

## RUSSIAN-ESTONIAN CODE-SWITCHING IN THE UNIVERSITY<sup>1</sup>

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*This study explores the experiences of Russian-speaking students studying at a university with Estonian as the language of instruction. In a bilingual classroom setting, the teacher and her students communicate with each other in intricate and highly routinised sequences of interaction. The teacher is a proficient speaker of Estonian, while the majority of students are not very fluent in that language. During the autumn semester, they were enrolled in an Introduction to Linguistics course, which provides an introductory overview of traditional and contemporary fields of the study of linguistics, points of contact with other disciplines and possibilities for the application of the results of linguistic research. In general, the teacher and her students used both languages outside the university classroom as well as during lectures. It is clear that there is a very real potential for code-switching to occur as the teacher and her students are aware of the linguistic resources available to them despite the constraints.*

### INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses the issue of Estonian-Russian code-switching in the university classroom and the ways in which the alternate use of codes is related to the learning and teaching process. The study is based on in-class observations, together with field notes and recordings, and in-group interviews.

Analyzing the bilingual pedagogical practices in an academic sphere, the paper shows how oral Estonian-Russian code-switching can be used in the classroom to help students overcome communication problems. The first part of the paper looks into code-switching as teaching and learning strategy. The roles and functions of the Russian language as L1 and Estonian as L2 are explored in the second part of the paper.

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The main reason why learners' code-switching had not been exhaustively studied in the 1970s-1980s was the fact that learners were seldom allowed to code-switch freely, and "authentic" data are hard to get (Legenhausen 1991). During those years, the traditional and stereotypical view of code-switching was that it is a completely haphazard mixture of two languages (Legenhausen 1991). Traditionally, SLA has been interested in L2 acquisition in a more or less formal setting: the pronunciation of an L2, the grammar of the L2 etc. (Ellis, 2000; Gass & Selinker, 2001; de Bot, et al. 2005).

The 1990s saw a growing body of classroom-based research on the use of code-switching as a *contextualization cue* (Martin-Jones, 2000). This term was developed by Gumperz (1982) and refers to any choices of verbal or non-verbal

forms within a communicative encounter which interlocutors recognize as 'marked'; that is, choices which depart from an established or expected pattern of communication. In a comprehensive review of the research on code-switching in the classroom, Martin-Jones (2000) points out that the first significant breakthroughs were made in early 1980s when researchers began to work with audio-recordings of classroom interactions, analyses took a more linguistic turn, and studies began to focus on analysis of classroom discourse functions (Martin-Jones, 2000).

Simon (2001) raises the question whether the methodology used for analyzing social code-switching is adequate in the classroom context. Code-switching can be exploited as part of actual teaching methodology. When the teacher knows the language of the students, the classroom itself is a setting that potentially elicits code-switching. Code-switching is inevitable in the classroom if the teacher and students share the same languages and should be regarded as a natural component of a bilingual's behaviour. Systematic investigations of learners' code-switching are undertaken by Arnfast and Jørgensen (2003), who show how code-switching may develop into a bilingual competence in learners within the first year of intensive training.

If this topic is touched upon at all in the SLA literature, it is either seen in terms of language transfer/interference or as a compensatory communicative strategy (Faerch & Kasper, 1983; Skiba, 1997; Odlin, 2000). The data discussed below suggests that this approach is too narrow. This paper attempts to widen the perspective and claims that learner's linguistic behavior can be described more adequately, if insights from research on language contacts and bilingual interaction are taken into consideration (Grosjean, 1982; Appel & Muysken, 1992; Auer, 1995 & 1998; Baker, 1995 & 2006).

There are different reasons why sociolinguists have not been interested in foreign language education (see Rampton, 1999). Analyzing the use of German among adolescents in a multilingual school in inner-city London, Rampton (1999) concentrates on the use of the target, foreign language in informal talk. His research team discovered the extent to which adolescents used German outside their German classes during breaks and in English, math or humanities lessons. Apart from a small number of studies (Li, Wei, 1993; Khan & Kabir, 1999; Arthur, 2003) complementary schools<sup>2</sup> remain relatively unexamined for the interaction, learning and identity formation processes which are probably at the heart of sustaining community languages and developing identities through socialization practices.

Bilingual teachers use two languages to teach the academic content. Within the context of lessons, they switch between the languages in at least three ways: (a) spontaneously, (b) for direct translation, or (c) intentionally. Teachers may decide on the spot when L1 should be used and when a switching to L2 is appropriate in order to enable comprehension and meaningful involvement of students (Cook, 2001). More often, however, teachers are unaware of the fact that they are switching; i.e., switches are made unconsciously (Tikunoff, 1985; Ovando & Collier, 1985; Mattson & Burenhult, 1999). An exception to unconscious code switching or translation is the New Concurrent Approach

(NCA) (Jacobson, 1981) which focuses on purposeful and systematic alternation of languages by bilingual teachers within the context of teaching a lesson. Both spontaneous and purposeful code switching or language alternation as studied by Tikunoff (1985) and Valdés-Fallis (1978), or as proposed by Jacobson (1981), focuses on the bilingual teachers' use of language during classroom lessons.

Rodolpho Jacobson (1981) has proposed and tested a model which incorporates the use of code-switching in the teaching of content courses in bilingual courses. There are pros and cons to the application of the concurrent approach that is using two or more languages in the same context. The NCA advocated here resulted from a desire to bring together the child's two languages in a way that would further the child's language development and, at the same time, lead to satisfactory school performance. In Jacobson's research, the following issues are addressed: (1) the extent to which the child's native language must be developed for success in learning a second language; (2) the extent to which the home language should be used in school; (3) the extent to which first language maintenance in the primary grades would not interfere with the transition to English in postprimary education; (4) the extent to which the use of both languages would lead to an understanding of the bilingual functioning of some sectors of our society; and (5) the extent to which school subjects could be learned through two languages. These issues are discussed in terms of the curriculum, the social situation of the classroom, the content lesson, and various aspects of staff development and teacher training.

## **THE STUDY & DATA**

The complex sociolinguistic situation in Estonia, especially in Tallinn, cannot be considered here at length. Since 1991, a solid body of literature on the language situation in Estonia has emerged (see Kolstoe, 1995; Rannut, 1995 & 2004; Smith, 1998; Verschik, 2005). Previous research on Russian-Estonian code-switching has been carried out within the paradigm of contact linguistics and the research data come from a variety of situations, none of which is a formal classroom setting (Zabrodskaia, 2005; Verschik, 2004 & 2007).

The particular domain chosen for investigation here relates to the university: Russian-speaking students learning academic subjects in Estonian. The class met once a week. As the class was intended for the Russian-speaking students, whose proficiency in Estonian is very low, additional seminars after the lectures were also held.

### ***Research Questions***

With regard to Auer's (1990) statement of impossibility to compile a comprehensive inventory of the functions of code-switching, Martin-Jones (2000, p. 3) suggests that the aim of studies in this area should provide detailed accounts of the specific interactional practices that have evolved in particular classroom settings in particular cultural and historical contexts.

Considering the above-mentioned points, the following issues will be addressed through the analysis of data:

1. What relationship is there between the language used as the language of instruction and its use as a communicative tool outside university? How is the Estonian language used by Russian-speaking students during a university lecture that is held in Estonian, and outside the Estonian-content classes, during the break, in the library, in the cafeteria, so on?
2. Can university classroom code-switching be compared to code-switching in everyday communication? What functions does it have?

### ***Participants***

When the data was collected, the participants were first-year, first semester students. As it was stated above, the language of instruction at the university is Estonian. The students study Russian philology and Russian as a foreign language. That is why some subjects in their curricula are taught in Russian. As I was teaching *Introduction to Linguistics* in Estonian to Russian-speaking first year students of Tallinn University, I had a number of advantages in my fieldwork. As a teacher, I could record the lectures and seminars in their entirety, and as an observer, I also had an access to casual speech behaviour of the students. There were 40 students at the beginning of the semester and 35 at the end. All of them had studied Estonian about eleven or twelve years at Russian-medium schools, their average age at the beginning of their university studies being between 19 and 20. To ensure the anonymity of the informants, their personalities are coded. Thus, the abbreviation 1987N/F/T/RR/1 shows that we deal with a female student (F) who was born in 1987 in Narva (N), and currently lives in Tallinn (T), both her mother tongue (R) and home language (R) is Russian. The last digit is used if there are two or more informants with same background data.

Simon (2001, p. 316) emphasizes that the sociocultural distance between the foreign language and the native language may vary considerably that affects the participants relationship to the linguistic codes potentially available to use. For example, she uses the case of Thai students learning French. For them, this distance is much greater than for French students learning English.

Who is a speaker of Estonian as L2? What characteristics does the study's participant have? Those questions are relevant in the light of what Franceschini (1998) presents as a portrait of a "code-switch speaker". Compared to the picture suggested by Franceschini (1998), the differences between immigrant and traditional minority context in Western Europe on the one hand and Estonia's post-occupation context on the other become obvious. Franceschini (1998, p. 57) bases her discussion on the body of literature on code-switching and concludes that there exist more or less prototypical cases. In prototypical cases, such speakers have the following sociolinguistic features: young age, being a member of an ethnic minority, belonging to a low social class, having strong "ethnic" group identity, and multilingual background. With regard to Russian-speaking students, only one of these characteristics is valid, namely, age (see Verschik 2004). Russian-speakers in the post-Soviet Estonia cannot be treated as minorities. Russian is one of the "migrant" languages spoken in Estonia and it has intensive contacts with Estonian, the majority language.<sup>3</sup> Younger Russian-

speakers have a more sovereign command of the Estonian language than their parents and use their Russian as a strategy to communicate with their parents but are essentially moving towards primary use of Estonian as they become socialized into the larger society.

### ***Purposes of Code-Switching During Lectures***

Cook (2001) claims that SLA research does not provide any reason for avoiding L1 in the classroom. Otherwise, the systematical use of it can be:

1. a way into the meaning of the second language;
2. a short cut in explaining tasks;
3. a way of explaining grammar;
4. a way of demonstrating the classroom is a real L2 situation, not a fake monolingual situation.

Here, it must be emphasized that this study does not deal with the teaching of Estonian as L2 per se. The course *Introduction to Linguistics* was taught through a second language, Estonian. Thus, Russian-speaking students should have gained language competence in a particular academic domain and not in social communication (see *Content and Language Integrated Learning* Met, 1998; Davison & Williams, 2001).

The main goal of using code-switching is to enable the teacher to conduct the course in the target language even if the L2 proficiency of students is low. Code-switching addresses a perpetual problem: the tension between the desire of the teacher to use the Estonian language exclusively and the need of the Russian-speaking students to understand as much as possible of what is being taught. The basic principle of using code-switching in teaching is that the teacher speaks Estonian and code-switches into Russian in order to illustrate those parts which remain unclear.

The teacher is allowed to switch languages at certain key points. Let us consider the excerpt 1 of the NCA which allows systematic code-switching under the teacher's control. Hereafter the Estonian part of the transcription is in *italics* typeface and Russian part is given in *italics*.

### ***Excerpt 1***

Teacher: *Milliste eesti keele häälikute hääldamine valmistab raskusi vene keele kõnelejatele? Miks?* 'For Russian-speakers, what Estonian sounds are difficult to pronounce? Why?'

1987T/F/T/RR/5: *Eesti keele häälikud ä, ö, ü valmistuvad raskusi vene keele kõnelejatele, sest nad puuduvad vene tähestikus.* 'Estonian vowels ä, ö, ü are difficult to pronounce, because there are no such vowels in Russian alphabet'

Teacher: *Milline eesti keele häälik on keeruline soome keele kõnelejatele?* 'What Estonian sound is difficult for Finnish-speakers?'

1987T/F/T/RR/5: *Arvan, et see on häälik õ, sest see on eesti keele tähestikus aga puudub soome keele tähestikus.* ‘I think that this is the vowel õ, because it is in the Estonian alphabet, but not in Finnish’

Teacher: *Mis häälikud on rasked Sinu jaoks?* ‘What sounds are difficult for you [to pronounce]?’

1987T/F/T/RR/5: *Minu jaoks on raske hääldada raskeid eesti keelseid sõnu, kus on ... [pause] ... длинные звуки ... [pause] ... kaks või enam sama häälikuid korraga.* ‘For me it is difficult to pronounce difficult Estonian words, where ... pause ... long sounds ... [pause] ... two or more sounds at once’

Teacher: *Kas sõnad pika vokaaliga on Sulle rasked? Aga miks?* ‘Are words with long sounds difficult for you? Why so?’

1987T/F/T/RR/5: *Näiteks sõna läänemeresoome. Mõnikord ma ütlen kiiresti seda sõna, see vist juhtub sellepärast, et loen ... [pause] ... невнимательно ... [pause] ... mitte tähelepanelikult.* ‘For example, the word *läänemeresoome* ‘Finnic’. Sometimes I pronounce this word quickly, this happens, because I read ... [pause] ... carelessly ... [pause] ... carelessly’

Teacher: *Ahaa! Loed hooletult.* [smiles] ‘Ah, you read carelessly’

1987T/F/T/RR/5: *Loen hooletult.* ‘[I] read carelessly’

It is interesting to note that the student translates the Russian adverb *не + внимательно* ‘carelessly’ (literally ‘not attentively’) into Estonian component by component (*mitte + tähelepanelikult* ‘not attentively’). In Standard Estonian, the equivalent of Russian *не-внимательно* (literally ‘not attentively’) is an adverb of state *hooletu-lt* (care + negative affix + adverbial suffix). It could be suggested that with the means of pauses, Estonian-Russian code-switching and translated Estonian word she signals her need for help. The teacher prompts the right answer and the speaker accepts it by repeating.

In a class where a subject is being taught to Russian-speaking students in Estonian, the teacher can switch to Russian in the following situations:

- 1) When the concepts are very important (see excerpts 5 and 6).
- 2) When the students are getting distracted. Using L1, the teacher tries to reassure her students:

### **Excerpt 2**

Teacher: *“Pole vaja nii palju muretseda hinde pärast. F – это не самое страшное в жизни. Usu mind!”* ‘There is no need to worry about the mark. F is not the worst thing in the world. Believe me!’;

- 3) When the student should be praised. Use of L1 elevates the effect from the teacher’s commendation:

**Excerpt 3**

Teacher: “*Sa oled väga tubli! Молодец!*” ‘You are very good [student]! Well done!’)

4) When the students should be told off. One of the students is cheating at the test.

Willing to stress the dissoluteness of his action, the teacher uses L1:

**Excerpt 4**

Teacher: “*Niimoodi ei käituta ülikoolis! Saad sa sellest aru? See on ebaaus! Непорядочно!*” ‘It is no way to behave at the university! Do you understand? This is not fair! Not fair!’).

Analyzing bilingual data, Simon (2001) points out that in classroom interaction, the code choice is very frequently closely associated with the type of task or activity for methodological reasons (native language for grammatical explanations, cultural information and sometimes instructions about what to do). During *Introduction to Linguistics* both the content and Estonian as L2 had to be taught in a context of authentic holistic learning. Explaining of the academic subject was in the focus, teaching Estonian language was a by-product. To enable both, the teacher may switch to Russian when revising the difficult material that has already been given in Estonian. The fifth and sixth excerpts are given below. The teacher is explaining the synonym’s definition:

**Excerpt 5**

Teacher: *Sünonüümid on sarnased sõnad tähenduse järgi (aga neid võib kirjutada erinevalt): nagu näiteks “ilus – kaunis”. Täissünonüümid on need sünonüümid, mida võib teine teisega asendada igas tekstis. Konteksti mõte ei muutu. Näide võib olla selline: “ligidal – lähedal”. Osasünonüümid aga need sünonüümid, mida ei saa asendada teine teisega tekstis, sest siis teksti mõte kaob. Nende tähendus ei ole võrdne, võrdleme “väike – kääbus-”.*

‘Synonyms are different words with similar or identical meanings: for example *ilus – kaunis* ‘beautiful’. Absolute synonyms are identical in every aspect of the meaning so that they can be used interchangeably. The context does not change. The example is as following: *ligidal – lähedal* ‘nearby’. Relative synonyms do not replace each other in the text. Otherwise the idea of the text changes. The meaning of those synonyms is not tantamount; compare *väike – kääbus-* ‘small’.

The starting point is that code-switching occurs in the middle of the turn when the speaker and the listeners know the same two languages. That is why the teacher repeats in Russian

**Excerpt 6**

Teacher: *Синонимы – слова, близкие по значению. Например, “пара – двое”. Смысловые синонимы – одинаковые по значению слова: “чувство – эмоция”. Семантико – стилистический – значение слов близкое, но их нельзя заменить друг другом в одном контексте.*

*Если это сделать, то значение будет совсем другим. Например, прилагательные “верный – правильный”.*

‘Synonyms are words, with a similar meaning. For example, *пара – двое* ‘couple’. Absolute synonyms have identical meaning: *чувство – эмоция* ‘sense’. Relative synonyms are words with a similar meaning, but they can not be replaced in the text. Otherwise, the meaning of the text is changed. For example, *верный – правильный* ‘safe’.

The teacher might ask: “*Mis on sõna верный eestikeelsed vastad?*” ‘What are Estonian equivalents of Russian *верный*?’ Here, the teacher point that Russian *верный* ‘faithful, right, safe, certain’ means *ustav* ‘faithful’, *truu* ‘committed’, *vankumatu* ‘gallant’, *kindel* ‘reliable’, *õige* ‘true’, *täpne* ‘precise’ in Estonian.

As a result, the students learn that Estonian terms are *täissõnonüümid* ‘absolute synonyms’ and *osasõnonüümid* ‘relative synonyms’, while Russian are *смысловые синонимы* ‘absolute synonyms’ and *семантико-стилистические синонимы* ‘relative synonyms’. Thus, students are able to understand the topic in two languages.

In code-switching, the teacher always seeks oral feedback from the students: *Kas te saate aru?* ‘Do you understand?’, *On teil küsimusi?* ‘Do you have questions?’, *Kas ma pean kordama?* ‘Shall I repeat?’ In almost all cases the responses of the students to such questions consist of one word: *jah* (*aha, jaa*) ‘yes’ or *ei* (*ee*) ‘no’. Sometimes it was *чѐ?* ‘what?’ [Colloquial usage of the Russian interrogative pronoun *что* ‘what’]. By requiring and obtaining such feedback, the teacher learns if the students have understood what had been said, and thus, she can repeat and clarify words, expressions, and concepts where necessary.

The teacher’s use of code-switching makes it relatively easy for the students themselves to begin using code-switching. By introducing code-switching into her speech, the teacher provides a model of how code-switching works, which implicitly encourages the students to engage in code-switching themselves. Moreover, in addition to modeling code-switching, it is necessary for the teacher to explain overtly the reason for using code-switching.

The teacher can encourage students to switch the code when the latter try to initiate conversations with her (before, during, and after the class) about such subjects as the course material, testing procedures, and personal concerns related to the course, excuses etc. If students try to use Russian only, the teacher, rather than allowing them to do so, encourages them to use code-switching, as seen in Excerpt 7 below:

### **Excerpt 7**

1987T/F/T/RR/3: *А что надо дома со статьёй делать?*

‘What do we have to do with the article at home?’

Teacher: *Teil tuleb koostada mõistekaart.*

‘You have to draw the cluster’

1987T/F/T/RR/3: *Kas keeltest?* ‘Of languages?’

Teacher: *Ikka keelkondadest*. ‘Of language families’

1987T/F/T/RR/3: *Ma ei oska*. ‘I can not [do it]’

Teacher: *Jelena aitab sind*. ‘Jelena helps you’

The students begin to speak in Russian with each other. But it is still not all clear with the homework.

If on next occasion a student continues to resist the use of code-switching and sticks to monolingual Russian, the teacher relents, but she makes it clear that she will expect more use of the target language (in code-switched forms as well) in future discussions with her.

### **Excerpt 8**

1987T/F/T/RR/3: *Я не понимаю, а что в центре?* ‘I do not understand, what is in the centre [of it]?’

Teacher: *Võttesõnad*. ‘The key-notions’

What compels the student to switch to the native language again? Why does she not even try to formulate a question in the Estonian language? One may be tempted to explain the switch in terms of the non-native speaker lacking the necessary linguistic resources to formulate an adequate sentence. But there is another point which should be taken into consideration. The student knows that the teacher is a Russian-speaker, the same as they all are, and this has a temporary boundary-leveling effect as it does in spontaneous switching in everyday communication.

If a student wants to use code-switching in a one-to-one discussion with the teacher but simply cannot find the necessary words, the teacher encourages her to write the sentences or questions on a piece of paper. Rather than responding immediately to that utterance, she draws student’s attention to the sentence, or helps her find Estonian words, and waits, when the student ask the question in target language. For example, the student says: “*Я всё равно не понимаю, что такое fraasid. Почему это nimisõnafraas, а это omadussõnafraas?*” ‘I still do not understand what the phrases are. Why is it noun-phrase and this is adjective-phrase?’. The teacher may then feign non-comprehension, saying: “*Mida?*” ‘What?’ in Estonian. The student may of course exhibit an air of disgust, but the teacher hands her a pencil and scrap of paper and says: “*Kirjuta!*” ‘Write!’ The student writes her question Estonian: “*Ma ei saa aru, mis on fraas. Miks see on nimisõnafraas, see on omadussõnafraas?*” ‘I do not understand, what is phrase. Why is it noun-phrase and this is adjective-phrase?’ The teacher begins to explain in Estonian.

What has the teacher done? She has responded to the student, although it has probably taken her longer to do so than she wished. But more importantly, she has made an attempt to teach the student that (1) Estonian is for real communication, not just for lecture; (2) by thinking about what they have previously learned, students can indeed construct meaningful utterances in the Estonian language.

Cook (2001) discusses the relationship between code-switching and language teaching. She states that for many students the ability to go from one

language to another is highly desirable; there is not much point in being multi-competent if you are restricted by the demands of a single language.

As Cook (2001: 106) clearly states, teachers should remember:

- a) The classroom is often a natural code-switching situation.
- b) There is nothing wrong or peculiar about code-switching.
- c) Principles exist for code-switching in the classroom.

The fact that L2 speaker might play with language is hardly accepted among teachers, because the general image of learner's language is that of a lack of proficiency. Arnfast's and Jørgensen's (2003) research has shown that code-switching appears as a skill used in early attempts of playing with the languages involved in conversation. In sociolinguistic studies dominates the opinion if the bilingual speaker knows that the interlocutor shares the same language, code-switching is likely to take place for different functions (Grosjean, 1982, p. 152; Appel & Muysken, 1992, pp. 118–120; Auer, 1995, p. 120; Baker, 1995, p. 77 & 2006, pp. 111-113). More over, speakers are continually creating new ways of drawing on code contrast as a communicative resource. Using and adopting a framework based on Auer's (1984, 1995, 1998) conversation analysis, Liebscher and Dailey-O'Cain (2005) analyze learner's code-switching between L1 and L2 in an advanced foreign language classroom which they consider to be a community of practice. They conclude that allowing students to code-switch in ways that resemble uses in non-classroom bilingual interaction, therefore, not only gives them the opportunity to become more comfortable with the L2 but also gives them free rein to experiment with using two languages, like the bilinguals they hope to be someday.

This part has discussed code-switching as part of teaching methodology. Repetition of a phrase or passage in Russian is used to clarify a point. The teacher in university classroom explains in Estonian, and then explains it again in the Russian language, believing that repetition adds reinforcement and completeness of understanding. If Russian-speaking students do not know a word in L2, they switch from Estonian to Russian.

### **FUNCTIONS OF STUDENTS' CODE-SWITCHING**

In this part of the paper, Russian-Estonian code-switching by the students during the break, interviews and other informal situations that occurred in a university context are analyzed.

Russian-Estonian code-switching can be often used when the speaker is reporting what someone has said, as in Excerpt 9. After the first part of the lecture, the lecturer says twice that the break will be 20 minutes long. One of the students was speaking on a mobile phone and was not paying attention to what was being said by the instructor. He asks another student who answers rather emotionally:

**Excerpt 9**

1985N/M/T/RR/2: *Tebe že skazali, čto vaheaeg on kakskümmend minutit.* ‘You have just been told that the break is twenty minutes.’

The student is not only answering the question but also animating the teacher’s voice, as Estonian words sound stricter and more official than the Russian beginning of the sentence. The speaker’s tone rises, and the entire Estonian phrase is pronounced very clearly and smoothly. An explanation for code-switching is that the student repeats the words of the instructor and wants to be more authoritative. Another reason could be a matter of expressivity: he was nervous that the co-student had not listened properly and was asking to repeat.

Russian- Estonian code-switching is also used to high-lighting something. In excerpt 10, a student is speaking with the teacher:

**Excerpt 10**

1984T/M/T/RR/2: *Можно ли вам saata к сроку реферат vene keeles, aga tõlkimine ego прислать позже. Потому что сам реферат on valmis, а в виду последних событий: tööd on palju, а времени – мало, поэтому очень не успеваю сделать достойный tõlkimine, совсем позориться не хочется.* ‘May I send you in time the report in Russian, but the translation later? Because the report itself is ready, but in the view of some recent events: a lot of work and little time, that is why I do not manage to make a good translation, I do not want to disgrace myself’.

He stresses twice that the paper itself is ready in Russian, but the problem is with translation: *vene keeles* ‘in Russian’, *tõlkimine* ‘translation’, *on valmis* ‘is ready’. Speaking about his job in Estonian (*tööd on palju* ‘a lot of work’) he wants to attract the teacher’s attention to another important domain in his life. At the same time he wishes to demonstrate that he wants to make really good, sophisticated translation. He asks for the giving-up very politely.

The third reason for code-switching is discussing particular topics. Excerpt 11 is very telling, as it shows how much the language choice is connected to university domain.

**Excerpt 11**

I: *Pochemu ty vybral imenno etu special'nost'?* ‘Why have you chosen this speciality [Russian as foreign language – A. Z.]?’

1984T/M/T/RR/2: *Hochu byt' perevodchikom. Tol'ko mne istorija ne nravitsja.* ‘I want to be an interpreter. Only that I don’t like history.’

I: *Pochemy?* ‘Why?’

1984T/M/T/RR/2: *V škole tože ne ljubil. A v ülikool opjat ona.* ‘I didn’t like it at school either. At university we have it again.’

I: *I kak?* ‘And how is it going?’

1984T/M/T/RR/2: *Terplju. Teoreetiliste teadmiste omandamine vajabno tozhe.* ‘I am tolerating it. Acquisition of theoretical knowledge is important too.’

As for the language choice patterns found in the excerpt 11, the speaker sticks to his individually preferred language in the specific setting. Only when the degree of university involvement rises in the conversation, Russian-Estonian code-switching is used to differentiate the topics of the talk.

Finally, code-switching is used for emphasizing a particular social role. Excerpt 12 illustrates an imitation, realized through Estonian-Russian code-switching and changing the quality of voice through speech-style shifting: the student is animating her mother. In a group of seven students present, the interviewer (I) is talking to one of them (1983T/F/T/RR).

### **Excerpt 12**

I: *Mis on sinu jaoks õppimine?* ‘What does learning mean to you?’

1983T/F/T/RR/8: *Õppimine on uute teadmiste saamine, silmaringi laienemine. Minu ema ütleb, et õppimine – eto realizacija v dal’neishem svoih celei, vozmozhnostei.* ‘Learning is acquisition of new knowledge, the widening of horizon. My mother says that learning is realization of your own aims and possibilities in the future.’

The answer, uttered by the student, contains no pauses. From her comment (*minu ema ütleb* ‘my mother says’), we can see that the girl is initially referring to her mother’s words, first in Estonian (*et õppimine* ‘that learning’) and then in Russian (*et realization of your own aims and possibilities in the future*), giving an interviewer an answer to her question. The answer in Russian may reflect the serious nature of it. Here code-switching is we-code, it is informal and intimate. The speaker emphasizes familiarity with co-students within in-group.

Previous analysis has shown the imitation of Russian- or Estonian-speakers. The Estonian language seems to be associated with official situations and Russian is more intimate and close. Bilingual students do not code switch solely because of certain values to the particular languages involved. They code-switch because the alternation itself signals to the co-interactants how they want their utterances to be interpreted on that particular occasion. Russian-Estonian code-switching can be used as a device for changing topic, animating reported speech, expressing identity and expressive reasons. The results show that reported speech is combined with code-switching to create contrast or emphasis.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Code-switching in the university classroom is both inevitable and necessary. It is not only a part of communicative resources of a bilingual repertoire but also an active part in the learning experience. Jacobson has

developed a teaching method known as the NCA (Jacobson and Faltis, 1990), which gets teachers to balance the use of the two languages within a single lesson.

Here, the students and the teacher speak Russian as L1 and Estonian as L2; however, the former have a more limited knowledge of Estonian. Thus, the interactions are characterized by the different mastery of Estonian by the participants. A switch to L1, whether initiated by the teacher or the student, increases attention to the content of L2 message and facilitates understanding. One word, one phrase or even one sentence code-switching is very common in students' speech or written works. This kind of code-switch helps to bridge a gap in the discourse and plays a role of compensatory strategy. The results show that during lectures or seminars students use Russian as the language they feel most comfortable with and have greater competence in. In the informal situations Estonian as L2 can fulfill a wide range of functions from changing topic to showing expressivity.

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## NOTES

1. The current research is a part of the project „Uus eesti keele ja kakskeelse õppe süsteem Tallinna Ülikoolis” [= New Estonian and Bilingual Educational System in Tallinn University].
2. Complementary schools are voluntary schools – often called ‘community’ or ‘supplementary’ schools – which serve specific linguistic or religious and cultural communities, particularly through mother-tongue classes. Defining these schools as *complementary schools* stresses the positive complementary function between these schools and mainstream schools for those who teach or learn in them. It recognizes the importance of these schools for participants and their local black and ethnic minority communities and their contribution to political, social and economic life in the wider community (Creese, Martin 2006, p. 1).
3. Russians in the post-Soviet countries cannot be treated as minorities. Neither the term “immigrants” is adequate. There is an ongoing debate on the terms “diaspora” and “post-colonial” (see discussion and summary in Pavlenko 2006). The term “diaspora” appears as too general and vague because it refers to all Russians living outside Russia regardless the reasons and conditions of their migration. The concept of “near abroad” is often used in Russian political discourse but it is politically charged and is perceived as offensive at least in the Baltic states: it is implied that the post-Soviet countries are not viewed as “real” abroad but remain in the sphere of Russia’s influence. I find helpful the notions of majoritized minority (Russians) and endangered minoritized majority (non-Russians), suggested by Skutnabb-Kangas (1992).