

How to investigate non-spatiotemporal linguistic entities: Preliminary remarks

There is much evidence from various areas of research that there are not only spatiotemporal, but also non-spatiotemporal, social entities in their respective subject fields. As far as linguistics is concerned, this dichotomous view recognizes two types of entities: (spatiotemporal) language means (forms of language) and (non-spatiotemporal) language rules, which governs our language behavior (distribution of forms). According to Itkonen (e.g. 2003), who has developed one of the most prominent account of this type, rules are inherently normative entities, existing in the so-called intersubjectivity of language users' minds, namely in the form of three-level, common knowledge (i.e. 1st level: A knows-1, that X; 2nd level: A knows-2, that B knows-1 that X; 3rd level: A knows-3, that B knows-2, that A knows-1, that X). This type of common knowledge is said to be unconscious. Due to this special ("social") ontology, rules are not accessible by standard linguistic methods, developed for research into the domain of spatiotemporality.

If all this is true, we are facing a non-trivial problem, how to investigate entities with this special mode of existence. Unconscious knowledge of rules has also its experiential side, which rises to the level of consciousness when rules are broken. In other words, to note the rule-violating form is to (consciously) realize or reflect the existence of a relevant rule. Exploring and investigating rules should, therefore, consist of detecting some spatiotemporal correlates to non-spatiotemporal noting of rule-violating language behavior.

The paper introduces two possible ways how to detect this spatiotemporal correlate and discusses their advantages and disadvantages: (1) qualitative research into natural interactions, which finds the correlate in a self- and/or other-repairs, and (2) the psycholinguistic research into language users' minds using self-paced reading task, which finds the correlate in a protracted reading of slots occupied by a rule-violating form.

As for the first way, paper presents an example of thorough qualitative analysis of a particular "suitable", pre-selected interaction. It shows how other-repair can prove that repairing participant has three-level knowledge about a particular rule, meanwhile his interlocutor does not. This kind of evidence is very convincing and relatively simple to obtain; on the other side, it is almost impossible to find sufficient amount of interactions concerning the same rule, which makes this way rather illustrative, than explorative.

As the for second way, paper presents a pre-experiment determining, whether this correlate could be detected by the self-paced reading task. The experiment was conducted within ERCEL Lab (see <https://ercel.ff.cuni.cz/>) in January 2018. A total of 38 participants were asked to read ("self-pacedly") nine-words sentences with pre-selected non-standard (i.e. rule-violating) forms on the fourth and seventh position. The results show, that there is, in fact, significant reading protraction on slots occupied by non-standard (i.e. rule-violating) forms, which proves that participants have three-level knowledge of rules being the object of investigation. This kind of experiment is quite complicated to perform, but – unlike the first way – it allows us to obtain sufficient amount of data for each selected rule.

REFERENCES:

ITKONEN, Esa (2003): *What is Language? A Study in the Philosophy of Linguistics* [Publications in General Linguistics, 8]. Åbo/Turku: Åbo Akademis tryckeri.