ABSTRACT

Code-mixing or a fused lect? A typology of trilingual speech in a German-Hungarian-Romanian speech community in Northwest Romania

The present paper reports on a complex German-Hungarian-Romanian trilingual situation in Palota, a small Swabian village in Northwest Romania, which was founded in the 18th century. The focus is on the German dialect of the community, which – due to its isolated geographic situation, the historical events and the macrosociological changes – has become the subject of more than one language shift to Hungarian and Romanian (Szabó 2010).

On the microlinguistic level, this language contact situation led to the development of a new linguistic habit, norm of this community, characterised by German-Hungarian and German-Romanian code-switching and code-mixing. The paper deals with a qualitative analysis of language mixing phenomena in the community on a morphosyntactic level. The data used here come from a corpus of transcribed recordings (23 hours) of German-Hungarian-Romanian trilinguals in informal conversation. The data illustrates a frequent use of bilingual, occasionally of trilingual mixed constructions in the verbal and the noun phrase, but also in the domain of particles (adverbs, conjunctions and discourse markers) and complex syntactic structures. One example for this is the mixed construction consisting of the Hungarian generalizing particle akár- (‘ever’) and a German interrogative WH-pronoun, e.g. wer, wann, wo, etc. which, following the Hungarian ever-WH-compound pattern has emerged as a conjunction for the concessive conditional (Leuschner 2000), thus pointing to a grammaticalization process and supporting a movement along the continuum code-switching → language mixing → fused lects (Auer 1998), since there are no monolingual alternatives for these particles available in the mixed German dialect and there is no variation of these forms (Szabó 2012).

References


1 E.g. the trilingual past participle ge-grij-el-t (‘to care about’), built from the Romanian noun grijă, transformed with the Hungarian verbal suffix -el into a Hungarian verb and integrated into a German matrix sentence with the German past participle affix ge- -t.