

Code-Choice between English and Cypriot Greek Bilingual Compound Verbs Κάμνω erase (I do erase) instead of διαγράφω (I erase)*

Constantina Fotiou

University of Essex

Greek Cypriots are “reported by contributors to the press to freely use English loans and those competent enough in the language to code-switch” (Karyolemou 1994: 257). Most studies addressing this issue “are not based on actual data or extensive sociolinguistic research” (Goutsos 2005: 187). The data of this study come from natural speech recordings collected in Cyprus and the UK from December 2008 till December 2011, enriched by non recorded speech collected through participant observation (Dayton 1996). This paper focuses on one particular construction which is present in the data: Bilingual Compound verbs (BCVs). Two questions arise in relation to these constructions. Firstly, how can we analyze them syntactically when in many cases the English lexical item that accompanies the verb *kamno* (= do) is also a verb? The discussion is constructed based on Moravesik’s (1975), Muysken’s (2000) and Wohlgemuth’s (2009) analysis of BCVs. Secondly, why do BCVs exist at all since there are other mechanisms to incorporate foreign lexical items into CG? Some answers are suggested towards the end of this paper; however, they can only be applied to some of the BCVs present in the data.

1. INTRODUCTION

One topic that has been discussed extensively during the last decades is the influence of the English language in Cyprus¹, both at the state and at the personal level. While the state level measures have been taken to reduce the power and use of the English language, at the personal level not much can be accomplished. Thus, it is very common for scholars and non-scholars to comment upon the admixture² of English into Cypriot Greek (henceforth CG). Reports that Greek Cypriots code switch in English and freely use English loans are regularly present in the media (Karyolemou 1994: 257). The same author notes in a more recent article that the English language “very often sneaks into the vernacular either as a loan or as code switching. Its presence in certain spheres makes up a distinctive linguistic context” (my translation, <http://abnet.agrino.org/htmls/D/D005.html>). Some people interpret this domination as deeply harmful, as a warning of a construction of an ‘Anglo-Cypriot idioma’ and the dissolution of national identity (2004: 82). Others believe that factors contributing to

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¹ Cypriot Greek is the everyday linguistic variety of Greek Cypriots. It is widely known and accepted as the Cypriot Greek dialect. For the purposes of this paper, I will refrain from making the distinction between language and dialect and plainly refer to it as Cypriot Greek (CG). In the vast majority of cases, “Greek Cypriots use CG during their daily activities and code-switch into SMG in certain situations (Papapavlou and Pavlou 2005: 16). See Tsiplakou (2007) and Arvaniti (2006) for recent works on this issue.

² For the purposes of this paper I will not make the distinction between code-switching and code-mixing.

the wide use of English Greek” along with “the difficulty Cypriot Greeks experience in defining a satisfactory identity (cultural or ethnic), due to the fact that, although they are Greek, they constitute a political entity separate from the Greek state” (Karyolemou 1994: 257). A more positive view sees the number of English loans in CG not big enough to “alter the ‘Greek’ character of the Cypriot dialect” (Papapavlou 2005:153).

2. ENGLISH IN CYPRUS

Cyprus was under British rule from 1878 until 1960. After independence English was used in areas in which the official languages – Standard Modern Greek (henceforth SMG) and Standard Turkish – should have been used, for example in the judicial system. Since the mid-1980s legal measures have been applied to safeguard the Greek language in Cyprus (Karyolemou 2005: 28) and replace English with SMG; for example the use of English finally ceased in the courts of Cyprus in 1989 (ibid.: 38).

However, English shares a strong position in the linguistic repertoire of Greek Cypriot speakers. Children learn English as a second language from the very young age of six and, apart from the secondary-level private schools, there are now English-based elementary and nursery schools on the island. Moreover, UK universities are a favourite choice for many Greek Cypriots. Also, the majority of occupations require *at least* basic knowledge of English; this is partly due to the character of the Cypriot economy which is mostly based on tourism and services (ibid.:33). Finally, knowledge of English is needed in everyday interaction with the foreigners working on the island in places like cafes and even in the houses where foreign housekeepers are employed.

3. METHODOLOGY

The data discussed in this paper are part of a larger project placed within the background of research on admixture of English in CG during everyday activities of Greek Cypriots (Fotiou forthcoming). The definition that best describes code-mixing in Cyprus is “[t]he phenomenon where pieces of one language are used while the speaker is basically using another language” (Fasold 1984:180). An example from the data:

- (1) **No way.** Ξέχασ’το όχι διότι μια δουλειά μπορεί να μεν ευχαριστήσει κάποιον αλλά άμαν μπεις σε τούτα τα γραναζια γίνεσαι **you become one of them**
No way. Forget it because a job may not please someone but when you enter into this system you become you become one of them

In this paper, data from ten recordings of naturally occurring conversations which last approximately 505 minutes in total are used in this paper. Seven were recorded in Cyprus and three in the UK from Greek Cypriot students temporarily living there. The participants are fourteen women and thirteen men aged between thirteen and twenty-six years old. I used the “friend of a friend” approach to find participants and the recordings were not in any way guided.

I am also using non-recorded data which I have obtained through participant observation. This is a method suggested by Rickford (1975) and used by Baugh (1983) and Dayton (1996). This means that whenever it is possible and I hear someone using an English word or a phrase, I write it down along with a few words about the context. For a discussion on both the advantages and disadvantages of this method see Dayton (1996).

4. BILINGUAL COMPOUND VERBS

This paper focuses on a particular construction: bilingual compound verbs (BCVs). Many scholars have discussed and analysed such constructions (Moravcsik 1975; Muysken 2000; Myers-Scotton 2002; Edwards and Gardner-Chloros 2007; Wohlgemuth 2009)³. BCVs consist of a light or helping verb, usually translated as “do” or “make” and a lexical item which gives the semantic content of the construction:

Tamil-English data (Annamalai 1989: 50; cf. Muysken 2000)

- (2) Avan enne confuse –pannittan
 He me confuse did
He confused me

Scholars argue that “[t]his construction knows no typological or geographic limits” (Myers-Scotton 2002: 35) and “may constitute a universal of CS” (Edwards & Gardner-Chloros 2007:74). Most of the cases reported in the literature come from immigration settings. As far as the Greek⁴-English language pair is concerned, there are also many cases of compound verbs reported worldwide, for example:

- (3) Greek-American English (Seaman 1972)
 (4) Greek- Australian English (Tamis 1986)
 (5) Greek- Canadian English (Maniakas 1991)
 (6) Cypriot Greek- British English (Gardner-Chloros 1992; Edwards and Gardner-Chloros 2007)

The following examples come from the study of Zarpetta (1995) of Greek Cypriots in London (Harringey). As it seems verbs, participles, gerunds and nouns are used in conjunction with the helping verb and this is actually the case in all the studies reported in the literature which involve the Greek language.

- (7) Kámno use
 do-1sg use
 to use
 (8) Kámno developed
 do-1sg developed
 to *develop*
 (9) Kámno spelling
 do-1sg spelling
 to *spell*

³ These constructions are not always referred to as Bilingual Compound verbs. Myers-Scotton (2002:134) refers to them as the *do construction* while Wohlgemuth (2009) refers to them as the *Light Verb Strategy*.

⁴ Wherever I use the term Greek language I intend it to be an umbrella term which includes both SMG and CG.

5. WHAT MAKES THE PRESENT STUDY DIFFERENT FROM RELATED STUDIES OF BCVs?

Cyprus does not constitute an immigration setting or a language contact situation where there are native speakers of two languages. English is, for the majority, the second language of Greek Cypriots, acquired through second language acquisition. The use of BCVs is not necessary or justified since the Greek verb can easily be used instead. Limited knowledge of Greek does not explain the use of such constructions by Greek Cypriots by any means.

6. VERB COMPOUNDS IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE

By examining the nature of the verb compounds in the Greek language per se we can observe if BVCs involving the Greek language follow the same pattern as native ones or if they present innovations.

Both SMG and CG have native compounds with *káno/kámno*, such as *káno/kámno psonia* (do shopping) and *káno/kámno gimnastiki* (do gymnastics). There are also a number of borrowings in the form of bilingual compound verbs, such as *káno jogging* (do jogging) and *káno zapping* (I zap) (Edwards and Gardner-Chloros 2007:77), *káno surfing*, *káno camping* (Apostolou Panara 1991: 50). The second element of the compound is always the direct object of *káno/kámno*, and therefore a noun. Thus, *do (káno/kámno)* is only combined with Greek nouns or English gerunds which are borrowings in native Greek; “[n]either English nor Greek provides a model for the double verbal formation attested in CS” (Gardner-Chloros 1995: 78) which is evidently present in the data from Greek in the immigration settings discussed before.

In the following sections I discuss some problems that arise with BCVs.

7. SYNTACTIC CONSIDERATIONS

BCVs have been widely discussed in the code-switching literature (Moravcsik 1975, Romaine 1985, Muysken 2000, Myers-Scotton 2002, Edwards & Gardner-Chloros 2007, Wohlgemuth 2009). The main concern of these authors is the nature of the lexical item that accompanies the light verb, and the problematic cases are those in which the accompanying element of the light verb *do* seems to be another verb. One scholar whose discussion and analysis on the role of the verb in language contact phenomena has been very influential is Edith Moravcsik (1975, 1978). In her work *Verb Borrowing* (1975) she claims that:

(10) “There is a cross-linguistically recurrent **restriction** on the range of borrowed objects from the point of view of their syntactic classification. The restriction is that the class of borrowed constituents in a language does not include lexically homolingual constituents that are verbs in both languages – constituents, that is, that share *both meaning and phonetic form* with (or are similar in both meaning and phonetic form to) a verb in the source language and which are themselves characterized by the grammar of the borrowing language as verbal constituents whose sub-constituents are all foreign. The more specific positive claim to be advanced is that borrowed verbs, by internal syntactic composition, are (at least) bimorphemic and that they are bilingual, consisting of a generic verb constituent whose form is indigenous, *and of a more specific nominal constituent whose phonetic form corresponds, by identity or similarity, to the phonetic form of the source verb.*” (4)

Moravcsik claims that verbs cannot be borrowed **as verbs** in the recipient language but “are borrowed as nouns instead which then require some sort of (re)verbalization in order to function as regular verbs in the recipient languages” (Wohlgemuth 2009: 279).

Moravcsik uses BCVs as evidence for her claim since they are formed “from an indigenous verb form meaning ‘do’ (...) and a source verb, the shared form here being all of the form of the source verb *but the shared meaning being only the specific nominal part of the meaning of the source verb*” (1975: 7-8, my emphasis).

She specifically claims that this applies to verb borrowing in American Greek. She bases her argument partly on the fact that in native Greek in similar constructions the complement of the verb *káno* is a noun:

- (11) O Pétros káni mia prosforá
Peter makes a remark

Thus according to her, in the following example taken from my data:

- (12) Pu tóte tha mporúsan na to kámun diagnose as púme;
Since then they could **do it diagnose** let's say?

“diagnose” is taken into the construction NOT as a verb but as a nominal.

However, Moravcsik uses semantic terms to explain her argument which concerns the syntax of the lexical item. She does not explain why a “nominal part” of a verb gets to be borrowed, and what is so special or wrong with verbs that they cannot be borrowed as such. As Muysken (2000: 197) argues “[w]hile inserting verbs as such may well be problematic for both morphological and syntactic reasons, there is nothing in universal grammar that forces the way they are inserted to be nominal.” In fact, in his study⁵, Wohlgemuth (2009) demonstrates that verbs do get borrowed as verbs.

If Moravcsik’s argument is false and verbs can be borrowed as verbs, the problem of the nature of the lexical item in BCV constructions remains unsolved. Her argument was offering at least a convenient solution to the problem since, in syntactic terms, having a nominal next to the (light or helping) verb makes more sense than actually having another verb (which is not in an infinitive form).

Moving on to the study of Wohlgemuth (2009), he discusses four main borrowing strategies. To begin with, there is what he calls *direct insertion* in which “the borrowed verb is immediately available for the grammar of the recipient language without any morphological or syntactic adaptation whatsoever being necessary to render the replica equivalent to a native verb (or verb stem)” (2009: 87). Direct insertion is used by the majority of languages that Wohlgemuth reports from.

However, many languages require morpho-syntactic adaptation in order to accommodate loan verbs. Thus they used *indirect insertion* with which borrowed verbs are adapted with overt (verbalizing) affixation of some kind, and once the affix is added the borrowed verb can fully function in the recipient language and normal inflection patterns of that language can be applied to it. This strategy comes third in its frequency.

The strategy that comes second in frequency is no other than the BCVs – Wohlgemuth calls them the *light verb strategy* and argues that “[m]any languages (...) accommodate borrowed verbs by means of complex constructions, where the borrowed elements remain mostly uninflected and *more or less neutral with regard to their part-of-speech membership*” (2009: 102, my emphasis). He believes that since with *indirect insertion* and the *light verb strategy* the “loan verbs are overtly accommodated by equipping them with a native element that is either verbalizing (or has verbalization among its primary function) or a native (auxiliary) verb” (283) then we can assume that they are borrowed as non-verbs since they have to be reverbalized in some way.

Muysken (2000), in his discussion concerning borrowed verbs, claims that borrowed verbs can be classified either as inserted verbs, which are verbs inserted into the position which is ordinarily reserved for the native verb or as bilingual compound verbs (185). The latter are divided into the cases which involve a verb adjoined to the light verb and those cases in which there is a nominalised verb as a complement to the light verb. His basic argument is

⁵ For his study, Wohlgemuth collected 794 examples of loan verbs from 207 languages and 553 language pairs.

that a single unitary analysis of BVCs is impossible. In relation to Moravcsik's argument, he argues that only in cases with strong evidence of nominalization, can we claim to find patterns involving a helping verb and a nominalised complement. For example, in American Portuguese the presence of *o* (masculine singular definite article) makes a nominalization analysis possible:

- (13) *fazer o spoil* (2000: 207)
spoil

Muysken argues for cases which are better analysed as having adjoined to the helping verb another verb because in some cases there is a difference between the structure of the native compound and the bilingual one. This is the case with the CG data, as well. For example, in Popoloca, an Otomanguena language spoken in Mexico (Veerman-Leichsenring 1991) in the native use of the compounds, the helping verbs are combined with nouns. However, in the bilingual compounds the accompanying element of the helping verb "is generally, but not always, a verb" (Muysken 2000: 193). Romaine claims the same pattern for Panjabi-English mixed compounds (1985: 210).

According to Muysken's analysis, in the native structures there is an insertion pattern (14a) that involves a noun complement. In the bilingual cases, there is (14b) which involves an adjoined verb (and hence alternation)⁶.

- (14) a. Native: [love (noun) do] to perform love
b. bilingual [love(verb) [do]] to do something (namely loving)

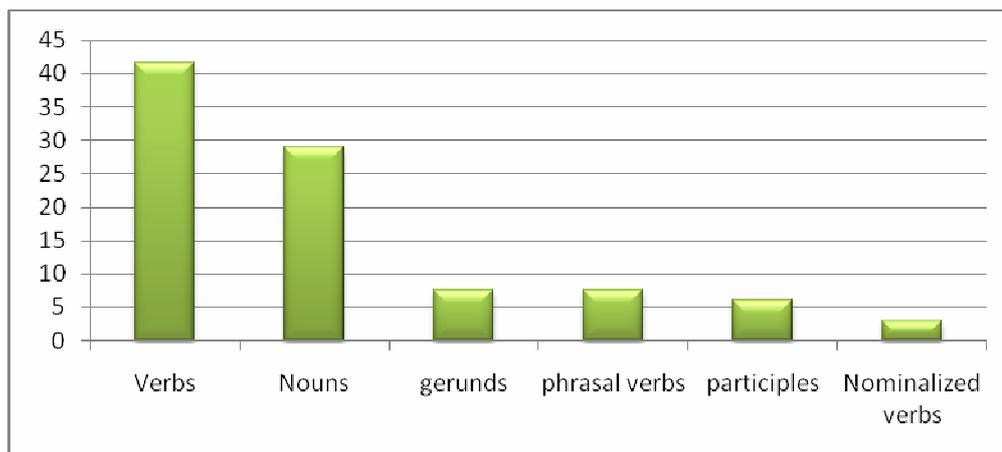
There seems to be a development in the bilingual use of the compound verbs from their native counterparts, in that the latter have a verb + noun construction and the former a verb + verb construction and if this analysis is correct "this shift from nouns to verbs was accompanied by a shift from a government to a modification relationship" (211).

8. CG – ENGLISH COMPOUND VERBS

In this section, I discuss 65 instances of different examples (types) of bilingual compound verbs. Certain examples occur more than once (tokens) and I did not count them as additional instances. The main characteristics of these BCVs are:

- a. The helping verb *kámno* is always inflected for tense, person and number.
b. The English part of the construction is not integrated into the Greek language.
d. There is not strong evidence of nominalization of the lexical item

⁶ Muysken argues for the existence of different processes in code-mixing, two of which are *insertion* and *alternation*. The first concerns "insertion of material from one language into a structure from the other language" and the second concerns "alternation between structures from languages" (2000: 3).

(Table 1) *Distribution of the lexical item (in terms of syntax)*

(15) Examples with a verb (41.5%):

- (a) En emporósa na **kámo conceptualize**
I couldn't do-1sg conceptualize
- (b) Pios se **kámni assign** se káthe máthima?
Who does-3sg assign you in each course?

(16) Examples with a noun (29%):

- (a) Prospathó na **kámno time management**
I am trying to do-1sg time management
- (b) H Katerina **kámni acquaintance** me ton Rikko
Katerina does-3sg acquaintance with Rikko (the dog)

(17) Examples with a gerund (7.5%):

- (a) **Kámno calling** eyo etsi; Bravo Skevi, éklises to tiléfono.
I am doing-1sg calling now? Well done Skevi, you hung up the phone.
- (b) Mporí na éshi pu na **kámnun spying** pjiós ena pái, pjiós en tha pái.
There might be people who do-3pl spying who is going and who is not.

Note that under a specific reading these BCVs could be acceptable in English if they were to be translated. According to Tobin (1993:29) “do is often used with an *-ing* form when we want to talk about an activity that takes a certain time or that is repeated. There is usually a “determiner” (*the, my, some, much* etc) before the *-ing* form”. So, for example, if you say “They don’t do testing” in English, it would have a habitual meaning. Also (18) may be instances of nominalization. According to Quirk’s English grammar, “we can take a normally dynamic item (say the verb in “He wrote the book” and nominalise it (“The writing of the book”) pretending to see the action as a static thing” (1979: 48). Even without an article these examples could be instances of nominalised verbs.

- (18) Examples with phrasal verbs (7.5%):
- (a) Epiðí en tha mporún na **kámun cope with** en kséro pos en i ellinikí l éksi, ne, na antepeksélthun me to environment tus.
Because they cannot do-3-pl cope with I don't know the Greek word, yes, to copewith their environment.
- (b) Men to **kámis turn off**
Don't do-2sg it turn off
- (19) Examples with participles (6%):
- (a) to sístima **kámni ta authorized**
the system **does-3sg them authorized** them
- (b) Foúme na tus kámo **confirmed**
I am scared to **them do-1sg confirmed**
- (20) Example with *format*

Format can be a verb and a noun in English. But when referring to computers *format* can only be the verb; the noun is *formatting*.

- (a) aplá éprepe na tu **kámi format**.
he just had to **do-3sg format**.
- (b) mporí na **káni** (pause) to **format** alla ðen éxume ta Windows.
he can **do-2sg the format** but we do not have the Windows.
- (c) tha tu pari 40 lepta na mu **kani to format**.
it will take him 40 minutes to **do-2sg the format**.
- (d) **ékame** mu **to** (pause) **format tze**
de **did-3sg the format** for me and

In contrast to the first example, an article precedes *format* in the other three. In (21d) “to” is most likely a pronoun referring to the computer, since there is a short pause just right after it suggesting that it is not an article. Thus, examples (20b) and (20c) provide the only sign of nominalization including articles.

Does the presence of the article here really guarantee noun-ness or high/full deverbalization of the verb? In this case probably yes. In the particular recording in which all of the above instances of *format* occur there is also another instance in which *format* occurs - not in a compound verb- and receives an article as well:

- (21) Pósi ora pémi **to format**;
How long does the format take?

One hypothesis could be that *format* has been borrowed both as a verb and as a noun from English to Greek since the noun “formatting” does not seem to be in use at all⁷.

⁷ This conclusion is reached both from participant observation and from directly asking speakers if they use it or hear it being used.

9. FUNCTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this section I classify some of my data⁸ based on semantic grounds so as to address the question of why such constructions are used since there are other mechanisms to incorporate foreign verbs into the Greek language.

As I have already mentioned, the Greek language includes some loans in the form of BVCs, such as *káno jogging* in order to “designate culturally new concepts (Edwards and Gardner-Chloros 2007: 77). Let us see some examples from this study:

- (22) Ksérís **ekómame sightseeing** epíame Vatikanó.
You know we **did-1pl sightseeing**, we went to the Vatican.

Sightseeing has no lexical entry in Greek. It can be translated periphrastically as *περιήγηση/ επίσκεψη αξιοθεάτων* or *ξεναγηση αξιοθεάτων* (touring of sights). The same applies to *jogging*,

- (23) an **kámnis jogging** as púme;
if you **do-2sg jogging** let’s say?

There is no lexical entry for *jogging* in Greek:

- (a) Jogging: *τρέξιμο εξάσκησης* (running for practice) (Matzenta dictionary).
(b) Jogging: *τζόκινγκ* (Google translator).
(c) The Oxford Greek-English dictionary does not have an entry.

Thus, some BVCs are used to introduce a new concept into the Greek language. In other cases they are used with mobile and computer based lexicon. Greek Cypriots tend to set their computers and mobile devices in English; thus particular terms tend to replace their Greek equivalents in their speech repertoire. In such cases the use of English words constitutes a choice of an English term over the Greek one. One such example is (18a) mentioned above. In that case, the participant attempted to make a call and accidentally hung up, cancelling the action of calling. The choice of *káno calling* instead of *τηλεφωνώ* (call) here is explained by the fact that she could see on her mobile the word *calling*. Other examples are:

- (24) **ékame** mu to **format** tze ípe mu na **kámo download** pu to Internet yia na to **kámi update**
[he] **did-3sg format** it for me and he told me to **do-1sg download** from the **internet** in order to **do-3sg update**
- (25) **ékame** tu **delete** email
[he] **did-2sg-past** him **delete email**

There are also many examples involving terms associated with Facebook. The majority of Greek Cypriots enjoy Facebook in the English language even though it is available in Greek.

- (26) en ton **kómno friend** tze en dangerous katástasi
I **do-1sg** not him **do1sg friend** and it is a dangerous situation
- (27) **ékame se add?**
[he] **did-3sg** you **add?**

⁸ Only 20% of the data could be fitted in categories which I will mention below.

For the rest of the data, an analysis of each recording individually is required in order to reach further conclusions.

10. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I discussed BCVs, a particular construction that arises in many bilingual communities, in the context of the use of English in CG as a form of code-switching/mixing. In particular, I addressed two major problems concerning BCVs: their syntactic analysis and the question of why they exist at all. In relation to the former, I have referred to the main analyses by various authors, however without reaching a specific conclusion myself. In relation to the latter, I have demonstrated how some of the occurrences of some of the data can be explained based on semantics.

The rest of the data which I have not addressed in this paper will be analyzed in the framework suggested by Gumperz (1982, 2008) and Auer (1984, 1995, 1998, 2007), which requires analysis of each recording individually for a micro-level of analysis and interpretation of the data.

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Constantina Fotiou

Department of Language and Linguistics
Wivenhoe Park
University of Essex
Colchester, Essex
CO4 3SQ
United Kingdom

cfotio@essex.ac.uk