

You have downloaded a document from



The Central and Eastern European Online Library

The joined archive of hundreds of Central-, East- and South-East-European publishers,
research institutes, and various content providers

Source: Darbai ir dienos

Deeds and Days

Location: Lithuania

Author(s): Maija Brēde

Title: Smudging the Language, or One Day With Spoken Latvian

Smudging the Language, or One Day With Spoken Latvian

Issue: 54/2010

Citation style: Maija Brēde. "Smudging the Language, or One Day With Spoken Latvian". Darbai ir dienos 54:199-216.

<https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=52752>

SMUDGING THE LANGUAGE, OR ONE DAY WITH SPOKEN LATVIAN



MAIJA BRĒDE

ISSN 1392-0588
2010. 54

INTRODUCTION

Given the state of flux in various fields of life, including language development in general and specific languages in particular, it is quite appropriate that one of the most popular words of late is *change*. In case of language contact, the most common specific type of influence is the borrowing of words (Thomason 2001:10).

Vocabulary expansion is the area where linguistic innovation is mostly felt. At the present stage of language contact and development, many languages accept linguistic features from other languages and change their attitudes towards what is appropriate in the grammar. Borrowing seems an easy process since no one bothers about paying off the debt. However, it is stressed by a number of linguists that terms like *borrowing*, *loan word*, *loan blend* and *loan shift* (in the sense of a linguistic form taken over by one language from another) are a kind of misnomer as the words are not given back (cf. Crystal 1999: 40; 2008: 58). McArthur (1996:138) observes that “There are different preconditions for borrowing, among them the domination of some languages by others (for cultural, economic, political, religious or other reasons), and a sense of need, when users of one language draw material from another for such purposes as education and technology”. In fact, purposes of borrowing are multifarious. Traces of foreign elements can be observed both in spoken and written language, especially if the source language is a sustained contact language.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the course of time Latvian has been exposed to the influence of different languages, mostly German and Russian (Rūķe-Draviņa 1977). English was introduced in the 20th century, and its influence in Latvia has been constantly growing, especially since restoration of Latvia's independence. Direct contacts with foreign countries resulted

in the introduction of a large number of new concepts and terms, mainly from English. As a direct, indirect and intermediary contact language English has contributed primarily to the word-stock of Latvian, though its impact on the structure and conventions of Latvian is also beginning to be felt (Veisbergs *et al.* 2009: 220). The present linguistic situation can be explained in terms of globalization (Crystal 1997). Its fundamental features include the overcoming of spatial barriers and the centrality of knowledge and information (Bielsa 2005: 131). As Crystal (1997) points out, globalization has resulted in the predominance of English as a global lingua franca; in Latvia, English currently dominates the new channels of information and media. On the one hand, the native language is an important expression of Latvian identity, which, in turn, is associated with specific values. The issue of culture necessarily includes that of language. Language is an important ethnic symbol, and a threat to the native language is deemed to constitute a threat to cultural identity. On the other hand, there are language users, especially from the younger generation, journalists in particular, who find it stylish to use English words both in their colloquial speech and in a great variety of texts (Brēde 2008). Anglicisms are often used as fashionable words. It has been noted that the vocabulary currently in use reveals significant changes as to the source languages (Baldunčiks 1989; Veisbergs 2006). Consequently, an opinion is advocated that Russian is gradually losing ground to English (Veisbergs 2006: 150). However, the impact of Russian as a sustained direct contact language is still strongly felt in both spoken and written forms of language (Kušķis 1993; Bušs 2005; Brēde 2005, 2006). It makes itself felt not only on the lexical level but also on the level of syntax, and, to a certain extent, in the whole structure of discourse (Brēde 2000).

Language change has been topical in a wide range of areas, primarily in historical linguistics. However, as Aitchison points out, more recent approaches have brought changes that are currently taking place at the forefront of attention. They include syntactic change, hybrid languages, dying languages, as well as sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic factors that are at the basis of various alternations (Aitchison 1998: ix). Reasons for language change include, among other things, fashion, infiltration of foreign elements, the need for a new vocabulary, or inherent causes (*ibid.*). Crystal (2004: 130) states that “Language change is inevitable, continuous, universal and multidirectional. Languages do not get better or worse when they change. They just change”. At present a certain change can be observed in Latvian norms and conventions; the media has adopted a more colloquial style, and there is a freer use of slang in printed works.

Slang, defined as “a set of colloquial words and phrases generally considered distinct from and socially lower than the standard language” (McArthur 1996: 860), is a verbal variety that distinguishes one social group from another. It basically belongs to spoken language. As a sign of group identity, slang is not associated with regional varieties. Crystal defines the primary function of slang as follows: “The chief use of slang is to

show that you're one of the gang" (2002: 97). Other reasons for using slang include the desire to establish and maintain relations and to sound original. Communication is possible if speakers share the same vocabulary – one of the features of slang is the use of foreign words of all kinds. People who are not familiar with it may not understand it, because the style of language is not their own (Munro 2007: vii). The first Latvian slang dictionary includes approximately 8000 slang units (Bušs and Ernstsone 2006). The authors conclude that the number of Russian slang-based barbarisms in Latvian has been steadily growing over the last 10 to 15 years, and that Russian continues to affect Latvian to a much greater extent than English (Bušs 2005: 44–46).

Sociolinguistic investigations reveal that Latvia is still facing the problem of demographical balance (in 2009 the percentage of Latvians in the country as a whole was 59.3%, and in the capital merely 42.3%). Although the goal of the Latvian government is to create an integrated society based on the State language, the situation regarding the use of Latvian has not improved much. Latvian/ Russian bilingualism is common. Reasons adduced for the tenacity of Russian in the public sphere include people's willingness to come across as tolerant (Poriņa 2009: 184–185). The recent report by the State Language Commission on the use of Latvian reveals that in the civil service sector it is satisfactory, in business it is inadequate, in the media it is highly unsatisfactory, and in education barely satisfactory (Mūrniece 2010).

With respect to language in use, emphasis is now placed on how language forms conform to a particular speech situation. The principle of appropriateness is replacing the act of passing judgement as to the correctness or incorrectness of a certain form or usage. Problems do, however, arise, and falling standards are a matter of routine concern. Reasons for this state of affairs may be the blurring of boundaries between spoken and written forms of language and, to a certain extent, between genres as well as ignorance and lack of understanding of a correspondence between linguistic means and a speech situation. Indeed, this may even extend to outright unwillingness to follow and respect rules of linguistic behaviour. That is why the language problem is of a crucial concern in Latvia.

DATA AND METHOD

The present study draws on the assumption that social roles and identities of language users are reflected in their linguistic performance. Language functions as a mirror of culture; it also registers and reflects all developments in a particular society. Language contacts, especially direct permanent contacts, bring about changes felt on different linguistic levels.

This paper presents a study of spoken Latvian on the basis of interview material to demonstrate the influence of Russian. The material comes from the recorded

interviews on the radio and TV broadcasts as well as interviews published in the weeklies “TV Izklaide” (“TV Entertainment”), “Kultūras Diena” (“Culture Day”, a supplement to the daily “Diena”) and “Rīgas Viļņi” (“The Waves of Riga”, a weekly radio and TV programme magazine) between 2007 and 2009. Some observations concerning mobile telephone conversations overheard in public places have also been added.

The results of the analysis show that the most readily borrowed part of speech is nouns (as these denote objects). They range from terms and professionalisms to popular slang words and have been adapted to the rules of Latvian grammar acquiring the characteristic endings (*ģedovščina*, *stroibats*, *kapots*, *graņonka*, *prikols*, *fīška*, *ļimons*, *zubrila*, *lunis*, etc.). The present paper mostly focuses on cases when Russian exerts influence upon the usage of verbs, adverbs, prepositions, pronouns, and interjections; the paper also discusses the influence seen in some idioms, in the use of discourse markers, and it looks at word order and the formation of negative and interrogative sentences.

In most cases the borrowed linguistic forms (as they appear in Latvian texts) are loan translations. They are used in headlines of newspapers and magazines, apparently to attract the reader's eye, though quite often the reader might wonder if a particular form has been specially chosen to fulfil some stylistic purpose. One can come across single Russian words, phrases and even whole sentences in the transliterated form, e.g. *kogda konci ne otdani; denģi ne vozvraščajut; kto zdes boľnoi? Fašizm ne proidjot; Vasjka slušajet, da jest*. Even if such words are highlighted, or a translation is provided as an attempt to justify their presence, they *smudge* the language.

INFLUENCE OF RUSSIAN ON LATVIAN PARTS OF SPEECH

The data analysis reveals that a class of words that has crept almost imperceptibly into Latvian vocabulary and has become indispensable for many language users as a result of direct language contacts is the verb. I will start with analyzing the situation regarding *direct verbs*.

DIRECT VERBS

In the first two examples the same verb takes two different prefixes which indicates the development of the paradigm:

- (1) *Filma **uzpērķ** ar pamatīgo profesionālismu.* (подкупает)
(The film fascinates with its real professionalism.)

In Latvian there are other ways to express the same idea, e.g. *Filma piesaista...* (lit. “The film attracts...”). The verb “pirkt” (to buy) with the prefix *uz-* is most often used in the meanings of “to buy up” and “to bribe”. It is apparent that neither of them fit the given context.

- (2) *Mani ļoti **nopirka** viņa attieksme pret šo darbu.* (купило)
(His attitude towards the job appealed to me very much.)

The prefix *no-* indicate the perfective aspect which corresponds to the situation; however the Latvian form requires either *Man ļoti **patik**...* (lit. “I like ... very much”) or *Es **augstu novērtēju**...* (lit. “I appreciate... a lot”).

- (3) *Man nekad nav šķitis, ka es būtu kaut kādā veidā **apdalīta**.* (обделена)
(I’ve never felt like having been deprived of something.)

In this case the Russian morphemes have been transferred to Latvian directly. In Russian there are several verbs with the prefix *об-*, the Latvian equivalents of which have the prefix *ap-*, e.g. “обвинить” (*apvainot*; to offend), “обиграть” (*apspēlēt*; to outplay), etc. This to a certain extent explains the form of a particular loanword. Besides, its pronunciation is similar to the original word due to energy assimilation ([“abdali:ta]).

- (4) *Politiskajā žargonā runājot, kurš nav “**uzmetis**” vēlētajū?* (кинуть)
(Using political slang, who hasn’t cheated the electorate?)
- (5) *Vienkāršs slāgeris, kuram tu zini pat nobeigumu, mani **besī** ānā.* (бесит)
(A simple popular song whose final tunes are known to everybody, just enrages me.)
- (6) *Naktī absolūta tumsa, vai nu tu **zažmurīl glaza** vai turi atvērtas.* (зажмурил глаза)
(At night there’s absolute darkness, it doesn’t matter if you keep your eyes shut or open.)

Example (5) illustrates a case of using a Russian verb adapted to the Latvian grammar requirements. Like most verbal borrowings, it belongs to the second conjugation. Examples (4) and (5) represent relatively recent loans. Sentence (6) shows the speaker’s pressing need for a Russian turn of phrase: the journalist has not changed a word the interviewee was saying.

REFLEXIVE VERBS

The corpus analysis indicates that number of *reflexive verbs* borrowed from Russian is quite considerable. The verb forms in Latvian, as can be seen from examples (7)-

(12) below retain the same prefixes as in Russian. The corresponding construction in Latvian often requires the passive voice, e.g. the sentence (1) should read *Plānotie pasākumi tiks atlikti*.

- (7) *Plānotie pasākumi **atliksies** uz nenoteiktu laiku.* (отложатся)

(The planned events will be postponed indefinitely.)

In the following two examples the calques do not fit the context since the interviewee is talking about serious matters:

- (8) *Viņu stils diezgan jocīgi **ierakstās** šī konkursa formātā.* (вписывается)

(Their style fits the format of this competition rather oddly.)

- (9) *Busuļa dziesma Eirovīzijā **nenolasīsies**.* (не прочтётся)

(Busulis' song won't be understood in Eurovision.)

An appropriate form in example (8) is either ... *stils... izskatās* or ... *stils ne īpaši atbilst... formātam*, whereas in (9) – ... *dziesmu... nesapratīs*.

- (10) *Pietiek ar vienu vārdu, lai **panestos** vesela tēma.* (чтобы понеслась)

(One word is enough to start a whole story.)

Example (10) illustrates a case when a Latvian speaker has borrowed the Russian slang expression (the literal meaning of the verb is *to carry*). The verb form to be used in Latvian is *aizsāktos*.

- (11) *Viņš atkal **besījās** par muļķīgajiem solījumiem.* (бесился)

(Again he was beyond himself with rage about the silly promises.)

- (12) *Domburs iekarsa – no Latvijas vajag “**nafīgizēties**” visiem, kuriem te negribas neko darīt, bet tikai vaidēt.*

(Domburs flared up – all those who don't want to do anything but moan should leave Latvia.)

Example (11) shows that, in addition to the direct form *besīt* discussed above, the reflexive form of the same Russian verb is also used. Example (12) illustrates how a loanword representing one part of speech (here: the interjection *nafīg*) is used to create another (here: the corresponding verb); this form belongs to recent occasionalisms.

As is evident from the material considered above, the majority of borrowings used instead of appropriate Latvian verbs are translation loans. Some of them clearly belong to slang expressions, and the speakers are aware of the register, whereas verbs in examples (7) and (8) are used without apparent awareness of unwelcome foreign patterns being copied.

PRONOUNS

It is generally maintained that “open” classes of words like nouns, verbs and adjectives are more readily borrowed than “closed” classes such as pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions and prepositions (Bynon 1977: 231). Though the inventory of Latvian pronouns has not changed, their usage at times reproduces characteristic Russian structures. Here are a few examples of pronouns that precisely correspond to Russian usage:

- (13) *Tā ir filma par zvēriņiem, **ja kas**.* (если что)

(That's just a film about animals.)

The elliptic clause **ja kas** rejects a possible criticism about the film.

- (14) *Jums – **kas?** Humora izjūtas nav?* (что)

(You – what? Don't you have any sense of humour?)

- (15) ... – ***Tu ko?!** Daudz sliktāk!* (ты что)

(... Don't you say so! Much worse!)

Examples (14) and (15) with exclamation marks demonstrate how the Russian way of expressing unpleasant surprise is mimicked. One of the reasons that prompts this type of phrasing is, perhaps, brevity.

In example (16) (an anecdote) both the question and the answer in the form of elliptic structures echo the Russian original:

- (16) *Es dzirdēju, ka Austrālijā esot sakrustojuši ķenguru un koalū!*

– *Patiešām? **Un kā?*** (и как)

– ***Nu, neko...** Nabaga zvēriņš nositās, jo aizmiga lēciena laikā.* (ну ничего)

(– I have heard that in Australia they interbred a kangaroo with koala!

– Really? What happened?

– Not much. The poor animal got killed 'cos he fell asleep while jumping.)

Actually, the sentences with pronountranslation loans reveal the integrity of linguistic elements within the syntactic structure and demonstrates how Russian constructions are transferred to Latvian. Thus the influence of Russian reaches far beyond a particular word class.

INTERJECTIONS

In addition to words that stand for things, actions or qualities, words that express attitudes and feelings are also borrowed. There is an assumption that Russian is a perfect

language for expressing negative emotions like anger, dissatisfaction, etc. The corresponding word list in Russian is much longer and more varied than that in Latvian, which mostly consists of animal names (Kursīte 2008).

Our corpus of data is characterized by its colloquial style and therefore contains interjections. The inventory of traditional loan interjections provided in (examples (17)-(18)) has been added a few more. *Nafig* (example (19)) has even served as the basis for a new derivative (see example (12) above). Interjections are pronounced according to the Russian norms including the position of word stress; in writing they are transliterated. Their functions in Latvian are the same as in Russian: *davai* is used for encouragement, *ā, vot* – for drawing attention to something, *nafig* expresses categorical denial that could be mixed with anger or contempt. *Blin* (example (20)) is a well-known euphemism for an expletive which unfortunately sometimes replaces a great number of other words suggesting the speakers' impoverished vocabulary. Some people replace it with the Latvian word *blāviens* (yell) that retains its connection with the original because of the initial consonant cluster.

- (17) *Nu, **davai**, artist, pārsteidz un izklaidē, iepriecini un relaksē!* (давай)
(Come on, artist! Surprise and entertain us!)
- (18) *Tas domāts, lai bailēs iekrampētos krēslā – **ā, vot**, kā šis pagriezīsies, tā... spok!* (а, вот)
(It's meant to make you freeze with fear. Ah, look, he's turning round – a ghost!)
- (19) ***Nafig**, es to darīšu!* (нафиг)
(Damn it! I won't do it.)
- (20) *Nu, **blin**! Mūsējie atkal zaudēja!* (блин)
(Damn! Our team lost again!)

A slang expression containing Russian words can be interpreted as a wish to appeal to those who can share the meaning of a particular word or expression. Apparently, for a certain target audience such a form has some significance. However, a deliberate use of slang words without stylistic considerations, especially in print, leads to a disuse of synonyms. There are contexts in which loanwords of the type are absolutely out of place.

ADVERBS AND PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions and some adverbs with similar functions borrowed from Russian, along with a few other linguistic features, clearly indicate that interference has reached the level of syntax. In Standard Latvian either different case forms of a declinable word classes or an altogether different structure should be used. Thus in example (21) the Latvian form requires the preposition *ar* (... **ar šādu nosaukumu**):

- (21) *Ko jūs zināt **zem** šāda nosaukuma?* (поА)
(What do you know with a name like this?)

In (22) the adverb is unnecessary since the verb is followed by indirect object (*advokātam*):

- (22) *Es atvainojos advokāta **priekšā**.* (перед)
(I apologize to the lawyer.)
(23) ***Aiz** manis visi mani darbi.* (за)
(My achievements speak for themselves.)

In (23) the whole construction needs to be modified: *Par mani liecina mani darbi.*

- (24) *Ar šodienu mēs iesaistāties tādā kā sacensībā.*
(Starting with today we participate in a kind of competition.)

In (24) instead of *ar* the proposition *no* should be used: *No odienas...*

CONJUNCTIONS

A commonly used Russian conjunction in Latvian that is often heard in colloquial speech and also seen in print is **a** (*but*) (see examples (25)-(27)). Sometimes it is used deliberately as if claiming an effect of irony or humour, however, the same effect can be achieved with linguistic means of Latvian:

- (25) *Klausies, **a** ko es šeit vispār daru?* (а)
(Listen, (but) what am I doing here out of all places?)
(26) *Vienkārši žēl skatīties tādu draņķi. **A** tauta rēc.* (а)
(It's miserable to watch rubbish like that. But the public roars with laughter.)

The speaker's choice of the Russian conjunction which in this context may be associated with a wish to sound ironical concerning the public's reaction to some poor film is explained by colloquialisms such as *draņķis* (junk, rubbish) and *rēkt* (to roar).

- (27) – *Tīci, ka bērņus atnes stārķis? – Nē. – **A** ka kāpostos viņus atrod? – Protams, nē. – **A** raganas mēdz būt? – Nē. Šie jautājumi ir vienkārši stulbi.* (а)
(Do you believe that children are brought by the stork? – No. – (But) that they're

found in cabbages? – Of course, not. – What do you think – do witches really exist? – No. These questions are just stupid.)

The journalist is obviously trying to create an informal, humorous atmosphere by exploiting the way children are asked string questions. The reiteration of the borrowed conjunction appears ineffective: the interviewee finds the questions idiotic.

(28) *Par cik manas intereses bija saistītas ar fotogrāfiju, izvēlējos šo kursu.* (поскольку)

(Since my interests were related to photography I chose this course.)

The Latvian sentence in (28) requires the complex conjunction *tā kā*: *Tā kā manas intereses...*

(29) *Joprojām nevaru saprast, vai šī ir jocīga komēdija vai kā?* (или как)

(I still can't make up my mind whether it's a really funny comedy.)

The conjunctions in (28) and (29) are frequently used loan translations; Latvian speakers seem not to be aware of the impact of Russian.

PARTICLES

Russian particles that have become indispensable for some people speaking Latvian are mostly used to emphasize a detail in a particular stretch of speech. Their frequency in Latvian can be also explained by the fact that they have become a characteristic feature of journalese. The particle that at present rates highest of all is *da* (examples (30)-(32)); it can be combined with different word classes.

(30) *Visur tas ir, da jebkur.* (да)

(It's everywhere, well, anywhere.)

(31) *Un sāk visi visriņķī mirt kā mušas... Da apnika man rakstīt par šo kinomēslu...* (да)

(They all start dropping like flies... Well, I got tired of writing about that rubbish film.)

(32) *Līdzīgu efektu sagādātu da jebkas, tiklīdz kadrā iznirst diva.* (да)

(A similar effect would be achieved by anything as soon as the diva appears.)

(33) *Arī lielā punktu starpība... – ir pārāk jau uzkrītoša.* (слишком уж)

(The big difference in the score is all too striking.)

The words in the last example are directly transferred following the exact word order of the source language (Russian).

WORD ORDER

Although word order in both Latvian and Russian is relatively free, in Latvian the SVO and SOV patterns are more common. Examples (34) and (35) follow the Russian VSO pattern, whereas (36) shows the OSV type.

- (34) *Nu, **nepārstāvu es** šajā rakstiņā reklāmu.* (VSO)
(Well, I don't advertise anything in this brief article.)
- (35) *Nu, **nebija, nebija man** panika, nekritu depresijā...* (VSO)
(Believe me, I wasn't in a panic, I wasn't becoming depressed...)
- (36) – *To šoseju tu **vēlies** ar divām joslām vai ar četrām?* (OSV)
(Would you like to have that motorway with two or four lanes?)

In line with the speaker's intention to emphasize a particular detail, an inverted word order pattern is, of course, acceptable. Example (35) illustrates the speaker's attempt to mitigate his interlocutor's wish to dramatize the situation. The effect is intensified by repeating the verb.

- (37) *Padejo **dēļ** manis.* (ДЛЯ)
(Dance for me.)

In Latvian *dēļ* is a postposition: *Padejo manis **dēļ***. The sentence could also read: *Padejo **man par prieku*** (to give me pleasure).

NEGATIVE SENTENCES

The examples of negative sentences illustrate a precise copying of the Russian way of expression. Although awkward grammatically – and, indeed, classed as an error – this form does allow the listener to understand what is meant. Erroneous negation forms are shown in examples (38) and (39). In Latvian negation is expressed by prefixing *ne-* to the verb: *Tas **nebiju es**...* (example (38)).

- (38) *Tas **biju ne es**, kur to apgalvoja.* (БЫЛ НЕ Я)
(It was not me who said it.)
- (39) *Sapratu, ka **esmu iegājis ne savā** dzīvoklī.* (ВОШЁЛ НЕ В СВОЮ)
(I understood I had entered somebody else's flat.)

It is clear from the context that no negation is needed at all. The speaker does not

mean he did not enter the flat (*neesmu iegājis*) but that the flat he entered was not his own (...*esmu iegājis svešā dzīvoklī*.)

Improper usage of the pronoun *nekas* (nothing) is illustrated in (40)-(41):

- (40) *Ceru, es **nekam** netraucēju.* (никому)
(I hope I'm not disturbing anyone.)
- (41) *Devītā vieta skaitītos **tā neko**.* (так ничего)
(The ninth place would be quite OK.)

The pronoun *nekas* stands for inanimate object, whereas the form *neviens* is required for people (...*es nevienam netraucēju*.). Although *tā neko* (accusative) rhymes with the Russian phrase, the correct form in Latvian is nominative (*tā nekas*).

There are also cases when an exact translation from Russian may obscure the meaning, as in (42) and (43):

- (42) *Labi, ka jau pašā sākumā tiekam vaļā no galīgi **nekādās** Lolas.* (никакой)
(Good to get rid of the nonentity Lola right at the start.)
- (43) *Kurš nopietns kinomaniaks ies skatīties filmu ar tik stulbi **nekādīgu** nosaukumu!*
(никаким)
(What self-respecting film buff would go to see a film with such a non-descript title!)

Nekāds as a pronoun does not take the definite ending, although like an adjective it can modify the following noun, e.g. *tā nav **nekāda** rotaļa* (it's not a game). Example (43) comprises an adjectival form derived from *nekāds* by adding a traditional suffix. Apparently the person concerned wishes to draw attention to his negative opinion.

INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES

Interrogative sentences represented by *wh*-questions and *yes-no* questions demonstrate elliptic constructions so characteristic of Russian. Many of them (which in Latvian should have a form of "to be", e.g. *viņš **ir** mājās*; "he is at home"), in Russian, on the contrary, do not need it (e.g. *он дома*). *Wh*-questions are exemplified in (44) and (45):

- (44) *Pie durvīm zvana. Šis prasa: – **Kas tur?***
(There's a ring at the door. He's asking: Who's there?)
- (45) – *Draugs, **kas ar tevi?** Palīdzēšu tev tikt līdz mājām. – **Es tikko no mājām.***

(What's the matter with you? I'll help you get home. – I'm just coming from home.)

The corresponding Latvian forms should be *Kas tur ir?* (44) and ... *kas ir ar tevi?/kas tev noticis?* Also the reply lacks a verb: *Es tikko nāku no mājām* (45).

In yes-no questions (examples (46) and (47)) the particle *vai* that introduces this type of question in Latvian has been omitted:

- (46) *Šonedēļ pieveicu testu. – Bija grūti jautājumi?*

(This week I passed the test. – Were you asked difficult questions?)

- (47) – *Kad atgriezīsies komunisti, atkal būs lēta desa. – Es kaut ko nesaprotu. Viņi to desu šurpu turpu nēsā?*

(When communists regain power we will again have cheap sausage. – I don't quite understand. Do they carry that sausage to and fro?)

PREFIXES

The influence of Russian can also be seen in derivational processes, and this especially concerns prefixed forms due to the fact that some prefixes in Latvian are identical with their Russian counterparts. However, it does not follow that in Latvian they function in the same way. The most common of these derivatives mimicking Russian usage (translation loans) are verbs.

In sentence (48) the verb in Latvian should take the prefix *no-* in the function of its perfective sense (*nodomāju*). The prefix *pa-* suggests diminished intensity of the verb meaning, e.g. *es (mazliet) padomāju par to* (I thought about it a little).

- (48) *Vectētiņ, es jau padomāju, ka spokojas. Ko tu te tik vēlu dari? (подумал)*

(Grandfather, I thought this place was haunted. What are you doing here so late?)

The verb in example (49) requires the present perfect or the simple past; there is no need for a prefix: ... *tu esi bijis/ bijil tev gadījās būt?* (Since there are no Perfect tenses in Russian a completed action is expressed with the help of a verb with a perfective prefix):

- (49) *Kādās vētras skartajās vietās tu pabiji? (побывал)*

(What places affected by the storm have you visited?)

In sentence (50) the reflexive verb in Latvian may take the prefix *pār-* to convey the sense that the action is being performed too intensively. The intensity of the action

can also be communicated with the help of an idiom, e.g. *publika plīsa no smiekliem* (the public split their sides laughing).

(50) *Publika pēc tam pati **apsmējās**.* (обхохоталась)

(The public then roared with laughter.)

(51) *Kāds mistisks ticējums noved pie **bezvainīgi** nomušītiem bērniņiem.* (безвинно)

(There is a mystical belief that causes killing of innocent children.)

Example (51) illustrates the adverb *bezvainīgi* with a Russian prefix. Though in Latvian there is a corresponding prefix *bez-*, this particular word in (51) requires the negative prefix *ne-*, i.e. *nevainīgi*.

IDIOMS

In Latvian colloquial speech one can observe a number of phraseological loans which include all types of idioms (Veisbergs 1999: 16). Extremely popular are calques like *uz doto momentu* – на данный момент, *nu, neko sev* – ничего себе, *kopš kuriem laikiem* – с каких пор, *izejot no pieredzes* – выходя из опыта, *pa tiešo* – по прямому), and many others. From the set of the borrowed idioms speakers appear to use those that have been on the list for years (examples (52) and (53)) as well as relatively recent loans (examples (54)-(57)).

(52) *Filma izrādījusies **ne pa zobam** vidējam skatītājam.* (не по зубам)

(The film proved to be too difficult for an average spectator.)

Another feature of Russian here is the way the journalist expresses negation:

(53) *Kad gali tomēr nav atdoti.* (концы не отданы)

(When the hopes are not given up.)

(54) *To varēsiet baudīt, ja esat krievu klasikas cienītājs un jums jau sāk braukt jumts.* (крыша поехала)

(You'll be able to enjoy it if you're a fan of Russian classics and you're going mad.)

(55) *Kāda mārrutka pēc vienā epizodē viņš klausās to muļķi?* (какого хрена)

(What the hell is he doing in that episode where he listens to that idiot?)

(56) *Pa lielam jau visam līdzī neizsekosi.* (по большому счёту)

(You can't follow everything so thoroughly.)

(57) *Ja skatāties **pa lielo**, par reformām nevar pat runāt.* (по крупному)

(In broader terms one cannot even speak of reforms.)

Sentences (56) and (57) illustrate a turn of phrase (in two different forms) that over the last few years has become a vital catch-phrase for almost everybody, from schoolchildren to politicians. It is heard on the street, in public transport, on the radio and TV interviews. The examples in question were taken from radio broadcasts.

DISCOURSE MARKERS

Any choice a speaker makes about how to construct an utterance can function as a cue about how it is meant to be interpreted. Spoken genres and their representation in a written form employ discourse markers such as conjunctions, interjections and comment phrases that signal textual relations and indicate the speaker's orientation and attitudes towards the speech situation. Russian loanwords in Latvian include particular lexical items that function as discourse markers. Examples (58) and (59) illustrate the old borrowings *vot* and *davai*. *Vot tā* at the end of the sentence in (58) makes the piece of information sound emphatic with a suggestion that the information is not welcome. Example (59) comes from a telephone conversation heard daily, and in a situation like this *davai* signals the end of the conversation. It may also be interpreted as just saying good-bye:

(58) *Tieši šodien priekšniekam vajag sapulci, **vot, tā**.* (вот)

(Today of all days the boss wants to call a meeting. You see?)

(59) *Nu tad sarunājuši. **Davai!*** (давай)

(Well, that's settled then. OK.)

In sentence (60) *koroče* fills a pause before the speaker comes forth with giving the exact time of the meeting. The lexical borrowing *tipa* / *tip*, so to speak, has run rife among young people. Sometimes it accounts for every other word, in which case it is difficult to interpret it as a discourse marker and which may be more readily seen as an indication of an individual speech habit. In sentence (61) the speaker uses *tipa* to concentrate on and introduce the information that follows:

(60) *Rīt braucam, **koroče**, tiekamies 9.00.* (короче)

(We're leaving tomorrow. So let's meet at 9.00.)

(61) *Viņa aizdomīgi paskatījās, **tipa** – vai tik es nešpikoju.* (типа)

(She looked at me suspiciously to see if I was not cribbing.)

Examples (62) and (63) demonstrate the speakers' need for a particular euphemism in order to formulate the appreciation and to show hesitation, respectively. Like *tipa*, *bļin* belongs to the lexis that makes the speakers' expression disagreeable.

(62) *Nu, tāds, **bļin**, krutais gabals!* (блин)

(Well, it's real cool!)

(63) *Vakar, **bļin**, iestaigāju ē **bļin** Plazā.* (блин)

(Yesterday, well, I er walked into well, Plaza.)

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the present analysis indicate that in the Latvian media, including printed media, one can often observe the presence of colloquial style which occasionally borders on slang. It involves an extensive use of borrowings, mostly from Russian and English. Observations indicate that carelessly formed constructions and a considerable amount of vague language can be seen and heard daily. The impression is that those who hold or participate in interviews are either eager to demonstrate their knowledge of Russian or, as it happens, they say or write down the very first word that comes to mind.

The interlocutors quite often neglect the rule of linguistic appropriateness. It is obvious that Russian has not ceased to affect Latvian vocabulary via borrowing single words, expressions and catch-phrases. Among different word classes, noun loans predominate. However, as the present set of examples illustrates, borrowings cover almost all word classes. The majority of them are semantic loans. Speakers who are not familiar with this particular vocabulary feel excluded. Regrettably, Russian also affects the level of syntax as can be seen in word order patterns and the use of elliptic sentence types characteristic of Russian. No doubt, the above mentioned factors may damage the impression of language integrity and, as a result, obscure the process of communication. Writing about English as his native language, the well-known journalist J. Humphrys says that language needs to be versatile and nuanced, not rudimentary and limited. When euphemism becomes the norm, real dialogue becomes impossible. He quotes George Orwell saying that slovenly language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts (Humphrys 2004: 333-334). While borrowing as a source of vocabulary enrichment doubtless has its positive sides, careless playing with foreign linguistic elements, especially in print, affects the quality of language for the worse.

Maija Brēde

NEREIKALINGI SKOLINIAI KALBOJE, ARBA VIENA DIENA LATVIŲ ŠNEKAMOSIOS KALBOS APLINKOJE

Santrauka

Tam tikrų kalbinių formų paplitimas ir populiarumas įvairių kalbos vartotojų socialinių grupių skirtinguose kalbos registruose liudija ne tik apie kalbinės bendruomenės įpročius, bet ir apie gyvenimo ritmo bei pažūrų pokyčius. Manoma, kad šiuo metu Latvijoje pamažu įsigali anglų kalba. Vis dėlto rusų kalbos kaip nuolatinės tiesioginio bendravimo kalbos įtaka tiek šnekamajai, tiek rašomajai latvių kalbai tebėra labai didelė.

Straipsnyje nagrinėjami radijo ir televizijos laidų įrašai, populiariuose dienraščiuose paskelbti interviu. Analizuojami pavyzdžiai (kalbos klaidos) parodo rusų kalbos įtaką.

Taigi rusų kalba, kurią dauguma latvių girdi ir neretai kasdien vartoja, stipriai veikia latvių kalbos leksiką: atskirus žodžius, frazes, lengvai įsimenamus posakius. Dažnai pasiskolintos kalbinės formos yra kalkės. Iš tiriamos medžiagos matyti, kad daugiausia skolinamasi daiktavardžių, bet galima rasti pavyzdžių iš beveik visų kalbos dalių. Deja, rusų kalba veikia ir gramatines konstrukcijas – itin žodžių tvarką ir eliptinę sakinių vartoseną. Be abejo, šie veiksniai trukdo sėkmingai bendrauti, nes iš kitos kalbos skolintos konstrukcijos ne visų gerai suprantamos.

REFERENCES

- Aitchison, J. 1998. *Language Change: Progress or Decay?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baldunčiks, J. 1989. *Anglicismi latviešu valodā*. Rīga: Zinātne.
- Bielsa, E. 2005. Globalisation and Translation: a Theoretical Approach. *Language and Intercultural Communication* 5 (2): 131–144.
- Brēde, M. 2000. One Aspect of Barbarisms in Latvian Discourse. *Contrastive and Applied Linguistics* 6 (7-13). Rīga.
- Brēde, M. 2005. Tulkojuma caurspīdīgums. *Latviešu valoda – robežu paplašināšana*. Valsts valodas komisijas raksti 1 (19-30). Rīga: Valsts valodas komisija.
- Brēde, M. 2006. Trojas zirdziņi latviešu runā un rakstos. *Valodas prakse: vērojumi un ieteikumi* (70-83). Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds.
- Brēde, M. 2008. Aizguvumi mūsdienu latviešu valodā izkļaudes materiālos. *Vārds un tā pētišanas aspekti* 12 (1): 209-223.
- Bušs, O. 2005. Pēc 25 gadiem jeb Barbarismi-2005. *Valodas prakse: vērojumi un ieteikumi* (39-46). Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds.
- Bušs, O., Ernstsone, V. 2006. *Latviešu valodas slenga vārdnīca*. Norden AB.
- Bynon, T. 1977. *Historical Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. 1997. *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. 1999. *The Penguin Dictionary of Language*. Penguin Books.
- Crystal, D. 2002. *The English Language*. Penguin Books.
- Crystal, D. 2004. *The Language Revolution*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Crystal, D. 2008. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. Blackwell.
- Humphrys, J. 2005. *Lost for Words*. Hodder.
- Kursīte, J. 2008. Par Lamāšanas un lamstīšanas. *Diena* 7.02. (16-17).
- Kušķis, J. 1993. Par dažu skaņu un skaņu savienojumu izrunu. *Latviešu valodas kultūras jautājumi* 27 (137- 42). Rīga: Avots.
- Mc Arthur, T. (ed.) 1996. *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Munro, M. 2007. *Chambers pardon my english!* Chambers.
- Mūrniece, I. 2010. Ne nauda izšķirs valodas likteni. *Lavijas Avīze* 20.03. (5)
- Poriņa, V. 2009. *Valsts valoda daudzvalodīgajā sabiedrībā: individuālais un sociālais bilingvisms Latvijā*. LU Latviešu valodas institūts.
- Rūķe-Draviņa, V. 1977. *The Standardization Process in Latvian, XVI Century to the Present*. Stockholm:

Almqvist & Wiksell International.

Thomason, S.G. 2001. *Language Contact*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Veisbergs, A. 1999. *Idioms in Latvian*. Rīga: University of Latvia.

Veisbergs, A. 2006. East Wind, West Wind in Translation (What the English Tsunami has Brought to Latvian). *Pragmatic Aspects of Translation*. (148–168). Rīga: SIA JUMI.

Veisbergs, A. 2008. Modern Linguistic Asymmetries – the Impact on Latvian. *English – the Lazy Way Out? Maybe... But is it Worth it?* (3-34). Rīga: SIA JUMI.

Veisbergs, A., Brēde, M., Ločmele, G., Šalme, A., and Žīgure, V. 2009. Jaundarinājumi latviešu valodā 21.gadsimtā. *Letonikas trešā kongresa zinātniskie raksti*. (211-223). Rīga: Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmija.