Parliamentary Records as Data for Linguistic Discourse Studies

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Aims of this presentation

Research questions

• How are Finnish plenary speeches modified in the making of written record?
• How do these changes affect the use of plenary records as data for linguistic discourse studies?

Data

• Written records of Finnish plenary sessions 2008–2014
• Audio and video recordings of Finnish plenary sessions 2008–2014
• Official guidelines for the Records Office of the Finnish Parliament (Kirjo 2016)

Methods

• Conversation analysis (e.g. Sidnell 2010)
• Linguistic text analysis (e.g. Halliday 2003)
• Participant observation (2010–)
Theoretical perspectives on reporting

• **Transcription** (cf. Jenks 2011)
  - From vocal action to visual object
• **Intermodal translation** (e.g. Kress 2009)
  - From one mode of communication to another
• **Recontextualization** (e.g. Linell 1998)
  - From one genre and context to another
• **Reported speech** (e.g. Holt & Clift 2010)
  - From speech event to direct quotation
• **Representation** (e.g. Knuuttila & Lehtinen 2010)
  - From act to enactment

(Voutilainen 2015; Tiittula & Voutilainen 2016)
Linguistic reporting practices: What is changed?

• Systematic standardization of **dialect** in phonological features
  
  \[ mä, mää, mie \rightarrow minä ’I’ \]

• Some modifications in **non-standard morphology**
  
  \[ vaikutus jollekin \rightarrow vaikutus johonkin ’effect on something’ \]

• Moderate editing of **spoken syntax**
  
  e.g. ”redundant” verbs or NP’s, utterance-initial particles, word order

• Exclusion of some minor ”**mannierisms**” (todellakin ’really’)

• Deletion of **planning expressions** (niinku ’like, kind of’) and evident **slips-of-tongue** (sukupuoli ’sex’ > sukupolvi ’generation’)

• Implementation of **self-corrections** (’thanks, or, congratulations’)

• Exclusion of **so-called technical talk, routine turns by the chairman and ”non-relevant” interjections**
Linguistic reporting practices: What is not changed (anymore)?

- regional and social variation in word-choices
  - *pönttö* ’podium’, *pruukaa* ’is used to’, *kafferi* ’cupboard’
- complex and obscure style
  - e.g. complicated syntax and ambiguous word choices
- Inappropriate conduct
  - e.g. casual forms of address, swearwords
- wrong claims
  - e.g. incorrect figures, names and facts (unless interpreted as blunders)
- False citations
  - e.g. inaccurate wordings or missing words (unless interpreted as blunders)

From speech to written record: overview

1) Ideational level: content
   - Very few significant changes
   - Modifications on the borderline between content, style and appearance

2) Interpersonal level: social relations
   - Transformations in social styles
   - Monologization of interaction

3) Textual level: discourse structure
   - Alterations in discourse processing
   - Changes in information structure

Reliable data for linguistic discourse studies on parliamentary speeches?

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**Minor methodological challenges**

**Considerable methodological challenges**