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TYPES OF NON-STANDARD
COMMUNICATION ENCOUNTERS WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RUSSIAN

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The way we speak in communication situations is determined by two major factors: (1) situational: where, on what topic, and with whom we speak, what our role is in the speech act, and (2) personal: what our linguistic background is. The first factor means that conversation is very different at home, in the street, at work, and at a reception. It also reflects the way people communicate in various roles: as a teacher, as a clerk at a service desk, as a parent, as a professional or amateur volleyball player, as a priest at a wedding, as a tourist, etc. A person can have several roles during her/his life, or even during a single day, as can easily be seen from the examples just mentioned. It is not by chance that systematic scientific interest in the first factor started with rather standardized situations of major social significance, such as doctor/patient and pilot/controller conversations.

In this paper I will consider the second factor determining our communicative behaviour: our linguistic background. I will try to give a short overview of Russian research on these issues through some concrete examples. Evidence from other languages, including Finnish, is given in order to describe parallel and (for most readers of this volume) more familiar cases. In view of the lack of research on the topic, I will also put forward questions and hypotheses on the nature of these phenomena. In order to describe different cases of this kind, I first define some basic categories of speakers and introduce an important element of our communicative behaviour, namely the use of a so-called adaptation mode.

Native speakers

Every individual has her/his own way of speaking. In sociolinguistic research our permanent linguistic characteristics have been traditionally called *idiolects*. If we pay attention not only to grammatical and lexical features of speech but also deeper differences in background knowledge and mental maps, we may need Iurii Karaulov's (1987) concept of *iazykovaia lichnost'* ('language personality'). In the great variety of personal variants of speech, an obvious major category of speakers is NATIVE SPEAKERS. Within this category we may differentiate such subgroups as STANDARD LANGUAGE SPEAKERS, DIALECT SPEAKERS, DIASPORA SPEAKERS, and SPEAKERS WITH AN IMPERFECT

COMMAND OF LANGUAGE (including, among others, children of various ages still learning their mother tongue, elderly people losing their language command, and other people with defects in speech production). All the other groups stand in opposition to standard language speakers (StNS) and may be characterized as non-standard native speakers (nonStNS). As always in linguistics, the borderlines between categories are not strict. Thus, a person can be both a dialect speaker and a standard language speaker. However, the main point in this categorization is that these are more or less permanent features of a person, while speech situations vary all the time. In comparison with the role factor, being a native speaker is more a less an inherent feature, while communication roles vary from situation to situation.

When dealing with the Russian language, two additions to this rough categorization of native speakers are needed. First, the Russian linguistic tradition has usually distinguished a large category of nonStNSs, namely *PROSTORECHIE* SPEAKERS, representing urban inhabitants who are not able to use the standard language. This tradition has in many ways affected research on the Russian language: e.g. in sociolinguistic research or statistical analysis, special reference has been made to standard language speakers, ignoring representatives of *prostorechie* (cf. Mustajoki 1982).

Due to its low prestige, *prostorechie* has become an object of linguistic interest through the back door. Studies of everyday oral dialogue started with an overwhelming concentration on speech among ‘native speakers of the standard language’ (*nositeli literaturnogo jazyka*) at the breakfast table (Zemskaja & Kapanadze 1978). The first attempt, and for long time the only one, to study the speech of non-standard speakers appeared in (Zemskaja & Shmel'jov 1984). Nowadays we can even find studies of language use at the Russian market place (Kitaigorodskaja & Rozanova 2003) and ‘linguistic portraits’ of *prostorechie* speakers (Cheriak 2003).

Second, in the Russian context it may be seen as reasonable to differentiate two groups of native speakers outside Russia. Although there are large numbers of Russian speakers far from Russia – in the USA, Australia, Brazil, Germany, etc. – a much larger

concentration is to be found in the former Soviet republics, known to the Russians as *bližnee zarubežje* ('the near abroad'). The term *diaspora* usually refers to cases where the connection with the homeland has been interrupted. If you are a native Russian speaker living in Latvia, Ukraine, or Kazakhstan, you see and hear Russian every day, and older generations still remember the time when Russian was the language of education and administration. So these Russians make up an intermediate group between 'pure' Russians in Russia and 'real' diaspora speakers.

As for different varieties of Russian, an important theoretical question is how to name them: should Kazakh / Australian / Finnish (etc.) Russian be regarded as variants of standard Russian or as something else. An interesting case from this point of view is reported in (Kibrik 1998). He describes a language spoken in Ninilchik in Alaska as a native tongue by 20–30 ethnic Russians whose ancestors moved to this village in the 1840s. Kibrik gives examples of the phonetics, lexicon, and morphology of that language. While its Russian origin is easy enough to recognize, there are features totally different from standard Russian not only in the lexicon (which is inevitable), but also in phonetics and morphology: e.g. the palatalization (softening) of consonants works differently, and the category of gender has disappeared. Kibrik calls the language of these people a *dialect* of Russian.

With regard to native and non-native Russian speakers, it is sometimes difficult to draw a distinction between those who speak the language as a core value and those for whom it represents social, business, personal, or cultural capital. Individuals are often ambivalent about their ethnolinguistic identities. Russian-speakers from the Baltic States living in Ireland report the frustration and confusion they experience when trying to explain who they are to their Irish co-workers and neighbours (Aptekar 2009, 25). It is not uncommon for ethnic Russians who migrated to Germany to have limited Russian-language literacy skills. These people typically identify themselves nowadays by a special ethnonym '*rusaki*' and make up a quasi-ethnic bilingual (German- and Russian-speaking) group of about 2 million people (Meng, Protassova 2009). Similar groups of near-native Russian speakers are spread all over Europe and the former Soviet

Republics. In many cases, including that of the *rusaki*, these people are at the same time competent speakers of the language of the main population (in this case, German).

Another typical example of a mixture of ethnic background and linguistic identity is reported from Kazakhstan. It does not concern Russian, but Finnish. According to the 1999 census carried out in Kazakhstan, there were 547 respondents who identified themselves as Finns. It can be assumed that most of them are Ingrians exiled by Stalin from the Leningrad oblast. Ten years earlier the figure was 988 (Suleimenova 2008: 407). It is quite possible that the decrease in the number of Finns is not only a result of migration, but is partly caused by a shift in the self-identification of these people. Such an assumption can be made on the basis of data concerning the languages they know. Only 11.2% (sic!) say that they speak Finnish, while almost all (98.4%) speak Russian, and 13.9% Kazakh. Thus, we see here a striking example of a discrepancy between ethnic and linguistic identity. To my knowledge, this ethnic Finnish minority has so far received no attention from researchers working on different Finnish and Finnish ethnic groups outside Finland. It should be studied before its last Finnish-speaker dies.

Non-native speakers

The opposite of native speakers is, of course, NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS, although, as it has become clear already, this distinction is far from being clear-cut (cf. also Davies 2003, Mustajoki & Protasova 2004). One may think that the speech of non-native speakers is a rather marginal phenomenon and not worthy of special attention. As will be shown later, this opinion is totally wrong. Another untrue conception is that contacts between people with different linguistic backgrounds are a specific feature of our time.

Globalization has certainly changed the forms of contacts, providing new opportunities to communicate with people from other parts of the world through the Internet and other technical devices, but the use of a non-native language as such has been a common phenomenon everywhere on our planet from the very early stages of the development of human language (cf. Edwards 1994: 1). It is impossible to give exact statistical data on the issue, but observations around the world show that multilingual environments are more common than monolingual ones. International enterprises like Nokia with English

as their working language are certainly a recent phenomenon, but regular contacts between people with different mother tongues are not.

In the absence of overall statistics on this, let us have a look at some examples. In Slovenia people usually speak two or three neighbouring languages: Italian in the South, German and Hungarian in the North, Serbian in the East (see e.g. Roter 2003). Ingush speakers living in Kazakhstan commonly know Kazakh and Russian besides their mother tongue; young people often speak English as well (Shaimerdenova & al. 2008; Gazdieva 2009). Cecilia Odé, who has studied the Mpur language spoken by 10,000 people living in the Eastern part of Indonesia (Odé 2002, 2004), told me in a personal discussion that despite the very isolated position of the language itself, native speakers of Mpur commonly speak one or two neighbouring languages. The majority of Mpur speakers also have a command of Indonesian.

As for Finnish and Russian environments, one can certainly find remote places in Finland where people used to live in a totally monolingual community until the era of television and language teaching at school, although even they might have met speakers of other dialects. Nowadays, Finnish schoolchildren learn a minimum of two foreign languages at school, but this does not guarantee that they are in reality able or willing to speak these languages. This is true especially for Swedish, an obligatory language to learn, officially referred to as the 'second domestic language'. In Russia, one may also find people living in areas where they speak and hear only Russian. But multilingual areas are also common. Some examples will be given later in the text.

The number of languages people encounter in their everyday lives is determined by various factors, such as the structure of economic life, level of education, and cultural traditions. However, in order to explain the differences in the use of Russian (or Finnish) we have to make a further classification of non-native speakers on the basis of the way they have gained a command of a foreign language: whether the foreign language is a SCHOOL LANGUAGE, a CONTACT LANGUAGE, or a HERITAGE LANGUAGE. Learning at school includes attention to writing and reading as well as oral skills, while contact languages are in many cases known only as a tool of oral conversation – they

are learnt *in vivo*. Another difference is the immediate need for and use of a contact language, whereas we learn foreign languages at school mainly for potential use in the future. Another important element of this type of learning is the fact that in many cases the teachers are not native speakers. When a heritage language is spoken or taught at home by parents in diaspora, it is not quite a foreign language, but in many cases it is not a native language either. Besides communicative needs (e.g. an ability to talk to one's grandparents and to read literature belonging to the heritage culture), the language to be learnt has an important role as a preserver of that particular culture. The notion of heritage language is mostly used in the (North-)American context with reference to second- or third-generation immigrants, but it can equally well be applied to Russian families that have immigrated e.g. to Finland.¹ During the last few years the Russian state and foundations financed mainly from official sources (e.g. *Russki mir*) have paid considerable attention to the maintenance of a command of Russian among Russian emigrants: grants have been made available for publishing textbooks, organizing various events, etc. As a matter of fact, textbooks make visible the possible differences between varieties of Russian. In other words: do we teach the pupils to speak as they do in Moscow or as they do in Almaty or Riga? In languages where the varieties are more distinct (e.g. British/American/Australian/etc. English, or Swedish and Finland-Swedish), such discussions have a long tradition.

To clarify the distinction between foreign language learners, let us take the following cases. Tauno and Maija belong to the very small minority of Finns (from 1 to 2%) who have learnt Russian at school. They use the language occasionally at work or during trips to Russia, but they have learnt the basics of the language through education. They thus represent the school learners' category. Matti, another Finn, is married to Svetlana, who is Russian, while Anneli works at an enterprise doing business with Russians. They did not learn Russian at school, but have taken part in some language courses elsewhere; however, their command of Russian has been acquired by just using the language in real communication. Petja and Nina live in a bilingual Finnish-Russian

¹ See, e.g., E. Protassova's article on teaching Russian as a heritage language in Finland in the special issue of the new on-line journal *Heritage Language Journal*, (6:2, 2008) dedicated to Russian as a heritage language. (<http://www.heritagelanguages.org/>)

family in Finland. Finnish is their strongest language. They have two hours of optional (native) Russian classes at school every week, which is standard practice in Finland, but they do not learn it more systematically as a foreign language. At home they usually speak Russian with their mothers, who also take care of teaching and correcting the speech of their children – clear heritage language cases.

Now, I will try to give some idea of the numbers of different categories of people speaking Russian. Everyone understands that we are dealing with a very rough approximation to the real situation. More systematic statistics is available on the former Soviet republics (see e.g. *Evraziiskii monitor* 2007). The survey shows very significant differences between the countries. In Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Latvia, and Moldova the number of speakers ‘fluently speaking and reading Russian’ exceeds 60%. Only in two countries, Georgia and Azerbaijan, does the number of people with no knowledge of Russian exceed 10%.² An overall analysis of the role of Russian in the former Soviet republics has been made by Aneta Pavlenko in her review articles (Pavlenko 2008a, 2008b³; cf. also Lazutova & al. 2002, Andreeva & Khruslov 2004). More substantial analyses of the whole linguistic situation are available for some of the countries, e.g. for Kazakhstan (Suleimanova & Smagulova 2005; Smagulova 2008) and Kyrgyzstan (Orusbaev 2003; Orusbaev et al. 2008).

Figure 1. Number of NPs and NNSs of Russian.⁴

² The results can also be affected by political attitudes: people may be reluctant to admit that they know Russian. At the same time, Azeri and Georgian migrant communities in Russia are growing.

³ Both articles include a large number of references, useful for anyone interested in these questions.

⁴ The figures are based mainly on the article *Skol’ko liudei ... 2006*. There are various sources of uncertainty in these figures. The notion of a ‘speaker’ is, of course, not always clear. A further practical problem in interpreting the data is the use two different concepts of immigrants, *russkaia diaspora* and *rossiiskaia diaspora*. The first term is ethnolinguistic, the latter geographical.

	Native speakers of Russian	Non-native speakers of Russian
1. Russia	116 000 000	26 000 000
2. Previous Soviet republics	26 000 000 ⁵	27 000 000
3. Europe: previous Eastern block	380 000	18 700 000
4. Europe: 'Western Europe'	600 000	7 400 000
5. North and Southern America	4 200 000 ⁶	1 950 000
6. Asia and Australia		4 000 000 ⁷

In terms of the categorization introduced above, item 2 refers to the near diaspora speakers, items 3–6 belong to the far diaspora, while the first category, Russia, can be classified as HOMELAND SPEAKERS. The NNSs make up a very heterogeneous group with different backgrounds and levels of language command. The fourth group of NNSs includes, among others, a large number of 'Kazakh Germans'. At the same time, there are millions of people in Germany who learnt Russian at school in East Germany. In the US and Canada the proportions of the different groups are slightly different. The number of Russian language learners is not very high. As a matter of fact, the state level interest in teaching Russian has been through interesting phases. After the collapse of Soviet Union, the attitude to the usefulness of Russian changed dramatically. According to the prevailing ideology there was no extra need for specialists with a command of Russian because the country was no longer a dangerous enemy. As a result, several centres of Russian studies were closed (cf. Brecht & al. 1995). Some ten years later the situation changed, this time in the direction of more positive attitudes towards learning Russian, which was included in the Overseas Languages Flagship Programme launched and sponsored by American Council.⁸

⁵ Including: Ukraine 8.3, Kazakhstan 4.0, and Belarus 1.2 million.

⁶ The largest Russian immigrant populations in this category are in the USA (3.1 million), Brazil (0.58 million), Canada (0.35 million), and Argentina (0.1 million).

⁷ The source does not differentiate NSs and NNSs in this category. The largest group is the Russian/Soviet diaspora in Israel (about 1.1 million).

⁸ See: <http://flagship.americancouncils.org/index.php?lang=Russian>

Although Table 2 does not show this directly (due to the fact that Russia reaches beyond the borders of Europe), Russian is, along with German, the most widely spoken mother tongue of our continent.

The use of Adaptation Mode

Having defined different categories of speakers, let us turn to the second important theoretical and terminological clarification which deals with the major tactics that interlocutors employ in their interaction. By this I mean the general attitude of the speaker to the whole situation (cf. Mustajoki 2008). As pointed out in (Barr & Keysar 2005: 23; Keysar 2007), communication tends to be rather egocentric. “When people communicate they do not routinely take into account the mental states of others, as the standard theory assumes’ (Keysar 2007: 72). People are inclined to concentrate on what they are saying without thinking of whether it will be understood or not. Therefore, one may assume that in the basic (or default) mode of communication we do not think of the recipient’s ability to comprehend the message we produce.

In the literature on this question, an alternative mode is widely discussed, although there is much variation in naming and defining the phenomenon. One of the terms used is *recipient design* introduced by Schegloff (see, e.g., Sacks & Schegloff 1979). Another, more psychological term is *altercasting* (Malone 1995). A further term is *negotiation* (see e. g. Thomason 2001, Winford 2003, Mauraanen 2006). Within the *communication accommodation theory* (e.g. Giles 1973), the term *convergence* has been introduced; it refers to the speaker’s strategy of adapting her/his communicative behaviour to the recipient. ‘There is a general propensity for communicators to converge along salient dimensions of speech and non-verbal behaviour in cooperative social encounters’ (Ylänne-McEwen & Coupland 2000: 193). I agree that adaptation / accommodation / recipient design is an important part of many types of communication situation; however, it is not the basic regime, but rather an exception.

As a matter of fact, the exceptional role of the ADAPTATION MODE is testified by the fact that there are special terms characterizing some typical situations where it is applied: for

example, *baby talk* (*motherese*) and *foreigner talk* are special registers or styles which native speakers use if they realize that the recipient has only a restricted language command (see e.g. Freed 1981). Thus, we are dealing with a simplified variety of a language. Another proof of the secondarity of the adaptation mode is the observation made by Ermakova and Zemskaja (1993), and confirmed by our everyday experience, that misunderstandings are as usual in the speech situations of family life as they are in interaction with foreigners (or indeed more usual). Given that the matching of the mental worlds of the interlocutors is one of the main prerequisites of successful communication, the contrary should be true. This curious fact can only be explained by the adaptation mode: in family contexts we do not use it, but in contacts with a foreigner we do (cf. Mustajoki 2008). Anna Mauranen (2006) has shown how this works in communication using English as a *lingua franca*.

The use of the adaptation mode is crucial when we consider NS-NNS or NNS-NNS encounters. Thanks to the adaptation mode, such communication is not only possible, but is indeed an effective tool in enhancing mutual understanding between representatives of different cultures. The Russians (and not only the Russians) tend to speak to foreigners loudly, emphasizing key words, and using international vocabulary and gestures.

Types of communication strategies

Having defined the basic terms we need, we can now move on to discuss different types of communication situations from the point of view of research on Russian. Let us start with the very essence of human conversation. Imagine that X and Y live near each other or have other good reasons to communicate (e.g. in order to buy or sell something, to negotiate their rights to something, or simply to learn something about each other out of curiosity). Most studies on these issues concentrate on conversations between two standard language users. Dialects are also a traditional topic of user-oriented fieldwork in many countries, including Russia. However, the number of studies rapidly decreases when we go from small linguistic units (phonemes, morphemes, words) to large ones (sentences, utterances, whole conversations). The same concerns studies on slang.

As for Russians in diaspora, most of the studies deal with the emotional, sociological or purely statistical side of this phenomenon. Some examples: Žanna Zaionchovskaia (2004) gives an overview of ‘Russian post-Soviet emigration movement to Western countries’. Similar statistical data can be found in (Russkii arhipelag 2009). Special attention has also been paid to the language of Russians with a strong Orthodox tradition, especially the so-called Old Believers (*staroobriadtsy*, *starovery*), e.g. in Estonia (Külmoja 2003), in Latvia (Sinochkina 2004), and in the US (Kasatkin & al. 2000). The study of Zemskaja (2001) is rich in concrete analyses of the speech of Russian emigrants and descriptions of their linguistic portraits. Glovinskaia (2001) tries to see more general phenomena in the linguistic features of Russian in diaspora, reflecting the development of the language as a whole by identifying the most movable elements in the language structure. Golubeva-Monatkina (2004) provides full texts of interviews with Russian immigrants of different waves in Canada. Protasova’s book (2004) gives an overview of the life and language use of Russians in Finland.

Thus, there are a certain number of studies on diaspora Russian, but what is still lacking is research on encounters between these speakers and StNSs. Are there special types of misunderstandings caused by different varieties of a language? To what extent do StNSs themselves perceive nStNSs as ‘different’, justifying the use of the adaptation mode?

A totally different situation occurs when X and Y do not share the same native language, but speak languages A and B. As V.M. Alpatov (2000: 15-20) points out, in such a situation there are some outcomes in which the communicants get by without a common language (in the basic sense of the word): they can refrain from interaction, they can use non-verbal tools of communication, and they can turn to an interpreter as a facilitator of communication. I leave these options aside in the following analysis and concentrate on cases where the interlocutors want and/or need to communicate with each other and therefore have to decide how to do it. Strictly speaking, they have the following main options:

- They both speak their native language, A and B (= Strategy 1)
- They use A or B (Strategy 2)

- The use a third language (Strategy 3)
- The use of a combination of A and B (Strategy 4)

Strategies 1 and 2: speakers' languages are sufficient

Strategy 1 is a possible and natural choice if the two languages, A and B, are closely related. In Scandinavian meetings, the old tradition has been to speak 'skandinaviska', which means that the Danes, the Norwegians, and the Swedes speak in their mother tongues (as do the members the Swedish-speaking minority of Finland), while the Finns and the Icelanders choose one of these languages. The communicants, especially experienced ones, are able to adapt their speech to the multilingual situation. The conversation, as a rule, goes rather smoothly, but it sometimes happens that people pretend to understand more than they actually do, because it is not altogether acceptable to show a lack of competence. This, of course, leads to problems afterwards in the course of communication. Nowadays, people increasingly prefer to use English at Nordic meetings and conferences. Another location where Strategy 1 can easily be used is the former Yugoslavia (cf. Lindstedt 2005).⁹

The only possible language that Finns might understand without special study is Estonian. However, as a rule, Strategy 1 does not work in conversations between Finns and Estonians, or works only after some training. According to a common view it is easier for the Estonians to understand Finnish than *vice versa* owing to the numerous contracted forms in the Estonian language by comparison with Finnish. There may also be another explanation: the Estonians may be more active and motivated in learning Finnish than the Finns are in learning Estonian. For the Russians, potentially comprehensible languages are Ukrainian and especially Belarusian. Here again,

⁹ Both cases contradict the linguistic definition of a language, according to which two persons speak different languages (but not different dialects) if they do not understand each other. It is a well-known fact that in real life this definition does not work; instead, languages are 'established' simply on the basis of political will.

comprehension is not self-evident and requires some practice. Unfortunately there are no studies on these important issues.¹⁰

Speaking in related languages is, however, not the only case of Strategy 1, which is also feasible if X knows Y's mother tongue (or another language (s)he knows well), and *vice versa*. This highly practical and democratic way of interaction is seldom used in Finland in encounters between Finnish and Swedish native speakers. If the company includes a single Finnish speaker, the norm is to speak Finnish. In Russia we find situations where, say, a Russian and an Englishman (or a Finn) talk to each other using both native languages in their conversation (alternatively, a strong foreign language may be used in place of the speaker's native language). Here again we lack studies on such encounters.

Strategy 2 represents an encounter between a NS and a NNS. As can be seen from Table 1, Russian is widely known as a second language, and is therefore a possible choice for interaction between millions of people. The popularity of a language as a means of communication is influenced not only by people's knowledge of it, but also by psychological and practical circumstances, including attitudes to the language. The Russians, especially representatives of the *intelligentsiia* (cultural elite), are patient towards foreigners trying to speak Russian, but less tolerant of immigrants, gastarbeiters from non-Western countries with a strong accent in their Russian speech; people seem to think that 'if you come to work in our country, you have to learn our language properly' (Mustajoki 2004). As for Finnish, the possibility of using it in encounters with foreigners or immigrants is increasing, and as a result the Finns are learning to accept 'bad Finnish' instead of turning to English in such situations. Regardless of the number of such encounters, the research questions are the same: To what extent do the NSs use the adaptation mode? Which factors determine its use: the level of language command of the interlocutor, the familiarity of the speech situation, or relations between the communicants? Are there characteristic features of NNS Finnish and Russian that do not depend on the mother tongue of the speaker?

¹⁰ L.P. Krysin (2000) describes various types of Russian-Ukrainian bilingualism but avoids commenting on the possibility of using the native languages in a conversation between these people.

These questions are only now beginning to enter the sphere of linguistic research. Salla Kurhila's doctoral thesis (2003) is a good example of such studies. She investigates NS-NNS Finnish institutional encounters with special attention to the ways in which the Finnish official helps foreign customers to express their thoughts in Finnish. I know only one such study using Russian material, the master's thesis of Ilona Sammalkorpi (2006), which was dedicated to causes of communicative failures in dialogues between a Finnish official and a Russian client at a job centre in Helsinki.

Strategy 3 – *lingua franca*

In connection with **Strategy 3**, the term *lingua franca* is used.¹¹ In discussing this issue, we cannot avoid saying a few words about the role of English in the contemporary world because it is *the* language of international cooperation. Here one can ask which varieties of English (e.g. British or American) have gained the above-mentioned position. The right answer is: none of them. The language we use in global discussion is another variety of English which differs from 'genuine' Englishes very substantially. One may call it *international English*, *world English*, *global English*, or *English as lingua franca*. Pejorative expressions are sometimes also used, e.g. *bad English*. Actually, in many cases this 'bad English' is an excellent tool of communication. This observation seems to contradict the important role of similarity between the interlocutors' mental words in mutual understanding. I think we have to search for an explanation for this not in the language itself but in the situation where it is used. We use any *lingua franca* mainly in cases where the speakers have a high motivation for interaction. This is why they also try to avoid the risk of misunderstandings by adapting their speech as far as possible to the recipient's level of knowledge. As a result, 'bad English' is sometimes even a better tool of communication than 'real' English (Phillipson 2003: 167).

There are an increasing number of studies on different Englishes, English as a *lingua franca* among them (see, e.g., Babst et al. 2002, Doving 1997, Jenkins 2007, and

¹¹ Another term used in this connection is *vehicular language*, used e.g. by Firth.

literature mentioned there)¹². Although every foreign English speaker has her/his own peculiarities, there are also some universal features in English as a lingua franca. They are based on two aims: to keep speech as simple as possible and to guarantee transferring the message to the recipient. Thus, repetition, saying the same thing in two ways, is quite common. The overuse of some prepositions is usual (e.g. *we discussed about the matter*). The simple grammar of English has been made even more simple, e.g. by dropping the third person *-s* (*John want to meet you tomorrow*). Semantically poor verbs, such as *have, do, put* and *take*, are used in cases where native speakers prefer more precise and less frequent verbs. Historically, the development of English from a creole language of half-French origin to a world language is a unique success story.

Curiously or not, in Europe the notion of *lingua franca* is mostly applied only to the English language. A rare exception of a wider use of this term is the book edited by Ammon, *Lingua francas in Europe – except English*. As a matter of fact, most of the world's languages are used not only by their native speakers but also in speech with or among foreigners.

The Russian language has a long history of being some kind of lingua franca, although without using this term. In Soviet times Russian was a *jazyk mežnacional'nogo obščeniya*, a (or rather *the*) language of interethnic communication. Another widely used expression was *jazyk-posrednik*, a 'mediator language' or 'transmitter language'.

During the Soviet period and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, a good deal of research has been carried out on the position of Russian in the (former) Soviet republics. As a rule, however, these studies concern the sociological and political side of the issue:

¹² See also (Ranta 2009) for discussion of the differences between English as a lingua franca research and second language acquisition research. She points out that the former is more focused on effectiveness of communication, and the latter on the errors made by speakers from the point of view of standard language use. Cornelia Hülmbauer (2009) puts the matter even more straightforwardly: as a rule, ELF speakers do not even try to speak correctly, but they aim at communicative effectiveness. I find this a very true observation.

official status, e.g. as a language of education, mass media, or official information; the number of speakers; people's attitudes, etc. Less attention has been paid to the linguistic features of the Russian used by different categories of speakers. The interest in the sociolinguistic side of the question is understandable because – as the Finnish experience of a bilingual country shows – language plays a fundamental role in politics and people's identities. As Ketola (2007) has shown, the same was true also in the early autonomous Finland in the first decades of the nineteenth century: it was important for the new rulers to launch Russian as an official language, but nobody was worried about the real practice of language use, which was very far from the situation described in legislation.

Russian often bears the stigma of the expansionist legacy of Soviet socialism, and/or coerced Russification during the Russian Imperial, Soviet, and possibly even post-Soviet eras. Given this heritage, can Russian continue to be used as an effective vehicular communicative tool? The observations from different speech situations show that the need to find a common language is stronger than possible negative attitudes to Russia. So, Latvian and Polish *gastarbeiters* can communicate with each other in Russian in Germany, as can Ukrainian and Kazakh immigrants in Finland.

Psychological matters play a certain role here as well. Living in a foreign country whose language you do not know very well, you see in another immigrant an in-group fellow and feel happy if you find a common language with her or him, other than the local majority language.

There are some regions where Russian is the *lingua franca* without any doubt. In Dagestan, 25–30 languages are spoken, and 14 of them (including Russian) have the status of a state language. Most of the languages belong to the North-Caucasian group of languages, but are so distantly related that their native speakers are unable to understand each other. This makes the use of Russian as a *lingua franca* quite a natural choice. Describing the variety of Russian spoken there, Dobrjushina and Daniel (in press; cf. Dobrjushina 2007) come to the conclusion that we are not dealing with a pidgin or creole language but a particular ethnolect (term from: Belikov & Krysin 2001: 24). One can compare 'Dagestan Russian' with language varieties reported among

immigrants in the Scandinavian countries. However, the history of the creation of *Rinkeby Swedish* (Kotsinas 1987, 1988), *Kebab Norwegian* (Aasheim 1997), or *Metropolitanskolen Danish* (Quist 2008) is quite different from what has happened in Dagestan. *Dagestan Russian* is a rather stable variety of the Russian language, and practically the only one spoken in that region.

Strategy 4 – pidgins and other mixed languages

In **Strategy 4**, more dramatic things happen: a new tool of communication is created. This is not an easy task, and it is usually only attempted if the other possibilities described in Strategies 1–3 are excluded in view of the speakers' lack of language capacity. However, in certain environments, mixed languages can also have other purposes: ¹³ they serve as a device of strengthening group identity in the same way as slangs do (cf. street languages in the Netherlands).

The phenomenon itself is probably very old, but it became an object of interest only when representatives of big colonial states like Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands met indigenous people in different parts of the world and an auxiliary language was created between them on the basis of the languages of both sides. Some of these pidgins developed into creole languages, native to whole nations or ethnic groups, such as the Haitian language based on French and local and other languages.

For a long time it was assumed that pidgin languages only arose in situations where conquerors met people from other social classes. It was a Russian-based pidgin that ruined this conception. In 1927 Olaf Broch published a description of *russenorsk*, spoken in conversations between Norwegian fishermen and Russian merchants

¹³ In his classification of communicative encounters, V.M. Alpatov (2000: 15-20) equates pidgin languages with other artificial communication tools such as Esperanto. This is an interesting point. However, I see a crucial difference between these two types of communicative tools. Pidgins appear in a very natural way in authentic speech situations; artificial languages are created outside a speech community as a result of sophisticated reasoning.

transferring fish to their own market. In (Arends & al. 1994: 363-364), ten Russian-based pidgins are mentioned. New studies on the topic continue to appear, e.g. Stern's (2005) extensive description of the so-called *govorka*, a Russian-based pidgin that has been spoken in the Taimyr region in Siberia along the banks of the Yenisei. An important source in the study of Russian pidgins has been the non-standard speech of characters in books (e.g. *Derzu Uzala*, a famous book by the Russian explorer Vladimir Arsen'ev, and a film based on it).

Elena Perehvaksaia's recent book (2008: 117-128) includes a good deal of interesting data, theoretical reasoning, and a comprehensive history of studies on Russian pidgins. Comparing different Russian-based pidgins, the author comes to the conclusion that some of their features are surprisingly regular. These are: (1) SOV word order; (2) indeclinable pronouns *moia* (I/me), *tvoia* (you), (3) the use of indeclinable verb forms, usually similar to Russian imperative. Perehvaksaia argues that these similarities can be explained only by the monogenetic origin of all these pidgins. She supposes that they are descended from a *protopidgin*, the customary Russian way of speaking to non-natives, i.e. foreigner talk. However, it is important to note that contemporary Russian foreigner talk does not display the features mentioned above (cf. Fjodorova 2002, 2006). Thus, according to Perehvaksaia, we are dealing with the Russian way of speaking to foreigners that was current during the expansion of the Russian Empire in the 17th – 19th centuries.

Perehvalskaya (2008: 206-210) also provides unpublished materials on a Russian-Finnish pidgin. It was spoken in Tikkurila among Finnish sellers and Russian buyers, who did not have a common language, but needed to communicate in order to do business. The article of trade was second-hand refrigerators. As might be expected on the basis of the above, this *Tikkurila pidgin* does not have the features found in old pidgins. In view of its very restricted use, Perehvalskaya calls it Finnish–Russian Jargon, but describes it as one of the Russian pidgins.

In this connection it is worth mentioning a couple of other mixed languages based partly on Russian. In Belarus, a mixture of Belarusian and Russian known as *trasjanka* is

spoken (Hentschel & Tesch 2006; Liskovets 2002): similarly, in Ukraine, a mixture of Ukrainian and Russian known as *suržik* is in use. They are clearly mixtures of two languages, but do not fulfil all the criteria for a pidgin. The birth of these two languages is of interest because Ukrainian and Belarussian are so close to Russian that there would seem to be no need for a separate in-between language: the speakers could use their native languages and understand each other. These new languages are of low prestige, as can be seen from their names. *Suržik* originally means a mixed-grain bread or cereal; *trasjanka* refers to low-quality mixed hay. They are not regarded as ‘proper languages’, although for some children they may serve as the first language learnt at home from the parents.

Another mixed language of interesting origin is *Odessa Russian*, a peculiar language that is hard to define in traditional terms. Its main elements are taken from Russian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish. There are also numerous loanwords from French, English, Italian, Greek, Polish, Romanian, and Turkish (see e.g. Mechkovskaia 2006). It was originally launched by immigrants arriving in this multiethnic city. In this respect it resembles the variants of Scandinavian languages mentioned above, but its linguistic foundation is larger and it is more stable, having already been used for a long time.

A case study of a multilingual community

In a wider community with NSs of different languages, communication may take place in a variety of languages. I will show this through a concrete example connected with the use of both Russian and Finnish.¹⁴ The Department of Slavonic and Baltic Languages and Literatures at Helsinki University has several teachers for the different Slavonic and Baltic languages.¹⁵ Of the 28 teachers and other staff, 15 are Finnish NSs and 5 Russian NSs. Swedish, Polish, Czech, Lithuanian and Croatian are represented by

¹⁴ The figures provided here are based on a preliminary study of the material. It will be analysed in more detail later. I thank Aurelija Kaškelevičienė for carrying out the survey among the staff.

¹⁵ At the beginning of 2010, the department merged with other language departments to form a larger unit called the Department of Modern Languages.

one NS each. Three persons claim to be bilingual: Finnish/Russian NS, Swedish/Finnish NS, and Latvian/Lithuanian NS.

Altogether, a group of 28 people makes up 378 pairs of communication. Statistically, these include 105 Finnish NS – Finnish NS pairs and 10 Russian NS – Russian NS pairs. Bilinguals use their two native languages according to the interlocutor; this means we have 15 more Finnish – Finnish pairs, 5 more Russian – Russian pairs, and a Lithuanian – Lithuanian pair. Of course, in a language department one could expect something special even in these cases, but in their responses the speakers said that they use their native languages in these situations.¹⁶ In analysing the rest of the cases, where NSs of different languages are involved, we can implement the categorization of situations (conversation strategies) provided above. In some conversational pairs the communicants use more than one language. As a matter of fact, these multilingual strategies are more common (it takes place in about 70 pairs) than might be expected on the basis of the assumption that people are inclined to prefer one communication tool with each communicant.

Only three persons on the staff manage to use fewer than three languages at their workplace. Fifteen use three languages, seven use four, two use two, and one uses one language. Thinking about language behaviour, we have to bear in mind that in normal working conditions people tend to avoid any extra burden in communication, so there is no competition to use as many languages as possible.

Strategy 1 is quite possible because all those involved understand and speak several languages. In spite of this, only one regular pair of this kind is recorded: NS of Polish – NS of Czech. **Strategy 2** is widely used. Almost all the Finnish NSs, and many of the others, speak only Russian with Russian NSs. Finnish is used, not always but approximately in half of all cases, in conversation between Finnish NSs and NSs of ‘less spoken languages’ (Lithuanian, Latvian, Croatian), but never with Russian NSs.

¹⁶ We find more unusual cases in the private lives of the teachers. A Finnish Russian teacher speaks Russian with his wife, also NS of Finnish and a teacher of Russian. Another Finnish teacher speaks Esperanto with his children.

There are two cases where a Finnish NS speaks Polish with a Polish NS and Lithuanian with a Lithuanian NS.

Strategy 3, the use of a lingua franca, is in many cases not necessary, as the interlocutors speak each other's languages. However, this is not possible in all encounters. English is therefore used as a lingua franca in 33 pairs, and Russian in 30 pairs. The frequency of the use of a lingua franca is rather low, if we bear in mind that each teacher is involved in 27 pairs of communication and can use more than one language in them. Russian is the dominant Slavonic language among the Finnish teachers, but English is another option in their encounters with representatives of the Baltic languages and of the Slavonic languages other than Russian. In four cases, we find situations where Finnish is used as a lingua franca between the foreign teachers.

The respondents were also asked to indicate their knowledge of other languages. Six teachers claimed to have at least B1 level command in interaction in German, and five in French. However, these languages are not used in the mutual interaction of the department staff.

Pidgin languages (**Strategy 4**) have not been created, but the Finns teaching Russian use many Russian elements in their Finnish, mainly words and expressions which are handier and shorter in Russian than in Finnish. Reciprocally, in the Russian of NSs of Russian there are many elements connected with Finnish society. Although both phenomena are rather similar (foreign words embedded in Russian or Finnish), their origin and the reasons for using them are quite different in this particular communicative setting. The use of Finnish concepts and terms is mainly due to their absence in Russian. Russian expressions are used in the Finnish speech of a near bilingual for two reasons: first, they come more readily to the speaker's mind as a result of their aptness; second, they give the conversation an in-group, slang-like tone.

Previous research on NNS language has mainly focused on the mistakes that reveal the extent to which the NNS's speech diverges from the standard language used by native speakers. 'Learner language' and 'interlanguage' are among the terms used with

reference to such deficiencies in language proficiency. In recent research, mediator languages have come to be examined from a new point of view. When the speakers' communicative needs are taken as a starting point, a seemingly imperfect and deficient form of the language may turn out to be an effective medium of communication.

Conclusions

Encounters between non-standard speakers, native or non-native, are very common. In spite of this, research on them is still rather sketchy. Questions to be addressed by forthcoming research include the following:

1. Are there common features which make Russian and other languages as lingua francas different from native varieties of the languages, in the same way that English as a lingua franca differs from native English?
2. How and when is the adaptation mode used? Does a native speaker stop using it in encounters with a foreigner with a good command of the language?
3. How does foreigner talk differ from parents' baby talk?
4. Which features of NNS language annoy NSs? Does this have an impact on understanding? What are the main prerequisites for understanding and the main causes of misunderstanding?
5. How does language learning background affect NNS-NS or NNS-NNS encounters: have the speakers learnt the language they use at school or *in vivo*?

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