



Language alternation in a multilingual community: How Roma in Estonian use their rich language repertoire

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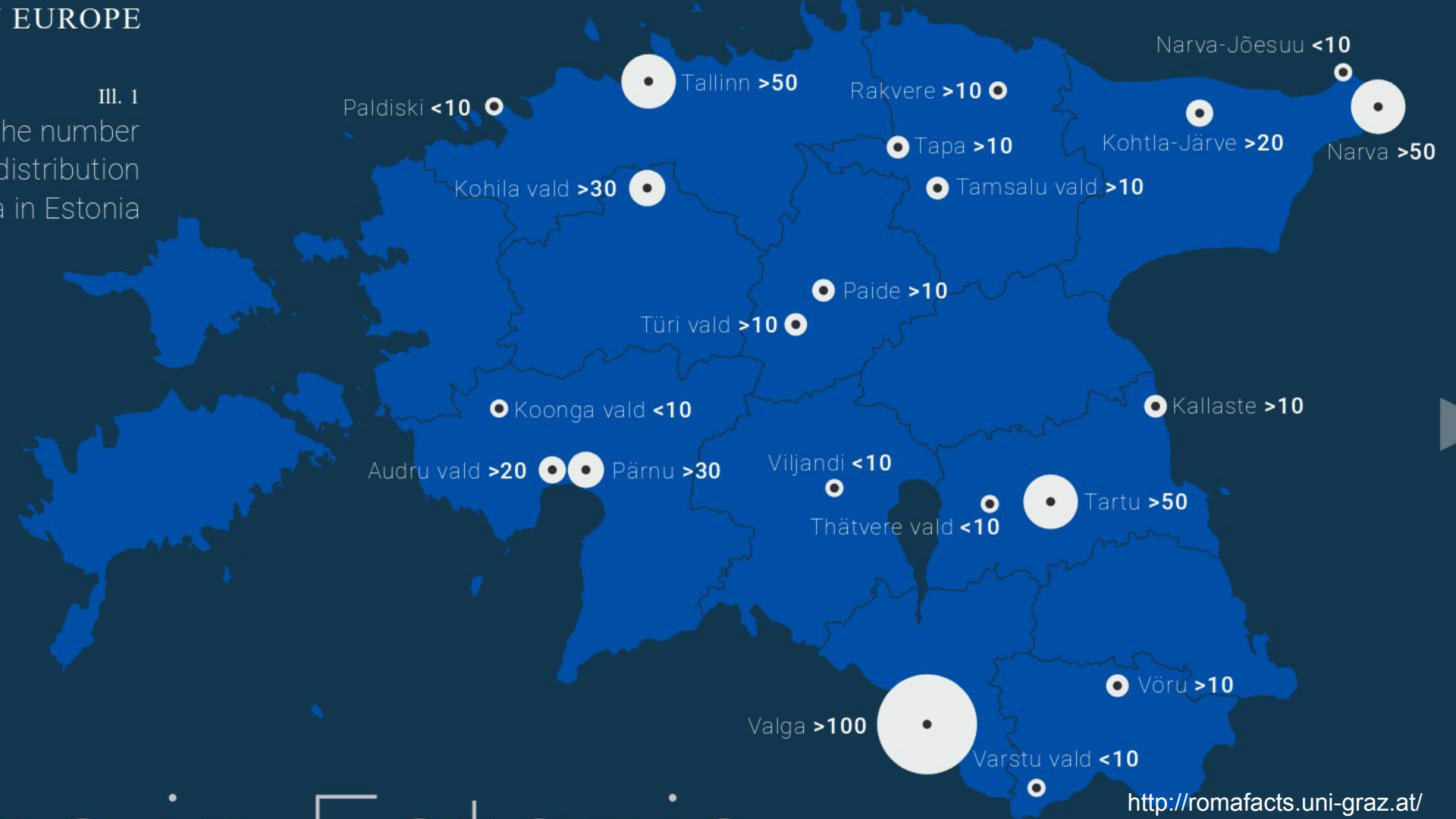
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LANGUAGE: THE USER IN FOCUS

III. 1

the number
distribution
a in Estonia







There is no 'pure' Romani

Sovas lija kraasi an vast i duminela i duminela, sir te kraasinel da. Sovas lija kaali värva, oi sorri, lija kaali kraasa, lija fenjo kaali kraasa, i kraasindža les fenjo kaales. Dikhela kana korakos pes rekativ i lija te rovel.

‘The owl took colours and thought and thought, how to paint it [the raven]. The owl took the black colour, oh sorry, took the black colour, and painted him entirely black. The raven now looked at itself in the reflection of the river and started to cry.’

Romani

Russian

Latvian

Estonian

Estonian



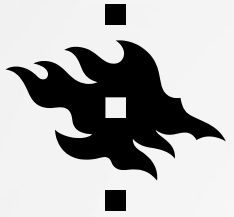
Multilingualism and language practices of Roma

‘even in the most traditional communities, Romani-language conversation contains extensive code mixing’ (Matras 2002, 241)

Interaction in Romani takes place in ‘bilingual mode’ (Matras 2009)

‘sociolinguistically, Romani is an oral, functionally restricted, dominated, stateless diaspora language with grown-up users always being plurilingual’ (Halwachs 2023, 432)

Translanguaging is ‘an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages as has been often the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable’ (García 2009, García and Wei 2014)



Data

Narratives

Spontaneous conversations

Romani
Estonian

Romani
Russian

Romani
Estonian
Russian

Romani
Russian
Latvian

Estonian
Russian



W35 Latvian Romani, Russian, Estonian, English speaker

Te doi sis baaredira ministiata- ministrijatir, **ministerstvo**, te jone- jone dikhle **pa-nastajaššemu** so- **pa-nastajaššemu** sis kerdi butti. Dova isis lači **vazmožnost** te sikaves so ame ašti te keres, te čaavorensa ašti te keres te isi- isi povodos te- te barjosa an dova te desa podrikiresa amen, sob te barjosa an dova.

‘And there is a director from the ministr-, ministry, **ministry**, and they see that we **really** that- **really** have done some work. It is a good **opportunity** to show what we are able to do, and what we can do with children, and it is an occasion to grow in that, and to give support to us to grow in that.’

Romani
Estonian
Russian



W65, W45, W35, W30 Latvian Romani, Estonian, Russian speakers

- | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|--|
| 1. | W45: Mama, kaj dada ločija? | 13. | W65: Rändasid |
| 2. | W65: Kaj? Kaj? Kaj ločija? | 14. | W45: A dada kaj ločija? |
| 3. | W45: Me nadžinaw, kaj dada ločija. | 15. | W65: Kus mina- |
| 4. | W30: Sir tu nadžines, kai dada ločija? | 16. | W45: Jõhvi vä? |
| 5. | W45: Tu an Keila ločijan, a jow? | 17. | W65: Ei ole. [...] Nadžinaw. |
| 6. | W65: Ma olen Keila. An Rakvere. | 18. | W45: Daže nadžinaw, kaj dada ločija. |
| 7. | W45: Aha, Rakvere. | 19. | W65: Mine küsi järgi. |
| 8. | W30: Sir tu biji ločijan? | 20. | W30: A rakir peski krupnjaki zupatir. Sir kerna? |
| 9. | W65: Vagedir | 21. | W45: Rakir! |
| 10. | W30: Rändasite? | 22. | W65: Võtan liha. |
| 11. | W65: Jaah | 23. | W45: A romanes rakir! |
| 12. | W35: Mmm | 24. | W65: Laa mas... |

Romani
Estonian
Russian



W65, Latvian Romani, Estonian, Russian speaker

W1: I korjela- kedelas lupati, korjela kaltse, nad olid tööl varumiskontoris siis, sis bucha kerde, korjavad need kaltse, patom lija ande Paida kokkuostus, nemad saavad jälle vastu- dena trauki, võtavad jälle need asju ja lähevad jälle suvel välja ja siis vaatavad, tada dikhena kaj šukar stettos kaj veš, kaj paaning, kaj rekka, šukar-šukar štettos. Võtavad teevad telki, kerna buudi.

“And they gathered- gathered rags, gathered rags, they were working at the stocking office back then, worked there, gather these rags, then gave these to Paide stocking office, in return they receive- give dishes, they take these things and they again go around in the summer, and then they search, then they search where is a nice place by forest, by water, by a river/lake, beautiful-beautiful place. They put up a tent, put up a tent.”

Romani
Estonian
Russian



Narrative from W55, Latvian Romani, Estonian, Russian speaker

“Pal dava i dewlesko laikos končinela pes. I kana deel dikhela, kai maanuša džana. Ke deel? Pal dava i rukavad’it’ ili lačena dai te dživen. Palda uus valitsus jeela, dewleskiiro, i da Venemaa isi, sir profet ennustuses, si pasljednu. Jow si uus impeerium, Vene uus impeerium. Jow kai deel te nakerel dai, noh, kan’ec, jow jawjasis i angloameerika neevi võimus, või- võim, aga doi šindo “Tema sarved murtakse”. Tema kaua nadžala, duur nadžala, Venemaa, Venemaa sigi rukavad’it’, jow si visbaari impeerium kanapa. Pal daa Ameerika traxala lestir. No kamel lesa vähemalt. A traxala so ta rikirla pes, jone traxala, jake si Biibla la čindo “Ta kohkub temast.” Xaladoorendir. I xalad- noh ee lõ- põhjakuningas ir doi čindo isi- isi sümboliseerinela karu, ta ainult paisub ja paisub võimu järgi, paisub. Pal dava paisub i talle anti seda võimu praegult. I kana is- kanapad džala. I deel phenela: “Da kaua ei kesta.” I les nikon nadolela la tele. Jake profet ennustuses, nikon nisane riiki nadola les tele. Tema sarved murtakse i kes murrab? Jumal. Doi čindo isi. Jumal murrab need sarved, impeeriumi sarved, Venemaa sarved. A sarved, mis sümboliseerivad? Võimu, i ame dživasamgi pasljedna vremja, pasljednja. /.../ Tu nadžines dava?”

Romani
Estonian
Russian



Conclusion

Roma and Romani speakers in Estonia are plurilingual.

Language alternation is frequent and accepted among Roma.

Speakers are using several different languages and language alternating patterns and varying between the patterns.

Language/Languaging choice is based on the other speakers, the situation, purpose of the communication etc.



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