

Title: Restrictions in Morphological Integration of Foreign Elements in Russian: A Comparative Analysis of Russian Speakers in Lithuania and Estonia

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Since the fall of the Soviet Union, isolated Russian communities within the Baltic States have steadily transitioned from a state of monolingualism to various degrees of bilingualism. Such a change has affected many structural aspects of Russian spoken in the Baltics. This paper analyzes the morphological integration of foreign elements into Russian spoken in Estonia and Lithuania. In these areas morphological assimilation has not occurred in a uniform manner. Specifically, Lithuanian lexical items are integrated to a much higher degree than Estonian words. Using previously conducted studies (Verschik 2004, 2005, Avina 2006) as well as independent data collected from newspapers, blogs and radio programs, this paper identifies underlying phonological and morphological restrictions which affect morphological integration in Russian speaking communities in Estonia and Lithuania. An example of non-assimilation is presented by Verschik (2004): “*pozhalujsta tvorog s maasika*”. Here, the Estonian noun is not integrated into the Russian declension pattern. Conversely, examples given by Avina (2006) show hybridization of Lithuanian root morphemes with Russian derivation morphemes: “*Nam ragan-ka v dom ne nuzhna*.” I argue that the crucial factor in integration is the genetic difference between L1 and L2. Lithuanian is closely related to Russian as an Indo-European language while Estonian belongs to the Finno-Ugric family.

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