

Communication Strategies of Russian-English Asymmetric Bilinguals Given Insufficient Language Faculty

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Abstract : In the age of globalization Internet communication as a new format of interactions have become an integral part of our daily routine. Internet environment allows for new conditions and provides participants to a communication act with extra communication tools which can be used on Internet forums or in chat rooms. As a result communicants tend to alternate their behavior patterns in contrast to those practiced in live communication. It is not yet clear which communication strategies participants to Internet communication abide by and what determines their choices. Given the continually changing environment of a forum or a chat the behavior of a communicant can be interpreted in terms of autopoiesis theory which sees adaptation as the major tool for coexistence between the living system and its niche. Each communication act is seen as interaction between the communicant (i.e. the living system) and the overall environment of the forum (i.e. the niche) rather than one particular interlocutor. When communicating via the Internet participants are believed to aim at reaching a balance between themselves and the environment of a forum or a chat. The research focuses on unveiling the adaptation strategies employed by a communicant in particular cases and looks into the reasons they are employed. There is a correlation between language faculty of the communicants and the strategies they opt for when communicating on Internet forums and in chat rooms. The research included an experiment with a sample of Russian-English asymmetric bilinguals aged 16-25. Respondents were given two texts of equivalent contents, but of different language complexity. They had to respond to the texts as if they were making a reciprocal comment at a forum. It has been revealed that when communicants realize that their language faculty is not sufficient to understand the initial text they tend to amend their communication strategy in order to maintain the balance with the niche (remain involved in the communication). Most common strategies for responding to a difficult-to-understand text were self-presentation, veiling poor language faculty and response evasion. The research has so far focused on a very narrow aspect of correlation between language faculty and communication behavior, namely the syntactic and lexicological complexity of initial texts. It is essential to conduct a series of experiments that dwell on other characteristics of the texts to determine the range of cases when language faculty determines the choice of adaptation strategy.

Keywords : adaptation, communication strategies, internet communication, verbal interaction, autopoiesis theory

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