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A CASE OF LANGUAGE CONTACT IN THE EAST BALTIC AREA

Close contacts have existed between various languages in the east Baltic region since the earliest times of which there are written records. The Baltic Fennic languages reveal marked Indo-European characteristics precisely because they have had lasting contacts with the Baltic languages. In comparison with the other Indo-European languages, the Baltic languages have in their turn obviously acquired specific features of the Fenno-Ugric languages. This is especially true of Latvian. As regards those periods from which there are written records, we have direct documentary evidence of the manner in which language contacts have given rise to bi- and multilingualism. Thus, for instance, a petition presented by a Tallinn stonemason, Johan Grijs, has survived from 1685. This petition contains a mixture of High and Low German, Swedish and Estonian elements¹ and is a fairly faithful reflection of the multilingualism of Tallinn artisans at that time. Although the petition was to have been in the official language of the local chancery, i.e. High German, nevertheless elements of the three local languages, viz. Estonian, Low German and Swedish, found their way into the document to such an extent that only a person familiar with all three languages can understand it.

Over thirty years ago already the present writer published a short account of general bilingualism as manifested at Iisaku (north-eastern Estonia), a locality where there have been close interlingual contacts between Estonian and Russian.² He has likewise dealt briefly with the bilingualism of Estonians and Swedes in north-western Estonia.³ A fairly abundant literature is available on the well-known close contacts between the Livs and the Latvians.⁴ There are interesting data also on the language contacts of the Lithuanians and Byelorussians, the Caraims and Lithuanians, the Caraims and Poles.⁵ It is possible to find other illustrations from different parts of the Baltic Area concerning the manner in which close interlingual contacts have given rise to general multilingualism. The complicated language contact relations in this region have been studied far from satisfactorily although the problems of language contacts are among the most topical and exciting in present-day linguistics.

¹ P. Johansen, *Nordische Mission. Revels Gründung und die Schwedensiedlung in Estland*, Stockholm 1951, p. 25.

² Korjamismatkal poluvertsikute maal. — *EKirj.* 1930, p. 366 ff.

³ *Eesti-rootsi laensõnad eesti keeles*, Tartu 1933, p. 126 ff.

⁴ See, e. g. P. Ariste, *The Livs and the Livish Language*. — *Latvijas PSR Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis* 1958, nr. 11, p. 41 ff.; *К вопросу о развитии ливского языка*. — *Труды Института языкознания IV*, Москва 1954, p. 293 ff.

⁵ К. М. Мусаяев, *Грамматика караимского языка*, Москва 1964.

Interlingual contacts have received a particularly large amount of attention in the Soviet Union. There are languages in the U.S.S.R. that are spoken by tens of millions of people and others that are used by only a few scores of individuals. There are ancient literary languages in the Soviet Union and languages that have become literary only since the October Revolution. In different parts of the country language contact has led to bilingualism, trilingualism and even quadrilingualism. Bilingualism is very widespread. In the case of bilingualism the components include Russian or one of several other languages. Very complicated instances of language interference can be met with. Some earlier cases of interference are dying out and new ones are coming into being.

In this paper I should like to deal with a micro-region in the Soviet Union where it is possible to observe some very complex cases of language contact.

Since time immemorial a group of Estonians has been living near the town of Ludza in the eastern part of the Latvian S.S.R. Some more Estonians settled here in the 17th century. The immediate neighbours of these Estonian peasants have long been Latvians, who speak the Latgale dialect, Byelorussians and Russians.

Under the conditions of feudalism the Ludza Estonians were able to preserve their language and ethnographical peculiarities because there was little movement beyond the immediate domestic circle. Besides Estonian they knew some Latvian and, if their neighbours happened to be Russian or Byelorussian, also the languages of these two peoples. Being Catholics the Ludza Estonians had at that time the closest links with fellow Catholic Latvians and Byelorussians, whereas they maintained closer relations with Russians only in those villages where the population had embraced the Orthodox faith. In the Catholic churches the language of sermons and confession was Estonian and, consequently, the Estonians had no direct need to know either Latvian or Byelorussian. The principal way of getting in touch with one's neighbours was while doing compulsory labour-service on the manorial estates. In the manors one could also hear Polish spoken, because the landlords and their officials were mainly Poles. The Polish language prevailed in the towns. In this region Polish was the common cultural language before Russian took over that role. Towards the middle of last century the church began to use the Latvian language and this led to a corresponding increase in the influence of Latvian upon Estonian. With the close of the feudal period the influence of Russian began to grow rapidly among the Estonians as well as the Latvians, Byelorussians and other peoples living in this area. The influence of Russian increased steadily when schools with Russian as the language of instruction were opened in large numbers at the end of 19th century and at the beginning of the present century. In addition it became quite usual for young Estonians, Latvians and Byelorussians to take up temporary jobs in Russian-speaking towns. Russian very rapidly became an international language here already in the latter half of the 19th century and has remained that till the present day.

On the eve of the Second World War the population of that part of the Latvian S.S.R. known as Latgale included (besides its Latvian majority) 20.13% Russians, 13.96% Byelorussians and 4.49% Poles. The Estonians, Lithuanians and Yiddish-speaking Jews represented the smaller ethnic groups. Seven languages were spoken on a fairly limited territory. Multilingualism was quite a common phenomenon at the time. All the Estonians knew Latvian and Russian besides their own language and were consequently trilingual. One could also find some Estonians who

spoke Polish or Byelorussian as a fourth language. The bulk of the Latvians and Russians were bilingual, but they also included a few people who were tri- or quadrilingual. The Jews, Byelorussians and Poles were likewise generally trilingual, since they also knew Latvian and Russian in addition to their mother tongue. Prolonged multilingualism in Latgale has given rise to complicated language contact relationships which we should now like to deal with briefly.

In the following discussion we shall proceed from the Latgale Estonians who speak a Fenno-Ugric language. In the local Estonian dialect there are first and foremost numerous loan-words from Latvian, one of the Baltic languages. Latvian borrowings have found their way into Estonian over the centuries. The earliest loan-words have been made to conform to Estonian phonological patterns, e. g. Est. *kutõl'*, gen. *kudõl'i* 'cattle louse' ~ Latvian *skutele*. The more recent loan-words, however, have preserved their Latvian phonological characteristics, e. g. *drušša* 'malaria' ~ *dručis*, gen. *druča*. Latvian words have been borrowed from very different branches of everyday peasant life. Their nature indicates that most such loan-words have entered into Estonian as the result of prolonged bilingualism. Some Estonian words have also penetrated into Latvian although the Latvians have been by far the more numerous and dominant ethnic group. The Latvian loan-words have come almost entirely from the local Latvian dialect. Only a few words have been taken from literary Latvian because it was not until the 1920s that literary Latvian began to replace dialect speech in this area. In addition to the Latvian loan-words in the Estonian dialect spoken here, the latter has likewise been strongly influenced by Latvian phonology. The entire phonological system of Estonian has drawn closer to that of Latvian. A Latvian influence is also noticeable in syntax.

In its turn Estonian has quite conspicuously influenced the general structure of the local Latvian dialect. There is a marked linguistic difference between the language of indigenous Latvian districts on the one hand and that of mixed Estonian-Latvian or earlier Estonian-speaking areas on the other.

Alongside the borrowings from Latvian numbers of loan-words have also entered this Estonian dialect from Slavonic languages. The Slavonic loans include words whose direct origin it is difficult to determine because they may have come from either Polish, Byelorussian or Russian, e. g. *baaba* 'woman, old woman' ~ Polish *baba*, Russian, Byelorussian *баба*. The origin of the majority of Slavonic loan-words, however, can be immediately recognized by applying structural and semantic criteria.

The loan-words from Byelorussian have come from the same spheres of peasant life as the Latvian elements. The older Byelorussian borrowings have been brought into conformity with the peculiarities of Estonian phonology, e. g. *pat'san* 'stork' < Byelorussian *бацця* or *kuut'sl'i* 'bunch of flax on a distaff' < *кудзеля*. More recent Byelorussian loans have retained their original phonology, e. g. *moža* 'perhaps' < *мога*, *dudar* 'bagpiper' < *дудар*. There is no immediate evidence of the structural influence of Byelorussian upon Estonian. The Byelorussian phonological characteristics which occur in loan-words may be due rather to a Latvian or Russian influence, because Byelorussian, Russian, Polish and Latvian all have common phonological features which differ very markedly from the phonological system of Estonian.

Numerous Polish words connected with urban life, the church, technology, clothing, gardening, etc. have infiltrated into Estonian as well as into Latvian, Byelorussian, Lithuanian and, to a lesser extent, Russian.

They include, e. g. *bul'ba* 'potato' < *bulba*, *drukavoodma* 'to print' < *drukować*, *knott* 'wick' < *knot*, etc. Almost all such Polish borrowings are phonologically alien to Estonian, this being evidence that they are more recent than the Latvian and Byelorussian loan-words. Generally speaking, the Polish words entered into the Estonian vocabulary at a time when the phonological system of Estonian had already become somewhat more Balto-Slavonic in character. The Polish influence on Estonian is confined to the vocabulary. For several centuries the Poles were the ruling class in Latgale, who exerted a cultural influence, but with whom the Estonian, Latvian and Byelorussian peasants did not maintain such close relations as amongst themselves. The Polish influence in Latgale has now disappeared entirely.

It is the Russian language that has contributed the largest number of loan-words to the Estonian dialect under discussion. Beginning with the latter half of the 19th century until the 1920s, Russian was the only official language of administration, of instruction at schools and also the principal language of culture. Almost all the new ideas which became known to the Estonian, Latvian or Byelorussian peasants in Latgale in those days are expressed by means of Russian terms. It was at that time that a particularly great change occurred in the life of the local peasants. Feudalism disappeared. The peasants began to move to the factories. There was an intensification of intercourse with Russian-speaking areas in particular. Large numbers of Russians settled in the districts inhabited by Estonians, Latvians and Byelorussians. The knowledge of Russian spread especially rapidly after the introduction of Russian into schools and, in the case of men, also as a result of compulsory military service. The Catholic church remained the only institution in which Russian did not become dominant. Beginning with the 1920s Latvian became the administrative, educational and cultural language of the area, but Russian has continued in use as an everyday second language. Owing to the rise in importance of Latvian as the language of administration, it has begun influencing the local Russian dialects.

The hundreds of Russian loan-words in Ludza Estonian have almost without exception preserved their Russian phonological character. Structural features occur which are far from characteristic of native Estonian words, e. g. *gošt* 'guest' < *гость*, *d'eelo* 'business, matter, affair' < *дело*. Only a few Russian loan-words have been somewhat Esticized, e. g. *koñt's* 'hound, hunting dog' < *гончая (собака)*, *räädnig* 'policeman' < *урядник*. The retention of Russian phonological features in Russian loan-words can be accounted for mainly by the fact that for some generations Russian has had a strong influence on the phonological system of other languages in Latgale. The influence of Russian can also be seen in the grammatical structure of Estonian, particularly in the domain of syntax. Even some prefixes have been borrowed from Russian. In the dialect there occurs, e. g. the word *pre-illos* 'very beautiful', which is modelled on the Russian *прекрасный* (Est. *illos*, literary *ilus* 'beautiful'). Russian translation loans are extremely plentiful. Translation loans have also come from Latvian, but their number is much smaller.

For centuries several peoples speaking different languages have lived side by side in Latgale. The resulting bilingualism or multilingualism has led to a situation where smaller ethnic groups have adopted or are adopting the languages of larger groups. Estonian has disappeared almost entirely because the majority of Estonians have taken over Latvian, a minority having adopted Russian. Byelorussian is receding before Russian and partly also before Latvian. The use of Polish has been greatly

restricted in favour of Latvian. The spheres of use of Latvian and Russian are shifting in either direction depending on which of the languages predominates in a given micro-region. In that part of Latgale that is the subject of the present paper a highly peculiar union of languages has come into being and has acquired a specific colouring because of the Baltic, Slavonic and Fenno-Ugric linguistic elements involved.

The study of language contact phenomena on even a fairly limited territory such as the one we have dealt with may yield interesting data on the various ways in which languages have influenced one another during different periods⁶.

ПАУЛЬ АРИСТЭ (Тарту)

СЛУЧАИ ЯЗЫКОВОГО КОНТАКТА В ВОСТОЧНОЙ ПРИБАЛТИКЕ

Прибалтику издавна населяют различные народы, живущие в непосредственной близости друг с другом. Это способствовало возникновению здесь тесных и многообразных языковых контактов, что вызвало появление дву- и многоязычности. Уже документы XVII века показывают, что в Таллине пользовались языком с элементами верхненемецкого и нижненемецкого, а также эстонского и шведского языков. Позже двуязычность отмечается в смешанных районах с ливским и латышским, эстонским и русским населением. Свообразием отличается многоязычность в восточной части Латвийской ССР — Латгалии, где был распространен лудзаский диалект эстонского языка. Этот сейчас отмирающий диалект находился в тесном контакте с латышским, русским и белорусским языками. Почти все без исключения проживающие в этой области были трехязычными. Известен был им и польский язык. Все соседние языки оставили след в эстонском языке. Наибольшим было влияние латышского. В последнее время увеличилось влияние русского языка. В статье дается анализ языковым влияниям, которые в разное время и по-разному проявлялись в лудзаском диалекте эстонского языка.

⁶ The present writer has dealt at greater length with the same subject in regard to Latgale in a Russian-language article «Случаи языкового контакта в Латгалии» (Lietuvių Kalbotyros Klausimai VI, Vilnius 1963, p. 137 ff.).