Vagueness tags in Polglish[1] & Polish

Joanna Jendryczka-Wierszycka (Adam Mickiewicz University)

Vague language is regarded as "one of the most important features of the vocabulary of informal conversation." (Crystal – Davy (1975)). Expressing linguistic vagueness has been present as an issue in English linguistics for some time now. The paper will review the current research on vagueness tags (or VTs) (e.g. Aijmer (2002), Biber et al. (1999), Channell (1994), Crystal – Davy (1975), De Cock (1998) and (2004) and Jendryczka-Wierszycka (in preparation)). What is understood by VTs here is expressions occurring in natural speech in times of memory loss, or from a lack or unawareness of a precise equivalent of a word the speaker wants to use, but also when the conversational topic does not require precision or the vague lexical item is consciously chosen in order to keep the informal atmosphere of the moment (Crystal – Davy (1975). Sequences such as: *I mean I, sort of like, you know* or *stuff like that* exemplify this phenomenon.

Since VTs are widely recognized to be underused in non-native English varieties, the need for a comparison of the data with the use of VTs in the learner's L1 follows as a matter of course. However, while the literature pertaining to both English as L1 and as L2 is abundant, it is apparently neglected in Polish linguistics. The present paper attempts at bridging the gap in Polish VTs.

In order to see whether it is the case that Polglish users underuse VTs because they have low incidence in the users' L1, the quest for the Polish inventory of VTs was conducted by means of using the available corpora of the Polish language. The working hypothesis is that Polish speakers use a smaller percentage of VTs in their L1 than English speakers in their L1. This paper presents the inventory of Polish VTs and investigates to what extent this has influence on their L2 performance. The L1 inventory, together with tentative conclusions on the linguistic divergence between Polglish and Polish VTs will be provided during my presentation.

The procedures of investigation, based on Biber et al.'s (1999) corpus-driven 'recurrent word combination' (RWC) method, Altenberg's (1990) assumption concerning RWCs, and the Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis (Granger 1996) will be briefly pointed to. The function of software extracting RWCs and measuring differences in frequency that allows for IL comparisons will also be explained.

References

Aijmer, Karin. 2002. English discourse particles: Evidence from a corpus. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Aijmer, Karin – Bengt Altenberg – Matts Johansson (eds.). 1996. Languages in contrast. Text-based cross-linguistic studies. Lund Studies in English 88. Lund: Lund University Press.

Altenberg, Bengt. 1990. "Speech as linear composition", in G. Caie – K. Haastrup – A. L. Jakobsen – J. E.Nielsen – J. Sevaldsen – H . Specht – A. Zettersten (eds.), 133-143.

Biber, Douglas – Stig Johansson – Geoffrey Leech – Susan Conrad – Edward Finnegan (eds.). 1999. Longman grammar of spoken and written English. Harlow: Longman.

Caie, G. - K. Haastrup – A.L. Jakobsen – J.E.Nielsen – J. Sevaldsen – H. Specht – A. Zettersten (eds.). 1990. Proceedings from the fourth Nordic conference for English studies, Helsingor, May 11-13 1989. Copenhagen University, Department of English.

Channell, Joanna. 1994. Vague language. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crystal, David – Derek Davy. 1975. Advanced Conversational English. London: Longman.

De Cock, Sylvie. 1998. "A Recurrent Word Combination Approach to the Study of Formulae in the Speech of Native and Non-Native Speakers of English." International Journal of Corpus Linguistics 3(1), pp. 59-80.

De Cock, Sylvie. 2004. "Preferred sequences of words in NS and NNS speech", *Belgian Journal of English Language and Literatures (BELL)*, New Series 2: 225-246.

---

[1]   Polish-English interlanguage of Polish learners of English as a foreign language (EFL)

Granger, Sylviane. 1996. "From CA to CIA and back: An integrated approach to computerized bilingual and learner corpora", in: Karin Aijmer – Bengt Altenberg – Matts Johansson (eds.), 37-51.

Jendryczka-Wierszycka, Joanna. 2006. *Lexical bundles in Polish learner speech: a study based on the PLINDSEI corpus of spoken learner English.* (unpublished M.A. thesis)

Kay, P.aul. 1997. *Words and the grammar of context. Chapter 6: The kind of/sort of construction.* Stanford, Cal.: CSLI Publications. 145- 158.

Otwinowska-Kasztelanic, Agnieszka. 2000. *A study of the lexico-semantic and grammatical influence of English on the Polish of the younger generation of Poles (19-35 years of age).* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog

Otwinowska-Kasztelanic, Agnieszka. 2000. *Korpus języka mówionego młodego pokolenia Polaków (19-35 lat).* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog

Scott, Mike. 1998. *WordSmith Tools Manual,* version 3.0. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (http://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/) (date of access: 16 May 2007)

Usoniene, A. (ed.). 1998. *Proceedings from the International Conference on Germanic and Baltic Linguistic Studies and Translation.* University of Vilnius, 22-24 April 1998. Vilnius: Homo Liber.