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Chuvash Ethnoblogging as a Communicative Phenomenon: Bilingual and Transcultural Aspects

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Abstract. The paper is devoted to identifying the distinctive communicative behavior of Chuvash ethnically oriented bloggers, prominent actors in the modern media space who spread Chuvash ethnocultural content on their social media pages and build positioning around ethnic self-determination. The speech activity of bloggers is considered from the perspective of the theory of translanguaging and is evaluated as a set of transcultural practices. The purpose of the study is to determine the uniqueness of the communicative practices of Chuvash ethnobloggers in the sociolinguistic aspect. The empirical basis consists of the channels of the three media managers in the Telegram messenger. The methods of included observation and content analysis based on the ideas of Internet and media linguistics, theories of artistic bilingualism and transculturation were used in the research. The posts published by bloggers from January 2024 to February 2025 were selected using a continuous sampling method. The results of the study showed that Chuvash ethnoblogging as a communicative phenomenon is characterized by transcultural specificity with a set of variable bilinguals. The Russian-Chuvash bilingual communication practices of the considered authors of the Telegram channels are formed on two levels: the messenger interface and a separate post. Focusing on a mass audience, bloggers run pages mainly in Russian, using the Chuvash language accentuated, often interspersed with individual words and expressions for the purpose of ethnocultural self-presentation and, accordingly, ethnomarketing content.

Key words: Chuvash ethnoblogging, bilingual linguistic personality, bilingualism, chuvashisms, transculturation, ethnoblog, media text.

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Чувашский этноблогинг как коммуникативный феномен: билингвальный и транскультурный аспекты

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Аннотация. Исследование посвящено изучению коммуникативного поведения чувашских этнически ориентированных блогеров — заметных акторов современного медиапространства, на своих страницах в социальных медиа распространяющих чувашский этнокультурный контент и выстраивающих позиционирование вокруг этнического самоопределения. В работе речевая деятельность блогеров рассматривается с позиции теории транслингвильности и оценивается как набор транскультурных практик. Цель исследования — определить своеобразие коммуникативных практик чувашских этноблогеров в социолингвистическом аспекте. Эмпирической базой выступили каналы трех медиатеделей в мессенджере «Телеграм». Исследование проведено методами включенного наблюдения и контент-анализа с опорой на идеи интернет- и медиалингвистики, теорий художественного билингвизма и транскультурации. Методом сплошной выборки отбирались посты, опубликованные блогерами с января 2024 г. по февраль 2025 г. Результаты исследования показали, что чувашскому этноблогингу как коммуникативному явлению свойственна транскультурная специфика с набором вариативных билингвем. Русско-чувашские двуязычные коммуникативные практики авторов рассмотренных телеграм-каналов складываются на двух уровнях: интерфейса мессенджера и отдельного поста. Блогеры, ориентируясь на массовую аудиторию, ведут страницы преимущественно на русском языке, чувашский язык используют акцентно, зачастую в виде вкрапления отдельных слов и выражений в целях этнокультурной самопрезентации и соответственно этномаркирования контента.

Ключевые слова: чувашский этноблогинг, билингвильная языковая личность, билингвизм, чувашизмы, транскультурация, этноблог, медиатекст

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Introduction

The formation and development of the Internet in the first quarter of the 21st century has formed a special communicative environment in which everyone has the opportunity to interact with a wide audience: to be not only a consumer, but also a producer of mass information. Users who are able to attract and retain subscribers' attention through their online activity and to satisfy subscribers' information and communication needs are called bloggers and today are perceived as full-fledged media actors, along with journalists. However, while the latter

disseminate information in order to fulfill their professional duty, which is socially important, authors engaged in blogging implement their content projects for personal, individual-authorial purposes: usually with the intention of self-expression and self-actualization [1].

Observing the actions of users on the Internet, we note the growth of ethnocultural content and the emergence of a special segment in the domestic media system — ethnic bloggers, or ethnobloggers — communicators who produce messages of ethnocultural content and build positioning on their pages in social media around ethnic self-definition. Their communicative behavior is increasingly becoming the subject of special study not only by linguists, but also by sociologists, ethnologists, and cultural anthropologists [2–5], and is considered from the perspectives of cyberethnography and digital sociology (as an online representation of ethnic identity [6]), media theory (content-thematic, genre-format and other characteristics of the content and promotion of ethnoblogs [7]), and cultural studies (as an online representation of ethnic culture [8]). Currently, there are known scientific works devoted to the analysis of Udmurt [9; 10], Khanty [11], Evenki [12] ethnoblogging. However, similar media practices of representatives of other peoples of Russia are noticeable in the information space — especially the Chuvash in quantitative and qualitative terms. The intensification of “Chuvash” content, the increase in the number of its producers, the emergence of various forms and ways of ethnomarked media communication are among the many manifestations of ethnos existence in the digital age and pose new research questions for humanities scholars. E.A. Jagafova and A.S. Rogovoi comprehensively study aspects of the Internet representation of Chuvash ethnicity [13–15], A.D. Gavrilov — mediatized practices of their self-identification [16], including the linguistic and stylistic specifics of Chuvash ethnoblogs in visually centric social media [17].

This research is aimed at determining the uniqueness of communicative practices of Chuvash ethnobloggers in the sociolinguistic aspect. The empirical base was the content posted between January 2024 and February 2025 in three popular Chuvash ethnoblogs: the telegram channels “An ta kala!” (from sensu. *That’s for sure!*, @antakala, 2450 subscribers),¹ “Savăpri” (named after one of the Chuvash pre-Christian female names, @savanpiki, 810 subscribers)² and “Sukhvi kalat” (from sensu. *Sofya says*, @suhvi_kalat, 520 subscribers).³ The material of the study was chosen based on the criteria of diversity of communicative strategies of the authors and at the same time the presence of common tactics, peculiar to the speech portrait of the majority of Chuvash ethnobloggers. The work was carried out by the methods of inclusive observation, continuous sampling and content analysis.

¹ Telegram channel “An ta kala!”, 28 March 2025, <https://t.me/antakala>

² Telegram channel “Savăpri”, 28 March 2025, <https://t.me/savanpiki>

³ Telegram channel “Sukhvi kalat,” 28 March 2025, https://t.me/suhvi_kalat

In the course of familiarization with Chuvash ethnoblogs, including those that were not included in the research sample, it was established that their authors, as addressees of messages, publish ethnocultural content, pursuing the general intention of expressing ethnic identity in the context of virtual self-presentation. In order to manage the addressee's attention, they create multiformat, adapted to the dissemination platform transcultural multimedia texts-posts, the information in which is transmitted by means of a verbal code with the addition of non-letter symbols, iconic signs of objects and compressed signs of emotions (thematic emoji), as well as by means of auditory (accompanied by famous Chuvash songs) and visual (for example, traditional or modified national costume is shown) codes, often ethnomarked, with the help of ethno-marked, and with the help of a variety of other codes. Replicated messages are bilingual — written in Russian with Chuvash-language embeddings of different volume, used as an ethno-identification marker. Such bilingualism in the communicative behavior of Chuvash ethnobloggers is explained, on the one hand, by their orientation to Internet users, mostly Russian-speaking, and on the other hand, by the author's intensionality. The choice of the topic of the message and its realization in the act of communication takes into account the potential of background knowledge of the user who is not immersed in the topic and does not speak Chuvash language, contributes to the understanding of the material by the mass audience and encourages it to feedback. Betting on ethnocultural topics from the point of view of communicativism and media promotion allows the blogger to make an original statement about himself, to stand out against the background of other communicators-media-makers and to be remembered by users in a given image, in the communicative role of "Chuvash ethnoblogger."

The results of the stage-by-stage observation of ethnobloggers' media speech allowed us to clarify the theoretical basis of the study. In our opinion, the speech activity of Chuvash ethnobloggers, whose media creativity in Internet is a fusion, a dialog of two cultures and languages — Chuvash and Russian, can be correlated with the creation of a Russian-language work by an ethnically non-Russian author, considered in the framework of the theory of Russian-foreign artistic bilingualism and more broadly — translingualism as "the practice of artistic creation in a language that is not ethnically primary for the author" [18. P. 184] and in the context of the theory of transculturation as a text that "ceases to be only a product of speech activity subject to structural preparation. It turns into a zone of 'cross-pollination' with multiple meanings, becomes a representative of cultures — their mutual overlapping, mutual repulsion, symbiosis, subordination, adaptation" [19. P. 416]. [19. C. 416]. Thus, the main premise of our study is the thesis that the linguistic personality of a Chuvash ethnoblogger can be characterized as a creative information-media (according to the classification of Professor A.V. Bolotnov [20]) bilingual personality of an author of ethnic Chuvash origin who creates transcultural content mainly in Russian.

Discussion

The first media projects, declared by their authors as Chuvash ethnoblogs, attracted the attention of the mass audience in 2018–2019. These were personal pages of young people in the social network ‘VKontakte’, profiles in Instagram (owned by Meta, a company recognized as extremist and banned in the Russian Federation), channels in TikTok and YouTube. The main part of the content of such resources revealed stories of ethnic self-determination, covered the historical and cultural heritage of the Chuvash, the originality of Chuvash culture with a focus on the author’s perception of it. Sometimes personal blogs grew into thematic projects. The same authors could maintain several accounts in different social media. Some of them developed cross-platform, forming an ecosystem of media products differing from each other in format within one single project of the same name: blogs, podcasts, special projects, etc. (“An ta kala!”, “Chăvash TV”, “Chuvishenka”, etc.).

Today, Chuvash ethnoblogs are presented practically on all media platforms: social networks, messengers, video hosting, and podcast platforms. They are run by young women (mostly) and men aged 18–35. In the development of the Chuvash ethnoblog they are driven by ethnic self-consciousness, desire for consolidation and integration of the people, preservation and popularization of their culture and language; desire for creative self-expression and formation of personal brand in social media; need for professional self-fulfillment, Internet popularity, commercial success (promotion by musicians, designers, photographers, event hosts and other specialists of their own goods and services with national colour) and others.

Posts in such blogs, as a rule, contain several of the most obvious ethnomarkers: the Chuvash language, state symbols of the republic, national clothing, music, works of Chuvash artists, poets, writers, etc. The Chuvash ethnobloggers use images of traditional culture and offer author modifications: they perform their versions (covers) of famous Chuvash songs, organize thematic photo sessions. When releasing content, Chuvash ethnobloggers use images of traditional culture and offer author’s modifications: they perform their own versions (covers) of famous Chuvash songs, organize thematic photo shoots based on folklore and artistic works, create and wear jewelry and costumes that visually resemble traditional ones, etc. They increase interest in Chuvash culture in the Internet environment, unite Chuvash people living in different cities and countries on their pages, and, having interested users with similar identity, motivate them to ethnotag their accounts.

Chuvash ethnoblogging in the messenger Telegram is a set of communicative practices of maintaining an author’s feed of publications — a channel. Blogs in this service are located in the same list with chats with subscribers from the contact book and other Telegram users. To receive messages from channels, subscribers need to find them beforehand and subscribe to updates. Interpersonal communication

in Telegram runs parallel to mass communication. Users can correspond, for example, with acquaintances and read channels in parallel. Therefore, blog authors think about how their resource looks in the general list of chat rooms, and think about the displayed elements of its interface — the name, the main photo (from the interface of the channel card containing general information about it) and the beginning of the last post (from the interface of the channel's publication feed). As a rule, these are the positions where ethnoblogs contain bilinguals and visual ethnomarked elements. Thus, two sections are communicatively significant in this messenger: the channel card and the feed of publications in it. The first one consists of several content fields (photo, channel name, link, description), the second one consists of posts posted by the author. The platform allows you to make publications containing text, photos, videos, stickers, audio of limited volume, so, as a rule, one message can be split into several posts of verbal, non-verbal and creolized content.

We chose three ethnoblogs in the messenger Telegram as material for analysis: the channels “An ta kala!”, “Savānpi” and “Sukhvi kalat”. While in the first and third projects the image of the author is not so clearly represented visually (the author does not appear in photos and videos), in the second project the author occupies a central position (he is almost always present in photos and videos). The first and third ethnoblogs contain textual and graphic content to a greater extent, while the second one is regularly accompanied by video. Being created for dissemination in social media, posts in ethnoblogs have all the properties inherent in Internet texts (incompleteness, non-linearity, mobility, multimedia, interactivity) and media texts (mediality, mass, polycode, openness).

In the course of the study we found that Russian-Chuvash bilingual communicative practices of the authors of the considered Telegram channels are formed at two levels: (1) the messenger interface (cards and publication feeds) and (2) the individual post. Let us turn to typical combinations of their code-switching and determine the degree of presence of the Chuvash language at each level in order.

1. Bilingual communicative practices of ethnobloggers traced at the level of the interface of the Telegram channel:

1. *Filling in the interface fields “Channel name”* [(Figure 1), *An ta kala!*], “Link” in transliterated form [(Figure 2), *@suhvi_kalat* (*Sukhvi kalat*)] and sometimes — “Description” in Chuvash language [(Figure 3), “*tāvan | a new look at the native...*”]. Chuvashisms in channel names and links carry the key semantic load: they convey the main essence of the content, evoke the right associations (related to the Chuvash people and their culture) and make the blog memorable against the background of other channels. “Description”, unlike the other fields, is more often represented in Russian with the inclusion of one or two prominent Chuvashisms, contextually decipherable. The arrangement of these fields on one page is perceived as a bilingual statement, the Chuvash language part of which is responsible for ethnomarking, and the Russian language part — for accessibility to the all-Russian Internet audience.

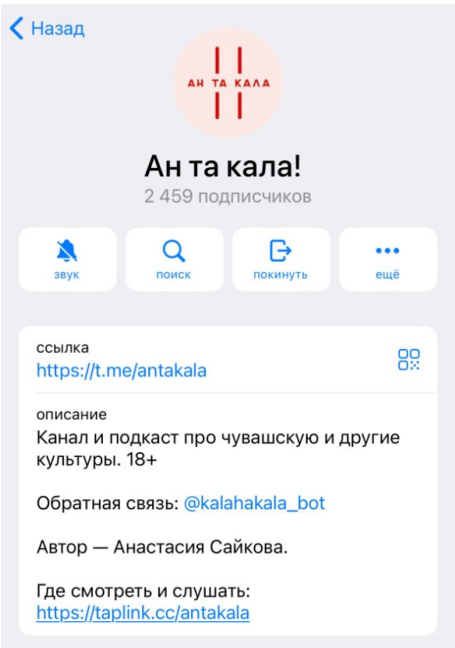


Figure 1. Filling in the interface field “Channel name” in Chuvash language (“An ta kala!”)

Source: Telegram channel “Ан та кала!”,
28 March 2025, <https://t.me/antakala>

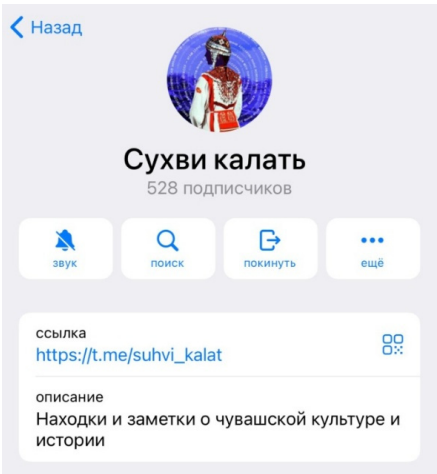


Figure 2. Filling in the Chuvash interface field “Link” in transliterated form (@suhvi_kalat)

Source: Telegram channel “Suhvi kalat,”
28 March 2025, https://t.me/suhvi_kalat

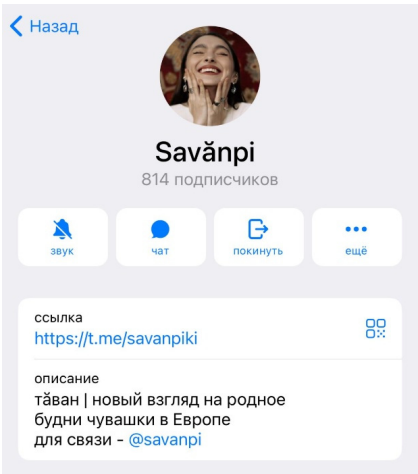


Figure 3. Filling in the transliterated interface field “Description” in the Chuvash language (@suhvi_kalat) (“tăvan | a new look at the native...”)

Source: Telegram channel “Savānpī,”
28 March 2025, <https://t.me/savanpiki>

2. *Alternation in the feed of publications* made only in the Chuvash language, only in Russian, Russian-language publications with an inclusion of Chuvashisms. This approach allows the author to demonstrate his linguistic competence and, as bloggers themselves sometimes point out, to remain interesting to subscribers who have a request for exclusively Chuvash-language texts.

When a user scrolls through the feed of posts, he/she finds himself/herself in a bilingual communicative space and, even if he/she does not speak Chuvash, can clearly form an idea of the resource. In general, ethnobloggers turn to the Chuvash language not in order to be more understandable to readers, which is sometimes caused by the speaker's switching to another language. They focus on a multilingual audience fluent in Russian, so they use Chuvash as a hallmark of ethnoblogging, as a component of ethnoculture, to associate with the Chuvash people.

Chuvashisms in Russian-language posts, as a rule, are in a strong position (Figure 4): in the first part of a two-part headline consisting of a Chuvash-language statement and its translation into Russian (*Man kunsem* | *my days now*) and / or at the end (in the form of a question to the reader). This arrangement is pragmatically conditioned: it allows the blogger to focus the reader's attention on the Chuvash embeddings and thus reinforce the verbal ethnomarker.

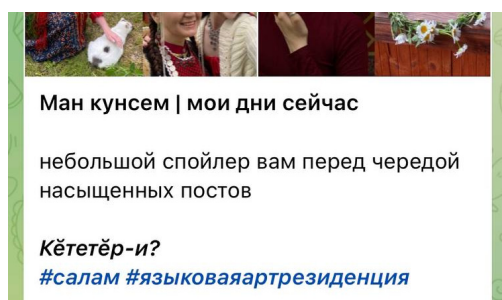


Figure 4. An example of a Russian-language post, in which Chuvashisms are presented in a strong position: the title and the ending

Source: Telegram channel “Savānpi,”
10 April 2025, <https://t.me/savanpiki>

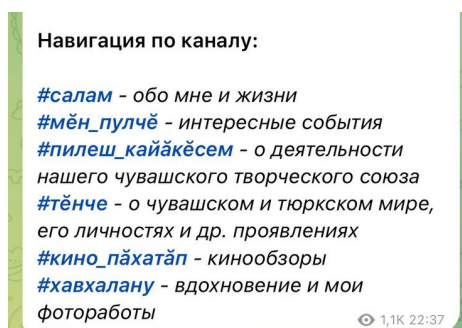


Figure 5. The use of the Chuvash language in hashtags

Source: Telegram channel “Savānpi,”
28 March 2025, <https://t.me/savanpiki>

3. *Use of the Chuvash language in hashtags* (Figure 5). In Telegram channels they designate thematic headings and are responsible for navigation, quick access to posts on the stated topic. In predominantly Russian-language Chuvash ethnoblogs, Chuvashisms in the hashtag position not only perform a symbolic function, but also serve as a means of accentuation, involving users in the content of the publication, creating a kind of dialogicality between the text of the message and the title of the rubric.

2. Bilingual communicative practices of ethnobloggers traceable at the level of a separate post:

1. *The use of the Chuvash language in the title* [partially or completely (Figure 6)] and in the ending [partially (Figure 7) or completely] of the text, the rest of it is in Russian. Chuvashisms in these compositional elements perform informative (conditionally encode the main meaning of the post, the idea of the text), advertising (responsible for attracting the addressee's attention), graphically distinguishing (as a rule, they are formalized by the authors in bold) functions.

It's not uncommon for bloggers to present some phrases in two language versions at once.



Figure 6. The headline is in Chuvash, the rest of the post is in Russian

Source: Telegram channel “Sukhvi kalat,” 10 April 2025, https://t.me/suhvi_kalat



Figure 7. Partial use of the Chuvash language at the end of the post

Source: Telegram channel “Savānpi,” 10 April 2025, <https://t.me/savanpiki>

2. *Insertion of Chuvashisms* (precedent phenomena, formulas of speech etiquette, ethnographic, etc.) into the main part of the Russian-language text (sometimes with translation into Russian).

For example, the author of the Telegram channel “An ta kala!” in Russian-language posts uses Chuvashisms in the aesthetic function (for semantic and language play) and in the so-called password function (to establish the relationship between “friend and foe”). Thus, in the post below (Figure 8), the word *ukhmakh* is translated from Chuvash into Russian as “fool.” In this context, the audience does not perceive this reference as an insult, as it continues the well-known statement (“*Do not leave your inner Chuvashia*”) and as if confirms the irreversibility of the precedent phrase. At the same time, it refers to the music video of the same name, which is announced in the post. In addition, the author uses the Chuvash word to mark his reaction to a fragment from the clip: “*The women’s choir at the end — chĕrere.*” The foreign-language embedding is translated from Chuvash into Russian as “in the heart,” which creates an intertextual connection with the youth slang lexeme “in the heart” meaning “liked,” “deeply touched.” Such uses

carry a stylistic load and perform an expressive function (help the author to convey his assessment, create a certain emotional background, establish a trusting relationship with users).

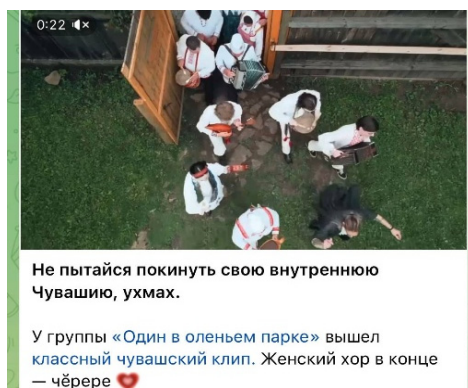


Figure 8. Embedding Chuvashisms in a Russian-language post to achieve the desired communicative effect
Source: Telegram channel “An ta kala!,” 10 April 2025, <https://t.me/antakala>

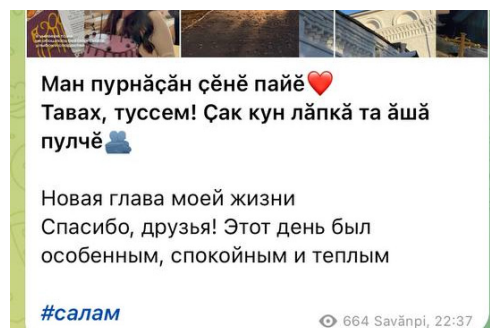


Figure 9. A post that duplicates information in two languages within the text
Source: Telegram channel “Savānpi,” 10 April 2025, <https://t.me/savanpiki>

3. *Using Chuvash as one of the two language versions of the post text* (Figure 9). Such posts duplicate the content: they are presented more often first in Chuvash, then in Russian translation. The pragmatic effectiveness of such a communicative move of the author is apparently due to the aim of demonstrating language ability and satisfying the audience’s need for Chuvash-language content.

4. *Use of the Chuvash language in the graphic accompaniment of the post text* (Chuvashisms are inscribed in non-verbal space, sometimes with translation into Russian). Photos, illustrations, infographics as a visual code of the multimedia text are transcultural in essence, because being a part of a predominantly Russian-language post, they contain traditional and modified images of Chuvash ethnic culture (symbols, colors, images of famous figures, other visual autostereotypes), as well as inclusions of Chuvashisms, which ethnomark and creolize the graphic content separately (Figure 10).

5. *The use of the Chuvash language in the video accompanying the text of the post:* for example, in short videos in the vlog format. Ethnobloggers shoot “trending” videos because social network algorithms promote recognizable content. This communicative practice allows them to show their online creativity to a larger number of users and possibly interest them in ethnocultural topics. The text in Chuvash is reproduced in the blogger’s voice and usually accompanies the video. In the frame one can see subtitles with a transcription and translation of what was said into Russian (Figure 11), or vice versa: the blogger tells the story in Russian, but subtitles are placed only in Chuvash.

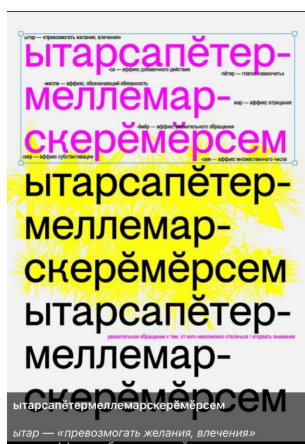


Figure 10. The use of the Chuvash language in the graphic accompaniment of the text of the post

Source: Telegram channel “Sukhvi kalat,” 10 April 2025, https://t.me/suhvi_kalat

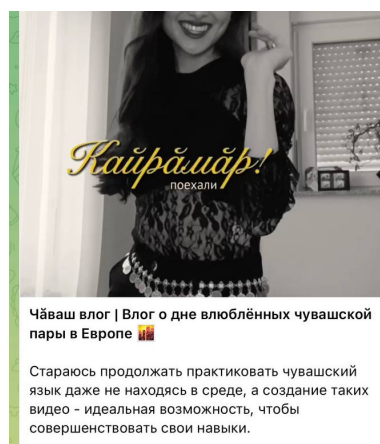


Figure 11. The use of the Chuvash language in the video accompaniment of the post: oral and written forms

Source: Telegram channel “Savānpī,” 10 April 2025, <https://t.me/savanpiki>

As an example of transcultural practices it is also worth mentioning such practice as musical accompaniment of bilingual text: the author attaches a popular song in Chuvash language to the post.

Conclusion

The analysis of the considered Telegram channels allowed us to establish the peculiarity of communicative behavior peculiar to Chuvash ethnobloggers. It consists in the Russian-Chuvash bilingual and transcultural construction of media statements, mostly in Russian with the inclusion of some words and expressions in Chuvash. Speech activity of Chuvash ethnobloggers allows them to widely represent their ethnocultural identity in the global information space, to stand out against the background of other content producers, thus attracting attention to their person and forming ideas “about Chuvash” in a multicultural environment. The identified communicative practices are effectively used by them both separately and in various combinations for successful realization of the author’s intention and strengthening of pragmatic impact on the audience.

In our opinion, the integrated methodology based on the sociolinguistic approach, based on the ideas of Internet and media linguistics, theories of artistic bilingualism and transculturation, is productive in assessing the communicative practices of ethnobloggers. The chosen toolkit allowed us to visually trace how Russian and Chuvash languages interact in the statements of Chuvash ethnobloggers and how Russian and Chuvash worldviews co-function. Unbalanced variant bilingualism, motivated by different communicative strategies and authorial intents

determining them, testifies that the creative laboratory of contemporary media artists is a space of speech innovations, which is practically not yet comprehended and requires regular monitoring research, taking into account the increasing complexity of the digital environment and the flourishing of screen culture.

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