

Verbs Don't Come Easy:
Bilingual Verb Formation in Language Contact and Acquisition

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Previous research has suggested that language contact in child bilingual acquisition may lead to variation in the child's codeswitching that is atypical of adult or balanced bilinguals (Meisel 1994). Does codeswitching of verbs represent an area where language use of the young bilingual differs from that of adult bilinguals? If so, what is the source of variation in the child's grammar of codeswitching, and why does developmental change in bilingual verb formation take the form as it actually does? This study aims to address these questions by examining morphological integration of English verbs in Hungarian-English codeswitching and borrowing as attested in adult and child bilingualism. In specific, the paper attempts to account for the obligatory presence of the Hungarian denominal verb-formation suffix *-l* (*-ol*, *-el*, *-öl*) on English verbs in the speech of adult bilinguals (1), and the developmental variation it exhibits from initial absence to later emergence in child codeswitching (2).

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| (1) a. cover-ol-ja
cover-VBZ-PRES/3SG/DEF
'it covers it' | b. ki-rent-ol-ja
PV/out-rent-VBZ-PRES/3SG/DEF
'she rents it' (Kontra 1995) |
| (2) a. take-Ø-t-ünk
take-Ø-PAST-1PL/INDEF
'we took a nap' (S1:4;2) | egy nap-et a nap-ACC
b. a left road-ot kell take-el-ni
the left road-ACC must take-VBZ-INF
'you have to take the left road' (S2:11;3) |

The longitudinal data come from an English-dominant bilingual child living in the U.S. Transcripts of 30 hours of naturalistic codeswitching tape-recorded over seven years (from age 3;7 to age 11;3) were analyzed for patterns of bilingual verb formation across two stages of observation. Stage One ranged from 3;7 to 5;10, and Stage Two from 6;8 to 11;3. In addition to the child data, the analysis draws on observational data of spontaneous codeswitching among adult immigrants, and examples from published literature on Hungarian-English borrowing/codeswitching (Kontra 1995).

The analysis of the verbalizer's role in adult grammars presents evidence in favour of treating the denominal *-l* as a 'verb marker', which (due to a typologically-based well-formedness condition of Hungarian—serves to express the category status of any newly-formed verb as a functional predicate through overt morphology. An account of monolingual and bilingual verb formation drawing on the Uniform Structure Principle (Myers-Scotton 2002) is offered.

Further, the analysis of the child's codeswitching data reveals a clear developmental pattern in the integration of English verbs into Hungarian, with a striking difference between the two stages of observation. At Stage One, 93.5% (86/92) of English verbs occurred without the Hungarian verbalizer, indicating incomplete lexical acquisition of bilingual verb formation. At Stage Two, a reverse pattern showed 95.5% (105/110) of English verbs taking the verbalizer as required in adult grammars. Based on the findings, it is argued that adult-like switching of English verbs requires that abstract features of the Hungarian verbalizer be extended from monolingual denominal derivation to bilingual verb formation (a subtle process of restructuring, which may delay the emergence of adult-like verbal switches until after the child's relatively long exposure to and practice in codeswitching).