

KÄSITE OR KÄSITYS - ON SLIPS OF THE PEN MADE BY SWEDISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS IN FINNISH

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1. INTRALINGUISTIC VOCABULARY ERRORS

The phonological resemblance of words in a target language, paraphasia, as well as semantic similarity, synonymy, can cause mistakes in the choice of words by means of sound and meaning associations, even at quite a late stage in the acquisition of a second language. Mistakes of this type are usually called intralingual, because they are caused by the target language's own system i.e. the structures within the target language interfere with each other (see Ringbom 1981, 57; Mäkilä 1982, 22). Most probably the most disturbing feature is the phonological resemblance of words. One can presume that a language learner pays most attention to the phonological features of words when dealing with lexical units (Ringbom 1989, 171). Sound associations are activated more in a language learner than in a native speaker, because a language learner tries to use all possible ways in learning a word for the first time, and more especially when a certain word should be found in his mental lexicon. According to this kind of theory, the mental lexicon has, in the first place, been formed phonologically (see Channel 1988, 88). In order to explain semantic mistakes however, it has been thought that inside the mental lexicon there are two different kinds of associative networks - the phonological and the semantic.

It is possible that especially partially learned words bring about mistakes, when one tries to activate one's passive knowledge of a word. A word coming to mind can resemble a stimulus word, for example by the number of syllables or by some of its phonological features. The beginnings and ends of words are important. Aitchison (1989, 171) has given numerous examples from English of how a given meaning can be associated with a given word form, for example, the meaning *beaver* to

the form *b....r* and in this instance the English words *beaker*, *bearer* etc. which resemble the stimulus word, may spring readily to mind.

The structure of Finnish vocabulary differs considerably from Indo-European languages and one can presume that this fact can cause the Swedish speaking language learner to make lexical errors caused by intralingual phonological resemblance. Finnish vocabulary is synthetic and it favours long and multimorphemic words (Häkkinen 1990, 137). As the most important factor in the formation of words has been derivation, Finnish words form word families which are derived from the same basic form and which resemble each other. Also, the meanings of these words are linked (at least as far as the basic form is concerned). These roots and derivations which are thus linked to each other, form a system which makes it easy for a native speaker of Finnish to remember these words. Thus the number of words that one is able to master in one's own language is considerably increased (Ikola 1990, 144). The corresponding memory of lexical units of a second language learner is still far from perfect and one could compare it to a broken net which the language learner tries to mend the best he can.

So-called "false friends" (orthographic resemblance and/or same etymology but a different meaning) are a notable source of vocabulary mistakes made between Indo-European languages. For example, in English the word *eventually* has a false friend in Swedish, *eventuellt*, which means 'possibly' (see Stroud 1987, 178); but in addition to this negative transfer, there is also a positive transfer when words that resemble each other are correctly interpreted. This interlingual resemblance of words does not, except for a few loan words, (for example Swedish *soffa* - Finnish *sohva*), exist between Swedish and Finnish.

2. MATERIAL AND OBJECT OF STUDY

I have taken as the object of my study the mistakes in written Finnish which have been made by native speakers of Swedish. My material consists of 800 essays kept at the Department of Finnish of Åbo Akademi University and written by advanced students in the 1980's. From the material I have collected such lexical mistakes in the choice of words, where the mistake has been caused by intralingual phonological associations in the target language, Finnish, or by interlingual semantic associations or structural differences. The results of this more extensive study have been presented in the article "Ruotsinkielisten tekemistä

leksikaalisista virheistä suomen kielessä" (Grönholm 1990a) (On the lexical mistakes made by native speakers of Swedish in the Finnish language).

It has been found in studies made with many other languages that the majority of errors made by advanced students were lexical ones (Grauberg (1971, 259-262). The quantitative calculations made by Eeva Lähdemäki (1991), based on similar material as my own (to a large extent the same essays) show that lexical errors are the second most common group of mistakes, when the total amount of lexical mistakes was 733 (13.7%). Even more common, in total 849 mistakes (15.9%), were spelling mistakes related to marking quantity in Finnish. For example *tuli* 'fire' and *tuuli* 'wind'. Other spelling mistakes were not common in this material (only 171 mistakes 3.2%). The most common mistakes after the lexical ones are morphological inflectional mistakes and syntactic mistakes.

Lähdemäki has calculated separately the numbers of mistakes made with translation loans words, idiomatic expressions and other lexical errors (cases of paraphasia, semantic confusion etc.). These are shown in the table 1 below.

TABLE 1

The amount of lexical errors and the relative amount of all errors made

Types of error	amount	%
Translation loans	62	1.2 %
Idiomatic expressions	45	0.8 %
Other lexical errors	626	11.7 %
Total	733	13.7 %

Data from Lähdemäki (1991)

3. CONFUSION OF WORDS DERIVED FROM DIFFERENT ROOTS

In this presentation I have concentrated on describing mistakes brought about by phonological similarity i.e cases of paraphasia (term

used e.g. by Mäkilä 1982, 54). Lexical errors caused by similarity of form or meaning can also be termed "approximations" (see e.g. Hyltenstam 1988, 75). Phonological resemblance is the most important feature behind these mistakes and thus there are both word pairs derived from the same root word and from different root words among these cases. As far as Finnish is concerned, this random phonological similarity causes errors to occur, for example as in the following cases:

- (1) *On vain yksi pieni vaikutus se on että työpaikka on utsjokissa tai Pohjoiskarjalassa (correct: *vaikeus*)
'There is only one small *influence' (correct: *difficulty*)
- (2) *Eilen kuulin rastaan viherrystä ensimmäisen kerran tänä vuonna (correct: *viserrystä*)
'Yesterday I heard a bird *turn green' (correct: *sing*)
- (3) *Hyvä esimerkki siitä on viime syksynä tapahtunut maanjärjestys Mexicossa... (correct: *-järistys*)
'A good example of this is the *civil order' (correct: *earthquake*)

In all these examples the morphematic form of the confused word pairs is so similar that it increases the probability of the wrong choice, in addition to the phonological similarity. In observations made on other languages, it has been noted that key factors in these confusions are syllable structure, stress pattern and the word class. For example Carter (1988, 88) has given, amongst others, the following examples from English: *lawn - line, easy - early*. In the material of Aitchison (1989, 122) the beginnings of words were identical in 80 cases and also the endings were identical in 70 cases. Also, in most of these cases the number of syllables was the same. Emmorey etc. (1990, 126) has put even more emphasis on the importance of the beginnings of words (for example in English, *cloak, close, clothe, clove* etc., which have been grouped under /klo/ in the mental lexicon). The same results apply to the examples in my own material. In all these cases, the number of syllables was the same and the majority had a phonologically identical beginning and ending (*vai--us, vi--ys, jär--ys*).

Moreover, the ordinary speaker does not usually have a clear picture of the etymological origins or relationships of words even in his own native language (Räisänen 1983, 117-120). Thus it is quite possible that in confusing, for example, the words *järjestys* ('order') and *järistys*

('earthquake') (example 3), the Swedish speaking writer has grouped in his mind these phonologically similar words as belonging etymologically together.

The cases of paraphasia of verbs are similar to those of nouns. Some of the cases are caused purely by phonetic and morphematic associations, but some may be caused by other factors as well.

- (4) *Kun minä olen *levinnyt* pari tuntia, minä aloitin tehdä minun kotitehtäväni (correct: *levännyt*)
'When I have **expanded*' (correct: *rested*)

4. CONFUSIONS OF WORDS DERIVED FROM THE SAME ROOT

Taken from a diachronic viewpoint, one can see that in Finnish there are very many words derived from the same root, which because of the "sameness" of the root also resemble each other phonologically. Some of the words, which etymologically belong to the same word family, have, however, drifted apart from each other and from the root, so that the Swedish speaking language learner can hardly have had any knowledge of the historical background and derivational relationship (for example the Finnish words *asema* and *asento* and *asea*)¹, when according to some studies, even a native speaker of Finnish is uncertain in judging these derivational relationships (Räisänen 1983, 117-120). Because of the eir random phonological resemblance these cases could possibly be classed in the same way as the words confused, and can therefore be discussed in part three. I have however, considered it justified to deal here with all the words that historically belong together as this gives a clearer picture of the extent of the problems caused by the structure of Finnish vocabulary. Owing to the characteristic structure of Finnish words, words that resemble each other form a much broader and more complicated system than in the Indo-European languages, because the family resemblance of words creates simultaneously phonological and semantic associations between words.

In Finnish, derived words are morphematically complex: the derived words can have many derivative suffixes one after the other, in addition to inflectional endings. In these cases, the analysis of polymorphemic groups becomes too difficult for the language learner and he does not have the strength to pay attention to the semantic meanings of both the inflectional and derivative suffixes : compare for example the

Finnish järki - järje + stä - järje + st + ele -järje + st + el + mä - järje + st + el + mä + llinen - järje + st + el + mä + llis + tä - järje + st + el + mä + llis + tä + minen (in English, systemization).

The difficulty of morphological and semantic interpretation makes the language learner try to make use of all the phonological features of the word. Some of the errors have to do with long compound words, in which at least one element is also derived, for example,

- (5) *Maatalousneuvontajärjestelmät, niin kuin esim. "Finska hushällningssällskapet", antavat työpaikkoja monille agrologille (correct: -järjestöt)
'Agricultural *systems' (correct: *organizations*)
- (6) *Onhan paljon muuta joka kuuluu opintoelämään (correct: *opiskelu-*)
'There is much more that belongs to *studies' (correct: *student life*)
- (7) *Oppilaiden pitäisi siis viihtyä koulussa ja siksi koulurakenteen pitäisi olla viihtyvä (correct: *rakennuksen* and *viihtyisä*)
'*The school *structure* should be feeling *comfortable' (correct: the *schoolbuilding* should be *comfortable*.)

In these examples there are disturbing associations with the stimulus words, in which one element of the compound word is the same. For example, the word *koulurakenne* ('school structure') which replaced the correct word *koulurakennus* ('school building') in example 7, is caused by the fact that its common element is almost identical in word form to the word that was being searched for in the writer's mind. However, the use of multimorphemic lexical units indicates clearly that the vocabulary of the writers has reached a high and specialized level in the acquisition of a second language. ²

The following examples are paraphasia errors of non-compound words:

- (8) *...joskus tuntuu siltä, että hevonen karkaa ohjuksista (correct: *ohjaksista*)
'The horse escapes from the *missile' (correct: *reins*)

- (9) *Monella suomalaisella on se *asento* että kaikki muut pitäisivät oppia suomea niin ettei he tarvitsivat oppia mitään vieraita kieliä (correct: *asenne*)
'Many Finns have the **position*' (correct: *attitude*)
- (10) *Nyt toisen viikon lopussa olen onnistunut saamaan jonkinlaisen *käsitteen* akatemiasta (correct: *käsityksen*)
'I have managed to get some sort of **concept*' (correct: *impression*)

In the case of *asenne* ('attitude') and *asento* ('position') - example 9, it can hardly be presumed that the confusion is caused by the words belonging etymologically together. Most probably, the only influential reasons are the phonological and morphemic associations caused by the resemblance of the word forms.

The same applies to example 8 *ohjuksista* (should be *ohjaksista*). The syllable structures of the aforementioned words are similar. In all the cases the beginnings of the words are similar, which in itself is known to cause confusion in language learning even when dealing with very common words (see Aitchison 1989,120)

In other languages as well (amongst others in English, see Aitchison 1989, 114-115), there are similar examples where even in one's own native language, especially derivations which resemble each other are confused, for example in English *malicious* for *malignant* (the suffix has changed), *provisional* for *provincial* (confusion in the stem). In the light of my own material, when it is a question of acquiring a second language, the problem is usually the change in the derivational ending, as in *käsite* for *käsitys* (example 10). This is probably caused by the special character of Finnish vocabulary structure, notably the much larger amount of derivational endings than in Swedish. In a way one could say that as far as Finnish is concerned, confusions are increased by this derivational morphology, which is difficult to learn and remember. It can also be presumed that the derivational suffixes are not very quickly joined with the root word and form lists based on associations in the mental lexicon (see Hurford 1981, 422).

In the background of some of these examples might be the morphological differences between Swedish and Finnish lexemes. Whilst Finnish uses derivation to form new nouns, Swedish uses both derivational endings and prefixes which are attached to the stem. When the meaning of a productively derived noun is specified by certain

derivational endings, the same additional semantic features, for example : [person], [location], [result of action], [intention], [lack of intention] etc., can in both Finnish and Swedish be expressed with different morphological structures. When the writer uses the derivation *maanviljelijä* instead of *maanviljelys*, ('farmer - farming'), he has chosen a word, which in Swedish correlation *jordbruk* - *jordbrukare* is expressed by a word formed with a so-called zero morph. When fluency in the target language has not yet been achieved, the similarity of the root can seem more important even in cases, where in Swedish there is alternation between forms derived from the same root, both with and without prefixes. In many previous studies on language contact, some results have shown that the meaning of the root is the most important feature in the intermediate stage of language learning: everything else, for example suffixes and prefixes are discarded as being unimportant (Mäkilä 1982, 9; compare also Grönholm 1988, 255-256). When using Finnish, the Swedish speaking user can consider the vast derivational systems of Finnish (in addition to the inflectional morphology) as being redundant. Compare :

Swe : byggnad	Fin : rakennus	(Eng : building)
Swe : uppbyggnad	Fin : rakenne	(Eng : structure)

Among cases of paraphasia there are also those where the wrong choice is caused, in addition to resemblance, by the difference in equivalence. Especially structurally and phonologically similar words of two syllables *muisti/muisto* (in English 'memory/a memory'), *taide/taito* ('art/skill') etc., get confused only because of resemblance, as has been found in other languages as well. These kinds of words even form whole phonological classes in the mental lexicon (see those in Aitchison 1989,125).

- (11) *Omasta kokemuksestani mukaan tiedän että ulkonäky pettää
(correct: ulkonnäkö)
'*Visions can be deceptive' (correct: *appearances*)
- (12) *Oppilaat rauhoittuvat vähitellen kun he huomaavat että *muistonsa* rupea palaamaan takaisin (correct: *muistinsa*)
'*a memory' (correct: *memories*)
- (13) *Salin löytäminen on suurta *taidetta* (correct: *vaatii suurta taitoa*)
'Finding the hall is a great *art' (correct: *skill*)

In all these examples the differences in equivalence of the initial language and the target language are clear. Swedish is underdifferentiated in comparison to Finnish; for example:

Swe : *syn* = Fin : *näky* and *näkö*
 Swe : *minne* = Fin : *muisto* and *muisti*
 Swe : *konst* = Fin : *taide* and *taito*

Cases of paraphasia in relation to verbs are of the same type. Especially numerous are the cases concerned with the distinction root verb/derived verb, but there can also be confusions between different derived forms. When contrasting Finnish and Swedish, one must remember that in Finnish there are many of modifying derivative endings for verbs and one cannot show the natural semantic equivalent for all of these in Swedish. For this reason the Finnish language causes the language learner to confuse both verbs and nouns, whereas in studies made on of English, nouns play the major role in malapropisms (Aitchison 1987, 20).

- (14) *Kun lapset näkevät väkivaltaa, he myöskin haluavat tietää mitä se on, ja miksi ihmiset *käyttävät* sota (correct: *käyvät*)
 '*use war' (correct: *fight a war*)
- (15) *Se ei merkitsee sitä että on *jätettävä* pois matkalta Kanarian saarille jos ei hallitse espanja (correct: *jätävä*)
 'This does not mean that one must **be left out* of a trip to the Canary Islands if one does not speak Spanish' (correct: *not to go to the Canary Islands*)
- (16) *Näin pieni harhailu väärälle ilmakehälle voi *johdatta* vaikka kolmanteen maailmansotaa (correct: *johtaa*)
 'This incident can **guide* us into a third world war' (correct: *lead*)
- (17) *Pidämme kuitenkin peukalot edelleen pystyyn ja toivomme, että saisimme ainakin pronssimitalin mukaan kotiin Moskovassa *pidätystä* MM-kisoista (correct: *pidetyistä*)
 'We hope to bring home a bronze medal from the world champion ships **arrested* in Moscow' (correct: *held*)

It is clear that the Finnish synthetic verbs, with chains of derivational suffixes, are difficult for a Swedish-speaking person to learn, when the equivalent in his own language is a root verb or a combination of, for instance, verb and preposition. In the light of my own material, advanced students have, more clearly than comprehensive school students, restructured the Finnish derived verbs in the aforementioned cases into two new categories, in addition to basic verbs. The clearly defined (*t*)*tA* verbs and to some extent the *U* verbs, that will be discussed later, are prototypes of this.

The difficulty in making a distinction is in most cases caused by the fact that in Swedish there is one root verb which is semantically equivalent to the Finnish root verb and a derivative verb or verbs. In Swedish, such semantic features which in Finnish are expressed with derivational endings can be latent. In some instances however, Swedish semantic features such as inchoativity and reflexive constructions, can be expressed structurally in a different way from Finnish, for example with the form *-s* or the pronoun *sig* and many semantic features, amongst others momentaninity, the direction or result of an action etc., can be expressed by the use of a separate preposition (see for example Viberg 1980, 6, 63; Tommola 1983, 126-127).

Another large group of errors is concerned with the confusions of *U* derivations and another verb, or the (*t*)*tA*-, *stA*- derivations. The direction of the simplification can come from either.

- (18) *Monet ihmiset luulevat että tehtaat *saastuvat* tahallaan ilman ja veden (correct: *saastuttavat*)
'The factories **get polluted*' (correct: the factories *pollute*)
- (19) *Eilen Ruotsia vastaan Suomi yltyi tasapeliin 1-1 (correct: *ylti*)
'**increased*' (correct: *achieved*)
- (20) *En voisi millään tavalla sanoa että syyslukukausi olisi vastannut odotuksiani mitä opintoihin *kuulee* (correct: *kuuluu*)
'as far as my studies **hear*' (correct: as far as my studies *are concerned*)
- (21) *Tämän jälkeen suunnitelmani olivat *muuttaneet*, voidaan sanoa etten tiennyt mitä tekisin (correct: *muuttuneet*)
'My plans had **moved house*' (correct: my plans *had changed*)

The use of the passive-reflexive *U* verbs³ is very problematic for a speaker of Swedish, as well as for speakers of German or English (see Siitonen 1990, 96). Swedish-speakers do not, however, in the light of my material, replace the Swedish *s* form with the passive at least when they have to write in an informal situation (compare Swe : *Dörren öppnas* - Fin : *Ovi avautui* (Eng : The door is opened - the door opens). One reason for this may also be that in Swedish many verbs have a [+causative/-causative] system, in which the anticausatives are marked by a passive or by a reflexive (Viberg 1980, 90). In this case the object (of the surface structure), which occurs with the Swedish *s* form is seen to have the semantic role of a passive subject (PATIENT, Jörgensen et al. 1987, 88-89) as with the Finnish *U* verbs (see Jokinen 1990, 14).

It can thus be seen as the interference of Swedish (and also as a universal language feature in the interlanguage of the language learner) that the Finnish verb system is simplified. At the same time the confusions are influenced by phonological associations. The semantic content expressed by roots of words that resemble each other is the most important feature as far as the language learner is concerned and this is enough for him at the intermediate stage. Redundant features are disregarded, as was done with nouns, or the semantic features of the derivational endings are not known in such a way that would have any meaning to the writer. As far as the language learner is concerned it is a question of a communicative language learning strategy. The text can remain complete when the words that one has learned are simplified in one direction or another: from root verb to polymorphemic or from polymorphemic to root verb (see also Grönholm 1990b).

Of the lexical errors made by native speakers of Swedish (approximations), the majority are cases of intralingual paraphasia, despite the fact that they are caused by confusing word pairs which do or do not belong etymologically together. The intralingual influence becomes especially emphasized with advanced learners who are at an interlanguage stage of language learning. Their vocabulary has grown quite large and sophisticated and thus the confusions of words belonging to the same word family become possible.

Notes

1. The relationship between the root word and the derived word is impossible even for a native a Finnish speaker to perceive, when the root word has disappeared or is scarcely used. For instance the aforementioned words *asema* and *asento* are derived from the root verb *asea*, which now only known in some Finnish dialects (Häkkinen 1990,-127).

2. For sake of comparison let us mention that comprehensive school students do not yet master such abstract and morphematically difficult compound words. In their essays, there are only a few compound words and those are very concrete in their meaning as for example *joulupukki* - Father Christmas *koiranruoka* - dog food (examples from primary school) and other well known words, such as *kuvaruutu* - TV screen, *mielipide* - opinion, *Pikkukakkonen* - a well known children's programme (examples from secondary school). Bilingual students use compound words in the same way as native speakers of Finnish, but they do make quite a few paraphasia errors with these words as well as with fixed connections, for example *kaasunaamio* - gas disguise, should be *kaasunaamari* - gas mask, *vähittäismaksu* - hire purchase should be *vähimmäismaksu* - minimum charge.

3. Jokinen (1990, 15-16) also calls the Finnish *U-* verbs *U-* passives because of the passive role of the subject. The function of these verbs can be deemed to be automatic as opposed to produced action.

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