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Spontaneous occurrence of non-Russian lexical elements in the speech of Estonia's Russians

After the restoration of independence in Estonia in 1991 scholars recognize a rapidly progressing bilingualisation of the local Russian speakers. The language of this “new” minority already showcases the influence of the titular language (Verschik 2008). Lexical change is the most prominent outcome of CILC (Thomason 2001), and also one of the most salient ones. Most work on lexical influence that was most intensively carried out around the previous decade, maps out loanwords/lexical copies and instances of code-switching (Verschik 2008; Адамсон 2011). Our goal was to document yet undocumented lexical items that emerged under the influence of the Estonian language and find possible reasons for their usage. We interviewed 28 informants, all Russian speakers, born in Estonia but of different socioeconomic backgrounds and ages. The semi-structured interview consisted of both pre-written questions about specific topics (the speakers' profession, Russian and Estonian cultural events, cuisine, linguistic attitudes), as well as providing the interviewees the freedom to talk about topics they preferred. We also asked direct questions about the variety of Russian they speak. Altogether we analysed 31 hours and 37 minutes of recorded, spontaneous speech. The transcriptions were searched for sentences that contained words that are not a part of monolingual Russian. Since one-word switches and loanwords are hard to differentiate and can be conceptualized as the two ends of a continuum (Thomason 2001) and are not effective to be strictly distinguished (Backus 2015), we treated all other-language elements in our corpus as loanwords. The research was qualitative in nature and its goal was to showcase some of the reasons speakers use loanwords. The reasons we found correspond to those in the literature: a subjective aesthetic preference (Verschik 2008), applying bilingual creativity to make the speech more interesting (Verschik 2005), sociopragmatic reasons (Verschik 2007), or sometimes a lexical gap of semantically specific words (Zabrodskaia 2013). This presentation will show examples of sentences which contain elements stemming from an Estonian lexical unit and attempt to give an explanation for their usage. Consider the following example:

„Моя работа иногда заказывать товар, вообще следить, чтобы всё правильно было, *инвентуру* делать, так больше организационный, именно.”

“My job is sometimes to order goods, basically to make sure that everything is done correctly, to do the *stock-taking*, so basically more organisational, namely.”

Stock-taking would be called *инвентаризация* (*inventarizacija*) in monolingual Russian, the speaker might be influenced by the Estonian word *inventuur*, with a slight modification.

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