

EASY – PLAIN – ACCESSIBLE

Chris Maaß / Laura Marie Maaß / Velga Polinska (eds.)

Easy Language in Research and Practice: Users, Modalities and Domains

**Proceedings of the 4th KLAARA
Easy Language Conference**

Chris Maaß/Laura Marie Maaß/Velga Polinska (eds.)
Easy Language in Research and Practice: Users, Modalities and Domains

Silvia Hansen/Chris Maaß (eds.)

Easy – Plain – Accessible

Vol. 24

Chris Maaß/Laura Marie Maaß/Velga Polinska (eds.)

Easy Language in Research and Practice: Users, Modalities and Domains

Proceedings of the 4th KLAARA Easy Language Conference

peer reviewed content



CC-BY-SA

ISBN 978-3-7329-1272-8

ISBN Open Access 978-3-7329-8641-5

DOI 10.57088/978-3-7329-8641-5

ISSN 2699-1683

Frank & Timme GmbH Verlag für wissenschaftliche Literatur
Berlin 2026.

Herstellung durch Frank & Timme GmbH

Wittelsbacherstraße 27a, 10707 Berlin

info@frank-timme.de

Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier.

www.frank-timme.de

Does Simplification of Grammar Reduce Sentence Acceptability?

A Case of Lithuanian Finite and Non-finite Verbal Forms

About the authors

Justina Bružaitė-Liseckienė (justina.bruzaite-liseckiene@flf.vu.lt) is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University. Her research interests include Easy Language, Plain Language, and second language acquisition. She is a co-author of the Lithuanian Easy Language Guidelines and is actively engaged in both research and practice in the field of accessible communication. She also teaches and provides training on accessible communication.

Laura Vilkaitė-Lozdienė (laura.vilkaitė@flf.vu.lt) is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Philology at Vilnius University and the head of the Psycholinguistics Research Group. Her research focuses on lexical processing, second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition, and language accessibility in reading. She is also a co-author of the Lithuanian Easy Language Guidelines and is actively involved in both research and practical initiatives aimed at promoting accessible communication.

Abstract

Simplifying grammatical structures plays a central role in ensuring that Easy Language texts are accessible. And yet, the relationship between grammatical simplification and the acceptability of Easy Language texts or their sentences (both by target readers and the general audience) remains largely underexplored. In this study, we investigated whether the choice between synonymous non-finite or finite (and potentially simpler)

verb forms in sentences affects the acceptability of those sentences. The study was conducted in the Lithuanian language with typical readers (older and younger native speakers) and Easy Language target groups: individuals with intellectual disabilities, people with early-stage dementia, and non-native speakers of Lithuanian.

A total of 161 participants evaluated sentence pairs differing only in the verb form (finite vs. non-finite). Quantitative data (3,147 judgments in total) were analysed by fitting Generalized Linear Mixed-Effects Models (GLMMs). Following this analysis, we carried out a thematic analysis of the qualitative data, consisting of participants' comments and reflections on their choices. The results revealed no overall systematic preference for either finite or non-finite verb forms across groups, suggesting that both types of constructions are equally acceptable.

Qualitative analysis showed a dual pattern in participants' evaluations. Finite constructions were linked to simplicity and clarity, while non-finite forms were valued for brevity and style. Preferences were also shaped by context: finite forms were associated with spoken language, while non-finite forms with formal or written registers. Easy Language groups gave fewer comments but reflected on similar aspects, with non-native speakers showing strong metalinguistic awareness shaped by their learning experience.

Overall, the findings indicate that grammatical simplification does not reduce sentence acceptability and that, from an acceptability perspective, both finite and non-finite forms are viable options, especially when contextual factors are taken into account.

Keywords: Easy Language, acceptability, acceptance, grammatical simplicity, text simplification, Easy Language target groups, non-finite verb forms

1 Introduction

Easy Language texts differ from typical texts in standard language. They are characterized by a specific layout, frequent and familiar vocabulary, as well as explicit explanations of complex terms. In addition, simplified grammatical structures further distinguish Easy Language from standard texts. For instance, Easy Language guidelines tend to recommend using short, syntactically simple sentences, preferring the use of the active rather than the passive voice, and avoiding rare word forms (e.g., SELSI Project, 2024; Bružaitė-Liseckienė,

Daraškienė, & Vilkaitė-Lozdienė, 2021; Pathways to Adult Education for People with Intellectual Disabilities, 2010).

However, previous research has demonstrated that comprehensibility and adherence to Easy Language guidelines do not necessarily align with acceptability (Hansen-Schirra & Maaß, 2020). That is, readers might understand a certain text, a sentence, or a construction more easily, and yet feel that the easier version is not acceptable and hence refuse to read it. Therefore, the wide acceptance of Easy Language texts is a key factor for the successful implementation and dissemination of Easy Language. The better such texts are received, the less the primary target groups of Easy Language are stigmatised (Maaß, 2020). Indeed, experts in the field have underlined that Easy Language should function as a publicly available, non-stigmatising option for all members of society (Lindholm & Vanhatalo, 2021, 15). Yet, previous reviews show that this goal is not always achieved (e.g., Anča & Melņika, 2021; Polinska & Liepa, 2023). Consequently, the issue of acceptance remains one of the challenges for the future development of Easy Language. Empirical studies on the acceptance of Easy Language or certain elements of text simplification could contribute to a better understanding of the issue of acceptance of simplified texts. However, despite its significance, this area is still under-researched (Moonen, 2021).

In the present study, we aim to start addressing the effect of morphosyntactic simplification on the acceptability of texts. We are not exploring the acceptability of the entire texts, but rather we are analysing the preferences of various groups of readers, when it comes to different morphosyntactic constructions. This research question emerges from the lack of empirical evidence supporting some of the guidelines for choosing grammatical structures in Easy Language texts. The existing guidelines for the Lithuanian language (Bružaitė-Liseckienė, Daraškienė & Vilkaitė-Lozdienė, 2021, 32) at the moment encourage the use of finite verb forms, as simpler and easier to understand than their non-finite counterparts. While based on pedagogical experience and corpus frequency data, this suggestion is not supported by solid empirical data on how readers read those finite or non-finite verb forms, or which ones they prefer as clearer and simpler to understand. Therefore, in the present study, we set out to answer this practical question about the specific set of constructions, and by doing so, we will gain

some insights into the larger picture of whether different groups of readers consistently prefer some constructions over others and their reasons for doing so.

2 Background

We can often convey the same or a similar meaning through a range of linguistic expressions. This variation goes beyond the lexical level and includes morphosyntactic structures. The present study examines the acceptability of three pairs of morphosyntactic constructions, each potentially using non-finite verb forms, in Lithuanian, aiming to determine how structural simplification influences the acceptability of Easy Language. We will look specifically at predicate constructions, attributive, and adverbial constructions.

2.1 Predicate Constructions: Active Voice vs. Passive Voice

The first pair of constructions that we analyzed consisted of synonymous constructions in the active and passive voice. As is well established, both constructions can convey almost equivalent meanings (see Table 1), with only subtle differences in what is foregrounded.

Active voice	Passive voice
The committee approved the proposal.	The proposal was approved by the committee.

Table 1: The same meaning conveyed by the active voice and the passive voice

The subject of a sentence can also be omitted in the passive voice (see Table 2). In this case, the sentence is shorter, but the reader is left to infer the whole message themselves.

Active voice	Passive voice
The committee approved the proposal.	The proposal was approved.

Table 2: Expressed vs. hidden subject in a sentence

Despite the semantic differences between the active and passive voice, there is also a formal distinction between the two. The active voice is composed of finite verb forms, whereas the passive voice is constructed with non-finite forms, typically participles. The formal difference is easier to notice in other languages than English (see Table 3).

Language	Active voice with finite verb form	Passive voice with non-finite verb form
Lithuanian	Komitetas pritarė siūlymui.	Siūlymui buvo pritarta.
Spanish	El comité aprobó la propuesta.	La propuesta fue aprobada.
English translation	The committee approved the proposal.	The proposal was approved.
Gloss	The committee approve-3SG. PST the proposal.	The proposal be.3SG.PST approve-PST.PTCP.F.SG.

Table 3: Active (finite) vs. passive (non-finite) constructions

While in the present study, we focused on the choice between the finite and non-finite constructions, the general comparison between passive and active constructions is interesting in its own right. There is a long-lasting tradition to warn against the use of the passive voice, both in plain language and in Easy Language texts. However, recent reviews of psycholinguistic data (e.g., Rastelli, 2025) suggested that this critical approach to the passive voice might be exaggerated. Rastelli claims that there is not much evidence of passive constructions being difficult per se; rather, they are often overused or used inappropriately. Ferreira (2021) also argued that passive constructions have their functions and are often necessary for maintaining the coherence of the texts. In any case, the comprehension of passive constructions has already been researched quite extensively, not from the preference perspective, but in terms of the readers' ability to process them easily and comprehend them. There seems to be some individual differences in how readers comprehend passive constructions (e.g., Dąbrowska & Street, 2006; Street & Dąbrowska, 2010). For example, people with lower academic achievements struggled with passives in these studies, while non-native speakers scored at ceiling, possibly because of the explicit training. These studies are particularly relevant in the context of

Easy Language texts. First, they offer an example of a clear distinction between how different Easy Language readers (e.g., non-native speakers vs. people with intellectual disabilities) comprehend passive constructions. Also, these studies show that our understanding of passives depends on our language usage and our being used to them.

Even though passive constructions have been quite extensively studied already (and we have only touched on a few examples of relevant studies), to our best knowledge, users' preference for passive or active constructions has not been explored systematically yet.

Apart from passive voice constructions, the use of non-finite forms is even more widespread in Lithuanian. As already mentioned, two other pairs of morphosyntactic constructions were analysed in this study, namely, attributive constructions and adverbial constructions. The same formal difference in verb forms applies to them both, and we will explain it in further sections.

2.2 Attributive Constructions

In Lithuanian, verbal constructions can function as attributes to a nominal phrase. Two main scenarios can be identified: In the first case, the attributive construction is centred around a finite verb form, while in the second case it is formed with a participle (see Table 4).

	Finite verb form in attributive construction	Non-finite verb form in attributive construction
Lithuanian sentence	Sprendimas, kurį priėmė komitetas, buvo svarbus.	Sprendimas, priimtas komiteto, buvo svarbus.
English translation	The decision that the committee made was important.	The decision, made by the committee, was important.
Gloss	decision-NOM.SG REL.ACC.SG make-PST.3 committee-NOM.SG be.PST.3 important-NOM.SG	decision-NOM.SG make-PST.PTCP.PASS.NOM.SG committee-GEN.SG be.PST.3 important-NOM.SG

Table 4: Attributive constructions with finite vs. non-finite verb forms

If the attributive construction is formed with a finite verb form, the verb must be preceded by a relative pronoun. On the one hand, this makes the sentence longer. On the other hand, in this case, the attributive relation between the nominal phrase and the verb phrase is expressed explicitly. As previous studies showed, an explicit link between sentences or clauses leads to better comprehension (e.g., Silfhout, Evers-Vermeul & Sanders, 2014). However, whether readers prefer such explicit constructions or their shorter grammatical alternatives has not yet been investigated.

2.3 Adverbial Constructions

The third pair of morphosyntactic constructions we addressed in the study were the finite/non-finite verbal forms in the adverbial context. In Lithuanian, temporal adverbial constructions can include either finite or non-finite verb forms (see Table 5).

	Finite verb form in adverbial construction	Non-finite verb form in adverbial construction
Lithuanian sentence	Kai komitetas priėmė sprendimą, dėl sprendimo balsavo Seimas.	Komitetui priėmus sprendimą, dėl sprendimo balsavo Seimas.
English translation	When the committee made the decision, the Parliament voted on the decision.	Once the committee had made the decision, the Parliament voted on the decision.
Gloss	when committee-NOM.SG accept-PST.3 decision-ACC.SG about decision-GEN.SG vote-PST.3 Parliament-NOM.SG	committee-DAT.SG accept-ADVL.PST.PTCP decision-ACC.SG about decision-GEN.SG vote-PST.3 Parliament-NOM.SG

Table 5: Adverbial constructions with finite vs. non-finite verb forms

Here again, the constructions with non-finite verb forms tend to be shorter, while the constructions with finite verb forms emphasise the temporal relations within the sentence more explicitly, which is signalled by the connectives, in the example, *kai* (*when*).

2.4 Usage of Finite and Non-Finite Verb Forms in Lithuanian

Apart from the morphosyntactic differences between constructions with finite and non-finite verb forms discussed above, their use and status also differ in the context of Easy Language (see Table 6). First, finite verb forms are more frequent in Lithuanian, particularly in spoken language (Dabašinskienė, 2009; Brinkutė 2018). Non-finite verb forms, on the other hand, occur more often in official registers, such as academic texts or administrative documents (Brinkutė, 2018).

	Finite verb forms	Non-finite verb forms
Usage	More frequent	Less frequent
Formality	More informal	More formal
Status in the Easy Lithuanian guidelines	Recommended to use	Recommended to avoid

Table 6: Differences between finite and non-finite forms in Lithuanian

Finally, reflecting these tendencies, the Easy Language guidelines for Easy Lithuanian (Bružaitė-Liseckienė, Daraškienė & Vilkaitė-Lozdienė, 2021) recommend prioritising finite verb forms and avoiding non-finite verb forms. However, the acceptability of these recommendations has not yet been systematically investigated. The present study, therefore, seeks to determine which verb forms are preferred by typical readers and by the primary target groups of Easy Language.

2.5 The research questions

In the present study, we aimed to answer two main research questions:

RQ1: Do various groups of readers consistently prefer finite or non-finite verb constructions when given a choice at a sentence level?

RQ2: What are the reasons that the readers provide for choosing one form over the other?

We performed statistical analysis of their choices to answer RQ1 and qualitatively analysed their comments to answer RQ2.

3 Methods

3.1 Participants

A total of 161 individuals participated in the study. They represented two broader categories: typical readers and Easy Language target groups. The study was conducted in the Lithuanian language.

3.1.1 Typical readers

We use the term “typical readers” in this paper to refer to native speakers reading standard texts in their mother tongue. The participants of this category fell into two distinct age groups: younger and older individuals. The younger group comprised 40 participants, 20 females and 20 males. Their mean age was 20 years, and they mostly lived in Vilnius, the capital city.

The older participants were 36 individuals (mostly females, only 3 males), and their mean age was 77 years. We aimed for a separate group of older individuals, as we expected that, potentially, they might show different preferences and would prefer simpler sentences.

3.1.2 Easy Language target groups

We have included three Easy Language target groups in the study: people with cognitive impairments, non-native speakers, and people with dementia. Our main reason for having several different groups of participants was the fact that these groups have very different characteristics when it comes to language use and, therefore, could show completely different preferences.

Thirty-one individuals with cognitive impairments participated in our study, 10 males and 22 females. Their mean age was 37 years old. They were independent readers and would be able to read Level 3 (most complex) Easy Language texts in the Lithuanian system. A professional social worker served

as a research assistant when collecting data from this population to make sure she was sensitive to the needs of this group.

Forty non-native speakers also participated in the study, 14 males and 26 females. They came from a variety of first language backgrounds, and their level of Lithuanian proficiency varied considerably. We were aiming for the participants who are capable of reading at least at the A2 level, based on the CEFR. The self-indicated proficiency level of the participants ranged from A2 to C1. To ensure the participants were comfortable giving comments during the task, they were allowed to comment on their choices in English if they preferred.

Finally, 14 participants with early dementia participated in the study. Three of them were male, and 11 were female; their mean age was 77 years. They were mostly recruited through various assisted living homes or day centers for people with dementia.

All the participants gave written informed consent to participate in the study and to be recorded. To make sure that participants understood the consent sheet, we prepared two versions of it: one in plain language and one in Easy Language.

3.2 Materials and Procedure

The data analysed in the paper were collected as part of a larger experimental study. For the present study, the participants were asked to evaluate pairs of sentences that were identical except for the verb forms: in one sentence, a finite verb form was used, while in the other, a non-finite verb form. We have randomized the order of the two options, so that half of the time the finite and half of the time the non-finite construction was presented first.

One sentence in each pair was an authentic example of Lithuanian language use from the Lithuanian Web Corpus (ltWaC, Kilgariff et al. 2010) or the Internet. We made sure that half of the authentic sentences contained finite and the other half, non-finite verb forms. We wrote the alternative option ourselves. For example, if the authentic sentence contained a finite verb form, the corresponding alternative sentence in the pair was converted to a non-finite form and vice versa (see Table 7).

Direction of modification	Authentic sentence	Modified sentence
Finite ↔ non-finite	Kai tu dainuoja, atrodo, kad tavo balsas skamba kartu su muzika.	Tau dainuojant, atrodo, kad tavo balsas skamba kartu su muzika.
Translation	When you sing, it seems that your voice sounds together with the music.	When you sing, it seems that your voice sounds together with the music.
Gloss	when you.NOM sing.2SG it seems that your voice. NOM sounds.3SG together with music.INST	you.DAT sing. ADVL.PRS. PTCP it.seems that your voice.NOM sounds.3SG together with music.INST
Non-finite ↔ finite	Miestelyje kalbama, kad moteris turėjo didelių skolų.	Miestelyje žmonės kalba, kad moteris turėjo didelių skolų.
Translation	It is said in the town that the woman had big debts.	People in the town say that the woman had big debts.
Gloss	town.LOC say.PASS.3SG that woman.NOM have.PST.3SG big.GEN.PL debt.GEN.PL	town.LOC people.NOM say.3PL that woman.NOM have.PST.3SG big.GEN.PL debt.GEN.PL

Table 7: Sentence pairs contrasting finite and non-finite verb forms

A list of 26 sentence pairs was prepared. As this task turned out to be too long for the Easy Language readers, for the Easy Language version, 14 of the sentence pairs were selected. We adapted them into Easy Language by getting rid of any optional details and making sure the vocabulary used in the sentences is frequent. Both standard and Easy Language versions maintained the same verb forms.

Participants were presented with the set of sentence pairs individually. They were instructed for each pair of sentences to select the one they preferred and, if possible, comment on their choices. The instructions provided to participants were as follows (but obviously, in Lithuanian, here we present the translation for the sake of simplicity):

Read the pairs of sentences provided and choose the one that sounds better to you. There is no correct answer – we are only interested in your opinion. If you have any thoughts while choosing a sentence, please share them out loud. If both sentences sound fine to you, still choose one!

Three research assistants collected the data. They were instructed to encourage participants to share both the reasons for their choices and their opinions about the evaluated sentences.

3.3 Data Analysis

We analysed the qualitative data (participants' choices) using the R statistical program (R Core Team, 2013), and the models were fitted using the lme4 package (Bates, 2015). As the response was binary (either finite or non-finite verb form chosen), generalized linear models were fit. When interpreting such models, odds ratio coefficients that are above 1 show that the higher values of the predictor variable increase the odds of the outcome, while odds ratios below 1 indicate the opposite trend in the data.

In our models, non-finite constructions were taken as the baseline, so the odds ratios higher than 1 in the models indicate a higher probability for choosing the finite construction. As there were two versions of the study (standard and Easy Language version), separate models were fitted: one for the typical readers and one for the three groups of Easy Language users.

As for the qualitative data, the comments of the participants were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. We have inductively coded the responses based on recurrent themes.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 RQ1: Do various groups of readers consistently prefer finite or non-finite verb constructions when given a choice at a sentence level?

To answer RQ1, we conducted the statistical analysis of the participants' choices. More specifically, we looked at these questions:

1. Do participants (typical readers and Easy Language reader groups) show an overall preference for either finite or non-finite verb forms?
2. Are there systematic differences between younger and older typical readers in their preferences for finite versus non-finite forms?
3. Are there systematic differences among the three Easy Language reader groups in their choices?
4. Does the type of morphosyntactic structure (passive, attributive, or adverbial) influence participants' choices?

4.1.1 Quantitative results: typical readers

Firstly, we analysed the preferences of the typical readers. The dataset consisted of 1,976 sentence-pair judgments in total.

To start with, the data was analyzed using a generalized linear mixed-effects model (GLMM) with random effects and the intercept only, intentionally excluding any fixed effects to capture the overall distributional preferences for finite and non-finite constructions. Items (sentences) and participants were included in the model as random effects. The intercept-only model showed that the choice of finite or non-finite constructions was equally likely (note the intercept in Table 8 is not significant, $p = .664$). This suggests that both choices (finite and non-finite constructions) were equally likely for typical readers (see Table 8). So there seems to be no overall difference in preferences, and consequently, in the acceptability of the two constructions between the typical readers, native speakers of the Lithuanian language.

	Preference		
<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Odds Ratios</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	0.90	0.56 – 1.45	.664
Random Effects			
σ^2	3.29		
τ_{00} Participant	0.26		
τ_{00} Item	1.39		
ICC	0.33		
N _{Participant}	76		
N _{Item}	26		
Observations	1976		
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	.000 / .334		

Table 8: Baseline GLMM results: typical readers’ preferences for finite vs. non-finite constructions

In the second model, we included the Group of participants (young native speakers vs. older native speakers) and the Morphosyntactic structure (adverbial, passive, attributive constructions) as fixed effects. Participant and Item were specified as random effects. Using this model, we addressed the following questions:

- 1) Are there systematic differences between younger and aging native speakers in their preferences for finite vs. non-finite forms?
- 2) Does the type of morphosyntactic structure (passive, attributive, or adverbial) influence participants’ choices?

The results of the statistical analysis are summarized in Table 9.

	Preference		
<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Odds Ratios</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	1.38	0.67 – 2.84	.386
Morphosyntactic structure [adverbial]	0.39	0.15 – 0.99	.048
Morphosyntactic structure [attributive]	0.85	0.23 – 3.12	.808
Group [younger]	1.07	0.79 – 1.46	.650
Random Effects			
σ^2	3.29		
τ_{00} Participant	0.26		
τ_{00} Item	1.19		
ICC	0.31		
N Participant	76		
N Item	26		
Observations	1976		
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	.042 /.335		

Note: dummy coding applied for categorical variables. Passive constructions were taken as the baseline for the Morphosyntactic structure, and the older participant group served as the baseline for the age group.

Table 9: GLMM results: effects of age group and morphosyntactic structure on sentence preferences

As for the Morphosyntactic structure of the sentence, the results showed that adverbial clauses differed significantly from the passive constructions (*Odds Ratios* = 0.39, 95 % CI [0.15, 0.99], $p = .048$). This suggests that, relative to passive constructions, participants were more inclined to choose non-finite forms in adverbial contexts. And vice versa, in passive constructions, the participants were inclined to choose finite verbal forms when compared to adverbial constructions. Attributive constructions did not differ significantly from the passive baseline (*Odds Ratios* = 0.85, 95 % CI [0.23, 3.12], $p = .808$). Predicted probabilities of choosing a finite verb form over a non-finite verb form in three different morphosyntactic contexts are shown in Figure 1.

These findings indicate that the choices of the typical readers in the study were not uniform across morphosyntactic contexts but were instead sensitive

to the specific function of each construction. In particular, the contrast between adverbial and passive constructions suggests a systematic tendency that calls for deeper explanation. While at this stage we focus on the statistical results, this tendency will be revisited in the qualitative analysis, where participants' own reflections on their choices provide further insights.

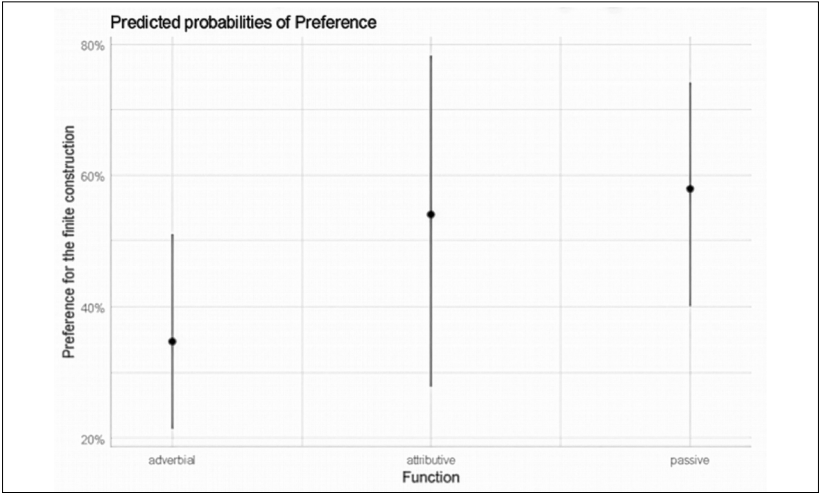


Figure 1: Predicted probabilities of choosing finite verb form over non-finite verb form

The fixed effect of participant group (younger vs. older native speakers) was not significant (*Odds Ratios* = 1.07, 95 % CI [0.79, 1.46], $p = .650$), indicating no systematic differences between groups in their preferences. This result suggests that both younger and older typical readers behave similarly and show no clear overall preferences for either finite or non-finite verbal forms.

4.1.2 Quantitative results: Easy Language target groups

Then we examined the data from the Easy Language reader groups. As with the typical readers, we fitted a baseline model with only an intercept to assess the overall preference for finite versus non-finite verb forms. The intercept was not significantly different from chance (*Odds Ratios* = 1.07, 95 % CI [0.83, 1.37],

$p = .595$), indicating that participants did not display a systematic preference for any of the forms. A summary of the GLMM results is provided in Table 10.

	Preference		
<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Odds Ratios</i>	<i>CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	1.07	0.83 – 1.37	.595
Random Effects			
σ^2	3.29		
τ_{00} Participant	0.31		
τ_{00} Item	0.12		
ICC	0.12		
$N_{\text{Participant}}$	85		
N_{Item}	14		
Observations	1171		
Marginal R^2 / Conditional R^2	.000 / .116		

Table 10: Baseline GLMM results: Easy Language target groups' preferences for finite vs. non-finite constructions

Finally, we fitted a model including fixed effects of interest. In this model, we included the group of the Easy Language readers (individuals with cognitive impairments, people with dementia, and non-native speakers) and the morphosyntactic structure of the sentence (adverbial, passive, attributive) as fixed effects, while Participant and Item (sentence) were specified as random effects. A summary of the model is provided in Table 11.

	Preference		
<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Odds Ratios</i>	<i>95 % CI</i>	<i>p</i>
(Intercept)	1.02	0.69 – 1.52	.910
Morphosyntactic structure [adverbial]	0.92	0.57 – 1.46	.713
Morphosyntactic structure [attributive]	0.94	0.48 – 1.82	.850
Group [with dementia]	1.16	0.71 – 1.90	.541

	Preference		
<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Odds Ratios</i>	<i>95 % CI</i>	<i>p</i>
Group [with cognitive impairment]	1.20	0.83 – 1.74	.332
Random Effects			
σ^2	3.29		
$\tau 00_{\text{Participant}}$	0.30		
$\tau 00_{\text{Item}}$	0.12		
ICC	0.11		
N _{Participant}	85		
N _{Item}	14		
Observations	1171		
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	.003 / .116		

Note: dummy coding applied for categorical variables. Passive constructions were taken as the baseline for the Morphosyntactic structure, and non-native speakers served as the baseline for the participant group.

Table 11: GLMM results: effects of Easy Language target group and morphosyntactic structure on sentence preferences

The GLMM with target group and morphosyntactic structure as fixed effects did not show any significant predictors. Neither morphosyntactic function nor target group exerted any systematic influence. These findings suggest that all Easy Language target groups, irrespective of morphosyntactic function of the finite form, did not show systematic preferences for either finite or non-finite forms in their choices. The results therefore point to fact that both verb forms seem to be equally acceptable between Easy Language readers.

4.2 Qualitative results

We followed up the quantitative analysis with the qualitative analysis of the participants’ comments gathered during the task. The insights of the qualitative analysis complement the statistical findings by revealing the motivations of participants’ choices and also the reasoning behind them. We have identified the main recurrent themes in their responses, and we will summarize them

below. When giving examples for each theme, we tried to provide a variety of comments from different participant groups.

4.2.1 Difficulty of choice

We began our analysis by examining how participants evaluated the difficulty of the task. Many reported that both sentences in a pair appeared very similar, which made it challenging for them to choose one of them. Some examples of participants' comments illustrating this difficulty are presented in Table 12.

Participant code	Participant group	Quotation (Lithuanian)	Quotation (English translation)
AT-K2-V-3	Typical readers	<i>Aš nelabai žinau. Dažnai man buvo ir taip, ir taip gerai.</i>	<i>I don't really know. A lot of times, either way was fine for me.</i>
MB-IN-21	Individuals with cognitive impairments	<i>nu šita užduotis sunkesnė, nes pagalvot reikia</i>	<i>Well, this task is harder 'cause you actually have to think.</i>
AR-DE-V-07	Individuals with dementia	<i>Tai kad čia tie patys. Ir šitas, ir šitas vienodi.</i>	<i>But they're the same. This one and that one are identical.</i>
AT-K1-M-22	Typical readers	<i>Nežinau, kažką galvojau, bet nesugalvojau, kas čia per skirtumai.</i>	<i>I don't know, I was thinking about something, but I couldn't figure out what the difference even is.</i>
AR-K1-M-35	Aging typical readers	<i>Čia grynai tas pats, nieko nesiskiria. Jokio skirtumo bendrai nėra.</i>	<i>It's literally the same thing, there's no difference at all.</i>

Table 12: Reported difficulties in choosing between sentences

A focus on meaning rather than form is natural in language processing (Barcroft & Wong, 2012). The difficulty reported by participants is therefore not surprising. Their struggle to choose between the target sentences also aligns with the quantitative results, which revealed no significant preference

for finite over non-finite verb forms or vice versa. Participants’ perception that both sentences looked essentially the same supports the conclusion that there is no systematic tendency to prefer either form.

4.2.2 Is the Subject Necessary?

Despite the reported difficulties in choosing between the two sentences described above, participants provided a considerable number of comments on the structural differences in the sentence pairs and on their own decisions. A large proportion of these comments concerned the contrast between active and passive voices. Most participants who drew attention to this distinction emphasized the importance of the subject in the sentence, noting that it adds accuracy and conveys more information (see Table 13).

Comments emphasizing the importance of the subject in a sentence were the most frequent ones in the qualitative data. However, there were a few counterexamples: some participants questioned the necessity of the subject in sentences (see Table 14). They highlighted the abstractness of non-finite verb forms, which they regarded as an advantage. Several typical readers observed that the active voice and an explicit subject can make a sentence overly specific, suggesting that certain information is better conveyed in a more abstract form.

Participant code	Participant group	Quotation (Lithuanian)	Quotation (English translation)
AT-K2-V-27	Typical readers	<i>Kai kuriuose atvejuose tai pasirinkau paprasčiausią variantą, nes jame aiškina, kas padarė veiksmą.</i>	<i>In some cases, I picked the simplest option, because it actually shows who performed the action.</i>
MB-IN-19	Individuals with cognitive impairments	<i>Nes geriau paaiškinta, kad organizacija turi užtikrinti, o ten neivardyta kas.</i>	<i>Because it's explained better that the organization has to ensure, while in the other one, it doesn't say who's supposed to ensure.</i>

Participant code	Participant group	Quotation (Lithuanian)	Quotation (English translation)
AT-K1-M-24	Young typical readers	<i>Pirmiausia tai sakinių informatyvumas. Ten viename, nu pavyzdžiui: „Miestelyje kalbama, kad velionė turėjo didelių skolų“, bet aš rinkausi „Miestelyje žmonės kalba“, kad parodyti kas kalba, nes galbūt tas pirmasis kalbėt gali ir svečiai, atvykę iš kažkur, ir panašiai, tai man visi sakiniai tokie, kur daug maž informatyvūs.</i>	<i>First of all, it's about how informative the sentences are. Like, for example: 'In the town it's said that the deceased woman had big debts,' but I chose 'People in the town say,' to make it clear who's speaking, because otherwise it could be visitors or someone else. So yeah, I went with sentences that felt more informative.</i>
AR-K1-V-24	Aging typical readers	<i>Pasirinkau dėl to, kad konkretizuoja, kas bijo. Tai aš taip pagalvojau.</i>	<i>I chose that one because it specifies who's afraid. That was my reasoning.</i>

Table 13: Participants' reflections on subject expression in active and passive sentences

Participant code	Participant group	Quotation (Lithuanian)	Quotation (English translation)
AT-K2-V-27	Non-native speakers	<i>Aš pastebėjau, kad „miestelyje kalbama“ ir kitam sakiny yra „miestelyje žmonės kalba“. Tai antram variante nėra, atvirkščiai, yra kažkoks objektas ir mes tipo susitelkiam dėmesį tenais – „žmonės kalba“. Šitoj pusėj labiau abstrakčiai yra pasakyta ir man, pavyzdžiui, kada yra kalbama abstrakčiai, nėra, pavyzdžiui, kažkokio dėmesio kažkokiam objektui. Man geriau skamba.</i>	<i>I noticed that in one it says 'in the town it's said,' and in the other it's 'people in the town say.' So in the second version, there isn't that, on the contrary, there is some object and we kinda focus on it – 'people say.' On this side, it's phrased more abstractly, and for me, when it's abstract, there isn't that focus on some specific object. To me, it just sounds better.</i>

Participant code	Participant group	Quotation (Lithuanian)	Quotation (English translation)
AT-K1-V-30	Young typical readers	<i>Tai aišku, kad, nu tipo, valstybė investuoja per žmones, bet <...> man daug natūraliau skamba, kad yra reiškiny, kad yra investuojama negu kad vat mes kolektyviškai investuojame į švietimo sistemą. „Investuojama“ variantas kažkaip labiau patinka man.</i>	<i>Well, yeah, obviously the state invests through people, but to me it sounds a lot more natural to say it as a process – that there’s investing going on – rather than like, ‘we collectively invest in the education system.’ I just prefer the ‘is being invested’ version.</i>
AR-K1-M-21	Aging typical readers	<i>„Valdžia nusprendė“ man kažkaip tai gal čia buvo... gal čia ne tik valdžia nusprendė, gal ir vietos gyventojai. Man tai labai atrodo konkrečiu, per daug sukonkretinta.</i>	<i>‘The government decided’ – to me it feels like, well, maybe it wasn’t just the government, maybe also the local people. It just sounds way too specific, too concrete.</i>
AR-DE-M-11	Individuals with dementia	<i>Man tai nepatinka, kad valdžia, kad daugumos gyventojų galbūt tas noras yra, ne tik valdžios.</i>	<i>What I don’t like is that it makes it sound like it’s just the government, when maybe that wish comes from most of the people too, not only the government.</i>
AR-K1-M-11	Aging typical readers	<i>Aišku ir taip, kas kalba, ne šuniukai, ne kačiukai.</i>	<i>Well, it’s obvious who’s talking without explanation. Puppies or kittens won’t be talking.</i>

Table 14: Participants’ views on the subject: precision, abstraction, and redundancy

Other participants emphasized that the subject in a sentence merely duplicates the meaning already conveyed by the verb form and is therefore not necessary. For example, several participants compared the structures “*In the town it is said*” and “*People in the town say*”, noting that the construction “*It is said*” is naturally associated with people talking (see Table 14). As one L2 Lithuanian speaker observed, the presence of an explicit subject may even distract the reader from the main message, which illustrates well the theoretical points made by Ferreira (2021) about how passive voice helps organize the information structure.

In sum, a substantial number of participants raised the issue of the subject in the sentence pairs. While most emphasized its importance and the value of concreteness, others regarded it as unnecessary or even distracting and interfering. So there seems to be no unambiguous preference for using passive or active constructions, and consequently, non-finite or finite verbal forms.

4.2.3 Do we need more words in a sentence?

A substantial proportion of participants also commented on the number of words in a sentence. As noted in Sections 2.2 and 2.3, constructions with non-finite verb forms often convey the same information with fewer words than constructions with finite verb forms. Our analysis of participants’ comments indicates that many based their preferences on the length of the clause (see Table 15 for comments from different participant groups).

Many participants who chose the non-finite construction justified their decision with the brief remark “*It is shorter.*” Others, however, elaborated further, often combining the notion of brevity with the perception that the sentence sounded better. Brevity was also frequently associated with clarity: several participants noted that shorter sentences were simpler, clearer, and easier to understand (see Table 15).

Participant code	Participant group	Quotation (Lithuanian)	Quotation (English translation)
AT-K2-M-22	Non-native speakers	<i>Tiesiog trumpiau tą patį galima pasakyti. Ir mes kadangi turėjome ten universitete teksto rašymo dirbtuves, mums labai varė ant šito, kad kodėl reikia kažkokius ilgesnius sakinius, jeigu galima trumpiau tą patį pasakyti.</i>	<i>You can just say the same thing in a shorter sentence. And since we had those text-writing workshops at the university, they really pushed this idea: why make long sentences if you can say the same thing more briefly?</i>
MB-IN-11	Individuals with cognitive impairments	<i>Aiškesnis tai antras, nes čia [pirmame] yra daugiau papildomų žodžių.</i>	<i>The second one's clearer, 'cause the first one has more extra words.</i>
MB-IN-19	Individuals with cognitive impairments	<i>Tas, manau, be žodelio „jei“. Skambesys gražesnis.</i>	<i>I think without the little word 'if', it just sounds nicer.</i>
AR-De-M-12	Individuals with dementia	<i>Tai čia tas pats. Čia vienoda mintis. Man šitas labiau, trumpesnis, labiau patinka.</i>	<i>It's the same thing. Same idea. I just like this one more – it's shorter, and I like it better.</i>
AT-K1-M-05	Young typical readers	<i>Praleidžiant tą žodį „kai“, tai irgi tiesiog kažkaip trumpiau, kad tiesiog gražiau skamba.</i>	<i>By leaving out that word 'when', it just comes out shorter, and it simply sounds nicer.</i>
AR-K1-M-16	Aging typical readers	<i>Šitas trumpiau skamba, suprantamiau.</i>	<i>This one sounds shorter, easier to understand.</i>

Table 15: Participants' comments on brevity in sentence constructions

However, other participants showed an opposite perspective. In particular, non-native speakers of Lithuanian emphasized that constructions with finite verb forms, although longer, were easier to understand than sentences with non-finite forms (see Table 16). The comment of participant AT-K2-M-22 also illustrates the importance of instruction in the context of learning Lithuanian as a second language, showing how teachers can shape learners' attitudes toward different structures.

Participant code	Participant group	Quotation (Lithuanian)	Quotation (English translation)
AT-K2-V-31	Non-native speakers	<i>Man su padalyviais būna sunku, todėl aš nepasirinkau.</i>	<i>I usually find adverbial participles hard, so I didn't choose that one.</i>
AT-K2-M-04	Non-native speakers	<i>Tenais yra biškį daugiau žodžių, bet vis tiek tai skamba aiškiau dėl to, kad, mano mąstymu, tai lengvesnė struktūra.</i>	<i>There are a few more words there, but it still sounds clearer to me, 'cause in my view it's just an easier structure.</i>
MB-IN-01	Individuals with cognitive impairments	<i>Tai čia irgi veiksmažodis, ką darė: perskaitė, man buvo aiškiau. O čia nebuvo taip aišku, nes ką dariusi, perskaičiusi.</i>	<i>So here it's also a verb, like 'read through,' and that was clearer to me. But in the other one it wasn't as clear, 'cause it was like 'having read' or 'after reading.'</i>
AT-K1-V-06	Young typical reader	<i>Man visąlaik būna lengviau su tuo žodeliu „kai“.</i>	<i>It's always easier for me with that little word 'when'.</i>
AT-K1-V-19	Young typical reader	<i>Šiaip kartais atrodo, kad yra visokių tokių, net nežinau, kaip pasakyti, priedėlių, visokių tų „kai“, „kad“ ir taip toliau, kurie, atrodo, padeda aiškiau suprast esmę arba sakinį, arba apskritai tą pačią sakinio struktūrą, kas iš tikrųjų yra norima perduoti, bet kartais atrodo, kad jie tokie tampa ir pertekliniai, kurie dar kaip tik atrodo nelabai reikalingi galbūt ir kad ir be jų ta pati mintis yra pasakoma, tai nežinau.</i>	<i>Sometimes it feels like there are all these little add-ons – I don't even know how to call them – like 'when,' 'that,' and so on. They seem to help make the meaning or the sentence clearer, or even the structure itself, what exactly is being said. But other times they just feel kind of redundant, like not really necessary, since the same idea comes through without them. So yeah, I don't know.</i>

Table 16: Participants' comments highlighting the simplicity of finite constructions

The ambiguity of the phenomenon is well illustrated by a native speaker's AT-K1-V-19 comment. This observation highlights the dual nature of constructions with finite verb forms. On the one hand, such constructions consist of at least two words, whereas a non-finite verb form alone is sufficient to express the same meaning. From a superficial perspective, processing a single word may seem easier than processing two. On the other hand, finite constructions tend to be more transparent and explicit than non-finite ones. Constructions with either finite or non-finite verb forms often constitute a subordinate clause. In the case of finite verb forms, the relationship between the main clause and the subordinate clause is signaled explicitly by a separate word such as *when*, *if*, or *that*. This transparency is assumed to facilitate sentence processing (Warren, 2012). By contrast, a non-finite verb form simultaneously conveys its own meaning and the relationship between the clauses, which may complicate its processing.

Thus, the qualitative data highlight both the advantages and disadvantages of finite and non-finite verb forms. These findings are again consistent with the quantitative analysis, which revealed no clear preference for one form over the other.

4.2.4 Does context matter?

Context emerged as another important factor shaping participants' choices. Several participants reported that their preference for one form over the other depended on the register of the sentence. Illustrative comments on this issue are presented in Table 17.

Some participants distinguished between everyday spoken language and more literary or written styles, noting that some sentences could be associated with one register while others belonged to a different one. In particular, the contrast between active and passive voice was closely linked to register. Passive voice was often associated with formal language, whereas active voice was described as "more natural" or even "more human" (e.g., Participant AT-K1-V-02, Table 17). In a few cases, however, active voice, and especially the explicit presence of a subject, was linked to formality. According to one participant (AT-K1-V-12, see Table 17), official texts should provide greater clarity; therefore, the subject should be explicit.

Similar associations were also noted in the context of adverbial and attributive clauses. For example, one participant (AT-K1-V-04, Table 17) associated attributive constructions with finite verb forms with spoken language, while linking constructions with non-finite verb forms to written contexts.

Participants' tendency to view non-finite verb forms as characteristic of written or official registers resonates with the findings of previous corpus studies. Finite verb forms are more frequent in the Lithuanian spoken language, whereas non-finite verb forms occur more often in official registers, such as academic texts or administrative documents (Dabašinskienė, 2009; Brinkutė, 2018). So the participants are potentially drawing on their language experience and expectations when choosing between the two given options.

Participant code	Participant group	Quotation (Lithuanian)	Quotation (English translation)
AT-K2-V-13	Non-native speakers	<i>(comment given in English)</i>	<i>Like for most of the sentences. They both sound okay for me. Like, I don't know. In some instances maybe some of them sound more like daily, like daily language. Some of them sound more like literary language, you know what I mean?</i>
AT-K1-V-04	Young typical reader	<i>„Skysčiai, kuriuos geriamė“, atrodo, kaip kažkas man duoda rekomendaciją, kaip pasakyti, išsako balsu, o tas „Mūsų geriami skysčiai <...>“ įsivaizduoju, kad labiau perskaityčiau negu kad man kažkas pasakyti.</i>	<i>‘The liquids that we drink’ feels like someone’s giving me a recommendation, like actually saying it out loud. But ‘the liquids we drink’ – I picture it more as something I’d read, not something someone would say to me.</i>

Participant code	Participant group	Quotation (Lithuanian)	Quotation (English translation)
AT-K1-V-02	Young typical reader	<i>Atrodo, tie variantai, kaip pateikia dirbtinis intelektas, žinai, ta tokia pasyvinė forma. O kita yra ta tokia žmogiškoji forma.</i>	<i>It feels like AI produces those versions, the ones that are in passive form, you know. While the other one has more of a human touch.</i>
AT-K1-V-12	Young typical reader	<i>Šiaip pagalvojau, kad man pagrinde tai yra funkcinis stilius, dažniausiai atitikdavo, kad, jeigu tai yra kažkoks oficialus tekstas, aš noriu kuo daugiau aiškumo. Jo, ir aš rinkdavausi tuos, kurie mini, būtent kas yra ką igaliotas daryti.</i>	<i>I was thinking, for me it mainly comes down to functional style. Usually, if it's some kind of official text, I want as much clarity as possible. Yeah, so I'd go for the versions that specifically mention who's authorized to do what.</i>
AT-K1-V-20	Young typical reader	<i>Kartais tiesiog atrodo, tokios abstrakčios konstrukcijos geriau skamba, kai kurios atrodo geriau, kai yra veiksnys kažkoks įvardintas, bet čia turbūt irgi labiau nuo konteksto priklauso.</i>	<i>Sometimes it just feels like those more abstract constructions sound better, and other times it works better when the subject is actually mentioned. But I guess that also mostly depends on the context.</i>
AR-K1-M-08	Aging typical reader	<i>Bijau, kad žiūriu iš tokios oficialios pusės. „Tikisi“ natūraliau būtų, o „tikimasi“ skamba oficialiau.</i>	<i>I'm afraid I'm looking at it from a more formal angle. 'Expects' would sound more natural, while 'it is expected' comes off more formal.</i>

Table 17: Participants’ reflections on contextual and stylistic factors shaping preferences

4.2.5 Are the Insights Across Groups the Same?

The task was completed by both typical readers and the Easy Language readers. Statistical analysis showed no significant differences either between younger and older typical readers or among the three Easy Language groups in their

preferences for finite versus non-finite verb forms. The qualitative analysis, however, pointed to different tendencies in both the quantity and the nature of comments made by the groups, suggesting that while their choices were statistically similar, the reasoning behind these choices varied.

Typical readers distinguished themselves in several ways. First, both younger and older participants frequently emphasized the difficulty of choosing between the sentences, as they generally conveyed the same meaning. Nevertheless, they were comparatively generous in providing comments, often elaborating on the factors that influenced their decisions. What particularly set this group of readers apart was the attention they devoted to context. Many typical readers stressed that their preferences depended on the communicative situation, noting that they might choose one structure in informal, everyday use and another in more formal or written settings. This sensitivity to context highlights a flexible approach to language use, in which both finite and non-finite verb forms are seen as acceptable and necessary, but their appropriateness is shaped by register and situational demands.

Non-native speakers of Lithuanian stood out most clearly among the Easy Language target groups in terms of the complexity of their comments. In fact, they distinguished themselves from all other participants in the study. They often approached the target sentences with extensive metalinguistic knowledge, employing grammatical terms and reflecting extensively on sentence structure. Their comments frequently highlighted the tension between what sounded nicer (typically non-finite verb forms) and what was easier to understand (typically finite verb forms). Some also drew attention to the process of learning Lithuanian as a second language. For instance, they reported favoring finite verb forms at lower levels of acquisition, while shifting toward non-finite forms as their proficiency increased.

Non-native speakers further emphasized the importance of frequency. As participant AT-K2-M-38 explained in English:

Like I've never heard this one before. And just, you know, this seems to me like a very normal way of like, I've seen that sentence structure a million times. So that makes it a lot easier. (AT-K2-M-38, original comment in English)

Finally, the influence of participants' first language also played a role in shaping their reasoning. One participant, for example, described how the complex system of non-finite verb forms is difficult to grasp for native speakers of English:

„Am, jo, bet apskritai su dalyviais, pusedalyviais, kitais dalykais, nebeprisimenu, kaip vadinasi, bet nu, nes aš, mano gimta kalba yra anglų, tai mes nelabai turim anglų kalboj, tai, ar turim, bet žymiai paprasčiau, tai aš galvoju, kad man ir kitiem, kurie kalba angliškai arba gimta kalba yra anglų, su dalyviais, yra lengviau sakyti ‚aš einu‘ nei ‚eidamas aš‘.“ (AT-K2-V-33)

English translation:

“Um, yeah, but in general with participles, semi-participles, and those other forms – I don’t even remember all the names – well, since my native language is English, we don’t really have that in English, or if we do, it’s way simpler. So I think for me, and for others whose first language is English, it’s easier to just say ‘I’m going’ rather than ‘going, I...’” (AT-K2-V-33)

Overall, the group of non-native speakers differed from the others in that their decisions were shaped not only by personal preferences and intuitions about language use, but also by factors central to second language acquisition, including learning experience, frequency of exposure, and the influence of their first language.

Individuals with cognitive impairments generally provided less elaborate responses. Most of the reasons behind their choices were brief and abstract, such as *“I like it more”* or *“It is clearer.”* Unlike other groups, however, they were the only ones to remark that choosing between the two sentences was easy, suggesting that intuitive decisions made without extensive reasoning may sometimes feel simpler. At the same time, several participants with cognitive impairments, like the rest of the sample, reported that the task was difficult. Some also emphasized the importance of the subject, as illustrated by participant MB-IN-01: *“Todėl, kad parašyta, kas užtikrina.”* (English translation: “Because

it actually says who ensures it.”). Others noted that omitting certain “little words” made the sentences sound nicer. Taken together, these insights indicate that participants with cognitive impairments, like the other groups in the study, reflected on similar aspects of finite and non-finite verb forms.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of this group was that quite a few of the participants were involved in the Easy Language text validation process: they had worked as text validators. As a result, some of their reflections were related to the experience gained in validation process. For instance, participant MB-IN-21 explained that the structure they preferred was also considered preferable during validation: “*Nes pas mus irgi taip būna. Mes į šitą [finitinę formą] labiau žiūrim, saugiau taip sakant*” (English translation: “Cause that happens in our case too. We prefer this one [finite form] too – it is safer to use this.”). This insight demonstrates that individuals with cognitive impairments can develop metalinguistic awareness and the ability to reflect on language and linguistic structures through everyday experiences and practices such as text validation.

Finally, the task appeared to be most challenging for the group of participants with dementia. They tended to get tired more quickly during the task and were more inclined to comment on the content of the sentences rather than on the differences between the sentence pairs or, in some cases, simply systematically choose the first option. They also seldom explained the reasons behind their preferences. Nevertheless, some participants provided insights comparable to those of the other groups. Participants with dementia likewise noted that it was difficult to choose between the sentences because the pairs conveyed the same meaning, or they expressed a preference for the shorter sentence or for the subject of the sentence to be made explicit.

To sum up, typical readers and Easy Language target groups differed considerably in the ways they reflected on their preferences for sentences with finite and non-finite verb forms. As expected, typical readers were the most expressive, which can be attributed not only to cognitive capacity but also to differences in experience. At the same time, some participants with cognitive impairments and those with early-stage dementia provided more elaborate reflections than others. For individuals with cognitive impairment, involvement in the Easy Language text validation process appeared to support deeper reflection on their decisions.

5 Limitations

As we were interested in the distinction between finite vs. infinite forms specifically, we had to give a choice between two sentences rather than longer texts. Giving more context to each sentence could have been beneficial (especially as the contextual differences were highlighted by some participants), but it would have made the study impractical as it would have taken too long.

Also, we are fully aware that when asking people to comment on their choices, there is always a possibility that they are justifying the choices *post factum*: the decision is already made, and they are simply trying to come up with some reasons to back it up, even if these were not the driving forces behind the choice. While this might well be the case, the comments of the participants still give us an indication of what they notice and are focusing on and are interesting for this reason.

6 Methodological implications

Before starting this study, we were unsure the feasibility of the two approaches: whether we would get any meaningful data at all, especially from the Easy Language readers (or would they simply choose, for instance, the first option all the time), and also, whether people would have something to say about their choices. Our findings demonstrate that these doubts were unwarranted: studies requiring participants to reflect on their language choices seem to be indeed feasible. All the groups of participants offered valuable insights for the analysis. As expected, some groups provided more comments or drew more extensively on their metalinguistic knowledge, but all five groups of participants did provide useful data for analysis. And those comments allowed us to look more deeply into the complexity of the choice between finite vs. non-finite verb forms, beyond the result of the statistical analysis that there was no significant difference between the two choices.

7 Conclusion

This study examined the acceptability of finite and non-finite verb forms among typical readers of Lithuanian and several Easy Language target groups, including individuals with cognitive impairments, people with early-stage dementia, and non-native speakers of Lithuanian. The quantitative analyses revealed no systematic preference for either verb form across the groups, indicating that both finite and non-finite constructions are generally accepted in otherwise corresponding sentences. Among the typical readers, however, there was an indication that finite forms were chosen less frequently in adverbial clauses than in passive constructions. So the grammatical context in which the phrase is used might affect the choice of the specific form.

The qualitative analyses provided a more nuanced picture; it highlighted the dual nature of the choice between finite and non-finite verb constructions. Finite constructions are more frequent, morphosyntactically simpler, and, in active constructions, also accompanied by an explicit subject. By contrast, non-finite constructions are shorter and therefore often preferred. Some participants based their preference for finite forms on their simplicity, while others explained their preference for non-finite forms in terms of brevity and sound. At times, the same participant expressed both tendencies, noting that in some cases they valued brevity, but in others they preferred clarity and simplicity. Many participants also emphasized the importance of context, observing that their choice of form varies depending on the communicative situation: finite verb forms were most often associated with informal contexts, whereas non-finite forms were linked to formal and written registers.

These results hold practical implications for Easy Language guidelines and text production. Both the statistical and qualitative findings indicate no systematic preference for finite or non-finite verb forms, suggesting that both are equally acceptable. So if we are simplifying the grammatical form of the sentence, when opting for finite construction, we do not reduce the acceptability of that sentence either among typical readers or among Easy Language target groups. It still remains to be explored which type of constructions (finite or non-finite) are easier to understand or to process, though. But if we rely on participants' initial impressions, the difference between the two structures is

sometimes hardly noticeable. This would suggest that both finite and non-finite verb forms can be employed in the production of Easy Language texts.

Bibliography

- ANČA, G., & MEIŠNIKA, I. (2021). Easy Language in Latvia. In: C. Lindholm & U. Vanhatalo (eds.), *Handbook of Easy Languages in Europe*. Frank & Timme, 305–326.
- BARCROFT, J., & WONG, W. (2012). Input, input processing and focus on form. In: J. Herschensohn & M. Young-Scholten (Sud.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press, 627–647. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139051729.036>
- BATES, D., MAECHLER, M., BOLKER, B., WALKER, S. (2015). Fitting Linear Mixed-Effects Models Using lme4. In: *Journal of Statistical Software*, 67 (1), 1–48.
- BRINKUTĖ, R. (2018). *Gramatinių kategorijų pasiskirstymas morfologiškai anotuotame lietuvių kalbos tekste* [Magistro baigiamasis darbas, Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas]. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12259/35660>
- BRUŽAITĖ-LISECKIENĖ, J., DARAŠKIENĖ, I., VILKAITĖ-LOZDIENĖ L. (2021). *Teksto lengvai suprantama kalba rengimo gairės*. Vilnius: Vilniaus universitetas.
- DĄBROWSKA, E., & STREET, J. (2006). Individual differences in language attainment: Comprehension of passive sentences by native and non-native English speakers. In: *Language Sciences*, 28 (6), 604–615.
- FERREIRA, F. (2021). In defense of the passive voice. In: *American Psychologist*, 76 (1), 145–153. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000620>
- KILGARRIFF, A., REDDY, S., POMIKÁLEK, J., & AVINESH, P. V. S. (2010, May). *A Corpus Factory for Many Languages*. In: LREC.
- LINDHOLM, C., & VANHATALO, U. (eds.) (2021). *Handbook of Easy Languages in Europe*. Frank & Timme.
- LINDHOLM, C., & VANHATALO, U. (2021). Introduction. In: *Handbook of Easy Languages in Europe*. Frank & Timme, 11–26.
- MAAB, C. (2020). *Easy Language – plain language – Easy Language plus: Balancing comprehensibility and acceptability*. Frank & Timme.

- MAAB, C., RINK, I., & HANSEN-SCHIRRA, S. (2021). Easy Language in Germany. In: C. Lindholm & U. Vanhatalo (eds.), *Handbook of Easy Languages in Europe*. Frank & Timme, 191–217.
- MOONEN, X. (2021). Easy Language in Netherlands. In: C. Lindholm & U. Vanhatalo (eds.), *Handbook of Easy Languages in Europe*. Frank & Timme, 345–370.
- PAOLAZZI, C. L., GRILLO, N., ALEXIADOU, A., & SANTI, A. (2019). Passives are not hard to interpret but hard to remember: Evidence from online and offline studies. In: *Language, Cognition and Neuroscience*, 34 (8), 991–1015. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23273798.2019.1602733>
- Pathways to Adult Education for People with Intellectual Disabilities (2010). *Information for all: European standards for making information easy to read and understand*.
- POLINSKA, V., & LIEPA, D. (2023). Easy Language in the Context of Modern Pedagogy. In: *Human, Technologies and Quality of Education*, 664–674. <https://doi.org/10.22364/htqe.2023.52>
- RASTELLI, S. (2025). *Plain Language: A Psycholinguistic Approach*. Routledge & CRC Press.
- Spoken Easy Language for Social Inclusion [SELSI] project (2024). *SELSI Guidelines for Spoken Easy Language*. <https://selsi.eu/en/homepage-eng/results/>
- STREET, J. A., & DĄBROWSKA, E. (2010). More individual differences in language attainment: How much do adult native speakers of English know about passives and quantifiers? In: *Lingua*, 120 (8), 2080–2094.
- VAN SILFHOUT, G., EVERS-VERMEUL, J., & SANDERS, T. J. M. (2014). Establishing coherence in schoolbook texts: How connectives and layout affect students' text comprehension. In: *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 3 (1), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1075/dujal.3.1.01sil>
- WARREN, P. (2012). *Introducing Psycholinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.