

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; however, it might not always be possible to fully justify it, as in the case to be presented below.

The argumentation will be centred around two loan-verb adaptation suffixes in the Lovari dialect of the Romani language spoken in Hungary, namely *-sar* and *-sajv*. However, in order to analyse them, it is essential to be aware of certain characteristics of the Lovari verbal system and verb formation.

The verbal paradigms of Lovari show signs of a somewhat surprising phenomenon which I described as gradual defectiveness in Baló (2008) and which is more obvious in the past paradigms but can also be seen in the present forms as it comes clear if we look at the five verb classes.

If we take a closer look at the *-i-* stem verbs, we can see that the regular and expected paradigm (on the left in the corresponding column in the table below) is replaced by an alternative paradigm formed by the suffix *-sar* (on the right in the corresponding column in the table below), at least for certain groups of Lovari speakers\*. This is important because these verbs are thus moved towards the consonantal class, which has the highest type and token frequency among all of them, displaying signs of analogical changes in the verbal system.

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. This distinction, however, is obviously not recognised by native speakers. The phenomenon may also be described as a case of paradigm levelling in the first subgroup, where two forces are exerted, one by the consonantal class (as can be seen in the fairly frequent first person forms), and another one by the *-i-* stem class, which has the second highest type frequency (as the second and third person forms clearly bear resemblance to the conjugation of the *-i-* verbs, due to the possible reduction of the *-uv-e* sequence to *-o-*).

Based on the data presented above and additional information regarding internal verb formation and loan-verb adaptation confirmed by native informants, there are strong arguments against the suffixes *-sar* and *-sajv* being broken down into, as Matras (2002) suggests on a historical basis, a particle *-s-* denoting loan-verb adaptation and a transitive or an intransitive derivational suffix, respectively. Moreover, the fact that they should not be broken down 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.

---

\* An interesting but completely different explanation for this is provided by Matras (2002). He claims that all the *-i-* verbs are results of the optional reduction of the loan-verb adaptation suffix *-(V)sar*. There is no doubt that there is a possibility to adapt loan-verbs productively by simply placing them in the *-i-* verb class (*indulij* ‘leave’ from Hungarian *indul*, *sorakozil* ‘have fun’ from Hungarian *szórakozik* etc.), but labelling such common verbs as *gindij* ‘think’, *vorbij* ‘speak’ or *trajij* ‘live’ simply as loan-verbs is somewhat audacious even if they can be traced back to Romanian and/or Hungarian words etymologically.

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 in the footnote above) new verbs can also be placed in the *-i-* stem class.

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. 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	consonantal stem	-a- stem	-i- stem
indicative	<i>kinel</i> ‘buy’	<i>loshal</i> ‘be glad’	<i>trajil</i> ‘live’
singular	kinav kines kinel	loshav loshas loshal	trajiv/trajij/trajisarav trajis/trajisares trajil/trajij/trajisarel
plural	kinas kinen kinen	loshas loshan loshan	trajinas/trajisaras trajin/trajisaren trajin/trajisaren
present tense	-o- stem		-u- stem
indicative	<i>kerdjol</i> ‘become’	<i>kinol</i> ‘shake’	<i>sunul</i> ‘feel pity’
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

## Bibliography

- Baló, A. M. 2008. A Strange Case of Defectiveness in the Lovari Verbal Paradigm. In: László Kálmán (ed.) Papers from the Mókus Conference. Budapest: Tinta Publishing House.
- Choli-Daróczi, J. and L. Fejér. 1988. Cigány nyelvkönyv [Manual of Gypsy]. Budapest: Magyarországi Cigányok Kulturális Szövetsége.
- Costanzo, A. 2008. On the Expansion and Productivity of a Balkan Romance Conjugational Sub-Class. Poster at the First Oxford Workshop on Romance Verb Morphology.
- Hutterer, M. and Gy. Mészáros. 1967. A lovári cigány dialektus leíró nyelvtana [Descriptive Grammar of the Lovari Dialect of Gypsy]. Budapest: Magyar Nyelvtudományi Társaság.
- Kálmán, L. 2007. Holisztikus szemlélet a nyelvészetben [A Holistic Approach to Linguistics]. In: Szabad Változók [Free Variables] Issue 4. Budapest: Free Variables Association.
- Matras, Y. 2002. Romani: A linguistic introduction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.