

Usage-based approach to computer-mediated Estonian-English-Japanese communication

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This paper investigates Estonian-English-Japanese multilingual communication within the framework of usage-based approach to contact-induced language change (Backus 2015). Applying a usage-based approach enables the analysis of morphosyntax and lexicon under the same terminological framework, as morphosyntax and lexicon are not separated (Verschik forthcoming). This can be the case with Japanese insertions that affect Estonian morphosyntax. Code-copying and code-alternation cases are analyzed, utilizing Johanson's code-copying framework (2002), as it is compatible with usage-based approach and treats all contact phenomena as various types of copying.

The combination of these languages is rare, with very few users (Estonians who speak English and Japanese). The data consists of both synchronous Facebook messages (private chat, group chat and public posts), as well as asynchronous forum and blog posts, with about 10,000 tokens in the corpus. As the corpus is small and it is necessary to identify contact-induced impact, qualitative analysis is applied for observing changes, their entrenchment and conventionalization. I concentrate on Japanese-Estonian and Japanese-English copying in cases where elements of all three languages are present. In some cases it is impossible to establish the basic language as they are intertwined and alternation is frequent.

The paper analyzes what kind of items and combinations thereof are likely to be copied, which can be if they are semantically specific, have strong expressive connotation or are relevant for organisation of discourse (pragmatic particles). Japanese has a complex system of register markers, and when Estonian-speakers have mastered them, they tend to copy the markers into Estonian and English. This may occur because their perception has changed and they feel a necessity to mark politeness in a Japanese way (*i.e.* pragmatic gap) (Verschik 2010). In addition, mediated copying is common, where English copies in Japanese are copied back into English or Estonian, with a slightly different, often more specific meaning. A bottom-up approach allows to identify emergence of new copies, their entrenchment and conventionalization in the language use of the micro-community, in hopes of a cross-fertilization between the fields of cognitive linguistics and contact linguistics.

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