UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS ON THE USE OF *THIS* AND *IT*

BA thesis

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TARTU

2018

ABSTRACT

This and *it* may be used in a very similar way, for example, to refer to something previously mentioned. Nevertheless, most of the grammar books do not focus on their differences or explain their use in detail and thus may cause a lot of problems for English learning students to understand their correct and incorrect use. This thesis analyzes how frequently Estonian learners of English mistake *this* for *it* and other way around, and in what grammatical function they are often misused. The hypothesis is that because the rules of the use of *this* and *it* and their differences are generally not explained in detail in grammar books, the Estonian learners of English mistake *this* for *it* and other way around. The results may be a good study material for teachers to see the frequent misuses and draw their students' attention to them.

This thesis focuses on the correct and incorrect uses of *this* and *it* by studying the 2014 University of Tartu learner corpus of Estonian learners of English. The data were collected from the texts written in the 2014 University of Tartu "English language and literature" major entrance examination. The thesis objectives were to study and write down the general uses of *this* and *it,* the similarities and differences in their use and situations where they were often mistaken for one another. The general uses were based on the grammar rules examined in multiple grammar books. Based on these rules, the learner corpus was analyzed to examine what mistakes do Estonian learners of English mostly make.

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INTRODUCTION

What is the difference between "It is mine" and "This is mine"? Is the meaning of the sentences the same or is it different? *This* and *it* seem to be very similar as both function as pronouns and may often be mistaken for one another. *This* and *it* are both deictic, which means that their meaning depends on the contexts in which they are used. Both can be used to refer to something previously mentioned and to identify someone or something. This thesis analyzes the use of *this* and *it* by the Estonian learners of English. To do that, the learner corpus of the University of Tartu was studied. The corpus consists of a collection of texts written by Estonian learners of English for the University of Tartu entrance examination in the year 2014.

The research questions are: How frequently do Estonian learners of English mistake *this* and *it* for one another and use them incorrectly? In what grammatical function are they often misused? Are the misuses easy to determine?

The aim of the thesis is to see in what contexts do Estonian learners of English make mistakes in the use of *this* and *it*. Michael Swan (2005: 584) was the only author who explained the differences between *this* and *it* in detail. All the other grammar books studied did not concentrate on the use of *this* and *it* and their differences. The author's hypothesis is that Estonian learners of English often mistake *it* for *this* and the other way around because it is a gray area of study usually not specified in grammar books. By studying in what ways were *this* and *it* used incorrectly by Estonian learners of English, the results of this thesis may provide help in further teaching of *this* and *it*.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the possible uses of *this* and *it*. Based on these rules, the chapter ends with the thesis author discussing situations where *this* and *it* may be often

confused and used incorrectly. For this, examples and explanations are included. For the rules and possible uses of *this* and *it*, multiple grammar books were analyzed. Chapter 2 presents the analysis of the learner corpus and highlights the errors and situations where both *this* and *it* could have been used. The decision of the cases being right or wrong are supported by rules written in Chapter 1. The thesis ends with a conclusion of the analysis and possible suggestions for future researches.

1. CHAPTER I – *THIS* OR *IT*

The following chapter will give an of the different functions of *this* and *it* have in a sentence and their correct use.

1.1. Possible uses of *this*

This can act as a demonstrative determiner or a demonstrative pronoun. A determiner is a noun modifier which precedes a noun or a noun phrase to clarify it. The most common determiners are the articles *the* and *a/an,* but *this/that/every/each/no/my* may also be used. *This* is a demonstrative determiner of singular countable and uncountable nouns, which can be seen in the example (1). In this sentence *this* acts as a demonstrative determiner for a singular countable noun *book* and it implies that the book is close to the speaker. A pronoun is used to replace a noun that has already been mentioned or known before. *This* as a demonstrative pronoun is usually used to introduce someone or something. To introduce a person to someone, typically, a construction *this + is/was + personal noun* is used, as illustrated in example (2). In this sentence, *this* implies that Elizabeth is close to the speaker and is introduced to someone. (Schibsbye 1965: 205; Quirk et al 1985: 253- 254)

1) *Have you read this book?* (Quirk et al 1985: 257)
2) *This is Elizabeth.* (Swan 1984: 603)

Demonstrative *this* is deictic because it locates the speaker or the entity to a certain reference point. *This* is used to show distance. It points out something that is close to hand or associated with the speaker, which can be seen in example (1) and in example (3). In example (3) if the letter talked about was already discussed by the speakers, then the pronoun *this* should be

used. To refer to the present time, *this* can also be used as a temporal marker, as illustrated in example (4), where *this* refers to the current month. (Lyons 1999:18)

3) *Show me this letter you have in your pocket.* (Lyons 1999: 18)

4) *This month marks their 50th anniversary.* (Lyons 1999:18)

This may also be used to refer to something the speaker is pointing to, as in example (5), where *this* refers to an object the speaker is talking about or showing to the listener. A statement like "this is mine" can only be used if something is currently in front of the speaker and is visible.

5) *This is mine.*

Another common use of *this* is to refer to a specific thing or content mentioned in the same or in the preceding clause or a sentence, as illustrated in example (6). In this example, *this* emphasizes and refers to the whole situation mentioned before. In addition, *this* can also be used to refer to situations later in or immediately after the main clause. This can be seen in example (7), where *this* refers to the last clause and is used because new information about the topic was added. In this case the new information was "since many of those present were plantation owners". Not only does *this* refer to the preceding sentence or a clause, but it can also be used to refer forward to something new happening or being said, as in example (8). (Long 1961: 293; Schibsbye 1965: 208)

6) *You mean to tell me that a woman dropped her bag so you would talk to her? When did all this happen?* (Schibsbye 1965: 208)

7) *His speech was concerned chiefly with the subject of land ownership. This was a very delicate matter, since many of those present were plantation owners.* (Long 1961: 294)

8) *This I can tell you: if you do not want money but are content to earn just enough to keep body and soul together, then go…* (Schibsbye 1965: 208)

This may also be used as an adverb, but it must then be proceeded by an adjective. When *this* is used as an adverb, it is usually used in the spoken language with additional gestures that emphasize and clarify the thing mentioned, like in the example (9). Just by reading the sentence it does not tell the reader how big the box was, thus additional gestures are needed to clarify this information. *This* may also act as an adverb of degree. If it is used to express manner, it is preceded by the quantifiers *much* and *many*, as can be seen in example (10). (Schibsbye 1965: 206)

9) *The box was this wide.* (Schibsbye 1965: 206)

10) *This much courtesy is bad for you.* (Schibsbye 1965: 206)

1.2. Possible uses of *it*

The pronoun *it* usually refers to inanimate objects, uncountable substances and may even refer to singular collection of people (Schibsbye 1965: 188; Quirk et al 1985: 348). In example (11) *it* refers to an inanimate object, in this case it is the noun *moon*. In example (12) *it* refers to an uncountable substance *soup*. *It* referring to a singular collection of people could be seen in example (13), where *it* refers to the word *parliament*. *It* is usually used with non-living things, but it can also be used to refer to living beings like babies, animals etc. without any reference to sex or number, as can be seen in example (14). (Long 1961:343)

11) *The moon was so bright you could read a book by it.* (Schibsbye 1965: 188)

12) *She made some soup and gave it away.* (Quirk et al 1985: 348)

13) *Parliament's answer to all awkward problems which it can then ignore.* (Quirk et al 1985: 348)

14) *Who was that? I thought it was your sister.* (Long 1961:343)

Similarly to *this*, the pronoun *it* may also be used to refer to a preceding clause, sentence or thing previously mentioned, like in example (15), where *it* refers to the first part of the sentence. When referring to something previously mentioned, the pronoun *it* does not emphasize anything particularly nor does it add any new information. (Schibsbye 1965: 188; Swan 2005: 584)

15) *The sack of Rome shook the whole of the Western World: in a sense, it was the end of the Roman Empire.* (Quirk et al 1985: 348)

It can also be used to identify someone or something. In example (16) a person gets a phone call and someone asks them who they are talking to and the person will identify the caller and say that it is John. They are not introducing, but identifying them. When identifying someone or something, *it* needs an antecedent. In example (17), the pronoun *it* needs something to refer to. "It is mine" would be used if the person was asked a question like "Whose book is this?". The pronoun *it* does refer to a specific thing, but it does not necessarily have to be visible to the speaker. (Swan 1984: 474)

16) *Who is that? It is John*. (Swan 1984: 474)

17) *Whose book is this? It is mine*.

In addition to *it* referring to a preceding sentence, it may also refer to the content of a following clause. This is shown in example (18). In this example *it* emphasizes the sentence that follows and acts as a preparatory subject. A preparatory or anticipatory *it* is used to introduce the subject or object, which usually is a clause. Frequently, it is a *that*-clause or *to + infinitive* clause. When the subject is an infinitive or a *that*-clause, the sentence usually starts with *it* and the real subject is moved to the end. If the subject is a *that*-clause, the sentence usually involves passive reporting verbs, like in examples (19) and (20), where the passive verbs are *thought* and *said*. When the subject is an infinite clause then the preparatory *it* can be seen in the structures like *it (is) + adjective + for + object + infinitive* or in *it (is) +*

adjective + infinitive, which expresses possibility, importance, necessity, urgency and frequency. In example (21), *it* as preparatory subject expresses possibility and is in the *it is + adjective + for + object + infinitive* structure. Sometimes *it* is used in a similar structure but with an *-ing* form as the subject, as can be seen in example (22). The preparatory *it* is also used to introduce the clauses with *if, as if* and *as though*. This can be seen in example (23). (Swan 2005: 423, 424, 350; Quirk et al 1985: 349)

18) *It was unbelievable – they actually welcomed me.* (Schibsbye 1965: 189)

19) *It is thought that the car had been destroyed before it was found.* (Quirk et al 1985: 349)

20) *It is said that the woman left the city two week ago.* (Quirk et al 1985: 349)

21) *It is essential for the papers to be ready before Thursday.* (Swan 2005: 423)

22) *It is nice seeing you.* (Swan 2005: 423)

23) *It looks as if we are going to have trouble with Ann again.* (Swan 1984: 424)

When a clause or infinitive object has a complement, *it* may also act as a preparatory object. It is usually used in the structure: *subject + verb + it + complement + infinitive/clause*, as illustrated in example (24). If there is no adjective or noun complement, then *it* is not used. In example (25) there is no complement, thus *it* cannot be used. It would be wrong to write "I cannot bear it to see people crying". Nevertheless, there are two exceptions and that is with the structures *owe it to…* and *leave it to*. Examples (26) and (27) have *it* functioning as a preparatory object with both structures mentioned before. *It* as a preparatory object can also be used with *-ing* form objects or an *if*-clause that follows *would appreciate* ("I would appreciate it if…"). Example (28) shows *it* being used as a preparatory object with an *-ing* form object. (Swan 2005: 424-425)

24) *We found it tiring to listen to him.* (Swan 2005: 424)

25) *I cannot bear to see people crying.* (Swan 2005: 424)

26) *We owe it to society to make our country a better place.* (Swan 2005: 425)

27) *I'll leave it to you to decide.* (Swan 2005: 425)

28) *I found it strange being in her house.* (Swan 2005: 425)

Frequently, *it* acts as an "empty it", which means that *it* bears no meaning and does not refer to anything. Anticipatory or preparatory *it* is also referred to as an "empty subject" because the real subject is in another part of the sentence, usually it is a clause. "Empty it" is used to talk about time, weather, temperature, atmospheric conditions or distance, like in examples (29) and (30). The "empty it" is used to fill the subject position in a sentence and is usually used with the structure: *it + be + adjective/noun*. (Swan 1984: 474; Swan 2005: 423)

29) *It is Monday.* (Swan 1984: 474)

30) *What time is it?* (Swan 1984: 474)

1.3. Confusion about the use of *this* and *it*

There are many instances where both *this* and *it* may be confused one for another. The demonstrative pronoun *this* is used very similarly to the pronoun *it*. When identifying a person, *this* is used if the person is close to the speaker or when the speaker is introducing someone. *This* is also used during a phone call when the speaker is introducing themselves, as can be seen in example (31). In this example *it* cannot be used, as the person is introducing themselves and not identifying. The pronoun *it* is used to identify someone, as illustrated in example (32). In this example, the speaker is clearly identifying the person asked about. In example (34) *this* refers to a thing visible and close to the speaker and does not require an antecedent. In example (33) an antecedent is required and the thing talked about does not have to be close or visible to the speaker.

31) *Could I speak to Jane Horrabin? This is Jane Horrabin.* (Swan 2005: 571)

32) *Who is that over there? It is John Cook.* (Swan 2005: 404)

33) *This is mine.*

34) *It is mine.*

When referring to the past or a previous sentence *this* and *it* are frequently confused for one another, because like *this*, *it* may also be used to refer to the past content mentioned. The difference is that *it* does not emphasize anything and is rarely stressed. If something needs to be emphasized, then a stressed pronoun *this* should be used (Quirk et al 1985: 348). *This* emphasizes the thing or the situation and is more preferred when additional information about the topic is added. Examples (35) and (36) are grammatically correct, but in the second sentence additional information is added to the topic emphasized and thus the pronoun *this* is used. *It* is used to talk about the thing that was already mentioned and continues discussing the topic and is not used to introduce it. *This* introduces the topic that was not talked or written about before, it gives new information, as it shown in example (37). When referring to something new that was mentioned in the following clause or sentence, only *this* can be used. This can be seen in example (38). (Swan 2005: 585)

35) *So she decided to paint her house pink. It upset the neighbors a bit.* (Swan 2005: 585)

36) *So she decided to paint her house pink. This upset the neighbors so much that they took her to court, believe it or not.* (Swan 2005: 585)

37) *VAMPIRES' PICNIC: This is a film for all the family.* (Swan 2005: 584-585)

38) *Now what do you think about this? I thought I would get a job in Spain for six months, and then…* (Swan 2016: 592).

When there are many things mentioned, *it* refers to the main subject, while *this* usually refers to the last thing mentioned, a new subject. In example (34) *it* refers to *the machine* used by the children, but if *this* is used instead of *it*, like in example (35), then *this* would refer to *the spare room* used by the children because that was the last thing mentioned in the first sentence. (Swan 2005: 585)

39) *We keep the ice-cream machine in the spare room. It is mainly used by the children…* (Swan 2005: 585)

40) *We keep the ice-cream machine in the spare room. This is mainly used by the children, incidentally...* (Swan 2005: 585)

2. CHAPTER 2 – Corpus based analysis of *this* and *it*

The following chapter is about the corpus, method of analysis and the results of the analysis.

2.1. Corpus background information

For this research the learner corpus from the University of Tartu is used. The corpus consists of texts from the 2014 University of Tartu "English language and literature" major entrance examination. The aim of the examination was to test the English language proficiency of the participants as well as their analytical reading and writing skills. The examination consisted of three exercises. The corpus has the answers for the third exercise, where the participants had to write approximately a 200-word answer related to a given text.

The corpus consists of 127 texts with no information about the nationality or the current English level of the participants. 127 people took the examination, 88 of them were women and 39 were men. The examination requirement was for the participants to hold a secondary education degree; however, some participant may have had a higher education degree in another major.

The corpus texts have an 8-digit code: (01) is a mark for "entrance examination", (14) means the year of the examination, the next number indicates the gender of the participant (8) is a woman and (9) a man, the last three numbers show the order of the texts. This thesis will refer to a certain text by pointing out the code given in the corpus.

2.2. Method of analysis

The first step was to read the corpus texts and by hand highlight the places where *this* and *it* were used. The second step was to identify the uses of *this* and *it*. For this, the grammar rules from Chapter I were taken and put in tables. In the end three tables were made. The first table is about the correct usage of *it* (see Table 1), the second table is about the correct usages of *this* (see Table 2) and the third table is about the errors made in their use (see Table 3). As the answers were written by students of English, the texts included many other grammatical errors; however, these will not be emphasized in this thesis. The corpus texts are referred to by codes and the examples from the texts are quoted exactly how they were written by the learners of English, including all the grammar mistakes. This thesis analyses all the misuses of *this* and *it*, but the different variation of *it*, like the reflexive form *itself* will not be analyzed; however, the misuse of *its* and *it's* will.

Determining the mistakes presented a lot of difficulty because there were a lot of situations where both *this* and *it* were possible, some of these instances are presented below with the author's explanation of how using one or another changes the meaning of the sentence and if one would have been a better choice to use than another. To determine that, the rules of the uses from the first chapter are referred to.

2.3. Results

In the learner corpus *it* appeared 647 times in 14 different ways, from where 7 were correct and 7 incorrect. The word *it* was used correctly 622 times in 7 different ways (see Table 1): to refer to something that was already mentioned; in the *it + be + adjective/noun* structure; used to introduce clauses with *if, as if* and *as though*; as a preparatory subject in a *that-*

clause; in expressions like *say it out loud, to sum it up*, etc.; to refer to a following clause; in a structure, *it* (*is*) + *adjective* + *for* (*object*) *to* or *to*. From these seven instances, *it* was used incorrectly when it was supposed to refer to something previously mentioned and the pronoun *this* should have been used. Other incorrect situations include circumstances where *it* was not written, *that* used instead of *it*, *it* was misspelled, used instead of *they*, used where it was not needed, mistaken with *its*. These errors are still connected with the use of *it* and thus considered as mistakes made in the use of *it*.

Table 1. The correct usage of *it*

Order	Context in which *it* was used	Correct usage
1	*It* is used to talk about the thing that was already mentioned.	408
2	Introductory *it*, used in the *be + adjective/noun* structure.	1
3	*It* used to introduce the clauses with *if*, *as if* and *as though*.	13
4	Preparatory *it* in a *that*-clause.	71
5	In expressions: *say it out loud; keep it this/that way; to sum it up; how long will it take; whether we like it or not, (whether you) like it or not*, *the way I see it*, *it depends on.*	9
6	Refers to content of a following clause or sentence.	5
7	In a structure: *it* (*is*) + *adjective* + *for* (*object*) *to* or *to*.	115

In the learner corpus *this* was used 137 times in 5 different ways – 3 correct and 2 incorrect. *This* was used correctly 135 times in 3 different ways (see Table 2): to refer to something that was previously mentioned; to refer to a present time and as a determiner to specify a noun or a noun phrase. From these 3 instances there were no situations where *this* was used incorrectly. The two incorrect uses include situations where *this* was overused and where instead of *this* the word *that* was used.

Table 2. The correct usage of *this*

Order	Context in which *this* was used	Correct usage
1	Refer to a situation just mentioned.	90
2	To refer to present time.	3
3	As a determiner to specify a noun or a noun phrase.	42

2.3.1. **Situations where both *this* and *it* are possible**

As it was mentioned in Chapter 1, *this* emphasizes the current situation and gives new information. In addition, *this* would refer to the last clause, while *it* would refer to the main subject. In many cases it is important to know the whole context of the paragraph and get an idea of what the author tried to refer to with the use of *this* or *it*. However, there are many instances, where both *this* and *it* could be used. Below are presented some examples where both *this* and *it* would have been a correct choice, but additional explanation is added of how the meaning of the sentence changes with the use of *it* or *this* and if one could have been a slightly better choice than the other. The examples include a preceding and sometimes a following sentence so that the context in which *this* and *it* were used could be better understood. The examples are quoted and shown exactly how they were written by the original authors. The places of *this* and *it* are underlined.

1. (01148006 line 8) "Although some countries have forced their mother tongue to others, for now, people have used to <u>this</u> and if someone doesn't like it, it's always a possibility to learn a new one."

Both *this* and *it* would have been correct and made sense in the sentence. Both refer to the situation and because there is only one idea being referred to, both *this* and *it* are possible. *It*

would refer to the situation, and *this* would emphasize the situation; however, there is no difference in meaning. The situation referred to is the clause "some countries have forced their mother tongue on others".

2. (01148023 line 22) "All in all the new standards of international languages will emerge whether native speakers approve of it or not and it is possible to use <u>this</u> in our favour."

This refers to the last thing mentioned. "To use <u>this</u> in our favour" would mean that to use the case of speakers approving or not could be used in our favor, which does not make much sense. *It* would refer to the previous *it* in "whether native speakers approve of <u>it</u> or not", which refers to the emerging of new standards. *It* would refer to the general idea and "to use <u>it</u> in our favour" would mean that the emerging of new standards could be used in our favor. *This* is used correctly, but if the emphasis was supposed to be on the emerging new standards, then *it* would have been more preferred.

3. (01148108 line 14) "The positive side in a new standard of international English emerging for other languages could be that countries, that before were only able to speak one language, now have the option of speaking two and may also have the option of teaching their language to countries who don't. The negative side to <u>this</u> can be that English will became so dominent of a language, that it will smother the language of the country."

This refers to the last clause of the previous sentence "have the option of teaching their language to countries who don't". *This* is used correctly; however, if the author of the text wanted to give a negative side to the new standard of international English emerging, then the pronoun *it* should have been used. However, because the sentence is long, with many ideas, it is easy to lose the sight of the main idea first introduced. If the author wanted to present a negative side to the new standards then "the negative side to a new standard of international English emerging is …" would have been the most suitable choice, as with *it* the reference would be hard to understand. The first sentence gives a positive side to the new standard of international English emerging and the second sentence would give a negative

side to it. Both *this* and *it* are possible, it depends on what the author of the text tried to refer to.

4. (01149002 line 1) "The positive is that it brings mankind under a singel language. <u>It</u> removes the language barrier, that we have, when a person wishes to work in a foreign country."

In the second sentence *it* refers to the *it* mentioned in the first sentence and continues discussing the topic. If the author tried to say that the language barrier is removed when the mankind is under a single language, the pronoun *this* should have been used because it refers to the last clause of a previous sentence. *This* would refer to the phrase "brings mankind under a singel language", while *it* refers to the previous *it*, which refers to the new standard of international English – both *this* and *it* are possible and grammatically correct.

5. (011149067 line 2) "Guy Cook believes that a new standard of international English will emerge in the future. With <u>that</u> there can be both positive and negative sides to <u>it</u>. What are the sides?"

Both *that* and *it* refer to the preceding sentence and that is why they cannot be used together in one sentence. "With that" should be omitted and instead it would be better to write: "There can be both positive and negative sides to it". *This* would be more preferred as it would clearly refer to the emergence of the new standard of international English, while *it* may also refer to the noun *international English*. If the author wanted to refer to the emergence having both positive and negative consequences then *this* would have probably been a better choice.

6. (01148031 line 12) "This emerging of an international English will definitely also affect other languages as well. What is positive about it is that it will encourage people to travel more. <u>This</u> also encourages people to move to other countries and learn the local language, that is not English."

This refers to the last clause "encourage people to travel more" and the idea would be that more travel leads to more people moving. It is also possible to use *it* because in the second sentence there is an *it* in "<u>it</u> will encourage", which refers to the "emerging of an international English". The second sentence would continue with the topic and start with "it will also

encourage", meaning that the emerging of an international English will also encourage people to move.

2.3.2. Errors made in the use of *this* and *it*

This and *it* were used incorrectly 35 times in 9 different situations – *it* was misused in 7 and *this* in 2 ways. There were situations where *this* and *it* were missing or something else was written instead, for example, the pronoun *that*. These instances are still considered as mistakes connected with the use of *this* and *it* and thus added in Table 3. There were 29 times and 7 incorrect situations concerning *it*. Most mistakes were made in the use of *it's* and *its*, they were mistaken for one another 13 times. *This* was misused conciderably less than *it*. There were 6 times and 2 incorrect situations concerning *this*: *that* used instead of *this*; overuse of *this*. *This* and *it* were not confused for one another a lot. Nevertheless, there were many situations, where one would have been more preferred than the other, but it does not mean that the pronoun was used incorrectly.

Table 3. Errors made in the use of *this* and *it*

Number	Situations where *this* or *it* were used incorrectly	Incorrect usage
1	*That* is used instead of *this.*	4
2	*That* is used instead of *it.*	1
3	Wrong use of *it's* and *its*.	13
4	*It* is used to refer to a previously mentioned situation or thing instead of *this*.	5
5	No need for the use of *it*.	7
6	No need for the use of *this*.	2
7	*It* is missing.	1

8	Instead of *it* a plural pronoun should be used to refer to a previously mentioned thing.	1
9	Misspelling of *it*.	1

This was mistaken for *it* zero times and *it* for *this* five times:

1. (01148083 line 2) "In acordance to Cook, there is a likelyhood that a new standard of international English will emerge. <u>It's</u> possibility is growing in time, since internet became available, most www–users use it in English language at least in some points."

The author probably meant to write *its* instead of *it's*, however, neither of them are correct. Here the pronoun *this* should be used; it is wrong to say, "it is possibility". It should be "this possibility" as it refers to the preceding sentence and the *likelihood*. It is the likelihood that is growing. In addition, the sentence adds new information to the topic and thus *this* should be used.

2. (01149066 line 1) "English has spreaded widely around the world. <u>It</u> has both positive and negative consequences."

It refers to the English language, *this* would refer to the whole sentence. A language cannot have consequences and thus *it* does not fit the sentence. If the author meant to refer to the wide spread of the English language and how this process can have both positive and negative consequences, then *this* would have been more preferred.

3. (01148112 line 1) "According to Cook the new standards of international English will emerge. <u>It</u> would have positive and negative consequences for English and other languages."

It refers to the new standards of international English, while *this* would refer to the emergence of the new standards of international English. If the author wanted to refer to the situation and not the noun, *this* should have been used: "This will have positive and negative consequences…". If the author wanted to say that the new standards will have both positive and negative consequences on the English language, then *they* should have been used.

4. (01148127) (1) "Nowadays English is one of the most widely spread language in the world. <u>It</u> can be seen by the number of different countries where Englis is the official language or by travelling."

This seems to be a better choice, because *this* is referring to the last topic mentioned – English as one of the most widely spread languages in the world.

5. (01148120) (4) "Nowadays, English is used everywhere and it is a very common language. Children learn it virtually, while watching TV or being on the Internet. The consequence of that is that English is coming more and more international language. <u>It</u> has some positive and negative sides as well."

This would have been more preferred as it is referring to the last topic mentioned – English becoming a more and more international language. *It* seems to refer to a previously mentioned main topic – English. As mentioned earlier a language cannot have positive and negative consequences and thus does not fit the sentence.

There will not be a detailed analysis of other misuses, like *that* being used instead of *this* or *it,* because these grammar rules were not described in the first chapter. On the other hand, because these situations are still considered as errors in the use of *this* and *it*, they will be briefly analyzed. There were 4 instances where the pronoun *that* was used instead of *this* and only once instead of *it*. As mentioned in Chapter 1 *this* should be used to specify the thing mentioned before or a noun/noun phrase. In the example (41), *this* should be used as a determiner, it should be "this situation", which both specifies the noun *situation* and refers to the past situation mentioned. In the example (42), *it* should be used instead of *that* to refer to a single noun *language*. In addition, to *that* being used incorrectly, the possessive form *its* was frequently mistaken for *it's* and vice versa. There were 13 errors in total, like in example (42). In this sentence instead of *it's* it should be *its*.

41) *My side in <u>that</u> situation is neutral.* (01148001 line 14)

42) *If English would be so widely known that other languages start to fade, it might make people more aware of how important their own language is and study <u>that</u> more.* (01148080 line 15)

43) *Not only will native language disapper bur <u>it's</u> culture as well.* (01148064 line 8)

There were nine instances where *it* or *this* were overused or unnecessary, like in example (44). In this sentence, "of it" does not give any additional information to the sentence nor does it refer to anything. The sentence should end after the word *variants*. The same could be seen in example (45), where "with it" is unneeded because the *it* before already refers to the "new standards of international English". In addition, *this* was also used in an idiom, where it was not needed. Idiom is a fixed phrase and adding *this* makes it incorrect. This can be seen in example (46), where the correct idiom is "be two sides of the same coin", when adding *this* a question arises "what coin?" because in this situation *this* acts as a determiner and specifies the noun after it.

44) *This is not only slang, but also, for example, japanese words, which now have English variants <u>of it</u>.* (01148056 line 18)

45) *If a new standard of international English does emerge, it will definitely bring some changes <u>with it</u>, not all of them being positive.* (01149087 line 2)

46) *Just like in any case, there are <u>two sides to this coin</u> as well.* (01149096 line 4)

In addition, to *it* being overused, it was once missing from the sentence, as illustrated in example (47). The correct phrase is "feel like something", so it should be "when they feel like it", where *it* refers to the situation mentioned in the beginning of the sentence. There were also a couple of misspellings, like in example (48), where instead of the first *it* it should have been *I*. Moreover, there was a situation, where instead of a singular *it* a plural *they* should have been used, as illustrated in example (49). *It* refers to the noun *languages* but because the noun is plural, the pronoun should be plural as well. In this situation a plural *they* should have been used, changing the phrase into "they bind them as a nation". If the whole sentence is considered, then languages make people differ from other populations and not the feeling of being proud over a language.

47) *People are changing their language themselves anyway, when they <u>feel like</u>.* (01148006 line 5)

48) *<u>It</u> think that a new standard of international English would not bring many good consequences for English or for any other languages.* (01148110 line 13)

49) *From a negative standpoint, we know that there are so many different languages out there, languages that their speakers are more than proud of. <u>It binds</u> them as a nation and makes them differ from other populations.* (01149087 line 4)

The texts written by Estonian learners of English included multiple grammar mistakes; however, it is important to note that *this* and *it* were predominantly used correctly. From 127 texts there were only 35 errors connected with the use of *this* and *it*. Even though the grammar rules of the use of *this* and *it* and their differences are generally explained very briefly in grammar books, the Estonian learners of English did not mistake *this* for *it*. Only five times was *it* used incorrectly in the place of *this*. This error mostly occurred in situations, when *it* was used to refer to the previous thing mentioned. It can be assumed that Estonian learners did not know exactly what did *it* refer to – to the main topic or last situation mentioned.

Overall, *it* was used incorrectly more than *this*: it was misspelled, mistaken for the possessive pronoun *its* and even used in places where it was not needed. This study has strived to provide information about the general use of *this* and *it*, their differences and the ways of how and how frequently were *it* and *this* used incorrectly by the Estonian learners of English.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis "Corpus-based analysis on the use of *this* and *it*" is about the analysis of the correct and incorrect uses of *this* and *it* occurring in the 2014 University of Tartu learner corpus. For the analysis if *this* and *it* were used correctly by the Estonian learners of English, the thesis author referred to the rules written in Chapter 1.

The research was divided into two chapters. The first chapter included the general uses of *this* and *it* and the most probable situations where they could have been mistaken for one another. For this chapter, the literature relating to the grammar rules and the uses of *this* and *it* were considered. Chapter 2 was an analysis of the learner corpus written by Estonian learners of English, which included texts written for the "English language and Literature" major entrance examination. The chapter concentrated on the incorrect uses and situations where both *this* and *it* were possible.

The first research question asked: How frequently do Estonian learners of English mistake *this* and *it* for one another and used them incorrectly? The author's hypothesis was that Estonian learners of English often mistake *it* for *this* and the other way around because it is a gray area of study usually not specified in grammar books. This hypothesis was proved to be wrong. The analysis showed that Estonian learners rarely mistook *this* for *it* and *it* for *this*. *This* was always used correctly to refer to the previous thing mentioned and was never used in the place of *it*. On the other hand, there were five occurrences where *it* was used in the place of *this*. Almost all of them were situations, where *it* referred to the wrong thing and the meaning of the sentence would have been more logical if instead of *it* the pronoun *this* had been used. There were other situations where *it* and *this* were supposed to be used or were used incorrectly: *that* instead of *this*; *that* instead of *it*; *it's* instead of *its* and the other way around; the overuse of *it*; *it* was missing; *they* used instead of *it*; *it* was misspelled. The

goal of this study was to see how frequently and in what contexts Estonian learners of English make mistakes in the use of *this* and *it*. Based on the research and analysis, *this* and *it* were used incorrectly in 9 situations 35 times together – *it* 29 times in 7 situations and *this* 6 times in 2 situations.

The second question was: in what grammatical function were *this* and *it* often misused? *It* was mostly confused with the possessive pronoun *its* and not the pronoun *this*. *This* was used incorrectly in situations where the pronoun *that* was used instead.

The final question was: were the misuses easy to determine? It was very challenging to determine if *this* and *it* were used correctly or incorrectly. A lot of the times both were possible to use. For the thesis author it was hard to determine if the sentences were written correctly or if only *this* or *it* could have been used. A lot of rereading and double checking was needed to make sure both *this* and *it* were possible to use and not used incorrectly.

Further studies are needed to concentrate on other differences briefly mentioned in this thesis, like the difference between the use of *that* and *this*. The analysis could be done in a similar way, where the general uses are described and then a learner corpus is analyzed. This can provide further help for teachers in teaching the differences and to know how and in what context do the students typically make their mistakes.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Eliza Podburtnaja

Korpuseanalüüs asesõnade *this* ja *it* kasutamisest
Corpus-based analysis on the use of *this* and *it*
bakalaureusetöö
2018
Lehekülgede arv: 29

Käesoleva bakalaurusetöö "Korpuseanalüüs asesõnade *this* ja *it* kasutamisest" teemaks on inglise keelt õppivate eestlaste asesõnade *this* ja *it* kasutamist. Analüüsiks oli võetud 2014. aasta Tartu Ülikooli õppijakeele korpus, mis koosnes 127-st tekstist, mis olid inglise keele ja kirjanduse õppe sisseastumiseksami kolmanda küsimuse vastused. Töö eesmärgiks oli leida, kui tihti ja millistes kontekstides kasutavad *this* ja *it* valesti inglise keelt õppivad eestlased.

Bakalaureusetöö koosneb kahest peatükist. Esimeses peatükis antakse teoreetiline ülevaade asesõnade *this* ja *it* kasutamisest ning seletatakse olukordi, kus nimetatud asesõnu on võimalik üksteisega tihti segi ajada. Asjaomaste olukordade teoreetiline ülevaade koostati mitme grammatika käsiraamatu alusel. Teine peatükk esitab analüüsi asesõnade *this* ja *it* kasutamisest 2014. aasta Tartu Ülikooli õppijakeele korpuses. Leitud info lisati kolme tabelisse, esimene oli asesõna *it* õige kasutamisest, teine asesõna *this* õige kasutamisest ning kolmas *this* ja *it* korpuses esinenud kasutusvigadest. Korpuses esines mitu olukorda, kus mõlemad *this* ja *it* oli võimalik kasutada. Osa nendest olukordadest on seletatud ning välja toodud.

Uurimustöö küsimusteks olid: Kui sageli inglisekeelt õppivad eestlased kasutavad *this* ja *it* valesti? Mis grammatilises funktsioonis on nad enamasti valesti kasutatud? Kas valesid olukordi oli kerge määrata?

Autori hüpotees oli, et kuna enamus grammatika käsiraamatuid *this* ja *it* kasutamise kohta ning nende erinevusest detailset informatsiooni ei anna, siis inglise keele õppijad tihti kasutavad *this* asesõna *it* asemel ja vastupidi. See hüpotees osutus valeks. Autor leidis, et asesõnade *this* ja *it* kasutamises esines vähe vigu. *This* polnud kunagi kirjutatud asesõna *it* asemel. *It* oli ainult viis korda kasutatud asesõna *this* asemel. Tihti olid *this* ja *that* omavahel segi aetud. *It* oli kasutatud 5 korda *this* asemel ning tavaliselt selleks, et viidata millelegi, mis oli varem välja toodud. Kõige rohkem oli *it* kasutatud asesõna *its* asemel ning vastupidi. Õigete ja valede olukordade määramine esitas palju raskusi, kuna oli palju lauseid, kus mõlemaid asesõnu oli võimalik kasutada. Kõik oleneb teksti kontekstist ning millele üritas korpuse teksti autor viidata. Need olukorrad vajasid ülelugemist ning topeltkontrolli.

Tulevased tööd võiksid uurida teisi tihti esinenud vigu, nagu *that* ja *this* erinevust ning nende valesti kasutamisest inglise keelt õppivate eestlaste puhul. Töö tulemused võivad olla abiks õpetajatele, et teada, mis kontekstis on *that* ja *this* valesti kasutatud, et pöörata õpilaste tähelepanu just nende olukordadele.

Märksõnad: inglise keel ja keeleteadus, õppijakeele korpus, asesõnad it ja this, grammatika.

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