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**NATIVE SPEAKERS OF RUSSIAN IN INTERETHNIC COMMUNICATION:
SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATIONS AND LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES¹**

Статья посвящена описанию вариантов речевого поведения носителей русского языка в различных ситуациях общения с людьми, для которых русский язык не является родным. Традиционно трансформации, наблюдаемые в речи носителей языка при коммуникации с иностранцем, рассматриваются как проявление специфического регистра языка, так называемого *foreigner talk*, который направлен на упрощение речи для восприятия неносителя. В то же время, как показывает сопоставление данных, полученных на материале разных стран и языков, используемые в этом регистре стратегии трудно назвать универсальными, поскольку речевое поведение носителя языка варьирует в зависимости от ситуации общения и социальных ролей коммуникантов. В статье рассматриваются три различных случая взаимодействия между носителями русского языка и иностранцами: общение с изучающими русский язык студентами в Санкт-Петербурге; коммуникация на русско-китайской границе; взаимоотношения с носителями финского языка в Санкт-Петербурге и Выборге. Используемые в этих ситуациях лингвистические стратегии позволяют продемонстрировать, как различные параметры коммуникативной ситуации, прежде всего социальные роли говорящих (формируемые в соответствии с этническими, социальными и языковыми стереотипами), влияют на речевое поведение.

Introduction

Linguistic strategies used by native speakers of a given language when communicating with non-native speakers usually are described as a part of foreigner talk register specific for this language. The term “foreigner talk” (FT) was first suggested in 1968 by Charles Ferguson as analogous with baby talk, speech addressed to infants (see Ferguson 1981). According to Ferguson, “Speech communities tend to have conventional varieties of ‘simplified’ speech which are regarded by the speakers as appropriate for use when the hearers do not have full understanding of the language” (Ferguson 1975: 1). Since the late sixties, FTs of many European languages have been widely investigated by western linguists. They discovered that while talking to foreigners, native speakers try to simplify their utterances in order to make them easier to perceive and understand. Various means of grammar simplification and sense clarification are employed, some of which are universal and others of which are unique to a particular language. Universal means include slower and louder speech, frequent repetitions, and grammar simplification. In general it can be said that FT tends to show higher redundancy of speech against lower redundancy of language means.

At the same time language data on FTs of different languages are rather controversial. In some studies no grammatical simplifications in the form of ungrammatical utterances were discovered (e. g. Henzl 1973) while others demonstrate high level of such utterances (Heidelberg... 1975). Some differences can be explained if we consider the methods of obtaining

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data in these studies: the highest level of grammatical simplification can be observed if we ask people about how they and others speak to foreigners. Ferguson himself used this method in his study of English FT (Ferguson 1975). He asked his students to transform some sentences (like “I haven’t seen the man you are talking about”) to make them more understandable for a foreigner and then to answer some questions on their attitude towards this type of talk. In real life situation or in experimental conditions people use less or none ungrammatical utterances (Long 1981). But another very important factor we have to take into account when describing FT is sociolinguistic situation in which contacts between native and non-native speakers take place.

Although most FT studies were based on just one or several similar typical communicative situations, such as communication between employers and foreign workers or between teachers and students, their conclusions were usually extended to “German FT” or “English FT” as a whole. The focus of earlier researches (1970–1980s) was on the language itself and not on the process of communication. FT was seen as a sort of separate linguistic system within the language, and the “foreigner” to whom it was addressed was rather abstract and a non-specified figure. Later studies (1990–2000s), on the other hand, were focused primarily on discourse analysis of interethnic communication (and such matters as negotiations of ethnic identities or conversational analysis and differences in pragmatics) and lack linguistic analysis (see e. g. Bremer et al. 1996).

In this article we suggest to combine “linguistic” and “anthropological” approaches and describe neither “Russian FT” as a unified register nor separate conversational acts or individual informants, but rather typical linguistic strategies (including using other languages, not necessarily Russian) used by native speakers of Russian in different sociolinguistic situations of communicating with foreigners. First, we concentrate on linguistic features observed in communication between Russians and foreigners (mostly students) temporarily living in St. Petersburg and are either studying or already have limited knowledge of the Russian language. Second, we turn to contacts between Russian and Chinese speakers in the Russian-Chinese border area. At last, we consider communication between speakers of the Russian and Finnish languages. As we will see, social roles and language attitudes as well as linguistic patterns differ considerably in these three situations.

St. Petersburg Data: Russian Speaker as a “Host”

Contacts with foreigners are not unusual for St. Petersburg dwellers: there are many tourists, businessmen, students from different Western and Asian countries. In spontaneous encounters with foreigners on the street the native speaker either speaks Russian without any significant alterations (apart from louder voice and slower tempo, and sometimes repetitions), or tries speaking a foreign language. It is interesting to note that a native Russian speaker could try to use a foreign language he or she can speak to address a foreigner without knowing if this foreigner can speak the same language. Thus, they can try to speak German to Americans, French or even to Japanese – any foreign language seems more understandable to a foreigner than Russian. People who deal with foreigners in the course of their job (tourist agents, employees, bank clerks, etc.) tend to speak English well or at least demonstrate some knowledge of it. Native speakers whose work does not include frequent contact with foreigners tend to use verbal clichés familiar to their profession with other native speakers as well as foreigners, not adapting to unusual communicative conditions. But speaking with foreigners who are not strangers is another story: we can witness significant differences here in comparison with “normal” (i. e. native to native) speech patterns.

Most part of the material described here was gathered through recording of informal conversations between foreigners (mostly students) and the Russian families they were lodging with or between them and their Russian friends. In most cases, Russians were not aware of

being recorded, or did not fully understand its implication, and were later informed about the research and its purposes. As a result, these recordings reflect as closely as possible actual speech behaviour – behaviour not influenced by the presence of an outside witness or by informants’ conscious attempts to modify their speech.

The most striking characteristics of personal everyday communication between Russians and Russian speaking foreigners can be described as Russian speakers’ hyperactive speech behaviour. When communicating with foreigners, people tend to, over the course of the conversation, take responsibility of and dominate dialogue. This phenomenon is illustrated by the following sample, in which a foreigner unsuccessfully tries to take part in the dialogue but is consistently interrupted by his Russian interlocutor:

- (1) NS [Native speaker]: *Они [schoolchildren] / предположим / по истории проходят э... / Древнюю Грецию. ‘They study, let’s say, in history class... Ancient Greece’*
 NNS [Non-native speaker]: *Да? Я... ‘Yes? I...’*
 NS: *Вот. Или / или / скажем / Египет. ‘Well. Or... or for example, Egypt’*
 NNS: *А... ‘And...’*
 NS: *И когда / когда они проходят Египет / они идут в Эрмитаж. ‘And when... when they study Egypt, they go to the Hermitage’*
 NNS: *Мы / мы... да... ‘We, we... yes...’*
 NS: *Видели там / да? Египет / да? Вот там вот гробни-ицы были / вот / му-умии. Да? То что касается / искусства / Древнего Египта. ‘Have you seen Egyptian art there, yeah? There were, tombs and mummies there. Yes? Everything about Ancient Egypt art’*
 NNS: *Да да / Мы тоже... ‘Yes, yes. We also...’*
 NS: *Это же / потому что это и история тоже. ‘It’s because that is part of history’*

As a result of this behaviour the communication between Russians and foreigners looks asymmetrical; the amount of non-native speakers’ input is at least twice less than the native speakers’ one. To minimise the foreigner’s role in conversation, informants often begin to speak, guessing the foreigner’s as of yet unarticulated thoughts.

- (2) NNS: *Мы много... ‘We were... a lot...’*
 NS: *Гуляли? ‘Walking?’*
 NNS: *По городу / да да / Мы видели какая... / Мы смотрели... с... Ис... Ис... ‘Yes, yes, around the city. We saw... We look... from... Iss... Iss...’*
 NS: *Исаакиевского собора. ‘St. Isaac cathedral’*

Sometimes native speakers practically exclude foreigner speakers from the conversation:

- (3) NS1 (to NNS): *Вы были / в блинной / на Гагаринской? ‘Have you been in the pancake café on Gagarinskaya street?’*
 NS2: *Не / не успели еще. ‘No, they haven’t had time yet’*
 NS3: *Нет / не успели. ‘No, they haven’t had time’*
 NS1 : *А / они приехали только... ‘Aha, they’ve just arrived’*

Russian native speakers’ domineering behaviour can manifest in another interesting trait: the native speaker employs interrogative sentences significantly less. In order to avoid misunderstanding, Russian speakers prefer to talk themselves, even when it is necessary to ask a question. They tend to use ‘yes / no’ questions or indicative sentence with the interrogative tag *да?* (‘yes’):

- (4) NS: *У тебя большая квартира / да? ‘You’ve got a big apartment, haven’t you?’*

‘Wh’-questions are often accompanied by several suggested replies, so that the foreigner can choose an answer rather than construct a new sentence himself:

- (5) NS: *Сколько в Англии средняя заработная плата? Тысяча фунтов? Больше? 'How much is an average salary in England? A thousand pounds? More?'*

As a consequence of this domination, roles in conversation are not equal: what was a dialogue between a native and non-native speaker tends to become a monologue by the native speaker. Interlocutors, therefore, must increase the phatic elements in their communication to be sure that there is no misunderstanding and to maintain the conversation. The prevailing form of this phatic communication is the use of the particle *да* at the end of a syntagma:

- (6) NS: *И мне очень понравилось / этот «Парфюмер» / да? 'And I liked it very much, this "Perfumer", yeah?'*
 NNS: *М-м.*
 NS: *Она в такой форме написана / вот / что вот этот вот / человек / да? 'It's written in such a way... there is a man, yeah?'*
 NNS: *М-м.*
 NS: *Он как бы контрабасист / играет на этом басы / вот / и беседует.... 'He is like a contrabassist, playing on his bass and communicating...'*
 NNS: *М-м.*
 NS: *С читателем / Просто в форме беседы / да? / И про все. 'With the reader. Just like a conversation, yeah? And about everything'*

There is also another form of communication maintenance, so-called phatic repetitions, in which native speakers repeat some words or phrases said by the foreigner:

- (7) NNS: *Не очень... / голоден. 'I'm not... very hungry'*
 NS: *Не очень голоден / да? Понятно. 'Not very hungry, yeah? I see'*

In fact, repetition plays a large part in native-non-native communication of this kind. Aside from phatic functions, repetition can be used as a didactic means to correct a foreigner's mistakes or teach him a new word or expression:

- (8) NS: *Какое слово? 'Which word?'*
 NNS: *Оставаться. 'Stay'*
 NS (slower): *Оставаться. 'Stay'*
 NNS: *Оставаться. 'Stay'*
 NS: *Я иду / на работу / а ты / остаешься дома. 'I am going to work and you are staying at home'*
 NNS: *А...*
 NS: *Оставаться / оставаться. 'Stay, stay'*

Naturally, informants sometimes simply must repeat their words when they are not understood by a foreigner, but often they make use of repetitions preventively (example 9), especially when numbers, perceived as difficult for a foreign ear to understand, are employed (example 10):

- (9) NS: *Если в троллейбусе / то до конца едете / до конца / до самого конца. 'If you take a trolleybus go to the end, to the end, to the very end'*
- (10) NS: *А у нас / когда вот / был путч / девяносто третьего года / да? / Девяносто третьего. 'And here... when there was the putsch of ninety three, ok? Ninety three'*

When speaking of syntactic strategies typical for this type of communication it should be emphasised that all of these strategies are directed at modifying actual speech towards standard

language. It seems that in Russian native speakers' minds their own colloquial speech is perceived as incorrect and far from the ideal language variant when conversing with a foreigner. The resulting syntax is much more regular and formal – closer to the standard – and as a result, is felt by the speakers to be 'too correct' and even artificial in natural, native speaker to native speaker situations. A comparison of our data with the one of Russian colloquial speech research (Земская и др. 1981) points to the validity of this claim.

In modern Russian colloquial speech ellipsis is widespread. But when communicating with foreigners speakers prefer to use fuller structures. Without context such sentences look neutral, but when they are prevalent they cause redundancy. It seems that this 'hypercorrectness', along with a slower tempo of speech, is the main diagnostic feature that allows native speakers to detect the FT situation, e. g. while listening to someone else's conversation with a foreigner on the phone. The fact that this minimisation of ellipsis is a conscious strategy can be confirmed by the fact that even when some elliptic form is used, it is often immediately followed by a 'self-correction' on the part of the native speaker – a reconstruction in fuller grammatical form:

- (11) NS: *Потому что у вас лодка женс... корабль женского рода. А у нас [korabl'] мужского [roda]. / Во всяком случае военный корабль у нас мужского рода. 'It's because in your language the boat... ship belongs to the feminine gender. And in ours – to the masculine. A military ship, in any case, belongs to the masculine gender.'*

Native speakers also tend to avoid asyndetic connection, rather common in colloquial speech.

Another important syntactic strategy is the use of a basic word order rather than a free one, typical of colloquial speech. In interrogative sentences, for example, speakers tend to place the interrogative word in the middle or the end of the utterance (Сиротинина 1965: 152). In our data, however, it is almost always in the 'right' place. Cf.:

- (12) NS (to NS): *А ты где ел? 'Where have you eaten'*

- (13) NS (to NNS): *Где вы были /сегодня? 'Where have you been today'*

Finally, most FT researchers list shorter sentences and the use of simpler syntactic structures as typical of the register (Ferguson & DeBose 1977: 104; Hatch 1983: 66). In this type of communication with foreigners, however, the situation is reversed: the average number of words in a sentence (9.58) is twice as large as the one found in a sentence between native speakers (4.56). Utterances addressed to non-native speaker are not only longer, they are more complex due to the use of a greater number of subordinate clauses (on average 1.55 per sentence vs. 1.3 in colloquial speech).

Thus, although it is commonly believed that FT is a simplified register characterised by such traits as short sentences, a limited lexicon, and, less frequently, ungrammatical constructions, Russians conversing with foreigners in real-life situations in St. Petersburg tend to use more formal, grammatically correct forms of speech despite their artificiality and unnaturalness. At the same time they aim at discourse dominance making their communicative partners play subordinate role in conversations which can be, and rather often is perceived as impolite and even rude by foreigners because they are accustomed to different rules of communication. Interestingly, this situation resembles cultural differences in hospitality between Russians and Westerners as described by L. Thévenot and N. Kareva (Тевено & Карева 2009: 691): «Его [иностранца] место особенное, и это значит, что он становится предметом особого внимания. Его прибытие празднуется со всей возможной широтой щедрого гостеприимства. <...> Он не способен принимать участие в самом создании общности на равных с местными жителями. Последние должны постоянно помогать ему преодолевать его неспособность, то есть обходиться с ним, как с маленьким ребенком. Иностранец особен-

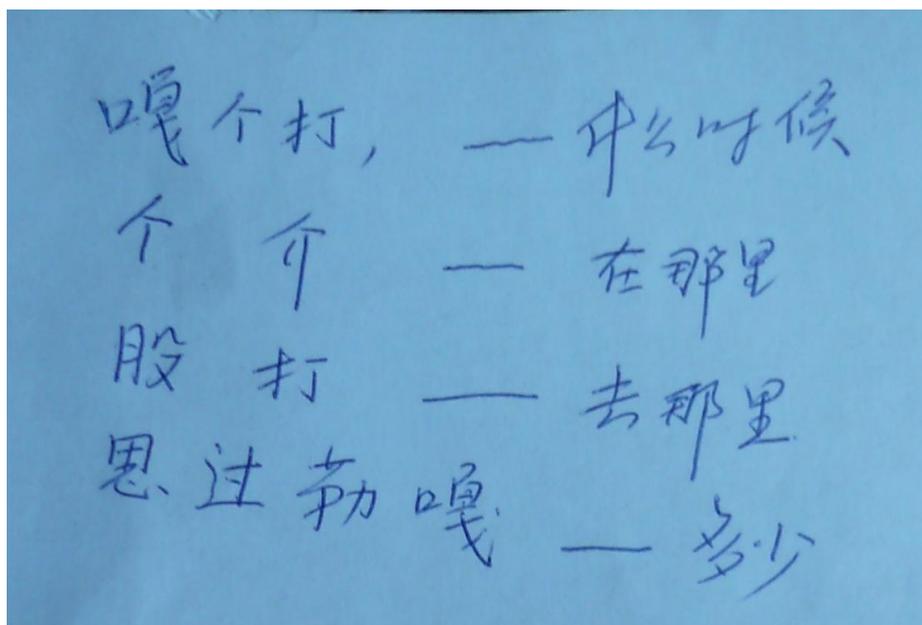
но благожелательно принимается тогда, когда он не вмешивается в то, что к нему непосредственно не относится, или лучше сказать, в то, что не предназначено для его взгляда. Ему не стоит надеяться стать одним из местных, одним из “наших”, и он должен как можно дольше сохранять свою изначальную способность “быть не своим”» (“His [foreigner] place is special, and it means that he becomes the object of special attention. His arrival is celebrated with all possible breadth of generous hospitality. <...> He is not able to take part in creating a community on equal terms with locals. Instead, Russians believe they should always help him to overcome his disability i. e. treat him as a small child. A foreigner is accepted most favourably when he doesn’t interfere with anything not concerning him directly, or, in better words, with anything not intended for his eyes. He shouldn’t hope to become one of the locals, one of ‘our lot’, and he should keep his initial ability to be ‘not our lot’ as long as possible”). It looks like Russian speakers acting as “hosts” towards foreigners tend to treat them as unequal partners in conversation and demonstrate it with both verbal and non-verbal means. But at the same time this should be seen as a positive discrimination rather than a negative one.

The Russian-Chinese Border Data: Russian Speaker as a “Boss”

The situation in the Russian-Chinese border area (in our case, in the Zabaikalsii territory of Russia and the Chinese border town Manzhouli) differs in many aspects from the situation described above. On the Russian side of the border “foreigners”, apart from rare Western tourists and some Mongolian students, are not just foreigners but “Chinese”. And most of them have some limited knowledge of Russian.

As sociological studies show Chinese migration to Russia has seasonal character (Шармашкеева 2007). Most of immigrants do not aim to stay in Russia, and their cultural and linguistic adaptation, therefore, can be minimal. As is common practice all over the world (Skeldon 1995), Chinese immigrants to Russia form close-knit communities (Дятлов 2008) and occupy several business niches; in Russia (by Russia here we mean mainly border areas) they are employed in construction, market trade, small repair enterprises and agriculture. There are many joint Russian-Chinese enterprises and business relations are often based on family ties. Mixed marriages are not uncommon – Chinese men are popular among Russian women because, according to the stereotype, they work hard, earn money and do not drink.

Very few Chinese immigrants, especially those employed in manual labour, get any formal language instruction; the overwhelming majority of them learn Russian during their communication with Russians in everyday situations or pick up some words from their linguistically more competent fellow countrymen. Thus, e. g., a Chinese businessman who owns a construction firm, teaches his employees some Russian words and expressions essential to communicate with their Russian clients (e.g., brick, water, spade, where, when, how much etc.). To do this he writes down the words in Chinese hieroglyphs, trying to reflect the pronunciation with similar syllables. As a result, his ‘pupils’ from the start learn these words in the form adapted to the Chinese phonological system: [ka-ga-da] instead of [ka-gda] (*kogda*, ‘when’) or [zy-de-si] instead of [z’des’] (*zdes* ‘here’).



Acquired in this form, words become conventionalised. Considering that most Chinese do not aim to learn the ‘full version’ of Russian and are content with the restricted form of the language, the gradual emergence of a conventionalised ethnolect of Russian is possible like, e.g., Gastarbeiterdeutsch in Germany (Gilbert & Pavlou 1994) or Moroccan Dutch in the Netherlands (Cornips 2008).

On the other hand, Russian speakers almost never try to learn Chinese in everyday communication (although learning the Chinese language at university level is relatively popular among younger generation keen on improving their career potential). Some more words should be said here on ethnic stereotypes and prejudices.

Most people see the Chinese as some sort of aliens with a different language, culture and way of life. Usually they describe Chinese in negative terms – as dirty, uneducated, uncultured, primitive, etc. Even positive qualities usually attached to ‘typical’ Chinese (such as diligence or thrift) are often perceived as ‘unnatural’ for Russian culture – in one informant’s words «Нормальный человек так вкалывать не будет» (‘No normal person would work that hard’). At the same time those involved in constant and close contacts with the Chinese tend to give preference to positive stereotypes. They depict Chinese people as kind, loyal, hardworking, and ‘unspoiled by civilization’ (meaning they are simple-minded people who can do with just basic food, goods and facilities). Chinese are often seen and pitied as the victims of Russian police and officials, making them ‘second-class people’. It is interesting to mention as well that positive attitudes towards Chinese are more typical for Russian women than men. But even those favourably disposed towards the Chinese people never miss a chance to amuse themselves with their “broken Russian”. Imitating “Chinese Russian” is popular form of language play, especially among younger people. And to teach some Chinese salesperson some “funny” word considered to be good practical joke:



As general in spontaneous communication with Chinese speakers at the market place native speakers of Russian do not accommodate to linguistically less competent partner: they use colloquial forms and speak rather fast. At the same time some words used by the Chinese trying to speak Russian become popular with Russian native speakers, turning into a local *jargon*, the restricted set of lexemes used in interethnic communication or, metaphorically, to refer to the contact situation. Words of this type are called “Shuttles language” or “Shuttles jargon” by Russian speakers in the region (“shuttle” is a name for people doing business by transporting some goods across the border and selling them for a higher price). The most frequently used elements of this jargon are:

kapitana – chief, master or anyone in higher position than speaker [from Russian *kapitan* ‘captain’]

druga – address to a man [from Russian *drug* ‘friend’]

kunia – address to a woman [from Chinese word meaning ‘girl’, but normally not used as address – see Цзе 2007)

kemel – person going to China to bring goods for someone and get paid for it [from English *camel*]

super-mimumum – best price

памагајка – person helping a Russian tourist or *kemel* with buying goods, packing, transporting etc. [from Russian *помогай* – imperative form of ‘to help’]

These words are used by both Russian and Chinese speakers:

(14) R [Russian speaker]: *Друга / чего стоит? ‘Friend, what does it cost?’*

Ch [Chinese Speaker]: *Пятам. ‘Fifty’*

R: *А супер-минимум дашь? Уступи / а? ‘And will you give me super-minimum? Please, go a bit lower’*

Ch: *Сорок пять. ‘Forty five’*

R: *Давай сорок! ‘Let it be forty’*

Ch: *Не / Сорок пять супер-минимум. ‘No, forty five is super-minimum’*

Another type of communication can be found in everyday conversations between Chinese and Russians involved in some constant business or personal relations. They may be spouses,

business partners, each other's employers or employees etc. The main difference is that they are not just strangers to each other; their communication is not accidental, but they communicate with each other on the regular basis. Linguistic strategies used by Russian native speakers in such "closed" (from most observers we should add) communication differ dramatically from those we analyze in previous section. Instead of artificially correct grammar here we can find a lot of ungrammatical utterances:

- (15) R: *Ты что хочу?* 'What do you want?' [the verb is in the form of first person instead of the second one]
- (16) R: *Завтра еще один гость будет / Чита-гость / Тоже чифан вару.* 'Tomorrow another guest will come. Chita guest. Cook the food [Chinese] again' [the noun is used as an adjective]
- (17) R: [about memory stick] *Такой мужчина купи / Не работай.* 'The man bought this one. It doesn't work' [the verb is used in imperative form instead of the past tense form]
- (18) R: *Все ху-ху-ху ха-ха-ха / У тебя три зуб скоро будет.* 'Always giggle. You'll have three tooth soon' [Nominative case instead of Genitive]
- (19) R: *А / Это Чита-фирма! Да / я писала / там бумага я есть.* 'Aha, this is Chita firm! Yes, I wrote, I have paper there' [again a noun used as an adjective and also Nominative case of pronoun instead of Genitive]
- (20) Ch: [talking about long-distance calls bill] *Это че?* 'What's this?'
 R: *А / это я / я Оксана позвони.* 'That's me, I called Oksana' [Nominative instead of Accusative and imperative instead of the past form]

Interestingly these ungrammatical forms resemble in many ways typical linguistic features of so called Russian-Chinese Pidgin which was used in cross-border communication in the 19th century (see Fedorova forthcoming).

As we can see, in communicating with Chinese speakers who are felt to be "inferior" in some ways Russian speakers use different language strategies: they either ignore their communicative partners' needs avoiding any modifications and expecting the Chinese will do all necessary adjustments; or imitate their partners' imperfect speech on lexical and / or grammatical level. Chinese speakers have no choice but to make some efforts to learn Russian. Speakers of Russian, on the other hand, are free to choose their language means. Of course this can be explained by the fact that it is Chinese who are more "interested" in negotiations because economically they depend on Russian customers. But it is not always the case, and even if we avoid any speculations about actual economical dependence of Russian citizens on Chinese goods and services (it is virtually impossible to buy e. g. "non-Chinese" shoes or dress in Chita for reasonable price), there are many examples when the relations are reversed: it is Russians who are subordinate to Chinese boss (e. g. when Chinese shop owner employs a Russian salesperson). However linguistic strategies used by Russian speakers in such cases are the same.

Most probably in Russian-Chinese cross-border communication Russians dominate over Chinese not economically but symbolically – everybody knows "who is the boss". And being the boss Russian speaker can choose (if he likes) "talking down", by speaking "worse" language and breaking grammar rules to put on par with his interlocutor.

The Russian-Finnish Border Data: Russian Speaker as a Pupil

The third situation we'll turn to in this section deals with another language specific type of "foreigner". Finnish speakers are frequent visitors to St. Petersburg and its suburbs, and in such border towns as Vyborg they constitute a dominant part of foreign tourists. Finland, on the other hand, is popular destination for Russian citizens of the North-West who enjoy going there for shopping and leisure activities. The Finnish language therefore can (but not necessarily as we will see) be of practical use in the region.

Communication between Russian and Finnish speakers differs from those of Russian and Chinese ones. The differences are caused by Russians' attitudes toward Finns and Finnish language and relationship between partners in their communication. If in dialogues with Chinese speakers Russians usually dominate (but not in the sense in which they dominate when communicating with their Western guests) Finns, on the contrary, are considered by Russian speakers as equal or even dominant partners. In this section we'll describe a Russians' attitude towards Finns and Finnish in respect to language usage in two different situations. The first one is the situation of learning Finnish language by adult Russians. The data were collected by the method of participant observation during two semesters in one of the language schools for adults in St. Petersburg (two groups of beginners during their first semesters in 4-semester program were observed).

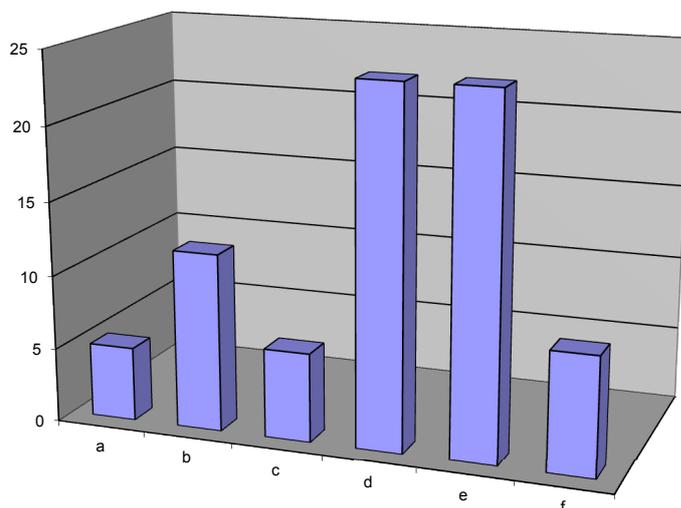
Finnish language is rather popular now: in the language school we observed they open 5-7 groups for beginners (with 6-10 students in a group) every six months. Of course many students give up learning Finnish for different reasons, e.g. lack of money, domestic problems and even immigration to Finland,² but it seems to be interesting to find out what motivates them to study Finnish in the first place. In informal conversations before classes and during the breaks we asked our class mates why they are learning Finnish. Usually the answers were very vague: «На самом деле я не знаю!» ("Really, I even do not know!"), «Я всегда мечтала учить финский» ("I have always dreamed to learn Finnish"), «Все меня об этом спрашивают» ("Everybody asks me"), «Мне просто нравится финский» ("I just like Finnish"). There were two following exceptions to this rule when people could be rather confident: "I visit Finland very often" (this answer is typical for people who speak only Russian and cannot use English in communication with foreigners) and "My boyfriend / husband is Finn". Nobody answered to the direct question that he / she plans to live and / or work in Finland (of course apart from so called "Finnish wives"). But then little by little it was becoming clear from hints, jokes and conversations not related to learning the language that many students would like to live in Finland (spend their summers, move to Finland after they would retire and so on). Often these plans were very uncertain but in many cases they seemed to be the main reason for starting learning Finnish. To collect more information about attitude towards Finnish and motivation for studying we used a small questionnaire. The questionnaires were handed out by teachers in order to make our respondents feel more free and independent. One of the questions was:

Why did you decide to learn Finnish? Please choose one or several variants:

- a. My work is connected with the Finnish language and Finland.
- b. I simply like Finnish language.
- c. Finnish language helps me to understand the culture and the history of Finland.
- d. I visit Finland often and I want to speak Finnish with Finns.
- e. I suppose that I will live and/or work in Finland.
- f. I have friends in Finland.
- g. Other variant _____

² In the cases we know about the reason for immigration was marriage with a citizen of Finland.

We offered to choose several variants because preceding conversations with our informants-to-be showed that the question about the reason is like to be an inconvenient and maybe even a personal one. So we tried to help our informants to “hide” their motives and they did not miss this opportunity: 13 of 33 respondents choose more than two variants, 'e' is marked in all these 13 questionnaires. Anyway the results are clear enough. The most popular answers are ‘d’ and ‘e’: each one of these variants was marked in 24 questionnaires. The distribution of answers is represented on the following diagram:



One variant of answer was chosen by 10 of our respondents: 5 of them marked 'e', 4 – 'd' and 1 – 'b'.

Not many students use Finnish regularly and in real life situations. In some cases language has mostly symbolic and not practical meaning: learning Finnish indicates for a person a possibility to change his / her life. The other interesting feature connected with attitude towards Finnish refers to the importance of perception in comparison with language production. Understanding of oral speech is considered to be a problem in studying Finnish. The less importance of language production is apparent in the fact that many students do not pay any serious attention to pronunciation. Indeed it is not an uncommon situation when a teacher corrects student’s answer pronouncing a word with Finnish phonetics (e.g. with long vowels or consonant) and then a student repeats his / her own answer keeping Russian phonetics without any modification.

People visiting Finland often learn some words not in class but in Finnish supermarkets or cafes. Pronunciation of these words is difficult to correct because learners feel no need to do this: they know enough to reach their aim – to read a label or a menu. Of course the lack of attention to pronunciation is caused not only by the character of communication a learner usually is engaged in but by the learner’s linguistic feelings and experience of studying languages. It is usually students under 35 years and / or with other foreign languages in background who tries to articulate carefully.

The important motive in classes is a Finnish “originality” which can be mentioned even in connection with grammatical rules:

- (21) S [Student]: *Основа может быть длинее слова? 'The steam can be longer than the word?'*
 T [Teacher]: *Чему вы удивляетесь? Это же финны! 'Why are you surprised? They are Finns!'*

“They are Finns!” – this phrase works as a universal explanation of any feature of the Finnish language. The teachers are apt to comment on words and grammatical rules giving much cultural information – often more than necessary.

The next important trait of learning Finnish is a students’ inclination to demonstrate their competence in Russian. Sometimes it looks like an attempt to balance the intricacy of Finnish language.

(22) T: “*Viljatuotteet*”. Как это назвать по-русски? *(in Finnish) Viljatuotteet. (in Russian) How is it in Russian?*

S1: Булка! *(in Russian) White bread!*

S2: Выпечка! Хлебобулочные изделия это называется. *(in Russian) Pastry! Bakery products is the name*

(23) [speaking about translation of the Finnish sentence “*Annea ei huvita lahtea ulos*” – “*Anne does not want to go outside*” where the semantic subject is not in Nominative but in Partitive]

T: Трудно перевести! *(in Russian) It's difficult to translate!*

S1: Аню не прикалывает идти на улицу. *(in Russian) Anya can't be bothered going outside* [The student uses the colloquial – even slang – verb. The semantic subject is in Accusative case here]

S2: Аню не прѐт... [lit. ‘*Anya isn't driven to...*’ The other student gives another slang expression with the same syntactic structure]
[Everybody laughs]

The structure and semantics of Russian words and expressions often becomes the object of discussion even if it is not necessary for understanding of Finnish words or grammatical constructions. This practice can be interpreted as an attempt to equal the languages and to rise learner's own linguistic status. In the informal discussions in class and during the breaks people mention directly or indirectly the advantages of Finland in comparison with Russia: the life in Finland is more secure, comfortable and plain, the state institutions are more efficient and so on. But maybe the fact that Finland is considered to be “not real Europe” (Бляхер & Зеликова 2004: 93) often makes people emphasize that Russians can be equal partners to Finns.

Language class does not offer real communication for students. It's a kind of laboratory where people demonstrate their stereotypes connected with a possible usage of the target language. They can construct their own linguistic identity emphasizing their high competence in their own native language. And real communication does not destroy this comfortable world.

To compare these conclusions about language attitudes with those reflected in Russian-Finns communication in real life situations let us turn to analysis of the language space and usage in Vyborg. Vyborg is situated not far from the Russia-Finland border and this town is usually described as a “Finnish town”: in the tourist sites and different forums one can read that “there are many Finns in Vyborg” or “all banners are Finnish”, or “everybody speaks Finnish”. But this “Finnish Vyborg” seems to exist only in the articles and in the Internet discussions. The real situation differs from the virtual one. Finnish language exists in town visual space but its role and area are restricted. The first place indicated as a potentially Finnish is the railway station and contiguous territory: there are many banners and signs in three (Russian, Finnish, English) or two (Russian, Finnish) languages. Some of these messages contain mistakes in spelling, e.g. absence of umlaut:



On the railway station the Finnish guide signs indicate exit (or “no exit”), toilets, ticket-office and some other directions, but the detailed and additional information (train time-tables and so on) is given only in Russian. At the gas station nearby one can read “Auto pesu” (“car wash” in Finnish), but the time of break and other important messages are only in Russian. In other words Finnish plays mostly symbolic role, it indicates something like “Welcome! But bear in mind that we do not want to make an effort”.

The main Finnish place in Vyborg is a central market. The names of all departments are in Russian and Finnish. Many prices (especially for souvenirs) are indicated in euro.



The sellers try to speak Finnish with Finnish customers who visit this market place to buy cheap non-licensed DVD (in English with Finnish titles), candy, chocolate and bed-clothes. It should be mentioned that Finns usually do not modify their speech; they do not try to speak slower or articulate more carefully. The reason is quite easy: the Russian partners are interested more in the results of communication. Speaking Finnish, the Russian sellers try to keep

at least some Finnish phonetics (e.g. pronounce long vowels). In the following example the Russian saleswoman offers different candies to the Finnish customer:

- (24) R [Russian speaker]: *Muisto, ruova, muisto. Tama halpo, ruova. Riisi, kakao, кукуруза. [to her Russian colleague] Кукуруза не знаю, возьми банку в ларьке напротив да и покажи ей. [show the can to the customer]. (in Finnish) Try it, lady, try it. This cheap, lady. Rice, cacao, (in Russian) maize. Maize – I do not know. [to her Russian colleague] Take the can in the shop opposite and show her'*
F [Finnish speaker]: *Maissi. 'Maize'*
R: *Maisi, kylla? Maisi? 'Maisi, yes? Maisi'*

The roles are not equal in this communication. The Russian partner wants to be polite and it becomes apparent in the frequency of word “rouva” (lady) which is not used so often in a similar situation in Finland. The Russian partner is ready to accommodate her behavior to the situation, to find ways to explain something even if she does not know the necessary Finnish word. Then she tries to learn new word and imitate correct pronunciation.

As we mentioned earlier, the “Finnish Vyborg” seemed to be restricted by the area of the market. It's a bit strange because the town is not big. However, the salesman from some DVD-shop situated within a 15 minute walk from the market place, when asked «У вас есть фильмы на финском?» (‘Do you have some films in Finnish?’) reacts: «На ФИНСКОМ?!» (‘In FINNISH?!’) with a great surprise as if he was asked about Swahili but not about the language most tourists coming to Vyborg speak.

Therefore the near border localization is not reflected in the language space of town. Probably this can be explained partly by the criminal character of Russians-Finns contacts: illegal trade (vodka, cigarettes, DVD without license), prostitutes and stealing. And the other important fact is the decreasing of even these contacts in the recent time. But anyway Russians who could in general economically benefit from the closeness of the border do not behave like Chinese in the Russian-Chinese border area. They are ready to play a dependent role only in close and professional communication with Finns when there is an obvious necessity to demonstrate a convergent language behavior in order to reach a financial profit. But in other situation they tend to express positive attitudes towards the Finnish language, value it as a symbol of some “better life” and good relations with Finland and in the same time do not bother with seriously learning and using it in everyday communication.

Conclusions

Of course the strategies we described in this article are not exclusively used in, respectively, St. Petersburg, Chita, or Vyborg. Naturally it is possible to find, e. g., examples of linguistic behaviour similar to the ones described in the first section of the article in communication within mixed Russian-Chinese families especially with higher educational level. But by analyzing most typical examples we tried to describe those strategies which correspond to socio-linguistic conditions (including people’s attitudes) existing in the region. Besides we have to bear in mind that linguistic strategies available for Russian speakers in interethnic communication are not limited by the ones described in this article. Thus e. g. one more object for research could (and should) be Russian speakers’ language behaviour when traveling abroad – being a “guest” is not the same as being a “host”. However some important conclusions can be derived from our analysis.

Linguistic strategies used by native speakers of Russian when communicating with foreigners are closely related with the social context in which their contacts take place. Social roles performed by Russian speakers and their foreign interlocutors are shaped not only by their particular relations and feelings towards each other but by common stereotypes and attitudes as well. Playing the role of a “host” for a foreigner Russian speaker tend to “overpro-

tect” him or her linguistically limiting their verbal space and using hypercorrect speech. On the contrary, when communicating with Chinese speakers in the border regions native speakers of Russian felt themselves free to demonstrate their social and discursive dominance (their “being a boss”) through directly opposed linguistic strategies: they can use ungrammatical utterances and “jargon” words justifying themselves by linguistic incompetence of their interlocutors. At last, when Russian speaker of the Russian-Finnish border region chooses (usually for some practical reason) to learn and use the Finnish language he or she becomes in socially disadvantaged role of a “pupil”. Then strategies aimed at negotiation of “oppressed” linguistic rights are implemented. As we can assume all these linguistic and behavioural patterns are culturally specific in some ways and should be studied in connection with anthropological data.

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