

ISTY-QAPEFCO
IVth. Estonian-French Seminar
« QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS IN ESTONIAN »
CNRS-Villejuif, 1 june 2012

CNRS, Centre André-Georges Haudricourt. Bâtiment D, Salle de conférence r-d-c, 7, rue Guy Môquet. 94801 VILLEJUIF Cedex.

I. Open seminar

For the open part of the seminar, all distinguished lecturers come from the University of Tartu, Estonia, Departments of General Linguistics, Estonian and Uralic Languages

11h00-11h30

- Tiit Hennoste : *Form-variants of Estonian polar questions: territories of knowledge and epistemic stance*

11h30-12h00

- Krista Mihkels : *Gestures home position revisited: a case of teacher-initiated repair sequences*

12h00-12h30

- Riina Kasterpalu : *Preference for hearing the news: the case of response particle jaajaa in Estonian business negotiations*

LUNCH

14h00-14h30

- Renate Pajusalu & Karl Pajusalu: *How to do things with questions: Interrogative requests in Estonian, Russian, and Finnish*

14h30-15h00

- Helle Metslang, Külli Habicht, Karl Pajusalu : *The origin of polar interrogatives*

TEA PARTY

II. Bilateral PARROT-PHC seminar

15h45-16h45

- Internal meeting of the ISTDY-QAPEFCO project

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ABSTRACTS →

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ABSTRACTS

Tiit HENNOSTE, University of Tartu, Laboratory of Spoken and Computer mediated Communication: **Polar questions and epistemic stance in Estonian spoken interaction**

In my presentation I will analyze the usage of main formation variants of Estonian polar questions (*kas, kas+või, või, jah*, declarative question) in spoken interaction.

The theoretical background of my presentation comes from John Heritage (2012). He shows that relative epistemic status of the participants takes precedence over two primary elements in formation of polar questions (morphosyntax and intonation) for determining whether a turn at talk requests or conveys information. He proposes also that epistemic stance or moment-by-moment expression of epistemic relationships between interactants is expressed through different grammatical realizations of propositional content, like in the questions *Are you married? / You're married, aren't you? / You're married*. The first example shows that the questioner has no definite knowledge of the recipient's marital status, the other two express increasing commitment to the likelihood that the recipient is married.

I will show how the same system is expressed in Estonian questions. I will use quantitative analysis and conversation analysis as research methods. My data come from the Corpus of Spoken Estonian of the University of Tartu. I will follow the typology of social actions fulfilled by question from Max Planck Institute question-response project (Stivers, Enfield 2010). My quantitative data come from article where we analyzed formation of different social actions fulfilled by questions in Estonian institutional interaction (Hennoste et al in appear).

Ref: Hennoste, Tiit, Rääbis, Andriela, Laanesoo, Kirsi, in appear. *Küsimused eestikeelses infodialoogis II. Küsimused ja tegevused*. [Questions in Estonian Infodialogues II. Questions and social actions]. Keel ja Kirjandus, in appear. • Heritage, John, 2012. Epistemic in Action: Action Formation and Territories of Knowledge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45 (1), 1–29. • Stivers, Tanya & Enfield, N. J. 2010. A coding scheme for question–response sequences in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 42, 2620–2626.

Krista MIHKELS (krista.mihkels@ut.ee), University of Tartu : **Gesture's home position revisited: a case of teacher-initiated repair sequences**

The question forms and constructions that co-participants use to initiate the repair are quite systematically described in different languages and settings. However, there exist fewer surveys that document the precise ways in which talk, gesture, posture, gaze, and aspects of the material surround are brought together to form coherent courses of action (e.g. C. Goodwin 2000; T. Stievers and J. Sidnell 2005).

The purpose of the present paper is to analyse the interrelations between linguistic form and non-verbal modalities (gaze, gesture, posture, usage of material artefacts) during the teacher-initiated repair sequences in Estonian elementary classroom interaction using the methodology of conversation analysis.

The previous work has shown that a very large number of moves and sequences of moves in interaction end regularly in the same position where they begin, in the home position (Sacks, Schegloff 2002; Kendon 1975).

In the presentation I will analyse the correlation between bodily movement's leaving and returning to the home position and the ongoing social activity, repairing the trouble in previous turn(s).

Firstly, I will show that the boundaries of the repair sequence might be marked non-verbally. Teacher-initiated repair can be accompanied with bodily movement that returns to the starting point, home position, after completing the repair.

Secondly, non-verbal modalities can give information about the process of the repair sequence:

the beginning of the repair sequence might be marked non-verbally,
the ongoing process of finding solution to the trouble-source might be marked non-verbally,
the end of the repair sequence might be marked non-verbally.

The multimodal microanalysis of teacher-initiated repair sequences in Estonian primary classroom data demonstrates that gesticulation may in various ways make visible the sequence organization of turns.

Ref: Goodwin, C. 2000. Action and embodiment within situated human interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics* 32, 1489-1522. • Kendon, Adam 1975. Gesticulation, speech, and the gesture theory of language origins. *Sign Language Studies* 9, 349-373. • Sacks, H; Schegloff, E.A. 2002. Home position. *Gesture* 2:2, 133-146. • Stivers, T.; Sidnell, J. 2005. Introduction: Multimodal interaction. *Semiotica* 156:1/4, 1-20.

Riina KASTERPALU, University of Tartu: **Preference for hearing the news: the case of response particle *jaajaa* in Estonian business negotiations**

While engaged in conversation, participants take into account who knows what. Thus they shape further interaction according to their consideration of what may be relevant to their co-participant. Besides thoroughly studied longer linguistic structures, *i. e.* sentences, there are small parts of conversational items which also effectively shape the flow of talk.

Studies of naturally occurring conversations have revealed the great importance of small functional items - dialogue particles (Jefferson 1978, 1985; Heritage 1984, Local 1996, Sorjonen 2001, Gardner 2001, Hakulinen 2001, Betz & Golato 2008, Golato & Fagyal 2008, Heinemann 2009, Keevalik 2010, Barth-Weingarten 2011). Dialogue particles can have different functions; they can be a response to a polar question, for instance. In this case, a dialogue particle represents the function of a responding activity. Another option is to use a dialogue particle in the third position, where it reveals a listeners' assessment about what was said in response to her question.

The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate the kind of action conveyed by the response particle *jaajaa* when the asker of a question is listening to the answer. For studying the function of particle *jaajaa*, I use recordings of sales negotiations, where both parties are representing an institution. The data for this research comes from the Corpus of Spoken Estonian of the University of Tartu. In my study, I explore the motivations of a listener who reacts with the particle *jaajaa*. What are the triggers that prompt the use of this item instead of numerous others? Additionally, I will show how, in my data, two different intonation contours of *jaajaa* are used systematically in different environments. One intonation stands for previously existent knowledge of the listener, while the other is a sign of knowledge acquired during the conversation. Regardless of the intonation, in both cases listeners aim to halt the ongoing activity of the speaker. By doing that *jaajaa demonstrates the* participants' preference of getting some new information regarding inquiry instead of being told what is already known to them. On the other hand, usage of the particle *jaajaa* may indicate that no further explanation is necessary.

Renate PAJUSALU & Karl PAJUSALU, University of Tartu: **How to do things with questions: interrogative requests in Estonian, Russian, and Finnish**

The presentation will report on the preliminary results of a comparative study of Estonian, Russian, and Finnish indirect requests, concentrating mostly on interrogative sentences.

Interrogative sentences conveying indirect request represent a well-known type of speech acts. However, they are difficult to study contrastively by using corpus analysis because they are rare in literary texts and informal everyday conversation. Therefore, we

introduce also other methods for the study of such phenomena. We use a questionnaire in which native speakers fill in the presented situations with some kind of speech acts and reactions to them. This means that in this presentation we are dealing with comparison of stereotypes, rather than with real language usage.

Our preliminary hypothesis is that in Estonian the most formal indirect request contains the question particle *kas*, negation (*ei*), a modal verb in the present conditional (*võiks*, *saaks*), V-form (2nd plural instead of 2nd singular *teie*), and a non-finite content verb.

<i>Kas</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>ei</i>	<i>saa-ks</i>	<i>mu-lle</i>	<i>pastapliatsi-t</i>	<i>laena-ta?</i>
QUEST	2PL	NEG	may-COND	1SG-ALL	pen-PART	lend-INF

Could you please lend me a pen?

In Russian, the same construction contains negation (*не*), a modal verb (*могли*), the conditional marker (*бы*), 2nd plural instead of singular (*вы*), and a non-finite content verb.

<i>Не</i>	<i>могли</i>	<i>бы</i>	<i>вы</i>	<i>одолжи-ть</i>	<i>мне</i>	<i>ручку?</i>
NEG	may	COND	2PL	lend-INF	1SG.DAT	pen.ACC

Could you please lend me a pen?

In Finnish, the construction contains a modal verb in the conditional mood, the question suffix (*-ko*), and a non-finite content verb (or, if there is no modal verb, the content verb will take the conditional marker *-isi*).

<i>Vo-isi-tte-ko</i>	<i>laina-ta minu-lle</i>	<i>kynä-ä?</i>
may-COND-2PL-QUEST	lend-INF 1SG-ALL	pen-PART

Could you please lend me a pen?

These categories (the conditional mood, modal verb, negation, interrogative particle, and choice of *T-* or *V-* form for addressing the hearer) combine differently depending on the language and formality of the situation. The aim of the study is to find out how these three languages differ in this respect.

Helle METSLANG, Karl PAJUSALU, Külli HABICHT, University of Tartu : **The origin of polar interrogatives**

The main markers of polar questions in Estonian have undergone grammaticalization or are in the process of grammaticalization from particles and conjunctions with a coordinative meaning: the interrogative particle *kas* from the conjunctive particle *kaas* 'together', the particle *või* from the disjunctive conjunction *või* 'or'. In addition to these polar question markers with a broad sphere of use, Estonian reveals a limited use of some more conjunctions.

The adversative conjunction *aga* 'but' acts as the means of interrogative reference in the following types of interrogative sentences:

1) the structurally incomplete sentence consisting of the particle *aga* and a word form or a phrase: *Aga sina?* 'but you', *Aga homme?* 'but tomorrow' *Aga meie plaanid?* 'but our planes'. The structure does not determine unambiguously the question type; the question could be interpreted as a polar or a content question. For example, depending on the context the question *Aga sina?* 'but you' could be understood either as 'Aga kas sina (tuled)?' 'but will you (come)' or 'Aga mida sina (teed)?' 'but what will you (do)' or in both ways;

2) the structurally incomplete sentence consisting of the particle *aga* 'but' and a conditional clause with the conjunction *kui* 'if': *Aga kui homme hakkab sadama?* 'but if it's going to rain tomorrow'. This sentence type, too, has a vague function, which could be interpreted as a polar or a content question about the occurrence of an action under the conditions marked by the *kui*-clause (e.g. *Kas me läheme matkama, kui homme hakkab sadama?* 'shall we go hiking if it's going to rain tomorrow' or *Mida me teeme, kui homme hakkab sadama?* 'what shall we do if it's going to rain tomorrow');

3) the complete sentence that expresses a polar question: *Aga sina oled täna kodus?* 'but

will you be at home today'. It is common to indicate the expected response in *aga*-questions by means of modal particles: *Aga sina oled täna **ju** kodus?* 'but you will actually be at home today'.

Other conjunctive conjunctions, both the unmarked *ja* 'and' and the adversative *ent* 'but' and *kuid* 'but' reveal similar usages as interrogative markers; they also employ the strategy of grammaticalizing conjunctive interrogative markers.

Also, sentences with a sentence-initial modality marker (*ehk*, *äkki* 'perhaps', *võib-olla* 'maybe') may function as a polar questions.

The questions and answers and their linguistic structures emerge from the functions of the utterances in conversation. The use of coordination and modality markers as polar question markers is based on reanalysis of a part of the presupposition of a potential question to the question itself.

Ref. : Campbell, Lyle 1991, Some grammaticalization changes in Estonian and their implications. In Elizabeth Closs Traugott and Bernd Heine (eds.), *Approaches to the grammaticalization*. Vol. I (Typological Studies in Language 19:1), 285–299. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins. • Heine, Bernd & Tania Kuteva 2002, *World lexicon of grammaticalization*. Cambridge University Press. • Metslang, Helle & Külli Habicht, Karl Pajusalu 2011, Developmental paths of interrogative particles: the case of Estonian. – *Folia Linguistica Historica*. 32: 149–188.

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