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RUSSIAN-ESTONIAN CODE-COPYING IN LIVE JOURNAL BLOGS: A PRELIMINARY OVERVIEW¹

Данная статья ставит перед собой две цели: во-первых, дать представление о русско-эстонских языковых контактах и о моделях двуязычного общения русских в интернете; во-вторых, применить теорию копирования кода к материалу письменного общения, или общения посредством компьютера. Ситуация русско-эстонских контактов в интернет-общении отличается от того, что описано в литературе. Подчеркивается, что теория копирования кода может быть применена к данному материалу, если к свойствам (материальным, семантическим, комбинаторным и частотным), которыми обладает языковая единица, добавить графические свойства. В блогах Live Journal русско-эстонское двуязычное общение характеризуется высокой степенью металингвистической сознательности, языковой игрой и творческим использованием орфографий обоих языков. Материал может послужить базой для сравнения копирования кода в устном общении и в общении посредством компьютера.

1. Introduction

During the last two decades a body of literature has emerged on language on/of the internet and computer mediated communication (CMC) in general as well as on multilingualism in CMC in particular. However, very few qualitative studies on multilingual CMC deal with structural and grammatical aspects (eg., Dorleijn & Nortier 2009). The aim of the current article is a general description of Russian-Estonian code-copying (henceforth CC) with the focus on CC from Estonian to Russian in Live Journal blogs, a particular blog environment favoured by Russian-speakers. It will be demonstrated that CC has become a habitual phenomenon, at least among some Russian-speakers/bloggers. CC framework (Johanson 1993, 2002) has not been applied to multilingual CMC, yet it will be shown that an application can be useful for theory development. To date, only one scholarly paper (Oja 2008) has presented data of Russian-Estonian code-switching (CS) in the portal www.rate.ee.

The article is organized as follows. First, I present a brief description of studies on multilingualism in CMC. Then CC framework, its possibilities and application to written/CMC data will be discussed. Afterwards, I will describe the current situation of Russian-Estonian Live Journal blogs and the data. Then instances of CC will be analysed and preliminary conclusions formulated.

2. Research on multilingual CMC

Until recently, CS and, more generally, non-monolingual speech was studied as a predominantly oral phenomenon. Dorleijn and Nortier (2009: 127) point out that real, authentic structures and patterns of CS are likely to emerge only in spontaneous speech. With the advance of internet and CMC scholars have gradually started to explore stylistic and pragmatic aspects of CS and its role in identity construction. According to Dorleijn and Nortier (2009: 127), this shift occurred because CMC is not written communication in a traditional sense (but see Col-

¹ The current research was supported by the state programme „Estonian language and cultural memory“ (Estonian Ministry of Research and Education), grant EKKM09-85 „Russian-Estonian and English-Estonian code-switching and code-copying corpora creation and management“.

lot & Belmore 1996 for more details) and CS in CMC is an indication of the informal character of the internet communication. Another path was taken by scholars who have turned to written CS in general and not as an on-line phenomenon in particular (Angermeyer 2005, Sebba 2006).

Before I proceed, an important methodological remark should be made. What kind of speech is “real” or “natural”? First of all, there are examples of highly deliberated and stylized oral CS as well (so-called macaronic songs, multilingual performance by comedians, and so on). Second, I claim that any kind of speech is natural for the context in which it occurs and, therefore, even deliberate CS is not less real than spontaneous CS. It is entirely possible that structural and other differences between spontaneous and non-spontaneous multilingual speech do exist but this calls for a new research perspective rather than for discarding such data.

Studies on CMC can be tentatively subdivided into research on monolingual and multilingual communication. It is difficult and maybe even impossible to produce a complete overview because many topics are overlapping. For the purposes of this article, I outline some major topics in the study on multilingual CMC and then suggest whether and how these are relevant for Russian-Estonian multilingual CMC.

The advance of informational technology is closely linked to English and its prestige. Therefore, some studies deal with CS between English and other languages. While English-Russian CS does occur in CMC, including the very same blogs where I collect my Estonian-Russian data, this topic is outside the scope of my research. In addition to English-X CS, it is instructive to look at a “non-English online community”, as Siebenhaar (2006: 486) suggests.

Papers by Androtsopoulos (2006) and Dorleijn and Nortier (2009) CS focus on diasporic on-line communities. Both studies have been conducted in the countries that have been a destination for numerous immigrants during a comparatively long period (Germany and the Netherlands respectively). This line of inquiry involves aspects of migrant multilingual identity because the mentioned online communities provide a separate virtual space for migrants.

As far as Russian-Estonian communication is concerned, the whole sociolinguistic situation of Russian-speakers in Estonia is very different from the typical majority-minority or migrant/diasporic situations known in the Western world (Rannut 2007 and references therein). To put it briefly, Russian-speakers were encouraged to migrate to the Soviet-annexed Baltic States and very often considered their new home as a part of their own country, remaining Russian monolinguals. The balance has shifted since the late 1980s and the regaining of independence in 1991. Recent decades have witnessed a rapid bilingualisation of younger Russian-speakers. Whether Russian-speakers in the former Soviet Union form a diaspora (cf. diasporic online communities) or not, remains a matter of debate (see Pavlenko 2008a, 2008b, Verschik 2009). Although the present study does not discuss identity and the role of multilingual speech in it, it should be pointed that the links between languages, multilingual speech, multilingualism vs. monolingualism and identity differ from those in the West-European migrant/minority context.

It has been shown that Russian-speakers in Estonia are the most heterogeneous group of Russians in the post-Soviet space as far as their self-identification, civic identity, world view, linguistic preferences and linguistic repertoires are concerned (see Verschik 2008: 25-47). The division between in-group and out-group is not always clear in our case. The bloggers whose blogs I used for data collection are speakers of Russian as L1 and, most probably, ethnic Russians who strongly identify with Estonia and know Estonian. This is, of course, not true of all Russian-language blogs, and heated arguments about language, policies and identity issues are contained in the comments between different Russian-speakers from Estonia. Thus, “we-code” and “they-code” (Gumperz 1982) cannot always be established unambiguously. Possibly, such a division may exist for diasporic online communities (in German there is even a special term “Ethno- Portalen”, Androtsopoulos 2006) but I cannot see how it is

applicable to blogs that are by definition personalized virtual space and differ from portals, forums, chat-rooms etc (maybe one can speak about an “I-code” instead).

Orthography and spelling in CMC is predominantly discussed from the point of view of ideology. As recent research on Greek and so-called Greeklish (Androutsopoulos 2009, Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou 2003) emphasizes, the use of Latin-based script for Greek, Arabic and other languages that traditionally have a non-Latin alphabet cannot be explained by technological constraints only. Koutsogiannis and Mitsikopoulou (2003) maintain that, although officially a Latin-based alphabet for Greek exists (and not just a range of spontaneous idiosyncratic adaptations by internet users), the choice of one over another is a highly ideological matter.

Contrary to the cases described by Androutsopoulos (2009) and Koutsogiannis and Mitsikopoulou (2003), the choice of orthography (Roman vs. Cyrillic) and creativity, compromise and hybridization in orthography use probably do not involve ideological issues, as there is no official or semi-official version of Latin-based Russian spelling. Neither can it be said that currently Russian lacks IT-support (although there may be individual difficulties, for instance, if a Russian keyboard is not installed into a particular individual’s computer etc). I believe that a closer view at compromise cases (hybridization, i.e., use of Cyrillic and Latin characters within the same word, separation or non-separation of Russian grammatical markers from Estonian stems by an apostrophe or a hyphen, playful transliteration etc) would be useful for theory development. In the blogs under consideration it is not about a strict choice between two discrete alphabets but rather about innovation and creativity. Dorleijn and Nor-tier (2009: 134–135) discuss to some extent orthographic issues and, quoting Hinrichs (2006) and Palfreyman and al Khalil (2003), mention the possibility of an emergence of a written form of a non-standard variety.

In the literature on oral CS it has been repeatedly observed that CS affects grammar and morphosyntax as well (see overview in Clyne 2003). Various models have been proposed to account for the non-lexical implications and structural change (composite Matrix Language, Bolonyai 1998, Myers-Scotton 2002: 22; triangle model by Muysken 1995, 2000, transfer and facilitation in transfer, Clyne 2003 to name just few). The interconnection between CS and convergence was discussed by Backus (2005) in greater detail. Indeed, if a researcher is interested in structural implications of CS (that is, overt use of other language lexical items) rather than in conversational functions of CS and identity construction of online communicators, then a broader descriptive model is needed. In the next section I will explain my preference for a CC framework and outline its possible applications to written/online data.

3. Code-copying framework

The following example (1a) demonstrates that quite often CS cannot be separated from morphosyntactic changes (word order, argument structure etc). In the examples, Estonian elements are in bold. A person explains the meaning of the Estonian term *haldussuutmatus* ‘administrative inability’:

(1a)	<i>Такого-то</i>	<i>rahva</i>	<i>haldussuutmatus</i>	<i>означает</i>
	Such and such	people:GEN	administration-inability	means
	<i>неспособность</i>	<i>народа</i>	<i>к</i>	<i>управлению</i>
	inability	of people	to	administration
	‘such and such people’s administrative inability means the people’s inability to administrate’			
	(Retrieved in June 2010, Live Journal community eesti_keel)			

The Estonian insertion *rahva haldussuutmatus* ‘people’s administrative inability’ triggers the left-branching structure where dependent elements in the genitive precede the head in the nominative; cf. monolingual Estonian in (1b):

fied terminological apparatus shows that initially the same mechanism is at work in (1a) and (2) and both examples are instances of copying. This fact remains obscure in other models that treat CS and contact-induced structural change in different terms.

In addition to global and selective copying, Johanson recognizes mixed copying, which is a helpful concept on a descriptive (and possibly also on a theoretical) level. A multiple word item (a fixed expression, compound noun, analytic verb, collocation etc) can be copied in such a way that some of its elements are global copies and some are selective copies (see more examples in Verschik 2008: 123–126), as in example (3a):

- (3a) Я сделала e-ōpe
 I made e-course
 'I passed [exam in an] internet-course'

The whole construction is a copy from Estonian *X-i tegema* 'to pass exam in X' with the literate meaning 'to make X', cf. monolingual Estonian in (3b):

- (3b) Tegin e-ōppe
 (I) made e-course:GEN
 (NOM õpe)
 'I passed a test in an internet course'

Example (3a) would mean something else in Russian of Russia, namely, 'I made a programme for an internet-course' rather than 'passed exam' It would be unreasonable to analyse (3a) separately as a semantic selective copy of the verb and a global copy of the object because it is a construction with a meaning different from the sum of the meanings of the components.

In addition to convenience on the descriptive level, the concept of mixed copies allows problems in classification and taxonomy to be avoided, i.e., whether an item similar to (3a) is a CS or anything else. In my view, the question about the distinction between one word CS and borrowing cannot be resolved by looking at structural properties of items in question (i.e., morphosyntactic and/or phonetic integration). In fact, Johanson (1993) rejects both terms CS and borrowing and claims that the only difference is in the degree of habitualization. A copy may become habitualized and conventionalized but this is not linked to structural features thereof.

I believe that the application of the framework to written texts is possible, be it CMC or any other type of writing. I have written elsewhere (Verschik 2008: 189) that an item can have graphic properties in addition to ones distinguished by Johanson. Of course one can claim that graphic properties can be grouped under material properties. However, the CC framework was initially designed to deal with oral data and in an application to written data the graphic aspect should be emphasized. If an Estonian item is rendered in its original orthography in otherwise Russian text, this would be a global copy (including copying of graphic properties). The choice is not only between transliteration (selective copying) and original rendition but also mixed copying is possible. Example (3a) is a mixed copy also from the point of view of graphic properties because *e-ōpe* 'electronic course' is rendered in the original orthography. Consider also (4):

- (4) PR-юxm
 'P(ublic) R(relations)-manager'

The abbreviation *PR* is known in Russian of Russia as well and can be considered as a common internationalism in Russian and Estonian (see more Verschik 2008: 128–129). However, the second part *юxm* is a copy from Estonian *juht* 'leader, manager, head'. The compound *PR-juht* is Estonian but different parts of the item have a different degree of copying. Like in (3a),

we deal with a multi-component item here that has to be viewed as a whole; hence, this is a case of mixed copying.

Orthography is an area where writers' creativity manifests itself in an especially visible way (contrary to selective copying of semantic and morphosyntactic properties that does not stand out as much as the use of overt foreign items or a different script does) as will be demonstrated in the following section.

4. Instances of CC in Live Journal

The data for the current article were collected from Live Journal Russian-language blogs from September 2009 until June 2010. Every entry containing instances of CC (both in the main body of posts and in the comments) was saved as a separate file (altogether 260 files). Live Journal is apparently more popular among Russian-speakers in general (i.e., not only in Estonia proper, but also in Russia itself as well) than other blog environments. It is interesting that Estonian-speakers have very few blogs there and prefer other environments, such as Wordpress, Blogspot etc.

Live Journal differs to some extent from the other mentioned options. While clearly not a real time dialogue/polylogue, nevertheless, vivid reaction and almost immediate commenting, in some cases maximally close to real time dialogue, is a part of Live Journal etiquette. Bloggers' networks are visible because bloggers usually make friends with other Live Journal bloggers and from one's profile it is possible to follow who is whose friend and whether it is a mutual or only unilateral friendship.

Most of the bloggers in whose postings CC has been registered are adolescents and young adults, more frequently males than females (excluding highly specific thematic communities like *eesti_oigus* and *eesti_keel*, the former dedicated to legal questions and the latter to problems of translation from and into Estonian, Estonian grammar etc). Some users do not hide their real personality and provide their full names. In many cases, in a small country like Estonia someone's real personality can be easily guessed even if the personal name is not indicated. Interestingly, not only do Estonian Russians copy from Estonian onto Russian but also certain users from Russia as well: usually, these are either fans of Estonia and Estonian or those who study Finno-Ugric languages. In the current article, for the sake of simplicity, I consider only examples found in the blogs of Estonia's Russians.

4.1. Global copying

It is not surprising that one-word items (mainly nouns) are the most likely candidates for global copying. In the terminology of Muysken (1995, 2000) these would be insertions. Alternations (that is, phrases and longer stretches in another language) have been registered as well, mostly as quotations of someone's Estonian speech or of Estonian-language texts but insertions are more frequent.

Instances of global copying are in (5) and (6) (a hyphen to separate the Inessive case marker is added by me).

- (5) *B Tervishoiuameti-s* *мне* *сказали* *ровно* *наоборот.*
in healthcare department-INESS to me said exactly opposite
'in the Healthcare Department they told me exactly the opposite'
(Retrieved on 11 March 2010)

In (5) there is so-called double marking: both Russian preposition with a locative meaning and Estonian internal local case marker are present. In Estonian-Russian CC, this phenomenon is characteristic especially of NP with Estonian local cases (see more in Zabrodskaja

2009a: 40–42). Interestingly enough, the same kind of double marking happens in CMC as well, although it is much less spontaneous than oral speech.

The following examples (6) and (7) demonstrate that there is variation in treatment of global copies and an Estonian item can be integrated into the Russian matrix. A Russian case marker is added to an Estonian stem, whereas the stem preserves Estonian orthography and the case marker is in Cyrillic characters.

- (6) *Несколько [...] мыслей о эстонских ajalookäsitlus-ax*
 some ideas about Estonian history.treatment-LOC.PL
 ‘some very interesting ideas about Estonian interpretations of history’
 (Retrieved on 9 November 2009)

- (7) *Хоть и запоздало, но поздравляю с sünnipäev’ом*
 although and late but congratulate with birthday-INST
 ‘albeit late, I wish you happy birthday’
 (Retrieved on 14 November 2009)

What is noteworthy is the hyphen/apostrophe between the Estonian stem and the Russian Locative case marker in example (7). There are more examples of this kind in posts by other bloggers, which shows that this is far from being an individual strategy elaborated by a single author. Such a conscious treatment and clear separation of the stem and the marker demonstrates a high degree of metalinguistic awareness, that is, knowledge about “how the grammars of the two languages work”.

Sometimes global copying (including graphic properties) is a conscious choice that signals language play. In the following example (8b), the commentator deliberately uses the similarity between Russian *лихо* ‘trouble, bad fortune’ and Estonian *liha* ‘meat’, ‘flesh’. Although not identical in pronunciation (Russian [lʲixə] with the reduction of the final unstressed vowel and Estonian [liha] with the half-long unstressed final vowel), a bilingual speaker can, nevertheless, draw parallels between the two. Here the Russian proverb is exploited:

- (8a) *Не буди лихо, пока спит тихо*
 Don’t wake trouble while it sleeps quietly
 ‘don’t trouble trouble till trouble troubles you’

Creatively interpreted by a commentator, it turns into (8b):

- (8b) *Не буди liha, пока оно тихо*
 don’t wake meat while it (is) quiet
 (Retrieved on 15 July 2010).

The commentator jocularly warns the blogger whose post he comments on not to engage in an argument with unfriendly people who had previously offended the blogger. In oral speech, such a play would not be impossible but it would require clear and precise phonetic rendition of the lexical items. Instead, the rendition in the Estonian orthography makes the pun visible at once.

4.2. Selective copying

In CMC, items have graphic properties by definition. Thus, if graphic properties are not copied, this would automatically render copied items under the heading of selective copying. This may prove relevant from a theoretical perspective because oral speech examples like (9) would be considered global copying.

- (9) *Милости просим к нам на арстимеадус*
 ‘We welcome you to visit us in medical science (department)’

(Retrieved on 9 January 2010)

Estonian *arstiteadus* ‘medical science’ is a highly semantically specific item (see Backus 2001 on semantic specificity and its role in CS) that belongs to the domain of university studies (such items are primary candidates for copying in oral speech as well, see Zabrodskaja 2007).

The following example (10) is abundant with legal terms in Estonian:

- (10) *Причем на tagaseljaotsus* *еще и было «kuulub viivitamata täitmisele»*
‘whereas on the default judgement it read „is to be implemented immediately“’
Cf. Estonian *tagaseljaotsus* ‘default judgement’; *kuulub viivitamata täitmisele* ‘to be implemented immediately’
(Retrieved on 21 June 2010)

Example (10) does not originate from the community *eesti_õigus* but from a private blog of a man who describes a case he was involved into. The comments to the post are written in the same spirit. Russian-speakers from elsewhere sometimes react to such posts/comments with a request of explanation because global copies and selective copies like in (7) and (9) are unintelligible to monolingual speakers.

It would probably be useful to consider this type of selective copying (i.e., where only graphic properties are not copied) separately because it stands close to global copying (in the sense that the items in questions are recognizably Estonian) and differs from cases where no overtly other-language items are employed.

Other cases of selective copying do not involve Estonian lexical items or complexes thereof but rather Estonian semantics, combinational properties (constructions, word order, argument structure etc). These instances can be unambiguously classified as selective copying both in oral speech and CMC.

Example (11a) is an instance of copying of Estonian separative verb phrase (see more in Verschik 2006). In Finnic languages, verbs such as ‘find’, ‘read’, ‘buy’, ‘to purchase’ require a separative local case (Ellative or Ablative), that is, you read something *from*, not *in* a paper and you buy goods *from*, and not *at* the store.

- (11a) *Ksجامي, ottтуда же прочитала*
by the way there from also read
‘by the way, I read it in the same place’
(Retrieved on 3 March 2010)

Compare to monolingual Russian and monolingual Estonian in (11b) and (11c) respectively:

- (11b) monolingual Russian
Kстами, там же прочитала
by the way there also read
‘id.’

- (11c) monolingual Estonian
Muide, sama-st koha-st lugesin
by the way same-EL place-EL read
‘id.’

Representation of types of selective copying and whether and how they differ from what is known about Russian-Estonian oral bilingual communication requires further investigation

4.3. Mixed copying

The notion of mixed copying in written texts and in CMC in particular may have slightly different aspects as compared to oral communication.

As was shown in (4), mixed copying can mean use of two orthographies in a compound item. In (12) a somewhat different case is presented where the model is the Estonian compound *ID-kaart* ‘ID’ (literally, ‘ID-card’) and one of the components thereof is a common but not identical internationalism for ‘card’ (Estonian *kaart*/Russian *карта*).

- (12) *При помощи ID-карты*
‘with the help of ID-card’
Cf Estonian *ID-kaart* ‘ID-card’
(Retrieved on 12 May 2010)

Compound nouns, analytic verbs and fixed expressions are likely candidates for mixed copying because their multiple word character enables greater variation in copying (Verschik 2008: 65, 102). This seems to be true of CMC as well, see (13) (transliteration of Russian added for the convenience of glossing):

- (13) *В вильяндиской* *культууриакадемии*
v viljandi-sk-oj kultuur-i-akademi-i
in Viljandi-ADJ-LOC culture-GEN-academy-LOC
‘At Viljandi Culture Academy’
(Retrieved on 10 December 2009)
Cf. Estonian *Viljandi Kultuuriakadeemia*

The relative adjective in (13) is a regular formation from the Estonian toponym Viljandi (in Estonian, the Genitive would be identical to the Nominative). The compound *kultuuriakadeemia* contains two common internationalisms; its formation and meaning is transparent. However, the Estonian Genitive case of the first component of the compound (NOM *kultuur*: GEN *kultuuri*) is being preserved. The blogger chose to retain the Estonian rendition of the long vowel, hence *культуури* (cf. Russian *культура* ‘culture’, *культурный* ‘cultural, of culture’). The second component of the compound is in its Russian version (cf. Estonian *akadeemia* ‘academy’, the quantity of long *e* is not rendered orthographically) and the locative case marker is added.

This case illustrates the significance of orthography. In oral speech, examples such as (12) are frequent but often it is hard to firmly establish whether and to what degree common internationalisms are adapted to Russian phonetics. As Zabrodskaia (2009b) convincingly shows, there is a degree of variation in phonetic realization of Estonian items and no straightforward links between the degree of conventionalization and the degree of phonetic adaptation seems to exist (that is, more adapted does not mean more conventionalized). Discourse-related factors (the topic, conversational goals, relations between interlocutors) and speaker-related factors (knowledge of both languages, accent etc) may be at play here. Of course, pragmatic, personal and discourse related factors do matter in CMC and in blog comments as well the utterances produced by the communicators are not as ephemeral as in spoken language. Even if conventions of standard language(s) are not necessarily followed, orthography nevertheless provides a firmer ground for analysis; at least, we can see that the compound under discussion in (13) is perceived by the writer as ambiguous and partly Estonian. This example illustrates again the usefulness of the mixed copy concept.

5. Conclusions

As has been demonstrated, the CC framework can be applied to written text and CMC in particular. Moreover, its application appears to be useful from a theoretical point of view at least for two reasons: (1) the importance of the notion of mixed copying becomes apparent and (2) some light is shed on borderline cases that would be considered global copies in oral communication but form a special type of selective copying in CMC.

The examples analysed in the article show that mixed copying becomes especially explicit in writing: either components of compounds/analytic forms are rendered in different orthographies or the Estonian form of a common internationalism within a compound is preserved.

Copying of lexical items without their graphic properties (transliteration) occupies a position between global and selective copying. This type is specific to written communication only. It remains to be investigated why and by whom transliteration is used; at this point it appears that the choice to copy or not to copy graphic properties does not reflect the degree of adaptation into Russian. In future, it would be instructive to study variation in this type of copying.

From the perspective of the bloggers and posters, it is safe to claim that copying of Estonian items, constructions, structures etc has become an unmarked mode of communication. At times there are examples of deliberate copying that demonstrate metalinguistic awareness (e.g. linguistic creativity, including play with orthographies, conscious referring to Estonian expressions, realities etc) but this is not always the case. Not everything produced by language users is conscious; for instance, selective copying of semantic and combinational properties results in seemingly monolingual utterances which are less easily recognized as “foreign” than lexical items. Despite this, writing, even highly spontaneous like in CMC in general and subject to individual regulations and creativity like in blogs in particular, is less spontaneous than oral communication. If copies from Estonian are present in CMC and no deliberate decision for their use can be detected, then their presence may be an indicator of their habitualization and conventionalization in the local varieties of the Russian-based idiolects of bloggers. Taking this further, one of the future research perspectives would be a comparison between CC in oral communication and CMC.

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