

Title: Великий и могучий "олбанский" язык: The Russian Internet and the Russian Language
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The talk examines the language specifics and social implications of the prevalent Russian internet slang, the "Olbanian" language of the so-called "падонкафф." Disregarding the fundamental principles of Russian orthography, spelling, and even morphology, the Olbanian language users have created an idiom that seemingly allows a complete freedom of writing. Yet, the spelling of the word подонков itself as well as the rendition of the popular Russian children rhyme in (1) suggest that the slang's basic organizational principle is "Write as you speak:"

(1) ЩИТАЛАЧГА

Рас, Дфа, Три, Читыри, Пяц
Вышил Зайчег пагуляц.
Фтрук Ахотнег выбигаид -
Пряма ф Зайчега стриляид

Indeed, the slang manipulates the morphophonemic principle applied in Russian orthography and renders in writing the processes of vowel reduction and voicing neutralization, e.g., в конце-концов becomes фканце-канцоф. Other rules discussed in the first part of the talk include: i) spelling of <ѐ> after palatalized consonants as <ьо> and as <о> after the phonetically soft ч, e.g., тёплый > тьоплый, ещё > исчо; ii) spelling of <и> after phonetically hard ш, ц, ж as <ы>, and iii) simplification of consonant clusters, e.g., <-ться> at the end of a verb is rendered as <-цо>, <-ца>, <-ццо>, or <-ця>.

The second half of the talk addresses the parameters and social implications of Olbanian. Here I consider two important tendencies. First, the publication in 2005 of the Russian version of John Lurie's cartoon changed the Internet status of the падонкафф. In a matter of weeks what started as negligible counter-culture groups has turned into a mainstream Internet movement. In consequence, the subculture lost its ideological edge, but its slang gained enormous popularity. The second tendency concerns the successful shift of Olbanian from the virtual into the real world. I give examples of use of Olbanian phrases and spelling rules in mainstream Russian mass media and discuss their implication for the standard language and culture.