



**THE CHOICE OF FORMS IN  
CONTACT VARIETIES: LINGUISTIC  
VS. SOCIAL MOTIVATION**

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(ON THE BASE OF LANGUAGE CONTACTS  
IN THE RUSSIAN-CHINESE BORDER AREA)

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# SIMPLICITY

❖ Less grammar categories



❖ Less morphological forms



❖ The simplest forms predominate



# DATA

- ❖ **Written sources on the Russian-Chinese Pidgin**
- ❖ **Field data on interethnic communication in Zabaikalskii krai and Manzhouli (2008-2010)**
- ❖ **Metalinguistic experimental data (St. Petersburg 2000-2001, Zabaikalskii krai 2009-2010)**

## RUSSIAN-CHINESE PIDGIN

- ❖ Emerged in 1730-1750 in Kyakhta after the Kyakhta Treaty (1727)
- ❖ In the second part of the 19th century spread along the Russian-Chinese border.
- ❖ Was used by many ethnic groups for interethnic communication

# RUSSIAN-CHINESE PIDGIN

- ❖ Vocabulary mostly derived from Russian so considered to be “broken, or bad, Russian” by native Russian speakers.
- ❖ Went out of use in the middle of the 20th century as a result of “closing” the border, mass deportations of Chinese, Koreans and Japanese from the Far East and gradual Russification of ethnic minorities in the USSR.

## MODERN FIELD DATA

- ❖ **Contacts resumed during Perestroika in the USSR and became intensive in the 1990s.**
- ❖ **Seasonal labour migration from China to Russia; small-scale cross-border trade (so called “shuttle trade); shopping tourism from Russia to China; border cities (Manzhouli)**



# MODERN FIELD DATA

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- ❖ Chinese ethnolect of Russian.
- ❖ Restricted code used by Russian speakers closely involved in interethnic communication (recordings from 8 informants plus some spontaneous recordings in the market-place).

# EXPERIMENTAL DATA

- ❖ Gathered according to classical foreigner talk studies technique (Ferguson 1975) when people are asked to transform certain sentences to make them more easily understood by non-native speakers (foreigners).
- ❖ 75 informants in St. Petersburg; 14 informants in Zabaikalskii krai.



## VARIABILITY: FIELD DATA

Tam **gonial-gonial** schet v banke nepravil'no. On bumaga tebe **pishi**, Kha In schet nepravil'no.

*There send-Past-send-Past bill-Acc (Nom) in bank-Prep not right. He paper-Nom you-Dat write-Imper, Kha In bill-Acc(Nom) not right.*

On mne bumaga **daet**. Potomu chto on **govorit**, esli ty tovar **pokupaj**, ty den'gi netu. Ia tebe schet **daet**. Ia den'gi **zaplati**.

*He I-Dat paper-Nom give-Pres-3sg. Because he say-Pres-3sg if you goods-Acc(Nom) buy-Imper you money-Nom(Acc) no. I you-Dat bill-Acc(Nom) give-Pres-3sg. I money-Nom(Acc) pay-Imper*

# VARIABILITY: EXP.DATA

Esli zavta ya budu svoboden, pokazhu Vam samuyu krasivuyu tserkov' →

Ya den' posle etot nichego ne **delat'** – ty **videt'** khoroshij mesto, gde **zhit'** cheloveki, kto **lyubyat** Bog.

*I day-Nom(Acc) after this-Nom(Acc)Masc nothing not do-Inf – you see-Inf good-Masc place-Nom(Acc), where live-Inf man-pl, who love-Pres-3pl God-Nom.*

# RUSSIN-CHINESE PIDGIN

❖ *Tut ran'she moja **zhivi*** (“I was living here in the past”)

*Here before my-Fem-Nom live-Imper*

❖ *Hentsiu famili chego-chego **kupila**, kuritsa iajtsa **kupila**, butyka **apus kajla*** (“The man named Hentsu bought something, bought eggs and put it to the bottle”)

*Hentsiu surname-Nom what-what buy-(Imper)-Past-fem, hen-Nom egg-Nom-pl buy-(Imper)-Past-fem, bottle-Nom put-Imper-Past*

# “LA” IN MODERN DATA

- ❖ Deti tam **igrajla** (“Children were playing there”)

*Children there play-Imper-Past*

- ❖ [From Internet forum manchzuria.ru] “Korifana, yuan’  
malo, **domoj-la**, shevre, shevre”

*Korefan [jargon “friend”], yuan-Nom little, home-Past, cheap-  
Compar, cheap-Compar [with phonemic distortion]*

# ADDRESSING WITH “TY”

❖ addressing Russian salesman] **Vy ne pokazhete** etot [telefon],  
**Nokia?** (“Will you show this [mobile phone], Nokia?”)

*You-Pl no show-Pres-2pl this-Acc-Masc, Nokia?*

❖ [addressing Chinese salesman] **Kurtku pokazhi** von tu,  
**beluyu.** (“Show me that jacket, the white one”)

*Jacket-Acc show-Imper there that-Acc-Fem, white-Acc-Fem*

# IMPERATIVE VS. INFINITIVE

❖ A schasa toka kartoshka sadi, sio magazina kupi, a  
lan'she ne

*and now only potato-Nom plant-Imper, all shop-Gen(Nom)  
buy-Imper, but before no*

❖ [about phone bill] A, eto ia, ia Oksana pozvoni

*Ah, that I, I Oksana-Nom call-Imper*

# IMPERATIVE VS. INFINITIVE

Ya **zhivu** daleko osyuda



Ya **zhit'** mnogo chasov zdes' **idti**.

*I live-Inf many hour-Gen-pl here go-Inf.*



# CONCLUSIONS:

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- ❖ Asymmetrical communication
- ❖ Stigmatization of “la” marker
- ❖ Violation of the rules of politeness
- ❖ Imperative as a social marker
- ❖ Imperative as a local (regional) cultural norm





**THANK YOU!**