON	FIN > REFL	FIN > PRON
Modal	<i>biln/böln</i>	infinitive	0.7	0.8	1.2	1.1
	<i>meign</i>	infinitive	0.4	0.0	1.1	1.0
	<i>hobn</i>	<i>za-an-</i> infinitive	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.9
Aspectual	<i>onheivn</i>	<i>za-an-</i> infinitive	1.2	1.0	0.7	0.4
	<i>onholtn</i>	<i>za-an-</i> infinitive	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.0
	<i>aufhearn</i>	<i>za-an-</i> infinitive	1.0	1.2	0.2	0.2
Implicative	<i>vrie genue khemen</i>	<i>za-an-</i> infinitive	1.0	1.0	0.2	0.2
Propositional	<i>denkbn</i>	<i>za-an-</i> infinitive	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.1
	<i>houfn</i>	<i>za-an-</i> infinitive	1.1	1.1	0.1	0.2

From the table, three main patterns seem to emerge:

- the one that characterizes the modal verbs *biln/böln* [want] and *meign* [can], for which the enclisis on the finite verb appears to be the most natural choice. It is noteworthy that the enclisis on the infinitival verb is also marginally possible for both the reflexive and personal pronoun with the verb *biln/böln*, and for the reflexive pronoun only for *meign*, which, as mentioned, suggests a different behavior for the two types of pronouns.
- A second pattern regards the modal periphrasis *hobn* (*za*) and the aspectual verb *onheivn*. These two verbs select a *za-an-*infinitive phrase, but they seem to be compatible both with the enclisis on the infinitive verb and – at least for some of the interviewed speakers – with the enclisis on the finite verb. This is particularly evident when the clitic is reflexive, which confirms the previous observation on the different behavior of reflexive and personal pronouns. In the case of *hobn* and *onheivn*, clitic climbing appears to be possible.
- A third pattern, which correlates with the aspectual verbs *onholtn* and *aufhearn* and the group of implicatives and propositional verbs, all of which select the *za-an-*infinitive, seems to accept only the enclisis on the infinitive verb.

In the next section, I will discuss these findings in a comparative perspective, taking into account the syntax of pronominal objects of infinitive verbs in Romance languages in contact with Saurian.

4. Comparative and diachronic analysis

In the previous paragraph, four syntactic properties were observed relating to the object pronouns of an infinitive:

- (i) Enclisis on the infinite verb with simple infinitive;
- (ii) Enclisis on the infinite verb with *za-an*-infinitive;
- (iii) Enclisis on the finite verb with simple infinitive;
- (iv) Enclisis on the finite verb with *za-an*-infinitive.

Property (i) is most likely a recent innovation: it appears to be relatively acceptable, although not natural; it seems to be compatible with the verb *biln/böln* though not at the same extent with *meign*, which may suggest that it is not fully grammaticalized; speakers with deeper metalinguistic awareness tend to reject it; finally, the structure is rarely attested in historical German. In this regard, a survey was conducted on the *Referenzkorpus Mittelhochdeutsch*. The corpus was queried by selecting only subcorpora that include texts originating from the Bavarian area (715,018 tokens altogether)¹⁷. The query yielded very few examples of enclisis on the infinitive verb – 13 examples only, all taken from rhyming texts – and 472 examples where the personal object pronoun occurs immediately before the infinitive verb¹⁸.

Property (ii) is most likely an innovation established in relatively early historical phases, as witnessed by its occurrence in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (see (1)). One may assume that it is linked to the fixing of the VO order in Saurian, which is well attested and can be considered as the unmarked word order in the oldest Saurian documents (Costantini 2023).

As for properties (iii) and (iv), the former is certainly a conservative feature (object pronouns occur systematically after the finite verb in Saurian as well as in historical German). The latter is probably a recent innovation: most, though not all, interviewees accepted it, and it is restricted to two out of seven verbs selecting for the *za-an*-infinitive. Thus, apparently, this property, which is reminiscent of Romance clitic climbing, has so far only partially affected one area of grammar, the one relating to modal verbs and aspectual verbs, without having extended to all aspectual verbs or elsewhere.

All in all, properties (i) and (iv) appear to be recent innovations. It is legitimate to suppose, at least as a working hypothesis, that contact with Romance languages may have played a role in shaping them, triggering pattern replication (Matras, Sakel 2007; Matras 2009).

¹⁷ The search string included the infinitive verb and the accusative and dative first- and second-person singular and plural pronouns (*mich, mir, dich, dir, uns/vns, iu, iuch*), the accusative third-person singular masculine pronoun (*in/inen*), the dative third-person singular masculine and neuter pronoun (*im/ime*), and the reflexive pronoun *sich*. This selection of pronouns was intended to exclude pronouns such as *sie/si/si* (third-person feminine and third person plural pronouns, nominative or accusative) and *ire/ir* (third-person feminine dative and third-person plural dative pronoun or second-person plural nominative pronoun), whose form is ambiguous and can be either indicative or accusative/dative. This choice was made to facilitate the analysis. Moreover, to facilitate the analysis, only examples where the infinitive and the pronoun occurred at the end of the sentence were considered, and therefore a period was added to the search string.

¹⁸ See for instance the following example: *vnt waf daz vil billich. | do er nicht lie genvgen sich* [and were this very fair, then he would not let satisfy himself] (*Das Anegeenge*, 0,241–0,242), https://www.linguistics.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/rem/pub/texts//M012_dipl.pdf (last accessed October 1, 2025).

In this respect, it should be noted that, as for property (i), enclisis on the infinitive verb is the unmarked word order in Romance infinitival structures, both restructuring and non-restructuring ones. See the following data from Italian and Friulian:

- (20) Italian
- a. *Volevano vedersi/lo.*
wanted see-INF=REFL/him
[They wanted to see each other/him.]
 - b. *Potevano vedersi/lo.*
could see-INF=REFL/him
[They could see each other /him]
 - c. *Dovevano vedersi/lo.*
could see-INF=REFL/him
[They had to see each other /him.]
 - d. *Hanno cominciato a vedersi/lo.*
have started to see-INF=REFL/him
[They have started seeing each other /him]
 - e. *Hanno continuato a vedersi/lo.*
have continued to see-INF=REFL/him
[They have continued to see each other /him.]
 - f. *Hanno smesso di vedersi/lo.*
have stopped to see-INF=REFL/him
[They have stopped seeing each other /him.]
 - g. *Sono riusciti a vedersi/lo.*
are arrived to see-INF=REFL/him
[They managed to see each other /him.]
 - h. *Pensavano di vedersi/lo.*
thought to see-INF=REFL/him
[They planned to see each other /him.]
 - i. *Speravano di vedersi/lo.*
hoped to see-INF=REFL/him
[They hoped to see each other /him.]
- (21) Friulian
- a. *A volevin viodisi/lu.*
they wanted see-INF=REFL/him
[They wanted to see each other/him.]
 - b. *A podevin viodisi/lu.*
they could see-INF=REFL/him
[They could see each other /him.]
 - c. *A scugnivin viodisi/lu.*
they could see-INF=REFL/him
[They had to see each other /him.]
 - d. *A an tacât a viodisi/lu.*
they have started to see-INF=REFL/him
[They have started seeing each other /him.]

- e. *A an continuât a viodisi/lu.*
 they have continued to see-INF=REFL/him
 [They have continued to see each other /him.]
- f. *A an smitût di viodisi/lu.*
 they have stopped to see-INF=REFL/him
 [They have stopped seeing each other /him.]
- g. *A son rivas a viodisi/lu.*
 they are arrived to see-INF=REFL/him
 [They managed to see each other /him.]
- h. *A crodevin di viodisi/lu.*
 they thought to see-INF=REFL/him
 [They planned to see each other /him.]
- i. *A speravin di viodisi/lu.*
 they hoped to see-INF=REFL/him
 [They hoped to see each other /him.]

Therefore, because enclisis on the infinitive verb is the unmarked word order in Romance infinitival structures, Saurian pattern (i) may derive from the transfer of a Romance pattern to Saurian structures. However, this pattern has not stabilized in Saurian, as shown by the low degree of acceptability expressed in the speakers' judgments.

As for pattern (iv), as we have seen, clitic climbing is also an (optional) operation one finds in Romance languages and one may wonder whether it results from the transfer of a grammatical pattern from Romance to Saurian. It must be noted, however, that while in Saurian the alleged clitic climbing from *za-an*-infinitives results in enclisis on the finite verb, in Romance it results in proclisis on the finite verb (compare, for instance, (9)b and (14)a', b'). Thus, admitting as a working hypothesis that pattern (iv) is a result of contact, Saurian should have accommodated clitic climbing within its system, since enclisis and not proclisis is enforced. However, it must be underlined that in Romance (i) clitic climbing is always optional and (ii) it is characterized by interlinguistic (and intralinguistic – idiolectal) variability. In this respect, Italian and Friulian seem to behave slightly differently, as is shown in (22) and (23).

(22) Italian

- a. *Si/lo volevano vedere.*
 REFL/him wanted see-INF
 [They wanted to see each other/him.]
- b. *Si/lo potevano vedere.*
 REFL/him could see-INF
 [They could see each other /him.]
- c. *Si/lo dovevano vedere.*
 REFL/him had-to see-INF
 [They had to see each other /him.]
- d. *Si sono cominciati / Lo hanno cominciato a vedere.*
 REFL are started / him have started to see-INF
 [They have started seeing each other /him.]

- e. ?? *Si sono continuati / Lo hanno continuato a vedere.*
REFL are continued / him have continued to see
[They have continued to see each other /him.]
- f. ?? *Si sono smessi / Lo hanno smesso di vedere.*
REFL are continued / him have stopped to see-INF=REFL/him
[They have stopped seeing each other /him.]
- g. ?? *Si sono riusciti a vedere.*
REFL are arrived to see-INF
[They managed to see each other/him.]
- g'. * *Lo sono riusciti a vedere.*
him are arrived to see-INF
- h. * *Si/Lo pensavano di vedere.*
REFL/him thought to see-INF
- i. * *Si/lo speravano di vedere.*
REFL/him hoped to see-INF

(23) Friulian

- a. *A si/lu volevin viodi.*
they REFL/him wanted see-INF
[They wanted to see each other/him.]
- b. *A si/lu podevin viodi.*
they REFL/him could see-INF
[They could see each other /him.]
- c. *A si/lu scugnivin viodi.*
they REFL/him wanted see-INF
[They had to see each other /him.]
- d. * *A si/lu an tacât a viodi.*
they REFL/him have started to see-INF
- e. */? *A si/lu an continuât a viodi.*
they REFL/him have continued to see-INF
- f. * *A si/lu an smitût di viodi.*
they REFL/him have stopped to see-INF
- g. * *A si/lu son rivas a viodi.*
they REFL/him are arrived to see-INF
[They managed to see each other /him.]
- h. *A si/lu crodevin di viodi.*
they REFL/him thought to see-INF
[They planned to see each other /him.]
- i. */? *A si/lu speravin di viodi.*
they REFL/him hoped to see-INF

Italian appears to allow for clitic climbing more extensively than Friulian: in Italian, though not in Friulian, proclisis of a pronominal argument of the infinitive verb is not accepted when the finite verb is aspectual. It is also worth noticing that according to some interviewed Friulian speakers, although the enclitic position on the infinitive verb and the proclitic position on the finite verb are both acceptable, the former seems more natural

than the latter. Thus, the evidence in favor of pattern (iv) in Saurian emerging from contact appears to be rather weak. Moreover, it must be underlined that this pattern concerns the modal periphrasis *hobn* + *za* + *-an-infinitive* and the aspectual verb *onheivn* [begin]. As we have seen (section 2), modal verbs are the semantic class of verbs triggering restructuring more easily cross-linguistically. As for aspectual verbs, they allow for unstressed pronoun movement to the *Wackernagel* position in Standard German, too¹⁹:

- (24) a. *Ich habe angefangen, es zu lesen.*
 I have begin it ZU read
 [I started reading it.]
 b. *Ich habe es angefangen, zu lesen.*
 I have it begin ZU read
 [I started reading it.]

To conclude, the following table compares Saurian, Italian, and Friulian with respect to the possibility of enclisis on the finite verb of the pronominal object of the infinitive verb.

Table 2

		Saurian		Italian		Friulian	
		INF > CL	FIN > CL	INF > CL	CL > FIN	INF > CL	CL > FIN
Modal	WANT	±	+	+	+	+	(+)
	CAN	–	+	+	+	+	(+)
	MUST	+	±	+	+	+	(+)
Aspectual	BEGIN	+	±	+	+	+	–
	CONTINUE	+	–	+	±	+	–
	STOP	+	–	+	±	+	–
Implicative	MANAGE	+	–	+	±	+	–
Propositional	THINK/ PLAN	+	–	+	–	+	±
	HOPE	+	–	+	–	+	–

The presence of Romance varieties in the individual linguistic repertoire of Saurian speakers may have exerted an influence on the grammar of Saurian – at least for some speakers – by making available the enclitic position on the infinitive verb governed by a modal verb (pattern (i)); of course the role of contact may be limited to the reinforcement of a position that is surely present in Saurian *za-an-infinitive*.

As for the second recent innovation (pattern (iv)), for which contact may be implicated – in principle – as a causal factor, evidence is insufficient to support this hypothesis. The domains of application of this innovation are different in Saurian and in Romance. Moreover, the domain of application in Saurian involves only the modal verb *hobn* and one of the aspectual verbs, *onheivn*, which suggests that the innovation may have been instantiated by

¹⁹ I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to me.

analogical principles and general rules that make certain verbs more prone to restructuring rather than by contact (as mentioned in section 2, modal verbs and aspectual verbs are on a cross-linguistic level the verbs that most frequently trigger the restructuring process). In other words, general rules governing restructuring cross-linguistically and defining the core of restructuring in modal and aspectual verbs may be implicated in the process.

5. Conclusions

This article has examined the syntax of personal and reflexive object pronouns in Saurian, a Southern Bavarian variety spoken in the language island of Sauris/Zahre, Friuli, northern Italy, focusing on structures with complex predicates involving functional verbs (modal, aspectual, etc.) followed by an infinitive. The primary interest of the article lies in identifying word orders that converge with Romance syntax and contrast with German syntax in a language, Saurian, that coexists in the individual linguistic repertoire of its speakers with Friulian and Italian, which is increasingly the dominant variety among younger generations.

A field survey conducted in 2024–25 with ten fluent Saurian speakers investigated the placement of object pronouns relative to infinitive verbs across different verb classes. The findings of the fieldwork revealed distinct patterns: modal verbs generally favor enclisis of the pronoun on the finite (main) verb; enclisis on the infinitive verb is marginally accepted by some speakers, particularly for reflexive pronouns; the modal verb *hobn* [have to] showed acceptability for enclisis on both the infinitive and the finite verb. Aspectual verbs, along with implicative and propositional verbs, generally display a clear preference for enclisis of the pronoun on the infinitive verb; enclisis on the finite verb is largely deemed unacceptable for these categories. However, quite notably, *onheivn* [to start] (an aspectual verb) showed compatibility with both infinitive and finite verb enclisis, especially for reflexives (similar to modal verb *hobn*).

Based on these observations, four main syntactic patterns for object pronoun placement were identified: (i) Enclisis on the infinitive verb with a ‘simple’ infinitive; (ii) Enclisis on the infinitive verb with a *za-an*-infinitive; (iii) Enclisis on the finite verb with a simple infinitive; (iv) Enclisis on the finite verb with a *za-an*-infinitive. Properties (i) and (iv) appear to be innovations, and the question was addressed whether language contact may have played a role in causing their establishment. It was claimed that pattern (i) is most likely a recent innovation and may stem from the transfer of a Romance rule, which introduced the enclitic position on the infinitive verb governed by a modal verb (perhaps reinforcing a position that is surely present with the *za-an*-infinitive); pattern (ii) appears to be an innovation established in relatively early historical phases and may correlate with the fixation of Verb-Object (VO) order in Saurian; pattern (iii) represents a conservative feature in Saurian, consistent with historical German; pattern (iv) appears to be a recent innovation, which, while reminding a Romance pattern, is probably due to language-internal factors.

To conclude, despite the existence of what superficially seems to be convergence patterns, the presence of Romance varieties in the linguistic repertoire of Saurian speakers probably has not played a significant role in shaping the portion of grammar investigated

in the present paper, as it has at most reinforced already existing structures in the receiving language in line with general norms that constrain crosslinguistic variation.

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