

Verbal modifiers in contact: a study of parallel Latvian and Latvian Romani texts



Kuriame
Lietuvos ateitį
2014–2020 metų
Europos Sąjungos
fondų investicijų
veiksmų programa

Kirill Kozhanov (Vilnius University)

Salos, July 27, 2021. The conference was funded from the
European Social Fund (project
No.09.3.3-LMT-K-712-01-0071) under grant agreement with
the Research Council of Lithuania (LMTLT).

Introduction

Data

The list of verbal modifiers

- Preverbs

- Verb particles

- Intermediate conclusions

Verbal modifiers and aspectuality

Conclusions

Introduction

Northeastern Romani dialects include closely related dialects spoken in Poland, Belarus, Russia and the Baltic countries; see (Tenser 2008).

Map of Northeastern Romani dialects



- ▶ Ancestors of these Roma arrived in Kingdom of Poland from the west (German borrowings) in the 16th century.
- ▶ During the 16–17th centuries the speakers of these dialects move further east and north creating two groups – Russian-Belarusian and Lithuanian-Latvian.
- ▶ Russian-Belarusian group is primarily in contact with East Slavic, whereas the northern subgroup is in contact with Polish and Belarusian. Latvian Romani is unique in being heavily influenced by Latvian

- ▶ One of the structural features of these dialects is the borrowing of preverbs (verbal prefixes) from Slavic
- ▶ This borrowing must have taken place rather early — in 16–17th centuries before the split between the dialects.
- ▶ In the Romani dialects spoken in the Baltic countries, some additional preverbs of Baltic origin were borrowed in addition to the Slavic ones, and in Latvian Romani verbal particles evolved as a way to modify verb's semantics; see (Belugin 1973; Ariste 1973; Kožanov 2011).

In this presentation I focus on the Latvian Romani (Lotfitka) dialect, cf. (Mānušs 1996).

- ▶ the most northern dialect of the group, spoken in northern Lithuania, central and northern Latvia and Estonia.
- ▶ some speakers also live in Russia, and, as result of recent migrations, in Western Europe, especially the UK
- ▶ the estimated number of speakers is at least 10 000.

Data



Collections of texts gathered by Jānis Leimanis (1886–1950), a Latvian Roma activist from Kurzeme, in Latvia in the 1930s; see (Tihovska, forthcoming).

In total – 70 notebooks in Romani and Latvian.

For this study I used available transcribed texts — about 16867 words in Romani and 17279 in Latvian (approximately one third of all texts). The texts are now being put together into a corpus (Natalia Perkova, Anette Ross).

These texts are available online

(<http://garamantas.lv/lv/collection/886320/Jana-Leimana-ciganu-folkloras-vakums>).

(5) Bimbaros te Billa.

Trīs jēkpar rom, dēkas goli
 les Bimbaros, isis leske romri
 Billa. Ledenas jone nader jek
 bāre filaciņatir, ano vās. Jek
 dēves dija Billa piro khēra te
 jardā khēre ke presēro phorom
 na tēk sig' sir vāvir molensa.
 Bimbaros isis vāšo dova hola-
 me so joi ngjovdžei signidir
 khēre te vāšo dova jōv nara-
 kedija kašta vāšē jōg, ni paņi-
 ng vāšo keraihen. Billa poman-
 gja Bimbaros mexadolēl jōv
 kašta te joi kokori dija pala
 paņing. Bimbaros lija tever
 lipindā po dambos nader

5 Bimbars un Bille.

Bij' vienu reizi dūstojis viens
 čigāns vārdā Bimbars, viņam
 sieva vārdā Bille. Mājoja viņi me-
 tāne tāle no vienas muižas, kurā
 bijei liels un slavens. Vienu dienu
 Bille izgāja pamangot un atgrie-
 zās pie sava vāca ne tēk (sig) atā
 ko parasti. (Bimbaros isis) Bimbars
 par to bij' sadusmojis un, vecās
 Billes un aiz dusmam viņš nesā-
 lasija kuramā (matēbala) priekš' ūgens
 kura un ūdenis nebij' atnāsis priekš'
 est vārišanas. Bille palūdā Bim-
 baru, lai sadabūtē malku un
 viņa patē aizgāja pēc ūdens. Bim-
 bars paņemis cīrni, un tāpāis uz

Verbal modifiers in Romani are contact-induced phenomena, and it is usually assumed Romani always copies the patterns of the contact language.

- ▶ Romani remains primarily spoken language, with little amount of texts. A comparative study is difficult to conduct.
- ▶ It is unclear with what language variety Romani should be compared with.

Leimanis' data are unique in providing parallel texts in Romani and Latvian written by the same person.

The comparison was unidirectional: I checked all verbal modifiers used in Romani and compared them with the Latvian text. This should be improved in the future

The Latvian translation does not always follow the Romani original. Some verbs or even sentences are omitted. This creates difficulties for automatic alignment.

The list of verbal modifiers

Preverbs

Some verbal prefixes used in Latvian Romani are clearly of Slavic origin. These preverbs are shared with the other Northeastern dialects of Romani:

- ▶ *do-*: *džál* ‘go’ : ***dodžál*** ‘reach’
- ▶ *ob-*: *džál* ‘go’ : ***obdžál*** ‘go around’
- ▶ *ot-*: *džál* ‘go’ : ***otdžál*** ‘go away’

In Latvian Romani some Baltic prefixes were additionally borrowed:

- ▶ *ie-*: *džál* ‘go’ : ***iedžál*** ‘enter’
- ▶ *no-*: *džál* ‘go’ : ***nodžál*** ‘pass’
- ▶ *pie-*: *džál* ‘go’ : ***piedžál*** ‘approach’

Preverb	Tokens	Types
<i>do-</i>	93 (17,1%)	21
<i>ie-</i>	18 (3,3%)	6
<i>no-</i>	18 (3,3%)	11
<i>ob-</i>	27 (5%)	14
<i>ab-</i>	1 (0,2%)	1
<i>ot-</i>	38 (7%)	21
<i>at-</i>	5 (0,9%)	3
<i>po-</i>	45 (8,3%)	28

Preverb	Tokens	Types
<i>pše-</i>	27 (4,9%)	11
<i>roz-</i>	5 (0,9%)	5
<i>sa-</i>	2 (0,4%)	2
<i>uz-</i>	4 (0,7%)	2
<i>vi-</i>	101 (18,6%)	37
<i>za-</i>	149 (27,4%)	61
<i>aiz-</i>	10 (1,8%)	7
Total	543 (100%)	

- ▶ The main bulk of the preverbs in Latvian Romani is of Slavic origin. Most Baltic preverbs are used only sporadically, apart from *no-*.
- ▶ In these texts there are no preverbs ‘at, by’ (cf. RusRom. *pri-*), ‘with, together’ (cf. RusRom. *s-* ‘with’).

First, we can look at the preverbs of Baltic origin:

aiz-: in Latvian 7 out of 9 the same prefix *aiz-* is used (1 instance of simplex verb, 1 instance is not translated)

ie-: in Latvian 14 out of 19 the same prefix *ie-* is used (1 simplex verb, 1 *iz-*, 1 *uz-*, 1 is not translated)

no-: 14 out of 17 instances the same prefix is used, 1 instance of *sa-*, two instances not translated

Second, we look at the preverbs of Slavic origin that have phonetically close correlates in Latvian:

ot-: in Latvian 29 out of 38 the correlate prefix *at-* is used (1 instance of simplex verb, 1 instance is not translated, 1 *aiz-*, 1 *pa-*, 1 *pie-*)

at-: in Latvian 4 out of 5 the same prefix *at-* is used (1 is not translated)

ob-: 18 out of 27 instances the correlate prefix is used, 2 instance of simplex verbs, two instances not translated

ap-: 1 simplex verb in Latvian

Third, we look at the preverbs of Slavic origin that have no phonetically close correlates in Latvian:

do-: out of 92 examples, in Latvian 13 instances are calques of the Latvian *dabūt* ‘get, receive’, 29 instances of *pie-* ‘approach’, 17 instances of *no-* ‘completion’, 11 not translated examples, 5 simplex verbs, 4 *aiz-*, 2 *ap-* etc.

pše-: out of 27 examples in Latvian 11 is *pār-*, 10 are not translated etc.

vi-: out of 101 examples, in Latvian 62 *iz-*, 18 examples are not translated, 2 instance of simplex verbs, two instances not translated

za-: out of 149, in Latvian we have 8 *aiz-*, 4 *uz-*, but 95 *sa-* etc.

Latvian Romani

*...ne pošli **dolijom** džinav so sapeske cipaša vašti gren sačkiren...*

Latvian

*...bet pēc es **dabūju** zināt ka ar čūskas ādu var zirgus ārstēt...*

‘but afterwards I got to know that one can heal horses with snake’s skin...’

Latvian Romani

Zakherdža džadžos romengīre phuredīren, te phenela lenge...

Latvian

Saaicināja čigānu vecajus un teic viņiem...

‘The leader called the Romani elders together and tells them...’

- ▶ The system of preverbs found in Latvian Romani is a system on its own. It does not simply repeats the Slavic or the Baltic systems
- ▶ Slavic prefixes make the core of the system, whereas most Baltic prefixes are marginal and are rare (except for *no-*)
- ▶ Previously borrowed Slavic prefixes are used to copy Latvian patterns, and they also extend their range of meanings

Verb particles

In Latvian Romani, verb particles are regularly used to modify verbs' semantics (not only spatial):

- (1) *Mukha-a buž'n'-a tele te jana-a*
 let-FUT.1SG goat-OBL.SG down and bring-FUT.1SG
šax ko ruu.
 cabbage.DIR.SG to wolf.DIR.SG
 'I will let down the goat and will bring the cabbage to
 the wolf' [Ar.]
- (2) *Kam-ja sawnakun-e gr-es' tele te*
 want-PST.3SG golden-OBL.SG horse-OBL.SG down CMPL
čor-el.
 steal-SBJ.3SG
 '[He] wanted to steal a golden horse' [Ar.]

Particle	Tokens	Types
‘inside’: <i>andre</i>	29 (13,1%)	11
‘outside’: <i>avri</i>	47 (21,2%)	27
‘on top’: <i>opre</i>	38 (17,2%)	15
‘down’: <i>tele</i>	74 (33,5%)	20
‘nearby’: <i>pašil, paše</i>	14 (6,3%)	7
‘away’: <i>krig</i>	16 (7,2%)	8
‘open’: <i>pširo</i>	2 (1%)	2
‘closed’: <i>fardo</i>	1 (0,5%)	1
Total	221 (100%)	

Meaning	Lotfitka	Latvian
‘inside’	<i>andre</i>	<i>iekšā</i>
‘outside’	<i>avri</i>	<i>laukā</i>
‘through’	<i>durx</i>	<i>cauri</i>
‘away’	<i>krigal, krig</i>	<i>projām, prom</i>
‘on top’	<i>opre</i>	<i>viršū</i>
‘against’	<i>preču</i>	<i>preti</i>
‘open’	<i>pširo</i>	<i>vaļā</i>
‘down’	<i>tele</i>	<i>nost, zemē</i>
‘around’	<i>truju</i>	<i>apkārt</i>

Most of verb particles are loan translations of Latvian verb particles. In most cases, these are Romani inherited spatial adverbs, but some of them are borrowed from Slavic (*preču*, *fardo*), and one, namely (*durx*), — from German.

Particle	Tokens	Latvian correspondence
‘inside’: <i>andre</i>	29	9 <i>ie-</i> , 9 <i>iekšā</i> etc.
‘outside’: <i>avri</i>	47	20 <i>iz-</i> , 8 <i>ārā</i> , 1 <i>nost</i> etc.
‘on top’: <i>opre</i>	38	11 <i>uz-</i> , 6 <i>augšā</i> , 10 <i>pa-</i>
‘down’: <i>tele</i>	74	43 <i>no-</i> , 4 <i>at-</i> , 4 <i>nost</i> , 2 <i>zemē</i>
‘nearby’: <i>pašil, paše</i>	14	9 <i>pie-</i> , 3 <i>klāt</i>
‘away’: <i>krig</i>	16	5 <i>at-</i> , 3 <i>nost</i> etc.
‘open’: <i>pšīro</i>	2 (1%)	1 <i>at-</i>
‘closed’: <i>fardo</i>	1	1 <i>cieti</i>
Total	221 (100%)	

Latvian Romani

*Gadžo javdža **andre** šēro **telle** mukhi te smentno, rom čhudža me**viurjelpes** te memorel **telle** jakha.*

Latvian

*Lauceniēks **ienāca** galvu **nokāris** un **bēdīgs**, čigāns lauciniēkam **sacīja** lai tagad **izgērbjas** un tad lai **nomazga** acis.*

‘The man came in with his head bent down and being sad, the Rom told the man that he should take his clothes off and wash his eyes’

It seems that synonymity of prefixed verbs and verbs with particles is also manifested in the preference of particles over prefixes in certain meanings:

‘in’: Leimanis’ collection contains 8 examples with the preverb *ie-*, but 27 examples with the particle *andre* ‘inside’.

Source	Preverbs		Particles	
	Tokens	Types	Tokens	Types
Ariste	275	67	630	61
Leimanis	337	89	126	34

Intermediate conclusions

- ▶ Lotfitka developed a system of verb particles, semantically (but not always lexically) copying Latvian verb particles.
- ▶ The system of verb particles is based on Romani adverbs and adjectives, but there are borrowings *durx* (from German) and *fardo* (from Polish).
- ▶ In Latvian Romani, verbal particles are more frequent than in Latvian, which makes Romani system of verbal particles even more unique
- ▶ In Lotfitka the difference in usage between prefixes and verbal prefixes is not so strong, they seem to be function as synonyms. For certain meanings, verbal particles seem to dominate.

Verbal modifiers and aspectuality

In Baltic and Slavic (and more) preverbs are one of the main morphological ways to modify the aspectual characteristics of a verb, namely to perfectivize it, cf. Ltv. *darīt* ‘do’ (IPFV): ***padarīt*** ‘do’ (PFV); see, e.g., [Arkadiev 2015].

What happens in Romani dialects when the system of preverbs is borrowed from Slavic or Baltic?

In Latvian prefixed verbs and verbs with particles are often regarded as aspectual pairs, cf. [Staltmane 1958; Hauzenberga-Šturma 1979; Horiguchi 2014 etc.]
ieiet ‘enter (PFV)’ : *iet iekšā* ‘enter (IPFV)’

Form	Ariste's texts		Leimanis' texts	
	pf	impf	pf	impf
present	0	38	0	7
future	72	0	2	0
preterite	408	0	72	0
imperfect	0	0	0	0
subjunctive	28	13	15	4
imperative	43	4	9	0

As most Romani verbs are “perfective”, their combination with prefixes and particles are synonymous with no aspectual difference.

Preverbs change verbs’ actional characteristics, but verb particles do not?

There is only one example of a non-telic verb with a particle in Ariste's texts (and no examples in Leimanis' collection) — *rodél* 'look for', but with changed actionality:

- (3) *me* *l-en* *jake* *rod-a* *opre.*
1SG.NOM 3-OBL.PL this.way look.for-FUT.1SG up
'I will find them like this [with no additional effort]'
(Latv. *uzmeklēt*)

Conclusions

- ▶ Northeastern Romani dialects has borrowed the system of verbal modifiers from Slavic and Baltic.
- ▶ Preverbs are always MAT-ter borrowings, and most verb particles are PAT-tern borrowings.

- ▶ The differences in the system of preverbs evolved under the influence of new contact languages, but the outcome of the contact never repeats the system of the immediate contact language.
- ▶ The system of verbal particles evolved in Latvian Romani under influence of Latvian. Its usage in Romani is, however, quite different. This might be the result of synonymy between verbal prefixes and verbal particles.
- ▶ All this puts Latvian Romani in an interesting position within the area, with the generally growing tendency for verbal particles from south to north; see, e.g., (Wähli 2001; Wiemer 2013).