THE LEXICON OF RUSSIAN OLD-BELIEVERS
(BASED ON MATERIAL FROM LATGALE AND THE ŽITOMIR AREA)

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The present paper deals with two insular Russian dialects spoken by Old-Believers in a non-Russian environment. The description is based on material collected in Latvia and Ukraine. It is important to pay attention to the specific historical and cultural background of these isolated people, which accounts for the fact that the dialects have been relatively unaffected by surrounding languages. This investigation is focused on the lexicon, especially on verbs. Two approaches are tested: the traditional analysis in terms of semantic components and an analysis in accordance with the principles of cognitive semantics.

Keywords: Russian, dialects, Old-Believers, Latvia, Ukraine, lexicon, verb, semantic.

I will first give some historical and ethnographical facts, before I begin to characterize the language. I intend to touch upon some problems of modern dialectal lexicology, to define the concept of "dialectal word" and to discuss methods of its description.

On several occasions from 1988 to 1992 I collected dialect material in small villages in two areas: the province of Latgale in the eastern part of Latvia and the Žitomir district in the northern part of Ukraine.

The inhabitants of these villages are Russian Old-Believers of the so-called Pomor branch; they are Fedoseevcy, i.e. descendants of those following the monk Feodosij Vasiljev and, consequently, they have no priests. They came to these villages from the Pskov area, and their emigration began about three hundred years ago (Zavarina, 1986). They first moved from east to west and south-west and settled down in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

Later, some of those living in Latvia moved further south, through Byelorussia, and settled in the Žitomir district, north of the Kiev district, and also in the Kiev district itself.

The Old-Believers don't constitute a homogenous movement. According to the radical branch, the Antichrist rules in the world, there is no orthodoxy, no sacrilegia, and consequently no priests. The prayer alone is a sufficient means of communication with God. Amongst those not recognizing priests the most radical ones do not recognize marriage, either, since there are no priests who can marry people. Amongst these Old-Belivers a custom evolved for a young man to "steal" a girl from her family (with her consent). Then the couple comes to the Nastavnik (who is in place of a priest) and asks him to pray for them. After a few days they go to the parents of the girl and are punished and forgiven, but no formal marriage comes about. During my first expedition to these people I asked an old woman to tell me about her marriage (she had before that told me about her husband and children). She answered firmly and proudly: "I was never married." I then realized that I was dealing with people belonging to quite another tradition than myself. Nowadays young men don't usually steal away their wives-to-be.

In the district of Daugavpils I registered the dialects of Old-Believers in the villages of Ambeli, Gutta, Berezovka, Starye Stupelishki and Isaevka. By the way, I think there are connections between these people and those inhabitants of the Canadian village Berezovka, which have been described by David Scheffel in his book (1991).

Gutta is a typical Old-Believers' village, situated in a hilly landscape in the south-east of Latgale. Here, in the thick forests, their ancestors hid from religious persecution. The inhabitants of these villages, especially Gutta, still talk of themselves as immigrants.

In Ukraine I visited the villages Russkie Pilipy, Pilipovka, Bol'shie Kosharisha, Chelovka, which have approximately an equal number of Ukrainian and Russian inhabitants. In, for instance, Bol'shie Kosharisha, one's attention is drawn to the fact that representatives of both cultures live tightly together: next to a Russian house there can be a Ukrainian one.

The only church in the village is the chaple of the Old Belivers, whereas Ukrainians go to church in a village nearby. In the store you can hear both groups of inhabitants talking to and freely understanding each other. The Old-Belivers get along well with the Ukrainians but preserve their hostility against the "Nikonians". It is no doubt that these Old Believers, too, have their roots in the Pskov area. The dialects of Old-Believers can be characterized as "emigrated", as opposed to dialects spoken in "original" areas.

The Pskovian origin of these groups of Russians is apparent: the houses still have the same style as in the Pskov region, the different parts of the house and of the fire-place are named as in the Pskovian dialects. In the language of non-Old Believers, also living in these places but having a different origin, other words are used, see fig. 1.

Fig. 1. *The different parts of the house and the fire-place*

Old Believers	*non-Old Believers*	
izba pozëmnaja	izba s podkletom	'house' (low / high)
zen'	most	'floor'
jama	podmost'e, podpol'e	'cellar'
posom	strop	'pediment'
slega, matica	verbalka, matica	'ceiling joist'

čalo	ust'e	'part of the fire-place'
pjačurka	pečorka	'='
ljažanka	golbec	'='

Common to all Old-Believers, especially those not acknowledging priests and rejecting marriage, is their isolation and preservance of their religion and culture, but contacts with the surrounding people naturally occur. In this respect an important factor is the surrounding language; this may be Russian, as in the case of Old-Believers living in Siberia or in the North of Russia, it may be non-Russian but Slavic, as is the case with Old-Believers in Ukraine or Poland, or non-Slavic, as is the case with those living in the Baltic countries, in Romania, and, of course, in the United States and Canada. For these latter groups the isolated and insular character of the dialect is especially apparent.

From the point of view of their origin the lexicon of the Russian Old-Believers living in Latgale and the Žitomir district (henceforth L&Ž) can be divided into three groups (see fig. 2). The two larger groups consist of words, not found in the literary language, dialectal words (D), and words belonging also to the literary language, "literary" words (L). Apart from this there is a small group, consisting of foreign, non-Russian loanwords, which have entered into these dialects directly, not via Russian (group F).

The main body of the dialectal words are of Pskovian origin or at least known to Pskovian dialects (henceforth PSK) as well as certain other dialects (group D1). But there is also a smaller group of words, not known to Pskovian dialects, but to some other Russian dialects (group D2). And finally, there is a very small group consisting of words registered nowhere else other than in the language of these Old-Believers (group D3). The words of D1 and D2 can preserve the same meaning as in the maternal (or some other) dialect: *azgaroda* 'fense', *banja* 'bath-house', *glyža* 'turf', *djanki* 'mittens', *netel'* 'heifer', *plat* 'shawl', *prastakiša* 'sour milk'. If not, they can be further subdivided according to well-known processual semantic criteria: addition of a meaning, as in *pagip'* (PSK 'misfortune'; L&Ž 'misfortune', 'death'), *atassat'* (PSK 'get hungry'; L&Ž 'get hungry', 'grow thin', 'live bedly and long'); loss of a meaning, as in *žichar'* (PSK 'inhabitant', 'who rents a flat', 'owner', 'hermit'; L&Ž 'who rents a flat'); change of meaning into a hyperonym or a hyponym, as in *smaroda* (PSK 'raspberry'; L&Ž 'black raspberries') or some other related meaning, for instance shift from whole to part, as in *abečajka* (PSK 'sieve'; L&Ž 'edge of a sieve').

Fig. 2. *The lexicon of the Russian Old-Believers*
    (classification from the point of view of their oriogin)

DIALECTAL WORDS   "LITERARY" WORDS   LOANWORDS

 D-1   D-2   D-3   L-1   L-2   L-3   Lo-1   Lo-2

In the case of D1 and D2, there are very often word-formation connections with words of the maternal Pskovian dialects. For instance, in Pskovian dialects there are words as *barkan* 'carrot'; *barkanina* 'one carrot'; *barkannik* 'pie with carrot filling', 'carrot leaves', 'kind of camomile', but only in Latgale and the Žitomir dialect we find the word *barkannica* 'carrot soup on milk' (for further details, see Lönngren, 1994).

What I here call literary words can be subdivided from a stative semantic point of view. They may have the same meaning or meanings as in the literary language (L1). They may be

polysemous and have some, but not all meanings in common with the corresponding word in the literary language (L2). And they may have no meaning, only the form, in common with the corresponding word in the literary language (L3). The group (L1) is of little interest, so I will concentrate on examples of L2 and of L3.

In my opinion, L2 is the most interesting group, to which I have devoted most of my attention. Here you find words quite close to the group L1, for instance *nachodit'*, which beside the literary meaning 'find' has the meaning 'give birth to'. My female informants use this euphemism only about themselves, about others they use the ordinary word *rodit'/rožat'* or some colloquial equivalent, for instance *privodit', prinosit', priživat'*.

Here are some other examples: *priložit'* 'be jealous of', *davat'* 'put, add', *bereč'* 'treat', *narjažat'* 'prepare for work', *rabotat'* 'build', *poterjat'* 'break', *ubit'* 'hit', *vplyt'* 'flow over', *napast'* 'guess'. It is interesting to note that in the case *rabotat'* 'build' not only the semantics, but also the syntactic properties are involved.

Words which can be assigned to L3 are: *pachat'* 'tidy up', *nadomnik* 'husband living in the wife's house', *ugol'nik* 'small table under the icon', *krutjaščaja* 'unfaithful (woman)'.

The small number of foreign words can be further divided into direct loans from Ukrainian and Lettish; and indirect loans, for instance German or French loans received through Lettish (for instance, *verbalka, sal'ka*). It is interesting to note that the Old-Believers in the Žitomir area have taken the word *čerevyky* 'shoes' from the Ukrainian language, but use the Russian word *tapački* when talking about the funeral ceremony.

It may also be useful to base a classification solely on the synchronic relationship to the literary language. In that case I would propose the following groups (see fig. 3): 1. purely dialectal words, having neither the expression nor the content plane in common with the literary language; 2. "deformed" words, with a recognizable, but differing expression plane but with no difference in their content; 3. dialectal-literary words, having an identical expression plane (apart from general phonetic dialectal features), but differing in respect to their content plane (these words correspond to the groups L2 and L3 of the first classification); 4. literary words, identical to the corresponding words in the literary language (these words correspond to the groups L1 of the first classification).

Fig. 3. *The lexicon of the Russian Old-Believers*
(classification from the point of view of the literary language)

PURELY DIALECTAL WORDS	"DEFORMED" WORDS	DIALECTAL-LITERARY	LITERARY WORDS

The first group, and to a lesser extent the second group, is the main interest of traditional, phonetically and historically oriented dialectology. For that reason Russian dialectologists generally treat them as one group. Since there is no semantic or syntactic difference between, for instance, the dialectal *pilavat'* and the literary *pilit'* and my main concern is the semantic properties, I choose to unite the second and the fourth group. The real problems are to be found within the group 3, upon which I will concentrate below.

Traditionally, emigrated dialects have been studied with respect to those properties which are reflected in the classifications presented above, that is their connection with the maternal

base, relationship to the literary language, proportion of loanwords and so on. In the case of Old-Believers special attention is drawn to the low "penetrability" of their language, that is resistance to external influence. The tasks undertaken by these dialectologists and the results of their studies, linguogeographical and others, are all very useful and necessary. I would like to characterize them as primary tasks. But there are other aspects of dialectological research which, in my opinion, require special methods. To these belong a deep understanding of the function of the lexicon.

The lexicon of a dialect, the body of words and expressions used by their contemporary bearers, reflects the culture of the countryside and preserves features of the old traditional folk culture. The well-preserved dialects of the Old-Believers is a live chronicle of their specific culture.

In the dialects of Old-Believers this is particularly true of words designing parts of the house, clothes, traditional food, landscape, plants, characteristics and behaviour of people and so on (see, for example, *pagip', ataššat', žichar', smaroda, abečajka)*.

The vocabulary used in connection with ceremonies is to a larger extent preserved in other dialects, since the Old-Believers reject, for instance, purifying rites, although they do accept protecting rites.

As is pointed out by linguo-ethnographers, the term national culture is the crossing-point of the lexicon and the culture. If we look at words like *svad'ba* through the eyes of a traditional dialectologist, they seem to be of little interest. Most of them have the same meaning as in the literary language. In the case of *uvod* we have to add one meaning: 'stealing away the intended with her consent'.

If we adopt a cognitive approach, we can present the linguistic model of a certain fragment of the culture of these people in the form of a frame. Let us take the frame *svad'ba* 'marriage' and compare bearers of maternal Pskovian dialects and those of emigrated Old-Believers in Latgale and the Žitomir dialect (see fig. 4). The arrows here indicate procession in time: A —> B 'A is followed by B'. However, the procession in time can stop at a certain point. This is indicated by a backward arrow (<—).

Fig. 4. *The frame SVAD'BA 'marriage'*

(PSK): [večorki —> sgovor] —> [opros —> smotren'e —> znakomstvo] —> [*otkladyvat' na dumy* <— svatovsto] —> [*dorogaja kladka* <— pogljadnoe —> kladka] —> [rukobit'e —> bol'šoj propoj —> sgovorënki] —> [gostincy darit'] —> [priezd s otves'u] —> [zasidki] —> [myly darit' —> porogi kričat' —> ugly zolotit'] —> [devičnik —> v banju vesti —> ëločku narjažat' —> kosu prodavat' —> vyt' zarju] —> [okručenie —> svadebnyj poezd —> otkupat' na četyre ugla] —> [*vstat' pod venec* <— venčanie (cerkov')] —> [posle venčanija —> straščat' molodych —> rasplet' kosu (nadevat' povojnik) —> sažat' na šuby —> bajniček pet' —> prodavat' postel' —> razdevat' muža] —> [banja—> bajnik est' —> knjažoj obed]...

(L&Ž): [znakomstvo —> sgovor] —> [vjačorki : kirmaš —> uvod] —> [(molennaja) okručenie —> rasplet' kosu (nadevat' povojnik)] —> [ukryvanie] —> [povinovenie —> nakazanie —> proščenie —> (?) ugoščenie]

We can see that the vocabulary used in connection with ceremonies is much more scanty in Latgale and the Žitomir dialect, than in Pskovian dialects. The main three parts are distinguished, but the very important purifying rite taking place in the bath is not represented.

From this you can't conclude that the Old-Believers don't know about the common Russian traditions; the know, but do not acknowledge them. For instance, the frame of the word 'baptism' is in Latgale and the Žitomir dialect composed of the scenes: seventh day, river, (in the winter) ice-hole, triple full immersion and so on.

In Pskovian dialects you have different scenes, for instance church, baptismal font, sprinkling *okroplenie* and so on. Old-Believers say: "Sprinkling *bryzganje* that is not baptism." They know the word *okroplenie,* but condemningly use the word *bryzganje.* So their attitude towards the Nikonians is reflected in this innocent word.

When working with dialect material it is good to have in mind that frames are reflected in dialects, and that they may differ from those of ordinary Russian speakers. The investigator is inclined to asign to a dialectal word the meaning familiar to him from the literary language. For instance, in Latgale and the Žitomir dialect we have the word *podat'/podavat'.* If we compare the meanings of this verb in Latgale and the Žitomir dialect with those in the literary language, we note only one difference: that in the dialect the verb has an additional meaning *darit'/podarit'.*

If wee agree with Lakoff & Johnson in their book (1980), we are constantly performing rituals. According to the Russian scholar N. Tolstoy (1983), in every ritual we can distinguish three registers: a verbal one (the word), a material one (the object) and a dynamic one (the act). The verb *podat'/podavat'* in Latgale and the Žitomir dialect covers the semantic space of different rituals, concerning serving of food: 1. serving one's own family; 2. serving strangers, not Old-Believers; 3. serving guests (at a fiest); 4. serving at a funeral. These rituals differ as to the quality of the registers (see fig. 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d).

Fig. 5a. *RITUAL 1: "Serving one's own family"*

VERBAL [the word]	MATERIAL [the object]	DYNAMIC [the act]
an appeal or invitation	it is an ordinary table, ...	all eat calmly together
to eat (– Eat, I have put	a common bowl with	
it all on the table)	simple food	

In the first case the verbal register contains an appeal or invitation to eat. (– Eat, I have put it all on the table); in the second case the invitation is issued once (Please have some / a piece of...); in the third case the guests are constantly attended to (– Please, dear guests, enjoy the food), and so on, and in the fourth case ritual wording is used (– *Pomjanite* 'Remember'...; the guests do not thank for the food, and so on).

Fig. 5b. *RITUAL 2: "Serving strangers, not Old-Believers"*

VERBAL [the word]	MATERIAL [the object]	DYNAMIC [the act]
the invitation is	there is no table,	there is no common
issued once	and usually no china...	participation in the meal,
(– Please have some		only the strangers eat
/ a piece of...)		

The material register is in the first case represented by objects (an ordinary table, maybe covered with a wax-cloth, as a rule, a common bowl with simple food). In the second case there is no table, and usually no china, what is served is a piece of bread or of a pirog; in the third case everything is better than usual since it is a fiest: table, food, serving (provided it is not at the fast time); in the last case – a restricted number of dishes according to the time – fast or not fast, the obligatory funeral porridge and so on.

The dynamic register is represented by the following components: in the first case all eat calmly together; in the second case there is no common participation in the meal, only the strangers eat; in the third case much attention is paid to the guests, there is constant serving, pouring up and so on; in contrast to this, in the fourth case the funeral guests eat quietly, in a mourning mood.

All this is an indication of the fact that the verb *podat'/podavat'* in these dialects corresponds not only to one frame, as in the literary language, but to four.

Fig. 5c. *RITUAL 3: "Serving guests (at a fiest)"*

VERBAL [the word]	MATERIAL [the object]	DYNAMIC [the act]
the guests are constantly addressed (– Please, dear guests, enjoy the food)	everything is better t is a fiest: table, food, serving (provided it is not at the fast time)	much attention is paid to the guests, there is constant serving, pouring up and so on

Fig. 5d. *RITUAL 4: "Serving at a funeral"*

VERBAL [the word]	MATERIAL [the object]	DYNAMIC [the act]
ritual wording is used (– *Pomjanite* ...); the guests do not thank for the food...	a restricted number of dishes according to the time – fast or not fast, the obligatory funeralhe porridge...	the funeral guests eat quietly, in a mourning mood

The Latgale and the Žitomir dialects are only a small fragment of the long and complex history of the Russian Old-Believers' movement, which has existed for more than three hundred years but is still, in fact, poorly understood and investigated.

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