

Light Verb Constructions in Heritage Turkish and the Nature of Borrowing through Bilingual Mixing

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Light verb constructions (LVCs) are verbal predicates that consist of a pre-verbal element selected by a light verb, a verb whose semantic content is typically bleached. A number of languages are known to heavily depend on LVCs, such as Persian, Hindi and Turkish. Realizational approaches to word derivation generally agree that the light verb realizes a functional head, such as the little *v*, analogous to affixal verbalizers (e.g. Folli et al. 2005 for Persian). The light verb thus turns an otherwise non-verbal element, such as a noun or an adjective, into a verbal predicate, which can then host tense, aspect or modality markers. In Turkish, the pre-verbal element is almost always a loan word. Although it is obviously not true for all languages, this property of Turkish proves highly important, helping us understand the nature of borrowing in bilingual mixing. An example of a Turkish LVC is provided in (1), where the pre-verbal element borrowed from Arabic is underlined.

- (1) Öğrenci-ler müze-yi ziyaret et-ti
student-PL museum-ACC visitation do-PST
'The students visited the museum.'

Perhaps not surprisingly, similar LVCs are also attested in modern language mixing situations, a property of heritage Turkish (HT) speakers who use two (or more) languages on a daily basis. LVCs (or "bilingual compound verbs" as used in some of the relevant literature, such as Edwards and Gardner-Chloros 2007, Muysken 2016) typically involve a borrowed infinitive and a native light verb that turns the borrowed word into a predicate. The use of such verbs in HT is well-attested. A number of studies have reported that HT speakers exclusively use the light verb *yap-* 'make' to derive LVCs (see Backus 1996 for Dutch-Turkish, Türker 2000 for Norwegian-Turkish, Pfaff 2000 for German-Turkish). Although we have long been aware of the presence of LVCs in HT, we know very little about their diachronic patterns, and even much less about their structural representation in synchronic heritage grammars. What does the argument structure of a LVC look like considering the fact that it involves an infinitive from one language and a light verb from the other? And, how does this structural representation vary from one speaker to another? In this study, I report findings from a corpus investigation and an acceptability judgment task looking at HT in the Netherlands. First, I provide a description of LVCs in this variety of Turkish relying on examples from the literature as well as my corpus findings. Then, based on the results of the acceptability judgments and drawing parallelisms between LVCs in HT and LVCs in standard Turkish (ST), I argue that the borrowed Dutch infinitive (in HT) or the Arabic verbal noun (in ST) realizes a span of syntactic structure, a representation much bigger than meets the eye.

LVCs consisting of a Dutch unaccusative infinitive like *vallen* 'to fall' or *arriveren* 'to arrive' are unattested, suggesting that the use of foreign infinitives with the light verb *yap-* must be constrained by certain selectional restrictions. Following Ramchand's Light Verb Constraint, which states that "a verb can be used as a light verb when all of its category features AGREE with some other verbal element in its complement domain" (Ramchand 2008: 132), I show that the LVC in HT is allowed only when the verbal categories of both verbs match, ruling out unaccusatives in LVCs when selected by the transitive *yap-*. This also provides further support for Butt's Generalization (Butt 2003), such that, unlike auxiliaries, light verbs in a language always have their corresponding "heavy" equivalents, perhaps making the category features of the light verb remain active.

Speakers of HT are more likely to accept sentences involving predicates where both the Dutch infinitive and its Turkish equivalent are of the same type, as shown in (2) for unergatives and in (3) for transitives. When speakers do allow a category mismatch between the Dutch infinitive and its Turkish equivalent, then it is the Dutch one that determines the argument structure in LVCs as exemplified in (4), which involves a transitive Dutch infinitive whose Turkish equivalent (*nefret et-*) assigns inherent ablative. This suggests that grammaticalization of Dutch forms in HT remains faithful to the argument structure of the source language.

- (2) Arkadaş-1m mesaj-1m-a reageren yap-tı
 friend-1SG.POSS message-1SG.POSS-DAT respond make-PST
 ‘My friend responded to my message.’
- (3) Babanne-m-i bezoeken yap-tı-k
 grandmother-1SG.POSS-ACC visit make-PST-1PL
 ‘We visited my grandmother.’
- (4) Abla-m tavuk *çorba-sın-dan / çorba-sın-ı haten
 sister-1SG.POSS chicken soup-COMP-DAT soup-COMP-ACC hate
 yap-ıyor
 make-PROG
 ‘My sister hates chicken soup.’

Furthermore, results from the acceptability judgments show that nominalizations of Dutch infinitives have a limited status in HT. But, when speakers do accept nominalizations, as exemplified in (5), it is always the ones that participate in an LVC construction in the speaker’s grammar in the first place. This explains the verbal behavior of these nominalizations, which retain their argument structure. Similar complex event nominals in ST are abundant. (See Sezer, 1991: 54) who claims that they are derived by truncating the light verb in ST.)

- (5) Arkadaş-1m-ın mesaj-1m-a reageren-ı
 friend-1SG.POSS-GEN message-1SG.POSS-DAT respond-3SG.POSS
 ben-i çok şaşır-t-tı.
 I-ACC much surprise-CAUS-PST
 ‘My friend’s responding my message surprised me a lot.’

Comparable nominalizations of foreign elements in ST allow adverbial and aspectual modifiers. They also allow agent-oriented modifiers and binomial each (a relation only possible with a true subject and an object), suggesting that these nominalizations must host true arguments, and are therefore complex event nominals (Grimshaw 1990). A logical conclusion is thus to acknowledge that borrowing in bilingual mixing situations is not limited to the insertion of foreign words into native language head positions; it also involves adopting spans of syntactic structure that can be as big as a complex event.

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