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Transitivity in Erzya: second language speakers in a grammatical focus

Abstract In Erzya, transitivity is indexed both in the verb conjugation and the inflection of the object. The degree of definiteness and object case alternate, while the verb displays the cross-reference of the person and number of both the subject and object. This morphologically complex transitivity marking system is a major challenge for speakers of Erzya as a second language.

The article examines the variation of Erzya transitive clauses in light of data drawn from interviews with non-native Erzya speakers who have a Slavic or Turkic language as their first language. During the HALS fieldwork in Dubenskiy district at the Republic of Mordovia in August 2013, a survey test was conducted with 68 transitive clauses representing patterns of both high and low transitivity. The answers of the Erzya second language speakers demonstrated that they had adopted Erzya transitivity as a system involving both nominal and verbal inflection. However, the marking of transitivity varied between individual speakers regardless of their background. Although the interviewed non-native Erzya speakers were very fluent, there was a clear contrast between the answers of native and non-native speakers.

1. Introduction

Although transitivity is one of the most basic syntactic and semantic features of the world's languages, and has been examined from multiple angles in the literature (Hopper & Thompson 1980, 1982, Kittilä 2002a, 2002b, Naess 2007), it has been less frequently mentioned as a category influenced by language contact. The marking of transitivity in a given language may involve both nominal and verbal inflection.

In Erzya, an absolutive non-ergative language, transitivity is morphologically marked both in the conjugation of the verb and the inflection of the object, which obey an exceptionally complex set of morphosyntactic rules (Aranovich 2007, Keresztes 1999). It combines the alternation of the case of object, characteristic of the other western Uralic languages, Saamic and Finnic (Denison 1957, Hakulinen & al. 2004: 881–899, Kont 1963, Wickman 1955: 11–55, Erelt 2003: 96–97), with the cross-reference of the person and number of both the subject and object in verbal inflection, characteristic of eastern Uralic (Honti 1998–1999, Siegl 2013: 249–255, Trosterud 2006: 248–303, Virtanen 2013).

Nominal paradigms marking transitivity tend to avoid syncretism, whereas verbal paradigms include portmanteau suffixes that agree with the person and number of the subject and object, in an instance of complex four-level agreement unique to the Uralic language family, as noted by Trosterud (2006: 246). However, individual forms other than the third person singular (as object) often overlap with one another, which increases their morphosyntactic cumulation (Keresztes 1999, Trosterud 2006). The predicate *sajimiž* (1), for instance, can be translated in six different ways: (a) 'you (many) took me', (b) 'they took me', (c) 'you (one) took us', (d) '(s)he took us', (e) 'you (many) took us' and (f) 'they took us'.

- (1) *děšateva oktábrá te-sta saj-i-miž*
tenth October here-ELA take-PST-3PL/1SG
'They took me/us on the tenth of October.' (Povodimovo 2013)

The indefinite or definite object may occur in three different cases: nominative, as in *jarsamopel'* (2); genitive, as in *inžet'neń* (3); and partitive, as in *prákado* (4) (frequently labeled as ablative).

- (2) *Vežava-ś anoksta-ś lamo jarsamopel'.*
[youngest] hostess-DEF prepare-PST.3SG much food
'The [youngest] hostess prepared a lot of food.' (ÈK 82)
- (3) *Siń čokšne-ń pert' kavańa-sť inže-t'ne-ń.*
they evening-GEN around entertain-PST.3PL guest-PL-DEF-GEN
'They entertained the guests the whole evening.' (ÈK 83)
- (4) *Baba-ś... kavań-i-že topo-ń práka-do.*
grandmother-DEF entertain-PST-3SG/3SG curd-GEN pie-PRT
'The grandmother served with cheesecake.' (ÈK 84)

Recently, transitivity in Uralic has been examined in terms of differential object marking (Iemmolo & Klumpp 2014 (see also for further literature), Virtanen 2013, 2014). The structural variation in the transitive clauses of languages such as Erzya and Moksha, that display both a special objective conjugation of verbs and a case alternation of the object, is more than a simple interplay between the verb and the object. Dalrymple and Nikolaeva (2011) suggest that information structure and topicality are more intensively involved in the semantics of the transitive clause than assumed in previous studies. Typologically, object marking is commonly driven by animacy, definiteness/identifiability, and specificity (Iemmolo & Klumpp 2014: 271, Sinnemäki 2014). The importance of verbal semantics and verb classes to the discussion of object marking has also been raised (Iemmolo & Klumpp 2014: 273–274, Naess 2003).

In Erzya and Moksha, the two Mordvinic languages, the object is primarily marked for case, which combines with number, possession and definiteness. Unlike in all other Uralic languages, definiteness is an inflectional category and, along with possessive suffixes, determines specific referential relations in a clause. The system of marked identifiable referents and diverse objects consists of a wide set of alternatives.

In contemporary colloquial Erzya, code-switching and shifts to Russian dominate at various levels. There are several domains that trigger the use of Russian instead of Erzya, in which bilingualism and language shift are widespread. However, there is no indication of direct Russian influence on the way Erzya marks transitivity.

Object property		Verb property	
Case	Combinable property	Objective conjugation	Combinable property
	Number	Person and number of subject	
	Definiteness	Person and number of object	
	Possession		Tense Mood Negation
		Subjective conjugation	
		Person and number of subject	
			Tense Mood Negation
		Non-finite verbs	
			Negation

Table 1. Inflectional marking of transitivity in Erzya.

Given that a verb inflected in the objective conjugation may mark the person and number of both the subject and the object, pronominal subjects and objects are often displayed as zero-marked anaphoric constituents (Kangastus 2012, Keresztes 1999). Sentences in Erzya that display non-pronominal subjects and objects show the widest variation in their ways of indexing transitivity.

Every native speaker has the skill of combining and discerning different degrees of transitivity in spoken Erzya by means of selecting mutually combinable properties from the “transitivity kit” of Table 1.

Example (5) is drawn from an interview with a native Erzya speaker at Povodimovo during a field trip in August 2013¹. Units involved in the indexing of transitivity are marked with bold, such as the predicate *sodasə́n* in (5c) and the object *ńetńeń* in (5f). The length of the example emphasises their frequency in colloquial language.

1. The interview was transcribed by Nina Agafonova following the encoding tradition of native Erzya researchers at the University of Saransk. Here, the text is presented in a considerably simplified way.

- (5a) *s-it', sínć vybirajut, a lįjasta meť-et'.*
come-3PL themselves select.3PL but otherwise say-3PL
'They choose [the books] themselves, but sometimes they say.'
- (b) “*dajka moń-eń mąji-jak interėsnoj*”.
give I-DAT something-ENCL interesting
'Give me something interesting.'
- (c) *a mon soda-sə́n soderžanįja-st bolšestvo i annatacija-st*
but I know-1SG/3PL content-3PL majority and annotation-3PL
'But I know the contents of most [books] and.'
- (d) *lov-sə́n i isťaka. Kuźma Abramovə-ń uš narašvat,*
read-1SG/3PL and so [K.A.]-GEN already top.hit
Praskurįnə-ń mąjľä
[P.]-GEN after
'I read the notes and so on. Kuz'ma Abramov's [books]
were already hits, afterwards Proskurin.'
- (e) *ul'-ńe-st' vąšike-ń papulärnoj-t', Rasputįnə-ń vąšike-ń.*
be-FREQ-PST.3PL all-GEN popular-PL [R.]-GEN all-GEN
'There were all kind of popular [books], Rasputin's all.'
- (f) *ńe-tńe-ń večke-le-ź, siń večke-le-ź ńe-t'*
they-PL.DEF-GEN love-PST-3PL/3PL they love-PST-3PL/3PL those-PL
'The people loved them, they loved those.'
- (g) *vadřa kńiga-t-ńe-ń. ńe-t' Źurbini vąšä Kočetev*
beautiful book-PL-DEF-GEN those-PL [Ž.] all [K.]
ńeka avtəřə-ś.
presumably author-DEF
'Beautiful books. Those Zhurbini and all,
Kochetev is presumably the author.'
- (h) *mon vąšä sodə-le-ń, pek sodə-le-ń, vąšäke-ń sodə-le-ń,*
I all know-PST-1SG very know-PST-1SG all-GEN know-PST-1SG
'I used to know everything, I knew very well, I knew all.'
- (i) *avtor-t-nə-ń vąšäke-ń*
author-PL-DEF-GEN all-GEN
'any authors'

(Povodimovo 2013)

Transitivity is manifested in multiple ways in this sample. Several verbs are conjugated in the objective conjugation, and there is a clear interplay between the definite object and the verb that indicates

the person and number of both the subject and the object. The focused pronominal subject *mon* is overtly manifested in (5c). The verb *soda-səń* ‘I know (them)’ agrees with the first person singular subject and third person plural object *soderžaniĵast* ‘their content’. In (5f) the verb *večkelež* ‘(they) loved (them)’ agrees with a zero-anaphoric subject and the definite plural object *netneń* ‘these’. However, a transitive verb may occur in the subjective conjugation as well, lacking formal agreement; but syntactically still interacting with the indefinite object as in *vásä soda-le-ń* ‘I used to know all’ (5h).

More generally speaking, the examples (5c, 5f) demonstrate higher transitivity compared to (5h), which exemplifies lower transitivity. There are many other aspects, such as the categories listed in Table 1 and the semantic properties of words involved, that have to be taken into account in the analysis of individual clauses. (For further discussion, see Grünthal (2008) and Keresztes (1999)).

This kind of system is a major challenge for a second language speaker attempting to adopt communication skills in an Erzya-speaking society. Individual forms characteristic of transitive clauses feature repeatedly in the language of fluent non-native speakers as shown in (6).

- (6a) ...tožä *fabrika-sə robotä, Aktäbärskej-sə. uniwersitetä-n-zə*
 ...also factory-INE work.3SG [A.]-INE university-GEN-3SG
präd-i-že,
 finish-PST-3SG/3SG
- (b) *mäjlä liš-ńe-s robotä... veterenar vrače-ks, — —*
 after leave-FRE-PST.3SG work veterinary doctor-TRA
- (c) *ńej uš vara šemnacät let to-sə robotä. — —*
 now already ENCL seventeen year there-INE work.3SG
- (d) [N.N.], *kožika-za, tože präd-i-ndžä, kafta uniwersitet-skaj*
 [N.N.] wife-3SG also finish-PST-3SG/3PL two university-ADJ
präd-š,
 finish-PST.3SG
 ‘[N.N.] also works in a factory, at Oktyabrskiy. (S)he graduated from the university. Later ((s)he) went to work as a veterinary doctor. Now (s)he has already been working for seventeen years. His wife graduated from the university as well, she completed two university grades.’
 (Kabaev 2013)

The informant uses possessive suffixes fluently, as in the object *uniwersitetänzə* ‘her/his university’ in (6a), applying a verb in the objective conjugation *prädize* ‘((s)he) finished (it)’ that agrees with the third person singular subject and third person singular object. At the end of the sample (6d), the informant demonstrates with *prädindžä* ‘(s)he finished (them)’ that there is a clear difference between a singular and plural third person object, which has to be indicated with the verb. However, this statement is followed by a completing sentence *kafta uniwersiteckaj präd-š* ‘(s)he finished two universities’, a self-repair that has an elliptic determiner, the adjective derivation *uniwersiteckaj* that lacks a syntactic head.

In the current paper, we shall examine the variation of Erzya transitive clause in the light of data drawn from interviews with second language speakers (ESL). In contemporary language, the alternation of the mentioned parameters of transitivity does not show any simplification in the speech of native Erzya speakers (NES) despite of heavy foreign interference. Our main hypothesis is that Erzya second-language speakers who have a Slavic or Turkic language as their first language inconsistently use those elements of the Erzya transitive clause in which the morphosyntactic simplification eventually begins.

We assume that the multiple marking of transitivity in Erzya and morphologically complex inflectional forms in both nominal and verbal paradigms are a major challenge for speakers of Erzya as a second language. Above, it was shown that the degree of transitivity influences the inflection of the object and verb. In principle, simple transitive clauses indicating low transitivity decrease morphological complexity. High transitivity, in turn, often triggers more complex forms such as the definite genitive and objective conjugation of verbs (cf. Grünthal 2008, Koljadenkov 1954: 133, 1959: 202). However, these two extremes cover several other combinations and, consequently, it is possible to mark transitivity in a number of ways.

Given that both the object and verb are marked, we assume that a non-native speaker could eventually find a simplified way of encoding transitivity. During the HALS field trip, this was tested with a questionnaire. Both object marking and verbal inflection were observed to assess the degree to which ESL respondents could apply

their core properties. Initially, before talking to any of the respondents, the test proposed the following hypotheses:

- (i) In the speech of ESL, the inflection of both the object and verb is simplified in one way or another, although speakers tend to use them to mark transitivity.
- (ii) In the speech of ESL, cross-reference of the person in verbal inflection decreases, which in turn increases the need to use pronouns.

2. Data and methods

During the HALS fieldwork in Dubenskiy district at the Republic of Mordovia in August 2013, a survey test was made on 68 transitive clauses representing patterns of both high and low transitivity. The test clauses were originally selected from the descriptive Finnish grammar (Hakulinen & al. 2004), slightly modified for these purposes. The informants were asked to translate the sentences orally from Russian into Erzya. In principle, such a method runs an increased risk of the interference of the source language. Translating test clauses does not, for instance, correspond to the claim of the naturalness of primary data applied in language description and documentary linguistics (Himmelmann 1998) and diverges considerably from normal speech, as illustrated in (1–2).

However, in the given case study, the main aim is not to document the typology of transitivity in Erzya, but the adoption of a complex way of indexing transitivity by non-native speakers. Given that one would need almost an unlimited number hours of conversational speech to achieve examples of various transitive constructions and inflectional patterns, there would have been insurmountable practical limits to use a linguistically rigorous interviewing technique based on narrative data. In fact, those characteristics that are seen in example (5) representing contemporary colloquial Erzya are unambiguously represented in the test clauses as well.

Eighteen informants who could easily speak Erzya and Russian in parallel responded to the questionnaire. Thirteen informants were native Erzya speakers (NES) and five had learned colloquial Erzya as a second language (ESL) in their local environments. Only one of them had used written texts in learning the language. Three of the ESL informants spoke a Slavic language, either Russian or Ukrainian, as their first language, whereas two were native speakers of Chuvash, a Turkic language. In both cases the native tongue of the informants displays regular object marking in transitive clauses, whereas neither Slavic nor Turkic languages have a special objective conjugation.

In Russian, aspect plays a crucial role in grammar and involves both the verbal and adverbial constituents. In the questionnaire, there were some Russian sentences and verb pairs such as *ja porezal* 'I cut [PST]': *ja rezal* 'I was cutting' that exhibited aspect in terms of prefix alternation. This, however, does not have a one-to-one correspondence in Erzya, which does not have grammatical aspect. The ESL respondents' answers to the questionnaire did not show any unambiguous influence of the Russian aspect system. More generally speaking, the Erzya verb uses derivation to distinguish between continuity and discontinuity, which in Russian are conveyed by aspect marking. Russian test clauses that displayed a morphological aspect marker, however, were only occasionally reflected in the Erzya responses.

The competence of Erzya of individual speakers varied somewhat, but everyone was very fluent by all criteria at a communicative level, as the analysis of the examples below shows. All used Erzya regularly in their everyday life. Nevertheless, occasionally many of the informants had to reconsider some of the translations they gave during separate discussions. The test situation was based on face-to-face interviews and initiated by a brief presentation of the aims of the project and the personal background of the informant. The interviewer read the test sentence in Russian, the sociolinguistically dominant language (which all ESL and NES respondents used regularly), and the informant was requested to translate it into Erzya. The test sentence was repeated as many times as the informant wished. Otherwise, only Erzya was used in the test situation as a medium of communication.

Given that several native Erzya speakers responded to the same questionnaire in four different villages, the answers of the ESL respondents can be compared to those of NES. Generally speaking, Russian – which was the metalanguage of the questionnaire – did not directly influence the use of basic properties of the object and verb. However, there are some test clauses in which the language of the test clause is reflected in the answer. The use of focused pronouns is the most obvious example. In example (7), for instance, the sample sentence (7a) in Russian² includes the pronominal subject *ja* ‘I’. The NES respondents regularly had a corresponding sentence-initial pronominal subject (7b), whereas one ESL respondent used a zero-anaphoric subject (7c) diverging from the basic pattern of the NES and other ESL respondents. Unlike in Russian, a pronominal object is not obligatory in Erzya because the verb involves the reference to the person and number of the object. However, if the object is a focused pronoun as *sonze* ‘him/her’, it is overtly manifested, as the answers of both NES and ESL respondents shows.

- (7a) Ja vstreti-l ego. (b) *Mon vast-i-ja sonze.*
I meet-PST.M he.ACC I meet-PST-1SG/3SG (s)he-3SG
‘I met him.’
- (c) *Son-ze karčo vast-i-ja.*
(s)he-3SG against meet-PST-1SG/3SG

Likewise, an object pronoun is regular in the answers of both NES and ESL respondents. In general, unlike Russian (8a), an object pronoun is not obligatory in Erzya because the reference to the possessor may be indicated by a possessive suffix as in *bibliotekasonzo* (8b) (a response of a NES). In the answers of NES speakers, the verb *vetimim* ‘(s)he took me’ was always inflected in the objective conjugation agreeing with the third person singular subject and first person singular object. As a rule, the pronominal object was omitted, whereas the possessive pronoun *svoju* ‘her’ of Russian was encountered with a focused possessive pronoun *ešenje* (8c).

2. In the description of the data, the Russian test sentences are always presented first and indexed with a number and the letter *a* as 3a, 4a, 5a, etc. Glossed examples in Erzya are italicized, while those in Russian are not. In the text, special reference is made to distinguish between the answers of native Erzya speakers (NES) and Erzya second language (ESL) respondents.

- (8a) Vera prive-la menja v svo-ju bibliotek-u.
Vera.NOM bring-PST.FI.ACC in her-ACC library-ACC
‘Vera took me to her library.’
- (b) *Vera vet-i-mim biblioteka-so-nzo.*
Vera bring-PST-3SG/1SG library-ILL-3SG
- (c) *Vera vet-i-mim eše-n-ze biblioteka-v.*
Vera bring-PST-3SG/1SG own-GEN-3SG library-LAT

The answers of ESL included more variation. Three out of five used the correct verb form *vetimim* with (8d) or without (8e) the object pronoun, whereas one replaced the verb with the causative-reflexive derivative *sovavtovi* ‘brings in’, in the present tense instead of the past tense, and converted the objective conjugation to subjective (8f), thus not displaying this category, which in general is important for marking transitivity.

- (d) *Vera vet-i-mim eše-n-ze biblioteka-s.*
Vera bring-PST-3SG/1SG own-GEN-3SG library-ILL
- (e) *Vera vet-i-mim biblioteka-v.*
Vera bring-PST-3SG/1SG library-LAT
- (f) *Vera sova-v-to-v-i moñ ese-n-ze biblioteka-s.*
Vera bring.in-REFL-CAUS-REFL-3SG I.GEN own-GEN-3SG library-LAT

More generally speaking, in many cases the answers of ESL respondents did not diverge strikingly from those of NES respondents but were often almost identical, most notably in simple transitive clauses. The biggest differences occurred in complex transitive sentences including multiple referential relations such as the possessive and other adverbials in addition to the subject, object and verb.

We shall first proceed with the discussion of the mechanisms of object marking (section 3.1), the use of four-argument verbal inflection (section 3.2) and non-finite transitive clauses (section 3.3). The relationship between different strategies for marking transitivity and sentences that involve a manifold argument structure will be more closely elaborated in section 4.

3. Multiple indexing of transitivity

3.1. Object marking

The object is inflected in case, number, definiteness and possibly person, if the object has a possessor. The boundaries between these morphemes are mainly identifiable, but syncretism occurs occasionally in morphologically cumulative forms. As mentioned, the choice of the case of the object depends on the degree of transitivity but NES respondents also display some morpheme alternation between literary Erzya as *kinont'* in (9b) and areal variants as *kinost'* in (9c).

- (9a) Ja vide-l èto kino.
I see-PST.M this film
'I saw this film.'
- (b) Mon *ne-i-ja* té *kino-ń-t'*.
I see-PST-1SG/3SG this film-GEN-DEF
- (c) Mon *ne-i-ja* té *kino-št'*.
I see-PST-1SG/3SG this film-GEN.DEF

In general, the ESL informants had a very good command of the Erzya case system, and in simple transitive clauses the case of object was usually identical with NES, as in (9d). However, as indicated in (9e–f), either the verb *nejin* in (9e) or the object *kinoś* in (9f) easily contradicts the morphosyntactic main rule according to which verbal inflection in objective conjugation forms must co-occur with definite objects, as is seen in the examples of NES. The object displays definiteness, as expected, but in the given example, the definite nominative suffix *-s* encodes both case and definiteness instead of the expected definite genitive suffix *-nt'*. The demonstrative pronoun *té* 'this' increases the deictic definiteness of the noun phrase 'this film', as it co-occurs with the definiteness suffix.

- (d) Mon *ne-i-ja* té *kino-ń-t'*.
I see-PST-1SG/3SG this film-GEN-DEF
- (e) Mon *nej-i-ń* té *kino-ń-t'*.
I see-PST-1SG this film-GEN-DEF
- (f) Mon *ne-i-ja* té *kino-ś*.
I see-PST-1SG/3SG this film-DEF

In addition to case, the answers of ESL speakers show the importance of definiteness in Erzya transitive clauses. Animacy, which (according to Sinnemäki's (2014) sample of 744 languages) affects case selection in roughly 30% of languages, is not involved in the variation of the case of the object in Erzya.

3.1.1. Indefinite object

The indefinite object in Erzya is in the nominative or partitive³ case as a rule, but only exceptionally in the genitive; for instance, if the object is a demonstrative pronoun or a proper noun (Grünthal 2008). However, the answers of both NES and ESL respondents included quite a lot of variation. The most unambiguous indication of indefiniteness is the subjective conjugation form of the verb that has no reference to the object. Furthermore, the NES respondents regularly used an object in the indefinite nominative (10b). In one of the answers of the NES respondents, the object occurred unexpectedly in the definite genitive (10c), a pattern that was repeated by one ESL speaker as well.

- (10a) Mal'čik tašči-t lodk-u. (b) *Čori-ńe-ś ušk-i venč*.
boy pull-3SG boat-ACC boy-DIM-DEF pull-3SG boat
'A boy is pulling a boat.'
- (c) *Čori-ńe-ś ušk-i venče-ń-t'*.
boy-DIM-DEF pull-3SG boat-GEN-DEF

A test sentence with an accusative object in Russian, which was regularly met with the indefinite nominative in the vast majority of NES answers, led to more variation in the answers of ESL respondents. In one answer, the object had the definite nominative suffix *-s* here as well (10d); two respondents used a different verb such as *kandoms* 'carry; take' (10e) instead of *uskoms* 'take, drive, ride', and one used the nominative plural instead of singular (10f).

3. In this article we apply the term "partitive" following the grammatical descriptions of the Finnic languages. Traditionally, grammars of Erzya more often describe it as the ablative, although it is probably more typically used for core grammatical relations than for indicating spatial relations. However, the most recent Erzya grammar, for instance, mentions object marking as the first function of the ablative (EK 84).

- (d) *Ćora-ńe ušk-i lodka-ś.* (f) *Ćora ušk-i lodka-t.*
 boy-DIM pull-3SG boat-DEF boy pull-3SG boat-PL
- (e) *Ćora-ńe-ś kand-i venč.*
 boy-DIM-DEF carry-3SG boat

The partitive is less frequent in comparison to the nominative and the genitive, but nevertheless occurs regularly in certain transitive clauses. Complements of certain processual verbs such as *jarsams* ‘eat’ typically display the partitive. The more limited use suggests that actually, the occurrence of the partitive could be accounted for as case government of individual verbs instead of a syntactically and semantically ruled case of object.

Example (11a) sought to test to what extent other properties of the object are attached to the partitive. The answers of NES respondents were very uniform, as all of them used an indefinite partitive *kašado* and the verb *jaršiń* (11b) lacking any reference to the object. Most of the respondents emphasized the subject *telefonoś* ‘the telephone’ as the topical constituent by using the definite nominative suffix *-ś*. One of the respondents added a possessive suffix adding a possessive relation that, as well as possession, assigns definiteness (11c).

- (11a) Ja e-l kaš-u, kogda zazvoni-l telefon.
 I eat-PST.M porridge-ACC when ring-PST.M telephone
 ‘I was eating porridge when the telephone rang.’
- (b) *Mon jarś-i-ń kaša-do, žardo zvońa-ś telefono-ś.*
 I eat-PST-1SG porridge-PRT when ring-PST.3SG telephone-DEF
- (c) *Jarś-i-ń kaša-do, žardo zvońa-ś telefono-nok.*
 eat-PST-1SG porridge-PRT when ring-PST.3SG telephone-1PL

The partitive case government of the verb *jarsams* is indicated in most of the ESL answers as well. However, despite a simple lexically derived rule, there was a lot of variation in the form of the object. Two of the respondents had the standard form of the indefinite partitive object. One respondent, in general a very fluent speaker, dropped the final vowel of *kašad*, which shows a confused perception of the case at issue and drops the final vowel of the suffix *-do* (11d). Another added a possessive suffix to the object *kašadon* (11e), a feature which more generally speaking often corresponds to definiteness. Finally, one of

the ESL respondents inflected the word *kaša* : *kašu* ‘porridge’ according to Russian morphology and thus, by displaying code-switching, avoided the selection of the correct form of the object in Erzya (11f).

- (d) *Mon jarć-i-ń kaša-d, ŋardo zvońa-ś telefon.*
 I eat-PST-1SG porridge-PRT when ring-PST.3SG telephone
- (e) *Mon por-i-ń kaša-do-n, žardo zvońa-ś telefono-ś.*
 I eat-PST-1SG porridge-PRT-1SG when ring-PST.3SG telephone-DEF
- (f) *Tě-dě kona zvońa-ś telefon jaršiń kašu.*
 this-PRT which ring-PST.3SG telephone eat-PST-1SG [porridge-ACC]

Given that an indefinite noun is, in principle, less marked than a definite noun, one would assume that indefinite objects are easier for non-native speakers than definite ones. However, in the light of examples (10–11), this is only partly true. Some of the ESL speakers gave the same answers as the NES respondents but quite often there was some sort of confusion in the morphological indexing of objects in this type of transitive clause.

3.1.2. Definite object

Above, it was claimed that, similarly to NES respondents, the ESL speakers seek to index the definiteness of the object (see example 9). In Russian, definiteness is not obligatorily overtly manifested, and instead of the case of the object, the aspect of the prefixal verb *posmotrel* ‘watched’ is decisive, whereas there is no direct indication of the definiteness or indefiniteness of the object *kino* (12a). The NES answers suggest that the object is perceived as a definite one. Furthermore, the definite object *kinont’* ~ *kinost’* ‘the film’ triggers the objective conjugation of the verb *vanija* ‘I saw (it)’ (12b–c).

- (12a) Ja posmotre-l kino do konc-a.
 I watch-PST.M film until end-GEN
 ‘I watched the film till the end.’
- (b) *Mon van-i-ja kino-ń-t’ pe-dě pe-s.*
 I watch-PST-1SG/3SG film-GEN-DEF end-PRT end-ILL
- (c) *Mon van-i-ja kino-ś-t’ do konc-a.*
 I watch-PST-1SG/3SG film-GEN-DEF until end-GEN

In this example, the verb has two determiners: the object and the adverbial. This increases the number of those variables to which ESL informants reacted in their responses. Only one of five used a definite genitive object *kinont'* 'of the film' in this example, whereas in all other answers, definiteness was indexed as the definite nominative *kinoš* 'the film' instead of genitive (12d). One respondent used a focused deictic pronoun and a subjective conjugation form of the verb *vaniñ* 'I saw' instead of *vanija* (12e).

- (d) *Mon van-i-ja kino-š prado-ma vidš.*
I watch-PST-1SG/3SG film-DEF end-INF until
- (e) *Mon van-i-ñ té filme-š do konc-a.*
I watch-PST-1SG this film-DEF until end-GEN

3.2. Four-argument verb conjugation of ESL

One of the basic differences between the verb of Russian and Erzya is that in Russian, verbal aspect and the alternation of verb stem and prefixes form the core of the sentence structure, whereas in Erzya, transitivity is frequently marked with the four-argument objective conjugation. The systems are definitely distinct, despite a massive influx of Russian vocabulary; there is no indication of Russian influence in the use of the Erzya objective conjugation.

The Erzya objective conjugation is based on a distinct paradigm that, in addition to tense and mood, marks the person and number of both the subject and the object. However, the most complete set of distinct forms is attested when the object is in the third person singular. In all other cases, there is ample syncretism and paradigmatic overlapping that increases the importance of contextual anaphors. For more detailed description of the object conjugation, see (Bartens 1999: 125–127, 175–176, ÈK 2000: 173–203, GMdJa 1962: 304–320, Keresztes 1999, Koljadenkov 1954: 133–193, Trosterud 2006: 248–303).

The interplay between the object conjugation and the definite genitive object was briefly introduced in examples (9, 12), which suggest that, in principle, the ESL speakers are well informed about the use of both categories. However, if there are more arguments as in (12) the risk of deviating from of the morphosyntactic rules characteristic of Erzya transitive clauses becomes higher.

3.2.1. Focused pronoun and object conjugation

Examples (13b, 14) show that ESL speakers master the verbal inflection rules and objective conjugation like the NES respondents, if the object is a focused pronoun. In a practical speech situation, a pronominal object is often lacking, if it is not focused. One of five ESL informants had difficulties with the objective conjugation forms and repeatedly used a different object reference, as in *ledñisiž* '(they) shoot (them/him/her)' (14d), which was not mentioned in the sentence of the questionnaire. The selected form marks the 3PL subject, whereas the object is either 3SG or 3PL. However, in (14), most other ESL informants simplified the inflection by using a consonant stem of the verb *led'-tadiž*; as evidenced by NES respondents, this has a stable vowel stem *ledi-tadiž* (14b). The four-agreement suffix *-tadiž* allows several interpretations of which the contextually correct one is used in the glossing⁴.

- (13a) *Menja zameti-li.* (b) *Moñ ñej-i-miž.*
I.ACC notice-PST.PL I.GEN see-3PL/1SG
'They noticed me.'

- (14a) *Vas perestrelja-jut kak utok.*
you.ACC shoot-3PL like duck
'You will be shot down like ducks.'

- (b) *Tink ledi-tadiž teke utaka-t.*
you.GEN shoot-3PL/2PL like duck-PL
- (c) *Tink led-ñi-tadiž koda jakšargo-ñ-t.*
you.GEN shoot-FRE-3PL/2PL like duck-GEN-DEF
- (d) *Ľed-ñi-siž teke utka-t.*
shoot-FRE-3PL/3PL⁵ like duck-PL
- (e) *Tink led'-tadiž koda utka-t-ñe.*
you.GEN shoot-3PL/2PL like duck-PL-DEF

3.2.2. Imperative objective conjugation and pronominal object

The increase of categories such as tense and mood added to the object of four-argument verb forms increased the divergence in the answers of ESL speakers, as in simple sentences with a focused object pronoun.

4. The following glossings are possible: 1SG/2PL, 3SG/2PL, 1PL/2PL, 1PL/2SG, 3PL/2SG, 3PL/2PL.

5. The verb could be encoded as 3PL/3PL or 3PL/3SG.

In imperative objective conjugation forms, for instance, most ESL answers deviated from those of NES informants. In (15a), the subject is in the second person plural and the object is in the first person singular, which is marked in the NES answers very uniformly (15b). In two ESL answers, the reference to both subject and object was as expected, whereas one used a 2SG subject in *ńeji-mak* instead (15c) and one hybrid form seeking to use an objective conjugation form but ending up with a reference to 3SG subject and 3SG object (15d).

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------|----------------------|-------------|
| (15a) Zamet'-te | menja! | (b) <i>ńeji-miž</i> | <i>moń!</i> |
| notice-IMP.2PL | I.ACC | see-2PL/1SG | I.GEN |
| 'Note me!' | | (c) <i>ńeji-mak</i> | <i>moń!</i> |
| | | see-2SG/1SG | I.GEN |
| | | (d) <i>ńej-i-nže</i> | <i>moń!</i> |
| | | see-PST-3SG/3PL | I.GEN |

The same happened with imperative objective conjugation forms referring to 2SG subject and 1SG object. The NES respondents used uniformly the inflectional form *sajemak* (16b–c), which has only one encoding 2SG/1SG 'You, take me!'. The cumulative morphosyntactic information is reflected in the ESL answers that, as a rule, firstly sought to indicate that the form is imperative and only secondly marked the objective conjugation. In three of the five ESL answers, the reference to the person of the object changed to 3SG as in *sajik* 'take (it)' (16d) instead of 3SG in the questionnaire.

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| (16a) Vozmi | menja | s | sob-oj! |
| take.IMP.2SG | I.ACC | with | oneself-INS |
| 'Take me along with you!' | | | |
| (b) <i>Saje-mak</i> | <i>moń</i> | <i>maro-t!</i> | |
| take-IMP.2SG/1SG | I.GEN | with-2SG | |
| (c) <i>Saje-mak</i> | <i>marto-t!</i> | | |
| take-IMP.2SG/1SG | with-2SG | | |
| (d) <i>Saj-ik</i> | <i>moń</i> | <i>maro-nk!</i> | |
| take-IMP.2SG/3SG | I.GEN | with-2PL | |

These examples show that morphosyntactically cumulative objective conjugation forms such as the imperative, which display the four-agreement pattern with the reference to the person and number of the subject and object, are harder to adopt for ESL informants in comparison with indicative forms.

3.3. Non-finite verb complements in modal constructions

Transitive non-finite verbs are a special subtype lacking any morphologically marked reference to subject and object. They are typically used in modal constructions, in which agentivity is manifested in some other way. However, infinitives have obligatory complements such as objects which, in principle, follow the same object marking rules that were discussed above. The person of the object is indicated with a pronoun regardless of topicality (17a). In the answers, there was no significant difference between the answers of NES respondents (17b–c) and ESL speakers (17d), though one of the latter ones had difficulties in finding the correct dative form of the pronoun and duplicated the 3SG suffix *-ze*.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|
| (17a) Emu | nužno | zameti-t' | menja. |
| he.DAT | must | notice-INF | I.ACC |
| 'He must notice me.' | | | |
| (b) <i>Soń-en-ze</i> | <i>eřavi</i> | <i>moń</i> | <i>ńeje-ms.</i> |
| (s)he-DAT-3SG | must | I.GEN | see-INF |
| (c) <i>Soń-en-ze</i> | <i>eřavi</i> | <i>ńeje-ms</i> | <i>moń.</i> |
| (s)he-DAT-3SG | must | see-INF | I.GEN |
| (d) <i>Soń-en-ze</i> | <i>eřavi</i> | <i>moń</i> | <i>ńejems.</i> |
| (s)he-DAT-3SG | must | I.GEN | see-INF |
| (e) <i>Son-ze-n-ze</i> | <i>eřavi</i> | <i>zameti-t'</i> | <i>moń.</i> |
| (s)he.3SG.GEN-DAT.3SG | must | [notice-INF] | I.GEN |

If the object is a noun, case and definiteness are the core variables. Non-finite verbs are not inflected and, consequently, are more stable compared to the high morphosyntactic variation of objective conjugation forms; they display a two-level hierarchy, which affects the inflection of the object as well. In all answers to (18a), the object is kept in sentence-initial position, normally the position of the subject or agent. The NES answers uniformly used a definite genitive object (18b). Two of them replaced the non-finite construction with an inflectional mood, either the conjunctive or desiderative, and converted the verb to objective conjugation (18c–d). Only one ESL respondent used the definite genitive *teve-ń-t'* thing-GEN-DEF 'of the thing', one used the indefinite genitive, whereas three preferred a definite singular nominative (18e)

which was more frequently used as the index of a definite object, especially in the speech of the Chuvash informants.

- (18a) Delo xote-li raz'jasni-t'.
thing want-PST.3PL clarify-INF
'They wanted to clarify the thing.'
- (b) Těve-ń-t' hoteli jovt-ńe-ms.
thing-GEN-DEF [want-PST.3PL] tell-FRE-INF
- (c) Těve-ń-t' tolkova-vli-ńek.
thing-GEN-DEF understand-CNJ-1PL/3SG
'We wanted to understand the thing.'
- (d) Těveń-t' teji-ksil'-iž.
thing-GEN-DEF do-DES-3PL/3SG
- (e) Těve-ś hotě-li razjasni-t'.
thing-DEF [want-PST.3PL] clarify-INF]

In (19a) the agent is in sentence-initial position. In the answers of both NES and ESL, the object occurs regularly in a sentence-final topical position. The previous ones used either a definite genitive (19b) or indefinite nominative object (19c) pretending that both are possible. The two Chuvash informants used an indefinite nominative (19d), whereas the three other ESL, who were native Slavic speakers, used a definite nominative (19e) which did not occur in NES answers.

- (19a) Tebe nužno iska-t' mal'čik-ov.
you.DAT must search-INF boy-PL.ACC
'You much search for the boys.'
- (b) Tońet' eravi vešńe-ms čori-ńe-t-ńe-ń.
you.DAT must search-INF boy-DIM-PL-DEF-GEN
- (c) Tońet' eravi vešńe-ms čora-t, čora-ejkakš-t.
you.DAT must search-INF boy-PL boy-children-PL
- (d) Tońet' eravi vešńe-ms čora-t.
you.DAT must search-INF boy-PL
- (e) Tońet' eravi vešńe-ms čori-tńe.
you.DAT must search-INF boy-PL.DEF

This, too, emphasizes the difference between simple and morphosyntactically cumulative transitive clauses. The higher number of optional constituents increases syntactic complexity in non-finite constructions, which increased the differences in the form of object between NES and ESL respondents.

4. The connection between the objective conjugation and case of object

Finally, we will reconsider the relationship between the objective conjugation and the case of object on the basis of the assumption that the objective conjugation most typically co-occurs with an object in the definite genitive. Above (example 18) it was seen that the Chuvash-speaking informants tend to use the definite singular nominative more often than other respondents. The NES answers to (20a) display the definite genitive object, although one used the singular definite nominative (20c), the same case that the Chuvash informants used here, too.

- (20a) Mužčin-u otvez-li v bol'nic-u.
man-ACC take-PST.PL in hospital-ACC
'The man was taken to the hospital.'
- (b) Čora-ń-t' ušk-i-ž bolnica-v.
boy-GEN-DEF take-PST-3PL/3SG hospital-LAT
- (c) Čora-ś usk-i-ž bolnića-v.
boy-DEF take-PST-3PL/3SG hospital-LAT

Definiteness is not only a property of the object, because other nouns display it as well. So far, several examples have shown the importance of definiteness as a dominating category in Erzya transitive clauses. Example (21a) includes an adverbial that, in Russian, is less focused than the object *ošibki* 'mistakes'. The NES answers include quite a lot of variation showing a diverse perception of topicality. However, in a vast majority, the adverbial was marked as definite (21b–c). In all responses the verb was inflected in the subjective conjugation, co-occurring with an indefinite plural nominative object.

- (21a) Ja zameti-l v tekst-e ošibk-i.
I notice-PST.M.SG in text-PRE error-PL.ACC
'I noticed errors in the text.'
- (b) Mon red-i-ń ilvedevks-t šormadovks-so-nt'.
I notice-PST-1SG error-PL writing-INE-DEF
- (c) Mon nej-i-ń tekste-st' ošibka-t.
I see-PST-1SG text-DEF error-PL

Only one ESL respondent used a definite adverbial *teksstent'*; another one used a definite genitive object co-occurring with the expected

objective conjugation form *heiĵa* ‘I saw (it)’ (21d), which failed to indicate the agreement with the 3PL object as it was indexed as 1SG/3SG. One Chuvash respondent applied a definite singular nominative object *ošibkaś* ‘the mistake’ (21e), likewise co-occurring with an objective conjugation form.

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| (d) | <i>Mon</i> | <i>ĵe-i-ja</i> | <i>teks-ste</i> | <i>ošibkat-ĵe.</i> |
| | I | see-PST-1SG/3SG | text-INE | error-PL-DEF |
| (e) | <i>Mon</i> | <i>ĵe-i-ja</i> | <i>zametka-s</i> | <i>ošibka-ś.</i> |
| | I | see-PST-1SG/3SG | note-INE | error-DEF |

Given that definiteness is an inflectional category of all nouns – and semantically it is manifested in possessive suffixes as well – the topical relations are often complex. The test sentence (22a) exemplifies a simple transitive clause that has a numeral phrase as an object. The NES respondents used almost equivocally a postposition *ejstest* ‘from them’ with a possessive suffix as the complement of the phrase, the word itself referring to both the spatial frame consisting of a group of people and person 3PL. Furthermore, they consistently used a definite plural genitive object *kavtoĵen* two-PL-DEF-GEN ‘the two’ and a verb conjugated as a four-argument one *mujĵ* ‘they found (them)’ (22b) with only slight divergence. The ESL speakers used different strategies to cope with increased morphosyntactic complexity. One applied passivization, converting the verb to a reflexive derivation *mujevst* ‘they were found’ and the object to the definite nominative subject *kavto-t-ĵe* two-PL-DEF ‘the two’ (22c). In the rest of ESL answers, either the case of object was not the assumed definite plural genitive but nominative (22d), or a personal pronoun was used (22e) instead of an endemic postposition with a possessive suffix.

- | | | | | |
|-------|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| (22a) | <i>Dvo-ix</i> | <i>iz</i> | <i>nix</i> | <i>naś-li.</i> |
| | two-PL.GEN | from | they.PL.GEN | find-PST.PL |
| | ‘Two of them were found.’ | | | |
| (b) | <i>Kavto-t-ĵe-ĵ</i> | <i>ejste-st</i> | <i>muj-i-ĵ.</i> | |
| | two-PL-DEF-GEN | from.ELA-3PL | find-PST-3PL/3PL | |
| (c) | <i>Kavto-t-ĵe</i> | <i>ejste-st</i> | <i>muj-e-v-ś.</i> | |
| | two-PL-DEF | from.ELA-3PL | find-REFL-PST.3PL | |
| (d) | <i>Kavto-t-ĵe</i> | <i>ej-ste-st</i> | <i>muj-i-ĵ.</i> | |
| | two-PL-DEF | from.ELA-3PL | find-PST-3PL/3PL | |
| (e) | <i>Kavto-t-ĵe-ĵ</i> | <i>sin-st</i> | <i>ejste</i> | <i>muj-i-ĵ.</i> |
| | two-PL-DEF-GEN | they-3PL | from.ELA | find-PST-3PL/3PL |

The relationship between the four-argument verb conjugation and object marking was tested in imperative sentences that included an adverbial as well. The deictic relation of the object was indicated with a demonstrative pronoun that generally assigns definiteness (23a). The NES answers included both a definite singular genitive (23b) and nominative object (23c). The alternation of case suggests that definiteness is the primary category, in comparison with case, in this kind of high transitivity clauses. As was seen above, some ESL informants tended to use the definite nominative object in certain sentences diverging from the preferred patterns of NES (cf. examples 22e and 21e). In this test sentence, one of the ESL informants inflected the object *spisok* ‘list’ according to Russian grammar lacking any case ending (23d), while others displayed both the definite genitive *spisokoĵt* ‘the list’ (23e) and nominative object *koĵovoś* ‘the paper’ (23f).

- | | | | | | |
|-------|----------------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| (23a) | <i>Otnes-i</i> | <i>ĕtot</i> | <i>spisok</i> | <i>na</i> | <i>kuxn-ju.</i> |
| | take-IMP.2SG | this.M | list | to | kitchen-ACC |
| | ‘Take this list to the kitchen.’ | | | | |
| (b) | <i>Kand-ik</i> | <i>ĵe</i> | <i>koĵovpelkse-ĵ-t</i> | <i>kuĵĵa-v.</i> | |
| | carry-IMP.2SG/3SG | this | [paper.half]-GEN-DEF | kitchen-LAT | |
| (c) | <i>Kand-ik</i> | <i>ĵe</i> | <i>spisoko-ś</i> | <i>kuĵĵa-v.</i> | |
| | carry-IMP.2SG/3SG | this | list-DEF | kitchen-LAT | |
| (d) | <i>Kand-ik</i> | <i>aĵo</i> | <i>ĵe</i> | <i>spisok</i> | <i>kuĵĵa-v.</i> |
| | carry-IMP.2SG/3SG | IMP.2SG | this | list | kitchen-LAT |
| (e) | <i>Kand-ik</i> | <i>ĵe</i> | <i>spisoko-ĵ-t</i> | <i>kuĵĵav!</i> | |
| | carry-IMP.2SG/3SG | this | list-GEN-DEF | kitchen-LAT | |
| (f) | <i>Kand-ik</i> | <i>ĵe</i> | <i>koĵovo-ś</i> | <i>kuĵĵa-v.</i> | |
| | carry-IMP.2SG/3SG | this | list-DEF | kitchen-LAT | |

In the Finnic languages, negation decreases telicity, and the partitive, a case typically indexing low transitivity, is used in negative clauses. In Erzya, negation does not trigger any change in the case of object, as is seen in the answers to (24a). All NES respondents regularly used the definite genitive, mostly in connection with a past tense negation verb in the objective conjugation *eĵija* ‘I didn’t (it)’ (24b). In a couple of cases, the finite negation verb was converted to the subjective conjugation *eĵiĵ* ‘I didn’t’ (24c). The answers of ESL speakers, though there were fewer of them, included more variation. The object was always assigned as a definite one, either a nominative *filmeś* ‘this film’ (24d) or genitive *kinost* ~ *kinont*’ (24e–f).

(24a) Ja ne vide-l èto kino.
I NEG see-PST.M this film
'I didn't see this film.'

- (b) *Mon eži-ja ñeje té kino-ń-t'.*
I NEG.PST-1SG/3SG see.CNG this film-GEN-DEF
- (c) *Mon ezi-ń nej té kino-ń-t'.*
I NEG.PST-1SG see.CNG this film-GEN-DEF
- (d) *Mon ežiń ñeje té filme-ś.*
I NEG.PST-1SG see.CNG this film-DEF
- (e) *Mon ei-ja ñej té kino-st'.*
I NEG.PST-1SG/3SG see.CNG this film-GEN.DEF
- (f) *Mon té kino-ń-t' ezi-ja neje.*
I this film-GEN-DEF NEG.PST-1SG/3SG see.CNG

The questionnaire included some longer examples as well, but as a rule they led to less focused answers. Other variables, such as word order, were considered during the tests. However, given the multiple morphological indexing of transitivity, word order does not play a crucial role in the way transitivity is manifested. Still, there are certain construction types, such as the deontic modal verb phrase involving the auxiliary reflexive verb *eřavi* which caused ambiguity in the answers to (25a). The vast majority of NES answers started with a sentence-initial definite genitive object *té tévent'* that otherwise is not the most common place (25b). However, a couple of the NES respondents changed it to the definite nominative *problemaś* (25c) that as the sentence-initial constituent should be encoded subject rather than object. All ESL speakers preferred the latter pattern, and the subjectivization of the sentence-initial constituent in the definite nominative.

(25a) Problem-u nado ešče reši-t'.
problem-ACC must still solve-INF
'The problem still has to be solved.'

- (b) *Té téve-ń-t' eřavi topavto-ms.*
this thing-GEN.DEF must fulfil-INF
- (c) *Problema-ś eřavi reša-ms.*
problem-DEF must solve-INF

5. Conclusions

The application of a questionnaire was an effective way of data collecting because both native Erzya speakers and second language speakers were willing to answer the questions and could do so with ease. Obviously, the test situation was not fully unusual, since Erzya speakers speak parallel Erzya and Russian daily. In our view, the methodological bias caused by a potential transfer influence of the source language (Russian) did not interfere much the core of the transitive clause, the investigated topic. If the transitivity pattern was corrupted in the ESL answers, it mainly resulted from their different perception of inflectional patterns instead of the source language of the test situation. The most salient grammatical elements of the Erzya transitive clause were actively used by all NES and ESL informants.

The main aim of our article was to test the adoption of Erzya morphosyntax by second language speakers. The topic of the paper, the transitive clause, is illustrative from many perspectives. Firstly, it consists of morphologically marked, mutually intertwining morphosyntactic rules that affect the inflectional properties of the object and the verb. Secondly, the inflectional forms of object and verb are morphologically complex involving several categories. The object involves the case, number, definiteness and possession, whereas a four-argument verb involves the person and number of subject and object in addition to tense and mood as was summarized in table 1. Thirdly, other optional adverbial arguments increase the multiplicity of grammatical relations in an individual sentence.

The answers of the ESL informants showed that they had adopted Erzya transitivity as a system involving both nominal and verbal inflection. However, the marking of transitivity varied between individual speakers. In simple transitive clauses consisting of the core arguments only, the answers diverged only a small amount from those of NES respondents. If the morphosyntactic complexity increased and there were more adverbial constituents or verbal categories such as the imperative involved in the clause, the perception of transitivity of ESL speakers became more ambiguous. In the indexing of the object, definiteness was repeatedly given a higher priority with respect to case. As regards verbal inflection, the morphosyntactically cumulative

objective conjugation forms were mainly correct but sometimes failed in showing the assumed congruence between the verb, subject and object. Furthermore, they were occasionally replaced by other conjugation strategies, such as the subjective conjugation instead of the objective one, if the object was marked and did not have a clear person reference.

Finally, it can be stated that the contrast between the answers of native and non-native speakers is clear despite the fact that this test was based on a small sample and the number of NES and ESL informants was rather low.

Abbreviations

1	first person	ILL	illative
2	second person	IMP	imperative
3	third person	INE	inessive
ABL	ablative	INF	infinitive
ACC	accusative	INS	instrumental
ADJ	adjectivizer	LAT	lative
CAUS	causative	LOC	locative
CNG	connegative	M	masculine
CNJ	conjunctive	N	neuter
DAT	dative	NEG	negation, negative
DEF	definite	NOM	nominative
DES	desiderative	PL	plural
DIM	diminutive	PRE	prepositional
ELA	elative	PRT	partitive
ENCL	enclitic	PST	past
F	feminine	REFL	reflexive
FRE	frequentative	SG	singular
GEN	genitive	TRA	translative

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