APPLYING COGNITIVE AND INTERACTIONAL LINGUISTICS TO ESTONIAN LEARNER GRAMMAR

Piibi-Kai Kivik, Anne Tamm
Indiana University, Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary
pkivik@indiana.edu, tammA@ceu.edu

Keywords: interaction, co-construction, conversation analysis, learner grammar, second language acquisition

Interactional Linguistics combines usage and form to analyze linguistic structure in naturalistic interaction, and Cognitive Grammar has been seen as compatible with spoken interaction (Fried and Östman, 2005). Recently, there have been calls by cognitive linguists to combine findings from both Conversation Analysis (CA) and Cognitive Grammar (CxG) to explain particular phenomena, cf. the theory and applications in e.g. Fischer (2010), Brône & Zima (2014), Etelämäki & Visapää (2014). There is a parallel movement in second language studies to bring together conversation-analytic studies (CA-for-SLA) and usage-based accounts of L2 development using experimental or corpus studies (e.g., the volume by Cadierno & Eskildsen 2015). The language learning process emerging in interaction and thus made visible for analysts allows to account for learning as social cognition (Kasper, 2009).

The present paper addresses the above agendas by analyzing situated language use by second language learners with a focus on distributed grammar and emergent grammatical constructions. We apply the findings to a new descriptive and pedagogical grammar of Estonian. We present: 1) analyses of learner interactions from our own datasets of talk by learners of L2 Estonian, where the focus on repair and co-constructed syntax helps locate processes of restructuring of the learner language; and 2) suggestions for revised pedagogical presentations of the linguistic phenomena. The focus is on Estonian cases and postpositions as well as aspect, negation and evidentials.

The combined use of interactional situations and cognitive schemata in L2 learning is seen as crucial in cases where the learners’ L1 does not distinguish between meaning or function differences in the surface form of a construction, as for example in the case of L1 English and L2 Estonian in (1) and (2), and the form encountered in one meaning/situation is erroneously extended to others, as in (3).

(1) *maksan kohvi eest [pay-1S coffee.GEN for] ‘[I] pay for the coffee’
(2) see on lapse jaoks [this be.3S child.GEN for] ‘this is for the child’
(3) *maksan kohvi jaoks [pay-1S coffee.GEN for] (Intended: ‘[I] pay for the coffee’)

We demonstrate emergent constructions in L2 talk and suggest ways that descriptive and pedagogical grammar presentations of Estonian constructions should incorporate both cognitive schemata (incl. visual representations of these) as well as interactional, situated examples of use.

References