

Lovari loan-verb adaptation markers as arguments for an analogy-based analysis of verbal systems

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It has often been a question in several morphological theories and frameworks whether certain morphemes are actually morphemes or they can be broken down into even smaller meaningful units. This latter solution may appear to be more appealing in many cases as the inventory of morphemes can thus be reduced.

Loan-verb adaptation with the help of certain markers is a very common phenomenon due to the ways and circumstances in which Lovari – and in a wider sense, Romany – is used and relies heavily on existing patterns and exemplars. Two of the most important elements of loan-verb adaptation in Lovari are the derivational markers *-sar* and *-sajv*: *zhutisar-* ‘help’ (from Romanian), *ašisar-* ‘dig’ (from Hungarian), *indulisar-* ‘leave’ (from Hungarian), *slobod-* > *slobodisajv-* ‘be freed’ (from Slavic or Romanian), *kezdődik* > *kezdődīsajvel* ‘begin (int.)’ (from Hungarian). They can be viewed as such, that is, as one single unit, but it is possible to break them down into two parts, namely *-(V)s-* and *-ar/-ajv* on a historical basis – both possibilities can be justified. The question could be which is worth more, but apparently the changes that have happened and are happening in the language may make the strictly diachronic approach unnecessarily complicated, whereas, at the same time, it can be difficult to handle them within a traditional synchronic framework. However, if we look at factors of frequency and analogy-based processes which have taken place and are taking place as a result of those factors, the change can easily be made part of the model and the question loses its significance.

The classification of verbs itself is not without problems. Based on Matras 2002, we can say that, fundamentally, there are two separate groups formed in accordance with the final sound of the stem: the consonantal and the vocalic verbs. As for the former one, the third person singular personal concord marker in the present tense is connected to the stem by the linking vowel /e/, which is, as Baló 2008 points out, epenthetic, whereas in the case of the latter one the stem ends in the vowel /a/, therefore no linking vowels are necessary. This renders for example the third person singular present tense form *kinel* in case of the stem *kin-* ‘buy, purchase’ and *patjal* for the verb *patja-* ‘believe’. Matras 2002 also points out that there is a third group, a mixed residual class, created through the disappearance or reduction of certain derivational markers on the one hand and through contraction on the other. Hungarian grammars (e.g. Hutterer–Mészáros 1967) split this into three further vocalic classes, the *-i-*, *-o-* and *-u-* stem verbs.

If we take a closer look at the *-i-* stem verbs in the table below, we can see that there are two variations – one with the marker *-sar* and one not containing it. Whereas all the *-i-* verbs are originally results of the optional reduction of the loan-verb adaptation suffix *-sar*, based on oral and written evidence it seems that the two variations now coexist within the Lovari variety spoken in Hungary, with the forms containing the marker *-sar* moving the verbs towards the consonantal class, which has got the highest type and token frequency, while the forms without it have created their own pattern. (There is also a possibility to adapt loan-verbs productively by simply placing them among the *-i-* verbs – *indulij* ‘leave’ from Hungarian *indul*, *sorakozil* ‘have fun’ from Hungarian *szórakozik* etc.).

A conspicuous anomaly emerges in connection with the *-o-* stem verbs, namely that they cannot be considered unanimously. The problem occurs in the first person forms, and the twofold nature of this verb class is traditionally explained by the different origins of the verbs

belonging to the two subgroups, the first one having been created through the partial contraction of the suffix *-uv*, the second one having been formed through the disappearance of the suffix *-sar*. This distinction, however, is obviously not recognised by native speakers. From an analogical perspective, the fact that the suffix *-uv* has remained in the first persons in the first subgroup may suggest that the first person forms have kept their original shape due to their frequency (and, on the other hand, the second and third person forms clearly bear resemblance to the conjugation of the *-i-* verbs).

Turning our attention to the loan-verb adaptation markers, Matras 2002 suggests that the suffixes *-sar* and *-sajv* should be broken down into a particle *-s-*, which may denote loan-verb adaptation and a transitive or an intransitive derivational suffix, respectively. On a historical basis, we can say then that the loan-verb adaptation markers in Vlax Romany look like the following: *-s-* + *-ar-* for transitive verbs and *-ajv-* for intransitive verbs. The particle *-s-* derives from Greek, the second element is of native origin and is still in use in internal verb formation. Based on the data about the verbal system presented above and additional information regarding internal verb formation and loan-verb adaptation confirmed by native informants, however, the Lovari spoken in Hungary shows a somewhat contradictory picture. Both *-sar* and *-sajv* take part in internal verb formation (e.g. *zuralo* ‘strong’ > *zuralosar* ‘strengthen’, *phenel* ‘say’ > *phenosar* ‘promise’, *kolo* ‘soft’ > *kolosajv* ‘become soft’, *lolo* ‘red’ > *lolosajv* ‘turn red’), which means that the particle *-s-* does not denote solely loan-verb adaptation, and there is an additional suffix *-in*, probably borrowed from another Romany dialect, which is used to adapt loan-verbs but lacks the *-s-*.

These arguments support the fact that, in a synchronic aspect, they should not be broken down, which in turn provides a much more solid foundation for an analogy-based analysis of the verbal system, as the suffix *-sar* in particular has a crucial role in the derivation of consonantal verbs, which form the largest and most common verb class. In this aspect, the fact that it can be used both in internal verb formation and in loan-verb adaptation also loses its significance.

In relation to this, a parallel may be drawn between the Lovari suffix *-sar* and the Romanian suffix *-sc*, which is derived from the Latin inchoative affix. As Costanzo 2008 points out, it appears in a subclass of the fourth conjugation as a stem extension but earlier it was used in verbs borrowed from Balkan languages as well as in internal derivatives. There is also a variation as to whether the new verbs are formed with or without the *-sc*, similarly to Lovari, where, as mentioned above, new verbs can also be placed among the *-i-* stem verbs.

The analogy-based phenomena related to the suffix *-sar* in Lovari are also somewhat akin to the case of Hungarian linking vowels as touched upon in Kálmán (2007). In general terms we can say that there are certain, perhaps competing patterns to which the forms in the specific conjugational or declensional paradigms of words are adapted (in this case, the consonantal class and the newly formed *-i-* stem verbs). Thus, the point is not whether these suffixes should be considered as consisting of two parts or as individual morphemes; this is far beside the point. The forms and paradigms containing the suffixes *-sar* and *-sajv* can be considered as patterns which are both tools and bases of analogical changes in the Lovari verbal system.

| present tense indicative | consonantal class | -a- stem verbs | -i- stem verbs |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| | <i>kin-</i> ‘buy’ | <i>loš-</i> ‘be glad’ | <i>traj-</i> ‘live’ |
| singular | kinav kines kinel | lošav lošas lošal | trajij/trajiv/trajisarav trajis/trajisares trajil/trajij/trajisarel |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| plural | kinas kinen kinen | lošas lošan lošan | trajinas/trajisaras trajin/trajisaren trajin/trajisaren |
| present tense indicative | -o- stem verbs | | -u- stem verbs |
| | <i>kerdjo-</i> ‘become’ | <i>kino-</i> ‘shake’ | <i>sunu-</i> ‘feel pity for’ |
| singular | kerdjuvav kerdjos kerdjol | kinoj kinos kinoj/kinol | sunuj sunus sunul/sunuj |
| plural | kerdjuvas kerdjon kerdjon | kinonas kinon kinon | sununas/sunusaras sunun/sunusaren sunun/sunusaren |

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