Reflexive and reciprocal forms in L2 Serbian

Maja Miličević

(University of Cambridge)

Reflexive and reciprocal forms in L2 Serbian·

Maja Miličević
University of Cambridge, UK

Abstract

This paper investigates the acquisition of Serbian reflexive and reciprocal forms by native speakers of Italian. Both Serbian and Italian have reflexive and reciprocal clitics and pronouns. However, the use of clitic forms is somewhat freer in Italian than in Serbian; moreover, unlike Serbian, Italian has obligatory clitic doubling for the reciprocal pronominal forms. The results of a picture judgement task show that despite being rather subtle, these differences between the two languages do lead to transfer-driven divergences between the Italian learners and the native speakers of Serbian. It is therefore argued that in instructional settings attention should be given to the specific L1-L2 differences, on top of the general properties of the area.

Introduction

Transfer of first language (L1) properties into second language (L2) grammars has long been one of the main foci of interest in the theory of second language acquisition. A number of studies have suggested that an area particularly subject to transfer effects is verbal morphology, or more specifically, morphological marking of lexical operations, such as the causative/inchoative alternation. Namely, it has been found that if the L1 marks such an operation morphologically, the learners tend to reject the L2 forms which carry no overt marking, and the other way round (compare, for instance, the Serbian *Vrata **se** otvaraju* and its English equivalent *The door opens*). However, in order to make strong claims about the transfer of verbal morphology, it seems desirable to look beyond the cases where marking is present in one and absent in the other language involved. What appears to be lacking is evidence of transfer effects in a situation where morphological marking is required in both languages, but some differences exist between the types of markers employed in the L1 and the L2. The study presented in this paper deals with one such case. The phenomena under investigation are reflexive and reciprocal formation in L2 Serbian, as acquired by native speakers of Italian.[1]

The structure of the paper is as follows. Firstly, some theoretical facts about reflexives and reciprocals are presented, followed by a description of the Serbian and Italian forms. After a brief overview of previous work on morphological transfer, different aspects of the study are presented and discussed: research questions and predictions, participants, testing materials and results. The paper ends with a discussion of the findings and some conclusions.

[1] Throughout the paper I will be using the term 'Serbian language' to refer to what used to be called Serbo-Croatian. The choice is due to the fact that the control group consisted exclusively of speakers of the Serbian variety and it does not imply any differences between the varieties in the domain of reflexive and reciprocal forms.

Theoretical background

Reflexivity, reciprocity, and their marking
Even though they differ in a number of properties, reflexives and reciprocals also share some important characteristics. In a reflexive situation the Agent performs the action expressed by the verb on himself/herself rather than on an external participant, while in a reciprocal situation the action is performed by two (or more) participants on each other (cf. Lichtenberk 1994). What unifies the two cases is the fact that the Agent of the predicate is at the same time its Patient.[2] This situation differs from the default one, in which the Agent and the Patient are two separate entities, and in most languages this semantic markedness triggers morphosyntactic reflexes, most notably the obligatory use of a special reflexive/reciprocal marker (cf. Cennamo 1993).[3]

Moreover, many of the world's languages employ more than one marking strategy, and it is always the case that one of the strategies is more economical, i.e. has less phonological weight than the other(s); this strategy is usually called *light* in the literature, as opposed to the *heavy* strategy (or strategies). The opposition is relativised depending on the system instantiated in each particular language (see König and Siemund 2000, Smith 2004), and the contrast can be between a verbal affix, or a clitic, and a pronoun (Russian, Serbian), or between a self-standing pronoun and a pronoun accompanied by an intensifier (German, Scandinavian languages).[4] Depending also on the exact morphological type they belong to, light and heavy markers normally have different distributions within languages, in the sense that they occur in different syntactic and discourse contexts. For instance, Serbian has to use pronouns instead of clitics in prepositional phrases, coordination, contrastive situations and answers to questions.

Importantly, light and heavy markers do not differ in distribution only with respect to similar contextual factors. Even in contexts such as direct object use, where both types should in principle be allowed to occur, there is a requirement, or at least a preference to use a specific type. A number of scholars assume that the crucial role in marker selection is played by the meaning of the verb the marker is attached to; in other words, some verbs commonly select the light markers, while others tend to take the heavy ones. With respect to reflexives, the former are usually labelled *intrinsic*, and the latter *extrinsic* predicates (see Haiman 1983, König and Vezzosi 2004, Smith 2004); the former denote actions that one typically performs on oneself (*shave*, *wash*, *dress*), whereas the latter refer to activities or states normally oriented towards others (*love*, *hate*, *destroy*). A parallel distinction is made for reciprocals between verbs denoting typically or necessarily symmetric (*kiss*, *hug*, *meet*) and non-symmetric actions (*kill*, *wound*, *poison*), which also leads to the choice of light and heavy markers, respectively (cf. Haiman 1983). For the sake of simplicity, in this paper the terms 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' predicates will be used when referring to either reflexives or reciprocals.

---

[2] In terms of syntactic functions this means that the subject of the verb is at the same time its direct object. Involvement of indirect objects is possible too, but this case is beyond the scope of this paper.
[3] In English, and a number of other languages, reflexivity and reciprocity can sometimes remain unmarked, as in *John washed* or *Paul and Sally kissed*.
[4] Intensifiers are expressions such as the Serbian *sam*, Italian *stesso* or German *selbst*; their meaning is close to the English 'self' and they are used to emphasise the reflexive meaning. They cannot appear with reciprocals, which can only take disambiguators such as *mutually*, *reciprocally*, and similar.

Reflexives and reciprocals in Serbian and Italian

At the first sight, Serbian and Italian systems of reflexive and reciprocal marking look very similar. Clitics are the predominant markers in both languages, and the main difference appears to lie in the fact that Serbian employs the same forms for all persons and both numbers, while Italian has different markers for each person and number.

Serbian uses the reflexive/reciprocal clitic *se* 'x-self, each other', the reflexive pronoun *sebe* 'x-self', and the reciprocal pronominal expression *jedan drugog* 'each other'. All Serbian reflexive and reciprocal markers are exemplified in (1) - (4).

(1)　　　Marina **se**　　　oblači.
　　　　　Marina REF.CLI dress.PRES.3SG
　　　　　'Marina is getting dressed.'

(2)　　　Marko voli　　　　**sebe**.
　　　　　Marko love.PRES.3SG REF.PRO.ACC
　　　　　'Marko loves himself.'

(3)　　　Tamara i　Ana **se**　　　dobro　poznaju.
　　　　　Tamara and Ana REC.CLI well　　know.PRES.3PL
　　　　　'Tamara and Ana know each other well.'

(4)　　　Lidija i　Ivan su　　　　　　　　povredili　　**jedno drugo**.
　　　　　Lidija and Ivan be.AUX.PRES.3PL hurt.PAST.PART one　　other
　　　　　'Lidija and Ivan hurt each other.'

Italian, by contrast, uses the special reflexive/reciprocal clitic *si* 'x-self, each other' and the reflexive pronoun *sé* 'x-self' only for the 3rd person (singular and plural), while its remaining forms are equal to those of the unstressed and stressed personal pronouns (see Table 1).

	Singular	*Plural*
1st person	*mi/me*	*ci/noi*
2nd person	*ti/te*	*vi/voi*
3rd person	*si/sé*	*si/sé*

Table 1. Italian reflexive/reciprocal clitics and reflexive pronouns

Importantly, the Italian heavy reciprocal marker contains the pronominal expression *l'un l'altro* 'each other', similar to the Serbian *jedan drugog*, but in direct object use this expression cannot occur on its own and it has to be accompanied by a clitic. Examples of Italian reflexives and reciprocals are given in (5) - (8).

(5)　　　Marina **si**　　　veste.
　　　　　Marina REF.CLI dress.PRES.3SG
　　　　　'Marina is getting dressed.'

(6)   Marco ama   **sé**.
        Marko love.PRES.3SG REF.PRO
        'Marko loves himself.'

(7)   Rita e   Anna **si**   conoscono   bene.
        Rita and Anna REC.CLI know.PRES.3PL well
        'Rita and Anna know each other well.'

(8)   Laura e   Ivan **si**   sono   feriti   **l'un l'altro**.
        Laura and Ivan REC.CLI be.AUX.PRES.3PL hurt.PAST.PART one   other
        'Laura and Ivan hurt each other.'

In addition to the difference in heavy reciprocal markers (pronouns versus clitic doubling), Serbian and Italian differ in the extent to which they allow clitics to be used as reflexive/reciprocal markers with different verbs. While in Italian it is possible to freely use reflexive and reciprocal clitics with both intrinsic and extrinsic predicates, in Serbian this issue is somewhat problematic, and while some authors claim that clitic reflexive formation is fully productive (see Marelj 2004), others argue that it is limited to intrinsic predicates (see Perović 2003). As it will be seen below, this controversy is reflected in the native speakers' judgements on extrinsic predicates marked by reflexive clitics, which some of them accept and some reject. However, regardless of what the final conclusion about clitics is, it is clear that in Serbian pronouns are the preferred reflexive markers with extrinsic predicates. The literature does not say much about the Serbian reciprocal forms, but given the crosslinguistic tendency for languages to follow a similar principle of marker distribution with reflexives and reciprocals, a preference for pronouns should exist for the extrinsic reciprocal predicates as well. In sum, Serbian and Italian undoubtedly differ in the range of verbs they typically reflexivise and reciprocate by means of clitic markers.

Previous research on morphological transfer
The acquisition of reflexive and reciprocal forms in terms of their morphological marking represents an extremely understudied area. Due to the lack of immediately relevant studies dealing with reflexives and reciprocals, this section briefly reviews the main findings of the previous research on morphological transfer in related domains.

In an early study on lexical transfer, Adjémian (1983) discusses some typical morphological errors observed in the production data from L2 French and L2 English. While the English learners of French often fail to produce the required morphological marker, as exemplified in (9), the French learners of English tend to use a marked instead of an unmarked form, as illustrated in (10). Both groups of learners clearly transfer into the L2 the option instantiated in their L1.

(9)   Cette règle *applique*   à tous. (correct: ***s'applique***)
        this   rule apply.PRES.3SG to all
        'This rule applies to all.'

(10)   They want to *fight **themselves*** against this. (French: ***se battre***)

Other studies report similar results, in particular Montrul (1997, 2000, 2001) for the acquisition of transitivity alternations in L2 English, Spanish and Turkish, and Toth (2000) for L2 acquisition of the Spanish multifunctional clitic *se*. For instance, Montrul's Spanish-speaking learners of English largely reject sentences of the type in (11), because the Spanish inchoative forms must be marked by the clitic *se*, as in (12). The reverse happens with English learners of Spanish, who accept the ungrammatical sentences lacking *se*.

(11)   The window broke.

(12)   La   ventana   **se**   rompió
        the window   REFL.CLI break.PAST.3SG
        'The window broke.'

Similarly, Toth (2000) has found that even after explicit instruction on the use of *se* in Spanish, the English learners fail to produce and judge it in a native-like fashion, continuing above all to omit it in those contexts that are morphologically unmarked in English.

Clearly, the results of these studies converge to support the conclusion that mastering the L2 rules of morphological marking of verbs represents a very challenging task for the learners.

The study

Research questions and predictions

As it has been stated in the introductory section of the paper, the main goal of the present study is to test for the existence of transfer effects in a situation where both the L1 and the L2 use morphological marking, but of a different type. If morphology really is as subject to transfer as it has so far been claimed, evidence of its presence should be discovered in this case too. Therefore, keeping in mind the findings of the previous studies and the options instantiated in Serbian and Italian, the following specific predictions are made:

Prediction 1

Italian learners of Serbian will accept reflexive and reciprocal clitics to a similar extent with intrinsic and extrinsic verbs.

Prediction 2

Italian learners of Serbian will reject reciprocal pronouns and accept reciprocal clitic doubling instead.

Participants

The Italian learners of Serbian recruited for this study were university students of modern languages who studied Serbian as their second or third language. The students were tested at their home universities in Padua, Venice, Udine and Genoa. Since they had an average of 30-50 hours of tuition in Serbian per year, it was possible to form only two small intermediate level groups, lower intermediate (LI, n=9), and upper intermediate

(UI, n=7). The control group consisted of 20 native speakers of Serbian, tested in Belgrade, Serbia. The information about the participants is summarised in Table 2.

Group	n	Mean age	SD	Age range
Control	20	22.30	5.02	18-33
It-LI	9	23.78	5.76	20-38
It-UI	7	23.43	4.35	20-33

Table 2. Participant data

It is important to mention that the Italian universities do not make a distinction between the Serbian and the Croatian varieties; the language is still taught as Serbo-Croatian, while the prevalence of a specific variety depends on the country of origin of the lecturers, or in the case of non-native speakers, on their educational background. Since Serbian and Croatian display the same behaviour with respect to the constructions examined in this study, no distinctions were made between participants on this basis.

Testing materials
The participants were asked to complete a written test consisting of four tasks: a Cloze Test, a Vocabulary Translation Task (VTT), a Picture Judgement Task (PJT) and an Acceptability Judgement Task (AJT).[5] As not all the data obtained from the VTT and the PJT bears on the research questions addressed here, in what follows I will refer only to the part of immediate relevance for the present paper. Moreover, due to space limitations, the results of the AJT will not be discussed.

The Cloze Test was used for assessing the level of the learners' proficiency in Serbian. It consisted of a short narrative from which every seventh word was deleted, for a total of 40 blanks.

The VTT contained a list of verbs to be translated from Serbian into Italian. Its goal was to check whether the learners knew the specific verbs they were tested on. If a subject did not provide a correct translation for a verb, his/her answers on the sentences containing that particular verb were not analysed in the PJT. A total of 15 verbs were used, comprising intrinsic and extrinsic subgroups of reflexive and reciprocal predicates. The verbs are listed in Table 3.

Reflexives		Reciprocals	
Intrinsic	**Extrinsic**	**Intrinsic**	**Extrinsic**
oprati 'wash'	*voleti* 'love'	*poljubiti* 'kiss'	*ubiti* 'kill'
obući 'dress'	*mrzeti* 'hate'	*zagrliti* 'hug'	*otrovati* 'poison'
obrijati 'shave'	*poštovati*	*maziti* 'caress'	*raniti* 'wound'
spremiti 'prepare'	'respect'	*upoznati* 'meet'	*napasti* 'attack'

Table 3. Verbs tested in the study

The same verbs included in the VTT were used in the PJT. The relevant portion of the PJT consisted of 30 pictures, each accompanied by a pair of sentences to be marked on a scale ranging from –3 to +3. The definitions of the points on the scale were the following:

---

[5] The structure of the test represents an adaptation of the design used by Montrul (1997). Note that the native speakers did not do the Vocabulary Translation Task.

−3 completely unacceptable
−2 unacceptable
−1 somewhat unacceptable
  0 can't decide
+1 somewhat acceptable
+2 acceptable
+3 completely acceptable

The subjects were explicitly asked to use '0' for the sentences they understood, but that they found to be on the borderline between acceptable and unacceptable, while they were supposed to put a question mark next to the sentences they did not understand.[6]

    Each of the verbs was used in four different constructions. Although there were four sentences to judge per picture, it was decided not to put all of them together (and have each picture only once) because having to judge four very similar sentences at one time would be too demanding for the participants and it would make it much easier for them to infer the goal of the task. Instead, each picture appeared in the test twice, with two different sentences.

    The verbs were used in the following four constructions: (a) verb + reflexive/reciprocal clitic (referred to as the *clitic* condition); (b) verb + reflexive/reciprocal pronoun (*pronoun* condition); (c) verb + reflexive/reciprocal clitic + reflexive/reciprocal pronoun (*clitic doubling* or *cli+pro* condition); (d) unmarked verb (*unmarked* condition). The unmarked condition has no relevance for this paper, while the clitic doubling will be discussed only in relation to reciprocal forms. Two sample items can be seen in Figure 1, illustrating reflexive clitics and pronouns, and reciprocal pronouns and clitic doubling.

Ivica se maskirao.	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3
Ivica je maskirao sam sebe.	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

Đura i Žile su napali jedan drugog.	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3
Đura i Žile su se napali jedan drugog.	-3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3

Figure 1. Sample items from the test

---

[6] The question-marked sentences were left out from further analysis.

Results

The Cloze Test was corrected with the acceptable word criterion; the results are given in Table 4. The statistical analysis confirms that the groups differ one from another (Kruskal-Wallis H(2)=28.293, p<0.001), i.e. the learner groups differ from the controls (Mann-Whitney U=0.000, p<0.001) and between themselves (U=0.000, p<0.01).[7]

Group	*n*	*Mean score*	*SD*	*Score range*
Control	20	92.19	4.37	85.00-98.75
It-LI	9	40.14	5.98	30.00-48.75
It-UI	7	56.25	8.23	50.00-73.75

Table 4. Cloze Test scores (%)

Group accuracy scores for the VTT are shown in Table 5. The upper intermediate group obtained fairly high scores on all verbs, while the most problematic verbs for the lower intermediate subjects were *napasti* 'attack' and *maziti* 'caress'.

Group	*n*	*Mean accuracy*	*SD*	*Accuracy range*
It-LI	9	75.56	18.56	40.00-93.33
It-UI	7	92.38	13.01	73.33-100.00

Table 5. VTT scores (%)

Moving on to the results of the Picture Judgement Task, I will first discuss the impact of the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction on reflexive and reciprocal marking, after which I will turn to reciprocal pronouns and clitic doubling.

The mean judgements of all groups on reflexive forms are displayed in Figure 2. It is clear from the patterns that Prediction 1 is confirmed for reflexives, as the native speakers and the learners treat reflexive clitics used with extrinsic predicates in different ways. More specifically, both lower and upper intermediate learners give higher marks than the controls to the extrinsic predicates; in fact, the difference between the learners and the native speakers is statistically significant (Kruskal-Wallis H(2)=6.796, p<0.05). The control group gives a very high average mark to the intrinsic verbs used with reflexive clitics, but its mean judgement on the extrinsic verbs is close to zero; the distinction it makes between the intrinsic and extrinsic verbs is confirmed by statistical results (Wilcoxon signed ranks z=—3.922, p<0.001). Focusing on the extrinsic predicates, 9 out of 20 control subjects mark them as unacceptable, 8 as acceptable, while the response of 3 subjects is equal to zero. This appears to be in line with the divide present in the theoretical literature between the authors who consider reflexivisation by means of clitics to be productive and those who describe it as limited to intrinsic predicates. A more detailed study would have to address the reasons behind this situation, as the data reported here does not suffice as evidence for either individual or dialectal variation. However, what is crucial is the fact that nothing similar happens in the learner groups, who do not distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic verbs used with clitics to a statistically significant extent.

---

[7] Whenever this was possible, the results were analysed using non-parametric statistical tests, due to non-equal variances and the ordinal nature of the judgement scale used in the Picture Judgement Task.
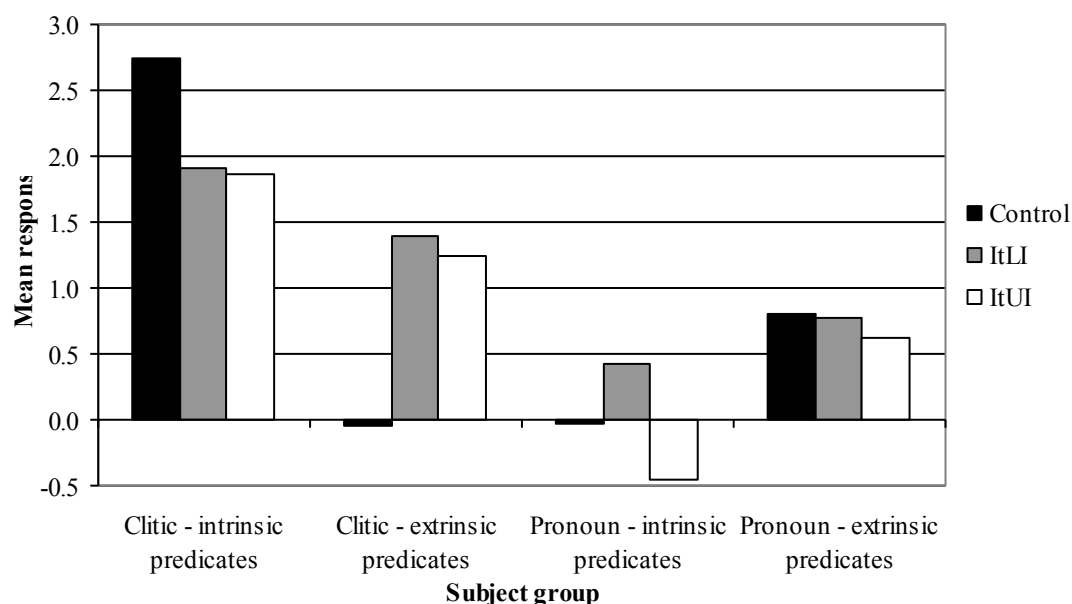
Figure 2. Mean judgements on reflexive clitics and pronouns

In contrast, all groups express similar judgements on pronouns. This is confirmed by a lack of statistically significant differences between subject groups and between the intrinsic and extrinsic conditions. Even the seemingly different marks of the three subject groups on the intrinsic predicates are not truly such, as there is a lot of individual variation and none of the means is significantly different from zero.

Another point to note in Figure 2 is that the mean judgements on pronouns are rather low overall, which is somewhat unexpected for the extrinsic predicates, typically reflexive-marked by pronouns in Serbian. The native speakers most probably give lower marks to pronouns because of their placement in the post-verbal slot, which is often considered to be the most marked position for pronominal objects. Namely, it is widely accepted that in Serbian the neutral position for pronouns is left to the verb, while the postverbal placement is reserved for cases of contrastive emphasis and deictic use (see Stojanović 1997, Perović 2003, Progovac 2005). This is exemplified by the sentence pair in (13), taken from Progovac (2005: 13).

(13) a. Milena ne voli   njega.   (contrastive)
      Milena not like.PRES.3SG him
    b. Milena njega ne voli.   (neutral)
      Milena him   not like.PRES.3SG
      'Milena does not like him.'

This, however, does not change the fact that the native speakers give higher marks to clitics with the intrinsic predicates, and to pronouns with the extrinsic ones, while the learners prefer clitics in both cases.

As Figure 3 shows, the trends are similar for clitics used with intrinsic and extrinsic reciprocal predicates; here as well there appears to be some evidence for the correctness

of Prediction 1, even though it is less persuasive than with reflexives. Serbian native speakers clearly prefer clitics to mark intrinsic reciprocal predicates and pronouns to mark the extrinsic ones; they make a statistically significant difference between the two predicate types for both markers (for clitics: Wilcoxon $z=-3.727$, $p<0.001$; for pronouns: $z=-2.506$, $p<0.05$). The learner groups, on the other hand, prefer clitics to pronouns with both intrinsic and extrinsic predicates and they never distinguish between the two; it only remains unclear why the upper intermediate learners give relatively low marks to clitics with intrinsic verbs. These results indicate that Italian learners of Serbian do indeed accept reciprocal clitics to a similar extent with intrinsic and extrinsic verbs. However, since the difference between the learners and the controls in the clitic condition with extrinsic predicates is not statistically significant, the claims made about transfer have to be somewhat more moderate than those concerning reflexives.
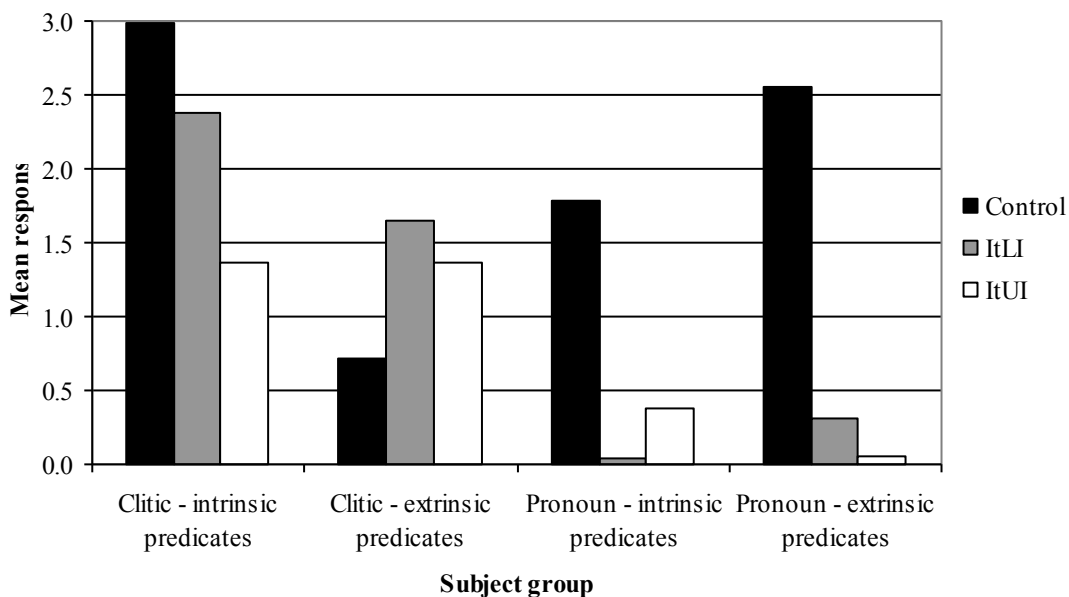

Figure 3. Mean judgements on the reciprocal clitics and pronouns

Moreover, it is essential to note that in this particular case a lot of caution is required in interpreting the results in terms of the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction, given that there might be some interference from the second issue under investigation in this paper, namely the learners' treatment of reciprocal pronouns and clitic doubling.

Recall that the Italian heavy reciprocal markers combine reciprocal clitics and pronouns, while in Serbian only pronouns can be used, for which reason it was predicted that the Italian learners of Serbian would reject reciprocal pronouns and accept clitic doubling instead (see Prediction 2 above). However, it is difficult to establish whether this prediction has been borne out or not, as the learners treat the forms marked by reciprocal pronouns and by reciprocal clitic doubling in similar ways (see Figure 4).[8] The learners differ significantly from the native speakers on both verbs types in the pronoun condition (intrinsic verbs: Kruskal-Wallis $H(2)=12.083$, $p<0.01$, extrinsic verbs: $H(2)=18.329$, $p<0.001$), and in the ungrammatical clitic doubling condition (intrinsic

---

[8] The data on reciprocal pronouns is repeated from Figure 3.

verbs: H(2)=24.232, p<0.001, extrinsic verbs: H(2)=20.188, p<0.001). The average marks they give are very low in both cases; more precisely, they are never significantly different from zero. This data does not enable any definite conclusions about whether the low averages on pronouns are due to their unclear status in the learners' L2 grammars, or to a general preference for clitics as reciprocal markers (a preference transferred from the L1). The similarity of judgements on pronouns and clitic doubling appears to indicate that the former is the case, and that these learners are at a stage when they are becoming aware of the L2 situation, in the sense that they are beginning to notice that they should not reject reciprocal pronouns, but at same time they still fail to reject clitic doubling, most likely under the influence of their L1.
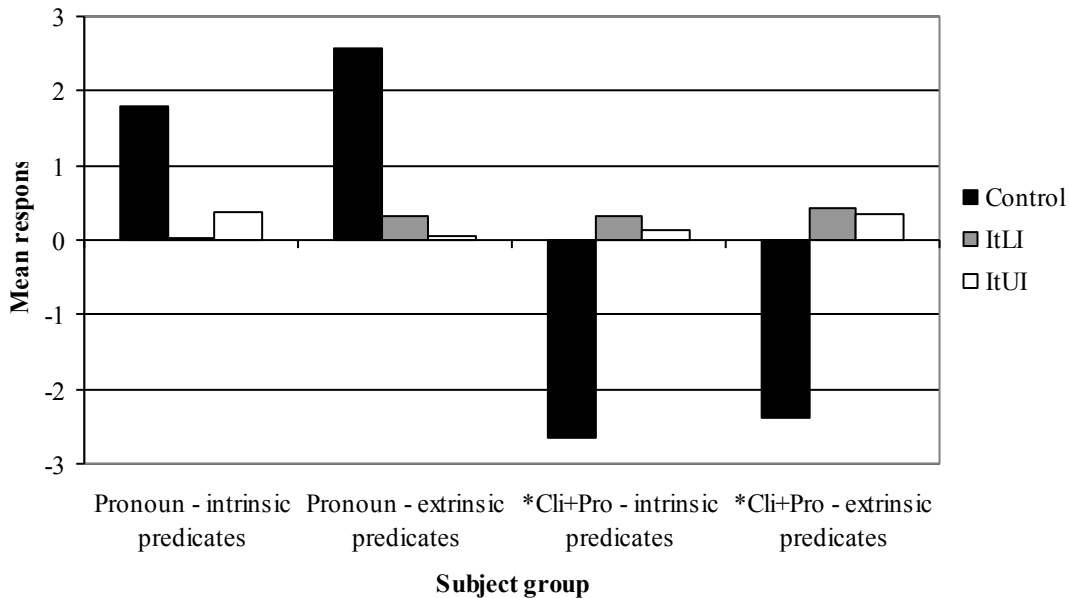

Figure 4. Mean judgements on reciprocal pronouns and clitic doubling

Discussion and conclusions

The results presented in the previous section largely confirm the predictions of the study and they show that transfer effects are indeed present when the L1 and the L2 differ only in the type of morphological marking they use.

More specifically, Prediction 1 receives full confirmation, as the learners do not distinguish to a significant extent between the intrinsic and the extrinsic predicates combined with reflexive/reciprocal clitics. This is in sharp contrast with the judgements of the native speakers of Serbian, who make a clear distinction between these two verb types in the clitic condition. The situation is clearer for reflexives than for reciprocals, as it is only in the former case that the learners differ statistically from the native speakers on clitics used with extrinsic predicates.

On the other hand, the results of the present study do not provide a definite answer in relation to Prediction 2, dealing with reciprocal pronouns and clitic doubling. The learner groups express indeterminate judgements close to zero on both marker types, failing to either reject or accept them. Since the testing was limited to intermediate-level learners,

the most plausible interpretation for this state of affairs is that it is a developmental stage in which the learners are faced with a conflict between the forms transferred from the L1 and those noticed in the L2 input. This stage was most likely preceded by one in which the learners rejected reciprocal pronouns and accepted clitic doubling. Even though beginner data would therefore be more telling, the fact that the learners do not reject clitic doubling at the intermediate proficiency level also represents an indication of morphological transfer from the L1.

Furthermore, as stronger transfer effects are found for the intrinsic/extrinsic contrast than for the heavy reciprocal markers, it can be concluded that morphological transfer is more persistent if the differences between the L1 and the L2 are more subtle, in all probability due to the fact that more subtle features are also more difficult to perceive in the L2 input. Evidently, due to the limited learner sample, this conclusion needs further confirmation, ideally from studies looking at different L1s and at proficiency levels from beginner to advanced. It appears particularly desirable to explore the proficiency-related issues more extensively, as the two intermediate groups in this study give very similar judgements despite their significantly different performances on the proficiency test.

These findings have important pedagogical implications. Serbian and Italian are usually considered to be very similar in their reflexive and reciprocal strategies, so that the biggest amount of time in the classroom is dedicated to the divergence in forms, while little attention is given to more subtle differences such as those described in this paper. However, since these smaller differences also lead to transfer effects and to some incorrect or inappropriate uses of the L2 forms, they should be emphasised in teaching contexts. Even in a situation when learners come from several L1 backgrounds and the properties of Serbian reflexives and reciprocals cannot be directly compared to all of the learners' L1s, it should be made sure that the potential points of divergence are indicated to the learners, especially in relation to the light/heavy marker distribution, which is subject to substantial crosslinguistic variation and likely to cause transfer effects.

References

Adjémian, C. (1983). The transferability of lexical properties. In S. M. Gass and L. Selinker (Eds.), *Language Transfer in Language Learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House. 250-268.
Cennamo, M. (1993). *The Reanalysis of Reflexives: A Diachronic Perspective*. Napoli: Liguori.
Haiman, J. (1983). Iconic and economic motivation. *Language 59*. 781-819.
König, E. and Vezzosi, L. (2004). The role of predicate meaning in the development of reflexivity. In W. Bisang, N. P. Himmelmann and B. Wiemer (Eds.), *What makes Grammaticalization?* Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 213-244.
Lichtenberk, F. (1994). Reflexives and Reciprocals. In R. E. Asher (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 7. Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press. 3504-3509.
Marelj, M. (2004). *Middles and Argument Structure across Languages*. LOT Dissertation Series. Utrecht: LOT Publications.

Montrul, S. (1997). *Transitivity Alternations in Second Language Acquisition: A Crosslinguistic Study of English, Spanish and Turkish*. PhD dissertation. Montreal: McGill University.

Montrul, S. (2000). Transitivity alternations in L2 acquisition: Toward a modular view of transfer. *Studies on Second Language Acquisition 22*. 229-273.

Montrul, S. (2001). First-language-constrained variability in the second-language acquisition of argument-structure-changing morphology with causative verbs. *Second Language Research* 17. 144-194.

Perović, A. (2003). *Knowledge of Binding in Down Syndrome: Evidence from English and Serbo-Croatian*. PhD thesis. London: UCL.

Progovac, Lj. (2005). *A Syntax of Serbian: Clausal Architecture*. Bloomington: Slavica.

Smith, M. (2004). Light and heavy reflexives. *Linguistics 42*. 573-615.

Stojanović, D. (1997). Object shift in Serbo-Croatian. In: J. R. Black and V. Motapayane (Eds.), *Clitic, Pronouns and Movement*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 301-319.

Toth, P. D. (2000). The interaction of instruction and learner-internal factors in the acquisition of L2 morphosyntax. *Studies on Second Language Acquisition 22*. 169-208.