Великий и могучий олбанский язык: The Russian Internet and the Russian Language*

Daniela S. Hristova

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rlj

Part of the Slavic Languages and Societies Commons

Recommended Citation
Hristova, Daniela S. (2011) "Великий и могучий олбанский язык: The Russian Internet and the Russian Language*," Russian Language Journal: Vol. 61: Iss. 1, Article 9.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.70163/0036-0252.1099
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rlj/vol61/iss1/9

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Russian Language Journal by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Великий и могучий олбанский язык: The Russian Internet and the Russian Language*

Daniela S. Hristova

Закалибали с ашыпками писать! Видити сибя харашо, пешыти биз ашыбак!

1. Introduction
The worldwide proliferation of the Internet as a fundamentally new media technology has coincided with a radical social and linguistic liberalization in Russia. This junction changed drastically the interrelationship between the standard language and the non-standard language varieties. A paradigmatic manifestation of the new Russian linguistic reality is the prevalent Internet trend of alternate spellings and non-normative lexical use. The phenomenon is frequently referred to as an “Olbanian” language and associated with the counter-culture of the so-called “padonki.” Disregarding the fundamental principles of Russian orthography, spelling, and even morphology, the padonki have created an idiom that seemingly allows complete freedom of writing. The practice has been even elevated to the status of an art form dubbed “ORFO-art,” cf. Shapovalova 2008. Moreover, the recent publication (Sokolovskij 2008) of what the author and master-mind of the movement Dmitrii Sokolovskii labels “a padonki’s bible or textbook of Albanian language” marks the official sanctioning, so to speak, of this new language variety.

Yet, the long-cultivated fixation of the Russian linguistic culture on normative usage has resulted in interpretations of the padonki sociolect mainly from the point of view of its harmful influence on the linguistic

* An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Association of the Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages in San Francisco. I would like to thank the audience for their questions and comments, and especially to Ingunn Lunde and Martin Paulsen for their valuable suggestions on improving the manuscripts.

norms of the standard language. This attitude is nowhere better summarized than in an interview given by the prominent Russian linguist Maksim Krongauz for the newspaper *Komsomol’skaja Pravda*, i.e., *Velikij i mogučij prevratilsja v ‘iazyg padonkaff’?* (Ostrovskaja 2008). Krongauz’s concern that *pravila orfografii mogut byt’ uteriany bezvozvrato* reminds the reader of similar anxieties expressed originally about two other East Slavic language varieties based on a standard language, i.e., the Ukrainian-based Surzhyk and the Belarusian-based Trasianka, and the threat they represent to the survival of the standard languages. Contrary to similar approaches to the *padonki* sociolect, the thrust of the present study is the understanding that Olbanian is a full-fledged communicative system with its own linguistic and socio-cultural characteristics that need to be accounted for, irrespective of its official approval. While previous investigations on Olbanian touch upon different aspects of these features, this article provides a comprehensive account of Olbanian as a linguistic phenomenon at its current state. In the process, I also offer insights into the terminological confusion surrounding the linguistic experiments on the Russian Internet.

2. The Emergence of Olbanian

2.1 The Label “Olbanian”

The label “Olbanian” (*olbanskij jazyk*) comes in two different spellings as regards its initial letter, i.e., with an initial “о” or an “а” (*albanskij jazyk*). In its first exploits, “Albanian” was spelled with an “а” whereas spellings with an “о” occurred chronologically later. Currently, both spellings are in use, and sometimes employed indiscriminately by the same author. I give preference to the spelling “Olbanian,” reserving “Albanian” only when used in quotations.

Similarly, there are two competing narratives on RuNet about the emergence of the label itself. In the more popular version, a young American wandered into a Russian blog on Livejournal.com a couple of years ago, and complained that somebody had the audacity to write on this supposedly English-only web site in a language incomprehensible to him and wondered what that language was, anyway.2 Little did he

---

2 See Krongauz 2008 for a full rendition of the exchange between the two Livejournal users.
suspect that his ignorant question had just opened a personal Pandora’s box. Not only did he receive an answer by another Livejournal.com user in a matter of hours that the language was “Albanian,” but also an avalanche of notes advising him to “learn Albanian” followed in the next few days. As a result, uči olbanskij, one of the most beloved and frequent phrases on RuNet, was born. The second narrative, recently endorsed by Sokolovskii himself, credits the pop-artist Madonna as the first person to use the term “Albanian.” Allegedly, in an interview about her new album, the singer referred to her numerous fans from Albania, mistaking padonki postings on her personal website for being written in Albanian.

Whatever the beginnings of “Albanian” might be, the important fact remains that the label was first associated with the standard-language/norm-breaking experiments within the padonki culture. Yet, in later years, the use of the term spread outside of the padonki realm, referring to the language of RuNet as a whole or other non-standard language varieties on RuNet, more specifically. This is due in part to the dynamic nature of the Internet itself, with its fluid boundaries. The real reason, however, is the lack of understanding of what distinguishes, on the one hand, and what connects, on the other, the different Internet linguistic experiments that has created the confusion. In this article, I will briefly trace the emergence of three sociolects that should be associated with the term “Albanian,” which is the language of the padonki culture, of the preved-phenomenon, and the so-called goblin’s language, offering a working definition of the term.

2.2 Padonki
To state a well-known fact: the word padonki represents a misspelled version of the original Russian word podonki (plural of podonok), meaning anti-social, criminal elements, or scumbags. Thus the name of the counter-culture itself illustrates one of its basic principles, namely the use of what Gusejnov (Gusejnov 2005) calls “errative” spellings. The padonki culture and language first began shaping up in 1998 on the website fuck.ru (now obsolete), where a person with the nickname Linxy embarked on a phonetic type of writing, called L-language. The trend


\(^{4}\text{See http://spb.aif.ru/society/article/3340. Also cf. http://www.olmer.ru/arhiv/text/other/51.shtml (January 25, 2009) for the opinion that the beginnings of the padonki’s language should be properly connected with Fidonet, where}\)
was not unique to the *padonki* culture as testified by the Internet publications of Dmitrij Galkovskij, who in the 1990s had broadly employed writing practices that would become a signature style of the creators of fuck.ru and later of udaf.com, cf. Gusejnov 2000. The latter website attracted most of the original fuck.ru members, who in 2000 grouped around Dmitrii Sokolovskii, known in Cyberspace as Uдав, and carried on the basic beliefs of the original *padonki*.

The present program of the *padonki*, together with their site’s official pictogram, occupies the most visible upper left corner on udaf.com: “Этот ресурс создан для настоящих падонков. Те, кому не нравятся слова ХУЙ и ПИЗДА, могут идти нахуй. Остальные пруца! ПАЛАЖИ НА ФСЁ ХУЙ!”

A closer look at this brief and laconic statement reveals at least three essential facets of the new *padonki*. First, udaf.com represents the real *padonki* as opposed to *padonki.org*, which contains the word *padonki* in its URL and therefore may mislead the uninitiated that the latter *ob*’edinenie kontr-kul’turnyx dejatelej epitomizes the *padonki* traditions. Second, the use of *mat* words is a fact of life for all contributors and regulars, whereas those insulted by such words are unwelcome.5 Finally, similar to John Perry Barlow’s original “Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace,” the concluding slogan endorses a complete freedom of expression.

### 2.3 Preved-Phenomenon

As it is known, the trend *preved* erupted on February 3, 2006 with the publication of John Lurie’s primitive painting “Bear Surprise” on the collective blog dirty.ru where Photoshop devotees display their humorous collages and image manipulations, called *fotožaby* in Russian.6 The only element that the blog contributor Lobzz changed in Lurie’s English original was the speech balloon phrase “Surprise” replacing it with the Russian word *privet* (’hi’) in its misspelled rendition *preved*. For a period of time, the collage stayed buried among hundreds of other *fotožaby*—only to explode months later and for no apparent reason – take by storm the Russian Internet. The enthusiast saint_erasty formed the

---


6 For a detailed description of Lurie’s painting and further information, see Sonking 2006.
society ru-preved on Livejournal.com, followed by the registered
domains preved.org, preved.ru, and preved.com. The iconic medved
(with no soft sign at the end), both as word and image, flooded
LiveJournal.com and RuNet as a whole. Soon, it also spilled over from
the “online” virtual space into the “offline” reality by first appearing on

However, the enormous popularity of the meme preved had
another, more important impact on the Russian Internet, as well as on the
Russian language. The attractiveness and high recognition of the
misspelled words preved and medved, joined later by forms such as
krosavčeg (for krasavčik) and učasneg (for učastnik), among others, resulted
in a vast familiarity with and social acceptance for misspellings.
Moreover, the contagious wittiness of the medved fotožaby inspired even
Russians that have never considered breaking the norms of the standard
language to also begin experimenting with alternative spellings. In his
Velikij i mogućij interview, for example, Krongauz relates the story of an
acquaintance who believes, to the linguist’s dismay, that žyzn’ bole
energična, čem žizn’. Thus, while by 2005 the padonki culture was already
a phenomenon worthy of the attention of the Russian Newsweek, it was the
expansion of preved with its numerous online communities that turned
the counter-culture into a mainstream Internet phenomenon.

2.4 Olbanian: Linguistic and Social Connotations
While from the very start padonki made clear their anti-norm, free-
spelling attitudes, they were aware of the fact that in order for their
writings to be read and understood, certain language conventions should
be followed. Yet, with the exception of forum discussions and the
recently published book by Sokolovskij, the sociolect did not receive any
explicit codification in terms of formal grammar description. As with
most non-standard language varieties, padonki had to learn how to
navigate in the new language space by deducing the linguistic rules from
the texts they read or from the comments they received on their writings.

7 Cf. http://community.livejournal.com/ru_preved
9 Admittedly, there are other reasons that explain the explosion of Olbanian. The advice
given by http://www.russki-mat.net/e/krivetizator.htm offers another insight into its
popularity: “Девушки! Вы слишком грамотно пишете, чтобы общаться с парнями в
интернете? Криветизатор Вам поможет.”
Similarly, the creators of preved fotožaby utilized numerous errative, but had to learn them by mnemonic absorption of existing precedents. I hypothesize that it is this method of acquisition, together with the basic principle of a conscious breaking of the norms of standard Russian common to both sociolects, that brought about the terminological and factual confusion between the language of padonki and this of preved.

The principles of free writing and implicit acquisition have another important consequence, namely the fact that different users exhibit different degrees of commitment to or fluency of the new standards. The rules and norms of Olbanian I present in Section 4 below should be understood as a compiled account of writing practices exhibited by numerous language users, almost never found in their entirety, or without significant variations, in the writing of one and the same writer. One has to look no further than the home page of udaff.com for confirmation of that statement. For instance, the padonki spelling conventions are implemented only in the form prutstsa and the very last sentence of the programmatic statement, whereas the rest follows the norms of standard Russian. Likewise, one notes a mixing of perfectly normative spellings alongside Olbanian spellings in the headings of the various web pages, e.g., glavnaja, kreativy,avtory vs. gastevuxa čtop pasrat’, kusno žrat’, pis’ma v redaktsyju.

In its extreme form, the preved sociolect should not be equated with the padonki sociolect, at least conceptually. While never stated, a basic spelling principle one observes in preved writings is “write opposite to standard Russian” rather than “write as you speak.” RuNet owes spelling such as preved, krosavočeg, zajčeg on the preved anti-orthographic tendencies. Yet, the shortness of preved writings, usually a sentence-long statement, and their genre limitation inhibit the expansion of sociolect. Even on websites such as http://community.livejournal.com/ru_preved/, the contributors use preved spelling only in the fotožaby texts, but not in their comments. When a preved user chooses an alternative spelling for his comments, it is usually the norms described in Section 4 below that he implements.10

The discussion above suggests that the term “Olbanian” be used as a collective label for a variety of sociolects that implement alternative spellings on RuNet. The principal socio-linguistic characteristics of this

---

10 Publications, however, often misrepresent the padonki forms and spelling norms as belonging to the preved-phenomenon and thus blur the picture, cf. Zhan, 2006.
language are i) norm-breaking, ii) non-compliance with the norms of standard Russian, iii) (different degrees of) linguistic consciousness. The latter notion refers to both a user’s awareness of the norms of the standard language as well as of the norms of Olbanian. Section 4 presents the concrete linguistic features of the language.

3. Anti-literacy Manifesto

Before discussing in detail the norms of Olbanian, a few words are in order about the program document that first announced the basic tenets of padonki’s anti-literacy movement. In February 1999, a formal proclamation titled Manifezd Antigramatnasti (‘Anti-literacy Manifesto’) materialized as a retorted response to the contest Zolotaja Klijaksa (‘Golden Blot’). Managed by the Novosibirsk regional educational network and the company Rinet, the contest’s organizers endeavored to raise the overall level of literacy on the Russian Internet in an opposition to the abundance of bezgramotnyx saitov v Internete (‘illiterate sites on the Internet’), presumably including fuck.ru.11 The organizers’ rigid assessment criteria were clearly purists in their attitudes toward language: only websites with less than one error in three pages receive an “excellent” grade; less than one error per page ranks a website as “good”; one to two errors on a page gives a website the lowest grade of “satisfactory.”

As a matter of principle, the padonki opposed so-called web literacy, Мы принципиально против так называемой “граматности” в Сити. They derived the main justification for their anti-literacy conviction in the warranted objection that, незадатили уебсайтав палучивших “аттлично” нии сами организатары конкурза НИ ЯВЛЯЮЦЦА ГРАМАТНЫМИ Людми – просто у них хорошие спилчекиры! Convinced that the computer spellcheckers are soulless riffles that kill the “living language,” the manifesto’s author, the known Internet writer Leha Andreev, marvelled at the basic stance of the post-KIBER movement, “Настаящие искувство новава тысячулетия – это то что нн можыт делать кампютыр а можыт делать тока чилавек!!!” This principle became the primary justification in the padonki’s fight with the “БИЗДУШНАЙ КАМПЬЮТЫРНОЙ ПРАВИЛНАСТИ.”

Whereas the manifesto clearly proclaimed the padonki’s philosophical outlook, it did not spell out overtly the means by which the

goals would be pursued. Yet, the form and style of the manifesto were as telling as the content itself. It was in the manifesto that what later grew to become the most recognizable features of the Olbanian language appeared for the first time in a formal document. Note, for instance, the spelling of the unstressed vowel phonemes with their alternates in positions of neutralization, or the full disregard for the voiced versus voiceless opposition in consonants, among others. If the original padonki implemented the free spelling mainly to avoid the taboo words and use them in somewhat palatable form in cyberspace mainly so that they could pass the obscenity filters, the manifesto laid bare the padonki’s yearning for writing not burdened by any existing spelling conventions.12 It is hard to survey the padonki’s initial response to the manifesto, as the website fuck.ru closed soon after the original padonki split into two groups, which are now represented by padonki.org and uدافф.com. However, one of the first reactions still preserved on http://www.guelman.ru/slava/manifest/istochniki/shelli.htm, where the manifesto was first published, not only testifies to the warm embrace of the new ideology, but also shed lights on how the newly prescribed anti-literacy was being consciously implemented by well educated Russian speakers: “Манифест о грамотности вызывает кипяченый восторг (очень не хочется проставлять минимум запятые – в новствах, скрежеща сердцем, я это еще делаю, а в гостевой через раз)вопперемех со смущением (всеки я типа там филолож несколько чуть).”13

4. Olbanian: Norms and Rules
The defenders of the purity of the Russian language accuse the padonki of total disregard of literacy. However, a closer look at Olbanian demonstrates that the sociolect is able to perform its communicative function exactly because it is based on principles known to its users who consciously and consistently break the rules of standard Russian.14 Yet, contrary to another common belief, the basic tenet of their writings is “do it opposite to standard Russian” rather than “write as you speak,” cf. the

---

12 This is not to say that the padonki promoted norm-less and rule-less writings. One finds copious statements similar to the epigraph of this article urging the padonki to follow the norms already established for their sociolect. See also 4 below.
spelling of the manifesto *manifesto* with a voiced final consonant cluster rather voiceless if the latter principle governed the spelling. In the following pages, I discuss the language patterns of Olbanian against those of standard Russian. In addition, I touch upon views expressed by Olbanian users as to the correctness of their language rules. When possible, I will use examples from Gusejnov 2005 in order to give the reader more material illustrating the Olbanian semantic innovations.

The most obvious pattern of alternation of the Russian orthographic rules in Olbanian is the alternative representation of all letters for which Russian has special spelling restrictions. These include the following instances.

A. Digraphemic representation of the monographemic “soft” series vowel letters <ю> and <я>  
As students of Russian learn in their language lessons, the letters <ю> and <я> represent a combination of the phonemes /j/ and /u/ and /a/, respectively, when at the beginning of the word and after a vowel or an non-palatalized consonant, or simply the phoneme /u/ and /a/, respectively, when in a position after a palatalized consonant. While one encounters similar spellings in Olbanian, the tendency is to use digraphemic representations in the former case, e.g.,

- в партию фсту сначало (cf. в партию вступи сначала)
- йазыг (cf. язык)
- афтар выпей йаду! (cf. автор, выпей яду!)
- обйом (cf. объем)

B. Manipulation of the spelling rules for <е> when representing the phoneme /о/
Another important Russian spelling rule concerns the spelling of the phoneme /о/, which resulted from the historical change of “е” to “о”

---

15 Note, however, that the pronunciation of *manifest*, if pronounced according to the norms of standard Russian, is no different from that of *manifest*.
16 Symbols enclosed in less-than and greater-than signs indicate letters (<>); phoneme appear between slashes (/|); phonetic representation appear between square brackets ([|]).
17 Unless otherwise indicated, semantic interpretations of the errative phrases are from Gusejnov 2005.
18 Докажи свою социальную состоятельность, советизм.
19 Выражение неодобрения данного постинга.
when under stress and not followed by a palatalized consonant. In such instances, Modern Standard Russian uses the letter <е> and only occasionally the letter <ё> when this is necessary for pedagogical purposes. The Olbanian practice for <ё> is to be spelled as <о> with a preceding <ь> indicating the palatalization of the consonant and as simply <о> after <ч> or <ж>, i.e., in the instances when the consonants have no phonemic palatalization, e.g.,

- тобольный (cf. тёплый)
- есче ог исче (cf. еще)
- афтар жжот (cf. автор жжет)

C. Manipulation of the spelling rules for <и> and <ы> as well as <е> and <э>

An important fact of Russian phonology is that the phoneme /i/ is represented by its [i] allophone after palatalized consonants, but the allophone [y] after non-palatalized consonants. However, since it is the etymological principle that mainly informs Russian spelling, the allophone [y] continues to be spelled as <и> after /ž/, /š/ and /c/, which were historically palatalized but lost their phonetic palatalization. Olbanian users take a special delight in the spelling of /i/ as <ы> after the letters <ш, ц, ж>, e.g.,

- жывотное (cf. животное)
- пешыти биз ашыбак (cf. пишите без ошибок)
- пешы исчо (cf. пиши еще)

Padonki also use the fact that /ž/, /š/ and /c/ are non-palatalized phonologically in Russian to introduce the letter <э> instead of <е> after those consonants, e.g.,

- тожэ (cf. тоже)
- жэ (cf. же)

D. Free orthographic variation of <щ> and the consonant cluster <сч>, or spelling of both as <щ>

The debatable status of the phoneme(s) represented by the letter <щ> in Russian, i.e., /sč/, /šš/, or /š’:/ triggers uncertainty among the Olbanian

---

20 Выражение удовольствия от постинга, не обязательно одобряемого собеседником; источник: “Глаголом жги сердца людей.”
21 Выражение поощрения автора постинга.
users, as it does in standard Russian. In addition, the phonetic change of articulation we observe in the consonant cluster <ч> makes possible its substation with <ш> or even <щ>. All this results in the fact that <ч>, <ш>, or <щ> are in a free orthographic variation in Olbanian, e.g.,

- иче/ышо (cf. ещё)
- читалачка/щиталачга (cf. считалочка)

E. Spelling of the genitive singular masculine desinence <-ogo>
The spelling of the adjectival-pronominal desinence [-ovo] as <-ogo> is another textbook instantiation of the etymological principle in Russian orthography. In Olbanian, the desinence is spelled regularly with the consonant <в> whereas the spelling of the vowels varies, usually reflecting the vowel reduction (see below), e.g.,

- нашова раднова изыка (cf. нашего родного языка)
- вено в нипо (cf. него)

F. Spelling of /i/ when following velar consonants
Parallel to the spelling rules that Olbanian users change, it is interesting to observe the ones that they do not modify. For instance, the Russian rule requiring the replacement of <ы> by <и> after velar consonants operates very strictly in Olbanian, e.g.,

- (таварисчи мистеръ) китайцы
- (типична) по-америкоски
- (парадуй сваю) багиню

One can only speculate why Olbanian users are reluctant to modify this particular rule, but it is clear that it reflects the unstable phonemic status of /к'/ and /г'/ in Russian phonological system.

Vowel reduction, voicing assimilation, and final devoicing are among the most important features of Russian phonology. With occasional exceptions, neither of them is reflected in writing. These phenomena also play a major role in Olbanian, but contrary to standard Russian, they constitute defining characteristics of the Olbanian spelling.

G. Vowel reduction

---

22 The only exception that I have been able to find so far is the exclamation bgygygygy (http://udaff.com/news/96435.html), which as part of the emotional grammar has no bearing on the claim.
The term “vowel reduction” refers to the articulation of an unstressed vowel sound with less effort than a stressed vowel. Compared to the stressed vowels, Russian unstressed vowels are reduced in terms of volume and length. More importantly, however, the unstressed vowels distinguish less phonological oppositions than the vowels in stressed position. For example, Russian distinguishes five vowel phonemes under stress, /a/, /e/, /o/, /i/, and /u/, but only three unstressed phonemes after non-palatalized consonants, /a/, /i/, and /u/, and only two unstressed vowel phonemes after palatalized consonants, /i/ and /u/. For instance, when not under stress, the opposition between /o/ and /a/ is neutralized in favor of /a/ after non-palatalized consonants, the opposition between the two and /i/ is neutralized in favor of /i/ after palatalized consonants. While from a phonetic point of view the occurrence of the unstressed vowel in pre-tonic versus pre-pre-tonic and post-tonic position matters, it is irrelevant for the phonological neutralizations.

Olbanian spelling of vowels in unstressed position utilizes precisely these phonemic neutralizations. Thus, in the padonki’s practices, unstressed /o/ is spelled as <a> and unstressed /a/ and /o/ are spelled as <u> after palatalized consonants, e.g.,

- адназначна (cf. однозначно)
- языка (cf. языка)
- криатиф, also криатифф (cf. креатив)

H. Neutralization of voicing
Neutralization of voicing refers to the elimination of the difference between the voiced and voiceless member of a binary opposition. In Russian, the neutralization of the opposition between voiced and voiceless consonants manifests itself as voicing assimilation and word-final devoicing. These processes apply obligatorily to all obstruents binary opposed as to voicing. In addition, voicing assimilation is thought

---

23 This feature of Olbanian spelling prompted speculations that the original motivation of udaf.com was to make fun of Belarusian language whose spelling reflects the vowel reduction. The Russian Newsweek article Із'язька есть’ after dismissed such opinions explaining that, “Йад” – это они издавались не над белорусским языком, в котором как слышится, так и пишется, а над русским.” http://www.runewsweek.ru/society/6588/

24 Слово из лексикона В.Жириновского, А.Чубайса и др. деятелей.

25 Постинг, понимаемый как литературное произведение. Note the letter <> in the last example represents the phoneme /i/, as Russian has no phoneme /e/ after soft consonants in an unstressed position.
to apply without exception within words and at the boundaries of prefixes or prepositions and words.

Similar to the vowel reduction, the neutralization of voicing is rarely reflected in Russian spelling. The tendency in Olbanian, however, is to reflect voicing neutralization in writing, both in word-final position, e.g.,

- фканце-канцоф (cf. в конце-концов)
- только не мой моск (cf. только не мой мозг)\(^{26}\)
- рассказ жизненный (cf. рассказ жизненный)\(^{27}\)

and in consonant clusters, e.g.,

- фтопку (cf. в топку)\(^{28}\)
- ашпки (cf. ошибки)

I. Anti-orthographic spellings

True to their basic anti-standard Russian spelling principles, padonki replace etymologically correct forms or forms that already display phonetic spelling with their opposites, e.g.,

- песать/пейсать (cf. писать)
- семпотичный (cf. симпатичный)\(^{29}\)
- превед (cf. привет)

It is not accidental that this pattern runs against what seems to be a well-structured method of spelling in Olbanian. Here we witness the combination of the padonki’s writing conventions with those that emerged from the preved-phenomenon. The basic principle in the latter involved a simple replacement of a voiced consonant with its voiceless counterpart, and vice versa, or the vowel /e/ with the vowel /i/, and vice versa, irrespective of the phonological processes in standard Russian.

The final group of patterns relating the phenomena of Russian phonology with Olbanian spelling includes various simplifications and innovations.

---

\(^{26}\) В реале: “не еби мне мозги”; выражение нежелания выслушивать от собеседника поучения.

\(^{27}\) Выражение относительного одобрения; иногда – поиск извиняющего обстоятельства при общей оценке креатива как скучноватого.

\(^{28}\) Выражение крайнего неудовольствия от чтения поста.

\(^{29}\) Ироническое.
J. Orthographic simplification of consonant clusters, e.g., <*> at the end of a verb spelled as <‐ц, -ца, -щц, -ця>, or <*> as <*>>, e.g.,
   • ащцой, ащцой (cf. отстой)  

K. Various types of abbreviations, e.g.,
   • пиисяд (cf. пятьдесят)
   • сиравно (cf. всё равно)
   • тануах (cf. да ну на хуй)

L. Spelling of the preposition <*> (less often of <*> in intervocalic position) as <*> irrespective of the following consonants, e.g.,
   • ф ащцгафку (cf. в оставку!)
   • ф Зайчега (cf. в Зайчика)
   • тафффай! (cf. давай!)

M. Adding <*> in word-final position
The use of the letter <*> word finally has various functions. The pattern is often used to prevent the normative for Russian word-final devoicing of voiced consonants, e.g.,
   • кто есъхто тудь (cf. кто есть кто тут),

or to indicate foreign pronunciation of Russian words, e.g.,
   • я рыдалъ (cf. я рыдал)

Furthermore, <*> plays a symbolic function marking in cyberspace, as it did earlier in advertisements and signs, the post-perestroika novel tendencies, cf., the online newspaper “Коммерсантъ.” Finally, as hypothesized by Gusejnov, “выражение удовлетворения детабуизацией мата как части возвращения к достоинствам отечественной архаики,” e.g.,
   • хуйь (cf. хуй) 

N. Geminate consonants
In native Russian words, geminate consonants occur at the morpheme boundary as a result of morphological derivation, e.g., оттащить ‘to drag away.’ In words with foreign origin, geminate consonants appear word-internally, e.g., грамматика ‘grammar’, or word-finally, e.g., грипп
'influenza', but in both cases as a part of the stem. The gemination we observe in Olbanian usually involves the consonant /f/, e.g.,

- аффтар (cf. автор)
- падонкафф (cf. подонков)33
- криатифф (cf. креатив)

Other consonants may also undergo gemination, mainly for emotive reasons, e.g.,

- свамми! (cf. с вами)
- помощьщ (cf. помощь)

Phonology is not the only level of the Russian grammar against which Olbanian forms its rules. The recent years demonstrated that morphology also becomes an object of active Olbanian manipulations. What we observe here is a substitution of Russian derivational suffixes with morphemes typical for Olbanian. The most characteristic in this respect is the morpheme {-чег} that derives diminutives, e.g.,

- зайчег (cf. зайчик)
- кросавчег (cf. красавчик)

Despite their appearance of preved-type anti-graphic renderings, the plurals of these forms, i.e., with a voiced consonant preceding the plural marker, кросавчеги (/gi/), зайчеги (/gi/), clearly suggest that the change involves morphology rather than phonology, cf. Šyškin 2006.

Similarly, the suffix {-nek} replaces the Russian suffix {-nik} that denotes persons or objects possessing the quality expressed by the underlying adjective, e.g.,

- мобильнек (cf. мобильник)

Another systematic substitution involves the reflexive particle <-ся>, rendered either as <-цо> or <-ца> when occurring after the infinitive, e.g.,

- бьеццо в истирике (бьется в истирике)34 or as <-со> in past tense forms, e.g.
- панравелсо (cf. понравился)
- ашибсо (cf. ошибся)

Although I consider these three changes morphological substitutions, commentaries on Olbanian usually, with rare exceptions

33 Geminate ff in final position reminds us also of the old-style transliteration of Russian surnames, cf. Smirnoff.
34 Выражение одобрения.
such as Sloboda 2006 and Shapovalova 2008, bunch them together with the purely spelling changes. Moreover, the tendency has been to qualify the Olbanian spelling as anti-orthographic or even amiss-orthography, the latter by the purists.35 Yet, the foregrounding only of the spelling patterns presents the risk to miss the fact that, despite its restricted functional scope, Olbanian is a full-fledged communicative system. It suffices for one to look at the new semantic meanings that Olbanian has developed alongside the new spellings, as illustrated in most of footnotes 34 to 49, to recognize that Olbanian is developing at all linguistic levels.36 Following are some more examples of phrases that underwent truncations and mergers into a lexeme with a new semantic meaning, e.g.,

- ниасилил (cf. не осилил) to express doubts in the quality of a long writing
- аццкая сотона (cf. адский сатана) to express ideological differences37
- морозиш (cf. сморозить чего либо) to express disapproval, antonym of жжош
- пруцца (cf. переться) 'to receive pleasure from something')38

Note in the latter examples, the change in the syntactic requirements of the verb, too, cf. Kuda presh’sia? Kuda oni prutsia? ‘Don’t do it!’ versus the Olbanian expression Ostal’nye prutstsa!

Similarly, most obscene expressions acquire not only new phonological forms, but also new meanings, e.g.,

- дапох (cf. да по хую все) meaning ‘do not care’
- хуясе (cf. ни хуя себе!) to express total surprise
- фигассе (cf. ни фига себе or ничего себе, вот это да!) to express surprise

---

35 Gramota. ru answer, “Поскольку написания ‘превед’, ‘крывач’ — это именно антиорфография. Для того чтобы существовать, эта ‘кривография’…”
36 It is outside the scope of this work to look at the semantic changes Olbanian undergoes; the reader is referred to the works of Gusejnov in this respect.
37 Note the change in the agreement between the adjective and the noun from semantic to grammatical, i.e., according to the grammatical gender of satana.
- хуяс (cf. ни хуя себе!) to express a high level of surprise

An important feature of Olbanian which distinguishes it from standard Russian principally is the treatment of the foreign borrowings. When words from foreign languages enter Russian, they do not undergo the phonological processes that native words undergo and usually stay marked as “foreign” in the Russian mental lexicon. As a quick look at RuNet indicates, this holds true even for the thousands of Anglicisms flooding the Russian-language websites. On the contrary, akin to the мат vocabulary, Olbanian subjects all foreign words to its spelling and grammatical patterns.

- энцедент (cf. инцидент)
- лицензируюцца (cf. лицензируються)
- прессканференции (cf. пресс-конференция)

To illustrate some of the points discussed in this section, following is an excerpt from an essay published under the rubric Novosti on Udaff.com. In addition, I append some of the commentaries on the essay. It is fitting to conclude the discussion of the features of Olbanian language with these kamenty for at least two reasons. As Sokolovskij pointed out in his January 15, 2009 interview, the kamenty is the place where Olbanian was born and took shape as narodnoe tvorčestvo mode of expression. Second, these particular remarks not only comment on the quality of the author’s Olbanian, but also provide an insight into its users’ language attitudes.

“Мир рассталсо с ещё адной мазгавой малекулай. В возрасте 39 лед скачаалазь мячта и адна из главных гирайинь эратицых фантаций пэтэушнегов начала дивяностых Анна.Неколь Смид. Што мы знаим аб этам замишательном чилавеге кроме внешнива вида? Толька несколька ключивых маментоф, приведших к трачнаму завиришенийю этай пачти детективнай исторейи.

Comments:
Што я могу добавить ат сибя? Помним, скорбим, спасиба Аня, падрачиле.”

5. Summary

In short, as a principal representative of an array of norm-breaking and non-compliance non-standard language varieties on RuNet, the padonki Olbanian is a full-fledged writing communicative system with its own spelling rules, developing phonology and morphology, as well as semantics. The users of the language articulate their ideological belief of freedom of expression by violating the norms of standard Russian and creating their own novel rules. I demonstrate that padonki favor the opposite-to-standard-Russian conventions rather than restricting themselves to the write-as-you-speak principle, as previously assumed. Since the success of such language experiments is contingent on the state of linguistic consciousness of its users, writings in Olbanian reveal a high level of awareness of the norms of standard Russian as well as of Olbanian on the part of its users.

One important issue that further research has to address is the effects of Olbanian on the spoken register of its users. Sloboda, for instance, alludes to blog discussions that indicate Olbanian-type pronunciation of phrases such as f atistafku! [f actafku] or krasavcheg [krasavcheg], but gives no reference to them. He also indicates that an artist named DJ Slona sings all the words in his song Preved medved the way they are spelled in Olbanian. Aleksandr Gavrilov, the chief editor of Knizhnoe obozrenie, shares similar observations, Я своими ушами

40 http://udaff.name/news/66565/
It has to be admitted, however, that we lack sufficient records in order to develop a convincing hypothesis how padonki speak in their offline meetings that have begun to take place in different cities in Russia.  

For instance, on December 6, 2008, the Russian television channel Russia.RU reported on the megatusovka (in Sokolovskii’s words) that took place in Moscow. In the short piece called Kak tusit UDAFF? Ostorozhno, topless!’, the camera followed Sokolovskii to and from the meeting. With the exception of one blip, there were no obscenities or any typical Olbanian phrases in his remarks. However, in his most recent television interview for the program VOT! Sokolovskii told the story of his friend’s son who received a low grade because he wrote batinacheg (cf. botinochek ‘a small boot’) in his homework. Sokolovskii explained that the little boy, who has never been exposed to any Olbanian type of writing, spelled the word in this way because his father spoke Olbanian at home all the time. Taken at face value, this episode supports a hypothesis that there exist individuals who not only write, but also speak in Olbanian. More importantly, in terms of language acquisition, no matter how isolated the episode may seem, the way this little boy learned the word batinacheg is no different from the way children acquire their native language. Should further investigations collaborate such observations, the hypothesis of Olbanian as a complete language system finds an additional support.

References:
Barlow, J. P. Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace,  
http://homes.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html.


42 http://www.cirota.ru/forum/view.php?subj=81064 ‘I have heard with my own ears how young people pronounce words such as priveda, prived, that the orthoepic norm has changed’.

43 This fact by itself is significant as it indicates that the padonki culture is moving from online to offline.


