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CONTENTS

Mirjana Mirić

Institute for Balkan Studies
Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts,
Belgrade
mirjana.miric@bi.sanu.ac.rs

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TENDENCIES IN EXPRESSING VERBAL ASPECT IN THE GURBET ROMANI: PILOT EXPERIMENTAL STUDY WITH ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL CHILDREN[*]

Abstract: The Romani system of tense-aspect-modality categories consists of three dimensions: aspectual (perfective : non-perfective), temporal (remote : non-remote), and modal (the category "intentionality"). Aspect is expressed as an extension to the verb stem: the perfective aspect is marked with a perfective marker added to the stem in order to express a completed event, whereas the absence of perfectivity provides an ongoing perspective (Matras 2001). This paper reports on a pilot study of verbal aspect in the Gurbet variety of Romani spoken by elementary-school children in eastern Serbia (the village of Minićevo, next to the town of Knjaževac). Participants (7 Romani-Serbian bilingual children aged 7 to 10) were shown short non-verbal cartoons from the serial "Die Sendung mit der Maus". Participants were asked to retell the content of the cartoons and their production was video-recorded and transcribed. The research was conducted in November 2017, and the material is available in the Digital Archive of the Institute for Balkan Studies (Belgrade). The analysis is based on 23 narratives revealing the following tendencies: perfective markers are added to the verb stems to express completed events; ongoing events are typically unmarked for perfectivity; verbs unmarked for perfectivity additionally refer to completed events; Serbian loanverbs, morphologically adapted to Romani, are used to convey the aspect; and perfectivity is additionally achieved by borrowing Serbian prefixes. Although the majority of verbs behave in the expected way in terms of aspect, several

exceptions are observed, suggesting that the choice of a verb form (perfective vs. non-perfective) might refer to the temporal dimension of an event, to its iterativity, or moreover be used for the narrative purposes.

Key words: verbal aspect, perfectivity, the Gurbet Romani, loanverbs, children's narratives

1. Introduction

The paper presents a pilot experimental study on aspect in the Gurbet variety of Romani spoken in eastern Serbia (in the village of Minićevo, next to the town of Knjaževac). The research is part of a broad project aiming at documenting and analyzing narratives in the Gurbet Romani in elementary-school children and creating a corpus of children's narratives. The project builds on the previous research conducted in 2016 and 2017 within the project "Exploring the Language and Folklore of Roma in Knjaževac", financed by the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia and carried out by the "Njegoš" National Library in Knjaževac (for more details, see Ćirković & Mirić 2017; Mirić & Ćirković 2018; Sikimić 2018). Conducted as a pilot research, this study provides an overview of the tendencies in expressing verbal aspect in the Gurbet Romani spoken by young Romani-Serbian bilingual speakers in the experimental setting, which can be fruitful for further investigation of the temporal and aspectual system in Romani. Given that this is a pilot study, only a small sample of younger elementary-school population is tested, while the information on aspect in pre-school children and adults as control group will be added in the future research. Therefore, the study is not designed as developmental, and treats elementary-school children's production of aspect as adult-like, using the available data to take a look into the aspectual system in a small sample of speakers.

The paper is organized as follows. In the remainder of the Introduction a brief overview of Romani dialects is presented, followed by information on the Romani aspect and borrowing in the domain of aspectual system. After presenting the short overview of studies on the acquisition of verbal aspect, the aim and hypotheses are formulated. In Section 2, the experimental methodology is described, and details on the participants, materials and the procedure are given. Section 3 deals with the distribution of aspectual forms (perfective vs. non-perfective) with regard to the completion of events the verbs refer to (completed vs. ongoing). This section focuses on the tendencies in expressing verbal aspect in the Gurbet variety. In Section 4, the main tendencies are summarized and discussed in relation to the results of previous studies, and ideas for methodological

improvement and further research are presented. Section 5 presents the concluding remarks.

1.1 *The Romani language*

Romani is an Indo-European language which is nowadays spoken in Europe, North and South America, and Australia by at least 3.5 million speakers. There are at least 4 large branches of Romani dialects: North (Northwestern and Northeastern), Central, Vlax, and Balkan branch, all of which can be further divided into subgroups of dialects and varieties (Bakker and Matras 1997: xvii–xx; Matras 2004: 12; Matras 2005). The Vlax branch is considered the most prominent group of Romani dialects in terms of numbers of speakers and geographical distribution (Matras 2004: 7). The Gurbet variety that we are dealing with in the study belongs to the Southern Vlax subgroup (Matras 2004).[1] Gurbet Romani is mostly spoken in the southwest of the Balkans, i.e. in parts of Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Bulgaria and Albania (Bakker and Matras 1997: xxv; Matras 2004: 8; ROMLEX).

Various Romani varieties are spoken throughout Serbia, where Romani was recognized as a minority language in 2006, when the Republic of Serbia ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.[2] In eastern Serbia, in the town of Knjaževac and the surroundings, where the data for the study were collected, the 2011 Census registered 673 Romani speakers (2.14%).[3] In this area, the dominant varieties are Leyash and Gurbet, which belong to the Northern and Southern Vlax subgroups, respectively (Sikimić 2018), although the exact number of speakers across varieties is unknown. Gurbet Romani speakers in eastern Serbia, both adults and children, are typically bilingual in Romani and the local Serbian variety.[4] The use of Romani is restricted to the family environment and the local Roma community (Mirić 2019).

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[1] For a linguistic description of the Vlax varieties see Boretzky (2003), Hancock (1995), Leggio (2011), among others.
[2] At its session held on 21st December 2005 the National Assembly of Serbia and Montenegro adopted the Law on Ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Official Gazette of SCG – International Treaties, No. 18/2005). The Charter came into force for the Republic of Serbia as successor to the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on 1st June 2006.
[3] According to the 2011 Census, 1.4% of inhabitants declared themselves as Romani speakers at the state level.
[4] The same holds for other Balkan states, where Roma people are likely to know both minority and majority languages (Friedman 2001: 149).

1.2 *Aspect in Romani*

Most linguistic theories distinguish between the grammatical and lexical verbal category of aspect. The grammatical aspect typically refers to perfective vs. imperfective opposition (Comrie 1976); it is often explicitly marked by linguistic means such as inflectional or derivational morphology, and shows wide cross-linguistic variation. The lexical aspect (also referred to as aktionsart, type of verbal situation, or inner aspect) refers to inherent semantic properties of verbs. One of these properties is telicity which indicates whether an event that a verb refers to has an inherent boundary or endpoint. Events are telic if they involve a boundary, whereas atelic predicates refer to events without a boundary (Arsenijević 2006).[5] Telicity is not explicitly marked in languages. To the best of our knowledge, Romani has not been discussed from these perspectives. Therefore, in this paper we will adopt the terminology on tense and aspect categories developed in the Romani linguistics literature and use notions such as *perfective* vs. *non-perfective*, as well as *completed* vs. *ongoing events* (cf. Matras 2001, 2004).

Typologically, "Romani is a language with prevailing agglutination, complemented to a high degree by inflectivity, to a lesser but still significant degree by analyticity" (Elšik 1997: 26). Romani verbs are composed of a lexical root which can be followed by suffixes marking various categories, such as loan adaptation, valency, perfectivity, person and number inflection, remoteness and modality; particles and auxiliaries are used to express future tense, stative present, remote or perfect tense and conditional and quotative modality (Matras 2004: 117-118). As an illustration of various suffixes and particles added to a verb root, several examples from the Gurbet variety of Romani spoken by adult speakers in Knjaževac and the surroundings are provided in (1).[6] The examples are taken from Ćirković & Mirić (2017), the glosses and translation are ours.

(1) a. *so   džan-av   ka   moth-av   tuće*
        what   know.1SG   FUT   tell.1SG   you
        'I will tell you what I know.'

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[5] According to Vendler's classification, telic predicates include accomplishments and achievements, while atelic predicates include states and activities (Vendler 1957, 1967).

[6] Abbreviations used in the paper: SG – singular, PL – plural, PF – perfective aspect, NON-PF – the absence of perfectivity, IMPF – imperfective aspect, M – masculine, F – feminine, DAT – dative, POSS – possessive, LOAN – loanword markers, SLASP – Slavic aspect, Sr – Serbian loanwords (morphologically adapted or not), CAUS – causative, FUT – future particle, IMP – imperative, COND – conditional, REM – remote, COMP – complementizer, REFL – reflexive, TAM – tense-aspect-modality, lit. – literally.

b. *beš-l-em*   *ande*   *Nemačka*
    live.PF.1SG   in   Germany.Sr
    'I lived in Germany.'

c. *posle*   *žen-isa-lj-em*
    afterwards.Sr   marry.LOAN.PF.1SG
    'I got married afterwards.'

d. *drab-ar-en*
    cure.CAUS.3PL
    'They are foretelling.'

e. *katastrofa*   *bi*   *av-el-a*
    disaster.Sr   COND.Sr   come.3SG.REM
    'It would be a disaster.'

f. *sov,*   *me*   *za-su-t-em*   *gja*
    sleep.IMP.2SG   I   SLASP.sleep.PF.1SG   like that
    'Sleep, I fell asleep like that.'

The Romani system of tense-aspect-modality categories consists of three dimensions: aspectual (perfective : non-perfective), temporal (remote : non-remote), and modal (the category "intentionality") (Matras 2001: 164). Aspect is expressed as an extension to the verb stem: the perfective aspect is marked with a perfective marker added to the stem in order to express a completed action or event, as in the examples (1b), (1c) and (1f).[7] In the literature, this form is usually referred to as past, preterite or aorist. As pointed out by Matras, the event encoded by the Romani perfective is viewed as one that has been completed prior to or at the contextual point of reference that is provided. As the reference time remains unspecified in relation to the moment of speaking, the Romani perfective lacks the deictic anchoring function that characterizes tenses (Matras 2001: 165).

The absence of perfectivity provides an ongoing perspective (characteristic of present, as in the examples (1a) and (1d), and imperfect), and 'imperfectivity' can be regarded as the absence of 'perfectivity' (Matras 2001: 165). The preterite (and the pluperfect) encode the perfective aspect, whereas "all the other TAM values are *non-perfective* by default." (Matras & Elšík 2006: 188).

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[7] Perfective markers in Romani dialects are *-d-/-d'-/-dž-*, *-l-/-l'-/-j-*, *-t-*, *-in-*, and *-il-* (Matras 2001: 168). For the markers in Vlax dialects see Boretzky (2003: 60–62). For the Early Romani perfective inflection classes see also Matras and Elšík (2006: 80–81).

As exemplified in (2), the same verb lemma can be interpreted as either perfective or non-perfective, depending on whether it is used with or without the perfective marker. In non-perfective forms there are no specific aspectual markers.

(2) a. *Vov*   <u>*ćer-el*</u>   *e*   *torta*.
      he   make.3SG   the   cake.Sr
      'He is making the cake.'
   b. *Vov*   <u>*ćer-d-a*</u>   *e*   *torta*.
      he   make.PF.3SG   the   cake.Sr
      'He made the cake.'

Tense in the deictic sense is expressed by agglutinative remoteness marker (as in (1e)) (Leggio 2011; Matras 2001; Matras 2004; Matras & Elšík 2006). According to Matras, remoteness is a temporal category, aspectually neutral since it does not refer to the internal structure of the event and places an event relative to the immediate context of speech (Matras 2001: 166; Matras 2004: 153). Regarding modality, tense-aspect categories are used as non-indicative within the scope of the non-factual complementizer *te*: the only inherently non-indicative form is the subjunctive, with the meaning of intentionality (Matras 2001: 167).

1.3 *Aspect and borrowing in Romani*

Previous research has shown that Romani varieties are highly susceptible to loanwords, given that the majority of Romani speakers are bilingual or multilingual and enter various types of language contact situations:

> "The sociolinguistic situation of all Romani varieties is highly favourable to contact-induced developments, since almost all Romani speakers are bilingual in the relatively prestigious languages of the dominant "matrix" populations and since, at the same time, Romani linguistic ideologies are relatively tolerant of borrowing in most functional domains." (Elšík 2007: 276).

According to Friedman (2001: 153), the Romani tense-aspect system, together with substantival and pronominal categories, is more resistant to contact-induced change in comparison to the adjectival system and modal categories of verbs. Nevertheless, in the domain of aspectual system several studies report on contact-induced changes and borrowing, mostly in aktionsart marking (cf.

Bodnárová & Wiedner 2015; Elšík 2007; Friedman 2001; Kiefer 2010; Matras 2001).

The emergence of aktionsart marking in Romani is triggered by contact developments, either through incorporating the verbal prefixes and/or particles or through borrowing the entire verb derivation system, as it is explained in the following paragraphs. Given that the data on borrowing in the domain of aspect are insufficient for the Gurbet variety, the aspect marking will be explained in relation to other Romani varieties, as they provide a valuable insight into the overall aspectual system.

Incorporating the verbal prefixes and particles to mark the aktionsart is characteristic of the Romani dialects in contact with German and Hungarian. Following Igla (1992), Matras lists several possible outcomes of borrowing from German to the Sinte Romani: the entire verbs may be replicated, the particle may be replicated with inherited verbs, a replicated verb may be accompanied by a calqued particle or the entire verb may be calqued (Matras 2001: 175-176). Bodnárová and Wiedner (2015) provided a detailed analysis of the development of verbal particles in Vend Romani varieties in contact with Hungarian and German. They showed that verbal particles in these Romani varieties developed through grammaticalization, direct borrowing, loan translation and the change of contact languages, and that they are used to derive new verbs or assign certain aktionsart to verbs. Elšík reported on the novel functions of the Greek-origin suffix *-(V)s-* in Rumungro, which might serve as a stem extension in aktionsart derivations as a part of the suffix *-(i)sal-* (Elšík 2007: 281). Kiefer (2010) analyzed the aktionsart-formation in several languages, one of them being the Lovari Romani. In this Romani dialect the old tense system reduced to past and not-past opposition and simultaneously developed a series of devices to mark the aktionsart: it developed particles due to the contact with Hungarian (from the Hungarian adverbs), it borrowed Slavic prefixes under the influence of Russian, and it either borrowed nontransparent German particles or developed its own in contact with German (Kiefer 2010: 158-160).

Furthermore, dialects in contact with the Slavic languages borrow verbal prefixes that can carry lexico-aspectual meaning. Friedman (2001: 152) reports on the borrowing of the Macedonian prefix *po-* in the Macedonian Arli variety, e.g. *kinel* 'buy' vs. *pokinel* 'pay for'. According to him, the distinction between *kinel* and *pokinel* is a lexical adaptation of the Slavic imperfective/perfective grammatical distinction, and in Romani this opposition is not part of the grammar. In his analysis of verbal aspect in Romani varieties in contact with Bulgarian, Igla

(1998: 68-69) pointed out that Bulgarian prefixes might be attached to Romani verbs without any aspectual differentiation or lexical change of the verbs (e.g. *bistrav* 'forget' vs. *zabistrav* 'forget'), while in other cases the prefix borrowing leads to the semantic modification of a verb (e.g. Romani *sovav*$_{1SG}$ – Bulgarian *spja*$_{IMPF}$ 'sleep', Romani <u>*za*</u>*sovav*$_{1SG}$ – Bulgarian *zaspja*$_{PF}$/*zaspivam*$_{IMPF}$ 'fall asleep', Romani <u>*na*</u>*sovav*$_{1SG}$ *man* – Bulgarian *naspja se*$_{PF}$/*naspivam se*$_{IMPF}$ 'have a good sleep'.

The other type of aktionsart marking is the verb derivation system of Slavic languages. According to Matras, Slavic aspect is borrowed in some Romani dialects in contact with Slavic languages, but it is not characteristic of the dialects spoken in the Balkans. Slavic aspect in Romani appears to be borrowed as a fixed derivation set, which is applied to those Romani verb roots that parallel verbs which allow the modification in a contact language, such as *dava* 'I give', *dodava* 'I add', *obdava* 'I embrace' etc., in the Northern Russian Romani variety Xaladitka (Matras 2001: 175-176).

1.4 *The acquisition of verbal aspect*

Previous empirical studies on the acquisition of aspect mainly focused on the data from pre-school children, showing cross-linguistically that children at the age of 5 (in some studies, even at the age of 3) behave adult-like in the domain of perfective and imperfective aspect comprehension, as they tend to relate imperfective telic predicates to completed and incomplete events, and perfective telic predicates only to completed events (García del Real, van Hout & Ezeizabarrena 2014; Kazanina & Phillips 2007; Vinnitskaya & Wexler 2001; Weist et al. 1984, among others). However, at the production level, children and adults differ. Unlike adults who use perfective aspect for completed events, and imperfective exclusively for incomplete ones, children use imperfective aspect to describe both completed and incomplete events (García del Real, van Hout & Ezeizabarrena 2014; Vinnitskaya & Wexler 2001).

In relation to tense, previous research has shown that at an early age past and perfective morphology is typically attached to telic predicates, whereas present and imperfective morphology attaches to atelic predicates, which triggered the *Aspect before Tense Hypothesis* (Antinucci & Miller 1976; Bronckart & Sinclair 1973; Shirai & Andersen 1995; Weist et al. 1984). The data supporting this view mostly come from Germanic and Romance languages. However, the research on the aspect acquisition in Slavic languages showed that tense and aspect are

acquired independently and that children are able to correctly produce perfective and imperfective verbs even at an early age (Gagarina 2004; Stoll 2001; Vinnitskaya & Wexler 2001; Weist et al. 1984). The overall results suggest the cross-linguistic variation in the acquisition of aspect.

Some researchers pointed out that the acquisition of aspectual systems continues even after the age of 5, as children's production at that age differs from the adults' one in the proportion of perfective verbs and the usage of aspectual pairs in Slavic languages (Gagarina 2004; Savić, Popović & Anđelković 2017). However, taking into account previous empirical findings in the domain of aspect acquisition, we assume that elementary-school children from the age of 7 behave adult-like in the aspect production.

1.5 *Aims and hypothesis*

Having in mind the overall TAM system in Romani, the aim of this pilot study is to explore the tendencies in expressing the verbal aspect in the Gurbet Romani variety in bilingual elementary-school children. Following previous findings on the aspect acquisition which showed that perfective verbs typically refer to completed events, while imperfective refer to incomplete ones, and taking into account the aspectual system in Romani, we assume that verbs with perfective markers will refer to completed events, while the absence of perfectivity will signify ongoing events.

Departing from the previous reports on borrowing at different levels of linguistic structure that characterize Romani varieties, as well as from the fact that Romani speakers in Serbia are bilingual and their language susceptible to loanwords (Ćirković & Mirić 2018), we hypothesize the influence of Serbian in the domain of expressing aspect.[8]

Serbian verbs are traditionally divided in perfective and imperfective. According to Arsenijević (2006: 202): "the stem verb is normally imperfective [...]. Adding a prefix to a stem verb contributes a lexical meaning (often even causing a shift in the lexical meaning of a verb), and it makes the verb perfective. [...] Adding a suffix to a perfective verb (even to a perfective stem verb) makes the verb imperfective." For instance, the perfective verbs *zapevati*$_{PF}$ 'start singing' and

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[8] The larger sample of narratives gathered within the project contains significant examples of code-switching. However, the narratives collected in the experiments investigating aspect were told in Gurbet Romani, without code-switching to Serbian. Therefore, only the Serbian loanverbs are included in the study.

*otpevati*_{PF} 'finish singing' are formed by adding the prefixes *za-* and *od-*, respectively, to the imperfective verb *pevati*_{IMPF} 'sing'; the imperfective verb *prepisivati*_{IMPF} 'rewrite' is formed by adding the suffix *-iv-* to the perfective verb *prepisati*_{PF} 'rewrite', which is built by adding a prefix *pre-* to the imperfective verb *pisati*_{IMPF} 'write'.

The aim of the study is to explore how and to what extent language contact between Serbian and Romani affects the Gurbet Romani verbs in the domain of verbal aspect. One possible contact-induced outcome is that only the prefixes are borrowed in order to mark the aspect and/or aktionsart or that Serbian verbs are borrowed as a whole, already incorporating the information on aspect.

The study is not designed as developmental, but rather uses the available data from elementary-school children to take a look into the aspectual system in Gurbet Romani speakers, assuming that their production is adult-like. Given that this is a pilot study, only a small sample of younger elementary-school population is tested, while the information on aspect in pre-school children and adults as control group will be added in the future research in order to provide the developmental perspective.

2. Methodology

2.1 *Participants*

The sample for the pilot study consists of 7 Romani-speaking elementary-school children aged 7 to 10, all of them bilingual in the Gurbet variety of Romani and the local variety of Serbian. Participants' first language (L1) is the Gurbet variety of Romani, which they started acquiring from birth in their family environment (all of the participants' families actively use Romani at home). Given that Romani is a minority language, participants started acquiring Serbian as a second language (L2) in their broader community also at a very young age. Regarding the language usage, participants use Romani at home and in their local Romani community, but with Serbian-speaking peers they speak Serbian and they attend school classes in Serbian (for more details, see Mirić 2019).

All participants were students of the elementary school "Dubrava" in the village of Minićevo (next to the town of Knjaževac in eastern Serbia). In the school year 2017/2018, when the research was conducted (November 2017), app. 50% of the students were Romani speakers. The study was approved by the school institution management. Participants' parents signed the consent form in which they were informed about the content, procedure and aims of the study, and the

participation in the study was voluntary. The experimental procedure required watching visual content, and none of the participants reported any visual problems or impairment.

2.2 *Materials*

In order to elicit the verbs, short non-verbal cartoons from the serial "Die Sendung mit der Maus" (Show about the mouse) were used in the experiment.[9] The cartoons were chosen because they had been previously used in the study of verbal aspect in Serbian conducted with monolingual Serbian-speaking preschool-aged children and adults, and their content was shown to be highly appropriate for studying verbal aspect (Savić, Popović & Anđelković 2017). In each cartoon, two or three characters (a mouse, an elephant and occasionally a bird) were involved in a sequence of actions. Although the full series contains more cartoons, in the pilot experiment participants were shown a selection of only 5 cartoons, whose duration varied between 42 and 84 seconds. A description of their content is provided in the Appendix 1.

2.3 *Procedure*

The experiment was conducted in a separate, quiet classroom. Participants were shown cartoons on a lap-top in the presence of another blind-folded student.[10] After watching a cartoon, each participant was asked to retell its content to the other student. The main reason for such a procedure was to provide the most natural setting in which children would retell the cartoons to their peers who were not familiar with their content. Each child narrated a cartoon as a first responder and always watched a novel cartoon s/he had not seen or heard before, as it was important to avoid bias from other children. Given that this was a pilot study, no training procedure was provided. The short instructions for the task were given in Serbian[11] and children were asked to retell the cartoons in Romani.

2.4 *Transcription*

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[9] The cartoons are available on the website: http://www.wdrmaus.de/. The authors are: Dieter Saldecki, Gert Kaspar Müntefering, Armin Maiwald; production WDR, RBB, SR, SWR.

[10] Sometimes a teacher and/or a few classmates were present. They did not interfere during the task.

[11] The instructions were given in Serbian since the experimenter was not fluent in Romani, and all participants understand Serbian.

The production was video-recorded and the transcription was performed by an adult native speaker of the Gurbet Romani.[12] The recordings and transcripts are preserved in the Digital Archive of the Institute for Balkan Studies of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Belgrade, Serbia).

The transcripts contain the following symbols: G – girl, B – boy (followed by a participant's number and a number of the narrative for each participant), # – short break, ### – long break, ə – hesitation, / – interrupted word followed by self-correction, // – interrupted sentence, […] – missing text (an interruption irrelevant for the narrative), XXX – unintelligible word(s), word [2x] – the number of times a word has been repeated.[13]

For the purpose of this paper, a total of 23 narratives in the Gurbet Romani were analyzed, whose length varied between 19 and 80 word tokens.[14] The examples of the shortest and the longest narrative, with the translation, are provided in (3) and (4).

(3) Dikhlem jekh životinja i slono sar ćhelen fudbal. I ovaj/ i koja aver životinja di/ dija e slone go. (G5_1)

'I saw an animal and (an) elephant playing football. And this/ and this other animal scored the goal.' (lit. 'gave (the) goal to the elephant')

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[12] The transcription is based on the commonly adopted orthography in Romani linguistics.

[13] It is noteworthy that Romani aspirated voiceless affricate /čh/ and stops /kh/, /ph/, /th/ were occasionally pronounced as non-aspirated counterparts /č/, /k/, /p/, /t/ in individual lexical items. This tendency towards the loss of aspiration was previously reported in other Romani dialects (Friedman 2001: 149; Matras 2004: 49). Aspirates are also marked as inconsistent in the adult speakers of the Gurbet variety under Serbian (Ćirković & Mirić 2017: 12) or Italian influence (Leggio 2011: 61), or as variants in a given morpheme (Boretzky & Igla 1994). In addition, some of the Gurbet informants tend to pronounce Romani long alveolar trill /rr/ as the alveolar trill /r/ in individual lexical items. The use of this consonant has been reported as unstable, subject to substitution or limited to certain word positions (Friedman 2001: 149-150; Leggio 2011: 61; Ćirković & Mirić 2017: 12). If the transcriber (a native speaker) was not certain about the actual pronunciation of a sound (aspirates and trills), the word transcription has been 'normalized' based on the data from the literature. This was done due to the fact that phonetic and phonological issues are irrelevant for this paper and recordings were not made under experimental conditions required for phonetic and phonological analyses.

[14] Hesitations, unintelligible words, and paralinguistic elements marked in the transcript (e.g. laughing) were excluded from the count, although they remain in the transcript.

(4) Sasa o šimjako thaj o slono. Sasa go igračke, gola krugo, kvadrat thaj kocka. I von thode gova sa go ćher. I [2x] goja čiriklji perada[15] lendje gova. I [2x] von opet ćerde i opet perada lendje. I von opet ćerde i [2x] čiriklji thoda pe upre pe [2x] po kaš. I [2x] posle voj/ pelo lako perje sru/ i srušis/ perada lendje opet e [2x] kućica. I von tradije la, našti te traden la i [2x] posle asaje, i kraj. (B1_3)[16]

'There were the mouse and the elephant. There were those toys, that circle, (a) square and (a) cube. And they put that all (on) that house. And that bird knocked that down. And they again made (it) and (the bird) again knocked (it) down. And they again made (it) and the bird landed on the tree. And afterwards she/ her feather(s) fell, and (it) knocked down again the little house. And they were chasing her away, (they) couldn't chase her away and afterwards (they) were laughing, and the end.'

3. Results

The verbs analyzed in the paper were excerpted from the transcripts. This section firstly provides the number of lemmas, types and tokens excerpted from the transcripts (3.1) and the information on the verb forms (3.2). Afterwards we deal with the distribution of verbs with regard to the perfectivity and completion of events (3.3), and most importantly, we analyze the tendencies in expressing verbal aspect (3.4). Additional remarks on the perfective markers are given in 3.5.

3.1 Verbs count

The overall number of lemmas excerpted from the transcripts is 58, the number of verb types is 90, and the number of verb tokens is 213.[17] All verb types excerpted from the transcripts together with relevant details are provided in the Appendix 2.

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[15] According to Ćirković and Mirić (2017), in the adult Gurbet speakers from the same area, the preterite of the verb *peravel* 'knock down' is *peravda*.

[16] The word *lendje*, which is used in the example, but not translated, is a 3PL.DAT pronoun with the possessive meaning, lit. 'the bird knocked them$_{POSS}$ down the house', with the meaning: 'the bird knocked their house down'.

[17] Lemma – basic verb form: 3SG (present), given that Romani has not retained the infinitive, e.g. *perel* 'fall'; type – different verb forms per lemma, e.g. *perel* (3SG), *pelo* (3SG.PF.M), *peli* (3SG.PF.F); token – occurrence for each specific type, e.g. *perel* (N=3), *pelo* (N=4), *peli* (N=1).

Figure 1 shows the overall number of lemmas, types, and tokens with regard to the verb origin (Romani verbs vs. Serbian loanverbs).[18]
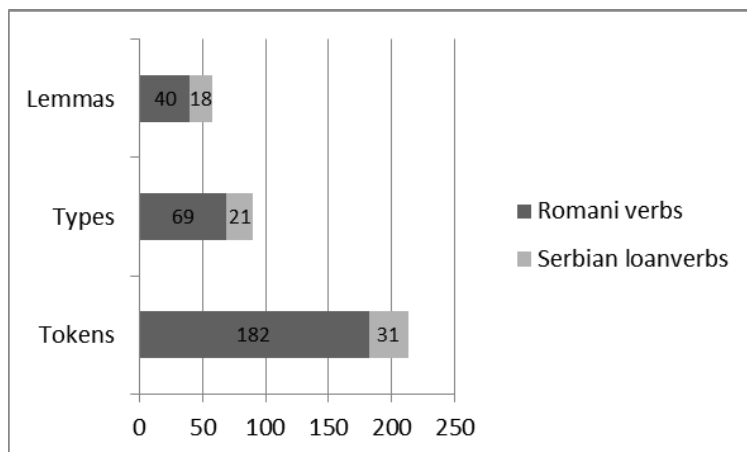
Figure 1. Verbs count

As Figure 1 shows, the majority of the verbs in the sample are Romani. Numerous Serbian loanverbs are hapaxes: 17 out of 31 Serbian loanverb tokens (54.84%) in comparison to 33 out of 182 Romani verb tokens (18.13%) were hapaxes. The Appendix 2 contains the information on the number of children who used each verb type.[19]

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[18] We did not count the following cases: a) the nonproductive repetitions, in which a participant repeated exactly the same verb or a phrase twice in a row; b) the interruptions and verbs which were afterwards self-corrected; c) verbs that were not used for the purpose of retelling the cartoons, e.g. digressions or addressing the researcher or a classmate.

[19] Regarding the translation of the verbs in the examples that follow, as well as in the Appendix 2, it should be mentioned that the verb meanings were searched for in several dictionaries, but primarily in Ćirković and Mirić (2017), Boretzky and Igla (1994), and in the ROMLEX lexical database. For those meanings which were not registered in the relevant dictionaries, the translation is provided based on the cartoons content. In particular, the verb *ačhel* 'stand, remain' was sometimes translated as 'land' as it refers to the activity of a bird landing either on a wooden shelf or on a house. The verb *thol* literally means 'put', but it can also be used in the meaning 'place' as in *thoda pe sovel* 'he placed himself / he went to sleep' and also 'land' in the context of a bird landing on a shelf.

3.2 Verb forms

Regarding the person concord, it should be pointed out that the analyzed verbs are inflected for 3SG and 3PL only, as they were the only ones elicited in retelling the actions from cartoons.[20]

Figure 2 shows the distribution of forms of the lexical verbs (N=204, verbs 'have' and 'be' excluded) with regard to the verb origin (Romani verbs vs. Serbian loanverbs).
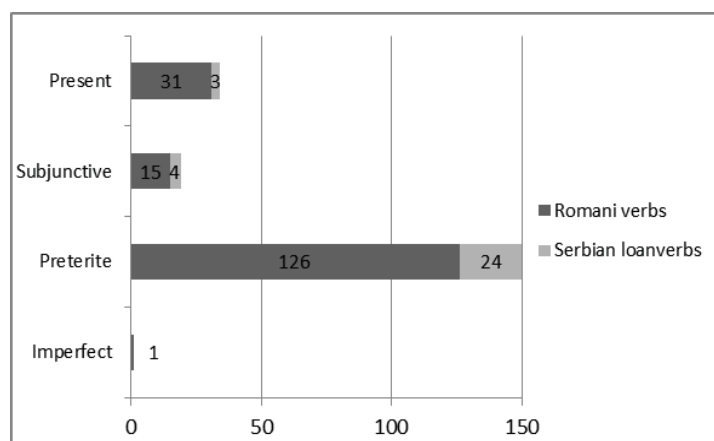
Figure 2. Lexical verb forms

As Figure 2 shows, the vast majority of verbs are used either in the form lacking any overt TAM marking (which corresponds to the present and subjunctive), or in the form with the overt perfective marker (which corresponds to the preterite). Both forms are characterized as non-remote in terms of tense, but differ in aspect – the former being non-perfective and the latter one – perfective. In addition to the non-remote forms, an isolated example of a lexical verb is reported with the remoteness marker *–a* in the form of the imperfect: $sovela_{3SG.REM}$ – *sovel* 'sleep', cf. example (5).

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[20] The rare examples of other forms (usually 1SG) were excluded from the analysis, as they were not used for retelling the content of the cartoons, but as digressions or for the purpose of starting the narrative, e.g. Dikhlem jekh životinja... '(I) saw an animal...'. In certain cases it was difficult to establish whether they referred to completed or ongoing events.

(5) *vo*   *branisarda,*   *a*   *sovela*.
     he   defend.LOAN.PF.3SG   but.Sr   sleep.3SG.REM
     'He defended (the goal), although he was sleeping.' (B1_2)

Before presenting the analysis, a point should be made regarding the verbs 'have' (6a) and 'be' (6b), as well as the verbs in the subjunctive form following the non-factual complementizer *te* (examples in (7)), which are all excluded from the analysis.

Romani dialects are conservative in their lack of a lexical verb meaning 'have' (Friedman 2001: 158). This verb bears no special marker for perfectivity. In our sample, it is used only once in the 3SG form (*si le*, N=1) to mark the present tense (cf. (6a)).

Regarding the verb 'be', as pointed out by Leggio (2011: 93) in his analysis of Mitrovica Gurbet Romani, the past-tense copula derives from the present copula by attaching the remoteness marker. Therefore, it cannot bear a marker for perfectivity, and there is no aspectual distinction. This verb always encodes states, as "non-chronological states of affairs in the background", as described in the analysis of the Sinte Romani narratives (Holzinger 1996: 114). The copula 'be' is used in our sample in the 3SG and 3PL forms with the remoteness marker (*sasa*, N=8), in order to set a background of the events (cf. (6b)).

(6) a. *O*   *slono*   *ćerda*   *torta.*   *I*   *avel*
         the   elephant.Sr   make.PF.3SG   cake.Sr and.Sr   come.3SG
         o   *mišo*   *i*   *novina*   *si le.*
         the   mouse.Sr   and.Sr   newspapers.Sr have.3SG.M
         I   *čitol*   *novina*…
         and.Sr   read.LOAN.3SG newspapers.Sr
         'The elephant made (a) cake. And the mouse comes and has the
         newspapers. And he is reading the newspapers…' (G1_1)

(6) b. *Sasa*   *o*   *šimjako*   *thaj*   *o*   *slono*.
         be.REM.3SG   the   mouse   and   the   elephant.Sr
         Sasa   *go*   *igračke*…
         be.REM.3SG   those   toys.Sr
         'There were the mouse and the elephant. There were those toys…' (B1_3)

The verbs used in the complement clauses after the non-factual complementizer *te* are always in the form typically regarded as the subjunctive, marking the 'intentionality' meaning and bearing only inflectional markers (cf. Matras 2001; Matras & Tenser 2016). There were 19 verb tokens of this kind excerpted from the transcripts, both Romani verbs (cf. (7a), (7b) and (7c)) and Serbian loanverbs (cf. (7d)).[21] In either of these cases, the verb is not marked for perfectivity.

(7) a.   *O*   *mišo*   *arakhla*   *o*   *zvono*   *i*   *vov*
         the   mouse.Sr   find.PF.3SG   the   bell.Sr   and.Sr   he
         na/   *naštija*   *te*   <u>*crdel*</u>   *le*.
         na/   cannot.PF.3SG   COMP   pull.3SG   it
         'The mouse found the bell and he couldn't pull it.' (B1_1)

   b.   *O*   *slono*   *xala*   *e [2x]*   *phabaj*   *i*
         the   elephant.Sr   eat.PF.3SG   the   apple   and.Sr
         opet   *thoda*   *pe*   *te*   <u>*sovel*</u>.
         again.Sr   place.PF.3SG   REFL   COMP   sleep.3SG
         'The elephant ate the apple and again went to sleep.' (B1_2)

   c.   *I*   *posle*   *o*   *slono*   *thaj*   *šimjako*
         and.Sr   afterwards.Sr   the   elephant.Sr   and   mouse
         lije   *te*   <u>*asan*</u>.
         begin.PF.3PL   COMP   laugh.3PL
         'And afterwards the elephant and the mouse began laughing.' (G4_3)

   d.   *O*   *šimjako*   *probisarda*   *te [2x]*   <u>*zvonil*</u>,
         the   mouse   try.LOAN.PF.3SG   COMP   ring.LOAN.3SG
         al   *naštija*.
         but.Sr   cannot.PF.3SG
         'The mouse tried to ring (the bell), but (he) couldn't.' (G4_1)

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[21] In the material sampled for this study, the complementizer *te* was used in the complement clauses of the verbs *našti* 'cannot', *mangel* 'want', *probil* 'try', *thol pe* 'place', 'land' (lit. 'put'), *lel* 'begin, undertake' (lit. 'take'), *džal* 'go', *avel* 'come', which were used with or without the perfective marker.

After excluding the verbs meaning 'have' and 'be' and the verbs in the subjunctive form, the overall number of analyzed verb tokens is 185 (158 Romani verbs, 27 Serbian loanverbs).

3.3 Distribution of verbs according to perfectivity

Figures 3 and 4 depict the distribution of Romani verbs and Serbian loanverbs, respectively, with regard to the perfectivity (non-perfective vs. perfective) and the status of the event/activity (ongoing vs. completed). In Figure 5, the percentages of Romani verbs and Serbian loanverbs are merged since they show similar tendencies in expressing verbal aspect.

In Figures 3–5, non-perfective verbs (non-PF) are the ones without any aspectual markers, while perfective verbs (PF) bear the perfective marker. Whether a verb marks the completed or ongoing event depends on the actual event in a cartoon and a participant's choice of a verb form. As it will be pointed out later, in some cases, different participants described the same cartoon event by using different verbal aspect, suggesting that participants can approach cartoon events from a different perspective, some of them focusing on the completion (perfectivity), others on the temporal perspective or other dimensions.
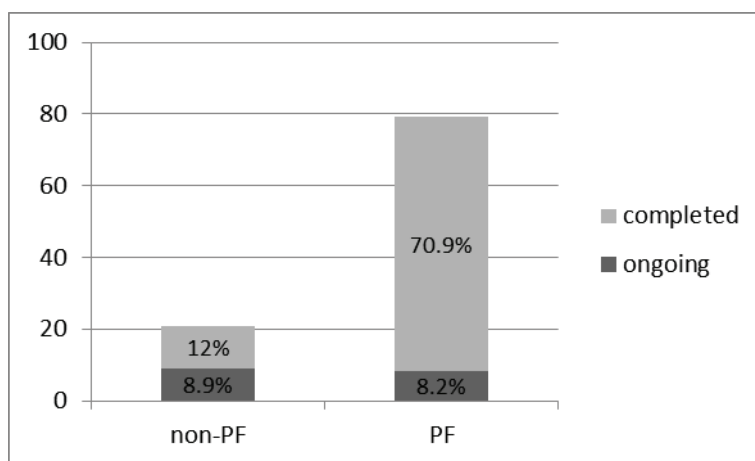
Figure 3. The distribution of Romani verb tokens with and without perfective markers according to the completion of events
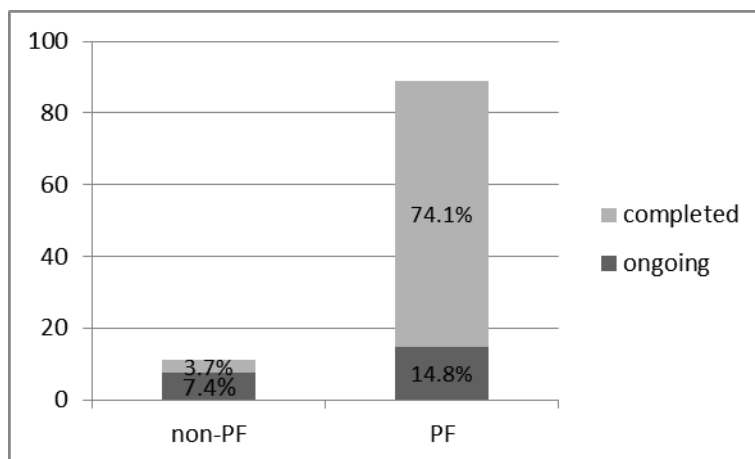
Figure 4. The distribution of Serbian loanverb tokens with and without perfective markers according to the completion of events
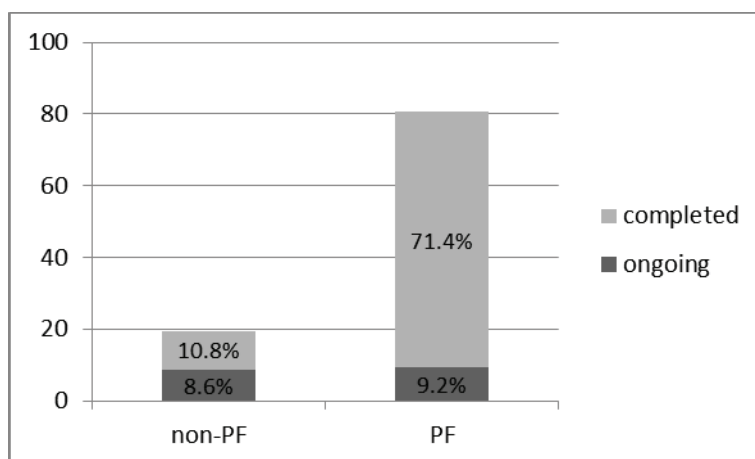
Figure 5. The distribution of verb tokens in the overall sample with and without perfective markers according to the completion of events

As can be seen in Figure 5, the verbs with the perfective marker dominate in the overall sample (cf. N_{PF}=149 (80.6%) vs. N_{NON-PF}=36 (19.4%)). Figures 3 and 4 depict similar distribution in the sample of Romani verbs (cf. N_{PF}=125 (79.1%) vs. N_{NON-PF}=33 (20.9%)) and Serbian loanverbs (cf. N_{PF}=24 (88.9%) vs. N_{NON-PF}=3 (11.1%)). By using the perfective forms, the participants in the study focused on the completion of the series of events. This relates to the fact that not only were the

verbs with perfective marker dominant, but generally verbs referring to the completed events (cf. $N_{completed}$=152 (82.2%) vs. $N_{ongoing}$=33 (17.8%) in Figure 5).

In the overall sample of Romani verbs and Serbian loanverbs bearing a perfective marker (N_{PF}=149), a marker is predominantly used to mark completed events ($N_{PF/completed}$=132 (88.6%)); however, the verbs with a perfective marker were also used to mark ongoing events, although to a much lesser extent ($N_{PF/completed}$=17 (11.4%)). Remarkably, in the overall sample of Romani verbs and Serbian loanverbs unmarked for perfectivity (N_{NON-PF}=36), the absence of marker marks ongoing events ($N_{NON-PF/ongoing}$=16 (44.4%)), but also the completed ones ($N_{NON-PF/completed}$=20 (55.6%)).

It is worth mentioning that neither individual differences nor any developmental patterns were found in children of different ages regarding the distribution of perfective markers or the reference to completed or ongoing events. The only observed difference was in the size of narratives across ages, showing that younger children (at the age of 7) typically produced shorter narratives than the older ones (at the age of 8, 9, and 10). Given that this finding is irrelevant for this study, it will not be further elaborated.

3.4 Tendencies in expressing verbal aspect

The analysis has revealed several tendencies in expressing verbal aspect in the Gurbet variety of Romani.

3.4.1 Perfective markers in Romani verbs

In the sample of Romani verbs (N=158), a perfective marker is typically attached to the verb stem in order to express perfective (completed) events (N=112 (70.9%)), as in the examples (8) – (11). This tendency prevails in the sample and pertains to the facts that the verbs with perfective markers are the most frequent in our material and that participants mostly referred to completed events.

(8) *O*   *slono*   *lija*   *o*   *šlago*
     the   elephant.Sr take.PF.3SG   the   whipped cream.Sr
     i   *thoda*   *pe*   *torta.*
     and.Sr put.PF.3SG   on   cake.Sr
     'The elephant took the whipped cream and put (it) on (the) cake.' (G3_2)

(9)   *Avilo*   *šimjako i*   *o*   #   *o*   *slono*
        come.PF.3SG.M. mouse and.Sr the   #   the   elephant.Sr
        ćerdilo   *po²²*   *kao*   *po*   *sneško beli(ć).*
        turn into.PF.3SG.M.   into   like.Sr into   snowman.Sr
        'The mouse came and the elephant turned into like a snowman.' (G3_3)

(10)   *Pelo*   *iv.*   *I*   *onda*   *avilo*
        fall.PF.3SG.M.   snow   and.Sr then.Sr come.PF.3SG.M.
        o   *šimijako*   *i*   *ćerda*
        the   mouse   and.Sr make.PF.3SG
        jekh   *bari*   *kugla*   *tar*   *o*   *iv.*   (G2_4)
        one   big   ball.Sr from   the   snow
        '(The) snow fell. And then the mouse came and made a big snowball.'

(11)   *Posle*   *lija*   *phabaj,*   *čhudija*   *lese*
        afterwards.Sr   take.PF.3SG   apple   throw.PF.3SG   him
        i   *vov*   *istarda*   *thaj*   *dija*   *go.*
        and.Sr he   catch.PF.3SG   and   give.PF.3SG   goal.Sr
        'Afterwards (he₁) took (an) apple, threw him₂ and he₂ caught (it) and (he₁)
        scored (a) goal.' (B2_2)

However, although the verbs with perfective markers typically refer to
completed events, there were several instances of perfective markers added to the
stem although the event they referred to was not completed (N=13 (8.2%)), as in
the examples (12) – (14):

(12)   *I*   *von*   *tradije*   *la*,
        and.Sr they   chase away.PF.3PL   her
        našti   *te*   *traden*   *la*
        cannot   COMP   chase away.3PL her
        i [2x] *posle*   *asaje,*   *i*   *kraj.*
        and.Sr afterwards.Sr   laugh.PF.3PL   and.Sr the end.Sr
        'And they were chasing her away, (they) couldn't chase her away and
        afterwards (they) were laughing, and the end.' (B1_3)

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²² The preposition *po/pe* in the Gurbet Romani consists of a preposition and the definite
article *o* or *e* depending on the gender of the noun it precedes. This preposition is typically
translated as 'on', although in certain contexts it corresponds to the English prepositions
'in' and 'into'.

(13) *O mišo arakhla o zvono i vov*
      the mouse.Sr find.PF.3SG the bell.Sr and.Sr he
      na/ naštija te crdel le.
      na/ cannot.PF.3SG COMP pull.3SG it
      'The mouse found the bell and he couldn't pull it.' (B1_1)

(14) *O mišo avilo pašo zvono thaj #*
      the mouse.Sr come.PF.3SG.M near bell.Sr and #
      marda po zvono, naštisarda,
      hit.PF.3SG on bell.Sr cannot.PF.3SG
      gurisarda, naštisarda, vazdija, naštisarda.
      push.LOAN.PF.3SG cannot.PF.3SG lift.PF.3SG cannot.PF.3SG
      'The mouse approached (a) bell and hit on (the) bell, he couldn't (move it),
      he pushed, he couldn't, he lifted (it), he couldn't (move it).' (B2_1)

It is noteworthy that in 10 out of 14 examples in this group, the modal verbs *mangla*PF.3SG – *mangel* 'want', *naštija*PF.3SG – *našti* 'cannot', and *naštisarda*PF.3SG – *naštisarel* 'cannot' are the ones marked with the perfective marker. They cannot be analyzed based on the opposition completed vs. ongoing event, as they refer to states. In the example (12), the verb tokens *tradije*PF.3PL – *tradel* 'chase away' and *asaje*PF.3PL – *asal* 'laugh' clearly mark the ongoing events.

3.4.2 The absence of perfective markers in Romani verbs

In the sample of Romani verbs (N=158), the forms unmarked for perfectivity are used to mark ongoing events (N=14 (8.9%)), cf. verbs *ćhelen*NON-PF.3PL 'play' and *phirel*NON-PF.3SG 'walk', in the examples (15) and (16).

(15) *Dikhlem jekh životinja i slono*
      see.PF.1SG one animal.Sr and.Sr elephant.Sr
      sar ćhelen fudbal.
      how play.3PL football.Sr
      'I saw an animal and (an) elephant playing football'. (G5_1)

(16) *O šimjako phirel [2x], i o/ [2x] e kugla*
      the mouse walk.3SG and.Sr the/ the ball.Sr
      čalavel e šimjako ane bul (laughing).
      hit.3SG the mouse in bottom
      'The mouse is walking, walking, and the snowball hits the mouse in the
      bottom.' (G3_3)

Nevertheless, certain telic (completed) events were referred to with the non-perfective forms (N=19 (12%)), cf. the verb *čalavel*~NON-PF~ 'hit' in the example (16) above, as well as the underlined verbs in the examples (17) and (18).

(17) *I*   *avel*   *o*   *slono*   *i*   *dikhel*
      and.Sr come.3SG   the   elephant.Sr   and.Sr see.3SG
      jekh   *avres/* *[…]*   *o [2x]* *slono*
      one   other/   the   elephant.Sr
      lel   *e*   *torta* *thaj* *čhudel*   *po*   *mišo.*
      take.3SG   the   cake.Sr and   throw.3SG   on   mouse.Sr
      'And the elephant comes and he sees one another/ […] the elephant takes the cake and throws it on the mouse.' (G1_1)

(18) *O mišo*   *thaj o* *slono*   *ćerde*   *ćher*.
      the mouse.Sr   and   the elephant.Sr   make.PF.3PL   house
      I   *posle*   *avili*   *e*   *čiriklji* *i*
      and.Sr afterwards.Sr   come.PF.3SG.F the   bird   and.Sr
      ačhili   *upral* *pe*   *go*   *vitrina,*
      land.PF.3SG.F   above   on   that   shelf.Sr
      ni   *džanav*   *so,*   *ačhili*   *i*
      not   know.1SG   what   land.PF.3SG.F   and.Sr
      posle   *von*   *ćerde*   *kućica,*
      afterwards.Sr   they   make.PF.3PL   little house.Sr
      voj   *ačhel* –   *peravel,*   *von*   *ćeren*,
      she   land.3SG   knock down.3SG   they   make.3PL
      voj *ačhel* – *peravel*.   *Posle*   *pelo*
      she   land.3SG knock down.3SG   afterwards.Sr   fall.PF.3SG.M
      katar   *e*   *čiriklji* *o*   *pero*   *i*   *posle [2x]*
      from   the   bird   the   feather.Sr   and.Sr afterwards.Sr
      rušisaljo   *o*   *ćher...*
      knock down.LOAN.PF.3SG   the   house
      'The mouse and the elephant made (a) house. And afterwards the bird came and landed above on that shelf, I don't know what, (she) landed and afterwards they made (a) little house, she lands – (she) knocks (it) down, they make (it), she lands – (she) knocks (it) down. Afterwards the bird's feather fell and afterwards knocked down the house…' (G4_3)

It seems that the non-perfective form performs a function which is neither temporal nor aspectual. In the example (17) the whole series of events is retold by using the non-perfective forms, although the verbs clearly refer to completed

activities: *avel*_{NON-PF} 'come', *dikhel*_{NON-PF} 'see, look', *lel*_{NON-PF} 'take', *čhudel*_{NON-PF} 'throw'. They can be regarded as the narrative present.

Furthermore, as the example (18) indicates, the non-perfective forms may be used in order to emphasize the iterativity of the event, given that the verbs *ćeren*_{NON-PF} – *ćerel* 'do, make', *ačhel*_{NON-PF} 'land', *peravel*_{NON-PF} 'knock down' are used without the perfective marker to mark telic events which happen repeatedly. These verbs were previously introduced in the narrative with the perfective markers (e.g. *ćerde*_{PF}, *ačhili*_{PF}), signaling the inherent completion of an event.[23]

3.4.3 The same event – different aspect in Romani verbs

In certain cases, different participants opted for different aspectual verb forms for the description of the same cartoon event, as in the examples (19) – (22), where examples in (a) are non-perfective (*perel*, *avel*, *čhudel*, *sovel*), and in (b) – perfective (*pelo*, *avilo*, *čhudija*, *sovda/suto/zasuto*). Choosing a different aspect is not age-related in the study, since children of different ages opted for either a perfective or non-perfective form.

(19) a. <u>*Perel*</u>   *o*   *iv…*   *a*   *o*   *slono*
        fall.3SG the   snow   and.Sr   the   elephant.Sr
        sasa   *gothe*   *an'*   *go [2x]*   *krugo.*
        be.REM.3SG   there   in   that   circle.Sr
        'The snow is falling… and the elephant was there in that circle.' (G1_2)
   b. <u>*Pelo*</u>   *iv.*   *I*   *onda*   *avilo*
        fall.PF.3SG.M   snow   and.Sr   then.Sr   come.PF.3SG.M
        o   *šimijako*   *i*   *ćerda*   *jekh*   *bari*
        the   mouse   and.Sr   make.PF.3SG   one   big
        kugla   *tar*   *o*   *iv.*
        ball.Sr   from   the   snow
        '(The) snow fell. And then the mouse came and made a big snowball.' (G2_4)

(20) a. *O*   *slono*   *ćerda*   *torta.*   *I*   <u>*avel*</u>
        the   elephant.Sr   make.PF.3SG   cake.Sr   and.Sr   come.3SG
        o   *mišo*   *i*   *novina*   *si le.*
        the   mouse.Sr   and.Sr   newspapers.Sr   have.3SG.M

---

[23] Apart from the alternation of the present and preterite forms within a narrative, narratives describing past events are often characterized by the use of preterite forms at the beginning and the end of a narrative, while the narrative present is used as a stylistic means for expressing vivid and exciting events (Schiffrin 1981; Ćirković 2012).

'The elephant made (a) cake. And the mouse comes and has the newspapers.' (G1_1)

b. *Ćerda*   *o*   *slono*   *jekh*   *torta*   *i*   *o*
make.PF.3SG   the   elephant.Sr   one   cake.Sr and.Sr the
mišo   <u>*avilo,*</u>   *čitosarda*   *novine…*
mouse.Sr   come.PF.3SG.M   read.LOAN.PF.3SG   newspapers.Sr
'The elephant made a cake and the mouse came, he was reading the newspapers…' (G5_3)

(21) a. *o [2x]*   *slono*   <u>*lel*</u>   *e*   *torta*   *thaj*
the   elephant.Sr   take.3SG   the   cake.Sr   and
<u>*čhudel*</u>   *po*   *mišo.*   *O*   *mišo*   <u>*lel*</u>
throw.3SG   on   mouse.Sr the   mouse.Sr   take.3SG
thaj   <u>*čhudel*</u>   *po*   *slono.*
and   throw.3SG   on   elephant.Sr
'the elephant takes the cake and throws it on the mouse. The mouse takes (it) and throws (it) on (the) elephant.' (G1_1)

b. *I*   *onda*   *avilo*   *o*   *šimjako.*   *I*
and.Sr   then.Sr come.PF.3SG.M the   mouse   and.Sr
onda   *ə*   <u>*lija*</u>   *o*   *slono*   *e*   *torta.*
then   ə   take.PF.3SG   the   elephant.Sr   the   cake.Sr
I   *onda*   <u>*čhudija*</u>   *la.*   *I*   *onda*   *xale*   *la.*
and.Sr   then.Sr throw.PF.3SG   it   and.Sr   then.Sr eat.PF.3PL it
'And then the mouse came. And then the elephant took the cake. And then (he) threw it. And then (they) ate it.' (G2_2)

(22) a. *O*   *mišo*   *avilo*   *pašo*   *golo.*
the   mouse.Sr   come.PF.3SG.M near   goal.Sr
O   *slono*   <u>*sovel*</u>   *pašo*   *go…* (B2_2)
the   elephant.Sr   sleep.3SG   near   goal.Sr
'The mouse approached the goal. The elephant is sleeping near (the) goal.'

b. *O*   *slono*   <u>*sovda*</u>.
the   elephant.Sr   sleep.PF.3SG
Avilo   *šimjako*   *sa*   *e*   *lopta.*
come.PF.3SG.M mouse   with.Sr the   ball.Sr
'The elephant slept. (The) mouse came with the ball.' (G2_3)

c. *O   slono   <u>suta</u>   po   go.*
   the   elephant.Sr   sleep.PF.3SG   in   goal.Sr
   I   o   mišo   avilo   i   vov
   and.Sr the   mouse.Sr   come.PF.3SG.M and.Sr he
   čhudel   e   lopta.
   kick.3SG   the   ball.Sr
   'The elephant slept in (the) goal. And the mouse came and he kicks the ball.' (B1_2)

d. *O   slono   <u>zasuto</u>   po   go,*
   the   elephant   SLASP.sleep.PF.3SG   in   goal.Sr
   a   o   šimjako   probisarda
   and.Sr the   mouse   try.LOAN.PF.3SG
   te   čhudel   lese   o   go.
   COMP   kick.3SG   him   the   goal.Sr
   'The elephant fell asleep in (the) goal, and the mouse tried to kick him the goal.' (G4_2)

The examples in (22) are particularly interesting as they reflect the range of options that Gurbet Romani speakers have at their disposal. Namely, the same event is described by 4 different verb types: *sovel*, *sovda*, *suta*, *zasuto*. The last one will be discussed in section 3.4.5., as it combines the Serbian prefix *za-* and the irregular preterite of the Romani verb *suta*. In Gurbet Romani the form *suta* has an irregular stem, whereas the form *sovda* is a regularly inflected form.

As we have already mentioned, the participants might have opted for the non-perfective form as the narrative present, not focusing on the aspectual or temporal perspective, e.g. (19a), (20a), or (21a). We would additionally allow for the possibility that the personal perspective on a particular event affects the choice of a verb form, which depends on whether the speaker focuses on the activity itself, thus choosing a non-perfective form, or on its endpoint, thus choosing a perfective form. For instance, in the cartoon 4 (see Appendix 1 and the example (19) above), the snow is falling at the beginning of the cartoon and continues falling afterwards. This event is clearly ongoing and explains the use of a non-perfective form, as in (19a). However, as some snow had already fallen on the ground, a participant might focus on that fact, marking it with the perfective form, as in (19b).

Although the majority of narratives (15 out of 23) shows variation of the verb forms used with regard to perfectivity (cf. (18)), one narrative contains mostly non-perfective forms (cf. (17)), and others mostly perfective forms (7 out of 23)

(cf. (14)).[24] In addition, regardless of this variation, some verbs are predominantly used in one of the aspectual forms. For instance, the verb *avel* 'come' (N of tokens=24) is used 3 times (12.5%) as non-perfective and 21 times (87.5%) as perfective, which suggests that the verb itself marks the lexical aspect to a certain extent. The Appendix 2 provides information on the number of participants who used a particular aspectual form.

3.4.4 Serbian loanverbs

Numerous loanverbs from Serbian (N of tokens=27) are used in the sample and they are morphologically adapted to Romani. When it comes to the distinction between the perfective and non-perfective forms, as well as the opposition completed vs. ongoing events, several trends have been observed.

Serbian perfective loanverbs are typically used with the adapted perfective markers (-*sard*- or -*salj*-) in order to express completed events (N of tokens=10 (37%)), as in the examples (23) – (26): *okrenisaljo*$_{LOAN.PF.3SG}$ < Serb. *okrenuti (se)*$_{PF}$ 'turn around', *krenisarda*$_{LOAN.PF.3SG}$ < Serb. *krenuti*$_{PF}$ 'set off', *razmazisarda*$_{LOAN.PF.3SG}$ < Serb. *razmazati*$_{PF}$ 'spread'). Apart from the underlined verbs in the examples, the following verbs also belong to this group: *pomerisaljo*$_{LOAN.PF.3SG}$ < Serb. *pomeriti*$_{PF}$ 'move', *sapletisaljo*$_{LOAN.PF.3SG}$ < Serb. *saplesti (se)*$_{PF}$ 'trip', *pomožisarda*$_{LOAN.PF.3SG}$ < Serb. *pomoći*$_{PF}$ 'help', *probisarda*$_{LOAN.PF.3SG}$ < Serb. *probati*$_{PF}$ 'try'.

On the other hand, Serbian imperfective loanverbs unmarked for perfectivity are used to express ongoing events (N of tokens=2 (7.4%)), as in (27): *čitol*$_{LOAN.NON-PF.3SG}$ < Serb. *čitati*$_{IMPF}$ 'read'.

(23)   *I*   *ondak*   *o*   *slono*   ə # ə # *okrenisaljo*
       and.Sr   then.Sr   the   elephant.Sr   ə # ə #   turn around.LOAN.PF.3SG
       pe   *aver*   *strana*.
       on   other   side.Sr
       'And then the elephant turned around on the other side.' (G2_1)

(24)   *Ćerda*   *o*   *slono*   *jekh*   *torta*   *i*
       make.PF.3SG   the   elephant.Sr   one   cake.Sr and.Sr
       o   *mišo*   *avilo,*   *čitosarda*   *novine*
       the   mouse.Sr   come.PF.3SG.M   read.LOAN.PF.3SG   newspapers.Sr

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[24] When it comes to the participants, only 1 out of 7 participants (G2) used only the perfective forms, whereas other participants used both perfective and non-perfective forms in their narratives.

i   *krenisarda*   *pe*   *torta*.
and.Sr   set off.LOAN.PF.3SG   towards   cake.Sr
'The elephant made a cake and the mouse came, he was reading the newspapers and (he) went towards (the) cake.' (G5_3)

(25)   *Sasa*   *jekh*   *torta. I*   *onda*   *o*   *slono*
       be.REM.3SG   one   cake.Sr and.Sr then.Sr the   elephant.Sr
       lija   *šlago.*   *I*   *razmazisarda*
       take.PF.3SG   whipped cream.Sr   and.Sr   spread.LOAN.PF.3SG
       umpre.
       above
       'There was a cake. And then the elephant took (the) whipped cream. And (he) spread (it) above.' (G2_2)

(26)   *O*   *slono*   *sovel*   *pašo*   *go*   *ə* [2x]
       the   elephant.Sr   sleep.3SG   near   goal.Sr ə
       i   *vov*   *probisarda*   *te*   *del*   *le*   *go*
       and.Sr   he   try.LOAN.PF.3SG   COMP   give.3SG   him   goal.Sr
       'The elephant is sleeping near the goal and he tried to give him the goal.' (B2_2)

(27)   *I*   *kotar*   *šimjako*   *avel*   *sa*   *e*
       and.Sr   from there   mouse   come.3SG   with.Sr the
       novina,   *čitol*   *e*   *novina*   *i*
       newspapers.Sr   read.LOAN.3SG   the   newspapers.Sr   and.Sr
       čalada   *sa*   *e*   *novina*   *ande*   *torta*
       hit.PF.3SG   with.Sr the   newspapers.Sr   in   cake.Sr
       'And from there (the) mouse is coming with the newspapers, he is reading the newspapers and he hit with the newspapers at the cake.' (G3_2).

An isolated example of a Serbian perfective loanverb (N=1 (3.7%)) was found marking the completed event without the perfective marker (*uhvatil*_{LOAN.3SG} 'catch' < Serb. *uhvatiti*_{PF} 'catch', with the prefix *u-* marking the endpoint, which contrasts with the Serbian imperfective aspectual pair marking the activity *hvatati*_{IMPF} 'catch'), as in (28). In this case, it appears that the focus is on iterativity, given that the "elephant always catches the ball".

(28)   *vov*   *probisarda*   *te*   *del*   *le*   *go*,
       he   try.LOAN.PF.3SG   COMP   give.3SG   him   goal.Sr
       ali   *našti*   *pošto*   *vov*   *uvek*
       but.Sr   cannot   because.Sr   he   always.Sr

uhvatil.
catch.LOAN.3SG
'… he₁ tried to give him₂ (the) goal, but (he₁) cannot because he₂ always catches.' (B2_2)

Remarkably, Serbian imperfective loanverbs marking ongoing events are used with the perfective markers -*sard*- and -*salj*- (N of tokens=4 (14.8%)), as in the examples (29) and (30): *čitosarda*₍ₒₐₙ.ₚ𝒻.₃ₛ𝓰 < Serb. *čitati*ᵢₘₚ𝒻 'read', *nervirisarda*₍ₒₐₙ.ₚ𝒻.₃ₛ𝓰 < Serb. *nervirati se*ᵢₘₚ𝒻 'to be annoyed'. Apart from the underlined verbs, several other verbs belong to this group: *crtosarda*₍ₒₐₙ.ₚ𝒻.₃ₛ𝓰 < Serb. *crtati*ᵢₘₚ𝒻 'draw' and *gadjisarde pe*₍ₒₐₙ.ₚ𝒻.₃ₚ₋ < Serb. *gađati se*ᵢₘₚ𝒻 'throw at each other'.

(29)   *Ćerda   o   slono   jekh   torta   i*
        make.PF.3SG   the   elephant.Sr   one   cake.Sr and.Sr
        o   miso   avilo,   čitosarda   novine
        the   mouse.Sr come.PF.3SG.M   read.LOAN.PF.3SG newspapers.Sr
        i   krenisarda   pe   torta.
        and.Sr setoff.LOAN.PF.3SG   towardscake.Sr   cake.Sr
        'The elephant made a cake and the mouse came, he was reading the newspapers and (he) went towards (the) cake.' (G5_3)

(30)   *I   posle   o* [2x] *slono   ikljilo*
        and.Sr afterwards.Sr the   elephant.Sr   go out.PF.3SG
        thaj   nervirisarda.
        and   be annoyed.LOAN.PF.3SG
        'And afterwards the elephant went out and (he) was annoyed.' (G5_5)

Completed events are sometimes referred to by Serbian imperfective verbs to which perfective markers -*sard*- and -*salj*- are attached (N of tokens=10 (37%)), as in the examples (31) and (32): *branisarda*₍ₒₐₙ.ₚ𝒻.₃ₛ𝓰 < Serb. *braniti*ᵢₘₚ𝒻 'defend', *rušisaljo*₍ₒₐₙ.ₚ𝒻.₃ₛ𝓰 < Serb. *rušiti*ᵢₘₚ𝒻 'knock down'. In the context of these examples, it would be more semantically precise to use the Serbian perfective verbs *odbraniti*ₚ𝒻 and *srušiti*ₚ𝒻 with the appropriate prefixes (*od*- and *s*-) which mark the endpoint of an event, as these verbs are accomplishments in Serbian, instead of *braniti*ᵢₘₚ𝒻 and *rušiti*ᵢₘₚ𝒻 which refer to activities.[25] Apart from the underlined verbs in the examples, other verbs belong to this group: *šutirisarda*₍ₒₐₙ.ₚ𝒻.₃ₛ𝓰 < Serb.

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[25] However, even in Serbian, the verb *braniti*ᵢₘₚ𝒻 can be used with the telic meaning in the context of playing football.

*šutirati*_{IMPF} 'kick', *gurisarda*_{LOAN.PF.3SG} < Serb. *gurati*_{IMPF} 'push', *čudisaljo*_{LOAN.PF.3SG} < Serb. *čuditi se*_{IMPF} 'wonder'.

(31) *I [2x]   dikhla   kaj   našti   te   del   go*
      and.Sr see.PF.3SG   that   cannot COMP   give.3SG   goal.Sr
      i   još   jekhare   čhudija   e   lopta,
      and   more.Sr   once   kick.PF.3SG   the   ball.Sr
      vo   branisarda,   a   sovela.
      he   defend.LOAN.PF.3SG   but.Sr   sleep.3SG.REM
      'And (he₁) saw that (he₁) cannot score the goal and (he₁) kicked the
      ball once more, he₂ defended, although (he₂) was sleeping.' (B1_2)

(32) *Posle   pelo   katar   e   čiriklji*
      afterwards.Sr fall.PF.3SG.M from   the   bird
      o   pero   i   posle [2x]
      the   feather.Sr   and.Sr afterwards.Sr
      rušisaljo   o   ćher...
      knock down.LOAN.PF.3SG   the   house
      'Afterwards the bird's feather fell and afterwards knocked down the
      house…' (G4_3)

As it was the case with Romani verbs, there is a variation across the participants in the use of Serbian loanverbs: while describing the same event, some of the participants used the verb with a perfective marker, others without it, cf. *čitol* in (27) and *čitosarda* in (29). This suggests that a participant's personal perspective on the event plays a role in the choice of aspect. Participants can approach cartoon events from a different perspective, some of them focusing on the completion (perfectivity), others on the temporal perspective or other dimensions.

3.4.5 Borrowing Serbian prefixes

Perfectivity is reinforced by borrowing Serbian prefixes, as in an isolated example illustrated in (33). The Serbian prefix *za-* is added to the Romani perfective form *suto* to obtain the meaning 'fall asleep' analogous to the Serbian verb *zaspati* 'fall asleep_{PF}'. One might interpret this case as the need to mark the aktionsart.[26]

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[26] In the verb count, this verb was treated as a Romani verb with a perfective marker referring to a completed event.

(33) *O*   *slono*   <u>*zasuto*</u>   *po*   *go*,
      the   elephant.Sr   sleep.PF.3SG   in   goal.Sr
      a   *o*   *šimjako*   *probisarda*
      and.Sr   the   mouse   try.LOAN.PF.3SG
      te   *čhudel*   *lese*   *o*   *go*.
      COMP   kick.3SG   him   the   goal.Sr
      'The elephant fell asleep in (the) goal, and the mouse tried to kick him the goal.' (G4_2)

As has been previously observed, in the domain of adapting verbs to its lexicon, Romani uses borrowed affixes and analytic constructions for purposes of adaptation (Friedman 2001: 152). According to Friedman, this phenomenon is a matter of potential source for a shift to the development of grammaticalized aktionsart (Friedman 2001: 152).

3.5 A remark on the perfective markers

The perfective markers added to the lexical verb roots in our sample are the following:[27]

a) *-d-*, e.g. *astarda*_{PF.3SG} – *astarel* 'catch', *čalada*_{PF.3SG} – *čalavel* 'hit, kick', *ćerda*_{PF.3SG}/*ćerde*_{PF.3PL} – *ćerel* 'do, make', *ćharda*_{PF.3SG} – *ćharel* 'crush', *ikalda*_{PF.3SG} – *i(n)kalel* 'take out', *istarda*_{PF.3SG} – *istarel* 'catch', *marda*_{PF.3SG} – *marel* 'hit', *naštisarda*_{PF.3SG} – *naštisarel* 'cannot', *pharrada*_{PF.3SG} – *pharravel* 'break, tear', *perada*_{PF.3SG} – *peravel* 'ruin, knock down', *sovda*_{PF.3SG} – *sovel* 'sleep', *thoda*_{PF.3SG}/*thode*_{PF.3PL} *(pe)* – *thol (pe)* 'put' / 'place';

b) *-l-*, e.g. *arakhla*_{PF.3SG} – *arakhel* 'find', *dikhla*_{PF.3SG} – *dikhel* 'see, look', *mangla*_{PF.3SG} – *mangel* 'want', *pharrli*_{PF.3SG.F} – *pharrol* 'crack, burst', *xala*_{PF.3SG}/*xale*_{PF.3PL} – *xal* 'eat';

c) *-il-*,[28] e.g. *ačhili*_{PF.3SG.F} – *ačhel* 'stand', 'land', *asaje*_{PF.3PL} – *asal* 'laugh', *avilo*_{PF.3SG.M}/*avili*_{PF.3SG.F} – *avel* 'come', *ćerdilo*_{PF.3SG.M}/*ćerdili*_{PF.3SG.F} – *ćerdol* 'turn into', *čhudija*_{PF.3SG}/*čhudije*_{PF.3PL} – *čhudel* 'throw, kick', *ikljilo*_{PF.3SG} – *i(n)kljel* 'go out', *naštija*_{PF.3SG} – *našti* 'cannot', *phagili*_{PF.3SG.F} – *phagel* 'break', *tradije*_{PF.3PL} – *tradel* 'chase away', *vazdija*_{PF.3SG} – *vazdel* 'lift (up)', *uštilo*_{PF.3SG.M} – *uštel* 'wake up'. A single example was attested with the marker *-salj-*<*-sajl-*: the reflexive verb *irisaljo*_{PF.3SG} – *iril pe* 'return'.

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[27] The similar distribution of perfective markers is observed in Mitrovica Gurbet Romani (Leggio 2011: 88-89).
[28] This marker underwent jotization in certain cases, producing the variant *-ij-*.

The perfective forms of the monoconsonantal stems *d-* 'give' and *l-* 'take'/'begin, undertake' are formed by attaching the perfective markers through a glide insertion: *dija*$_{\text{PF.3SG}}$ − *del* 'give', 'score' and *lija*$_{\text{PF.3SG}}$ − *lel* 'take'/'begin, undertake'.

Several verbs which manifest lexical alternations are also attested, e.g. *djelo*$_{\text{PF.3SG}}$ − *džal* 'go', *djilotar*$_{\text{PF.3SG}}$ − *džaltar* 'go away, leave', *pelo*$_{\text{PF.3SG.M}}$/*peli*$_{\text{PF.3SG.F}}$ − *perel* 'fall', *suta*$_{\text{PF.3SG}}$ − *sovel* 'sleep'. These verbs are reported to have undergone an irregular stem alternation *sov-* > *sut-*, *per-* > *pel-*, or even suppletion *dža-* > *ge-l-* (Matras & Elšík 2006: 198).

In addition, the material used in the study provided an insight into one prominent Romani feature, namely the past participle agreement. Although this phenomenon goes beyond the scope of the paper, it is worth mentioning that the Gurbet Romani has retained this feature. Past participle with adjectival agreement is attested in the 3SG past tense of certain intransitive verbs, e.g. *o*$_{\text{M}}$ *slono*$_{\text{M}}$ *avilo*$_{\text{M}}$ 'the elephant came', *e*$_{\text{F}}$ *čiriklji*$_{\text{F}}$ *avili*$_{\text{F}}$ 'the bird came'; *o*$_{\text{M}}$ *iv*$_{\text{M}}$ *pelo*$_{\text{M}}$ 'the snow fell', *e*$_{\text{F}}$ *kugla*$_{\text{F}}$ *goja*$_{\text{F}}$ *peli*$_{\text{F}}$ 'the ball that fell', *e*$_{\text{F}}$ *čiriklji*$_{\text{F}}$ *ačhili*$_{\text{F}}$ 'the bird landed', *goja*$_{\text{F}}$ *kugla*$_{\text{F}}$ *phagili*$_{\text{F}}$ 'that ball broke', *goja*$_{\text{F}}$ *krugla*$_{\text{F}}$ *pharrli*$_{\text{F}}$ 'that ball cracked/burst', *o*$_{\text{M}}$ *slono*$_{\text{M}}$ *ćerdilo*$_{\text{M}}$ *po sneško beli(ć)* 'the elephant turned into the snowman', *o*$_{\text{M}}$ *slono*$_{\text{M}}$ *ćerdili*$_{\text{F}}$ *jekh lopta*$_{\text{F}}$ 'the elephant turned into a (snow)ball'. This phenomenon is reported in other present-day Romani dialects as plain adjectival-participial concord with no person markers (Matras 2001: 169).[29] In the group of intransitive verbs, this feature usually affects verbs of motion and change of state, but it is subject to dialectal variation (Matras 2001: 174).

4. Discussion

The analysis of verbal aspect in the narratives obtained from elementary-school children showed that the vast majority of verbs in the overall sample of Gurbet Romani verbs and Serbian loanverbs are marked with a perfective marker (80.6%) and that those verbs which bear perfective markers mostly refer to completed events (88.6%).

The prevalence of the verbs with perfective markers has been expected since the task required retelling the series of events from the cartoons, and the

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[29] The active participle has been preserved in the dialects of southeastern Europe, it is facultative in the transition regions between the Balkans and Central Europe, but outside the Balkan regions, in Northern and Central Northern dialects it has disappeared (Matras 2001: 173; Matras 2004: 44). This characteristic is seen as one of the linguistic features which are important for the classifications of Romani dialects (Matras 2005: 15).

perfective forms play an important role in narrative construction. The results conform to various accounts on narrative structure, showing that the perfective forms are more common and more frequent, and thus unmarked in narratives (Fludernik 1991; Holzinger 1996; Savić, Popović & Anđelković 2017), allowing a speaker to distinguish between more and less important information in storytelling and mark salient events with perfective forms (Slabakova 2002).[30]

Regarding the aspectual system, the main results of the pilot study could be summarized as follows: perfective markers are added to the verb stems to express completed events; ongoing events are typically unmarked for perfectivity; verbs unmarked for perfectivity additionally refer to completed events; Serbian loanverbs, morphologically adapted to Romani, are used to convey the aspect; and perfectivity is additionally achieved by borrowing Serbian prefixes.

In the sample of Romani verbs, the perfective (completed) events are usually marked by adding a perfective marker to the verb stem, e.g. *ćerda*$_{PF}$ – *ćerel* 'make', *dikhla*$_{PF}$ – *dikhel* 'see', *avilo*$_{PF}$ – *avel* 'come'. Ongoing actions are unmarked for perfectivity and take the form of the present tense, e.g. *phirel*$_{NON-PF}$ – *phirel* 'walk'. These results support previous claims that Romani verbs marked with a perfective marker commonly refer to completed events, while the verbs without the overt aspectual marker refer to ongoing events and make no distinction between the moment of speaking and the moment of the event (cf. Matras 2001; Matras 2004; Matras & Elšík 2006). As Matras and Elšík pointed out (2006: 82-83), even though traditional Romani grammars refer to the non-perfective present/future and the perfective past (preterite, aorist) as 'tenses', the opposition non-perfective : perfective may be regarded as aspectual.

Serbian loanverbs attribute to the lexico-aspectual meaning. The fact that the perfective markers are preserved even in loanverbs supports the idea of the conservative tense-aspect system in Romani (Matras 2001). Serbian perfective loanverbs with the adapted perfective markers (-*sard*- or -*salj*-) express completed events, e.g. *okrenisaljo*$_{PF}$ 'turn around' < Serb. *okrenuti se*$_{PF}$ 'turn around', whereas Serbian imperfective loanverbs without perfective markers express ongoing events, e.g. *čitol*$_{NON-PF}$ 'read' < Serb. *čitati*$_{IMPF}$ 'read'. In several cases, Serbian imperfective verbs are used with perfective markers to mark completed events instead of their

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[30] The perfective verbs were previously reported as prevailing in the experiments conducted with Serbian-speaking preschool-aged children and adults which used the same experimental materials (Savić, Popović & Anđelković 2017). The study showed that the achievement verbs prevailed in different age groups as they are useful for the expression of flow and dynamics of activity in a narrative.

perfective counterparts, e.g. *rušisaljo*_PF 'knock down' < Serb. *rušiti*_IMPF instead of Serb. *srušiti*_PF with a resultative meaning. Perfectivity is additionally achieved by borrowing Serbian prefixes, e.g. <u>za</u>*suto* < Serb. prefix *za-* added to the form *suto*_PF 'sleep' analogous to Serbian <u>za</u>*spati*_PF 'fall asleep' in order to mark the aktionsart.[31] The obtained data regarding loanverbs and borrowed prefixes support the empirical research which shows highly productive loanverb adaptation of Serbian verbs to Romani (Ćirković & Mirić 2018), as well as the findings on borrowed Slavic aspect prefixes (Friedman 2001; Igla 1998; Matras 2001; Kiefer 2010) and various verbal particles in Romani dialects in contact with Hungarian or German (Bodnárová & Wiedner 2015; Elšík 2007; Kiefer 2010; Matras 2001). As pointed out in these studies, the purpose of borrowing in the domain of aspect is to assign aktionsart or change the lexical meaning of a verb.

Even though the results of the study support previous theoretical claims on the aspectual system in Romani, the relation between the perfectivity and the completion of events does not always seem straightforward.

Firstly, perfective markers may be attached to a verb stem to refer to incomplete events, e.g. *asaje*_PF – *asal* 'laugh'; *čitosarda*_PF 'read' < Serb. *čitati*_IMPF 'read'. In the interpretation we follow Holzinger (1996: 118), who proposes that the perfective can be used for non-sequential events if their internal temporal contour is not important. Since the perfective is unmarked, in this case it presents an event as a whole. Holzinger's analysis is based on the verbal aspect in the Sinte Romani narrative discourse of adult speakers.[32] The alternative explanation would be that it is the temporal perspective which is being marked, rather than the aspectual one: verbs with a perfective marker specify the distinction between the moment of the event in the cartoon which happened prior to the moment of speaking (retelling).

Furthermore, the non-perfective forms refer to completed events, e.g. *čalavel*_3SG 'hit', *peravel*_NON-PF 'knock down'. The literature on the acquisition of aspect also showed that imperfective forms might be associated with completed activities in children's production, but also in children's and adults' comprehension (cf. García del Real, van Hout & Ezeizabarrena 2014; Vinnitskaya & Wexler 2001;

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[31] The prefix *za-* is also productive in the speech of the adult speakers of the Gurbet Romani (cf. example (1f)). In addition, Igla (1998) observed that the prefixes *iz-* and *za-* are frequently borrowed prefixes in the Bulgarian Romani varieties.

[32] According to perspective-based theories on grammatical aspect (see Demirdache & Uribe-Etxebarria 2005, among others), perfective forms focus on the event as a whole, while imperfective forms focus on a narrow temporal interval of the event that excludes its endpoint.

among others). In our study, the verbs lacking a TAM marker are used either: a) for narrative purposes, in the form of the narrative present, as it is common in storytelling, or b) to emphasize iterativity of certain events. The use of non-perfective forms to mark completion in narratives may indicate that the non-perfective forms are used for narrative purposes, as the narrative present tense, as it has already been suggested in the studies of adults' production (cf. Fludernik 1991, among others). It has been argued that at least in the Indo-European languages there is a common pattern of episodic narrative and that the historical/narrative present occurs at specified points within this narrative (Fludernik 1991). This pattern holds for written, literary narratives and natural, conversational narratives characteristic of the oral storytelling. The purpose of the narrative present tense is to signal "tellable events, dynamically relating them to statements in the preterite that guide the listener's evaluation of these events, marking the 'point' of the story" (Fludernik 1991: 392).[33] According to Holzinger (1996: 118), the narrative present in the Sinte Romani narratives has the same general function as perfective. Furthermore, the non-perfective forms may be used in order to emphasize the iterativity of the event, to mark telic events which show up repeatedly.

One should also bear in mind that the personal perspective on the observed events plays a role in expressing aspect, which is supported by the variability across participants in describing the same event. According to Matras, perfective encodes a subjective perspective on the event as completed, with no reference to its internal phases (Matras 2001: 165). We believe that the 'subjective perspective' can be extended to the ongoing events as well. If a speaker focuses on the activity itself, s/he might opt for a non-perfective form, whereas choosing a perfective form might indicate a focus on the endpoint of an event.

Exceptions from the main trends support the claim that in Romani "tense, aspect and mood functions do not combine in a completely transparent way" (Matras & Elšík 2006: 188), and signal that the use or the absence of perfective markers should be interpreted beyond their aspectual functions, pertaining to the domain of temporality, narrative flow and dynamics, as well as the personal perspective on the observed or experienced events. As pointed out by Holzinger (1996), the function and the use of aspectual forms cannot be analyzed in isolation, as they are just one of the means to express thematic organization of the discourse.

Finally, certain limitations of the study should be discussed. The paper is based on a pilot experimental study, which could not capture the overall tense-

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[33] For similar accounts on tense variation and switching, see Chafe (1979), Schiffrin (1981), Fleischman (1990), Ćirković (2012).

aspect system in the Gurbet variety. In order to fully grasp the system, further research is necessary. Spontaneous narratives ought to be analyzed, as they could provide the insight into the larger corpus of Romani verbs and also enable us to investigate the adaptation of loanverbs in the domain of aspect, as well as the potential borrowing of other Serbian verbal prefixes. Additionally, the study included only a small sample of elementary-school children as participants whose linguistic competence was treated as adult-like. An experimental study involving more participants is required: including preschool-age participants would allow us to explore aspect from the developmental perspective, whereas the data from adult speakers as a control group could be compared to the data obtained from elementary-school children.

5. Concluding remarks

The study examined the verbal aspect in the Gurbet variety of Romani in 7 bilingual children aged 7 to 10 from the village of Minićevo in eastern Serbia. The results obtained in the study could be used as a relevant basis for the further investigations of the aspectual system in Romani varieties. The research confirmed the previous observations that perfective markers in Romani are typically used to refer to completed events, but it also revealed some exceptions, suggesting that the choice of a verb form (perfective vs. non-perfective) might refer to the temporal dimension of an event, to its iterativity, or might serve for the narrative purposes.

The conducted experimental research and the materials used in the experiments proved to be a useful means for investigating the aspect, as they allowed to analyze the verbs against the actual events in the cartoons. In this way, the most natural setting was established for eliciting verbal aspect.

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Appendix 1

Cartoon 1
A mouse approached a large hanging bell. It looked at the bell for several seconds and knocked on it twice. It bent over and looked under the bell. Then it tried to move the bell by pushing it with its hands for several seconds. It couldn't move the bell. Then the mouse turned around and tried to move it by pushing it with its back for several seconds but nothing happened. Then the mouse turned around and looked at the bell. It tried to kick the bell and fell. An elephant came, looked at the mouse and made a noise. The mouse also made a noise and started swinging its hands. The elephant moved the bell with its trunk. The bell started moving and ringing. The mouse and the elephant stood and looked at the bell. The mouse smiled.

Cartoon 2
An elephant was standing next to a cake, putting whipped cream on the top of the cake. It finished the cake and left. A mouse came with newspapers in its hands, holding it in front of its eyes, unable to see the cake. It hit at the cake and destroyed it. The mouse looked at the cake, and then he looked at the newspapers and threw them away. Then an elephant came with a candle in its hand. The elephant looked at the cake, opened its eyes wide and made an angry noise. It threw the candle away. Then the elephant took the cake and threw it in the mouse's face. The mouse took the cake off of its face and threw it in the elephant's face. Then they threw the cake at each other twice more. Then they started eating the cake and ate it all up.

Cartoon 3
An elephant was sleeping in a football goal. A mouse came with a ball. It put the ball on the ground and kicked it towards the goal. The elephant caught the ball with its trunk, while still sleeping, and threw it back to the mouse. The mouse hit the ball with its head towards the goal and the elephant caught it again, still sleeping, and threw it back towards the mouse. The mouse kicked it again, but the elephant again defended with its trunk. The mouse stood and thought and then it smiled. It took an apple out of its pocket and threw it towards the right corner of the goal. The elephant caught the apple with its trunk. The left corner of the goal was free, and the mouse kicked the ball and scored. The mouse cheered. At the same time, the elephant woke up and stood up. It first looked at the ball, then he ate the apple, lay down and fell asleep.

Cartoon 4

The snow was falling. A mouse was walking, then stopped and started looking in front of itself. A large snowball rolled down the hill and stopped in front of the mouse. The mouse jumped backwards. The snowball started moving. The mouse first moved backward and then around the moving snowball. The snowball hit the mouse in its bottom, started chasing it and the mouse ran from the snowball. The mouse turned its head around to look back at the snowball, tripped on a small stone and fell. The snowball hit the same stone and burst. An elephant appeared from the snowball. The mouse and the elephant looked at each other and smiled. The elephant shook the off from its body. The mouse took the snow from the ground and threw it at the elephant, who made a noise and sat down.

Cartoon 5

An elephant and a mouse were making a house from wooden objects such as cubes. When they put the last piece on the top of the house as the roof, a bird flew into the room, landed on the top of the house and knocked it down. Then the bird landed on a wooden shelf on the wall. It looked down at the mouse and the elephant and they looked at the bird. The mouse and the elephant started making the house again piece by piece and the bird watched them. Before they finished, the bird started flying and the house knocked down. The elephant yelled at it and the mouse tried to chase the bird away. The bird covered its eyes with its wings. The elephant and the mouse started building the house again. When they finished it, they made a step backward, looked at the house, then looked at the bird, who was looking at the house. A feather fell on the top of the house and knocked it down. The bird covered its eyes with its wings. The elephant and the mouse started laughing.

Appendix 2

The table presents the verbs excerpted for the purpose of this paper. First, the Romani verbs are given, followed by Serbian loanverbs, in alphabetical order. For each verb type, the lemma and its meaning are given, followed by the frequency of tokens in the overall sample and the number of participants who used the verb type. In the part regarding Serbian loanverbs, a star next to a lemma signifies that the lemma has not been previously attested in the relevant literature. The question mark signifies an unknown lemma.

ROMANI VERBS				
Verb type	Lemma (3SG)	Meaning	Freq of tokens	N of participants
ačhel₃SG	ačhel	'stand', 'stop', 'land'	2	1
ačhiliPF.3SG.F			2	1
arakhlaPF.3SG	arakhel	'find'	1	1
asan₃PL	asal	'laugh'	2	2
asajePF.3PL			1	1
astarda₃SG.PF	astarel	'catch'	1	1
avel₃SG	avel	'come'	3	2
aviloPF.3SG.M			2	2
aviliPF.3SG.F			19	6
crdel₃SG	crdel	'pull'	1	1
čalavel₃SG	čalavel	'hit', 'kick'	1	1
čaladaPF.3SG			4	3
čhudel₃SG	čhudel	'throw', 'kick'	6	4
čhudijaPF.3SG			8	4
čhudijePF.3PL			1	1
ćeren₃PL	ćerel	'do', 'make'	1	1
ćerdaPF.3SG			4	3
ćerdePF.3PL			8	4
ćerdiloPF.3SG.M	ćerdol	'turn into'	1	1
ćerdiliPF.3SG.F			1	1
ćhardaPF.3SG	ćharel	'crush'	1	1
ćhelen₃PL	ćhelel	'play'	1	1

del₃ₛ₉	del	'give' / 'score'	5	4
dija_PF.3SG			5	5
dikhel₃ₛ₉	dikhel	'see', 'look'	2	2
dikhla_PF.3SG			3	3
džal₃ₛ₉	džal	'go'	1	1
djelo_PF.3SG			2	1
djilotar_PF.3SG	džaltar	'go away', 'leave'	1	1
ikalda_PF.3SG	i(n)kalel	'take out'	1	1
ikljel₃ₛ₉	i(n)kljel	'go out'	1	1
ikljilo_PF.3SG			1	1
irisaljo_PF.3SG	iril pe	'return'	1	1
istarda_PF.3SG	istarel	'catch'	4	3
lel₃ₛ₉	lel	'take', 'begin, undertake'	3	2
lija_PF.3SG			10	5
lije_PF.3PL			2	2
mangel₃ₛ₉	mangel	'want'	1	1
mangla_PF.3SG			3	1
marda_PF.3SG	marel	'hit', 'beat'	1	1
našti	našti	'cannot'	4	3
naštija_PF.3SG			3	2
naštisarda_PF.3SG	naštisarel	'cannot'	4	2
perel₃ₛ₉	perel	'fall'	1	1
pelo_PF.3SG.M			4	4
peli_PF.3SG.F			3	1
peravel₃ₛ₉	peravel	'knock down', 'ruin'	3	1
perada_PF.3SG			2	1
phagel₃ₛ₉	phagel	'break'	1	1
phagili_PF.3SG.F			1	1
pharrada_PF.3SG	pharravel	'break', 'tear'	1	1
pharrli_PF.3SG.F	pharrol	'crack', 'burst'	1	1
phirel₃ₛ₉	phirel	'walk'	2	1
sasa₃ₛ₉.REM	si	'be'	8	4
si le₃ₛ₉.M	si le	'have'	1	1

sovel$_{3SG}$			2	2
sovda$_{PF.3SG}$	sovel	'sleep'	2	2
sovela$_{3SG.REM}$			1	1
suta$_{PF.3SG}$			1	1
thol$_{3SG}$			5	3
thoda$_{PF.3SG}$	thol (pe)	'put', 'place'	3	2
thode$_{PF.3PL}$			2	1
traden$_{3PL}$	tradel	'chase away'	1	1
tradije$_{PF.3PL}$			1	1
uštilo$_{PF.3SG.M}$	uštel	'wake up'	3	1
vazdija$_{PF.3SG}$	vazdel	'lift (up)'	1	1
xala$_{PF.3SG}$	xal	'eat'	1	1
xale$_{PF.3PL}$			1	1
zasuto$_{PF.3SG}$	zasovel?	'fall asleep'	1	1

SERBIAN LOANVERBS

Verb type	Lemma (3SG)	Meaning	Freq of tokens	N of participants
branisarda$_{PF.3SG}$	branil*	'defend'	2	1
crtosarda$_{PF.3SG}$	crtol	'draw', 'paint'	1	1
čitol$_{3SG}$	čitol	'read'	2	2
čitosarda$_{PF.3SG}$			1	1
čudisaljo$_{PF.3SG}$	čudil*	'wonder'	1	1
gadjisarde pe$_{PF.3PL}$	gadjil pe*	'shoot', 'throw'	1	1
guril$_{3SG}$	guril*	'push'	1	1
gurisarda$_{PF.3SG}$			5	4
krenisarda$_{PF.3SG}$	krenil*	'set off'	1	1
nervirisarda$_{PF.3SG}$	nerviril*	'to be annoyed'	1	1
okrenisaljo$_{PF.3SG}$	okrenil*	'turn around'	1	1
pomerisaljo$_{PF.3SG}$	pomeril*	'move'	1	1
pomožisarda$_{PF.3SG}$	pomožil	'help'	1	1
probisarda$_{PF.3SG}$	probil*	'try'	4	2
razmazisarda$_{PF.3SG}$	razmazil*	'spread'	1	1
rušisaljo$_{PF.3SG}$	rušil	'knock down', 'ruin'	1	1

sapletisaljo_{PF.3SG}	sapletil (pe)*	'trip'	1	1
šutiril_{3SG}	šutiril*	'kick'	2	2
šutirisarda_{PF.3SG}			1	1
uhvatil_{3SG}	uhvatil	'catch'	1	1
zvonil_{3SG}	zvonil	'ring'	1	1