"Can't we use Google Translate?" A multimodal analysis of language choices at the interface with Swedish Google

EUROSLA 21, Stockholm, Sweden

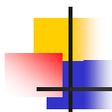9 September 2011

Nigel Musk

OR

Doing avoiding English with the help of Swedish Google

(c.f. Markee 2011 "Doing, and justifying, doing avoidance")

Nigel Musk

## Aims

Overarching aim

- Investigate pupils' (learners of English) Internet search practices for gathering information for project work (information literacy).

Narrower aim

- Investigate language choices in search activities at the interface with common computer software, e.g. Google & Word

Focus of this presentation

- How pupils orient towards the emergent features of the Swedish Google search engine which directly affect the language of their information sources

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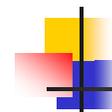
Avoidance 1

- In SLA literature avoidance is typically recast as a communication strategy (e.g. Tarone 1978, Færch & Kasper 1983) but (initially) often perceived as an individual mental activity (Bialystok 1978).
- However, the by now sizable literature is only marginal to this study, because:
    - focus traditionally on language production (not reading)
    - mismatches in many taxonomies between avoidance and language switching (c.f. Dörnyei & Scott's overview 1997: 196-197)
    - few empirical studies on language strategies take seriously the fact that communication strategies in general and avoidance in particular arise as situated activities in social interaction (but see Markee 2011)
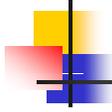
Avoidance 2

- Apart from the term avoidance and the involvement of a language switch, the problem-orientedness of communication strategies (Færch & Kasper 1983: 31, Dörnyei & Scott 1997: 182) is also relevant to this study.

- This study focuses on reading (not deemed as a language production skill), which through a series of jointly negotiated language switches is transformed into an activity performed solely in the students' first language.
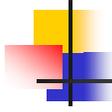
Avoidance 3

- drawing on an ethnomethodological conversation analytic framework, I can concur with Markee's respecification of avoidance as:

  "a locally contingent practice that is collaboratively co-constructed by participants in real time as a topic of interaction during the course of naturally occurring institutional talk."
  (Markee 2011: 603)

Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis

- **CA for SLA** (Conversation Analysis for Second Language Acquisition) (e.g. Seedhouse 2004, Mondada & Pekarek Doehler 2004, Firth & Wagner 2007, Markee 2008)

- **emic** (members') **perspective** without *a priori* SLA theories

- **multimodal transcription**, bringing in talk, gesture, gaze, manipulation of artefacts (primarily the computer & instruction sheet)

Data

- **site:** a Swedish secondary school

- **situation:** part of an English lesson in a provisional computer room

- **participants:** 4 pairs of pupils (4 girls & 2 boys) in year 9

- **recording:** video recordings from 2 angles (collected by Linn Olsen & Sara Göthman autumn term 2010)

Task

The task is to research a historical crime/criminal (with the help of the Internet) and present it to the rest of the class in English
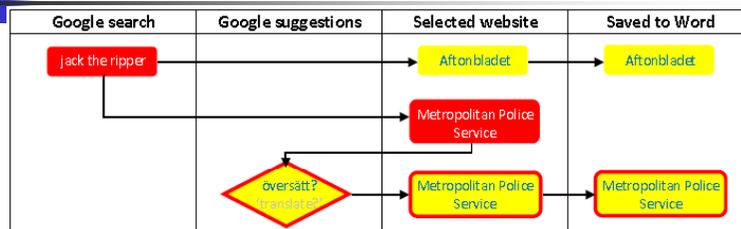
Task Instructions

Facts about Jack the Ripper

-a serial killer who shook England at the end of the 1880's.

Search facts about

- The murders
- Police reports
- News articles
- Theories about who he was
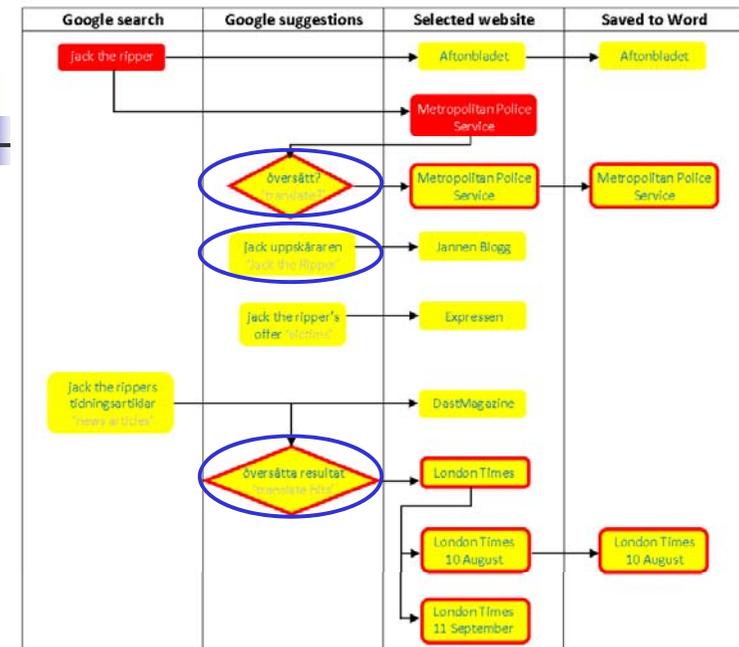- Something else you find interesting
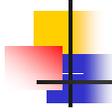
Tracking language choices 1

Google search	Google suggestions	Selected website	Saved to Word
jack the ripper		Aftonbladet	Aftonbladet
		Metropolitan Police Service	
översätt? translate?		Metropolitan Police Service	Metropolitan Police Service

KEY

jack the ripper	Search word or website in English	jack uppskäraren 'Jack the Ripper'	Search word or website in Swedish
översätt? translate?	Translation option in Google or Word (from English to Swedish)	Metropolitan Police Service	English website translated into Swedish
Metropolitan Police Service	Erasure of saved text in Word	jack the ripper Bilder 'images'	Search for images or image (irrespective of language)

MARIA & JOHANNA

| Google search	Google suggestions	Selected website	Saved to Word
jack the ripper		Aftonbladet	Aftonbladet
		Metropolitan Police Service	
	översätt? translate?	Metropolitan Police Service	Metropolitan Police Service
	jack uppskäraren "Jack the Ripper"	Jannen Blogg	
	jack the ripper's offer 'victims'	Expressen	
jack the rippers tidningsartiklar 'news articles'		DastMagazine	
	översätta resultat translate hits	London Times	
		London Times 10 August	London Times 10 August
		London Times 11 September	

Findings & conclusions 1

- Swedish Google offers different types of language options (including automatic translation)
- In Google, language choices in favour of Swedish activate further choices (interactive software), which can incrementally result in a total switch to Swedish
- Two pairs display a problem orientation towards English and make active language choices accordingly, where one pupil is already familiar with a translation option
- These choices constitute what could be conceived of as an avoidance strategy, collaboratively co-constructed by participants

Findings & conclusions 2

- Two of the pairs chose three of the four (noticed) language options in Google (and one pair also used the translation option in Word)
- Language options are regularly verbalised and negotiated (and in the case of Maria & Johanna, frequently accompanied by pointing at the screen)
- Once the first Swedish language option has been negotiated, opting for Swedish is not renegotiated, i.e. they do not return to English (except by accident, which is immediately repaired)
- Language of instructions and (established) language of activity may also affect language choices of the search
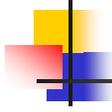
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