Beyond Uniform 2P
Clitic Placement in peripheral South Slavic

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SLE 2026
Osnabrück University, 26-29 August 2026

Roadmap

1. The 2P-VA divide
2. The peripheral varieties: Molise Slavic, Burgenland Croatian and Torlak
3. Experimental evidence
4. Analysis
5. Conclusions

Two placement strategies

South Slavic pronominal clitics linearize in one of two ways:

- **Second position (2P)**: after the first constituent of the clause (BCMS).

(1) Slavko **će** **je** videti
Slavko AUX.CL ACC.CL see.INF
'Slavko will see her' (BCMS; Comrie and Corbett, 1993)

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- **Verb-adjacent (VA)**: in a cluster adjacent to the finite verb (Macedonian).

  (2) **Mi** **go** dade Vera včera
  DAT.CL ACC.CL gave Vera yesterday
  'Vera gave it to me yesterday' (Macedonian; Franks and King, 2000, p. 70)

- The contrast is standardly taken to be **grammar-wide**: a variety is a 2P variety or a VA variety (Franks and King, 2000)

What 2P means, more precisely

- Clitics are traditionally described as falling after the first prosodic word (**1W**) *or* after the first syntactic phrase (**1P**) (Radanovic-Kocic, 1988; Halpern, 1995).
- Boskovic (2001) argues that placement is fixed in narrow syntax, with PF operations playing a restricted role.
- In BCMS, clitics are **never clause-initial**, and the conjunction *i* **cannot** count as the first element – the clitic must wait for the next constituent.

(3) Taj **ga** zadatak čeka.
that ACC.CL task await
'That task awaits him.' (BCMS)

Two accounts of the split

- **Boskovic (2008, 2016)** – the *DP parameter*.
  - VA varieties are DP varieties: pronominal clitics are D heads and can adjoin to the V+T complex.
  - NP varieties lack that option; clitics are phrasal and align at the clausal left edge.

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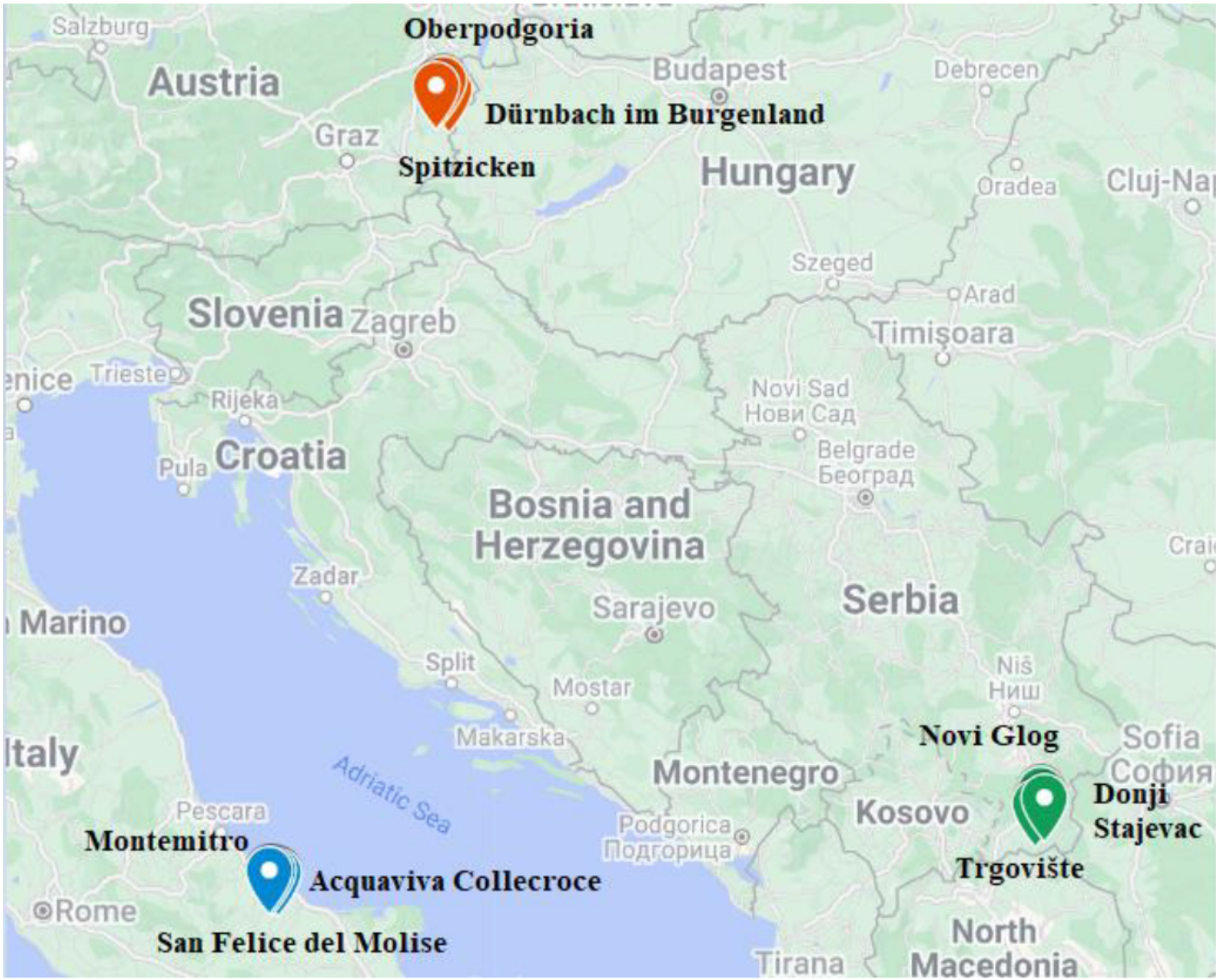
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- **Migdalski (2013, 2021)** – the *TP parameter*.
  - Retention of synthetic tenses (aorist, imperfect) diagnoses a projected TP.
  - TP provides the landing site for VA adjunction; loss of TP forces 2P.
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	DP predicts	**TP predicts**
Torlak	VA	VA
Molise Slavic	VA	VA
Burgenland Croatian	2P	2P

The South Slavic peripheral typology



Torlak

- Aorist and imperfect fully productive (4);

(4) Stanča čita-ješe po 50 strane svak d'n.
Stanča read-IMPF around 50 pages every day
'Stanča used to read around 50 pages a day.' (Zivojinovic and Jardon, 2025)

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- Postposed *-to/-ta/-te* in complementary distribution with demonstratives (5), consistent with D status though contested (Vukovic, 2022; Miseska Tomic, 2006).

(5) Nas ni sestra-ta iz ambulantu gleda
us ACC.CL.1PL nurse-DEF from clinic watch.PRS.3SG
kroz naočare
through glasses
'The nurse from the clinic watches us through her glasses.'
(Milosavljevic and Zivojinovic, in press)

Research question

Both diagnostics point to VA for; the descriptive literature says 2P (cf. Miseska Tomic, 2006; Runic, 2014; Zivojinovic, 2021).

1. Is Torlak a 2P or VA variety?
2. Does the type of host matter? Can very small functional elements such as *i* 'and' be hosts?

Design

- Acceptability Judgment Task, April 2026. **n = 36** speakers.
- 36 items, 24 exp. items + 12 fillers (3 hosts × 2 orders); 5-point Likert scale.
- Pronominal clitics only, so clitic class is held constant.

$$\text{HOST} - (\text{CL}) - \text{Adv} - (\text{CL}) - \text{V}$$

- **Condition**: clitic before the adverb [2P] vs. after it [VA].
- **Host/Left-edge element**:

host		**syntactic**	**prosodic**
lexical XP	*mojata sestra*	strong	strong
complementizer	*da*	strong	weak
conjunction	*i*	weak	weak

- Items open with a fronted locative set off by an intonational break.

The three minimal pairs

(6) U bolnicu ‖ mojata sestra **ga** stalno posećuje. / . . . mojata sestra
in hospital ‖ my.DEF sister ACC.CL always visits
stalno **ga** posećuje.

'In the hospital, my sister always visits him.' [XP: 2P / VA]

(7) Sinoćke ‖ svetlo se upalilo i **ga** odma ufatile kamere.
last.night ‖ light REFL turned.on and ACC.CL immediately caught cameras
/ . . . i odma **ga** ufatile kamere.

'Last night the light went on and the cameras caught him immediately.' [CONJ: 2P / VA]

(8) U sokače ‖ ljudi znajev da **gu** često vikav klačetarka. / . . . da
in street ‖ people know COMP ACC.CL often call chatter
često **gu** vikav klačetarka.

'In the street, people often call her a chatter.' [COMP: 2P / VA]

‖ = intonational break

Results

host	**2P**	**VA**	**2P – VA**
Lexical XP	4.11	4.00	+0.11 (n.s., $p = .46$)
Conjunction *i*	3.88	3.99	–0.11 (n.s., $p = .28$)
Complementizer *da*	4.12	3.68	**+0.44** ($p < .0001$)
overall	4.04	3.89	

- Cumulative Link Mixed Model.
- **No general preference between the two orders**: averaged over hosts, 2P is rated marginally higher (LR = 3.87, $p = .049$); restricted to XP and *i*, the difference is nil (LR = 0.002, $p = .97$).
- The interaction is carried by *da*: the contrast is flat after a lexical XP and after *i*.

Lexical XP: the adverb raises

2P	XP [**CL** [… Adv … V]]		*nothing moves*
VA	XP [**Adv**$_i$ **CL** [… t_i … V]]		*the adverb raises past the clitic*

- The clitic stays in the inherited Wackernagel position; what varies is whether the **adverb** raises over it. The raising is **contrastively licensed** – in BCMS (Diesing and Zec, 2017) and, as far as we can tell, in Torlak alike.

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- If the adverb moves, the "distance travelled" should matter; if nothing moves, it should not (cf. Ledgeway and Lombardi (2005) on the restricted class of adverbs that may intervene between clitic and verb):

	effect of adverb height	p
2P (nothing moves)	$+0.054$	.073
VA (adverb raises)	$\mathbf{-0.114}$	$< .0001$

i: what counts as a host

left-edge element		**prosodic word**	**in the projection**	**hosts in BCM**
lexical XP	*mojata sestra*	yes	yes	✓
complementizer	*da*	no	**yes**	✓
conjunction	*i*	no	**no**	*

- *da* and *i* are equally deficient prosodically, yet only *i* fails in BCMS: **the cut is domain membership, not prosodic weight** (Schütze, 1994: the host must lie within the clitic's clausal domain).

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- *da* and *i* are equally deficient prosodically, yet only *i* fails in BCMS: **the cut is domain membership, not prosodic weight** (Schütze, 1994: the host must lie within the clitic's clausal domain).
- **BCMS**: the clitic must be preceded by material **within its own extended projection**.
  Torlak: preceded by material, **full stop** – hence *i* + clitic (3.88).

da: no landing site

Balkan *da*-complements are **reduced** – Mood/Fin rather than full CP (Rivero, 1994; Miseska Tomic, 2006; cf. Olivier and Paradis, 2026 on complementizers and clause size).

- Truncation removes the **position the adverb raises to**; the clitic's own position is untouched.
- **Prediction**: the base order unaffected, the raised order degraded.

order	**main clause**	***da*-clause**	**paired difference**
2P (nothing moves)	4.11	4.12	+0.01 ($p = .94$)
VA (adverb raises)	4.00	3.68	**−0.32** ($p = .001$)

Conclusions

- After a lexical XP and in *da*-clauses, Torlak behaves **as BCMS does**: the alternative order arises by contrastively licensed adverb raising, and degrades where truncation removes the landing site.
- The divergence is ***i***: BCMS requires a host within the clitic's own extended projection, Torlak only that "something" precede it.
- The cut is domain membership, not prosodic weight: *da* and *i* are equally deficient, and only *i* fails in BCMS.
- **Beyond uniform 2P**: what counts as a host, and whether raising is available, differ by context within one variety.
- The empirical phenomenon that DP/TP parameters classify as a binary property is actually decomposable into (possibly) independent structural operations.

Future work

- **Burgenland Croatian** ($n = 5$): the raised order degrades after XP and *da*, not after *i*.
- **Molise Slavic** ($n = 5$): both orders accepted, despite its verb-adjacent classification.
- Comparison with existing works in similar settings, such as **Istro-Romanian** by Dragomirescu and Nicolae (2021).

Thank you! Hvala!

Acknowledgements

This research has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 101153454.

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