

Vocalic components in Serbian loanverbs in Gurbet Romani (Eastern Serbia)

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This study deals with Serbian loanverbs morphologically adapted to the Gurbet variety of Romani, spoken in Eastern Serbia, cf. Table 1 for loanverb examples.

3SG.PRESENT	naučil	čitol	osetil	svadjil pe
3SG.PAST	naučisarda	čitosarda	osetisarda, osetisaljjo	svadjisaljjo
Serbian verb (infinitive)	naučiti	čitati	osetiti	svađati se
	'learn'	'read'	'feel'	'argue'

Table 1. Serbian loanverbs in Gurbet Romani.

Theoretical background. Previous studies on Romani loanverbs have shown that in the Vlach Romani varieties (the Gurbet variety included) borrowed verbal roots are adapted by using the marker *-(i)sar-* for transitives and *-(i)sav-* for intransitives in the present tense, displayed as *-(i)sard-* and *-(i)sajl-* in the past tense (Boretzky 2003, Matras 2002, Leggio 2011, Leggio & Matras 2017). An optional reduction of markers to their vocalic components *-i-* and *-o-* in the present tense was also reported (Leggio 2011, Leggio & Matras 2017). As for the Serbian loanverb adaptation in Gurbet Romani, previous empirical research indicated: 1) a potential simplification of the adaptation marker system, based on the prevalent reduction of the loanverb adaptation markers to the *-i-* and *-o-* vocalic components in the present tense; 2) the inconsistent use of the adaptation markers in the past tense with respect to transitivity (Ćirković & Mirić 2021).

Aim. The aim of this study is to investigate the distribution of the vocalic components *-i-* and *-o-* in the morphological adaptation of Serbian loanverbs to Gurbet Romani with respect to the thematic formatives (TF) in Serbian verbs. The main research question is: Does the thematic formative in Serbian verbs affect the choice of the vocalic component in loanverbs? In addition, Serbian loanverb adaptation will be discussed in terms of their transitivity and aspectual characteristics.

Sample. The corpus for our research consists of transcribed narratives recorded in the town of Knjaževac and the surroundings (Eastern Serbia) in the period 2016–2018. The open-ended interview was used as a method of data collection, with questions focusing on traditional culture and autobiographical stories. The informants were native speakers of the Gurbet variety (12 adults, corpus size = app. 35,000 word tokens, and 22 elementary-school pupils (age 7–14), corpus size = app. 9,000 word tokens). As our previous research showed similar tendencies of loanverb adaptation in children and adults, the corpora were analyzed together. The overall number of loanverb types extracted from the corpus is 205.

Variables. The absolute and relative frequencies of all variables were measured. The dependent variable was the choice of the vocalic component in the loanverb (*-i-*, *-o-*), e.g., *nauč-i-l*, *čit-o-l*, *školu-i-l*. The independent variables were: 1) the thematic formative in the infinitive of the Serbian verb, e.g., *nauč-i-ti*, *čit-a-ti*, *škol-ova-ti*; 2) the thematic formative in the present tense of the Serbian verb, e.g., *nauč-i-m*, *čit-a-m*, *škol-uje-m*. The independent variables had 2 values: TF = *-i-*, TF ≠ *-i-* (e.g., *-a-*, *-e-*, *-ova-*, *-uje-*). There were 9 examples of loanverbs for which it was impossible to detect if the verb was borrowed in the PFV or IPFV aspect (marked by different TFs), e.g., *sperm-o-l* < *sprem-i-ti*_{PFV}, *sprem-a-ti*_{IPFV}, so they will be separately discussed.

Results. The vocalic component *-i-* is used in 156 loanverbs, while the *-o-* vocalic component is used in 49 loanverbs. The analysis has revealed that the *-i-* vocalic component in loanverbs is more frequent when the Serbian verb contains the TF *-i-* in comparison to other TFs, in the infinitive (62.8% vs. 37.2%) and the present tense (64.7% vs. 35.3%) (cf. Figure 1), while the *-o-* vocalic component is more frequent in loanverbs when the TF in Serbian is not *-i-*, but some other TF (e.g. *-a-*, *-e-*), in the infinitive (87.8% vs. 12.2%) and the present tense (77.6% vs. 22.4%) (cf. Figure 2). The Chi-square test of independence showed a significant association between the choice of the vocalic component (*-i-* or *-o-*) in loanverbs and the thematic formative in the infinitive ($\chi^2(1)=38.159$, $p<.001$) and the present tense ($\chi^2(1)=26.912$, $p<.001$) of Serbian verbs.

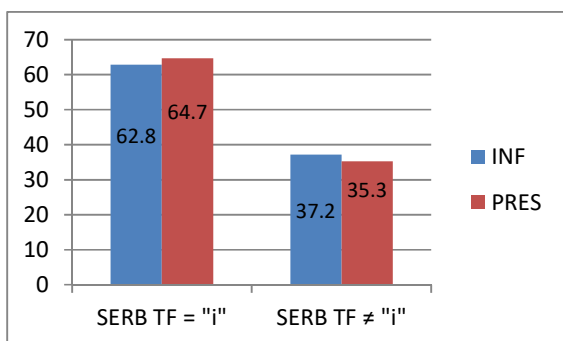


Figure 1. Relative frequency of the vocalic component *-i-* in loanverbs (e.g. *naučil*), as regards the Serbian verb form (infinitive or present) and the Serbian thematic formative.

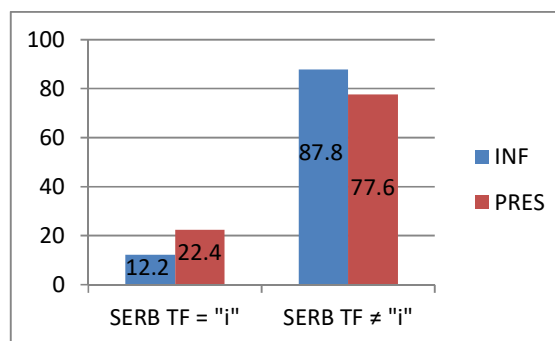


Figure 2. Relative frequency of the vocalic component *-o-* in loanverbs (e.g. *čitol*), as regards the Serbian verb form (infinitive or present) and the Serbian thematic formative.

Discussion. Overall, the thematic formative in Serbian verbs can be taken as predictor for the choice of the loanverb vocalic component in the Romani adaptation marker. In addition to these results, the presentation will discuss the loanverbs in terms of their verbal roots, transitivity and aspect.

As for the loanverb roots, some loanverbs are built from the form which corresponds to the Serbian verb root, e.g., *plivol* < *plivati*_{INF}, *plivam*_{1SG.PRES}, *pisol* < *pisati*_{INF}, *pišem*_{1SG.PRES} ‘write’, or the (part of the) present stem, e.g., *počnil* < *početi*_{INF}, *počnem*_{1SG.PRES} ‘begin’, *školuil* < *školovati*_{INF}, *školujem*_{1SG.PRES} ‘school’.

As regards the transitivity, the valency of a borrowed Serbian verb remains the same in a loanverb, as in (1) below, suggesting that not just the verb root might be borrowed, but possibly some higher structure.

- (1)
- a. Akana naučisardem slovura. (transitive)
 now learn.LOAN.PAST.1SG letter.PL
 ‘Now I (have) learned letters.’
- b. Džav i te plivov po bazento. (intransitive)
 go.1SG and COMP swim.LOAN.1SG on pool
 ‘I go to swim in the pool.’
- c. I goja majbut svidjol pe maje go igrica. (reflexive)
 and that most like.LOAN.3SG REFL I.DAT that game
 ‘And that game I like the most.’

As for the aspect, Serbian verbs of both aspects are borrowed; however, both IPFV and PFV verbs can be used to mark the ongoing activity or the completed action, as in (2), in which the PFV Serbian verb is borrowed, but used to mark the habitual action.

- (2)
- Mi dej ni dozvolil ma te pušiv cigare. (PFV)
 my mother NEG allow.LOAN.3SG I.DAT COMP smoke.LOAN.1SG cigarettes
 ‘My mother does not let me smoke cigarettes.’

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