Contrastive Linguistics Meets Heritage Languages: A cross-linguistic Study of Address Forms in Bilingual Russian speakers in Germany and Israel

Although contrastive linguistics mainly deals with comparison of different baseline languages, migrant heritage languages (HL) offer a fertile ground for contrastive investigations as well. Within HLs, at least two language systems come in contact. Analysis of the emerging contact-induced results and the mechanisms triggering changes in HLs can shed light onto structural specifics of the languages in contact or onto pragmatic features of their usage. This is where the present paper comes in.

Previous research on pragmatic skills of HL speakers has mainly concentrated on speech acts of making requests, in HLs in contact with English as a dominant Societal Language (SL) (Dubinina & Malamud 2017; Pinto & Raschio 2007). As first of its kind, the present paper 1) investigates the *address forms* in Russian HL in *Germany* and *Israel* and 2) compares pragmatic phenomena in contact situations of Russian with *two typologically different languages*.

The paper focuses on the formal speech based on the following hypothesis. As a result of the functional distribution of the HL and the SL (familiar resp official language), HL speakers mainly use their SL in the formal communication. In turn, a functionally reduced use of their HL contributes to its incomplete acquisition of its formal register(s) (Wiese & Yannick, 2021). Accordingly, Russian HL speakers in line with the multilingual variation as a main feature of their communication (Francescini, 1998) resort to a number of diverse strategies in the formal speech, based on the SL, the HL or on their own creativity.

The study describes these strategies and analyzes the pragmatic and linguistic factors influencing their choice, among others, regarding to the certain lacunae and divergences in the Russian address system itself.

The empirical data of the study were collected from 75 participants equally split into three groups: adult Russian-Hebrew and Russian-German bilinguals and a control group of Russian-speaking monolinguals. The participants' requests at the hypothetical communicative situations elicited by means of a speech-productive task were coded for the choice of the (a) pronominal (*T* vs. *V*) and nominal address forms (form of address, title, first or second name etc. and diverse forms combinations) and (b) their syntactic combinations.

The comparative evaluation of data from each experimental group shows that the choice (or creation) of concrete address forms in the formal speech is caused by both HL-gaps in HL-speakers and gaps in Russian address form's system itself. However, the strategies of filling these gaps are also related to the dominant address system (Hebrew or German), which exerts a linguistic but also pragmatic influence on HL. Moreover, the analysis of the data shows that the specifics of the address forms' use emergent not only due to system-linguistic and contact-linguistic factors but also due to pragmatically relevant factors (e.g., interpretation of status/ power and distance/ solidarity, individual social and cultural identity etc.).

References

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