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Describing syntactic pattern replications: a usage-based approach for Czech and German

Following the terminology in Sakel (2007: 15), language contact phenomena can be divided into matter replications, i.e. transferring concrete language material from one language into another, and pattern replications, representing such cases where the language material itself is not transferred. Instead, abstract patterns are replicated Matras (2009: 234).

This paper deals with syntactic pattern replications in narrative texts of German-Czech bilinguals. The analysis is based on the data collected within the project “Language across generations: contact induced change in morphosyntax in German-Slavic bilingual speech” supported by the German Research Foundation. The corpus consists of narrative interviews conducted in German and Czech and focusing on language biographies of the bilingual interviewees (Nekvapil 2003). Therefore, the data represents spontaneous spoken language.

One of the prominent areas in which syntactic pattern replications can be found is the argument structure and the related valence. For instance, there are Czech clauses in the sample deviating from the standard variety as well as from the colloquial variety used in the Czech Republic (1a). This can be explained by replication of German patterns (2).

(1) **Bilingual Language**

- a. *von¹ si to doufal*
3SG REFL DEM hope.3SG.PRF
(NT_GAU_MI_CZ)

b. **Homeland Variety**

- on v to doufal*
3SG in DEM hope.3SG.PRF
he hoped for it

¹ *Von* is a colloquial variant of the personal pronoun *on* ‚he’ pronounced with a prothetic *v*-.

(2) **L2-Model**

er hat sich das erhofft

3sg AUX.3SG REFL DEM hope.PTCP

he hoped for it

In order to describe and explain such contact-induced patterns different from patterns in the homeland baseline of the replica language, one must consider the number of arguments and their morphological shape as well as the semantic roles in both the model and replica language. Traditionally, dependency grammar is considered appropriate to describe sentence patterns, especially for Slavonic languages (Müller 2018: 359). However, spontaneous spoken language, especially in a language contact situation, needs an approach able to show the cognitive processes behind contact-induced patterns different from the homeland variety. For this purpose, the cognitive construction grammar introduced by Goldberg (1995, 2006) seems to be a promising approach compatible with valence theory arisen from dependency grammar (Welke 2011). It can be applied on bilingual speech within the framework of diasystematic construction grammar (Höder 2019), which allows not only a precise description of semantic and syntactic patterns, but also an inductive bottom-up typology of syntactic pattern replications in Czech-German bilingual data.

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