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Special Issue

Post-Soviet identities: Ethnic, national, linguistic, and imperial

Guest Editors
Anastassia Zabrodskaja
(Tallinn University and University of Tartu, Estonia)
and
Martin Ehala
(University of Tartu, Estonia)

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Article

Language and identity in the late Soviet Union and thereafter

Anastassia Zabrodskaja and Martin Ehala

Abstract

The introduction to the special issue takes a brief look at the history of ethnolinguistic policies in the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and post-Soviet space. It also covers relevant key terms for understanding linguistic processes taking place after the collapse of the USSR. At the end it introduces the case studies included in this special issue.

KEYWORDS: LANGUAGE POLICY, IDENTITY, COLLECTIVE IDENTITY, POST-SOVIET IDENTITIES

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1 Introduction

The articles in this comparative special issue of Sociolinguistic Studies, 'Post-Soviet identities: Ethnic, national, linguistic, and imperial', are focussed on the dynamic of the collective identity formation of the peoples in the post-Soviet space through an analysis of the linguistic and inter-ethnic situations in five distinct settings: Kazakhstan, the Autonomous Republic of Sakha in the Russian Federation, Moldova, the Baltic countries and the Russian-speaking diasporas in Europe (in Germany and Norway in particular). In her recent overview of multilingualism in post-Soviet space, Pavlenko (2013) notes that the language regimes and processes in this area are still insufficiently studied, particularly in the comparative perspective. This special issue has emerged in the wake of the international conference *Hot and Cold Ethnicities in Post-Soviet Space,* held in Tallinn, Estonia in October 2011, and it is focussed on just this goal, together with another collection from the same conference (see Zabrodskaja and Ehala, 2014).

We start this introduction with a short overview of the ethnic and language policies in the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union (SU) and post-Soviet space. Then we discuss some notions, such as *Russification* and *nativisation*, which are commonly used to label and characterise language and ethnic policies in the area, pointing to the highly ideologically charged nature of these notions, which makes it hard to analyse the processes that they describe objectively and impartially. We suggest that the notion of *normalisation* (Reniu i Tresserras, 1995) captures the common spirit of these notions and allows for a more balanced analysis. In the final section of this introduction, we present the case studies that have been included in this special issue.

2 Historical background

Identity-related language issues have been central in Russia and its (post-)imperial territories for well over 150 years, after purposeful Russification policies were first introduced following the 1863 January Uprising in the territory of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Weeks, 2010; Pavlenko, 2011). Until that time, Russification was mainly unplanned and administrative, i.e. the spread of Russian occurred voluntarily due to the social mobility of separate individuals in terms of entering the higher social classes, and due to the development of an imperial infrastructure for the centralisation of the state (Thaden, 1981). Both of these processes had insignificant impacts on the identities of the predominantly peasant non-Russian populations.

After the January Uprising, a systematic policy of Russification was established. While in the case of Poles it did not aim at cultural assimilation but just at reducing possible separatist sentiments, the main target of cultural Russification became the rural populations of Belarus and Ukraine, who did not have distinct national identities and, for this reason, fell easily under Polish influence and were Polonised, as was feared by the tsarist authorities (Weeks, 2010). Due to the weakness of the Russian empire at this time, these Russification attempts were not very successful. In other peripheral areas of the empire, Russification was even weaker and there were no attempts at large-scale cultural assimilation of non-Russian populations. Furthermore, the 1905 revolution hindered the Russification policy considerably.

Compared to tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union was much more successful in the cultural assimilation of non-Russian populations. The Soviet period was characterised by large flows of migration and resettlements, which changed the demographic structure of most socialist republics of the Soviet Union. These changes, together with the state policy of ethnic-Russian bilingualism and attempts to create a collective identity of Soviet people, led to a degree of blurring of the borders between linguistic, ethnic and national identities in some contexts, although not universally. As a result, a common language-based identity was constructed and knowledge of *Russian* became a crucial condition of participation in the *Soviet* society (see Wojnowski, 2015).

Despite this, or perhaps because of this, the questions of language and collective identities became the major concerns of the peoples of the late SU. The mass movements that ultimately led to the breakdown of the SU got their initial spark from the article 'Views on bilingualism without rose-coloured glasses' by the Estonian linguist Mati Hint (1987a, 1987b, see also an article written in the same vein by the Latvian linguist Bušs, 1988). Hint's article, which questioned the official policy of ethnic-Russian bilingualism and argued elaborately that bilingualism was detrimental to children's development, spread like wildfire throughout the socialist republics and autonomous regions of the SU, everywhere where there were ethnically non-Russian communities.

Raising the status of 'root languages' (i.e. languages of the autochthonous communities) in various areas of the SU became one of the main goals of popular mass movements. Less than two years after the publication of Hint's article, language laws began to be adopted in the parliaments of the Soviet Socialist Republics. The first among these laws was the Estonian Language Act, adopted on 18 January 1989. Very rapidly ten other republics also adopted similar laws (the last being Turkmenistan on 24 May 1990). Only the Caucasian republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia did not adopt language laws, as their

constitutions already had similar provisions. The Russian Federation adopted the Federal RSFSR Language Law on 25 October 1991, just before the final dissolution of the SU (Grenoble, 2003).

Most of the language laws of the Soviet republics established titular languages as official, and set language requirements for state employees and officials. The Russian language was mentioned in all these laws but the status it was given varied considerably. In the Lithuanian and Estonian language laws, Russian was afforded no special status; it was just mentioned as a language of communication with the central Soviet administration and, in the Estonian law, it was recognised as a widely used first language. In four language laws, in Latvia, Ukraine, Moldova and Turkmenistan, both the official titular language and Russian were recognised as languages of inter-ethnic communication. In five other laws, in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, only Russian was granted the status of the language of inter-ethnic communication (Grenoble, 2003).

These subtle differences in status granted to Russian reflected the cultural and demographic power balance between the titular nations and the Russian-speaking communities in the socialist republics. Clearly the Caucasian republics needed no language laws, as the Russian-speaking populations were all but non-existent there. Russian was recognised as an important language to be learned, but it constituted little threat to the titular nations in these republics. Lithuania had only a small Russian minority and a strong national tradition so that there was no need to establish a special status for Russian. While having a considerable Russian minority, Estonia strongly insisted on the restoration of the status of Estonian as the only state language, as it had been before the annexation of Estonia in 1940. The Latvian, Moldovan, Turkmen and Ukrainian languages were in a slightly weaker position and, thus, granted more recognition to Russian. In the rest of the republics, Russian had already gained significant cultural and administrative roles. That is why Russian rather than the national language was recognised as the language for everyday inter-ethnic communication.

Even though the ultimate breakdown of the SU was legitimised by a combination of various moral and economic arguments, language issues remained in the forefront of social reforms, together with the economic transition to capitalism, in the newly emerged independent states. More than 20 years after the collapse of the SU, the processes of linguistic, ethnic and national identity formation are still cogent. This is perhaps most vividly seen in the case of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Law on Languages (1989) gave Ukrainian the status of the only official language, made it the language of the government and all communication with public bodies, declared the functioning and development of the Ukrainian language and culture to be the priority of the state, and made Ukrainian the

language of education at all levels of education in Ukraine (Zakon, 1989). This law reduced the role of Russian considerably and remained in effect for the next 23 years, till 2012, although it was hardly enforced in the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern and southern regions of Ukraine (see Polese, 2014).

In 2012, the Verkhovna Rada, the parliament of Ukraine, established a new law, 'On the principles of the state language policy', which gave Russian and other minority languages the status of 'regional languages' in municipalities where the proportion of minority language speakers exceeded 10%. Regional languages were allowed to be used in courts, schools and other government institutions. While it legalised practices that were already widespread in those areas with high percentages of Russian-speakers, the process of the adoption of this law caused highly emotional discussions, and led to public demonstrations and even a fistfight in the Ukrainian parliament (Pavlenko, 2013). These tensions did not ease over time, and one of the first actions on 23 February 2014 that the new Verkhovna Rada took after the 2014 Ukrainian Revolution was voting to repeal the 2012 Language Law. Although the new Ukrainian president, Oleksandr Turchynov, vetoed the repeal bill on 28 February, the damage had been done: the repeal sparked protests in Russian-speaking regions, contributing to the crisis in Crimea.

While the Ukrainian case has been the most dramatic one, similar tensions between the titular and Russian language have characterised several successor states of the Soviet Union, including the Russian Federation itself. At the core of these debates is not the problem of language use in the instrumental sense, but the association of language with specific collective identities. The language debates are battles of collective identities and the relative status that is ascribed to the people having these identities in a society.

3 Language debates and collective identities

Language debates become emotional at the moment, and to the extent, that the languages concerned are associated with collective identities that are in competition in a certain territory. There is no doubt that the cause of language debates in the post-Soviet societies is the imperial expansion of tsarist Russia, and later of the SU, which brought the Russian language, culture and speakers as significant elements into territories that had had different language regimes previously. In some cases, these processes had started several centuries before, and in some instances later. In all these cases, the competition between the imperial Russian language and identity and the local ones intensified during the 20th century, largely aided by general technological modernisation characteristic of this period. As the collapse of the SU left large Russian-speaking communities in the successor states, the debates have not ceased, but have acquired a new perspective.

We will start our discussion on these debates by outlining the four key terms – *commodification, assimilation, Russification and nativisation* – that Pavlenko (2013) uses to characterise identity-related language policies and processes in the SU and thereafter.

Pavlenko (2013) defines commodification as the increased need for knowledge of Russian for business, education and leisure purposes. The term is, of course, broader and is used to characterise the market value of any language in a certain society, or even in a smaller linguistic environment within a state (Heller, 2003, 2010). The relative level of commodification of languages is perhaps the key factor that influences individuals' motivation to acquire a particular language in addition to their first language. As language commodification depends on a large array of factors, the relative market value for each particular language may vary from region to region within a state, not to mention the differences between states. Relative commodification of competing languages in one linguistic environment is the long-term 'invisible hand' that causes language shift amongst the native speakers of weakly commodified languages. Assimilation, which is tied to differences in commodification, is a natural process, and is inherently neither good nor bad, but just another manifestation of the power law, so common in nature.

By Russification, Pavlenko (2013:264) means the 'consistent and long-lasting attempts to forcibly make Russians out of non-Russians', but argues that much of the language shift amongst the non-Russian population has not been due to forceful Russification, but that it is just a consequence of modernisation and the high level of commodification of the Russian language and culture (we believe that this is especially true in Central Asia).

By nativisation, Pavlenko (2013) means the following processes in the post-Soviet societies: (1) establishing titular languages as languages of administration, (2) elimination of Russian from official paperwork and communication, higher and secondary education and state-sponsored media, (3) de-Russification of grammar and vocabulary (we would also include the transition from a Cyrillic to a Latin alphabet), (4) spreading the knowledge of titular languages among those who did not know it before and (5) spreading the knowledge of English as an alternative to Russian as a lingua franca. She labels all these phenomena with the term 'the monolingual turn', which is aimed at an intended language shift of Russian-speakers and largely involves policies of nativisation, with intended assimilation of Russian-speakers.

Despite the different and highly charged terms, one has to admit that the processes of Russification and nativisation are functionally equivalent and, furthermore, have the same relationship to the notion of assimilation as the

alleged long-term goal. To facilitate more neutral discussion of the language policies it is necessary to secure the functioning of an official language, we propose to abstain from the use of nativisation, Russification and other terms of the nature of 'X-ification', in favour of the notion of *normalisation*. Normalisation was first used by the Generalitat of Catalonia to call for elaboration of the General Plan of Language Normalization which took place on 18 December 1991 (see Reniu i Tresserras, 1995). Thereafter it has been used sporadically in the literature of language policy to denote the process by which a minority language aims to improve its status and corpus planning in society.

We propose to use normalisation more broadly to denote all language planning attempts that aim to establish a desired language regime that would be perceived by the population as normal. In the process of normalisation, two qualitative steps need to be distinguished: first, ensuring that everybody has sufficient official language competence and, second, ensuring that everybody has developed an emotional attachment to the collective identity associated with the official language. While there is no denying the legitimacy of the first step in any nation-building project, the second step is what makes the situation emotionally charged, causing accusations of attempts at assimilation of minorities.

It is fairly clear that, for a highly commodified language, it takes less effort to normalise than for a relatively less commodified language. Understandably, the methods are different, as are the possible outcomes, and this can be seen in the analyses of all case studies included in this collection. What we would like to stress is that the analysis of the normalisation processes and policies needs to be highly context-dependent and multilevel: to understand what is happening in each particular situation, it is necessary not only to search for official language policies and rhetoric, but also to look at actual language practices, the relative commodification of the languages involved and the processes of collective identity formation affected by language normalisation. As this special issue will reveal, there are large differences in these contextual factors, which means that it is impossible to assess language and collective identity processes in a uniform manner in all settings of the post-Soviet space.

4 Overview of the special issue

In our special issue, we present a set of detailed case studies focussing on the aspects of how collective identities are tied to language normalisation efforts in different post-Soviet societies, and the relative outcomes of these processes in different contexts.

The collection starts with the article 'Blurring of collective identities in the post-Soviet space', by Martin Ehala. He adopts the Sign Theory of identity (Ehala, 2007) to distinguish between the particulars of different collective identities: linguistic, ethnic, national and imperial. According to the theory, collective identity may be interpreted as a Social Sign. The general function of Social Signs is to structure the social world and legitimise the distribution of power and resources between the members of different subgroups in society.

Ehala specifies the functional and structural differences between ethnic, ethnic national, civic national, imperial and linguistic identities, and outlines the conditions for identity blurring, using the notions of identity density and identity distance. He argues that the distinctions between ethnic, linguistic and national identities became blurred as a result of Soviet language and ethnic policies. These developments led to the ethnicisation of nation-building efforts in a number of successor states of the SU.

At the same time, because of the strong exclusive nature of ethnicist nation-building, the non-autochthonous populations of the former republics, mainly speaking Russian as the first language, developed non-ethnic Russian linguistic identities having strong connections to Soviet cultural heritage. These identities, while largely linguistic and cultural, are not tied to ethnicity or even to nationality, but represent a hybrid supra-national identity (see also Nikiporets-Takigawa, 2013, who describes how post-Soviet communities/groups have constructed a common language-based identity in which the Soviet element has a substantial role). Ehala's theoretical analysis is backed up by the evidence from the case studies in this special issue.

The processes of identity formation are analysed in great detail in the first case study, 'Transnistrian conflict in the context of post-Soviet nation-building', by Anastasia V. Mitrofanova, who distinguishes five major forms of Moldovan identity: (1) Moldovan ethnonational identity as a regional variation of Romanian identity, (2) a specifically Moldovan ethnonational identity, (3) a post-Soviet amorphous 'non-identity', (4) specific identities of ethnic minorities (identification of Ukrainians with Ukraine, Russians with Russia, etc.) and (5) marginal identities of the titular ethnic group. This contrast with firm and consolidated Transnistrian identity, which is a civil identity based on ideology, not on ethnicity, is open to all post-Soviet ethnic groups. Because of the different structures and contents of the identities on the opposite sides of the Dniester River, there is no immediate path to consolidation. Her case study provides a great deal of empirical support for the understanding of collective identities as competing social signs which have different appeals to different fractions of the society, thus illustrating

the dynamic between identities as social signs and the links that individuals in a society develop to these identities. Her case is also a very insightful account of the emergence of a new collective identity in the Transnistrian area.

The second case, '*'What is my country to me?*' Identity construction by Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries', by Anastassia Zabrodskaja, goes into more detail in analysing how existing ethnic, national, imperial and linguistic identities become blurred in the post-Soviet setting of the Baltic countries. She discusses the findings of qualitative studies carried out among Russian-speakers in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 2008–2011, triangulated with quantitative cluster analysis. The results show that the Russian-speaking community is quite diverse in respect of its beliefs and attitudes, as well as in terms of its ethnolinguistic vitality and identity clusters: from animosity towards titular nations to the desire for assimilation into the mainstream society with two (in Latvia and Lithuania) and three (in Estonia) in-between clusters. Diaspora identity is gradually separating from the mainland Russian identity. The sociolinguistic environment and proficiency in an official language are very strong determinants of the ethnolinguistic identity of Russian-speakers. Zabrodskaja's analysis reveals the wide variety of ways in which identities related to the same signal (the Russian language) can have widely varying content differences, so that it is for some people a signal of imperial identity, for some linguistic identity and for some a newly emerging ethnic identity.

Kinga Geben and Meilutė Ramonienė, in their article 'Language use and self-identification: the case of Lithuanian Poles', show that the choice of ethnic identity is affected by many factors. Polish culture was closest to the interviewees, followed by Russian and then Lithuanian. Their ethnic and cultural awareness can be seen as a combination of different cultural elements that have always been accessible to them in their multilingual and multicultural environment, such as place of residence, origin, tradition, family and language. The issue of identity is particularly complex at the intersection of languages and cultures. Poles speaking all three languages and participating in the three worlds of media that present various cultural and political patterns (with a clear influence of Russian media, in TV, radio and newspapers) are differentiated by a sense of separateness from the rest of Poland and Lithuania. However, Polish residents in smaller towns, who experienced a stronger Russification policy in the Soviet period, currently tend to accept the domination of Lithuanian.

Aimar Ventsel and Natal'ia Struchkova argue in their paper, 'Sakha language and education in a social, cultural and political context', that, due to economic, social and political processes, the Sakha language in the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic, in the Russian Far East, occupies at least two niches in the society: as a language of

those in the disadvantaged low social strata and as a language for the national elite. The Sakha case demonstrates that language speakers do not form a coherent group and the status of their language can vary according to the social positions of the speakers. The paper also shows that processes of 'elitarisation' and 'lumpenisation' of the language are intermingled and that people can move from one language stratum to another using various strategies. Their case study indicates convincingly that the distinction between ethnic and national identity is very blurred and often very hard to determine, and shows how linguistic identity is in a tense dynamic relationship with ethnic/national identity, being influenced from outside by the imperial identity of the majority Russian population in the autonomous Republic of Sakha.

The paper 'Cultural and language self-identification of ethnic minority groups in Kazakhstan', by Sholpan Zharkynbekova, Aliya Aimoldina and Damira Akynova, assesses the ethnolinguistic vitality of four ethnic minority groups (Russians, Ukrainians, Poles and Koreans) in Kazakhstan. This analysis enables the authors to compare the ethnolinguistic processes of these ethnic groups and the roles of the demographic and communicative capacities of their languages, particularly the role of L1 in ethnic identity and the maintenance and development of ethnic languages. The paper provides rich material on the interplay between ethnic, national, linguistic and imperial identities in several combinations. One can see how several ethnic/national identities have gradually been eroded, becoming symbolic identities at the same time that there is noticeable blurring between imperial and linguistic identities associated with Russian. The case provides significant empirical support for the hypothesis that identity density and distance affect the blurring process.

In the final article, 'Maintaining ties: Russian-speaking communities in Germany and Norway', Ekaterina Bagreeva and German Mendzheritskiy present a comparative study of the migrant communities in Germany and Norway. Their analysis focuses on the issue of collective identity associated with the Russian language in the immigrant context. Even though the Russian-speaking immigrant groups in Germany and Norway differ considerably in density, size and reasons for immigration, there are some similarities in the way collective identity is maintained. The case is interesting in that it involves several layers of collective identity: the immigrants to Germany have either German or Jewish ethnic identity, which was the defining characteristic for their acceptance in the host country. Besides this, they all have some sort of collective identity association with Russian, whether linguistic, national or imperial, and this identity is going through a further formation process in the German and Norwegian Russian-speaking diaspora contexts.

5 Concluding remarks

All the papers in this special issue were written well before the spring 2014 events in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation. Even though these events directly involve only Ukraine, their impact on the identity processes in post-Soviet societies cannot be underestimated (especially in Transnistria).

It is very likely that in as much as the feasibility of the Russian imperial identity is enhanced through the annexation of Crimea, some of the identity formation processes, mainly the emergence of new Russian-speaking non-imperial identities, will be affected. It is impossible to predict right now whether this will lead to a clearer fragmentation within the Russian-speaking communities into subgroups with imperial, ethnic or symbolic ethnic identities, to the rejection of Russian linguistic identity by bilingual national elites in several post-Soviet republics, to the rise of the status of the Russian language in the Baltic countries, together with the development of stronger civic national identities, or to other yet unknown developments.

However, the changed situation and unpredictability of the future identity processes do not affect the relevance of this collection, as it provides empirical data useful in testing different approaches introduced in language policy theory. The analysis presented in this special issue shows the developments that took place largely at the time when the Russian imperial identity was considered to be a phenomenon of the past. After the events in Crimea, one can argue that it is again one of the feasible identity choices for Russian-speakers in the post-Soviet space. How this quickly developing political situation may change identity formation processes and what new patterns of identities might supplant the previous ones remain to be seen. Future comparisons with the analysis in this special issue will certainly be able to clarify the dynamic. The interpretation of new patterns and phenomena will gain much from our knowledge of the previous context.

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Article

Blurring of collective identities in the post-Soviet space

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Abstract

The paper focuses on collective identity formation in the post-Soviet space, applying the Sign Theory of Identity, which claims that collective identity is a type of Social Sign, which structures the social world and legitimises the distribution of power and resources. The paper specifies the functional and structural differences between ethnic, ethnic national, civic national, imperial and linguistic identities; outlines the conditions for identity blurring, using the notions of identity density and identity distance; characterises the main paths of identity blurring; and presents an analysis of the collective identity dynamics in the post-Soviet space, based on the case studies in this special issue.

KEYWORDS: LANGUAGE POLICY, IDENTITY, COLLECTIVE IDENTITY FORMATION, SOCIAL SIGNS, POST-SOVIET IDENTITIES

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1 Introduction

This paper focuses on the principles of collective identity formation, using the setting of the late Soviet Union and the post-Soviet space as an example. It is a setting which has one particularly powerful ethnic group (Russians) and a large number of other ethnicities with different demographic, economic and cultural strengths on its periphery. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 created a number of new societies, often involving status reversal of the major ethnic groups in the successor states. This geopolitical event has had a profound effect on collective identity formation throughout the whole post-Soviet space.

The notion of collective identity has at least two different usages in the literature. In one tradition, collective identity is understood as an individual variable, characterising a person's subjective sense of belonging to a group (Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). Work in this framework recognises that collective identification is a multidimensional concept involving several distinct aspects, such as self-categorisation, pride, emotional attachment, sense of interdependence and meaning (Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004).

In the other tradition, collective identity is understood as a shared collective construct, not a person's identification with a group or even a sum of individual identities. Collective identity 'is the image that the community has of itself as a historical and legitimate group' (Landry, Allard and Deveau, 2010:32). In this tradition, collective identity is seen as constructed in the public discourse: in history textbooks, political speeches, the press, linguistic landscapes etc. It is a mental representation shared by the members of a group.

There are accounts that incorporate both understandings of the collective identity concept. For example, David and Bar-Tal (2009) distinguish the micro and macro levels in collective identity, where the micro level pertains to the individual member's categorisation within the group, and the macro level is the identity of the group as a whole, including shared beliefs, attitudes and behavioural patterns. This paper follows this latter understanding.

There may be different collective identities available in any society at any particular time. Some of these identities may be inclusive of each other, and some may be in competition. Under certain conditions, mixing, appropriation and blurring of these identities may take place. The goal of this paper is to analyse, based on the selected cases of post-Soviet societies presented in this special issue and a closely related one (Zabrodskaja and Ehala, 2014), under which conditions and in which ways collective identities get modified and blurred. In the first section, the Sign Theory of Identity (Ehala, 2007) is outlined. In the subsequent sections, the main collective identities associated with societal organisation –

ethnic, national, imperial and linguistic – are characterised and illustrated with cases from the post-Soviet space. The final two sections analyse how these identities are layered in society, in which conditions these identities lead to identity blurring and what the likely outcomes of these processes are.

2 Sign theory of identity

According to the Sign Theory of Identity (Ehala, 2007), collective identity functions as a social sign. The general function of social signs is to structure the social world and legitimise the distribution of power and resources between the members of different subgroups in society. On the macro level, collective identity has the dual structure characteristic to all signs: the signal side, i.e. something by which identity is made empirically perceivable, and the meaning side, containing a socially shared set of core values characteristic to this particular collective identity. On the micro side, collective identity is the association that an individual has to a particular collective identity. The association between an individual and the collective identity consists of two links: to the signal side and to the meaning side of identity. Depending on the strength of these links, each particular collective identity has a more or less central position in this person's self-conception (see Figure 1).

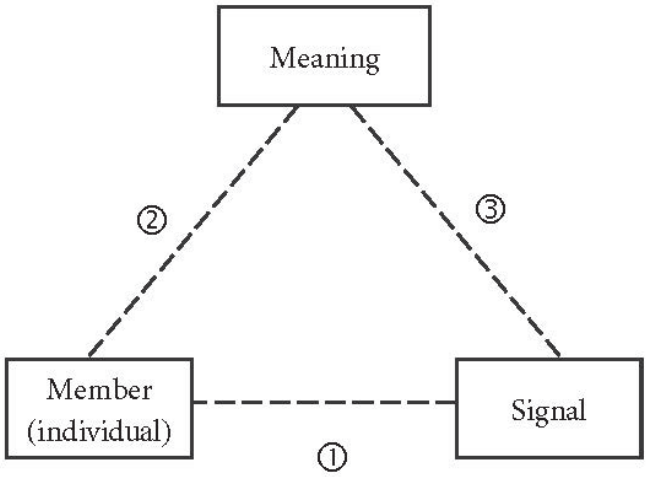

Figure 1. The tripartite structure of collective identity.

On the macro level, collective identity is a shared mental representation of what counts as the signal of a particular identity and what its meaning is. So collective identities are just like human language words, which also have a dual structure: sound (signal) and meaning. For example, by uttering the word *cat*, a person sends the signal /kat/, which is empirically perceivable by other people. The

receivers know that this signal represents the meaning of 'cat' because they have the same shared representation of the sign *cat* as does the person who has uttered the word.

The signal of a collective identity is a feature (or a set of features) that can be detected from the appearance or behaviour of the group members. It can be physiological (race), linguistic or engagement in a practice or a discourse. Whichever it is, the signal must be empirically perceivable or else there is nothing that will distinguish the members of a given group from non-members. For example, the collective identity *Estonian* is usually empirically detected if a person reveals a native-level knowledge of the Estonian language. This means that fluent speech in the Estonian language functions similarly in signalling the identity concept 'Estonian' as the sound sequence of /kat/ functions in signalling the meaning 'cat'.

The meaning part of the identity sign consists of the core concepts associated with this identity. For example, ethnic identity consists of what in the ethnosymbolist approach (Smith, 1991) are considered the main attributes of an ethnic group: a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more core cultural values (Smolicz, Secombe and Hudson, 2001), a concept of a specific homeland, a common language and possibly the sense of being chosen for a special destiny.

Connection ③ between the signal and the meaning of the identity (see Figure 1) is what makes the process of signalling collective identity possible. Any empirically detectable feature is insignificant unless it has a particular set of social meanings attached. Once this connection between a feature and a set of meanings is established, it becomes a social sign, similarly to the way in which the connection between sound and meaning is the basis of human language words as signs.

On the micro level, collective identity is the connection between an individual and a collective identity as a social sign. Each individual has or develops a connection both to the signal and to the meaning of a collective identity. For any individual, the process of establishing these connections is the process of self-categorisation (Turner et al., 1987). At the group level, it is the process of group formation.

Connection ① indicates the salience of the identity for the member. Inherited features, such as skin colour, and entrenched features, such as first language, are very salient, cultural practices somewhat less, and arbitrary symbols, such as national colours, are the least salient if not purposefully manifested. The salience can vary in strength among individuals. The more salient the connection to the signal, the more central the particular identity is for an individual (compare *importance* and *behavioural involvement* in Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004).

Connection ② indicates emotional attachment to collective identity, which is expressed at the level of internalisation of the identity content by the member. The strength of this connection, too, can vary among individuals. The stronger the link to the meaning, the more emotionally attached the member is to this group (compare *attachment* and *affective commitment* in Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004).

Connections ① and ② need not be of equal strength. There can be individuals whose identity is salient (empirically easily detectable) even though they do not identify strongly with it, and vice versa. Any individual may have several collective identities; for example, one may have an ethnic identity, manifested in the combination of dress, religion and racial features, a linguistic identity associated with a language (different from that of the ethnic heritage language), and a national identity, manifested by a little national flag on the car's dashboard etc. All of these identities exist as signs signalling group membership, and any individual has some freedom regarding being associated with any of them. Blurring of identities is a process in which the signals and the meanings of identities get rearranged in several ways and cause the emergence of new signal-meaning pairs, and new associations are formed between individuals to these emerging social signs. Before I focus on the blurring of identities, I'll discuss various collective identities available and manifested in the case studies presented in this special issue. My focus is on the macro level, i.e. the structure and content of different collective identities; some of the case studies referred to below also contribute to the micro-level analysis.

3 Ethnic identities

Assuming that collective identity is a social sign on the macro level, to define ethnic identity we need to define what count as possible signals and possible meanings for this type of identity.

Cartrite (2003) identifies 12 properties that figure in definitions of ethnic group: common descent, common culture, attachment to a certain territory, a shared language, the collective will to be a group, mutual recognition of group membership, common history, common religion, group symbols, economic ties and existential threat. In social psychology, the definitions of ethnicity have also included such features as cultural norms and values, group strength, salience and subjective meaning (see Zagefka, 2009). Despite the large number of characterising features, according to Reicher and Hopkins (2001) no single feature is either necessary or sufficient to define ethnicity.

If one takes the sign approach to identity, what are definitional for ethnicity are not actual common descent, shared language, home territory etc., but the existence of these concepts in the meaning part of the identity sign. This approach is a close, but more structured version of the ethno-symbolist theory of ethnicity (Smith, 1991), which claims that beliefs in common ancestry, homeland and history are the central defining features for ethnic groups.

The sign approach to identity explains why there are a myriad of properties that characterise ethnic groups, while none of them is definitionally necessary. This is because just one single property is necessary for a collective identity to have the potential to function as an ethnic identity. This one concept is the sense of belonging together historically, through common descent, common history or common fate. The concept of shared history is unavoidable for ethnic identity, since an ethnic group without any shared history is unimaginable.

While the notion of shared history is necessary, it is not sufficient. There are groups who may have a concept of shared history, but which are not considered to be ethnic groups, such as political parties and biker gangs. What distinguishes ethnic groups from all other groups which may have a notion of shared history is the way the group is continued. Ethnic groups use intergenerational transmission of collective identity to secure their continuity; other groups mostly use member conversion. Intergenerational transmission is tightly connected to the notion of descent. Therefore, an ethnic group can be defined as a group which has a collective identity consisting of the concept of shared history and the concept of common descent.

While the concepts of shared history and descent are unavoidable parts of the meaning of ethnic identity, there are other concepts: historical homeland, common language, a specific religion or cultural practice etc. Following Smolicz, Secombe and Hudson (2001), I will call the set of these central meanings of identity sign the core values of identity. There may be ethnic groups which have all or most of these concepts present in the meaning of their collective identity, and they are also enacted by the group members. For example, Estonians have a shared sense of history, the concept of Estonia as the homeland, the Estonian language and some cultural practices, such as *Laulupidu* (a large periodic song festival tradition), as core values. The majority of the group members also enact these properties in reality, i.e. they know their history, speak the language, live in Estonia and participate in *Laulupidu* (Song Festival).

However, an ethnic group may exist even without any enactment of the core values. For example, Poles in Kazakhstan are Poles despite the fact that they do not live in Poland, are not religious and do not speak Polish as their first language (see Zharkynbekova, Aimoldina and Akynova, this issue). This is possible because

they have the shared knowledge of the Polish identity as a social sign containing these concepts as core values, and connection ② of emotional attachment to this sign. While this connection may be weak, we can speak of the existence of a Polish minority group in that there exists a part of the population in the Kazakhstani society that shares Polish identity as a social sign.

4 National identities

According to the sign theory of identity, a nation is a group of individuals having the connections ① and ② to a social sign that can be characterised as national. To define national identity, one needs to distinguish what properties this type of collective identity must have.

The understanding of national identity rests heavily on the common and often abused distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism. Although this distinction marks two extreme ends of a continuous scale rather than a binary opposition (see Brubaker, 2004), it still makes sense to outline the properties of prototypical alternatives to define the range. Thus, a civic national identity is one that is 'maintained not by calls to blood and land but by a vague, intermittent, and routine allegiance to a civil state' (Geertz, 1963:110). Ethnic national identity is not much different from ethnic identity, as it has the concepts of common ancestry, homeland and/or language as the core values in its meaning. Where ethnic national identity seems to differ from ethnic identity is the association to the notion of state, which manifests itself through 'common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (Smith, 1991:14). This association is best expressed by Guibernau (1996:47-48), who defines nation as 'a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself'.

Based on Guibernau's definition, the distinctive aspect of national identity seems to be the claim of the nation to the right to rule itself, i.e. the claim of sovereignty. Thus all collective identities that have the concept of sovereignty as one of the core values can be characterised as national. For example, civic national identity has the concept of sovereignty as its defining feature, but may have none or very few other core values, since in extreme cases its members do not share a common ancestry, homeland, language or culture. Ethnic national identity is essentially an ethnic identity which, in addition to ethnic core values, has the core value of sovereignty. Thus the distinction between ethnic and ethnic national identity is the existence of the concept of the group's right to rule itself as one of the core values.

The sign theory of identity makes possible an elegant distinction between what Guibernau (2004:131) calls 'nations "with" and "without" states'. According to her, nations without states are cultural communities, e.g. Catalan, which has many properties of a nation but lacks a state, or nations that have lost their states because of occupation. According to the sign theory of identity, any set of individuals that has connections ① and ② to a collective identity that has sovereignty as one of its core values constitutes a nation, whether it has its own state or not, or whether it has lost its state and lives scattered in exile. If the concept of sovereignty exists as a core value in the collective identity, the individuals sharing this identity continue to exist as a nation.

For example, the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian nations were born when these ethnic groups imagined the concept of sovereignty as a core value in their collective identities. This happened at some time in the 19th century, when these ethnic groups were living under tsarist rule. They began as nations without states, managed to become nations with states after WWI, became nations without states again just before the WWII and nations with states again with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

According to this understanding, the collective identity of the Transnistrian people, analysed by Mitrofanova (this issue), also has sovereignty as one of its core values. And as they also militarily successfully defended their sovereignty in the early 1990s, they are a nation with a state, even though this state has no international recognition. Furthermore, if we look at the example of the Sakha (Ventsel and Struchkova, this issue), we see that the Sakha people also have sovereignty as one of their core values. This is not the idea of full sovereignty, since such an idea seems unrealistic given the prevailing geopolitical and demographic situation, but the idea is present, and therefore it is a national identity even if full sovereignty is not conceptualised.

Certainly the distinction between ethnic and ethnic national identity is vague in this framework. A concept of sovereignty may well be formulated by a single poet perhaps a hundred years before anybody actually takes it seriously, but as it gradually becomes a part of a collective identity, the ethnic identity turns into a national identity. What this means is that ethnic national identities are highly saturated with the sovereignty idea, and are interwoven with other core values. Civic national identities, however, are relatively shallow, often having only two core values: territory/state and sovereignty. It is also possible that a civic national identity gradually turns into an ethnic national identity over time and produces the concept of shared history.

5 Imperial identities

Imperial identities do not differ much from national identities; they are one version of national identities. What both national and imperial identities as social signs share is the concept of sovereignty as a core value. Where imperial identity differs from national identity is in having the concept of superiority as one of its core values.

Superiority as a core value need not include the image of aggressive militant superiority, although there are imperial identities which have had this idea very clearly expressed. Rather, the core of the superiority concept is universality, the understanding that this collective identity is the default human condition, and all other possible identities, national or ethnic, are just *culs-de-sac* of historical development, perhaps destined to disappear in the future. This sense of superiority is derived from the vast cultural capital that is connected to this identity and available through the language associated with this identity. Thus, imperial identity has a very rich set of cultural core values which have given rise to its defining core value: superiority.

Imperial identity has a few other properties that distinguish it from national identity. First, imperial identity always has language as one of its core values, unlike ethnic and national identities, which can function without considering language as a core value. For imperial identity, language is the main, and often the only signal of the identity, i.e. speaking the language that is the core value for an imperial identity is also the main token by which the members of this group are recognised. The tight connection between imperial identity and language is necessary, since language is the essential tool for administration of the empire and the tool of much of the cultural production (literature, science etc.). Therefore, the content of imperial identity is carried by its language and the language is the main token of this identity. The linguistic heritage of several historical empires is clearly seen on the world's linguistic map.

Secondly, the combination of the sense of superiority and language gives rise to the phenomenon of monolingualism, which is a significant characteristic of bearers of an imperial identity. For example, the monolingualism of Russian-speakers in Kazakhstan is overwhelming despite Russian becoming the minority language in the country after the dissolution of the SU. Even though Russian-speakers acknowledge the need to learn Kazakh, this is mostly just a rhetorical gesture (see Zharkynbekova, Aimoldina and Akynova, this issue). In the dominant position, the bearers of imperial identity often express outright hostility towards people who use other languages in public spaces, such as in the Sakha case (Ventsel and Struchkova, this issue). In Estonia and Latvia, many Russian-speakers have remained monolingual even though this considerably limits their opportunities in the job market (Zabrodskaja, this issue).

Thirdly, imperial identities differ from national identities in their relationship to territory. While in national identities, the homeland is a core value, in imperial identities the notion of frontier has a separate value. For example, Mitrofanova (this issue) describes at length how the Transnistrian community formed during the Soviet times precisely as a frontier that attracted individuals from all over the Soviet Union to participate in the industrialisation process of Transnistria. The same process occurred in Kazakhstan, leading to the industrial development of the country and 'reclamation of virgin lands' (Zharkynbekova, Aimoldina and Akynova, this issue). After WWII in Estonia and Latvia, a significant number of Russian-speaking immigrants arrived, displaying monolingualism and attachment to specific Russian ethnic values and the historical homeland. So, in addition to the homeland, the notion of the frontier becomes a core value, i.e. the attitude towards territory has an expansionist connotation which is missing in the content of national identities.

Another way in which imperial communities differ from national communities is that imperial identities are transmitted, to a considerable extent, via the conversion of people from their ethnic or even national identities to an imperial identity. This happens through learning the main token and carrier of the imperial identity: the language. Learning the language occurs first and mainly through pure pragmatic necessity, in order to get access to the resources (financial and intellectual) of the empire. This conversion process is facilitated by the monolingualism of the members of the imperial community and their dislike of the use of other languages in the public space. In this respect, imperial identities are close to religious identities, which are also transmitted via conversion and often involve hostility towards other congregations. The significant extent of Kazakh–Russian bilingualism amongst ethnic Kazakhs, as well as the Sakha–Russian bilingualism amongst ethnic Sakha discussed in this special issue, are clear consequences of such imperial conversion.

6 Linguistic identities

Linguistic identity, in its pure prototypical form, has language as the signal of identity, but no core values attached. Such a situation occurs mainly in the context of a language shift where ethnic identity is retained, but the heritage language has been replaced by a dominant language. For example, many Crimean Tatars who were deported to Central Asia at the end of WWII lost the Tatar language to the Russian, but rejected the core values of the Russian imperial identity. Such a development is characteristic of situations of forceful assimilation.

On a voluntary basis, the emergence of linguistic identity is particularly likely in imperial situations involving high mobility of an ethnically heterogeneous population to frontier territories. In the Soviet Union, most of the ethnic Soviet republics can be considered to be frontier areas. In this environment, the diverse immigrant population began shifting or had already shifted to the Russian language and began developing or had already developed imperial identity, depending on how completely the heritage ethnic identities were abandoned. This path of linguistic identity development is typical of many Ukrainians, Poles and Koreans who use the Russian language as their first language and have Russian linguistic identity in addition to their ethnic identity (Kosmarskaya, 2006; Zharkynbekova, Aimoldina and Akynova, this issue).

Even though linguistic identity may first appear without core values in the process of language shift, it is likely that it will gradually gain the core values associated with the new language, i.e. over time the emotional attachment to the ethnic identity weakens (usually over generations) and a new emotional attachment is formed to the national or imperial identity associated with the new language. Thus, linguistic identity does not remain without content, but converges toward the imperial or national identity associated with the new language.

In some areas, this has also caused a language shift amongst the original population of frontier areas. For example, as discussed in Zharkynbekova, Aimoldina and Akynova (this issue), the Russian language was associated with high culture and civilisation by both the ethnically diverse, but linguistically homogeneous immigrant population and the local ethnic/national groups, such as Kazakhs, Kyrgyzis and Uzbeks. These people acknowledge their ethnic roots, but at the same time have a positive emotional attachment to the core values associated with the Russian language. Kosmarskaya (2006) has characterised this category of people as 'the children of empire'. In addition, educated Sakha who master Russian at the native level and have some knowledge of the Sakha language are likely to have a Sakha national identity and Russian linguistic identity (Ventsel and Struchkova, this issue).

It is likely that the strength of the imperial component in such a linguistic identity varies over time, depending on political developments. In the Soviet era the main emotional attachment was to the imperial identity, while the ethnic roots were only cognitively recognised. The collapse of the SU brought about a sharp status reversal of the titular and Russian-speaking groups in the Baltic states, which made the imperial identity untenable for most of the Russian-speaking population. In Kazakhstan, Russian retained its high prestige and wide usage, most of the symbols of the Soviet Union, such as statues, were left in the cityscape, and the denunciation of the content of the imperial identity was far weaker than in the Baltic countries.

On the other hand, the independence of Kazakhstan affected the identities of Kazakh–Russian bilingual ethnic Kazakhs, whose emotional attachment to Kazakh national core values strengthened, while they seem to have rejected the imperial component altogether. The 2014 crisis in Ukraine also shows that even in the same city a part of the Russian-speaking population can hold to a Russian imperial identity while others have a Russian-speaking Ukrainian identity.

Even though linguistic identity is supposed to be a social sign that only has a signal (the language), but a meaning void of core values, in reality totally content-free social signs do not exist. Any collective identity has some cultural content, and is able to generate new material. As vividly analysed by Mitrofanova (this issue) in the case of Transnistrian identity, even shallow identities are able to appropriate diverse cultural material, leading to a bricolage identity. Perhaps only in the case of a forced language shift (as in the case of Crimean Tatars) will a group develop a linguistic identity that rejects the core values associated with the new language. In most cases, however, the development of linguistic identity is also followed by acculturation and at least partial adoption of the core values associated with the dominant imperial or national language.

7 Identity density and distance

Density is a term from physics that refers to the quantity of something as a unit of measure, for example volume. The higher the density, the more complex and impenetrable the substance. Identity density is a notion that refers to the complexity of the collective identity as a sign, i.e. how much cultural material it contains, both in terms of meaning and signal. As with other substances, the denser the identity the harder it is to mix it with other identities of the same type.

Following the sign theory of identity outlined earlier, the simplest form of collective identity is civic national identity, which in the prototypical case has only two core values: state/country and sovereignty. In its prototypical form, this identity has no signal except the state symbols that everybody can easily display if they wish. Several authors have claimed that the Belarusian identity promoted by the state is closest to the civic national identity prototype in the post-Soviet space (Buhr, Shadurski and Hoffman, 2011; Bekus, 2014).

A slightly denser identity is the linguistic identity that develops as a consequence of language shift to a dominant (imperial or national) language. Linguistic identity can, in principle, be totally without content, i.e. it can have no core values. A prototypical case of such a linguistic identity is formed as a result of forceful imperial deportation of individuals with different ethnic backgrounds to a frontier area where they need to use the imperial language to function, although they

reject the core values of this identity. The formation of the Russian linguistic identity amongst the deported Tatars in Central Asia seems to be close to the prototypical form of this identity. If a language shift occurs voluntarily, linguistic identity is accompanied by acculturation and at least partial adoption of the core values of this identity.

Ethnic identity is a dense identity, involving several historically entrenched core values, and manifested on the signal side by highly embodied practices, such as language, customs and religion. Because of their richness and high emotional attachment to core values, ethnic identities as signs are relatively durable over time. However, language as a signal of ethnic identity may erode in an unfavourable social environment. This need not bring about the erosion of the ethnic identity altogether. If some emotional significance of core values is retained, a symbolic ethnicity (Gans, 1979; Waters, 1990) results. Symbolic ethnicity is a very low density identity. The Polish, Korean and Ukrainian identities in Kazakhstan are good examples of this phenomenon in the post-Soviet space.

Generally, ethnic national identities are even denser than ethnic ones, because the use of state structures in nation building ensures that there is a continuous process of enforcing core values with new cultural material. Imperial identities understandably have the densest structure, due to the vast resources available to create the cultural material needed to sustain their high quality.

Identity distance is a notion that describes the extent to which any two identities share core values and how close these identities are in terms of signals. The distance between the ethnic, ethnic national and imperial identities of the same cultural substance is very small. These identities essentially involve the same social sign, and there are only a few core values that distinguish them. The core value of sovereignty distinguishes between ethnic and ethnic national identities. It is very hard to pinpoint when this core value is present, because it may be totally inhibited on the signal side, i.e. it has no or very little behavioural manifestation. Estonian and Latvian identities during the Soviet time exemplify this well. The Sakha people (Ventsel and Struchkova, this issue) and Lithuanian Poles (Geben and Ramonienė, this issue) certainly have some concept of sovereignty, as their political activity indicates. As even smaller communities worldwide have claimed sovereignty (e.g. Kosovo, Abhasia and Transnistria), the difference between ethnic and ethnic national identities is inherently blurred.

Similarly close are ethnic national identity and the corresponding imperial identity. These two differ only in the core value of superiority and in terms of expansion. Several European nations have had imperial identities, but as they lost their empires they lost the imperial nature of their identity. Whether and to what extent this applies to Russian identity is debatable. There is no doubt that there

are members of the Russian-speaking populations in the post-Soviet space who still maintain the imperial identity. The proportion of such individuals may be the highest amongst the population of the Transnistrian Republic, and there are people holding onto imperial identity amongst the Russian-speakers in Ukraine, as the recent developments have shown. As Zabrodskaja (this issue) demonstrates, such identities are also present amongst a segment of the Russian-speaking populations in Estonia and Latvia, too.

The distance between different versions of the same ethnic or ethnic national identity can be slightly larger, but they are still relatively small. A splendid example of a range of close identities is provided by Mitrofanova (this issue), who has described competing Moldovan identities. All of these identities are variants of social signs that share a number of core values, but differ in some of them. All of them are available in the space of shared social representations, waiting for individuals who wish to develop an emotional attachment to one of these alternatives.

For ethnic Moldovans, who have a significant number of core values that all of these identity versions share, it is relatively easy for them to choose any of them, depending on the general public support each of them enjoys. However, for members of other ethnic or linguistic groups, association with any version of this ethnic national identity is difficult, because it would imply abandoning a whole set of existing core values and adopting new ones.

8 Blurring of identities

Identity density and distance directly affect the process of identity blurring. The most likely to occur is blurring between identities that have low density and small distance. Blurring is less likely where the identities have small distance and high density, or large distance and low density; identities that have high density and large distance are unlikely to blur.

The blurring of identities is possible because collective identities are socially shared signs, similar to human language words. Meanings, connotations and the phonetic shape of words constantly evolve as they are used by a speech community. The same happens with identities as social signs as their content and manifestations are negotiated.

Blurring between low density identities can occur in all directions. A linguistic identity can become more ethnic over time when the community experiences a common fate, and develops common cultural practices that can become core values. Blurring the border between linguistic and ethnic identities can be seen in the case of Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia (Zabrodskaja, this issue).

Blurring the boundary between civic national identity and ethnic (national) identity can be seen in the case of the Transnistrian community, which has its own concept of origin, shared historical memories (war) and a set of cultural core values (Mitrofanova, this issue). Similarly, an eroding ethnic identity can become blurred with a linguistic identity, as in the cases of the Sakha people (Ventsel and Struchkova, this issue) and the Russian-speaking ethnic Kazakhs. A linguistic identity may in turn develop into a civic national identity, as seems to have happened to the Russian-speaking ethnic Kazakhs in Kazakhstan after the country became independent (Zharkynbekova, Aimoldina and Akynova, this issue; see also Kosmarskaya, 2014).

When a linguistic identity or a civic identity becomes blurred with an ethnic identity, this is a diachronic development in which these identities develop richer sets of core values and signals, as well as stronger emotional attachment to these identities. In the case of an ethnic identity evolving into a linguistic or civic identity, two collective identities are involved, i.e. a person has connections ① and ② to two different identities as social signs: the heritage ethnic one and the new linguistic or civic one. In principle, over generations an eroding ethnic identity can develop into a new ethnic one via a linguistic or civic identity. Since there is a developmental path between these three types of identities, boundaries between them may become blurred under certain diverse social conditions.

As many of the examples indicate, the blurring of identities can be rather common. However, this does not always occur. Some identities do not blur that easily. For example, the Estonian ethnic national identity has several historically entrenched core values which are also signalled empirically, mainly through the native-like level of Estonian knowledge. This identity is very dense and fairly hard to attain, as it requires a good knowledge of language and accepting a set of core values that are very distant from the core values associated with versions of Russian-speaking identities.

Imperial identities are even denser. Often they do not blur even after status reversal and in diaspora situations. As an emigrant Russian-speaking ethnic German in Germany expressed it: '*The Russian person is not a patriot of a fixed place or a piece of land. He feels good where he is, and where he has a wish to succeed. His cultural space – the habits, rituals and traditions which he identifies himself with - he always carry with him, in his home, in his soul, etc.*' (Bagreeva and Mendzheritskiy, this issue:329). Ethnic national identities are durable too, easily surviving half a century of oppression, as the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian cases show. Ethnic identities are slightly more prone to erosion, particularly if the set of core values is shallow. This is particularly clearly seen in the case of small

ethnic border communities. As the Lithuanian Poles show, such communities have a high propensity to multilingualism, shifting their identities when state borders are redrawn (Geben and Ramonienė, this issue). This can be regarded as a kind of identity mimicry that safeguards against possible persecution by the state, while still retaining some of the crucial core values of ethnicity.

Civic identity is the least dense, of course, but one must not forget that over time there may be a saturation of any identity, leading to what can be called ethnogenesis. Both civic and linguistic identities, when their sets of core values and members' emotional attachment to them increase, may become increasingly more ethnic, as can be seen in the cases of Transnistrians and Russian-speakers in Estonia.

9 Conclusion

This paper has presented an analysis of the collective identity situation in the post-Soviet space based on the case studies that will follow in this special issue. This analysis has outlined the crucial features that distinguish ethnic and different types of national, imperial and linguistic identities, has examined the conditions that inhibit or enhance the processes of convergence between identities, and has focussed on the blurring of identities, using the sign theory of identity as a guiding framework. It has described some of the regularities, but by no means all the richness of data or analytical insights presented in these case studies. Reality is always richer than any accounts meant to systematise it. Furthermore, the generalisations presented here are based on the analysis of one particular post-colonial setting, and therefore may easily misrepresent the features characteristic to this setting as being universal. Hopefully, the presentation of the argument has been detailed and clear enough so that specialists in other post-colonial settings can fruitfully modify and complement the generalisations.

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Article

Transnistrian conflict in the context of post-Soviet nation-building

Anastasia V. Mitrofanova

Abstract

This paper aims at comparing national identity situations in Moldova and the self-proclaimed Transnistrian state (Pridnestrovie). Moldovan identity is torn and takes at least five forms: (1) Moldovan ethnonational identity as a regional variation of the Romanian one; (2) specifically Moldovan ethnonational identity; (3) post-Soviet amorphous 'non-identity'; (4) specific identities of ethnic minorities (identification of the Ukrainians with Ukraine, Russians with Russia, etc.); (5) marginal identities of the titular ethnic group. None of these identity projects is directed towards consolidating the Moldovan civil nation, including ethnic minorities (making up approximately 22% of the population). Moreover, there is an identity split within the titular ethnic group, more complex than a dilemma of Romanianism / Moldovanism. Moldovanism has at least two versions (ethicized and integrative), not to mention marginalized identities (such as Romanian-speaking Orthodox fundamentalists objecting to eurointegration). Transnistrian identity, to the contrary, is firm and consolidated, although it consists of seemingly incompatible parts (pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet). It is a civil identity based on ideology, not on ethnicity. This ideology is also mosaic and cannot be reduced to 'neo-Communism' or Russian nationalism. Thus, the Transnistrian national project is open for all post-Soviet ethnic groups. Rapid reunification of the two banks seems impossible because their national projects have not just different contents, but different structures. Moldova should first decide on its vision of the national project and then build its policy towards Pridnestrovie and the EU on this ground. Without it, the conflict cannot be resolved in the foreseeable future.

KEYWORDS: MOLDOVA, TRANSNISTRIA, PRIDNESTROVIE, NATIONAL IDENTITY, NATION-BUILDING

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1 Some introductory remarks

In February 2011 the author of this paper boarded a mini-bus (*marshrutka*) at Chisinau bus station, bound for Tiraspol, the capital of the unrecognized republic of Pridnestrovie. Passengers were vividly chatting in Romanian (or Moldovan; the difference is insignificant when you don't understand a word) thus confirming the worst prognostications of political analysts in Moscow about the future of the Russian language in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The closer to the border and to the check-point, however, the less they talked. For a moment, the mini-bus was silent; but it immediately burst out with chatting again. But now it was all in pure Russian. This sudden change left an impression of a fairy-tale – a sad Tale of Two Banks.

This paper aims to understand the Transnistrian conflict within the framework of nation-building in the post-Soviet states and to evaluate the possibility of national reconciliation and restoration of territorial integrity of the republic. My hypothesis is that the possibility of resolution of the Transnistrian conflict in the foreseeable future depends on the ability of the elites from the two banks to build a consolidated nation from what now looks like fundamentally oppositional groups. I suggest that important differences between national identities emerging at the banks of the Dniester hamper their ability to overcome contradictions in the foreseeable future. Research methodology combines analyzing printed and electronic sources with interviewing Moldovan and Transnistrian scholars and political analysts, as well as participant observation.

Due to the shortage of printed sources on many important issues, interviewing experts became the most important research tool for the author. Quotations are taken (unless another source is identified) from these interviews. The following experts were interviewed by the author in 2009–2011:

Vladimir Blajko – Professor at the Institute for Philosophy, Sociology and Political Studies (Chisinau) and of the Pridnestrovan State University (Tiraspol).

Irina Caunenko – Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of the Cultural Heritage of Moldova (Chisinau).

Viorel Cibotaru – Director, European Institute for Political Studies of Moldova (Chisinau), since March 2015 minister of defence.

Ilya Galinsky – Director of the Institute of State and Law History at the Pridnestrovan State University (Tiraspol).

Oazu Nantoi – Program Director, Institute for Public Policy (Chisinau). In January 2012 – prospective independent presidential candidate.

Viacheslav Stepanov – Main Research Fellow at the Institute of the Cultural Heritage of Moldova (Chisinau), deputy director of the Institute of State and Law History at the Pridnestrovan State University (Tiraspol).

Iurie Rosca – politician, ex-chair of the Christian Democratic People's Party, ex-member of parliament.

These interlocutors are either distinguished academics or experienced political practitioners; each of them was able to provide a substantial argument in support of their political choices.

2 Introduction

The problem of Transnistria[1] (Pridnestrovie; the PMR; the Left Bank) should be discussed in a broader context of nation-building in the post-Soviet area. Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union most of the newly independent states were founded upon a full rejection of the Soviet (also seen as imperial) past. Thus, their new national identities were dominated by ethnicity. Even in the Russia of the early 1990s there were attempts to 'erase' the Soviet period from the new Russian history and to transform Russia into a state of ethnic Russians.

Ethnic nationalism in Moldova is a specific case due to the existence of two versions: Moldovan ethnic nationalism as such and nationalism of the Moldovan sub-ethnic group within the Romanian ethnic nation (for more on the Moldovans, see King, 2000). By the end of 1988 right-bank Moldova had been politically and culturally dominated by 'Unionists', promoting the project of a divided Romanian nation and demanding re-unification. On 30 August 1989 the Supreme Soviet of Moldavia adopted the Language Bill, according to which the Moldovan language (understood as regionalized Romanian) became the only state language (for a detailed description of the linguistic situation in Moldova, see Ciscel, 2007; Zabarah, 2010). In February 1990 the Supreme Soviet elections were won by the Popular Front oriented towards unification of Moldavia and Romania. These decisions, made without considering the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual composition of the Soviet Moldavia, led to the armed conflict in Transnistria and to the emergence of nascent Gagauz separatism (for details see Kolstø, Edemsky and Kalashnikova, 1993).

By the mid-1990s the newly independent states had to abandon their ethnonationalist projects as they discovered that they were in fact ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous. In that period all these states had transitional regimes that were unwilling to produce anything to replace the deserted ethnic projects. There was a backlash in the process of nation-building: after a short period of militant ethnonationalism the newly independent states became the amorphous 'Former Soviet Union'.

Table 1 is based on the 2004 census (Itogi perepisi naseleniya 2004 goda) – the freshest source of reliable data – which demonstrates the following state of affairs in Moldova (*without* Transnistria):

Table 1. Ethnic groups and languages in Moldova.

Ethnic group	**Moldovans**	**Ukrainians**	**Russians**	**Gagauz**	**Romanians**	**Bulgarians**	Other, or no
(%)	75.8	8.4	5.9	4.4	2.2	1.9	1.4
number	2 564 849	282 406	201 218	147 500	73 276	65 662	48 421
Total population: 3 383 332 people							
Language usually spoken	**Moldovan**	**Romanian**	**Russian**	**Ukrainian**	**Gagauz**	**Bulgarian**	Other, or no
(%)	58.8	16.4	16	3.8	3.1	1.1	0.4
number	1 988 540	554 814	540 990	130 114	104 890	38 565	25 419

'Romanians' here mean not a specific ethnic group, but Moldova nationals consciously considering themselves part of the Romanian ethnic nation. Linguistic differences between the 'Moldovan' and 'Romanian' languages are insignificant; this differentiation is first and foremost political. To sum up, 78% of the population of right-bank Moldova can be counted as one more-or-less homogenous ethnic group (the Moldovans and the Romanians), and 22% as 'non-titular ethnic groups'. The Moldovan-Romanian language is spoken (as a primary language) by 72.2% of the total population (some Moldovans speak Russian); the Slavic languages (Russian, Ukrainian and Bulgarian) by 20.9%; Gagauz is a Turkic language. Considering these high numbers of ethnic and linguistic minorities, it is no surprise that the idea of a mono-ethnic and mono-lingual Moldovan state met with a chilly social response (see Figure 1). Subsequently, Moldova had to decline the Romanian project as early as 1994 (the year when the Constitution was adopted), well before the Communists came to power in 2001.

The Communists won the elections not because they had an attractive national project but because they were the only alternative to the Unionists. Moldova joined the rest of the newly independent states, which became an amorphous 'former USSR' having no national projects to speak of. The situation has radically changed in 2003–2004. Both the population and the leadership of the newly independent states discovered that 'the FSU' could no longer function as an integrating force and that they must cease to be former so as to become something present.

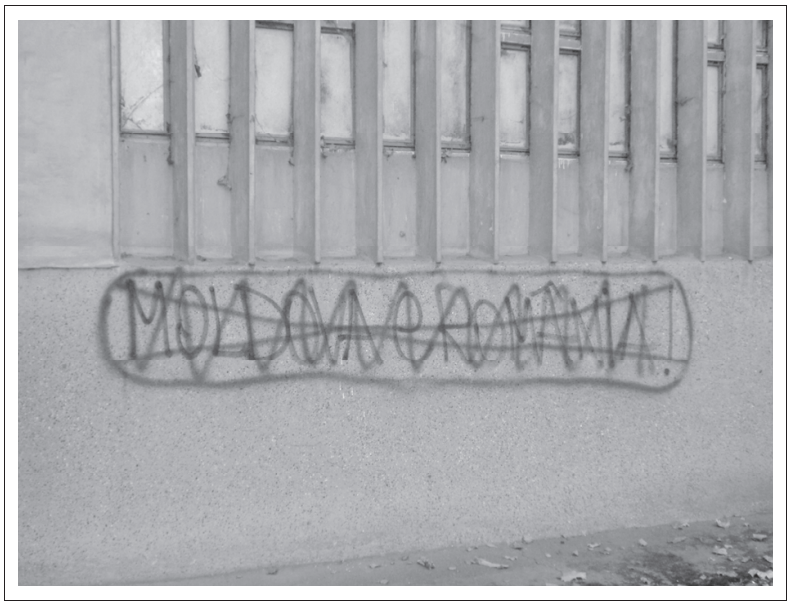

Figure 1. Crossed-out graffiti in Chisinau – 'Moldova is Romania'.

At that moment 'colored revolutions' in Ukraine and Georgia had met the challenge of nation-building. The initial ethnonational enterprise was replaced with the project of building European-style civil nations to join, eventually, the

European structures (EU and NATO). This project is not oppositional in the strict sense because, for the most part, the previous regimes had declared the same goals. However, in reality they would never be able to realize these goals, since their authority and wealth were based upon the idea of a post-Soviet amorphous state. For them, integration with Europe would mean losing everything they had and maybe even legal prosecution. To actualize the European (or Western) enterprise, the opposition in Georgia and Ukraine had to dismiss the post-Soviet regimes.

3 The multiple identities of Moldova

Vladimir Voronin's regime made some attempts to construct the Moldovan nation, differentiating itself from the Romanian one. This job was mostly financed by the *Pro Moldova* private foundation, with some state support. In 2003 *The History of Moldova* by Vasile Stati[2] was published to oppose *The History of Romanians* being taught at public schools. Stati rejected the common destiny of the Moldovans and the Romanians, calling to raise 'the flag of the culture of Moldovanism' (Stati, 2003:407). His book even states that although the Moldovans, like the Romanians, descend from the Dacians, these were another, free Dacians, not enslaved by the Romans (Stati, 2003:17).

Stati insisted on the continuity of Moldovan statehood from the 14th century to the present, including the 'crypto-existence' of Moldova in the form of a republic of the Soviet Union. To stress this continuity he lists all rulers of Moldova: medieval princes, imperial governors of Bessarabia, chairmen of the first Moldovan parliament (1917–1918), the first secretaries of the Communist parties of Ukraine and Moldova, chairmen of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the MASSR and the MSSR, chairmen of the parliament of the Republic of Moldova and, finally, presidents.

Another book by Stati, published by *Pro Moldova*, focused on Stephen the Great, a medieval ruler of the Moldovan Principality, whose persona was important for the Unionist project. In 1989 Leonida Lari, a poetess and member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, one of the leaders of the Popular Front, got symbolically married with a statue of Stephen the Great in Chisinau. Stati, in his turn, rejected Stephen's Romanian origins and stressed that Stephen 'spoke the language of his people – the language of the Moldovans, the one they called and still call the Moldovan language' (Stati, 2004:113). It is noteworthy that, according to Stati, Stephen also spoke Russian fluently. This idea of Stephen as a figure of ethnic reconciliation was echoed by President Voronin (2004). Opening a monument to Stephen the Great in Beltzy (Balti), Voronin expressed his hope that this monument and the heritage of Stephen would become a uniting symbol of the country (quoted in Stati, 2004: 159–160).

In 2003 Stati published *The Moldovan–Romanian Dictionary*, the very name of which is challenging for Unionism. The dictionary has become a subject of mockery for intellectuals, including those opposing the Romanian project. Stati commented on this:

> The Romanian language and the Moldovan language are not different languages; they have two linguonyms, two names of national languages – the Moldovan national language and the Romanian national language… [B]oth of them preserve their linguonym, which is an identifier of the two nations… The name 'Romanian language' hits the nation… Linguonym is a non-linguistic phenomenon; it is a sociocultural, ethnopsychological phenomenon, one of the basic signs of ethno-identification of each people. I am Moldovan and my language is Moldovan.[3]

Apart from these semi-private initiatives, for eight years the Communists have done nothing to promote the project of Moldovan national identity. The majority of the intelligentsia, especially educators, remained pro-Romanian. It is noteworthy that neither Vasile Stati, nor Petr Shornkov, another prominent proponent of Moldovanism, was admitted to the National Academy of Sciences. *The History of Romanians* as a school discipline was not replaced by *The History of Moldova*. Neither was the status of the Russian language strengthened. In 2001 a bill intending to make Russian the second official language successfully passed through the Communist-dominated Parliament. However, in 2002 the Constitutional Court declined the law as contradicting the Constitution. The results of Voronin's education policy could be seen in April 2009, when young people were waving Romanian flags. What is more important, nearly nothing was done in the socio-economic sphere – the majority of the labor force had to go abroad in search of jobs. In 2009 people voted not so much for the Unionists but against the Communists.

Generally Moldova remain an unfinished nation with an unstable identity, torn into competing pieces:

(1) *Moldovan ethnonational identity as a regional variation of the Romanian one*. Only a minority of Moldovans identify themselves firmly as Romanians (2.2 %). But this part of the intelligentsia is the most politically active and intellectually productive. Mihai Ghimpu once said:

> …as long ago as in 1990, when I became a member of parliament, it was written in my resume that I was Romanian… I always knew which language I was speaking, except, may be, for the first months of my life. I always spoke Romanian and wrote with the Latin script. I cannot say that I am a Dacian Slav, if I am a Dacian Roman.[4]

Many more people calling themselves Moldovans understand Moldovanness as a subjunctive form of Romanianness. Politically this identity pours into the Unionist project, now strengthened by the hope that joining Romania would mean automatically becoming an EU and NATO member. The Soviet past is seen by Romanianists as 'the period of occupation'. In June 2010 a memorial stone was erected in the center of Chisinau to commemorate victims of the Soviet occupation and the communist regime (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Memorial stone: 'Here a monument will be erected in memory of the victims of the Soviet occupation and the communist regime'.

Joining the EU is commonly justified by a shared cultural heritage – 'Moldova is a part of Europe without any buts' (Viorel Cibotaru). Moldova's membership in NATO would contradict the constitutional principle of neutrality. Romanianists suggest that neutrality was imposed on Moldova by Russia. The 'theory of neutrality, of separateness of Moldova, is absolutely forced', Viorel Cibotaru says, insisting that neutrality meant the 'finlandization' of Moldova, playing into the hands of Russia. He thinks the decision about neutrality was made to prevent Russia from dragging Moldova into some other military alliance.

Ethnic minorities are tolerated until they become politicized. No room for the public role of the Russian language is left. The reaction of Oazu Nantoi to the author's suggestion to make Moldova a bilingual nation (like Finland or

Switzerland) was emotionally rejected: 'There can be no Switzerland with three armies [Moldovan, Russian and Transnistrian – A.M.] on the territory of the country!' At the end of 2009 the new government initiated a commission on constitutional reform to change the name of the state language from Moldovan to Romanian.

Romanianists reject any cultural (ethnic, historical, etc.) uniqueness of Transnistria, understanding it simply as 'administrative territory' (Viorel Cibotaru). They hope that it will simply 'straighten itself out' (Oazu Nantoi), relying on gradual erosion of the ruling regime. Viorel Cibotaru asks a rhetorical question: Who is the real Transnistrian elite: Igor Smirnov, who arrived in 1987 to head the 'Electromash' factory, or 'a girl from Slobozia, a graduate of a university in Bucharest'?

(2) *Moldovan ethnonational identity as something specific and only insignificantly resembling the Romanian identity* (see Figure 3). This identity seems to be the most popular, but its bearers are much less active compared with the 'Romanians'. Moldovanism in this interpretation also presupposes gradual assimilation of ethnic minorities. The Russian language is tolerated as the language of international (i.e., interethnic) communication to be replaced in the future by the titular (Moldovan) language.

Figure 3. 'Moldova is my homeland': a billboard in Chisinau.

This project has a less ethnocentric version, presenting Moldova as a civil multiethnic and, most likely, bilingual nation. Initially Vladimir Voronin and his party were associated with this version of Moldovanism. The PKRM came to power in 2001 with slogans suggesting a distancing from NATO and joining the Union of Belarus and Russia. However, by the mid-2000s their position had already undergone visible changes. Viorel Cibotaru admits that he participated in

preparing 'the orange revolution' in Moldova in 2004, but 'Voronin has liberated us from the necessity to overthrow him by revolutionary means'. Voronin's rhetoric from this period becomes barely distinguishable from the Unionist one. The Sovieticized version of Moldovanism, represented by Stati, was abandoned in favor of a more ethnocentric vision, implying, at the same time, the prospect of European integration. 'We want to enter the European Union through Brussels, and not through Bucharest',[5] Voronin stated in 2009. The Atlantic part of the project was much less strong; nevertheless, in spite of the neutrality principle, Voronin made some steps towards NATO.

Voronin's position on Transnistria has changed as well. In 2003 he accepted, but then suddenly rejected, the plan of reconciliation offered by Russia ('Kozak's Memorandum'), which implied reshaping the country into a federation consisting of Moldova as such, Gagauz Eri and Transnistria. Explaining the motivation for that decision in 2005, Voronin said:

> …to unite our country we need no peacekeepers – either Russian, or European. Peace on the Dniester is a reality. And it is only threatened by a totalitarian clique consisting of ten and a half of maniacs, sponsored by international mafia [Igor Smirnov's government – A.M]. About five thousand students from Transnistria study in Chisinau; many Transnistrians work at enterprises of right bank Moldova – all of them need no middlemen in khaki, and Moldova needs no Russian military presence at all.[6]

Voronin's project has proven unable to integrate ethnic minorities into the nation. Moreover, it made evident that even softer ethnocentric projects eventually become more rigid.

(3) *Post-Soviet amorphous identity (rather non-identity) culturally centered around the Russian culture and language (without being identified with the Russians ethnically)*. This identity is accepted by ethnic minorities and some ethnic Moldovans (for example, Russophone ones). It engenders no articulated political project except regretting the dissolution of the Soviet Union; its bearers normally vote for the Communist Party because, as Irina Caunenko mentions, it is the only multi-ethnic party not associated exclusively with the titular ethnic group.

(4) *Various marginal identities of ethnic minorities, such as identification of the Ukrainians with Ukraine, the Russians with Russia, etc.* Living in Moldova geographically, such people possess foreign passports and do not see themselves as a part of the nation. Only the Gagauz have no opportunity to identify themselves with some foreign nation. Turkey tries to play on their reemerging interest in their mother-tongue. It contributes a lot towards the Moldovan educational system, including financial support for Komrat University (see Paptsova, 2010). There is Gagauz labor migration to Turkey; some people are interested in Islam, others try to restore the ancient Turkic Tengri religion (traditionally the Gagauz profess

Orthodox Christianity) (see more in Anikin, 2009). Ethnic minorities turn to foreign sources of identity because the dominant ethnonational projects leave no room for them. There are no political parties to represent ethnic minorities – most likely, they are not interested in real integration into the political system. Members of ethnic communities not speaking Moldovan either migrate to 'their' countries or work exclusively in the private sphere. It is no surprise that Russian has become the business language in Moldova.

(5) *Marginal identities of the titular (Moldovan/Romanian) ethnic group*. Intellectuals, not satisfied with the pro-European choice of the core projects, produce specific, sometimes strange ideas about what it means to be a Moldovan. Some Romanian ethnonationalists, who used to be active in the beginning of the 1990s, have suddenly found that their bucolic concept of the Orthodox Moldova living along patriarchal lines clashes with the European values, meaning, after all, gay pride parades and same-sex marriages. Some of them came up with the idea of turning Moldova into an Orthodox (ideocratic) state, which would join a community of the other Orthodox states (including Russia). This project can be easily confused with post-Soviet nostalgia, but this would be a mistake.

The Christian Democratic People's Party (Partidul Popular Crestin Democrat, PPCD) and its leader (up to 2011) Iurie Rosca is a good example. Up to approximately the mid-2000s the party was in the vanguard of Romanianism and established connections with many European nationalist parties. Initially the PPCD called for forced accession of Moldova to the EU and NATO as a guarantee against the rebirth of communism. Soon, however, the libertarian positions of the European nationalists and the European institutions generally left Moldovan Christian Democrats disappointed. In 2011 the PPCD erased European stars from its logo, where they used to surround the silhouette of the statue of St. Stephen the Great. In an interview to the author, Rosca, previously known for his anti-Russian activities, such as burning the Russian flag in 2003, even admitted that 'we [Moldovans] need union with Russia, but Russia should become Orthodox again'.

This brief description of multiple visible identities available for an average citizen of Moldova regardless of his/her ethnicity leads to at least three conclusions. First, the identity situation of the titular ethnic group is more complicated than a simple controversy between Romanianism and Moldovanism. There are representatives of the titular group (Moldovans and Romanians) dissatisfied with both variations; they are in search of some third Moldovanness/Romanianness. Right now no one knows their exact number and their discourses remain marginalized. This does not mean, however, that would be unable to win more supporters in the future and to move the dominant discourses aside.

Second, Moldovanism is not an integral national identity project. It has at least two versions, which overlap, merge and turn into each other, not to mention that there is no solid border between this project and Romanianism or post-Soviet 'non-identity'. Moldovanism is discreet and vague because its elaboration needs more political, financial and intellectual resources than it has ever had. Potentially it may evolve into an inclusive ideology able to integrate the titular ethnic group and minorities into a consolidated nation.

Third, none of these projects is directed towards consolidating the Moldovan civil nation, including ethnic minorities, which make a significant part of the population even without Transnistria. 22% of the population, mostly using Russian as either a first or second language, will not simply 'dissipate', and no nation can be built without them. However, the most influential projects (Romanianism and Moldovanism) remain exclusive of minorities; more inclusive projects are marginalized or hardly visible. Minorities, in their turn, are not able to suggest a joint identity for them all, or an inclusive identity for the whole nation.

Irina Caunenko's research on ethnic psychology has shown that the titular ethnic group and the minorities (symbolically associating themselves with the Russians) gradually distance from one another (see Caunenco and Gasper 2005; Caunenco, 2007). Her explanation for this increasing gap is that the Moldovan nation has no clear understanding of itself, no name and no language. The call for the integration of minorities, Caunenco thinks, is meaningless because there is no clear entity to be integrated into and the titular ethnic group is unable to center the civic nation on it; even a demand to learn 'the language' becomes empty since no one knows which language to learn: Romanian or Moldovan. In my opinion, her research helps to understand why de-consolidation of the inhabitants of Moldova is in progress instead of national consolidation.

Today (as of August 2015) the Romanian/European project dominates the intellectual and political scene. It seems inexplicable considering that the number of people identifying themselves with Romania is small. However, the political course in Moldova is determined by the elite exclusively; it is a culture of a silent majority in the full sense. The ruling elite of Moldova is mostly represented by graduates from Romanian universities; they are citizens of Romania and identify themselves as Romanians. The elite is also connected with Romanian business.

And one cannot help but mention migration. There is no reliable data on how many Moldovan nationals are currently working abroad: estimations vary from 300 thousand to 1 million. Statistics provided by the World Bank demonstrate that in 2008 people working abroad sent back home approximately 27% of the country's GDP.[7] The most active, intellectually capable and open-minded part of

the population is constantly absent, not just ignoring political life inside the country but even being unable (or unwilling) to participate in elections. It is no surprise that the Moldovan population demonstrates social indifference and fatigue.

4 Transnistrian identity: A bricolage

There is a significant difference between Transnistria and right-bank Moldova, making their coexistence problematic. Transnistrians do have a formidable identity (Transdnistrianness, *pridnestrovskost'*) – this fact is confirmed by a variety of independent observers, including such internationally recognized scholars as Pål Kolstø and his collaborators (e.g. Kolstø and Malgin, 1998; Skvortsova, 2002; Troebst, 2003; Cojocaru, 2006; Deviatkov, 2010). It is built on remembering the 1992 conflict and on being ready to protect the republic in case of intervention from the Right Bank (see Figure 4). It is mostly a negative identity defining a Transnistrian as someone who is 'not from the Right Bank'. Even the rural ethnic Moldovans (most sensitive to the influence from Chisinau), according to Viacheslav Stepanov, agree that 'we are not the sort of Moldovans as those at the other bank'. Paradoxically, this Transnistrian identity emerged and continues to exist mostly due to the policy of the Right Bank. The tougher the rhetoric of Chisinau becomes, the more garrison thinking and subsequent national consolidation in Transnistria increases.

Figure 4. Tank 'T-34', part of *The Monument of Glory* in Tiraspol to commemorate several wars and the 1992 conflict.

Ilya Galinsky insists that the Pridnestrovans emerged as a civil nation as early as in 1920s, when this region was part of Soviet Ukraine and Moldova did not yet exist. 'We lived in the sovereign independent Moldova not even one day', he says. At the same time, he dates the spiritual background of this nation to the end of the 18th century, when Pridnestrovie became part of the Russian Empire.

The official ideology is that the Transnistrians have overgrown both regional and ethnic identity and now compose a new polyethnic entity – the Pridnestrovan people [*narod*]. The state-employed Transnistrian scholars emphasize that borders between ethnic groups in Pridnestrovie gradually disappear and that Pridnestrovan identity is being transformed from ethnic to civil (Ostavnaya, 2009:155). Stepan Beril (an ethnic Bulgarian), rector of the Pridnestrovan State University up to July 2014, writes:

> On the basis of the Russian language, the Russian culture and the Russian semantic space, the whole population of Pridnestrovie, consisting mostly of the Russians, the Ukrainians and the Moldovans, has united into a civil nation – the Pridnestrovan people [*pridnestrovskii narod*], which has proven to be able to determine itself and to create full-fledged independent statehood. (Beril 2010:146)

The word 'people' [*narod*] is commonly used instead of 'nation' [*natsiya*] because, following the Soviet tradition, 'nation' (or 'nationality') is understood as a substitute for 'ethnicity'. The fact that Beril and other Transnistrian (as well as Russian) authors, nevertheless, sometimes use the word 'nation' (normally complemented by an adjective 'civil') should be perceived as the influence of Western political discourse. Still, '*narod*' much better stresses the non-ethnic nature of Transnistrian society.

The ethnic situation in Transnistria, in accordance with the official statistics (Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Pridnestrovskoi Moldavskoi Respubliki, 2010:30), looks as follows (see Table 2):

Table 2. Ethnic composition of Transnistria
(percentage in brackets is the author's approximate calculation).

Population	**2008**	**2009**
Total (thousands)	527.5	522.5
Moldovans	168.3 [31.9%]	166.8 [31.9%]
Russians	160.4 [30.4%]	158.8 [30.39%]
Ukrainians	151.9 [28.79%]	150.5 [28.8%]
Bulgarians	13.2 [2.5%]	13.1 [2.5%]
Byelorussians	3.7 [0.7%]	3.6 [0.68%]
Gagauz	3.7 [0.7%]	3.6 [0.68%]
Germans	2.1 [0.39%]	2.1 [0.4%]
Jews	1.1 [0.2%]	1.0 [0.19%]
Others	23.1 [4.37%]	23.0 [4.4%]

Transnistria has no state language; Moldovan, Russian and Ukrainian are recognized as 'official languages' with equal status. Statistical data on spoken languages is not available, but there is information on languages used at secondary and high schools (2010), both private and municipal (see Table 3):

Table 3. Languages used at secondary and high schools in Transnistria (Marakutsa 2010:141).

Language	Number of schools	Percent of schools
Russian	135	70.3
Moldovan	33	17.2
Russian and Moldovan	16	8.4
Ukrainian	2	1
Romanian	6	3.1

Sociological data (although obtained by state-sponsored research bodies) confirms the presence of some common meta-ethnic Transnistrian identity. In 2003 a survey conducted by *Perspektiva* Center (Tiraspol) demonstrated that 77% of the respondents agree that the population of Transnistria may be called 'the Pridnestrovan people', while 71% feels that they belong to this people (Ostavnaya, 2009: 153). Even if we don't take these figures for granted, they, as Kolstø and Melberg eventually conclude, 'reflect attitudes based on incomplete and skewed information but nevertheless subjectively held and honest answers' (Kolstø and Melberg, 2002: 32; Protsyk, 2009). One should also keep in mind the degree of control exercised over the society by the ruling elite and the political police, preserving the optimal level of national consolidation. Several interviewees, on the basis of anonymity, confirmed that the political and ideological situation in Transnistria is 100 % under the control of the MGB (Ministry of State Security). The point is not that the MGB forces people to share the officially supported identity but that it prevents propaganda (and even conceptualization) of probable alternative identities, thus making it easier for people to adopt the only visible version.

'Unlike Moldova, Pridnestrovie has a real, clear national idea', Viacheslav Stepanov insists. I would add that unlike multiple Moldovan identities, the Transnistrian common identity is not based on ethnicity. The extended use of the Russian language in Transnistria does not make the Transnistrians a regional subgroup of ethnic Russians. Transnistria used to be the most industrialized region of Soviet Moldavia, which attracted people from all parts of the Soviet Union. These people, even being nominally ethnic Russians, mostly had no deep cultural roots in the places of their origins. They were not acquainted with Russian folk culture; neither had they had any profound 'genuinely Russian' values. Culturally they were first and foremost Soviet people having, in a way, no ethnicity. The same is true for most Russians living in Soviet Moldavia. Alla Skvortsova elaborates that:

> Most Russians living in Moldova were either born there or came to Moldova not from Russia but from other Soviet republics. This means, of course, that they have nowhere in Russia they can point to as their home district or hometown. The Russians in the non-Russian republics were highly exposed to and ready to consider themselves members of the new community, in other words, to form the Soviet people. (Skvortsova, 2002:173)

Transnistrian identity is grounded solely in ideology, although its key values are not easily understandable. Pål Kolstø and his co-authors wrote:

> Although the mass media have regularly referred to the [1992] war as an ethnic conflict, neither side agrees to this description. Both insist that it is essentially political in character (although they strongly disagree as to which political values are at stake). (Kolstø, Edemsky and Kalashnikova, 1993:975)

It is easy to label the Transnistrian political values as 'Neo-Communist' or 'Neo-Soviet', as the 'Romanianized' Moldovan intellectuals constantly do. There is some data in support of this viewpoint. Transnistria joined the Soviet Union in 1922 – 22 years earlier than the Right Bank – and loyalty to the Soviet power here was always higher than in rural right-bank Moldova, especially after collectivization. Transnistrian legislative bodies are still called 'Soviets'; the self-proclaimed republic uses the Soviet flag and coat of arms.

This position is partly accepted by the proponents of the 'Pridnestrovan people' as well. Ilya Galinsky thinks that the Pridnestrovan mentality is, 'as we call it, Russian Soviet mentality', but expressed in the form of a political and civic nation. Viacheslav Stepanov agrees that Pridnestrovie preserves the cultural code of the previous period, i.e. the Soviet code. At the same time, he seems not to distinguish between the pre-Soviet Russian code and the Soviet Russian one.

Official Transnistrian scholars insist that 'the Pridnestrovan identity' emerged much earlier than the separation of the region from the Right Bank. Alla Ostavnaya from the Pridnestrovan State University writes that:

> Awareness of the uniqueness of the Pridnestrovan entity was present in the period of the MSSR: for example, the Pridnestrovans continued calling the right bank of the Dniester 'Bessarabia', in spite of this term being excluded from the official vocabulary. Differences between the inhabitants of the Left Bank and the Bessarabians were unofficially registered by the Communist party's policy as well: the former were considered to be more loyal to the Soviet regime… When studying the Pridnestrovan history, many scholars have to acknowledge that self-definition of Pridnestrovie and its conflict with Moldova were engendered by the existence of an identity, differentiating the Pridnestrovan population. (Ostavnaya, 2009:152)

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to call Pridnestrovie a remnant of the Soviet past or a neo-Communist formation. All industries of the Left Bank have been privatized and the most profitable of them became foreign property. The economy is highly monopolized by an omnipotent company, *Sheriff* (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. A supermarket *Sheriff* in Tiraspol.

The old Soviet symbols, monuments and memorable dates are being incorporated into new national memory. For example, the history of Pridnestrovie within the Russian Empire and the USSR becomes a crypto-history of a hidden nation, which existed 'eternally'. A two-volume book, *The History of the Pridnestrovan Moldovan Republic* (Tiraspol, 2001), for instance, simultaneously affirms the positive value of the Soviet past and the ever-existing independent 'Pridnestrovan nation'.

In spite of this somewhat exaggerated independence, the Transnistrians are somehow part of Russia. 'Spiritually, we consider ourselves a constitutive element of the Russian state. The one who leaves for Russia – he is not a traitor for us. He left for his big Motherland' (Galinsky). 'Unity with Russia is our power' (*Nasha sila – v edinstve s Rossiei*) – this slogan is displayed in the center of Tiraspol while images of Vladimir Putin and Dmitrii Medvedev were used (together with Che Guevara) by the pro-government youth movement *Proryv* (Breakthrough) – see Figure 6.

Figure 6. Headquarters of *Proryv* in Tiraspol, 2008.

In September 2006 a referendum on the future political destiny was held in Transnistria (turnout – 77.63% of the population). Two questions were answered as follows:[8]

> 1. Do you support pursuing the policy of achieving independence of the Pridnestrovan Moldovan Republic and subsequent free entrance of Pridnestrovie to the Russian Federation? – Yes: 97.1%; No: 2.3%.
> 2. Do you consider possible rejection of independence of the Pridnestrovan Moldovan Republic with subsequent joining Moldova? – Yes: 3.4%; No: 94.6%.

Is the Transnistrian nation based on the desire to lose its identity and to join the Russian nation (the issue of whether this Russian nation exists is beyond the theme of this paper)? This would be too simple. 'We think ourselves more Russian and more citizens of Russia than the citizens of Russia themselves', says Ilya Galinsky. What does it mean, to be more Russian than Russian nationals?

To answer this question one needs to pinpoint (however hard it may be) some key concepts of Transnistrian ideology. It includes some elements of industrial socialism (the Transnistrians are proud that their huge factories still work), direct democracy based on referendums rather than on parliamentary representation, and traditional values alternative to Western ones and grounded in Orthodox Christianity. Even in the smallest details this project resembles the national project of the Republic of Belarus.[9]

Transnistrian identity, unlike Moldovan, is not torn. It is a bricolage identity, symbolized by the monument to Suvorov, the founder of Tiraspol, which ties together the distant imperial past, the recent Soviet past and the sovereign present. Contradictions of this mosaic identity are not articulated and seem to be unnoticed.

Both Belarus and Pridnestrovie have transformed the Soviet heritage into the foundation of their national projects. But they never pretended to hold monopoly on this heritage. Their projects are not 'national' in a narrow sense; they became nationalized because there has been no external and more powerful actor to join in pursuing these projects. Unlike the closed ethnic projects of Moldova, the Transnistrian 'national project' is open; and this openness makes it indefinite and vague.

Not accidentally, in both countries there is a strong feeling of 'the frontier'. Transnistrian borders are external borders of some bigger entity: it might have been Russia, but some ideal Russia of the future. President Smirnov once coined that Pridnestrovie is 'the outpost of Russia'.[10] It is an outpost, but an outpost of an idea, not of a reality. Belarus and Transnistria are protecting an imagined border, a frontier of the future. Within Russia, this ideological project is privatized by the opposition uniting those generally called patriots (as opposed to liberals) – Communists, Orthodox traditionalists and Russian nationalists. Archimandrite Tikhon (Shevkunov), representing the moderate wing of Orthodox traditionalism, once called Pridnestrovie 'the spiritual outpost of Russia'. In support of this vision he argued that:

> The Pridnestrovan Republic never loaned money from international banks; it has not a single oligarch on its territory; it did not lose state control over any significant industry; it created a mighty army, which held off external aggression back.[11]

Apparently, these characteristics are juxtaposing modern Russia to its suggested 'outpost'. In this vision, the Transnistrians are more Russian than the Russians; they are the ideal Russians. There is a widely quoted phrase attributed to President Lukashenko: 'The Belarusians are the Russians, but of top quality'. It seems that, according to the official ideology, the Transnistrians are of even better quality.

The hopes of the right-bank elite on gradual erosion of the Transnistrian regime are partly justified. More than half of Transnistrians have Moldovan passports (the rest use Russian and Ukrainian passports to travel outside the region). Moldova tries to attract the Transnistrian youth into its universities, providing stipends and organizing Russian-speaking student groups. It is important to note that a Transnistian diploma is recognized in Russia only, while a Moldovan diploma is

recognized in Europe. Viacheslav Stepanov agrees that the Transnistrian population becomes more and more influenced by the Right Bank. He also mentions the Ukrainan influence on ethnic Ukrainians, who study at Ukrainian schools with textbooks from Ukraine.

Even the leaders of Transnistria do not conceal the fact that they are Europe-orientated. 'Pridnestrovie is a European state with a stable Russian vector of development', says the Transnistiran deputy minister of foreign affairs.[12] Two Transnistrian microregions – Kamenka and Rybnitza – were even made an offer to join a euro-region 'Dniester' in 2010, although the project failed.

Vladimir Blajko distinguishes between the two elites of Transnistria: the first one consists of Smirnov's old comrades-in-arms and has no place to step back from its position. The second elite is represented by young businessmen who need markets, free economic space. Respectively, the older generation of average Transnistrians is consolidated in their opposition to the Right Bank, while younger people are less hard. Most of the industrial giants of Transnistria are now out of date; people leave the region for Russia and Ukraine; the labor force decreases. It seems that 'the old guard' may find no one to replace it: in 2010 even Oleg Smirnov, the younger son of the president, sold his financial assets and left for Russia with his family.

However, a revolution inside the rogue region seems impossible. Until Russia gives money, Vladimir Blajko says, 'people will sit there [in Transnistria – A.M.] and there will be no way to smoke them out'. Paradoxically, his ideological opponent Oazu Nantoi is of the same opinion: there can be no 'orange revolution' in Transnistria, 'mamalyga [Moldovan corn dish, an offensive nickname for the Moldovans – A.M.] never explodes'.

In 2011 Igor Smirnov handed power to Evgenii Shevchuk, tightly connected with both *Sheriff* and state security bodies. It is too early to judge on the results of this change. However, the new leader seems to understand that the Transnistrian national ideology only makes sense as a part of a larger ideological entity. Right now this entity is vaguely represented by the Eurasian Union. On 4 July 2012 the new Transnistrian minister of foreign affairs Nina Shtanski said that 'Eurasian integration is proclaimed as the basis for our national idea. This logically follows the results of the 17 September 2006 referendum and is a concrete step to implement the will of the Pridnestrovan people.'[13] It is not, then, clear what is the ideological foundation of Russia-led Eurasian integration. Discussing this issue is beyond the scope of this paper.

5 Prospects for the future: The end of the tale of two banks

Rapid reunification of the two banks seems impossible because their national projects have not just different contents, but different structures: multiple and incompatible identities in Moldova versus an externally firm but internally mosaic identity in Transnistria. Mechanistic unification of these identities is impossible. Neither is each of them able to assimilate its adversary, for in the case of Moldova there is no holistic identity, while in Transnistria identity is too holistic, if not flawless. Restoration of territorial integrity of the former Soviet Moldavia depends, in my opinion, not so much on elaborated conflict resolution schemes, but on working out a version of inclusive national identity able to embrace people of all ethnic and linguistic groups living on both riversides.

What may happen with the self-proclaimed republic in the foreseeable future in the absence of such inclusive identity?

Contrary to the worst suspicions of the Moldovan Unionists, the Russian Federation would hardly like to recognize the sovereignty of the PMR. On the one hand, Russia needs no second exclave (apart from the Kaliningrad region). It already spends too much on Pridnestrovie, allowing it not to pay for natural gas and directly supporting pensioners and the military (in 2012 the Transnistrian gas debt had reached about $3 billion[14]). On the other hand, Russia's recognition of the PMR would automatically mean losing the rest of Moldova, because the unresolved situation in Transnistria prevents realization of any Unionist scenario. Romania is not ready to incorporate the PMR with its politically active Russian-speaking population. Having an unresolved domestic conflict, Moldova cannot become a EU/NATO member. Thus, a 'pro-Russian sovereign PMR' would only be a seeming geopolitical advantage for Russia, not to mention that the PMR would never become a sovereign state in the full sense.

Russia still sticks to its initial plan of reconciliation: federative and neutral Moldova with representatives of the Russian-speaking minorities in its government. This project also implies transition to bilinguism, which is out of the question for the contemporary Unionist leaders of Moldova. Some authors (like Nantoi) reject the idea of the federalization of Moldova. Others (Cibotaru) are ready to live in a federal state, but not a bilingual one. Meanwhile, in the case of reunification, predominantly Russophone minorities would make up, according to the author's rough calculations, about 28% of the population (not counting the Russophone Moldovans). Even now, with 22% of predominantly Russian-speaking minorities, Russian is much more than simply a minority language.

The Moldovan elite (both extremely pro-Romanian and more moderate) understands that Moldova is currently unable to bring Transnistria back by force. Even were it possible, there are observations that Moldova is not, in fact, interested

in reunification. 'Pridnestrovie is the brand of Moldova', says Irina Caunenko. 'It is not a brand, it is a disaster', Oazu Nantoi opposes. Be it brand or disaster, an unresolved armed conflict on the territory of Moldova definitely makes it a special case among post-Soviet states, being allowed to receive humanitarian aid, grants and other benefits from the European Union. Not accidentally, the Moldovan minister of foreign affairs and European integration in March 2011 coined a phrase that 'when a baby is crying, he gets milk'.[15]

Another reason for the Moldovan elite not to force unification is the concern that Transnistrian clans are politically and economically much more influential, consolidated, strong and determined than Moldovan ones. Thus, the ruling class of Moldova would rather prefer the conflict to stay frozen, or dispose of the rogue region altogether. The Unionists will receive a much warmer welcome in Bucharest without the Transnistrian 'tail'. On 24 June 2010, Mihai Ghimpu, then a provisional president, signed a decree introducing 28 June as a day to commemorate the 1940 'Soviet occupation' of what now constitutes right-bank Moldova. Apparently, Transnistria could not have been annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940, because at that time it was already part of Soviet Ukraine. Ghimpu's decree, thus, may be interpreted as a tacit recognition of the PMR's right to live independently.

Not surprisingly, Ghimpu's more moderate partners from the Alliance for European Integration, such as Marian Lupu, did not welcome the 28 June decree; the Constitutional Court declined it as illegal. Leaving the Transnistrian problem aside, the Moldovan elite should also beware that dropping Transnistria may provoke a resurgence of separatism in the Gagauz Eri (in no way do the Gagauz want to live in Romania). This policy of avoiding abrupt moves makes the Moldovan elite unable either to force reunification or to reject it formally.

For the ruling elite of Transnistria, it being a *de-facto* state guarantees economic and political power as well as a financial flow from Russia. Since it is not possible to keep the conflict frozen forever, both elites may eventually vote for the final partition and sovereignty of the PMR. Thus, the two banks prove unable to resolve the situation themselves; they need assistance (if not pressure) from external actors.

Neither Russia, nor the West is interested in an independent Transnistria; together they can start a process of negotiating between the two elites. The West seems to be an important resource for influencing Moldovan leaders, while Russia may be helpful in persuading the Transnistrians. However, I suggest that no reconciliation plan would work until Moldova finds some way out of its national identity crisis. Moldova should first define what its vision of the national project is and then build its policy towards Transnistria on these grounds. Restoration of

territorial integrity requires, first of all, an inclusive national project able to incorporate the titular ethnic group, minorities from the Right Bank and Transnistrians into one civil nation. Third parties, be them Russia or Europe, are not able to consolidate a Moldovan nation.

Notes

1. Transnistria is a Romanian term to designate not only the former Soviet Moldovan Left Bank of Dniester, but also the neighboring parts of present-day Ukraine. In the self-proclaimed Transnistrian Moldovan Republic the term is never used; instead, such words as Pridnestrovie (noun) and Pridnestrovan (adjective) are introduced when narrating in English.
2. Vasile Stati (b. 1939), linguist and historian, used to be a member of parliament in 1994–2001.
3. 'Vasile Stati: rumynskii i moldavskii – ne dva raznykh yazyka, u nikh dva lingvonima: natsionalnyi moldavskii yazyk i natsionalnyi rumynskii yazyk' [Vasile Stati: Romanian and Moldovan are not two different languages; they have two linguonyms: the national Moldovan language and the national Romanian language]. *BASA-Press*. 27.08.2004. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.allmoldova.com/index.php?action=newsblock&rid=1070654951&id=1093621130&lng=.
4. 'Ghimpu: To, chto ya rumyn, ne pomeshalo mne progolosovat za sozdanie gosudarstva Respublika Moldova' [Ghimpu: the fact that I am Romanian did not prevent me from voting for creation of the Republic of Moldova]. *REGNUM*. 03.12.2009. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.regnum.ru/news/1231662.html.
5. 'Voronin obvinil Rumyniu i Rossiyu vo vmeshatelstve v dela Moldovy' [Voronin blames Romania and Russia for intervening in the affairs of Moldova]. *Lenta PMR*. 13.04.2009. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://tiras.ru/ttlnews/8007-voronin-obvinil-rumyniju-i-rossiju-vo.html.
6. Vladimir Voronin: "My dokazali, chto my – narod!"' [Vladimir Voronin: 'We have proven that we are the people!']. *Kishinevskie novosti*. 2005: 7. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.kn.md/?Action=News&NewsID=FWlbnjxFyy.
7. 'Denezhnye summy, perevedennye iz-za granitsy, sostavlyayut priblizitelno 27% ot VVP Moldovy' [Money sums transferred from abroad make approximately 27 % of the GNP of Moldova]. 15.09.2007. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.migratie.md/news/1117/ru.html.
8. Source: Teplenin, Timur. Pridnestrovie progolosovalo za Rossiyu [Pridnestrovie has voted for Russia]. *Utro*. 18.09.2006. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.utro.ru/articles/2006/09/18/584520.shtml.
9. Here the author mostly repeats what she already wrote about the Byelorussian project (Mitrofanova 2006).

10. 'Igor Smirnov: "Pridnestrovie – forpost Rossii"' [Igor Smirnov: 'Pridnestrovie is the outpost of Russia']. *Stoletie*. 03.03.2005. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.stoletie.ru/rossiya_i_mir/igor_smirnov_pridnestrove__forpost_rossii.htm.
11. See: 'Prezident Pridnestrovskoi Respubliki vruchil nagrady deyateliam Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi' [President of the Pridnestrovan Republic has given awards to the officials of the Russian Orthodox Church]. *Pravoslavnoe chtenie. Sbornik dushepoleznykh tekstov*. 21.03.2001. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.zavet.ru/news/news-s010320.htm
12. 'MID Pridnestroviya: realizatsii proekta evroregiona "Dnestr" meshaet politika' [MOFA of Pridnestrovie: politics prevents realization of the project of 'Dniester' euroregion]. *Novyi region 2*. 29.12.2010. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.nr2.ru/pmr/315098.html.
13. 'MID Pridnestroviya: evraziiskaya integratsiya – osnova nashei natsionalnoi idei' [MOFA of Pridnestrovie: Eurasian integration is the basis of our national idea]. *REGNUM*. 04.07.2012. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.regnum.ru/news/fd-abroad/transdniestria/1548238.html.
14. 'Dolg Pridnestroviya za rossiiskii gaz vyros na polmilliarda dollarov' [Pridnestrovie's gas debt to Russia has become half-billion dollars larger]. *Rosbalt*. 06.03.2012. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.rosbalt.ru/exussr/2012/03/06/954048.html.
15. See: Ivashkina, Irina. Plachushchii rebenok poluchaet moloko [When a baby cries, he gets milk]. *Kommersant.md*. 30.03.2011. Retrieved on 2 February 2013 from http://www.kommersant.md/node/2048.

Appendix: Abbreviations

MASSR – Moldavskaya avtonomnaya Sovetskaya sotsialisticheskaya respublika [Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic]

MGB – Ministerstvo gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti [State Security Ministry]

MSSR – Moldavskaya Sovetskaya sotsialisticheskaya respublika [Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic]

PPCD – Partidul Popular Crestin Democrat (Christian Democratic People's Party)

PKRM – Partiya kommunistov Respubliki Moldova [Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova]

PRM – Pridnestrovskaya Moldavskaya Respublika [Pridnestrovan Moldovan Republic]

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Article

'What is my country to me?' Identity construction by Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries

Anastassia Zabrodskaja

Abstract

Contributing to the research on interdependence between perceived ethnolinguistic vitality and identity construction patterns, the article takes a close look at the identities of Russian-speakers living in the Baltic countries. Combining quantitative and qualitative research, the purpose is to analyse ethnic, national, linguistic and imperial identity construction by respondents with different ethnolinguistic vitality profiles. The results show that linguistic environment and official language competence are very strong determinants of perceived ethnolinguistic vitality, which, in turn, affects identity construction. It is possible to distinguish up to five vitality clusters within each Russian-speaking community in the Baltic countries. The Russian-speaking groups are quite diverse in respect to the beliefs and ideologies connected with the host and heritage countries, languages, cultures and ethnic self-categorisations.

KEYWORDS: ETHNOLINGUISTIC VITALITY, IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION, RUSSIAN-SPEAKERS, ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA

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1 Introduction

The current study falls into the field of the sociolinguistics of identity, which focuses on the ways in which people position or construct themselves and are positioned or constructed by others in sociocultural situations through the instrumentality of language and with reference to all the variables that comprise identity markers for each community in the speech of its members (Omoniyi and White, 2006:1). In the current approach of the social sciences, there has been a trend towards deconstructing the understanding of nations and ethnicities as groups by providing evidence of massive variation in linguistic and cultural practices within populations that are claimed to form nations/ethnicities (Irvine and Gal, 2000; Makoni and Pennycook, 2007).

In connection with Anderson's (1991:6) definition of a nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' – ethnicity as well may be seen as 'constructed and contingent', 'social, cultural and political forms of life – material ways of being in the modern world' (May, 2001:12). Brady and Kaplan (2000:59) summarize some of the findings of studies on ethnic identity, and then comment that for some researchers 'ethnic identity is the result of group interactions that evolve with changing contexts'. However, not all members of one ethnic community behave the same way (see Hazen, 2000). In a particular ethnic group there are certain sub-groups.

A number of authors have provided evidence and argumentation that ethnicity is a social category rather than it defining a group (Brubaker, 2004), and thus one should not assume that inter-ethnic processes are processes between groups as actors. This argumentation is supported by evidence for mixed, blurred, fluid and hybrid types of identities displayed in the context of immigration in large urban cosmopolitan centres (Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck, 2005). Work in this direction has shown that ethnicity may be a label that individuals can choose to apply to categorize themselves, or they may actively construct new collective identity categories for themselves. This might also be true for Baltic Russian-speaking communities, who construct their common identity mainly by means of the Russian language, and therefore might be called Russian-speaking communities without distinguishing their different ethnic backgrounds. At the same time, their common identity is fragmented based on ethnolinguistic vitality, which, in turn, is one of the key factors influencing group identity construction, as it is the capability of one's own group to behave as a distinctive collective entity in intergroup settings (Giles, Bourhis and Taylor, 1977:307).

As a social-psychological phenomenon, vitality is closely connected to one's ethnic/linguistic identity. For example, the collective identity of the members of low vitality groups may contain a sense of collective inferiority and self-pity, with

an imminent perception of cultural hopelessness. There is also evidence that medium vitality groups construct their vitality as open yet clearly distinct from out-groups. The extremely high vitality groups may have incorporated the sense of superiority into their collective identity, which in some cases is accompanied by hostility or insensitivity towards weaker out-groups.

The results of our study showed that Russian-speakers living in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania do not form single unitary categories which have uniform value systems and attitudes (Ehala and Zabrodskaja, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). Instead, the Russian-speaking community in each Baltic country is quite diverse in respect to vitality, ideologies and patterns of identity construction. Several different subgroups (vitality clusters) can be distinguished in the quantitative data: five in Estonia[1] and four each in Latvia and Lithuania. These clusters differ from each other in a number of parameters: the low vitality clusters have a sense of low self-esteem, but some of the high vitality clusters seem to be associated with imperial identity (see Section 5.4). To enrich the analysis of the ethnolinguistic vitality profiles with instances of interactions and experiences, qualitative in-group interviews were conducted. These findings will be discussed below.

The focus of the article is on identity construction by different groups of Russian-speakers through interview discourse. Section 2 introduces the particular ethnolinguistic vitality approach and V-model used in the Baltic setting to measure the ethnolinguistic vitality of the titular groups and Russian-speaking communities. I also focus on connections and relationships between the principles of the V-model and semi-structured interview frame used for qualitative study. This theoretical background situates the study. In Section 3, the methodology of data collection for the combined quantitative and qualitative sample is addressed in more detail. In Section 4, I describe the current sociolinguistic situation of Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries. This overview of their objective ethnolinguistic vitality is relevant for an understanding of Sections 4.1–4.3, in which I introduce the vitality clusters of Russian-speakers, i.e. the results of the quantitative analysis of large-scale data-sets. The clusters are the results of subjective ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions. Focus groups in the qualitative study were formed based on them. In Section 5, I illustrate how the representatives of different vitality clusters can be portrayed with the help of positioning on the following four levels: with respect to ethnic identity, national identity, linguistic identity and imperial identity. To do so, I group similar clusters found among Russian-speakers from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (Section 4.4 explains principles of grouping). Qualitative data is then discussed to gain insight into the process of identity construction by different ethnolinguistic vitality profiles.

2 V-model of ethnolinguistic vitality: Theoretical background for combined research on Russian-speakers' profiles

According to the V-model, the driving force behind language shift is power differences between dominant and minority groups. Language and identity maintenance depends on the opportunities and rewards, real or symbolic (including more positive social identity), that the two groups can provide to their members. The sum of these factors can be called the perceived strength of the group. However, for vitality, the crucial factor is not the perceived strength itself, but the perceived strength differential (PSD) between the two groups. The reason is that the weaker one's own group appears in relation to a prominent other group, the stronger the motivation to shift one's language and identity to the stronger group: in the case of a small differential, the benefits from shifting one's group membership do not outweigh the emotional and social costs.

There are other factors that can either intensify or reduce the impact of PSD. Intergroup discordance (D-factor) expresses the perceived illegitimacy of intergroup power relations and the distrust of the out-group. If the subordinate group members perceive their low status as legitimate and have favourable attitudes towards the prominent out-group, they have a stronger motivation to shift their language and identity than if they perceive their status to be unjust and have negative feelings towards the dominant group. In fact, strong intergroup discordance would largely prevent language and identity shift altogether, as strong negative feelings between groups make the intergroup boundary impermeable.

However, even in the case of low D, the shift to the dominant group may not be easy if the linguistic, cultural, religious and/or racial differences between the prototypes of the two groups are large. All of these factors can be summarised as the factor of intergroup distance (R, standing for radius). The larger the intergroup distance, the more emotional energy and time is needed to successfully acculturate into the other group. In cases where the groups differ significantly racially or linguistically, a full transition to the dominant group may be impossible because of the distinctive racial features and/or accent that remain. However in the case of a small R (as between a dialect subgroup and standard speakers group), the transition to the high status group is relatively easy.

The last significant social-psychological factor affecting language and identity shift is utilitarianism (U). Utilitarianism is a broad discursive mindset that justifies pragmatic and economically beneficial courses of action. Individuals who have a utilitarian mindset are more likely to opt for language and identity shift if this change is likely to bring economic gain and success. However, utilitarian

discourse is balanced by what can be called the 'traditionalist discourse', which expresses the group members' commitment to their cultural practices and values. People who have a traditionalist mindset are less likely to shift to the language and identity of the prominent group. For example, some religious groups (such as the Amish, or the Russian Old Believers in the Baltic countries) are so traditionalist that they practically do not assimilate at all, despite their supposedly large negative PSD with the mainstream society. This value configuration supports language and identity maintenance. If utilitarian values are highly salient and traditional values not at all, the group members are more predisposed to abandon heritage traditions, as maintaining them seems costly, meaningless and/or backward.

Altogether, the interaction of PSD, D, R and U leads to a wide range of possible vitality profiles, which in turn affect identity construction. The interview plan of this study was drafted on the principles of the V-model and included the following topics: (1) self-categorisation, (2) perceived cultural distance between groups (factor R), (3) possible identity trajectory in the future, (4) appreciation of traditions vs. utilitarianism (factor U), (5) perception of ethnocultural symbolic capital (factor PSD) and (6) perception of inter-ethnic discordance (factor D).[2] The semi-structured interviews had open-ended questions, which allowed for differentiated, individual and subjective opinions to be given, but also provided a set of responses that could be related to the quantitative data, which is introduced next.

3 Overview of informants and data collection

The theoretical V-model outlined in Section 2 was operationalised in Ehala and Zabrodskaja (2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014) in the form of a quantitative survey questionnaire: 60 statements were built on the Likert scale principle. The statements formed 10-item sets that measured the above-described variables (PSD, D, R and U) in the V-model. By calculating the mean scores for each 10-item set, it was possible to get pseudo-continuous variables which could, to a certain extent, be used in parametric statistical tests. For data analysis, a two-step cluster analysis was calculated. This made it possible to explore the data for a best solution by not imposing the number of clusters arbitrarily beforehand. (For details, see Ehala and Zabrodskaja, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014.)

Samples of the quantitative surveys were composed using a stratified sampling method so as to reflect the inter-ethnic composition of the population in five different regions in each country, and were compiled by well-known professional polling companies. In Estonia, the sample consisted of 460 Russian-speakers, in

Latvia 406 Russian-speakers and in Lithuania 230 Russian-speakers. The samples were structured by five strata (see Table 1): A: areas of overwhelmingly titular mono-ethnic populations, mostly rural and smaller settlements, but also the city of Kaunas in Lithuania; B: areas of 70–90% titular population, mostly medium-sized towns, but also the city of Klaipeda in Lithuania and the Latgale rural area in Latvia; C: areas of 50–70% titular populations, which included all three capital cities: Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius; D: areas with a prominent minority population (50–80%), which included the Russian-dominant industrial towns and the Polish-dominant rural area around Vilnius (Vilniaus rajonas); and E: areas with overwhelming Russian majorities, which included industrial towns from each Baltic country.

Table 1. The samples of strata in the quantitative surveys in Baltic countries.

Settings	Percentage of titulars in the area	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
A	>90	50	103	60
B	70–90	70	3	60
C	50–70	70	152	60
D	20–50	120	50	
E	<20	150	98	50

The qualitative research was carried out in 2008–2011 through 10 focus-group oral interviews (see Table 2). Their goal was to elicit qualitative data that would lead to a deeper understanding of the discursive choices that underlie ideologies studied by the quantitative survey.

Table 2. Interview statistics.

Country	Number of interviews with Russian-speakers	Groups' general description	Settings
Estonia	4	Russians from Tartu; students from Tallinn; students from Narva; young specialists from Narva	C, E, B
Latvia	3	Retired or older working persons with higher education; working class middle-aged people; students from Riga	C, A, B, D
Lithuania	3	Older or retired people with average or low educational levels; people with higher education; students from Vilnius	C, E, A

Each group was comprised of six respondents and can be considered a combined group because it was formed on the basis of the vitality differences among the clusters obtained from the analysis of the quantitative data. This method allowed for the elicitation of differences in ideologies across clusters. Each interview lasted approximately two and a half hours. All of the respondents were interviewed in Russian in cafes or university rooms by me and/or a local Russian-speaking community representative (whom I previously instructed on how to conduct the interviews), following Gans's (1985:304) proposal that ethnic studies should be done by both insiders and outsiders to avoid possible conflicts of interest. In extracts given in Section 5, for reasons of confidentiality, all names have been changed.

In Section 4, sociolinguistic issues regarding Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries are presented to provide a relevant context for an understanding of the current language situation.

4 Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the language situation in the Baltic attracted a large number of researchers interested in language policy, societies in transition and post-communist studies (Hogan-Brun, 2005; Kolstø, 1999; Laitin, 1996, 1998, 2003; Ozolins, 1999; Pavlenko, 2008, 2011; Romanov, 2000; Ryazanova-Clarke, 2014; Smith, 1998, to name but a few). However, language policy and minority rights issues have continued to dominate research (Pavlenko, 2011, 2013 and references therein) since the point at which a number of laws, legislative acts and strategic documents were adopted by the parliaments of the three Baltic countries (the *Riigikogu* in Estonia, the *Saeima* in Latvia and the *Seimas* in Lithuania) concerning the status of titular and the other languages used in the republics: their status, teaching and use within the educational system, as well as in society at large.

As for citizenship issues, Lithuania chose the 'zero option', according to which Lithuanian citizenship was granted to all persons who on the day on which the law came into force were legal permanent residents of Lithuania, irrespective of the basis on which their residence rested; this was in contrast to Latvia and Estonia, where anyone having no ancestors living there before June 1940 must pass an official language test and have knowledge of the respective country's constitution (see more in Zabrodskaja, 2009). This is an important difference in language legislation that has influenced the negotiation of identities among Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries. Thus, it is possible to claim that Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries are socially in a subordinate position as speakers of a language that is not the dominant language of the country in which they reside.

Generally, Russian-speakers did not learn titular languages in Soviet times because Russian was the language of inter-ethnic communication (*язык межнационального общения*). Thus, Russian became the dominant language of a number of different ethnic groups in the territory of the Soviet Union (not only Russians but also Belarusians, Ukrainians, Tatars and other 'third ethnicities') who settled in the Baltic countries during the Soviet period (1944–1990/1991). As their common identity is constructed mainly by means of the Russian language, these groups can be called Russian-speaking communities without distinguishing their different ethnic backgrounds.

Due to socio-historical factors, Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries cannot be considered a typical minority. Besides the already mentioned complication of different ethnicities united under the umbrella of 'Russian-speaking communities', there are other factors that make the Baltic countries a quite challenging case, where the varying situations between titulars and Russian-speakers cannot be simply described as a classical case of majority–minority, indigenous–immigrants or indigenous–colonizers. First, Russian minorities in the classical sense existed and still exist in the Baltic countries (i.e. Old Believers). Second, it has been suggested that, as the migration of Russian-speakers was part and parcel of the demographic and language policies of the Soviet authorities, the Soviet-era newcomers and their descendants are better described as colonizers (see Ozolins, 2002). However, Pavlenko (2011:38–39) argues against the usage of the term 'colonizers' in relation to Russians. She states that some space for the cultivation of national languages was provided in the USSR, and Russian-speakers were no more privileged than speakers of other languages. What is clear is that Russian has not retained as powerful a position in the Baltic countries as, for example, French and English have retained in much of present-day Africa, India and other typical post-colonial settings.

Table 3. General characteristics of Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries (summary from Ehala and Zabrodskaja 2013a:52–58).

	Estonia	**Latvia**	**Lithuania**
Population size	384,000	676,000	201,000
Percentage of total	29%	32%	6.5%
Role in economy	Modest	Significant	Insignificant
Institutional support	Limited	Significant	Very limited
Material prosperity	Below average	Above average	Below average
Politically	poorly organized	well-organized	not organized

Among the Baltic Russian-speaking communities (see Table 3), the largest lives in Latvia and has considerable cultural, economic and linguistic influence in the country. The second largest Russian-speaking community lives in Estonia, but both economically and politically it is much weaker than in Latvia. At the same time, it is quite compactly settled, ensuring its sustainability. The number of Russian-speakers in Lithuania is lower, they are more dispersed across the country and they are considerably weaker than the Estonian Russian-speakers.

Previous large-scale quantitative studies used the V-model of ethnolinguistic vitality (Ehala and Zabrodskaja, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014) as the basis for specifying the patterns of acculturation for Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries based on their ethnolinguistic vitality profile. The results have shown that, in general, in Estonia, the segregation of the Russian community is likely to continue. Latvian Russians have the highest vitality amongst the Russian-speaking communities in Baltic countries, which may lead to demands for higher status and more rights. For the Russian-speaking community of Lithuania, assimilation seems to be a satisfactory solution for both Russians and representatives of the titular nation.

Next, Sections 4.1–4.3 describe the vitality profiles of the clusters found in the Baltic countries among Russian-speakers in terms of the V-model of ethnolinguistic vitality, also highlighting the general background characteristics of the clusters' representatives. These data constitute the framework and provide the context (explained in Section 4.4) within which ethnic, national, linguistic and imperial identity constructions by Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries were studied.

4.1 Four clusters of Russian-speakers in Lithuania

As Table 4 shows (for more, see Ehala and Zabrodskaja, 2013c:57–59), among Lithuanian Russian-speakers four vitality clusters emerged; these ranged from the Pessimist Utilitarianists group, consisting of 29.2% of the respondents, to the Threatened Traditionalists group (16.7% of the respondents).

Pessimist Utilitarianists are characterised by a utilitarian attitude, accompanied by strong perception of weakness and out-group favouritism. Lithuanian is used excessively. This cluster has the lowest vitality index. Many public sector employees with higher education and students belong to this cluster.

Cultural Traditionalists are characterised by the strongest out-group favouritism and traditionalism. Russian is used less than Lithuanian in this cluster, but they see the Russian community as relatively less weak than do other clusters. Thus, cultural heritage is valued, but this does not lead to language maintenance.

This cluster has the second lowest vitality index. This cluster is dominated by males with low educational levels and high unemployment. Many students also fall into this cluster.

Practising Russian-speakers is the group which uses Russian the most amongst the Lithuanian Russian clusters. They are traditionalists and show out-group favouritism. This cluster is dominated by retired people with low educational levels.

Threatened Traditionalists have the highest vitality amongst the clusters. These people are very traditionalist and have a strong perception of Russian-speakers' weakness compared to Lithuanians. It is the cluster which does not show out-group favouritism. This group is dominated by females, and higher education is common. The cluster includes people whose incomes are above average and people with very low incomes.

To conclude, two subgroups of Russian-speakers in Lithuania showed out-group favouritism and also progressive language shift from Russian to Lithuanian, although one subgroup (the Cultural Traditionalists cluster) valued Russian culture. One cluster, Practising Russian-speakers, maintained the Russian language and did not feel any discordance towards the titular group. What makes the four Lithuanian clusters unique is a lack of discordance towards the out-group.

4.2 Five clusters of Russian-speakers in Estonia

In Estonia, five clusters can be distinguished within the Estonian Russian-speaking community (for more, see Ehala and Zabrodskaja, 2013c:52–55): (1) Medium Low Vitality, (2) Stable, but Low Self-Esteem, (3) Stable and Integrated, (4) Stable and Traditional and (5) Vital and Discordant (see Table 4).

The Medium Low Vitality cluster was characterized by a high perceived ethnic weakness of Russian-speakers compared to Estonian-speakers. The members of this cluster did not perceive any discordance in relations with Estonian-speakers; in fact, they even indicated a slight favouritism toward the out-group, i.e. a tendency to see Estonian-speakers in a very positive light. This cluster is dominated by males, and people over 40 years old, they have Estonian citizenship and higher education, work as private sector employees with above average incomes and live in Estonian-dominant towns or in the countryside.

The Stable Vitality Low Self-Esteem cluster had a considerably higher vitality value than the Medium Low Vitality group. This cluster's vitality value indicates that the subgroup in general is maintaining their heritage. What makes this cluster special is that they have a clearly traditional value system and a fairly large

intergroup distance from Estonian-speakers. The representatives of this cluster are predominantly stateless, and over 60 years old or retired people; also they have higher education, slightly below average incomes and live in eastern Estonia.

The Stable Vitality Traditional cluster is characterized by the most traditional value system amongst the subgroups. This is accompanied by a distinct feeling of discordance towards Estonians and the largest intergroup distance from Estonians. This cluster is dominated by those who are in their forties–sixties, have Russian citizenship, have below average incomes and live in eastern Estonia.

The Stable Vitality Integrated cluster has a middle vitality value, indicating that the subgroup is stable in respect to vitality. This cluster has an even more traditional value system than the previous one, and a similarly neutral attitude towards Estonians, but it differs from other clusters in its small intergroup distance from Estonians. All of these factors indicate that this group is well integrated into Estonian society, but has positive self-esteem and is maintaining its cultural and linguistic heritage. This cluster includes people who are under 40 years old, have Estonian citizenship, are public sector employees or students, have average incomes and live in Estonian-dominant towns or in the countryside.

The Discordant cluster is distinct from the rest of the groups in several respects. First, members consider Estonians and Russian-speakers to be almost equal in esteem. Second, they have the highest perceived interethnic discordance and a high intergroup distance from Estonians. Their value system is well balanced between utilitarianism and traditionalism. The people in this group are under 40 years old and stateless, have significantly below average incomes and live in eastern Estonia.

To summarise, the results show that, in general, Russian-speakers in Estonia are quite vital, as three of the subgroups (the Stable Vitality Low Self-Esteem cluster, the Stable Vitality Traditional cluster and the Stable Vitality Integrated cluster) have a clear preference for heritage language maintenance. There are two extreme subgroups as well. One is the Medium Low Vitality cluster, which shows a tendency towards social mobility and linguistic and identity shift. Another is the smallest group in the sample – the Discordant cluster – which clearly distances itself from the out-group.

4.3 Four clusters of Russian-speakers in Latvia

Table 4 shows (for more, see Ehala and Zabrodskaja, 2013c:55–57) that among Latvian Russian-speakers four vitality clusters emerged, ranging from the Trusting Utilitarianists group (38% of the respondents) to the Discordant Traditionalists group (7% of the respondents).

Trusting Utilitarianists are characterised by a notably utilitarian attitude accompanied by slight out-group favouritism and frequent usage of Latvian. Their vitality is the lowest amongst the clusters. The cluster members are predominantly male, students or unemployed.

Humble Traditionalists are characterised by very traditional attitudes accompanied by a distinct perception of the weakness of Russian-speakers in Latvia and very low discordance towards Latvians. This cluster is dominated by females with higher education; also many pensioners belong to this cluster.

Discordant Utilitarianists are characterised by a distinct feeling of discordance, accompanied by a slightly utilitarian attitude, strong perception of the weakness of Russian-speakers as compared to Latvians and low usage of the Latvian language. Many public sector employees belong to this cluster, as do people whose incomes are considerably below average.

Discordant Traditionalists have the highest feeling of discordance, accompanied by distinct traditionalism; usage of Latvian is low, and they perceive a relative equality of strength between Latvians and Russian-speakers. Many people with vocational secondary education belong to this group, as do people whose incomes are considerably below average.

In conclusion, the Latvian Russian-speakers have the highest vitality amongst the three communities, and there are no low vitality clusters, which means that language and identity are maintained well. Furthermore, the Latvian Russian-speakers have the highest level of discordance towards the mainstream, with two clusters making up almost one-third of the community.

4.4 A comparative look at the clusters of Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries

The general perceptual linkage between the clusters of Russian-speakers is given in Table 4, in which, together with the cluster name, their representativeness in the general sample in each country and vitality values are provided. For better understanding of the clusters, first we need to reorganize them based on vitality value from lowest to highest in the case of each country (according to the V-model, vitality value may range from -2.5 to 3.5; for more, see Ehala and Zabrodskaja, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c). We will start with Lithuania, although it has the smallest number of Russians-speakers.

Table 4. A comparative picture of the clusters among Baltic Russian-speakers.

	Lithuanian Russian-speakers	**Estonian Russian-speakers**	**Latvian Russian-speakers**
High Vitality: 3.5 ↑			Discordant Traditionalists 7% .85
			Discordant Utilitarianists 25% .18
		Discordant 14% .10	
		Stable Traditional 26% -.05	Humble Traditionalists 30% -.06
		Stable Integrated 22% -.08	Trusting Utilitarianists 38% -.10
	Threatened Traditionalists 16.7% -.13		
	Practising Russian-speakers 28.8% -.16	Stable Low Esteem 28% -.15	
	Cultural Traditionalists 22.7% -.18		
		Medium Low Vitality 10% -.31	
↓ **Low Vitality: -2.5**	Pessimist Utilitarianists 29.2% -.35		

We begin reading Table 4 from the bottom left corner, where the Lithuanian clusters with the lowest vitality values are given. Then we follow a diagonal path and notice that the clusters in Estonia have similar low vitality values. When we look at the clusters of Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia, we notice strikingly parallel patterns among Stable Traditional and Stable Integrated groups in the former and Humble Traditionalists and Trusting Utilitarianists in the latter. If we shift our gaze to the upper right corner, we notice three discordant groups of Russian-speakers: one in Estonia and two in Latvia. The Latvian data provide the expected similar results to the Estonian clusters. A higher level of discordance is felt by Russian-speakers with low incomes: Discordant Utilitarianists and Discordant Traditionalists. These two subgroups of people use Latvian rarely. Thus, their situation is similar to the Discordant cluster found among Estonian Russian-speakers, except that the discordance level is higher in Latvian clusters.

In general, Russian-speakers in Latvia are noticeably more discordant than in Estonia. This result of subjective vitality perception is important as a link with information on their objective vitality (see Section 4), which showed that Russian-speakers in Latvia are considerably stronger in their cultural, economic and linguistic influence than Russian-speakers in the two neighbouring Baltic countries.

Lithuanian Russian-speakers have the lowest vitality amongst Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries, which is clearly reflected in the relatively extensive language and identity shift towards the Lithuanian mainstream. Even though the vitality of Russian-speakers in Estonia is higher, there is also one cluster which is characterised by language and identity shift. In Latvia, the Russian language and identity are better maintained, and the lowest vitality clusters integrate with the mainstream rather than assimilate into it.

5 Identity construction patterns among Russian-speakers

The negotiation of identities is defined by Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004:20–21) as ‘an interplay between reflective positioning, i.e. self-representation, and interactive positioning, whereby others attempt to position or reposition particular individuals or groups’. Section 5 exemplifies how the identities of the representatives belonging to different vitality clusters outlined above have emerged and developed. This section will not fully report on each type of cluster found among Baltic Russian-speakers; rather, it will draw on overlapping identity themes to demonstrate how ethnic, national, linguistic and imperial identities are constructed by members of the different clusters.

5.1 Ethnic self-categorisation in identity construction

Edwards (1985) proposed a division of ethnic identity into objective, which encompasses linguistic, racial, geographical, historical, religious and ancestral characteristics (close to Fishman's [1977] definition that ethnicity comes 'with the blood', where kinship is the basis of the felt bond with one's own kind), and subjective, in which one can claim the ethnic identity one feels is closer to him/her on the affective level, irrespective of any religious, linguistic, racial or historical factors. Later Dorian (2010:89) argued that 'ethnicity can feel very primal, but it rests fundamentally on social rather than on biological underpinnings – and socially constructed categories are subject to change'. In the following, it is shown how ethnicity is interpreted by typical representatives of the clusters.

The following extract is taken from an interview with a representative of the Estonian Medium Low Vitality cluster. Here she talks about the changes in her cultural behaviour due to the new identity and new ethnic status: Estonian Russian, a type of localized Russian identity:

> *I am a Russian who lives in Estonia, and Estonian culture is very close to my heart; for example, we celebrate all of the Estonian holidays and we do not celebrate Christmas on 7 January but only on 24 December.*

The informant actually mentions the Lutheran and Orthodox Christmas, linking them with two local groups – Estonians and Russians – in compliance with celebration traditions (here I would mention that official holidays fall only during the Lutheran Christmas period and a lot of debate still arises in local media over whether the Orthodox Christmas period, which usually starts after the end of the school winter holidays, should be declared an official holiday).

Guardado and Becker (2013:57) discuss comparable cases when writing about 'locally cultivated ethnic identity', referring to Kouritzin's (1999) study of language loss in Canada, where a participant positions Hungarian culture in Hungary as 'theirs' and Hungarian culture in Canada as 'ours'. They add that similarly King and Ganuza (2005:186) observe that in Sweden an informant described his ethnic identity as Chilean, 'but from Stockholm'.

The discourse might be doing more than clearly following the 'we–they' division. Both local and mainland communities might be the groups with which one associates oneself. Such complexity is recognized not only by those clusters that tend to assimilate or successfully integrate into the majority but by those that do not manifest favouritism towards the local titulars. One Lithuanian Threatened Traditionalist gives an example in the following quote:

> *A [basketball] team came from Russia and played a team from Lithuania, and then a boy I know told me: 'Ours play against ours'. In other words, he considered 'ours' both Lithuanians and Russians and did not know whom to support.*

Estonian Russian-speaking informants belonging to the three in-between clusters somehow balance between two sides, unable to categorise themselves as ethnic Russians, Estonian Russians or Estonians. The following quote comes from a member of the Estonian Stable Vitality Integrated cluster:

> *Strangely enough, at times I feel I am a lost person [pause] and it turns out that I do not count myself in with them [Russians – A.Z.]. I do not count myself in with the representatives of the Estonian nation. I am located somewhere in the middle, and so I'm a type of lost person.*

The next example comes from the Estonian Stable Vitality Traditional cluster, and again inner conflict is evident:

> *I am like a Russian. I feel like a Russian who lives in the Estonian republic. I cannot refer to myself as either part of Russian culture or of Estonian. I am stuck in the middle.*

The next two extracts were elicited during interviews with Russian-speakers in Latvia and Lithuania. Despite the difference in country, it's clear that the Latvian quote draws attention to the existence of the category Latvian Russian.

The Latvian Trusting Utilitarianists also have an awareness of a multi-layered identity because of being absorbed into the local mainstream but still attempting to preserve their heritage and cultural roots:

> *I feel I am a resident of Latvia with Russian as my main culture.*

Interestingly, the Lithuanian example shows how the type of cluster that is close to the Estonian Medium Low Vitality in the sense of feeling out-group favouritism and aspiration for assimilation, as well as being close to the Latvian Trusting Utilitarianist in preserving cultural roots, describes ethnic identity based on knowledge of the local languages. The Lithuanian Cultural Traditionalist states that he is Lithuanian because of his multilingual background:

> *Simply I am Lithuanian, just Lithuanian. I simply know languages: I can communicate, and come to an agreement [pause]; like that.*

To summarise, the ethnic identity constructed by the clusters' representatives aiming to assimilate into the mainstream is a type of new emerging local identity that is a hybrid of Russian roots and accommodation to titular cultural patterns. It

might be useful for future research to determine how the identity trajectory of 'lost' Russian-speakers found among Estonian Russian clusters is formed: Do they prefer to blur ethnic boundaries or to maintain them rigidly? This might largely depend on the official constructed discourse and language policy (Russian-medium secondary schools that have been switched to Estonian, the language of instruction at the basic level in non-Estonian schools etc.).

5.2 National identity construction

The following representative of the Estonian Medium Low Vitality cluster not only has Estonian citizenship but clearly considers Estonia to be the motherland:

> *For me, Estonia is my homeland. Here I was born and here I live and above all she, Estonia, is associated with this: this is my homeland.*

Among the members of this cluster, there are Russian-speaking students who have acquired Estonian, are studying in universities to become teachers of Estonian as a second language and see their agency as an opportunity to improve the situation of their ancestry group via teaching Estonian:

> *For me, Estonia is my motherland, my home; this is my home that brought me up and I want to give something of myself, to help Estonia as a teacher, as a pedagogue, and do something, do my part, so that life will become better and easier, and people will feel good here.*

Discourses of discordant nationalism were constructed by the Discordant cluster among Russian-speakers in Estonia and Discordant Utilitarianists and Discordant Traditionalists among Russian-speakers in Latvia. The following quote shows the opinion of a Latvian Discordant Traditionalist, who talks about the social costs of being non-Latvian and not having a Latvian national passport:

> *There exists the notion 'Latvian'. It means that you can work for the police, for customs, and everywhere in national structures; you always will be taken first. Latvians always have higher priority than Russians.*

This example clearly reflects the discordant feelings caused by the change of status from being the dominant majority in one big country to that of the minority in contemporary Latvian/Estonian sociolinguistic conditions. In Estonia, there were similar examples with only one difference in titular ethnicity named: 'there exists the occupation Estonian'. These attitudes are accompanied by poor titular language knowledge and the resulting limited career opportunities (see Ehala and Zabrodskaja, 2014:182–183 for similar cases).

5.3 Linguistic identity construction

McEntee-Atalianis (2011:152) states: '"identity" is not something we "have"…, but something we "do" and (co-)construct in social action and should therefore be analysed through an examination of "language in use" and textual analysis'. Language is one of the aspects which can be used to determine a group's identity. Language can be transferred and adopted, switched and shifted; language may even disappear because of powerful new rulers and cultures.

Among respondents who expressed language attitudes characteristic of the members of the Estonian Medium Low Vitality cluster, there was a belief that mainland Russians tried to distance themselves from diaspora Russians because of the language that the latter use:

> *When I was in Russia, Russian people said me that I was not Russian because I had another accent; therefore, I also cannot completely relate myself to Russians.*

This quote from a recent arrival from the Russian Federation also exemplifies the 'they–we' discourse I discussed in Section 5.1.

The maintenance of the Russian language and culture among the youngest generations of Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries is not assured at present. Ties to linguistic heritage are weak among the Medium Low Vitality and the Stable Vitality Integrated cluster of Russian-speakers in Estonia, the Trusting Utilitarianists and Humble Traditionalists in Latvia, and the Pessimist Utilitarianists and Cultural Traditionalists in Lithuania. In Lithuania, where the assimilation of Russian-speakers into the Lithuanian language environment is especially noticeable, ties to linguistic heritage are maintained by the Practising Russian-speakers and Threatened Traditionalists.

Although Lithuanian Threatened Traditionalists maintained ties to linguistic and cultural heritage, they were often unable to transmit it to the next generations, as revealed in this discourse among the cluster's older representatives:

> *My grandchildren now go to Lithuanian schools, and already I cannot understand my grandchildren. I say something in Russian and they [respond – A.Z.]: 'You, močiutė [Lithuanian 'močiutė' = English 'grandmother', she code switched between Russian and Lithuanian – A.Z.], speak the way you should [speak Lithuanian – A.Z.]'.*

Thus, there is no continuation across generations of the same linguistic patterns. Younger Russian-speakers who represent the Estonian Medium Low Vitality and Latvian Trusting Utilitarianists clusters see the heritage language as useless, both educationally and economically. In other words, it has no capital in the 'linguistic markets' of Estonia and Latvia. A female student belonging to the Latvian Trusting Utilitarianists cluster gives an example:

By name you can't always understand who someone is, for example in our course. By name it seems that the course is Russian but among the students not so many spoke Russian and some were not even able to speak Russian.

It is easy to ascertain a link between language and education in the examples from these quite utilitarian young Russian-speakers, who tend to assimilate into the titular language and sometimes are hardly able to read Russian and do not tend to consider it their mother tongue:

My fellow students can speak [Russian – A.Z.], yes, but [do not – A.Z.] perceive it as a native language and cannot read [in Russian – A.Z.]. I spoke in Latvian.

She and her co-students see the heritage language – Russian – as a language for in-group oral communication only. Notably the informant herself stressed that she spoke in Latvian with her fellow Russians.

To conclude, an intergenerational shift has been observed in Estonia and Latvia: younger generations of Russian-speakers are shifting to the titular language as a route to education, jobs and successful careers. This shift in linguistic behaviour might also be the result of the influence of (pre-)schools' language of instruction. In Lithuania, a language shift has long been in progress in the Russian-speaking community.

5.4 Imperial identity construction

Answers during the interview given by a Latvian Discordant Traditionalist indicated that heritage roots are highly valued:

I am proud that I am Russian. Anyway, this is a great nation, good culture and traditions. Why should I be ashamed of it?

Furthermore, he tried to generalize and, according to his view, the concepts of pride in one's heritage nation and the heritage country's well-being are interdependent:

I think that Russians, as now Russia is recovering, are proud of their nation, of belonging to this nation.

The imperial identity view is exemplified by the disagreement with official rhetoric:

The Soviet time was not as bad as is now commonly assumed. There was a lot that was valuable and good but there was bad as well. I think that sometimes many feel nostalgia for Soviet times. That they were confident then in tomorrow, that there was work, and there was medicine.

This is combined with a kind of nostalgia on the part of the interviewee, as later the interviewee expressed a sudden wistful yearning for the Soviet period when everything was better:

> *I associate Latvia as it was in past times [pause]. The culture was always good in Latvia, production was at a high level, and certain brands were famous – recognized in the whole former Union – such as balsam, Dzintars [perfumery and cosmetics manufacturing company – A.Z.], and Jūrmala [a resort town, the Baltic's version of the French Riviera – A.Z.]. As the saying goes, it was the gateway to Europe.*

To sum up, the construction of an imperial identity is common for clusters showing discordance towards titulars. Language and citizenship policy are the first among a number of the factors that have influenced the imperial identity's sustainability during the past decades, because adult citizenship was granted in Estonia and Latvia based on the principle of *ius sanguinis*. Russian-speakers faced the necessity of passing titular language exams after 1991. As this was a challenge to their comfortable linguistic behaviour and they were forced to change, the question of citizenship started to foster traditional ethnic borders and led to discordance, as well as creating a space for an imperial identity construction that made it possible to avoid self-pity because of the sense of collective inferiority.

6 Discussion and conclusions

This article has contributed to the field of group identity construction in a changed sociolinguistic situation by providing a detailed account of the striking heterogeneity of Russian-speakers in the Baltic countries. A range of ethnic, national, linguistic and imperial identities was revealed during the interviews, and these identities have been analysed with the help of the clusters that were defined through large-scale quantitative studies of the ethnolinguistic vitality of Russian-speaking communities. This enabled us to observe the dominant ideologies that are reflected in minority discourses in all three countries.

The results show that language seems to be the only unifying characteristic, although soon this last connection between different clusters might drastically disappear because the younger generations of Russian-speakers tend to assimilate into the titular languages. Their ideologies are similar to what Sallabank (2006) describes when talking about the island of Guernsey, whose sociolinguistic and cultural situation demonstrates that the indigenous language, Guernsey French, is used among older people, while younger people do not view it as being very important because of their desire to leave the island, which does not provide many opportunities for career, education and professional development.

This combined quantitative–qualitative comparative study clearly demonstrates that, on the one hand, there are clear subgroups with good titular language knowledge, who have good education and broader career opportunities, and who tend to assimilate linguistically, while sometimes valuing and maintaining their cultural roots. On the other hand, there are subgroups whose titular language skills do not allow them to receive higher education and because of this their career opportunities are quite limited. Such people spend their lives in a circle of deepening segregation as failure only sharpens discordant feelings toward the titulars. This, in turn, creates a fertile field for indifference and lack of interest in learning the titular language. In addition, in Estonia and Latvia there are predominantly Russian-speaking areas where such people may live out their lives without any contact with an Estonian-language environment. Such territorial segregation has worsened the situation, especially in light of the already mentioned official Latvian and Estonian policies on citizenship. Deprivation and segregation fuel imperial identities in an effort to raise status.

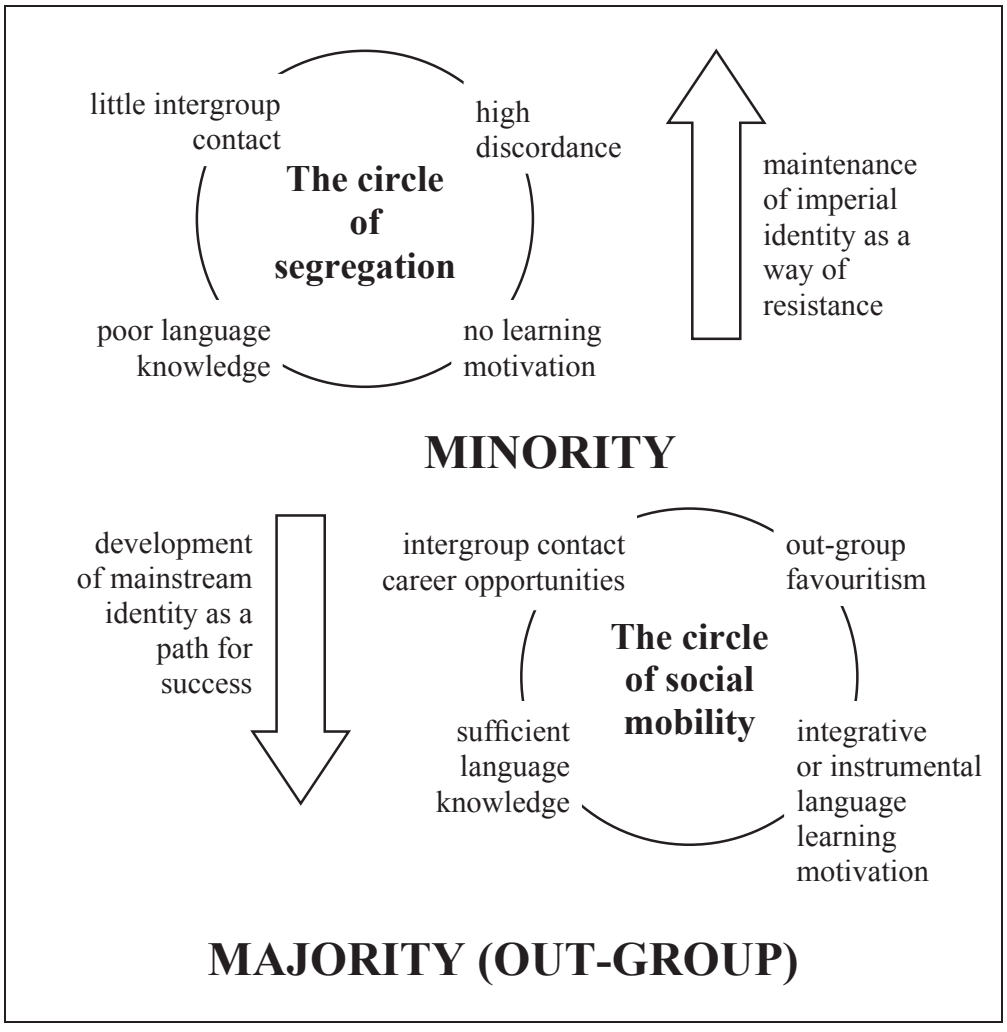

Figure 1. Negotiation of Russian-speakers' identities in the Baltic countries.

These processes are shown schematically in Figure 1. I believe that they are to some extent true as, in Lithuania, where citizenship was granted to all Lithuanian legal permanent residents, there are no groups exemplifying discordance towards the titulars (although not all speak fluent Lithuanian): Lithuanian Russian-speakers show out-group favouritism to a greater or lesser extent. In addition, imperial discourse construction is absent.

Pavlenko and Blackledge's (2004:18) observation that 'identity becomes interesting when it is contested or in crisis' suggests that it would be instructive to explore further the discursive construction of collective identities within the Russian-speaking population in the Baltic countries. The clusters and their discourses show that there are several emerging identities being constructed, all of them aiming to provide a particular set of values, symbols, narratives and collective emotions that enable Russian-speakers to structure their everyday experiences and provide an explanation for their position in between the titular (Western) and Russian-national identities, which at present are constructed as existential Others. As a continuation of this study, it would be particularly relevant to observe whether the recent imperial ambitions of the Russian Federation, as well as the events in eastern Ukraine and Crimea, will lead to a clearer fragmentation within the Russian-speaking clusters into subgroups with imperial, ethnic or symbolic ethnic, linguistic and national identities.

Notes

1. Lauristin et al. (2011) also showed that the picture of a strict division of the Estonian society along ethnolinguistic borders is a gross oversimplification.
2. The full semi-structured protocol for a focus group interview may be retrieved from http://kodu.ut.ee/~ehalam/Appendices.pdf.

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Article

Language use and self-identification:
The case of Lithuanian Poles

Kinga Geben and Meilutė Ramonienė

Abstract

Based on newly collected quantitative and qualitative data from two research projects on language use and attitudes carried out in Lithuanian cities and towns, this paper aims to report and contrast current identity tendencies and their links with the linguistic behaviour of Lithuanian Poles permanently residing in the capital Vilnius and in smaller towns. The study reported here involves a description of the Polish community and review of its background, analysis of the sociolinguistic peculiarities of Polish and identification of areas in which it is used, an evaluation of the role of Polish in the identity of its users as well as changes in the process of identity formation. The data covered in the article consist of 281 responses from Lithuanian Poles in the two research projects. The quantitative data were supplemented with the findings from qualitative research, so this article analyses 14 interviews, or nearly six hours of recorded data. The study shows that different urban contexts are characterised by varying linguistic behaviour. The interview material reveals the importance of the inter-relationship between ethnicity and citizenship as well as between identity and the place of residence

KEYWORDS: LITHUANIAN POLES, ETHNIC IDENTITY, MULTILINGUALISM, LANGUAGE USE

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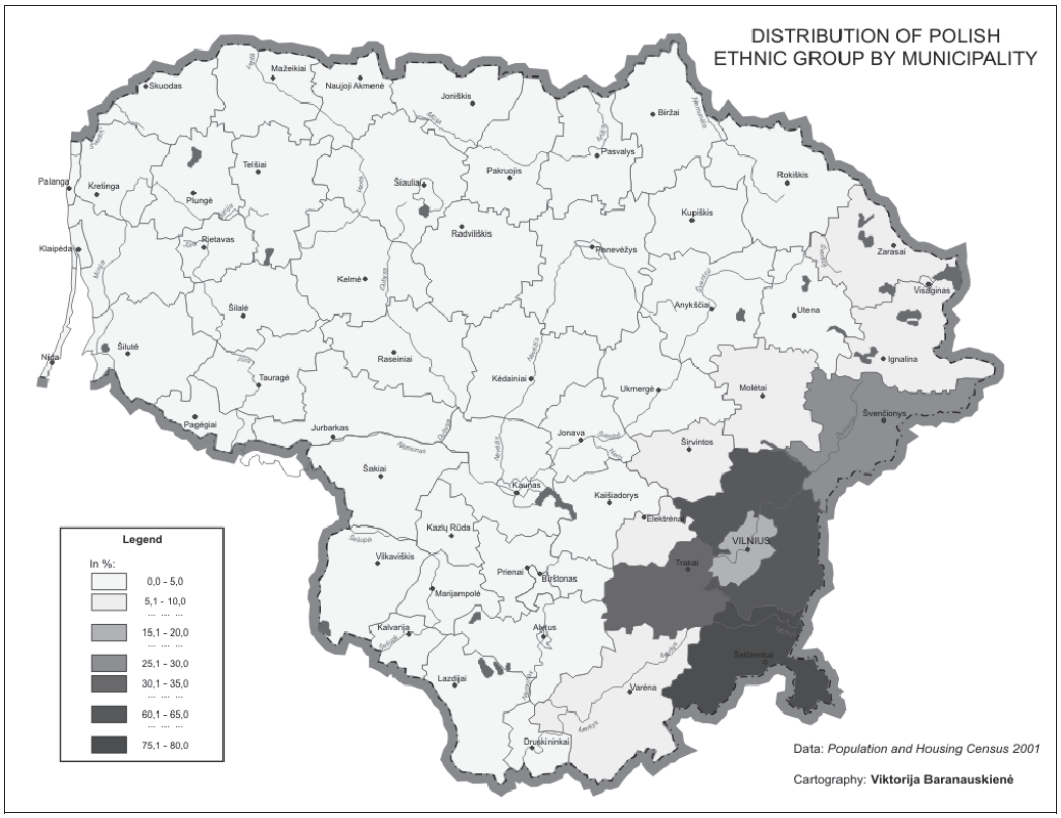
1 Introduction

The Polish community constitutes the largest ethnic minority group in present-day Lithuania, a country re-established as an independent state after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. In the period after 1969, the Russian community in Lithuania was bigger than the Polish one, but since 1990 the situation has been changing (Kasatkina and Leončikas, 2003:37–40). The number of Russian people living in Lithuania has been decreasing owing to emigration and assimilation, so that in 2011 the Russian community made up just 5.4 per cent of the population (Lietuvos statistikos metraštis, 2011:43) as compared to 6.3 per cent in 2001 and 9.4 per cent in 1989. Although the Polish community has also been diminishing in recent years, this tendency is considerably weaker. At the beginning of 2011, the Polish community consisted of 212,800 people, or 6.6 per cent of the Lithuanian population while it was the same in 2001 and 7.0 per cent in 1989. One of the significant features of the Polish community is related to its living area. Polish people tend to reside in a relatively limited area, namely around the capital Vilnius and in the south-east of Lithuania (see Map 1).



Map 1. Distribution of Polish ethnic group by municipality.

During the Soviet period, the language used by the Polish ethnic minority underwent a process of change and many people were influenced by the Soviet policy of Russification. The restoration of independence in Lithuania stimulated a return to Polishness. Among the ethnic minorities of Lithuania, the Polish community is distinguished by its social and linguistic behaviour with many variations in the choice of the language of communication. Linguistic behaviour differentiates Poles in Vilnius and those in the smaller towns, provinces and villages. Similarly, Polish identity is also dynamic. As the largest ethnic minority in Lithuania, the Polish community has been the focus of diverse studies dealing with adaptation, assimilation and integration into society.

The bilingualism and multilingualism of this group has been investigated by sociologists Kasatkina and Leončikas (2003:86–97), Leončikas (2007:86–93), Beresnevičiūtė (2005a, 2005b), Juozeliūnienė (1996) and Juška (1999). It has been the object of studies in political science (Savukynas, 2000; Pileckas, 2003:40–43), geography (Vaitekūnas, 2006) and anthropology (Daukšas, 2008). Ehala and Zabrodskaja (2011) examined the phenomenon of the 'ethnic temperature' of ethnicities in Lithuania, Polish being among them. The studies dealing with the relationship between language and identity, however, are rather scarce. This aspect has been dealt with in Hogan-Brun and Ramonienė (2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) and Hogan-Brun, Ozolins, Ramonienė and Rannut (2009) when reporting the sociolinguistic situation of 2002 and 2004 in south-eastern Lithuania, more specifically in its villages and the capital Vilnius. The most recent quantitative data from a study in Vilnius has been presented in the monograph *Towns and Languages* (Lith. *Miestai ir kalbos*) by Ramonienė (2010). Multilingualism and the identity of the Polish community were the focus of Geben (2010), while Ramonienė and Geben (2011) analysed the linguistic behaviour of Polish people in Lithuania. These sociolinguistic studies involved quantitative methods, while hardly any qualitative research has been carried out to describe the linguistic behaviour of the Polish community in smaller and larger towns in Lithuania.

This article aims to report and contrast current identity tendencies and their links with the linguistic behaviour of Lithuanian Poles permanently residing in the capital Vilnius and in smaller towns on the basis of the latest quantitative and qualitative data. The study reported here involves a description of the Polish community and a review of its background, analysis of the sociolinguistic peculiarities of Polish and an identification of the areas in which it is used, an evaluation of the role of Polish in the identity of its users and changes in the process of identity formation.

2 Historical and social background

2.1 Historical context

The presence of the Polish language in Lithuania has a long tradition. From the mid-seventeenth century Polish was an official language in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Kurzowa, 1993:33). It was used by the court and the nobility of Lithuania (Mędelska, 1993:49). In the spread of the Polish language in Lithuania, a special role was played by higher social classes and educational institutions concentrated in the cities. The mid-nineteenth century witnessed a process where the peasantry started using Polish on a larger scale. The peasant dialect was different from standard Polish; it had been saturated with all the typical interferences of Belarusian and Lithuanian at all levels (Turska, 1995:24; Kurzowa, 1993:60). In 1918, the emergence of the independent nation states of Lithuania and Poland brought changes in the national-social structure. The historical south-eastern part of Lithuania together with the capital Vilnius remained within the borders of the state of Poland, where the Polish language became the only language in public dealings and where all residents were given Polish citizenship. The presence of Vilnius University and numerous scientific and cultural institutions contributed to the dissemination of the Polish literary language and to a linguistic unification with Poland.

The Polish national identity was fortified among the population in these areas. In contrast, on the remaining territory of Lithuania, moves to retain Lithuanian identity and the Lithuanian language gained prominence. During the cardinal changes to the map of Europe after World War II, the current boundaries of Lithuania were restored but changes in the structure of the population were irreversible. Vilnius and the Vilnius region have been multi-ethnic ever since. Even today, Poles make up a majority of the population in the Šalčininkai district (79% of the population) and 63% in the Vilnius district (excluding Vilnius). In 2002, the population of Vilnius – the capital of the country and the largest city of Lithuania – was 553,904 people: 57.5% (318,510) Lithuanians, 18.8% (104,446) Poles, 14.05% (77,698) Russians, 1.3% (7,159) Ukrainians, 0.5% (2,785) Jews, 0.2% (1,060) Tatars and others (3.6%) (Statistikos departamentas, 2004:38).

2.2 Education, media and political activity

More than any other sphere of social life, education has a huge impact on the formation of individual personality and the development of national processes (Pileckas, 2003:43). It is at school that people form their first outlooks and attitudes, which gradually construct the historical consciousness of a nation (cf. Beresnevičiūtė, 2005b:121).

Primary and secondary education in Lithuania is carried out both in Lithuanian and in the languages of ethnic minorities. The beginning of this practice in school education goes back to the Soviet period and it has been largely maintained since the restoration of independence in 1990. Parents have always been free to choose a suitable school for their children in the Vilnius region according to their language preferences, because schooling can be done in Lithuanian, Polish or Russian. In Vilnius, for example, there are Lithuanian schools, Russian schools and schools with the Polish or Belarusian language of instruction. Up to 2011, all disciplines at schools (except for Lithuanian language classes) were taught in the language of instruction of a particular school, which could be Lithuanian or the language of any ethnic minority. Ongoing educational reform, however, aims to introduce the teaching of certain disciplines (Lithuanian history, Lithuanian geography, Lithuanian social science) in Lithuanian at schools of ethnic minorities. This move provoked opposition from the Polish population and resulted in several protest strikes.

Interestingly, the number of pupils learning in Polish schools is decreasing, and a similar tendency is even more obvious in Russian schools (Beresnevičiūtė, 2005b:122; Lietuvos švietimas skaičiais 2006:42; 2010:27) (see Figure 1). The decrease can only partly be explained by the demographic situation in Lithuania. More importantly, it reflects parents' decisions regarding the choice of schools for their children, which, possibly, are based on language prestige issues and the relationship between ethnic majority and minority.

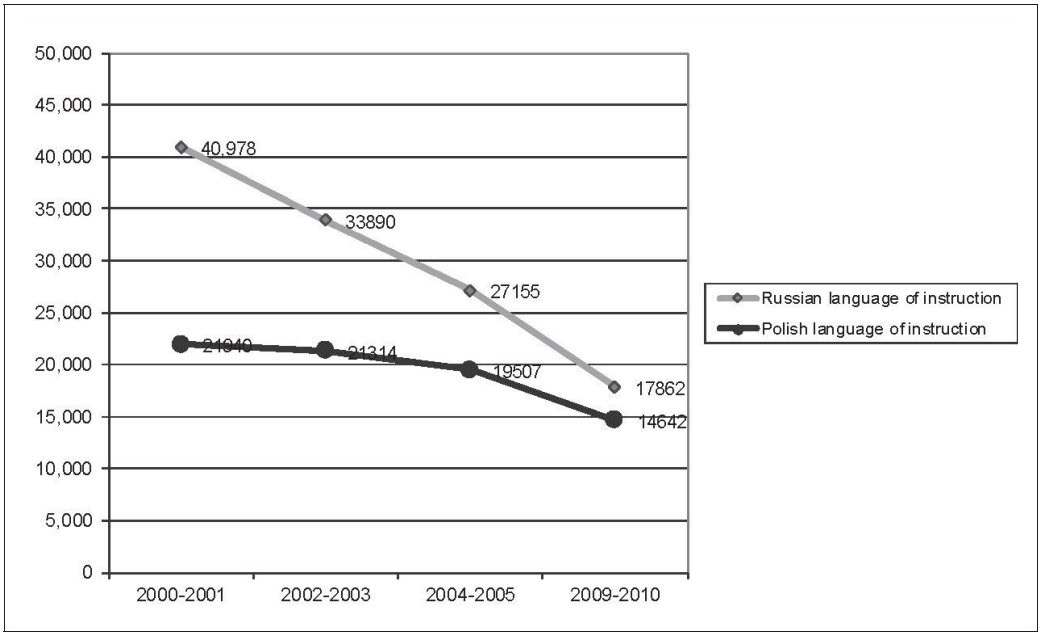


Figure 1. Numbers of pupils attending Russian and Polish schools, 2000–2010.

Polish mass media in Lithuania, supported by donations from Poland, have a rather limited circulation and small target audience. Published media include the daily *Kurier Wileński*, the weekly *Tygodnik Wileńszczyzny* and the magazine *Magazyn Wileński*. Circulation statistics (Lietuvos spaudos statistika, 2005:74) show that these publications have small readerships not proportional with the size of the Polish ethnic minority in Vilnius. The Polish-language commercial radio station *Znad Willi* has been broadcasting since 1994. Although it offers contemporary and interesting content, analysis of its audience in Vilnius in 2008 proves that it attracts only 2.7 per cent of radio listeners in Vilnius. A Polish radio programme on Lithuanian national radio, namely the 30-minute daily news digest *Klasika*, has an even smaller audience. The Lithuanian national television channel LTV2 offers a 15-minute programme in Polish every Saturday. Lithuania also allows Poland to broadcast *TV Polonia*, which is aimed at Poles living outside Poland. The increasing reach of the internet has given new impulses for the mass media; there are several websites for the Polish community in Lithuania, e.g., www.wilnoteka.lt and http://pl.delfi.lt/ (cf. Geben, 2008:62).

Polish people constitute a politically active minority. They are represented in Lithuania by two parties, Polish Election Action and the Polish People's Party. These two parties hold different positions on the adequate protection of ethnic Poles and especially on the question of assimilation. Most Poles vote for an 'ethnic Polish' party, i.e., Polish Election Action (cf. Kasatkina and Beresnevičiūte, 2010:19), which was established in 1994. It has a majority of seats in the Vilnius Region and Šalčininkai Region municipalities. Currently, Polish Election Action has 1212 members (cf. http://www.awpl.lt/). However, representation of the Polish minority in the Lithuanian parliament (Seimas) with six seats out of 141 is lower than the relative proportion of this ethnic group in the overall population (cf. Kasatkina and Beresnevičiūtė, 2010:15).

3 Methods and data

The data for this article was collected during two research projects – 'Language use and ethnic identity in urban areas of Lithuania'[1] and 'Sociolinguistic map of Lithuania: Towns and cities'.[2] The study involves quantitative and qualitative research methods, i.e., representative surveys and semi-structured in-depth interviews.

The surveys were conducted in Vilnius (in 2008) and in smaller towns in the south-east of Lithuania (in 2010) where the density of the Polish population is the highest. As the surveys covered people of all ethnicities residing in the region, for the purposes of this study the data of the Polish group has been extracted and investigated.

In the first of the two projects, 162 Poles from Vilnius were surveyed, while in the second project carried out in the towns of the Vilnius region (excluding the city of Vilnius), 119 Poles were surveyed. So the data covered in the article consists of 281 responses by Lithuanian Poles in the two research projects. Multi-level random sampling was used to select respondents who were surveyed during face-to-face interviews. In both surveys, the Polish respondents accounted for 18 per cent of the total number of respondents, which statistically matches the proportion of this ethnic group in the population of the capital. The bulk of the questions in both questionnaires are identical, which enables reliable comparisons across the two project data sets. SPSS software was used for the statistical analysis. The findings of the quantitative analysis cover questions about the native languages of the respondents, their proficiency in Polish, Lithuanian and Russian and the use of these languages in various spheres of life as well as national identity issues within the Polish ethnic minority.

The quantitative data was supplemented with the findings of qualitative research, which allows for the study of complex phenomena and gives insights into subjective implications and interpretations of the process (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Wei and Moyer, 2008; Silverman, 2007). The current study has been designed to reveal values and views and to interpret them in the light of quantitative data as well as to show common tendencies arising from individual reactions. The process of the selection of respondents took into account their ability to explain certain implications and disclose in-depth links between linguistic behaviour and the (re)construction of self-identity. The interviews were conducted in the respondents' mother tongue, i.e., Polish, to facilitate the expression and formulation of their thoughts. The interview method was used to examine the individual experiences of Poles born in Vilnius, Šalčininkai and Trakai. The objective of the interviews was to assess the relationship between regional identity, ethnicity and language. The analysis covers those fragments of the interviews that show the motivation of behaviour or are related to the respondents' identity, choice of language or cultural affiliation. The in-depth interviews with the Polish respondents were recorded in Vilnius and in two smaller towns, namely Šalčininkai and Trakai. Šalčininkai is located 46 km south of Vilnius with a population of 6,722 (79% are Polish); Trakai is 28 km west of the capital and has 5,725 residents (21% are Polish) (cf. Statistikos departamentas, 2002:170). This article analyses 14 interviews, or nearly six hours of recorded data.

4 Patterns of language use

4.1 Native language

The question of identity is usually related to language and identity is therefore seen as a linguistic phenomenon, reinforcing the idea that the mother tongue has a major impact on self-identity (Joseph, 2004). One of the questions raised in this study is the role of the mother tongue in the life and identity construct of Polish people who live in Lithuanian towns.

Research shows that 137 Polish respondents (84.7%) in Vilnius reported Polish as their mother tongue or one of their native languages. Such responses were slightly fewer in the towns of the Vilnius region, with 84 Polish respondents (70.6%) indicating Polish as their mother tongue or one of their native languages. In Vilnius, 24 people declaring Polish ethnicity (15.3%) did not recognize Polish as their native language; in the smaller cities of the Vilnius region, there are more Poles recognizing languages other than Polish as their first (29.4%). Table 1 summarizes the data on the declaration of the mother tongue, taking into account the possibility of declaring several native languages.

Table 1. Native language(s) of Poles living in Vilnius and other towns in the Vilnius region, %.

	Native language(s)			
	Lithuanian	**Russian**	**Polish**	**Other**
Poles in Vilnius (n=162)	8.6%	20.9%	84.7%	0.6%
Poles in other towns in the Vilnius region (n=119)	10.1%	24.4%	70.6%	1.7%

The data show that the recognition of several languages as mother tongues is a popular phenomenon, which means that the two languages become the languages of the household and the respondents identify themselves with these languages (Vilkienė, 2010:41). In Vilnius, 117 respondents (72.2%) indicated Polish as their only mother tongue, while 14 people (8.6%) indicated two native languages in the following combinations: Russian and Polish – 8 respondents; Lithuanian and Polish – 5 respondents; 6 (3.7%) respondents from Vilnius indicated three native languages, Russian, Lithuanian and Polish; 20 respondents (12.3%) consider Russian as their native language; 4 (2.5%) named Lithuanian. In other towns in the Vilnius region, 75 respondents identified Polish as their only mother tongue, 8 respondents named two native languages in the following combinations: Russian and Polish – 7 respondents; Lithuanian and Polish – one respondent; and one respondent named three native languages, Russian, Lithuanian and Polish. Thus, the quantitative data show that Polish respondents from Vilnius consider the

Polish language to be their mother tongue more often than Polish respondents from smaller towns around Vilnius. The latter group contains more people who indicate that their mother tongue is Russian, Lithuanian or some other language.

The question is: How does multilingualism affect personal identity? Possibly, one of two (or more) mother tongues is more important than the other and a person identifies him-/herself with that language. Not all respondents indicated a willingness to keep both languages. The data suggest that there is a tendency among the residents of the Vilnius region to consider one's native language the language which is most frequently spoken at home – and it is not necessarily Polish.

4.2 Language proficiency

The question of ethnic identity is closely related to the most widely used languages in the country. Following the restoration of independence in Lithuania, public life has been dominated by the state language, i.e., Lithuanian. In the two decades of independence, the Russian language has remained the second most widely known language among the population of the country. Even though some of the Polish respondents do not consider Polish their native language, this language does belong to their linguistic reality. One of the research questions in this study dealt with their proficiency in Lithuanian, Polish and Russian.

In general, Poles from Vilnius self-assess their knowledge of languages very highly. Almost all respondents agree that they understand Russian (99% of respondents), Lithuanian (98%) and Polish (96%). A lower level of proficiency in Lithuanian is observed among the elderly. Proficiency in the use of languages primarily depends on the language situation in the family, on education and on the age of the respondent. Figures 2 and 3 below summarize the data on language proficiency.

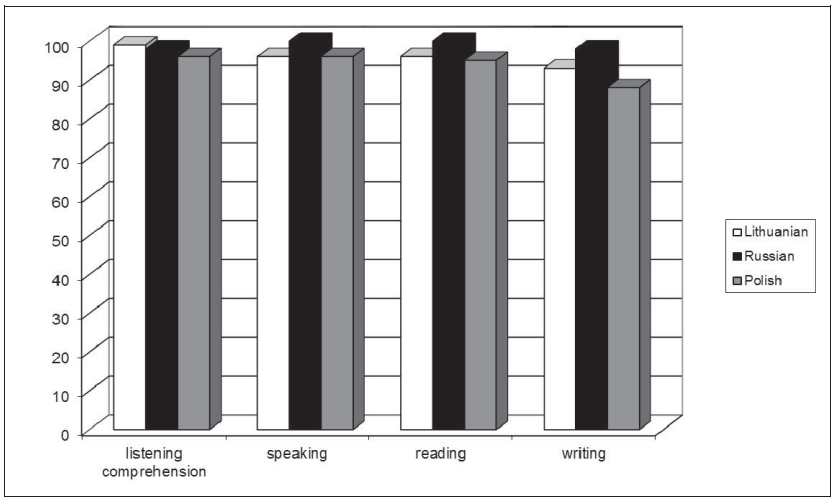


Figure 2. Scope of language proficiency among Polish respondents in Vilnius, %, (2008).

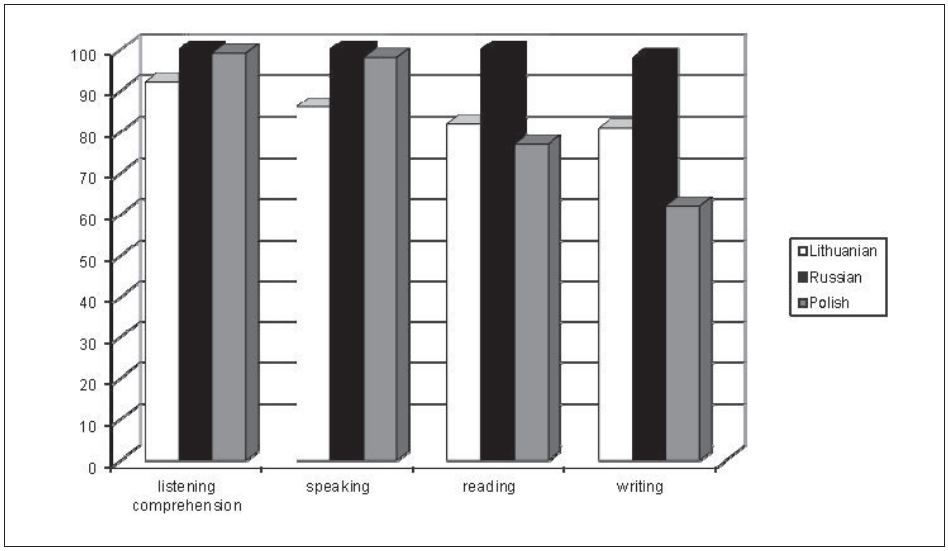


Figure 3. Scope of language proficiency among Polish respondents from other towns in the Vilnius region, % (2010).

100% of Polish respondents from the Vilnius region say that they can understand, speak and read Russian, 98% that they can write in Russian, 92% that they understand Lithuanian, 86% that they can use Lithuanian when speaking and 82–81% when reading and writing. More Poles speak and understand Polish in the Vilnius region (99% of respondents) than they do in Vilnius (98%), but there is a marked difference in reading and writing skills in Polish in the Vilnius region – fewer respondents from this group can read (77%) and write (62%) in Polish.

It should be emphasized that according to the summarized declarations, proficiency in Russian (oral and written) is best among Polish respondents living in Lithuanian cities. This can be partly explained by the fact that in the Soviet period many of these people were educated in Russian. They learned the language at school and so today they choose it for writing even though they are fluent speakers of Polish. Polish respondents from smaller towns usually have a higher level of proficiency in spoken Polish (the difference is 3%) because this language is used not only at home but also in public places. A higher proficiency in Lithuanian is reported by residents of Vilnius, because here Lithuanian is most often chosen for public verbal exchanges. Proficiency in Polish is also assessed better by residents of Vilnius. This group of respondents yields the biggest number of native speakers of Polish (the difference is 14%). It should be noted, however, that this refers to the urban rather than rural population where the density of Polish people is higher and the linguistic context is different (Kurzowa, 1993:316).

4.3 Diglossia

The respondents are aware of the fact that the Polish language in Lithuania and in Poland is different; they recognize their imperfect knowledge of the language:

> Our speech is impure, mixed. They talk more in Polish, so we talk more simply. //
> *Nasza mowa nieczysta, mieszana. Oni dokładniej rozmawiają po polsku, my tak bardziej prosto.* (TrakaiW78);
> The language of Poles in Lithuania is, one can say, the local language because we are not far from the border of Belarus ... and in our time we went to Russian schools. //
> *Język Polaków na Litwie jest, no taki, można powiedzieć język tutejszy, bo jesteśmy niedaleko od granicy białoruskiej ...eee.. .a także szkoły na tamte czasy skończyliśmy rosyjskie.* (ŠalčininkaiW39).

Poles in Lithuania are involved in the situation of diglossia. In official settings, at schools, in churches and institutions associated with Poland, such as in the Polish Embassy, they attempt to use the standard Polish language variant, which is considered as a variant of high prestige. The low variant, or dialect, is used only in non-official situations; it is associated with uneducated people. When a person familiar with the dialectal variant of the language used at home begins to participate actively in social life, he changes his everyday language to the standard learned at school. A linguistic inferiority complex causes Poles to choose Lithuanian, which children learn at school, as a home language:

> I will surely send my children to a Lithuanian school, and the Polish language will be heard at grandma's, I think that this is better for the child. It will be easier for him in life, to find a job and all. //
> *Dzieci to na pewno najszybciej, że oddam do litewskiej szkoły, a polski język będą słyszali u babci, myślę, ze to jest lepiej dla dziecka będzie. Będzie łatwiej mu w życiu potem znaleźć pracę i w ogóle* (ŠalčininkaiW20).

One respondent of the middle generation considers why they do this:

> I think that Poles who are not confident perhaps do not have an opportunity in the family to speak Polish, are afraid to teach their children the language incorrectly. And after Lithuanian school they think that it is easier to find a job. There is the Lithuanian language in our country now – the national language. And so I think that people are apprehensive of something, whether to look for a job, or whether it is more difficult to learn the Lithuanian language after a Polish school. //

> *Myślę, że Polacy te, które nie pewne siebie, chyba w rodzinie nie mają takiego do czynienia rozmawiać w języku polskim, boją się nauczyć swych dzieci języka niepoprawnego. A po szkole litewskiej sądzą tak, że lżej łatwiej znaleźć pracę i jest język litewski teraz w naszym państwie – państwowy język. I tak ja myślę że ludzie czegoś się boją, że czy w tym szukać pracy, czy ciężej uczyć się potem na język litewski po szkole polskiej.* (ŠalčininkaiW39).

The mixing of languages and awareness of the fact that the language they speak differs from standard Polish, Russian or Lithuanian gives rise to an inferiority complex. Speaking a 'worse, mixed' language is difficult to accept in a city where prestige and the power of language counts. They select an easier option – a language which they speak every day at home. This attitude has become especially popular in Trakai among the respondents of Polish–Lithuanian or Polish–Russian mixed families. Languages other than Polish also prevail in mixed families from Vilnius: it is Russian or Lithuanian, depending on the choice of school for the child. Other respondents (e.g., ŠalčininkaiW20, ŠalčininkaiW39) think that the dialect interferes with the learning of the standard language, while the knowledge of several languages is clearly positively evaluated.

4.4 Language and religion

The language of religion is one of the most enduring of language choices; the Polish community in Lithuania is traditional and Catholic. The Church fulfils the role of an institution integrating the Polish environment (cf. Kabzińska, 2009: 175). It strengthens the identification of Catholicism with the Polish language and with the Polish identity in these individuals, who use Russian daily in their homes but who are not Orthodox. Some 88% of Poles from Vilnius and a similar proportion in the Vilnius region's smaller towns (82%) pray in Polish. This is the highest percentage of the use of the Polish language among all other uses of this language.

The interviews indicate that all respondents maintain traditional lifestyles and are Catholic. The Polish community has a very distinctive inclination to religion which survived during the Soviet repressions. In the 19th century, part of the local population identified themselves with Polish people merely on the basis of Catholicism, which was contrasted with the Orthodox confession ('non-Polish') in the regions bordering Belarus (cf. Krupowies, 1999:41). It could be thus assumed that for those local residents who did not possess clear linguistic and national features, common religious practice served both as a means of ethnic self-identity and a unifying factor. The simple common tongue was a safe communication tool in the context of multilingualism, multiculturalism and multi-nationalism.

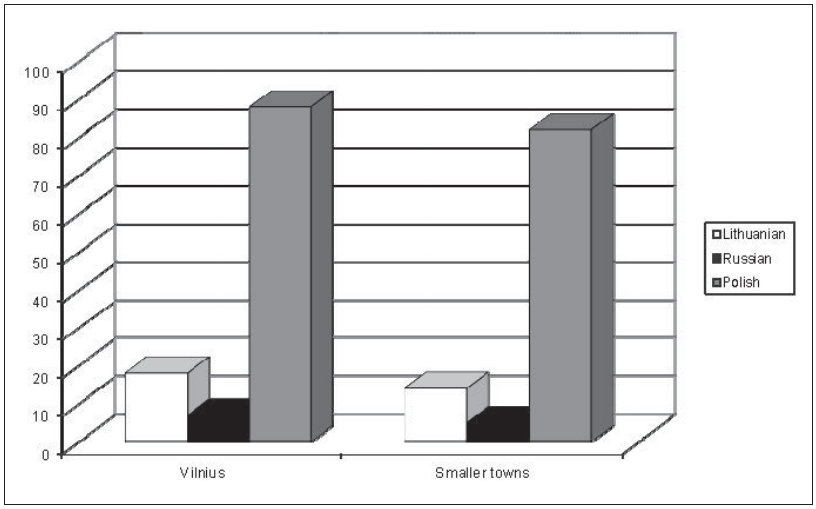


Figure 4. Languages used for religion among Polish respondents from Vilnius and smaller towns of the Vilnius region.

This tongue was a distinctive feature of the community rather than an expression of certain ethnicity. However, the stereotype of the Polish Catholic is currently disappearing, since faith and religious practices are relegated to the realm of private experience. The marginalization of religion follows in the wake of the process of modernization and the impact of modern Western culture (Koseła, 2003:289). Similar processes are occurring both in the whole of Lithuanian society and in Polish communities in Lithuania, but this is still an ethnic group very strongly (especially the older generation) associated with the tradition of Catholic feasts and the domestic observance of Catholic traditions (such as baptism, marriage, funeral rites). For example:

> I took First Communion in Polish. My parents always took me to services in Polish. I know all the prayers only in Polish. And so it's nice for me and it's very important that I participate in the Polish service. //
> *Chodziłam do Komunii Pierwszej w języku polskim, moi rodzice zawsze mnie prowadzali z sobą na msze w języku polskim. Wszystkie modlitwy wiem tylko w języku polskim. I* dlatego *mnie jest przyjemnie i to bardzo ważne że uczestniczę w polskiej mszy.* (ŠalčininkaiW39).

A respondent from Šalčininkai emphasizes that she uses Polish every day in church, and that she speaks a 'dialect' at home ('po prostu'):

> Every day, every day, when we go to church we speak Polish and at home we speak the dialect 'po prostu' more. //
> *Codziennie, codziennie, o jak do kościoła idzim to po polsku, a w domu to po prostu więcej.* (ŠalčininkaiW70).

Another example is a Polish–Russian family, where Russian has become the language of the home and the father does not continue the Catholic schooling of his son:

> B – Are you a Catholic? R – Yes. B – And is it important for you what language you use in church? R – Maybe not very important. We, with my wife, went to an Orthodox church, we go to church. B – And what service, Polish or Lithuanian? R – I went to the Polish service. B – Is it important to your children? R – My son, no, he's never been to church. He is, as they say, maybe more 'продвинутый' [modern], as they say, maybe he is a little shy when you tell him to go to church, somehow, he is such sort of man. He is more self-conscious. //
> B – *Czy pan jest katolikiem? R – Tak. B – I czy to jest ważne dla pana, w jakim języku pan chodzi do kościoła? R – To może i nie bardzo ważne. My i do cerkwi z żoną zachodzili, do kościoła chodzim. B – A na jakie msze, na polskie czy na litewskie? R – Na polskie chodziłem. B – A czy to jest ważne dla pana dzieci? R – A syn u mnie – nie, akurat, on nigdy w kościele nie był, on u mnie, jak to mówi się, bardziej może taki 'продвинутый', jak to mówi się, on może nawet i wstydzi się troszeczkę, jak powiedzieć jemu do kościoła, jakoś tak, nu taki człowiek. Nu, on taki w ogóle bardziej zamknięty.* (VilniusM58).

4.5 Multilingualism and cultural awareness

The qualitative data show that the respondents come from Polish families and most of them agree that Polish culture is closest to them. They rank Russian culture second, then Lithuanian. As VilniusM46 stated, this is a result of their life and education: *It is because I grew up in Soviet times* or, as VilniusM19 says, the Russian language and culture is close to him because of the daily reception of the broadcasting media in Russian.

The impact of the Russian language and Russian culture intensified during the Soviet period because of the education which many people of Polish ethnicity received in Russian schools. This is illustrated in the following extract from an interview of a male respondent from Vilnius:[3]

> Poles in a Russian school tend to waver regarding Polish culture; they are not so attached to Lithuanian either. Then it is quite difficult, and even my wife, for example, finished a Russian school and Russian culture is closer to her than Polish. Polish as usual, but also more-or-less Russian, fifty-fifty. //

Polacy w rosyjskiej szkole po prostu trochę odstępują od polskiej kultury, nie są do tego przywiązani, do litewskiej, jak i innej. Dosyć trudno potem, trudno, nawet i żona na przykład kończyła rosyjska szkoła, to i bliżej jej rosyjska kultura niżeli polska. Polska tak normalnie, ale rosyjska też mniej więcej, pół na pół. (VilniusM45).

Does multilingualism in the families of the respondents and their study and working environments affect their concepts of cultural identity? The autobiographical stories suggest that this is assimilation and an ongoing transition to a different language (Russian or Lithuanian), which in particular refers to families whose children have finished Russian schools (TrakaiW65, VilniusM58). In contrast, those Poles who finished Russian schools in the Soviet period now tend to send their children to Lithuanian schools, which eventually contributes to their assimilation with Lithuanians (TrakaiW65). People from south-eastern Lithuania often enter into mixed marriages. Having in mind the current political situation, it is possible to expect that the Lithuanian nationality will dominate in such families (cf. Pileckas, 2003:44). Thus ethnic and cultural awareness can be seen as a combination of different cultural elements that have always been available to Polish people in their multilingual and multicultural environment. The issue of identity is particularly complex at the intersection of languages and cultures.

The Poles of the Vilnius region are multilingual and are therefore able to understand several cultures. Is Polish still important in the awareness of ethnic identity? Their native language is the underlying factor in their self-identification, but it is not the only one. All respondents indicated a good knowledge of three languages, when the native language of the respondents was Polish. Almost all of the respondents recognized Polish as the language closest to them, but they also often mentioned Russian:

Polish, Polish is very important, we are Poles, the Polish language is important. //
Polski, bardzo ważny polski, my jesteśmy Polacy, ważny język polski. (ŠalčininkaiW70);

I think I like Russian most. It is very beautiful. And Polish is also very beautiful. //
Najbardziej lubię to chyba język rosyjski. Jest bardzo ładny. No polski też jest bardzo ładny. (ŠalčininkaiW20).

Even people who do not speak Lithuanian well, such as ŠalčininkaiW70, find the official language – Lithuanian – the most important:

> Since we live in Lithuania, we should know the Lithuanian language, because you can pass exams at university to continue your education, which is easier when you know the Lithuanian language. It's obvious, obvious...//
> *Bo za to że jak na Litwie żyim, to dobrze bardzo i litewski język znać i bywa, że gdzie postąpić tego uczyć się, czy gdzie to, łatwiej to już litewski język, żeby był, wiadomo, wiadomo…* (ŠalčininkaiW70);

> Most important is Lithuanian, we should know the others, you must know how to write Lithuanian everywhere.//
> Najpotrzebniejszy *litewski, a inne trzeba znać, trzeba wszędzie po litewsku trzeba pisać, za to i idzim tak.* (TrakaiW65).

According to both the oldest and the middle generations, the impact of the Russian language is very strong:

> I know Polish, Russian, Lithuanian and a little English. I know Russian best because I finished a Russian school. //
> *Wiem język polski, rosyjski, litewski i trochu angielski. Nu najlepiej wiem język rosyjski dlatego że skończyłam szkołą rosyjską.* (ŠalčininkaiW39).

The learning environment (Russian schools) and the language of the media are related to Russian for many Poles in Lithuania. Hence, speaking Polish is not necessarily an indication of Polish ethnic identity for Lithuanian Poles, even though it remains an important aspect of identity.

5 Choice of cultural and ethnic identity

The construction of 'I' identity requires 'the other' (cf. Miniotaitė, 2006:6), so the opposition of 'myself vs. the other', which is observable both inside and outside the community, should be taken into account. A group of people is always comparing itself with the other groups it comes in contact with and in this way establishes two positions: 'we' (our group) and 'they' (the other group, aliens). This juxtaposition allows people to grasp self-identity and admit the distinctiveness of 'the others'. The opposition 'myself vs. the other' is particularly evident at the crossroads of different cultures. The construction of the individual 'I' often evokes norms and stereotypes of the group to which a person chooses to belong (cf. Koseła, 2003:50). Social changes in a society might affect the ethnic awareness of its members and people may acquire a different attitude towards criteria that define their belonging to a group (Kasatkina and Leončikas, 2003:20).

5.1 Interdependence of ethnicity and the declared group membership

Do the Poles in Lithuania feel that the declaration of ethnicity by origin goes hand in hand with a sense of their group membership? Most people of Polish ethnicity (73.5% in Vilnius and 68.9% in the Vilnius region as a whole) express their emotional and volitional belonging to the Polish group. Poles from the capital express this in a more determined way, but the overall results indicate a process of decline in the spread of this ethnic community in Lithuania (see Table 2).

Table 2. Interdependence of ethnicity and the declared group membership.

Who do you feel you are when thinking about yourself?	**Lithuanian**	**Russian**	**Polish**	**European**	**Citizen of the world**	**Other answers**	**No answer**
Poles from Vilnius (n=162)	6.2%	3.1%	73.5%	6.8%	5.6%	2.5%	2.5%
Poles from other towns in the Vilnius region (n=119)	10.9%	8.4%	68.9%	8.4%	1.7%	–	1.7%

The comparison of ethnic origin and the declaration of group membership reveals that 6.3% of people of Polish ethnic origin in Vilnius and 10.9% of those in other towns in the Vilnius region consider themselves to be Lithuanians. Slightly fewer (in Vilnius 3.1%, in other towns 8.4%) feel that they are Russians. This demonstrates the processes of integration and assimilation to which Poles in Lithuania are subjected. The Russification and assimilation of the Soviet period still lingers and affects the mentality of the Polish community, hence part of its members feel they are more Russian than Polish. On the other hand, some people feel attached to Lithuania as citizens of the country. So integration into Lithuanian society and the continuous strengthening of the civic dimension in the construct of personal identity, which is a distinctive feature of contemporary Western societies, is also observable in the Polish community in Lithuania.

Furthermore, the shifting identity construct of Poles living in the cities and towns of Lithuania is also affected by the processes of globalization. According to the survey data, 7-8% of Poles feel more European than representatives of a single nationality, while 6% from Vilnius and 2% from smaller towns feel that they are citizens of the world. When interpreting such data, it should be born in mind that the statements may be variable and often depend on the lifestyle, education, family, individual goals, experience, etc., of the respondent.

5.2 Polish *tutejszy*

What all respondents have in common is that they were born in Lithuania and consider Lithuania to be their homeland. When asked about their ethnicity, all respondents referred to themselves as Poles and most of them described themselves as a 'Pole of Lithuania' (VilniusM19, VilniusM46, VilniusM58, TrakaiW39). In the opinion of the respondents, the word *tutejszy* ('from here') refers to the birthplace of a Pole who is not from Poland. This term may be used synonymously with *miejscowy*, or 'local'. They define themselves by the nation-state formula as Poles in Lithuania, which determines an affiliation to an ethnic and territorial group. Their identity is created by the name of an ethnicity connected with territorial determination.

For example:

> How would I define it? I think so, I would define it as a Pole living in Lithuania, what else can I say. //
> *Jak ja określiłby? Tak myślę, określiłbym – Polak żyjący na Litwie, nu co jeszcze można powiedzieć.* (VilniusM58);

> R – As far as I know, all the local Poles sometimes call themselves 'tutejszy' ['from here'], that is 'miejscowy' ['local'], well, one could be called a Pole of Lithuanian origin, because after all, we all live in Lithuania. (...) I would call myself tutejszy, too. (...) In my opinion, this is a resident who was born in the district of Vilnius, in Vilnius, the district of Vilnius, Šalčininkai. B – And this does not interfere with being a Pole, and tutejszy? R – But these are the Poles, who determine themselves like that, who were born on the territory of Lithuania but are not Lithuanians. They call themselves miejscowy, tutejszy, but they are Poles. B – They are Poles? R – They are Poles. Tutejszy is not a nationality. B – It is not a nationality? R – It is not! It is miejscowy. In the Vilnius language, it means local. (...) B – It is not a negative term? R – In my opinion, it is not. //
> R – *Na ile mi wiadomo, wszyscy miejscowi Polacy siebie czasami nazywają tutejszymi, czyli miejscowymi, no można byłoby nazywać się Polakiem z pochodzenia litewskiego, bo jednak w Litwie mieszkamy. R – Ja siebie też nazwałbym tutejszym. (…) W moim pojęciu to jest mieszkaniec, który się urodził w rejonie wileńskim, w Wilnie. W rejonie wileńskim, solecznickim. B – A to nie przeszkadza być i Polakiem, i tutejszym? R – Ale to są Polacy, którzy siebie określają, którzy urodzili się na terenach Litwy, ale nie są Litwinami, oni siebie nazywają miejscowymi, tutejszymi. Ale oni są Polakami. B – Są Polakami? R – Są Polakami. Tutejszy to nie*

narodowość. B – To nie narodowość? R – To, to nie! To jest miejscowy. Z wileńska, to znaczy miejscowy.(…) B – To nie jest jakieś negatywne określenie? R – W moim pojęciu nie. (VilniusM46).

The statements of VilniusM58 and VilniusM46 include important indications that point to the identity of Poles in Vilnius, who feel best here, where they were born. Their identity is shaped by the locality in which they were born; moreover, they have a strong sense of regional ties. Such a notion of the Pole in Lithuania (Pole tutejszy) is constructed in opposition to other territorial and ethnic groups in Lithuania, as well as in opposition to Poles in Poland. In the statements, there is no sense of significant generational differences, but the declaration of Polish ethnic identity is somewhat different from that in Poland. The sense of distance to Poland sounded especially clear in the statements of respondent VilniusM58:

R – Well, somehow I don't know, I don't know, let's think that if I went to Poland, I don't know if I'd feel good there, I don't know how they would be received there, as from abroad? From Lithuania, and earlier as from the Soviet Union, they would look at all this not very nicely. B – As a stranger? R – As a stranger, I think. I can feel like a Pole more here than I would there. Here, I am more in place, as it is said, than there. //
R – *Nu, jakoś ja nie wiem, ja nie wiem, dopuścim, że wyjechałbym do Polski, na ile, na ile ja czułbym się tam dobrze, ja nie wiem, jak by tam przyjęli, jak zza granicy? Nu z Litwy, a raniej jak ze Związku Radzieckiego, patrzyli na to wszystko nie bardzo. B – Obco? Tak? R – Obco, ja myślę, że tak. Tutaj może bardziej czujesz siebie Polakiem niż tam czuł się by Polakiem. Tutaj bardziej na swoim miejscu, jak to mówi się, niż tam.* (VilniusM58).

Lithuanian Poles indicate two factors that they consider important for territorial awareness: living in the border region and being local residents of the region (Daukšas, 2008:63).

5.3 'Lithuania, my fatherland!'

All respondents recognize Lithuania as their homeland and identify with their own town. The question is, 'where is their homeland?' During the interviews, the respondents mention that they live 'in the motherland', 'in the land of their ancestors', and they keep repeating the famous quotation from *Pan Tadeusz*, an well-known Romantic poem by Adam Mickiewicz, 'Litwo, Ojczyzno moja!' ('Lithuania, my fatherland!'). Poles in Lithuania identify themselves with their native country – Lithuania is their homeland. A young respondent (TrakaiW13)

declares that she wants to remain in Trakai forever. Another from Trakai (TrakaiW39) states that Trakai is closest to her heart. They all clearly state that they do not think about emigrating from Lithuania.

> B – And what if you could choose which country to be born in, in this or that country, what would you choose? R – On this subject, I agree as Pushkin said that a native country is 'the three birches' – it was Vilnius, it is Vilnius and Vilnius it will be. //
> B – *A gdyby pan mógłby wybrać, w którym państwie urodzić się, w tym czy innym, jakie by pan państwo wybrał? R – Jednak na ten temat zgadzam się, jak powiedział Puszkin, że ojczyzna to 'te trzy brzozy', więc było Wilno, jest Wilno i zostanie Wilno.* (VilniusM46).

The concept of 'being European' or 'being a citizen of the world' is not accepted as a value; none of the surveyed respondents wanted to identify with these options.

For many ethnic groups, the link to the cradle of the nation is of utmost importance (Kasatkina and Leončikas 2003:30), yet that place is often on the territory of a different state. Moreover, contacts with the nation are often associated with expectations of possible support (cultural, political, etc.). These contacts and links cannot be underestimated in the construction of an ethnic community's national identity. Although all respondents remember that their relatives (sometimes even very close relatives of the older generation) left for Poland, contacts with the family living in Poland are now fading. In the Soviet period, in the 1970–80s, Polish relatives visited them and the contacts were closer. Today, older respondents can recite the names and the degree of kinship with those who live in Poland, but younger ones have only general information about the existence of distant relatives in Poland. No contacts are maintained with younger family members in Poland. Time has passed and the kinship patterns of today have changed too. Ossowski (cited in Nowicka, 1997:73) notes that in the course of human history one can clearly observe the development of social groups from societies based on substantive ties (e.g., blood or clan) to groups based on conventional ties (cultural, psychological, consciousness).

6 Concluding remarks

The study shows that different urban contexts are characterised by varying linguistic behaviour. The differences between Polish people in Vilnius and in smaller towns are obvious in the retention of their mother tongue and the evaluation and knowledge of languages. Group identity is more prominent in the capital Vilnius, while residents of the smaller towns, who experienced a stronger

Russification policy in the Soviet period, currently tend to accept the domination of Lithuanian. Polish respondents from smaller towns are usually more proficient in spoken Polish, while proficiency in Lithuanian is higher among the residents of Vilnius, one of the reasons being the fact that Lithuanian is most often the chosen language for public verbal exchanges in Vilnius. Polish residents from smaller towns use Russian more often than those in Vilnius.

The study shows that the choice of ethnic identity is affected by many factors. The respondents link their identity to the place of residence, origin, tradition, family and language. Education in the mother tongue is seen as one of the most important preconditions for the maintenance of group identity. The result of the conversation during the interview was the determination of the identity of the respondents as 'the Poles, the Poles in Lithuania, miejscowy, tutejszy'. The name of the Vilnius Poles, a *miejscowi* 'of here', in their understanding denotes inhabitants of this territory in opposition to other people who come both from Lithuania and Poland. The respondents express their multicultural awareness and participation in several cultures. Vagueness in the demarcation of cultural orientations indicates settling in several cultures and accepting their values as one's own. There is a tendency of assimilation in the generation of children from mixed families, which is evident in the examples studied (VilniusM58, VilniusM46, TrakaiW65, TrakaiW63). Some respondents show a strong link with two cultures: ethnic and state, e.g., TrakaiW63; others tend to identify themselves with the dominating culture, e.g., SalcininkaiW20, or the cultures of other minorities (VilniusM56).

The multilingualism of the Poles surveyed in the cities of the Vilnius region has a special nature – it expresses the relationship with the place of residence. Poles in Lithuania stand out among other ethnicities by sharing at least oral knowledge of three languages: Polish, Lithuanian and Russian. Poles speaking all three languages and participating in the three worlds of the media that present various cultural and political patterns (with a clear influence of the Russian media, in TV, radio and newspapers) are differentiated by *something*, which gives them a sense of separateness from the rest of Poland and Lithuania. There is a certain split between ethnic identity and culture: being a Pole in Lithuania means participating in the three cultures and assimilating their values as one's own.

The mixing of languages, the overlapping of cultures and a clash of different political attitudes create conditions for assimilation (the easier option) or for the continuity of cultural diversity (the harder option), with the maintenance of the knowledge of their ethnic language. The conclusions of the study suggest that people living in multi-ethnic cities are able and willing to adapt to social and ethnic changes.

Notes

1. The project 'Language use and ethnic identity in urban areas of Lithuania' was carried out in 2007–2009. It was funded by a grant from the Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation. M. Ramonienė supervised the project while K. Geben was a member of the project team. A representative quantitative survey was carried out by TNS Gallup.
2. The project 'Sociolinguistic map of Lithuania: towns and cities' was carried out in 2010–2012. It was funded by a grant (No. LIT-2-18) from the Research Council of Lithuania. M. Ramonienė supervised the project while K. Geben was a member of the project team. A representative quantitative survey in other towns was carried out by the social research centre SIC.
3. The quoted statements are identified by the name of the city, sex (letter W indicates a female, M male) and by the age of the informant. The letter R indicates respondent, B interviewer.

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Article

Sakha language and education in a social, cultural and political context*

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Abstract

This paper analyses the language situation in the Republic of Sakha, Russian Far East. Due to economic, social and political processes, the Sakha language occupies at least two niches in society – as a language of those in the disadvantaged low social strata and as a language for the national elite. The paper demonstrates that one language can have several social positions simultaneously in an environment where multiple social, economic and political factors determine the social and cultural identity of its speakers. In the Republic of Sakha, the role of education and access to good quality schools is more crucial in determining the social status of the speakers and their language than official national language policy. Our paper is critical to sociolinguistic theories of 'killer languages', language utility, code switching and other theories that see a language group as a homogenous body acting as a unit. The Sakha case demonstrates that in reality language speakers do not form a coherent group and the status of their language can vary according to the social position of the speakers. The paper also shows that processes we call 'elitarisation' and 'lumpenisation' of the language are intermingled and that people can move from one language strata into another using various strategies. As a result we conclude that in a multilingual environment, the educational system is important as an institution that affects people's life paths via networks they are able to establish in school or social groups they study with.

KEYWORDS: SAKHA, ELITARISATION, LUMPENISATION, EDUCATION, AGENCY, SOCIAL STATUS OF THE LANGUAGE

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1 Introduction

Language is a powerful tool for creating identities and loyalties but it is also a symbol and source of conflicts. Therefore, when studying the use or non-use of a language, a researcher is often confronted with politics, economics and a range of social processes that all have an impact on language practices. It is interesting to find out how many factors indeed play their role in language processes and in various linguistic practices. This article focuses on the sociopolitical meaning of the Sakha language in the Republic of Sakha, in the Russian Far East, especially in the capital of the republic, Yakutsk. Our aim is to discuss how the status differences of the same language are tied to economic and social processes in the post-socialist setting and are affected by nation-building politics after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The interaction between the social status of an ethnic group, culture and language is well studied in anthropology and sociology. It is generally agreed that 'language-use is a social practice' which cannot be separated from the social, economic and political context (Fairclough, 1989:66; Collins, 1999:3; Thomason and Kaufmann, 1988). However, the various studies give a linear and simplistic picture of these processes. In sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropology models, one language acts as a coherent unit having often only one position in the social, political and economic hierarchy that reflects the social status of its speakers. In linguistic studies it is commonly agreed that in this hierarchical relationship, one language is more prestigious and dominant at the cost of the other(s), due to the socioeconomic position of its speakers. The history of creating similar academic models is solid and reaches back several decades. It is interesting that the original studies with a focus on relations between languages completely ignored social factors. For instance, Weinreich (1953) argued that German influences on Estonian grammar had a purely linguistic background, similar to Turkish influences on Asia Minor Greek (Dawkins, 1916). This purely linguistic approach was later criticised by several scholars who demonstrated that the one-way changes in both cases were caused by the German and Turkish dominant status over Estonian and Greek (Mufwene, 2004). Later it became clear that the dominant–subordinate relationship between languages was caused by the social status of the speakers, as Dension (1972) demonstrated in his study of the prestige differences of Friulian and German languages in Italy. The prestige difference perspective was applied in studies of language switching by bilingual speakers, where people switch between languages according to their social position (see, for example, the Guaranii and Spanish in Paraguay [Rubin, 1972]). The understanding that language and its speakers are and act in unity becomes especially obvious in theories of biocultural diversity where languages are treated like

'linguistic species' (Mufwene, 2001, 2004). These theories support the idea of sociolinguistic homogeneity in the contact situation (e.g. Aikhenvald, 2002) and the unit-like perception of a language is especially well embodied in the concept of 'killer languages' that are able to annihilate others (Nettle, 2002).

The case is similar for studies and theories of language utility and vitality, which again present the language speakers as a coherent group. Language utility discourse is defined by the economic background of the language, i.e. among others, how much advantage the language gives for successfully participating in economic processes. A much-cited study in this field is a book by Haugen (1953) about the language shift of Norwegian-Americans who after several generations gave up the Norwegian language due to its low economic value. Haugen showed how the use of Norwegian decreased after economic activities outside of the community became a substantial source of income. Ehala (2005:45) argued that the utility paradigm is especially significant in analysing the maintenance of traditions, cultural symbols or language of the subordinated group. Minority groups often modify or give up all three in order to be economically successful in an environment dominated by another group or choose an isolationist lifestyle in order to keep their language, lifestyle and culture alive (e.g. Mennonites in Cañas Bottos, 2008). No different is the ethnolinguistic vitality concept, looking at language as coherent entities in relation to other languages. According to that concept, the emotional affiliation with one's language and culture is intensive ('hot') or non-emotional ('cold'), but again, this affiliation is expressed in a group's ability to act as a collective entity. Hot languages are those whose speakers value the meaning and use of the language and are interested in maintaining and developing it. In the latter case, the group tends to undervalue their language and switches easily to the majority language (Ehala, 2011). In the following text we demonstrate that theoretical models of ethnolinguistic vitality such as by Grenoble and Whaley (1998), who tend to speak about 'the prestige' of the language in socioeconomic processes, are oversimplified. It is a mistake to see language speakers as a coherent group who are either bilingual, monolingual, resistant to changes or so forth.

It is little studied how a language can have different positions and grades of prestige when combined with economic or social factors. The case of the modern Sakha language proves that one language can be simultaneously the language with high prestige and the language associated with a lower class status. The linear concept of 'either/or' does not apply in the case of Sakha and nuances of political or economic factors should be taken more deeply into consideration when discussing the status of language.

2 The Sakha and their language

The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia, 2007) is the largest region of the Russian Federation. The territory of the republic is more than three million square kilometres and is located in the Russian Far East, not far away from the coast of the Pacific Ocean and the Chinese border. The republic is famous for its mineral resources, producing roughly one third of the world's and 99% of Russia's diamonds, and it also has quite impressive oil, gold, coal and timber reserves. The titular ethnic group are the Sakha, a Turkic language people, who make up roughly one-third of the republic's less than one million population. More than 50% of the population are people from all over the former Soviet Union; the dominant groups are Russians and Ukrainians. Apart from the Sakha, indigenous people of the region are Evenki, Eveni, Dolgan, Chukchi and Yukaghir, the numbers of which varies from a few hundred to a few thousand people. Despite the fact that most of these small nations have either switched to Sakha or Russian as their first language, several scholars work on establishing these languages as written languages (see Robbek, 1998; Sleptsov and Robbek, 1994). Sakha people are better known by their Russian ethnonym 'Yakut', although, since the 1990s, after the declaration of sovereignty, their native expression 'Sakha' has become more well known outside of the republic and has spread internationally. The region was united with Russia in the 17th century and since then it has remained as a part of Russia.

The unification of the Sakha region with Tsarist Russia meant the immigration of Russian officials, Cossacks, hunters and peasants. This does not automatically mean that Sakha people lost all their leading positions to Russian colonial power. Similar to British India, Sakha elite maintained high social, political and economic positions during the Tsarist and Soviet era. British historian James Forsyth (1992) argues that Sakha people have always collaborated with the Russian state: Sakha nobles used to collect taxes for the Tsarist government and Sakha Communists tried to maintain a controlling position in the Soviet era. After the revolution, the Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was established where ethnic Sakha occupied various high positions in the Soviet apparatus and were actively engaged in enforcing Communist policies. During Ventsel's fieldwork in eastern districts of the republic, local Eveni elders told him it was Sakha Communists not Russians that were the Soviet officials that organised sedentarisation and collectivisation of nomadic reindeer herders in the 1940s. Sakha historian Mikhail A. Tyrylgin (2000:209) sees this collaboration as part of a national diplomacy in order to maintain a high political position in the region and to be able to control resources. The fact that Sakha had their own agenda within the Soviet system and obviously were able to build and support informal ethnic networks to control decision-

making positions was also mentioned by Canadian leftist writer Farley Mowat, who was one of the few Western people to visit Yakutia in the 1960s (Mowat, 1970). Tyrlygin (2000:209) argues that the Soviets attempted to limit the high position of Sakha by appointing to positions of high office those people with a mixed ancestry or ethnic Sakha with Russian spouses. On the other hand, we have encountered the opinion that marrying Russian women for career purposes was also seen as a strategy to maintain high political status on an individual and group level. During Ventsel's first fieldwork in the Republic of Sakha he noticed that while Russians dominated the economy, especially in large diamond or oil companies, ethnic Sakha dominated in politics. One reason for the high presence of ethnic Sakha in politics is the structure of political institutions in the republic: the republican parliament *Il Tumen* is formed by the representatives of districts and the number of inhabitants in the district plays very little role in this. While Russian and other incomers represent the majority of the population in the republic, they live densely in a few districts, and the ethnic Sakha electorate of mostly agricultural districts, although having fewer inhabitants than industrial Russian-dominated regions, elect Sakha people as their deputies. The political dominance of Sakha also made it possible for the Sakha language to achieve the status of a national language in the early 1990s and also attracted financial investment in Sakha language education.

Sakha people themselves trace the history of Sakha as a written language to the 17th century (Yakutia, 2007). Nevertheless, it is assumed that the modern Sakha written language was created in 1922 using the Latin alphabet. The first books in Sakha were published around 1926 and in 1939 the Latin alphabet was dropped to be taken over by Cyrillic (Forsyth, 1992). The first people to establish Sakha as a written language were writers, poets and historians cum politicians (P. A. Oiunskii, G. V. Ksenofontov, K. O. Gavrilov) whose aim was not only to develop Sakha culture but also Sakha as a nation with a modern culture. It can be said that the foundation for the openness of the Sakha culture was laid in this period: even today changes in music, theatre or literature and adaptation of elements from other cultures are encouraged in order to modernise Sakha culture (e.g. Doidu, 2001). However, in the Soviet era the Sakha language had a very complex and controversial position. In general, Sakha was a language for the indigenous rural population and was not very actively used by ethnic Sakha in Yakutsk and many other cities with a Russian-language dominance. In the Soviet period, in Yakutsk there existed only two schools where education was given in the Sakha language. Incomers, who are usually called Russians irrespective of their ethnic origin, and Sakha people living in cities rarely learned the language in schools and in a few generations established a form of 'city Sakha' (*kuorat sakha*[1]) i.e. ethnic Sakha

who spoke their mother tongue with a Russian accent or hardly at all. Most of these people were educated and formed the group of government officials or so-called technical intelligentsia – skilled white-collar workers (Lapparova, 2002, cf. Khazanov, 1995). Many of our informants have told us that in the 1980s Sakha people were ashamed to speak their native language in towns; moreover, they were harassed by Russians when speaking Sakha in buses or on the streets. As one person said: 'In the 1980s there was a non-written agreement that Sakha was not spoken in the city' (*suchestvoval neglasnyi dogovor chto v gorode po-iakutski ne govoriat*). A different attitude to the Sakha language is expressed by another informant, a village woman who moved to Yakutsk in the 1990s and is now retired: 'We never paid any attention to what people thought when we spoke Sakha in Yakutsk. When we went to Yakutsk and met relatives we of course used our language.' From a theoretical perspective it can be argued that the utility of the Sakha language in the Soviet period was low: in the urban environment it was restricted to the home and the sphere of culture – theatre, music and literature. The Sakha language was not used as a working language in the resource-extraction industry or other spheres with a high prestige and income, but only in low-paid agricultural occupations. The utility of the language is triggered by the situation in higher education: university-level education in the Sakha language was only at the Yakutsk State University (now North-Eastern Federal University named after M. K. Ammosov) in the department of Sakha Philology and Literature, part of the faculty of Philology. All 'technical subjects' leading to high salary jobs were and are in the Russian language.

The shift in attitude towards the Sakha language changed in the early 1990s when the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) declared its sovereignty. The declaration was followed by a Sakha nationalistic euphoria and the takeover of dominant positions in politics and culture. Sakha language was declared a state language on an equal level with Russian and (at least formally on paper) English. This process was accompanied by a wave of books that formulated the ideology of the modern Sakha nation with the emphasis on maintaining traditions and language as central symbols for the Sakha people in the 20th century (Tyrylgin, 2000; Nikolaev, 1994; Khazanov, 1995) and this symbolic value of the Sakha language was also recognised by Russians. Until today, the coat of arms of the republic and the colours of the republic's flag remain one of the much beloved decorations of clothes and many industrially produced consumables. This increased the importance and visibility of the Sakha language. Due to growing migration from the villages the language became spoken on city streets. After the declaration of sovereignty, the Sakha language also became more associated with state governmental institutions. The oath of the President of the Republic is given in the Sakha language, and the

first President of the Republic, Mikhail Nikolaev, published several collections of his speeches in Sakha. The Sakha language and its development was an issue of debate in the regional parliament *Il Tumen*. The sovereign Republic of Sakha invested a substantial amount of money into education; several institutes and colleges were established to educate teachers and work on education programmes (Yakutia, 2007:700, 707). Sakha language education was also introduced into local Russian schools. However, the development of Sakha in the school system seemed to be uneven. Whereas the education was subsidised in northern or Arctic districts through government programs, central districts with mainly an ethnic Sakha population received less attention. The government subsidises teachers who volunteer to work in Arctic districts and pays 50% of the costs of a one-room apartment in the capital Yakutsk, whereas there is little evidence of similar programmes for teachers who work in central districts (see Yakutia, 2000:702). As I will show below, this unequal educational policy creates socio-economic consequences.

3 Fieldwork and data

Ventsel started his academic career in the Republic of Sakha in 2000 when he arrived to conduct fieldwork for his PhD thesis, and has since visited the region regularly. While never originally focused on the language issue in the Republic of Sakha he always had a great interest in the topic due to its importance for the identity-building process of Sakha people. Struchkova has studied Sakha identity formation for over a decade and noticed the important bond between the language and identity. Language, teaching and language's political meaning has been constantly thematised in formal interviews, informal discussions and also in the Sakha media. For this article, we draw upon our field diaries over the last decade. During this time we have discussed the topic with a cross-section of people from middle-aged, high-ranking diamond company officials to teenage reindeer herders in the northern districts. Due to the fact that Ventsel has married into a family of Sakha teachers, discussions about education have constantly been a part of his life when he visits the republic. Ventsel had extensive discussions about the meaning of the Sakha language and the state language policy when he was on a boat trip with four Sakha teachers in 2009. All the teachers were ethnic Sakha in their mid-thirties, their first language was Russian and they were all female. In April 2010 Struchkova and Ventsel had several discussions on the topic separately with academics and young students who were either studying or working in Saint Petersburg at the Herzen Pedagogical University. All discussion partners had Sakha as their first language. Additionally we spent an evening

talking about the same topic with ethnic Russians and Sakha working in the representative office of the Republic of Sakha in Saint Petersburg. In November 2011 and February 2012, Ventsel spent time with Sakha artists visiting Estonia and again we ended up talking about the meaning of language and the education system in the Republic of Sakha. In both cases, his discussion partners were females in their early forties whose children went to their respective schools, one in a village, another in the city of Yakutsk. The last time the Sakha language became a focus of discussion was in June 2012 at a gathering of Sakha living in the Scandinavian and Baltic states. All but one of the participants were female aged from 26 to their mid-fifties. Their education, regional origin and time spent abroad were also different (from one year to 30 years). Apart from talking to people, we regularly read Sakha Internet forums at www.ykt.ru where issues of ethnicity, language and social groupings have been discussed extensively during the last few years.

4 Post-Soviet education and Sakha language education

The collapse of the Soviet Union caused tremendous changes in the local economy. Industry as the sphere where most resources are accumulated remained in the Republic of Sakha under the control of the Russian-speaking part of the republic's population. Living standards in rural areas decreased in contrast to new possibilities to earn money in private business, the criminal sphere or industry in towns. Migration from villages to cities, especially to the city of Yakutsk, has grown in recent years, and it is especially high among young people between 16 and 29 years old (Drobizheva, 2002:293; Donskoi, 2001; see also Argounova-Low, 2007). Apart from labour migration, young villagers arrive to Yakutsk to study, often through governmental programs that support access to university education.

At the same time, there are complaints about the level of education young migrants receive before leaving the village. A retired teacher told us: 'You hear them talking on the streets and you understand how badly they speak Russian'. Another university teacher confessed: 'Often the village youth have huge gaps in their school education'. The reason is the massive outmigration of teachers from rural areas. Many teachers in village schools were of incomer origin who fled the decreasing living standards and negative atmosphere towards everything Russian in the villages during the 1990s. The 1990s saw an increase of nationalist sentiments among the Sakha population. Villages and their culture were seen as a hotbed of Sakha culture and identity which created hostility towards Russians, especially in the villages. Due to national policy, the emphasis on Sakha roots as a

horse breeding taiga (polar forest) culture increased the self-confidence of the villagers and helped to start communal projects, learning history, local traditions and beliefs (Crate, 2006). At the same time, Russian teachers were often seen as agents of Russian colonialism and these sentiments, combined with economic factors, made Sakha villages, as a rule, too unpleasant a place to live for an incomer. Wages were not paid on time, subsidies fell away and the state central resource distribution vanished. In villages where Ventsel conducted his fieldwork in 2000–2001, he did not meet any non-native teachers, and many school subjects did not have any teachers at all and were therefore not taught. Many of these teachers' positions remain unoccupied even today. Apparently Sakha rural education faces the same problem that is acute in many countries around the world: young university graduates do not want to return to the villages and prefer to find a job in the city. As a consequence of complex historical and economic processes, Sakha village indigenous youth who arrive in the city are often half-educated and with a very poor command of the Russian language.

While poorly equipped village schools belong to the worst in the republic then Sakha schools in Yakutsk belong to the best. The government has established and supports many urban schools with a Sakha language focus or simply Sakha special classes in 'normal' Russian language schools. The most elite institution among these schools is considered to be the Sakha urban national gymnasium in the city of Yakutsk, or Sakha gymnasium, as it is popularly known. According to public opinion this school gives one of the best educations in the republic. Moreover, the school has a so-called 'Oxford college', a program created in collaboration with Oxford University that prepares students for studies in the elite British universities. Many people such as local teachers or clerks of the ministry of culture have told us that the local Sakha and Russian elite send their children to the Sakha gymnasium or to Sakha classes of other city schools. At the same time, some people think that the elite status of the Sakha schools and classes is artificially maintained by a small group of people. It is believed that an 'average' child has very little chance to get into such a school, especially into the Sakha gymnasium. According to popular opinion and various local journalists' articles, the management of the Sakha gymnasium hinders at all costs the acceptance of 'average' children into the school; for instance, there is a suspicion that for non-elite children there are some very difficult entrance examinations that they have to pass in order to get a place in the school (Ivanova, 2011). As a teacher in her thirties told us on the boat trip in 2009: 'My mum did not have any connections to send me to the Sakha school in the city. I have no connections to send my children to the Sakha gymnasium. Neither do we have money to buy ourselves in. Therefore

we do not know the Sakha language and instead speak Russian.' Nevertheless, it is a fact that there are many more applicants than the school can accept. Because of its links to special educational programs and to government institutions, the school has been accused of elitism even in the local media (Ivanova, 2011), which usually avoids criticism of the local government. The image of elitism at the school is supported by statements such as: 'the Sakha gymnasium increases the competitive capacities and chances of success of children' (Ivanova, 2011).

The 'other side' of the language process in the Republic of Sakha is the high status of the Sakha language as a symbol of national identity and integrity. An ethnic Sakha who wants to occupy a high position in the public sector should have a good command of the native language and a good knowledge of Sakha culture because he is representing Sakha people on a national level. In public office, and especially leadership positions under the watchful eye of the media, a person is often confronted with the need to demonstrate his or her Sakha language skills or cultural knowledge, for example by giving an interview to Sakha national television programs or local news shows.

5 Social processes and the status of the Sakha language

Mufwene (2001:2) writes that the linguist Neil Smith (1999:38) 'denies the validation of communal language'. However, to speak about language evolution, Mufwene adds, we have to accept the notion of communal language, a language spoken on a communal level. For Mufwene (2001:2–3), changes in the status of a language are linked to the emergence of subgroups or creole/pidgin languages that split from the communal language. The social is collected from different (sometimes even non-social) components and social meanings of the Sakha language are assembled from different components like education, the social status of speakers, job market value and so forth. The sociolinguistic development of the Sakha language demonstrates that the preservation of a communal language is maintained, although with different levels of prestige, so a certain social split must not be followed by the appearance of linguistic subgroups.

As stated, the collapse of the Soviet Union caused a massive wave of migration from the villages to the cities. Quickly, young migrants from the villages became a problem in the cities, especially in Yakutsk. During Ventsel's first fieldwork period in 2000–2001 students were considered by the majority of average Yakutsk adults to be the most dangerous group of people.[2] Most students were branded as 'villagers' (*ulusniki*, *derebasy*, *mombasy*) and they were visible in the cityscape roaming around in groups. This does not necessarily mean that all members of

these youth groups were indeed students or originating from a village, but in 2000–2001 a large part of these young men did arrive in the city to study either at the university or vocational schools. When in summer 2001 we visited remote villages in the central Churapchy district we were surprised to meet a great number of young males who told us that they were either studying in Yakutsk or have quit their studies and returned to the village.[3] The problem with such migration is that many of the young people enter the university through district quotas (*raionnye kvoty*) without undergoing exams, which means that there is little means to prevent having students who do not have the necessary standard of education to study in the city. In many cases these young people (especially men) dropped out of the university or did not even get in, instead forming an aggressive part of the Yakutsk social underclass which already contained labouring migrants from agricultural districts.

The process that can be described as the lumpenisation of the Sakha language is extremely interesting and leads to the social construction of a certain group of people. What distinguishes these young people from the city population is their very poor knowledge of Russian. Young migrants from villages are distinguishable by their heavy Sakha accent and this is combined with a poor knowledge of Russian grammar when they are speaking. According to public opinion, which was also confirmed in private discussions with a selection of school and university teachers in Yakutsk, the poor Russian of the village youth has further deteriorated ten years on. A village youth with such a poor education has, as a rule, very little chance of finding a good job in Yakutsk or graduating from university on a normal basis. The prospects of the almost monolingual Sakha people in the villages are no better, and this is currently a national issue in the republic.[4] In the cities of the Republic of Sakha, most well-paid positions require a good knowledge of Russian (and commonly a university degree). Often these people are able to find only low paid menial jobs, which according to the local social and economic hierarchy are only a step above the lowest economic strata that is occupied by Tadzik or Kirgiz migrant workers. According to studies in the cities, unemployment amongst Sakha is twice as high as it is amongst Russians (resp. 10.4% and 5.6%) (Drobizheva, 2002:290). Aside from their poor Russian, Sakha youth are recognisable by their cheap clothing, roving around in groups and – what is especially unpleasant for others – their aggressive behaviour, all of which leads to the more educated and wealthy city dwellers avoiding such groups and the places where they gather. Part of the aggressive behaviour of the village youth is speaking or yelling loudly in the Sakha language, which alerts other people to the identity of the youngsters and warns them from afar to change their side of the street.

The migration of Sakha youth from the villages was also often referred to as a social problem in local newspapers, especially in the pages of *kriminal'naia khronika* or 'crime report' (e.g. Iakutsk Vechernii, 04.07.2001). Relating to linguistic abilities, bad behaviour, appearance and village origin, they are perceived as *derebasy*. In 2011 we asked a doctor, who was ethnic Sakha and in her thirties, whether one can recognise *derabasy* on the street or if this is a myth. She said: 'Not all village people are *derebasy*. *Derebasy* are those cheaply dressed guys who scream loud. They use bad language. Even when their clothes are not cheap, they look different, tasteless.' According to our observations in 2001, village youth as a group were recognisable by their black trousers and white button down shirts for males and flashy Chinese produced dresses for females. In 2009, *derebasy* wore a specific cut of baggy jeans and fake sweaters bought at the 'Chinese market' in Yakutsk. Girls often wore cheap, tight fitting, dark blue jeans and dark coloured tops. According to Mauss (1990:215), the construction of a 'social phenomena' means linking habitus with the idea, and therefore the existence of village youth as a social group in Yakutsk effects the social prestige of the language they speak. Following this train of thought, we can argue that part of the social and economic processes in the region is the tendency for Sakha-language (speakers) to inhabit the lowest level of the urban social hierarchy.

The position of the Sakha language is also very interesting because in the Republic of Sakha one can observe an opposite (and parallel) process by which the Sakha language is becoming the language of the local elite.

Sakha gymnasium and other similar schools stress the quality of the education that the students receive. Less mentioned by teachers is the fact that a child goes to school with the offspring of local ministers and rich businessman which gives them a network for life. Here we see another side of the Sakha language education process: combined with high quality education, the Sakha language is a ticket to success and entry into the local elite.

Besides language skills, one has to 'know people' when climbing in one's career. Most well-paid positions in the republic are distributed via informal networks where common kin origin, school background or district origin play as vital a role as formal education. In the Republic of Sakha exists an opinion that by using the 'right connections' one achieves more than one could by taking an 'honest way'. The quote mentioning how a person has no 'connections' to send her child to the Sakha gymnasium is a rather typical story and is part of a wider opinion that 'rich people support each other' and was mentioned in 2009 by a middle-aged Sakha women in Yakutsk. The importance of common clan or district origin among the Sakha in politics and the economy is not very well studied, although very apparent

when living in the Republic of Sakha. It remains ambiguous how consciously clan politics are taking over certain spheres in the public sector and pushing other clans out. The fact is that it has happened in modern Sakha politics more than once (e.g. Argounova-Low, 2011). It is also true that parents utilise their networks to get their children into Sakha language schools and classes. As mentioned above, the high political positions in the Republic of Sakha are dominated by ethnic Sakha and to have access to this group one should have a good education and a good knowledge of Sakha. In summer 2012 a Sakha woman in her early forties who now lives in Finland told us: 'They (students of urban Sakha schools) speak very good Sakha. This is how they stick out.' The opposite view was expressed by the Sakha university professor who lives and works in Saint Petersburg: 'The students of the Sakha gymnasium speak the same language as the people in villages. They just have an elite education and are earmarked to work for the government. But the language is the same!.' This statement confirms the concept of a communal language whose status varies according to the setting. Among the high echelons of the Republic of Sakha, an ethnic Sakha is under pressure to speak Sakha. Not untypical was the comment of one TV producer, an 'urban Sakha', from the state broadcasting corporation NVK in 2001: 'Five years ago, no-one demanded that we speak Sakha. Then all of a sudden our new administration began to demand that we speak Sakha to them. Luckily I spent all my childhood summers in a village. I re-learned Sakha pretty quickly but still people criticise me over my accent.' In 2009 he told us, 'Nothing has changed. We have young people who come to work, somebody's relatives. When they are Sakha then all of them speak the language very well. Some of them start in the ministries and then move over here. Some of them come straight from the university or school.' While rural Sakha society is more or less monolingual, the state and economic structures of the Republic of Sakha are not. The importance of the Sakha language for the upper level was created politically and this process started with the Declaration of Sovereignty in 1991. What the Sakha people have achieved is establishing an exclusive symbolically monolingual niche in a bilingual situation, dissimilar to the practice in European colonies where the indigenous language was maintained as a medium for the elite to communicate with their 'less-affluent relatives and with the other members of their ethnic group' (Mufwene, 2004:211). This way, having a good Sakha knowledge becomes a symbol of being part of the chosen group with a common institutional background with reciprocal practices.

Several studies of language evolution stress the agency of people who switch their language (Fishman, 2002; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001; Vakhtin, 2001), the Sakha case also demonstrates people's ability to switch from the low category Sakha to

the high prestige Sakha. There are several strategies to compensate for the lack of contacts or absence of a non-elite school education. The easiest way is to send your child to the university in Yakutsk and support her or him. It is not uncommon that a whole family from a village financially supports the study of their sibling in the hope that he or she 'will make it'. Those urban Sakha who can afford it send their children to prestigious Russian universities whose standard or reputation is higher than that of the university in Yakutsk. It is usual that the family invests into the young person's higher education knowing that this way he or she overcomes a lack of Sakha skills or a non-existent network. When returning with a diploma from Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Saint Petersburg or Moscow, a young person can hope for a broader choice of jobs, even if he or she is not fluent in Sakha. There are people who successfully entered into governmental structures after studying at a prestigious Russian university and then began to learn Sakha. Although such people are reminded that they have an accent, they also have the prestigious position in society. The ingenuity of people helps to overcome the gap between the two different positions of the language and results that in reality elitarisation and lumpenisation are intervowen. In the Sakha case the bridge is created via education and the mobilisation of family resources. Here we can come back to Latour's concept of the 'social' as a phenomenon of different components – the value and symbolic meaning of the Sakha language is possible to manipulate by adding extra values.

6 Concluding remarks

The connection between language, identity and politics was recognised and propagated centuries ago by the German philosopher Johan Gottfried Herder who argued that traditions and skills are transferred via language (Bauman and Briggs, 2003). The tradition, utility and transfer of cognitive knowledge in language is also widely discussed by several contemporary scholars (c.f. Bloch, 1991; Bucholtz, 2011; Demont-Heinrich, 2007; Descarries, 2003; Duranti, 2003; Gudmundsson, 1999) who also stress the importance of the language as being essential for a modern times 'knowledge economy' (Graham, 1999). It is not too uncommon to study language as one marker, instrument or factor of economic and political positioning, in a wider context (Collins, 2000; Duranti, 2003). As a rule it is assumed that language as a marker of nation or subordinated groups has one status (Talib, 2006; Trenz, 2007). In this paper we show that a language can have more than one social position depending on other factors and that the 'single position' view can be an oversimplification of the sociolingual processes.

The role of different languages as means of communication and definition of social and political relations has been recognised in Russian territories since Tsarist times (Gerasimov, Kusber and Semyonov, 2009), and native language education has been part of creating a local semi-nation state in several post-Soviet Russian regions (e.g. Veinguer and Howard, 2007). In the Siberian context, an indigenous language curriculum is often related to the maintenance of a traditional culture (Ventsel, 2005; Ventsel and Dudeck, 1998; Robbek, 1998) but language processes in the region are much more complex.

The linguistic processes in the Republic of Sakha are very interesting because in many cases the status of the language is also tied to a specific social, political and economic position. It is estimated that 29% of Sakha speak Russian as their first language. This does not mean that Sakha language speakers are either at the bottom or top of the local social hierarchy as one would conclude from similar multilingual settings where two or more different languages are socially positioned unequally. Ideally the Sakha language is one symbol of national identity but its position in local life is ambivalent. Sakha language is without any doubt an autopoetic language, i.e. a language that recreates itself (Ehala, 2010). However, the link to the social status and the utilitarian principle (Ehala, 2005:45) of the Sakha language is very ambivalent and in different sociocultural settings it has different economic characteristics. On the one hand, Sakha people have always used official structures and institutions to remain as the local elite. For this reason they have established in the period of sovereignty institutions whose purpose is to nourish the Sakha elite and raise the status of the Sakha language as the language representing a modern education and career. On the other hand, the collapse of the Soviet planned economy has left rural areas literally out in the cold. Remote Sakha villages are not very attractive working places for educated people like teachers.

The position of the Sakha language in society depends on its combination with education. Village school students with their insufficient school education and poor Russian language skills tend to represent the underclass aspect of the language. Combined with an elite education, Sakha language becomes a symbol of being part of the national elite. However, the practice shows that different social positions of the language are constant and controlled yet people have developed ways to enter the elite and avoid lumpenisation. The Sakha language is an example of how the utilitarian value of the language can be changed by investing in education and social networks. Language can be capital—in combination with other forms of capital.

Notes

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1. In this text, Sakha words are marked by italics whereas Russian words are underlined and italicised.
2. Ventsel recalls one weekend in June 2001, when he asked his friends why the city was so empty in the evening. Their response was '*Studenty guliaiut!*' (The meaning of the phrase could be understood as 'Students are having fun!').
3. It must be mentioned that the Yakutsk State University, renamed as the North-Eastern Federal University, after M. K. Ammosov, a few years ago, is a huge institution that supersedes the capacity of the city of Yakutsk. After several years of contact with the university and its students it becomes clear that the majority of students are not from Yakutsk. As a fact, people from Yakutsk, both Russians and Sakha, tend to send their children to Novosibirsk, Tomsk or (wealthy families) to Moscow or Saint Petersburg to receive their university education. The increase in the number of students outside of Yakutsk was a consequence of the policy of the first president of the Republic of Mikhail Nikolaev, who invested huge amounts of diamond money into the education system.
4. There existed an article and a long discussion on the site http://yakutia24.sakha.ru, which has since been deleted.

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Article

Cultural and language self-identification of ethnic minority groups in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of the language problems in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Social and theoretical deconstruction of the Soviet ethno-cultural monolith has led to changes in socio-psychological self-identification that reflect previously hidden differences in identity and language usage. The focus of the article is on the language knowledge, attitudes and the ethnolinguistic vitality of four ethnic minority group of Kazakhstan: Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, and Koreans. The research findings indicate that the level of knowledge of Russian is high amongst Russians while the other groups studied have low knowledge of their heritage language and have mainly shifted to Russian. The knowledge and use of the Kazakh language is low amongst all minorities studied, while the attitudes towards learning Kazakh are generally positive. The analysis of ethnolinguistic vitality showed that the Russians have high ethnolinguistic vitality with a weak level of ethnocentrism while Ukrainians and Poles have low ethnolinguistic vitality indicating a medium danger of assimilation. Koreans have the lowest ethnolinguistic vitality indicating a strong danger of assimilation.

KEYWORDS: KAZAKH, RUSSIAN, LANGUAGE POLICY, ETHNOLINGUISTIC VITALITY

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1 Introduction

In this paper the reader is given an opportunity to get acquainted with modern discussions on language problems in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The study of ethno-linguistic identification processes of peoples in Kazakhstan can indicate the range of problems that currently exist with the new language policy of the country. It should be noted that the State programme of language functioning and development for 2011–2020 plays the role of a universal mechanism for this new language policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which aims to ensure the full functioning of the state (Kazakh) language as the most important factor in strengthening national unity while preserving the languages of all ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan (State program of functioning and development of languages 2011).

The purpose of the paper is to determine the ethnolinguistic vitality of four ethnic minority groups in Kazakhstan: Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, and Koreans. We have chosen these four non-Turkic groups that belong to ethnic groups of different relative importance. For instance, Russians and Ukrainians are statistically prominent groups. According to census data from 1 January 2010, Russians account for 23.7% and Ukrainians for 2.1% of Kazakhstan's population, and, therefore, are considered relatively large ethnic minority groups in Kazakhstan (Statistics Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2010). Poles and Koreans belong to ethnic groups whose proportion is less than 1% of the population, i.e. 0.2% of the total population of the country, and, therefore, can be referred to as small ethnic groups (Statistics Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2010). It should be noted that the socio-economic and political conditions of these ethnic groups are very similar. Therefore, we believe that by projecting the data onto other members of the diaspora living in the territory of Kazakhstan we can get a real picture of the characteristics of ethnic processes in the country as a whole, and of the prospects for the development of any ethnic group and language in particular.

The paper is structured in the following way. First, the historical background of the development of the ethnolinguistic situation in Kazakhstan is discussed, with special attention given to the migration processes occurring in the country. Thereafter, a brief overview of the current language situation is provided with a more detailed outline of the characteristics of the minorities studied. The fifth part presents the overview of the research methods used. In Section 6, the results of the research to determine the ethnolinguistic vitality of Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, and Koreans who live in Kazakhstan are discussed. This analysis enables us to compare the ethnolinguistic processes of these ethnic groups and the role of the demographic and communicative capacities of their languages. This approach

also enables us to reveal the role of the mother tongue in ethnic identity and to explore attitudes towards other languages and perspectives regarding the maintenance and development of ethnic languages. The concluding section compares the vitalities of the groups studied with possible implications for language policy.

2 Historical background

The formation of the diverse and complex ethnolinguistic situation in Kazakhstan has been directly influenced by the annexation of Kazakhstan by Russia at the end of the 19th century, waves of migration including forced resettlement, repeated redrawing of state borders, the peculiarities of the state political systems of the Pre-Soviet, Soviet and Post-Soviet periods, and recent events that have strongly affected all ethnic groups in the country. In addition, there have been cardinal transformations of the social system and modernisations of society and the economy in independent Kazakhstan.

The forced resettlement of ethnic populations plays a significant role in the history of the former Soviet Union. From the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century, the ethnic composition of Kazakhstan was considerably reshaped, primarily as a result of Bolshevik policy. This policy included the forced deportation of entire nations from the 1930s to the 1950s, the famine from 1931 to 1932, and the labour migration of Russians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians. Consequently, a kind of special areas with ethnic minorities appeared in Kazakhstan when Germans, Ingush, Chechens, Koreans, Karachai, Kalmyks, Balkars, Crimean Tatars, Greeks, Poles, Finns, and Meskhetian Turks underwent a complete deportation. The deported ethnic groups totalled 1.2 million in the 1930s and 1940s (see Kozybaev, 1990; Mendikulova, 1997; Mendikulova, 2006; Shotbakova, 2004; Sadykov, 2005).

This demographic context based on the policy of Russification negatively affected the population size of Kazakhs, which in turn led to a decrease in the role of the Kazakh language. In 1926, Kazakhs constituted approximately half of the total population of Kazakhstan (58.2%), and, 33 years later, this segment of the population had diminished to only 50%. By 1959, the number of Kazakhs had decreased to nearly 30% of the total population, most of whom were rural residents. Kazakhs constituted only 20% of the urban population. By contrast, Slavic groups prevailed in urban areas (Smagulova, 2008:444).

Russians not only consolidated a superior demographic position but were also dominant in political, economic and cultural aspects. As Laitin (1998:74) notes, the percentage of Kazakhs in leadership positions was 46.6%, and their presence in administrative positions was only 6.7%. In the intellectual realm, the share of

non-Russian research workers constituted 21.4% in 1960 and 29.8% in 1973. Such an ethnic differentiation of the labour force determined the comparative prestige of certain ethnic groups. The comparatively low quantity of Kazakh-language social and educational institutions and the prevalence of Russians in urban areas of Kazakhstan led to language assimilation among Kazakhs.

The share of Kazakhs who spoke fluent Russian increased from 41.6% in 1970 to 50.6% in 1979 and increased further to 62.8% in 1989, whereas only 1% of Russians could speak Kazakh. Therefore, as Smagulova states (2008:445–446), 'this asymmetrical bilingualism reflected the ethnic stratification of Soviet Kazakhstan, where Kazakh-speakers found themselves dominated politically, economically, and culturally, and threatened demographically'.

Social, political, and economic changes following the collapse of the Soviet Union have reshaped the demographic situation of Kazakhstan. The period from 1999 to 2009 showed a general decrease in all non-Kazakh European ethnic populations: the number of Russians decreased by 15.3%, Ukrainians by 39.1%, Germans by 62.7%, Byelorussians by 40.6%, and Poles by 28% (Smailov, 2010).

The most intense process of migration occurred during the first three years following the collapse of the Soviet Union. From 1992 to 1994, 1,125,000 people emigrated from Kazakhstan, and 73% of these people migrated to CIS countries. During that period, 343,000 people immigrated to Kazakhstan, 91% of whom were from CIS countries (Statistics Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan 2002).

Besides migration, the ethnolinguistic composition of Kazakhstan is also strongly influenced by high fertility of ethnic Kazakhs. Among Kazakhstan's population of 13 million in 1970, 4.2 million people were Kazakhs and 5.5 million people were Russians. In 1979, the population of 14.7 million people included 5.3 million Kazakhs and 5.99 million Russians. According to the data of the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan, with respect to the 2009 census, the population of 16.2 million people included 10.06 million Kazakhs, but the Russian population remained steady at 3.79 million. Kazakhs, who constituted only one-third of the total population 30 years ago, have become the majority, and their share in the total population is 63.1%, while Russians constitute 23.7%, Uzbeks 2.9%, Ukrainians 2.1%, and other ethnic groups 7%.

Thus, demographic processes occurring in the territory of Kazakhstan in the last 150 years have caused quite dramatic changes in the ethnic composition of the population. First the immigration of Russians and forceful resettlement of other ethnicities caused the decline of Kazakhs in the population, but their high birth rate, the emigration of the majority of Slavic ethnic groups and the immigration of Kazakh repatriates after the collapse of the Soviet Union has changed the situation considerably.

3 The language situation in Kazakhstan

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted in 1995 (see 2003) and Law 'On languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan' (Article 4, 1997), the only state language of the country is Kazakh, which is the language of the titular nation. Through its language policy, the state was aiming to create conditions under which the Kazakh language could realise its assigned function as the official language in all socio-economic spheres of public life, against a backdrop of the increasing population of the titular nation and the state of the process of self-determination. The Russian language does have official status and can be used alongside the Kazakh language in government institutions and local self-government (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 1997, Article 5). Besides these two languages, 124 other languages belonging to different genetic groups are spoken in Kazakhstan.

The declared status of the Russian language shows its necessity in Kazakhstan as an important scientific and cultural information carrier. It has quite a strong position, which can be explained not only by the ethnic composition of the country, but also by historical realities, particularly the language policy implemented for long periods in different domains, including that of education—all of which meant that Russian in Kazakhstani society had a dominant position in all spheres of communication. The influence of Russian language culture is also due to the presence of the common political and economical, cultural and scientific space of all post-Soviet countries. Over time, the flow of information from the Russian-speaking channel has increased, and in connection with these processes the Russian language has become not only a means and a way of familiarization with new knowledge, but it is also the medium of in-group and out-group communication. Even today, Russian remains the language that is spoken by the majority of Kazakhstani citizens.

The independence and rebirth of national ideas in Kazakhstan led to swift growth in the prestige of its culture and language. As the well-known Kazakhstani sociolinguist Suleimenova (2011) notes, rapid demographic processes in the last twenty years have led to significant shifts. In today's Kazakhstan there is a process of regrouping of languages, primarily regarding changes in their relative importance in terms of function and learning. At the forefront, of course, this refers to the official language, which received full support both from the state and from Kazakhstani society. There has been a shift in emphasis in the study and use of English in the professional sphere and everyday life, a noticeable increase in the number of people studying Chinese, Arabic and Turkish, and an increased number of schools with Uzbek, Tajik and Uyghur as languages of instruction. Obvious changes have taken place in the features of the functioning of the Russian language in Kazakhstan.

Thus, the linguistic environment of Kazakhstan has been primarily shaped by Kazakh–Russian bilingualism (75% of the representatives of the titular nation speak Russian). Secondary influences include Russian monolingualism (e.g., Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, Koreans) and national Kazakh–Russian bilingualism (e.g., Uzbeks, Uighurs, Turks, Kurds, Tajiks, Chechens) (Suleimenova and Smagulova 2005). Demographically and communicatively unequal languages of ethnic groups create the unique ethnolinguistic landscape of the state and reflect the multi-faceted history of the different groups that have migrated to Kazakhstan over the course of history. However, the peculiar language situation in Kazakhstan is emerging as a result of both the diversity of languages and the co-functioning of two strong languages – Kazakh and Russian.

4 Characteristics of the groups studied

Here, an overview of the demographic, cultural and linguistic characteristics of the examined ethnic groups in Kazakhstan is presented. Basic demographic numbers and geographical concentrations for these groups have been given in Table 1 based on the figures from the 2009 Population Census in Kazakhstan (Smailov, 2010). The following is a brief history of the migration patterns of these ethnic groups to the territory of Kazakhstan. Cultural information includes the local variety of cultural life, the overall level of ethnic group participation in this local culture, the relationship of these individuals with their historical homeland, the availability of native language education and its scale, and the availability of mass media in the mother tongues of these groups.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan.

Ethnic group	**Population of ethnic groups in total**		**The highest density**	
	Percentage (%)	**Absolute**	**Region**	**Percentage (%)**
Russians	23.7	3,793,764	North-Kazakhstan region	48.25
			Kostanay region	40.73
			East Kazakhstan region	40.51
			Karaganda region	39.17
Ukrainians	2.1	333,031	Kostanay region	11.52
			Pavlodar region	6.39
			Akmola region	6.22
Poles	0.2	34,057	North-Kazakhstan region	2.39
			Akmola region	1.25
Koreans	0.6	100,385	Zhambyl region	1.19
			Kyzylorda region	1.17
			Almaty	0.96

4.1 Russians

According to the 2009 census results, Russians are the largest ethnic group in Kazakhstan (Smailov, 2010). The largest number of Russians lives in the northern regions of the country, which is closer to the Russian border. Three periods of Russian migration can be distinguished: (1) the migration of Russian Cossacks and the foundation of Cossack settlements and military fortresses (18th century–late 19th century); (2) governmental policy for the settlement of Russian peasants (second half of the 19th century–early 20th century); (3) the Soviet period of migration, including industrialisation and the reclamation of the 'virgin lands' (20th century).

There is a wide selection of print, electronic, and broadcast media in the Russian language both produced locally and broadcast from Russian and other former Soviet republics: more than 70% of the nearly 1,700 publications and over 80% of the 120 electronic media are published in Russian, the Russian-language book market is filled with literature, and Russian TV and radio channels are available. There are a number of associations that support and develop the local Russian culture, such as 'The Russian Community of Kazakhstan', 'Lad', 'Istoki', and the 'Slavic Cultural Centre'. More than ten regional branches of these centres of culture and folk art are functioning in various regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Currently, the presence of the Russian language at all levels and in all areas of education in Kazakhstan remains high. In the public education system of Kazakhstan, the main languages of teaching and learning in schools and other educational institutions in the country are Kazakh and Russian. Parents have the right to choose schools for their children with either Kazakh or Russian as the main language. Since 1989, enrolment in Russian-language schools has significantly decreased (Fierman, 2006:108). However, the demand for Russian-language schools remains high, especially in the northern regions of the Republic (Smagulova, 2008:444).

Both Russian and Kazakh are obligatory school subjects in Kazakhstani secondary schools and, since 2008, have been two of the compulsory subjects in the National Standard Test, which acts as both a secondary school exit test and a university entrance test.

4.2 Ukrainians

According to the 2009 census, Ukrainians constituted 2.1% (333,031 people) of the total population of Kazakhstan at the beginning of 2010 (Smailov, 2010). The first Ukrainians moved to Kazakhstan during the middle of the 19th century; these individuals participated in the anti-monarchic rebellion of 1868 and were

exiled to Siberia. During the years of Stalin's repression, many Ukrainians were exiled to Kazakhstan, including 'kurkuls' and 'national traitors' (the members of the Ukrainian nationalist organisation UPA-OUP). Many Ukrainians arrived in Kazakhstan during the years of the 'virgin land reclamations' (Nations of Kazakhstan, 2003:367).

Current data show that 13 Ukrainian public associations were registered with the assistance of the Embassy of Ukraine in 1999. The 'Українці Казахстану' ('Ukrainians of Kazakhstan') association has been established in the Republic by the eight regional Ukrainian communities in Kazakhstan. Ukrainian programmes are broadcast on the regional radio channel. In addition, in secondary schools in several cities there are special Ukrainian branches, with national revival in mind. The first Central Asian Ukrainian educational complex was opened in Astana in 1995 and includes a kindergarten, a gymnasium, and Sunday school. This school sponsors many cultural activities, including 11 choirs, eight vocal and vocal-instrumental ensembles, a dance group, and two folk-dancing groups (Suleimenova, Shaimerdenova and Akanova, 2007:228).

4.3 Poles

According to the 2009 census, the number of Poles in Kazakhstan amounted to 34,057 people, who represent 0.2% of the total population of the country (Smailov, 2010). Polish migration to Kazakhstan began in the 1830s, when political opponents of the monarchy were exiled to Kazakh territory. Polish individuals also settled in the region for other reasons. During World War I, many civilians were evacuated to the territory of Kazakhstan, including communities from Poland. This settlement pattern continued during World War II. The post-war status of Poles as special settlers was decreed by the Resolution of the USSR's Council of People's Commissars of 8 January 1945: 'On legal status of settlers'. Poles then totalled more than 50,000 (Nations of Kazakhstan, 2003:358).

Poles support and strengthen their ties with their historical homeland. There are five Polish organisations that address issues of national and cultural revival in Kazakhstan. In northern Kazakhstan, the 'Poloniya' TV channel has been broadcasting Polish-language programming for several years. Approximately 600 students from Kazakhstan study in institutions of higher education in their homeland. In the capital and other cities of Kazakhstan, Polish Catholic churches and temples have been built. In Kazakhstan, 15 regional Polish communities are united by the Poles Union in Kazakhstan registered in 1994. In Kazakhstan, there are 22 Polish Sunday schools where children and adults can study the Polish language and culture. A specialty in Polish language and literature is offered by the Kazakh University S. Valikhanov School of World Languages and International

Relations. The Polish folk ensemble 'Stepove Kvyat' (Kokshetau), Children's Dance Ensemble (Almaty), etc. are well-known in Kazakhstan (Suleimenova, Shaimerdenova and Akanova, 2007:200).

4.4 Koreans

According to the 2009 census, the population of Koreans in Kazakhstan is 100,385 people, representing 0.6% of the total population of the republic. A mass migration of Koreans began in 1937 when the first Koreans were resettled from the Far East to Kazakhstan during the Sino-Japanese War. They were among the first ethnic groups, who were deported to Kazakhstan during the period of Soviet Union. Koreans had to adapt to completely new living conditions, and formed an ethnic community that became considerably different from those living in the Far East. The number of Kazakhstani Koreans increased to 81,598 in 1970, to 91,984 in 1979, and to 103,315 in 1989 (Nations of Kazakhstan, 2003:325).

In 1990, the Republican Association of Koreans' cultural centre of Kazakhstan was established. Cultural and media outlets in this community include the Republican Korean Theatre of Musical Comedy and the newspaper 'Koryo Ilbo' (the successor to the newspapers 'Lenin Kichi' and 'Senbon'). In 1999, the Korean radio programme 'Koryo Saram' was established and currently broadcasts in Korean once a week for 20 minutes. The Association of Korean Studies in Kazakhstan was established in 1996 at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan. This association publishes the journal *Proceedings of Korean Studies*. In 1998, the Republican Youth Centre Association of Koreans in Kazakhstan was established (Son, 2012).

5 Research method and informants

The methodological foundation for this study is a complex analytical approach based on the measurement of quantitative and qualitative parameters of the ethnolinguistic vitality of ethnic groups, i.e. demographic and cultural features.

A written survey was used for data collection from December 2010 to October 2011. In total, 300 people of four ethnicities (90 Russians, 70 Poles, 70 Ukrainians, and 70 Koreans) participated in the survey. This size of the sample is adequate for the requirements of comparative quantitative analysis of ethno-linguistic groups. It was assumed that the Russian language was the dominant language of the respondents; therefore, questionnaires and interviews were in Russian. The survey was conducted in various locations: schools and universities, government offices, libraries, call-centres, in the street, and by random sampling with the help of social networks.

The questionnaire included questions that were based on several parameters: sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents, language functioning in the context of language personality, linguistic vitality of these ethnic groups, the motivation for learning a mother tongue in an educational space, the desires of the respondents to preserve the mother tongue in their families, and the preservation of folklore traditions that have a communicative function. A combination of open and closed questions was used. Identity trends were investigated based on the 'ethnoautobiographies' of the informants, who were asked the following question: 'Who am I?' (e.g., 'I am Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, or Korean. What does this mean for me?').

The age distribution of the respondents was relatively even. The questionnaire was completed by minors, young adults, middle-aged and pre-pension people, and pensioners. The average age of the respondents was 31.5. The gender distribution was slightly biased in all ethnic groups, as more females (62%) than males (38%) responded. The social status of the respondents showed a high level of education (all respondents studied in schools, colleges or universities) and, consequently, they were able to respond appropriately to the survey and interview questions. Students were the largest professional subgroup amongst respondents in all but one ethnic group (see Table 2):

Table 2. Social status of respondents.

Social status of respondents	**Russians (%)**	**Ukrainians (%)**	**Poles (%)**	**Koreans (%)**
Students	32	29	25	17
State workers	11	14	8	15
Workers of educational sphere	20	13	16	10
Workers of service sphere	15	12	18	21
Businessmen	7	12	14	23
Unemployed (including pensioners)	15	20	19	14

The interviews consisted of non-spontaneous speech produced by informants, usually in response to questions given by the interviewer. 86 interviews (25 with Russians, 18 with Ukrainians, 22 with Koreans and 21 with Poles) were conducted. Recorded interviews with informants lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. In most cases, the speech of informants was transcribed verbatim. Interviewers were the authors of the research with experience of conducting such studies. The Russian language was used during interviews; therefore, there was no barrier for respondents to communicate.

6 Results and discussion

6.1 Language skills

The survey focussed on respondents' self-reported Kazakh, Russian, and respective ethnic language skills. As it turns out, many representatives of the Ukrainian, Polish, and Korean ethnic groups barely know the language of their ancestors (see Table 3).

Table 3. Language skills (percentage).

Diaspora	Kazakh language	Russian language	A language of their own ethnic group
Russian	8	100	100
Ukrainian	4	100	16
Korean	14	100	33
Polish	2	100	12

As shown in the Table 3, only Russian respondents have a high degree of correlation between ethnic and linguistic identity. The extremely low level of ethnic language knowledge of other ethnic groups suggests a language shift. The respondents explained their answers based on the fact that they were born in Kazakhstan, attended Russian-language schools, and speak Russian more often and more fluently than their ethnic root language (they do not have opportunities to practise adequately this language in daily life). Some respondents even raised the question of which language is considered their mother tongue (*rodnoi jazyk* in Russian, the closest language to self-identification):

> *... I think my mother tongue is Russian ... I was born in Kazakhstan, and I didn't have a great need of the Ukrainian language. In the family we speak only Russian. (Ukrainian, male, 25)*

> *Most likely Russian, because I speak Russian ... I know the history of this country better. I have lived all my life in the territory of the former Soviet Union. (Polish, female, 25)*

The results of the survey confirm that the concept of mother tongue is strongly correlated with language skills: 88% of Poles, 84% of Ukrainians, and 67% of Koreans consider their mother tongues to be the language of another ethnic group. This is the proportion of respondents reporting no knowledge of their heritage language.

The current unstable ethnic and linguistic identities of ethnic minority group members suggests that the personal ties of many Ukrainians, Poles, and Koreans to an ethnic language has been lost to some extent. The vast majority of the respondents reported that Russian was their mother tongue. Here, we observe

some asymmetry in the different perceptions of the relationship between identification with the language of an individual and that of the ethnos: the language identity that a person selects or acquires is often not the same as his/her ethnicity.

However, the instability of language identity does not have a destructive character. In fact, this instability may be evidence of the problem of choosing the most appropriate language identity from an existing 'identity register' in accordance with specific socio-cultural and political circumstances. Furthermore, 75% of the respondents agreed that each person should know his/her mother tongue. The awareness of the importance of mother tongues has been preserved and perhaps increased by national revival processes, which have grown in recent years. At the same time, it should be noted that 51% of the respondents reported that they have positive attitudes to those who do not know their own mother tongue, understanding the complexity of the circumstances that have led them to the current situation.

In answering the question '*Did you feel uncomfortable because you do not know the language of your ethnic group?*', 100% of the Russian respondents answered in the negative (this result suggests that the vast majority of these respondents can speak their native Russian language). Only 11% of Ukrainians, 13% of Poles, and 15.3% of Koreans replied 'rarely' to this question. We assume that these responses were given because the informants do not frequently meet other members of their ethnic groups who speak their mother tongue. However, this response could also be attributed to a general tolerance towards this type of 'inability'.

The results of the study show that the ethnic and linguistic identities of the Russian respondents coincide with each other, whilst Ukrainians, Poles, and Koreans are characterised by an identity crisis as a result of the language shift towards Russian. These ethnic groups show a high level of tolerance towards the linguistic environment and a medium to low degree of tolerance towards themselves as members of an ethnic group and a language minority.

6.2 Ethnolinguistic vitality

The ethnolinguistic vitality of the four ethnic groups (Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, and Koreans) was determined with the assistance of a formal computational model. This model is a mathematical formula that determines the interdependence and effects of the four indicators on the vitality of these linguistic communities: perceived 'strength' differential between an in-group and an out-group (PSD), the level of discordance between these groups (D), the perceived intergroup distance (R), and the level of utilitarianism in the value systems of the members of the in-group (U). The vitality (V) is calculated using the following formula: $V = U (PSD + D) / R$ (for the particulars of the model and method, see Ehala 2010; Ehala and Zabrodskaja, 2014).

The average values of the ethnolinguistic vitality of the ethnic minorities of Kazakhstan are presented in Table 3. The listed values in Table 4 were interpreted according to the scale presented in Ehala and Zabrodskaja (2014:83). In the centre of the scale there is a zero point, which differentiates groups with a low vitality ($V < 0$) and a high vitality ($V > 0$).

Table 4. Vitality of ethnic groups of Kazakhstan.

Diaspora	V	Description
Russians	0.19	high vitality, weak ethnocentrism
Poles	- 0.28	low vitality, under medium danger
Ukrainians	- 0.29	low vitality, under medium danger
Koreans	- 0.35	low vitality, under strong danger

Based on these findings, we divided the studied ethnic groups into 3 categories: high ethnolinguistic vitality and weak ethnocentrism (Russian), low ethnolinguistic vitality and a medium danger of assimilation (Ukrainians and Poles), low ethnolinguistic vitality and a strong danger of assimilation (Koreans). In the next subsection, we examine these groups in greater detail.

6.2.1 *Vitality of Russians*

According to the survey results mentioned above, we classified most of the Russian respondents into this group. This group is characterised by high ethnolinguistic vitality with elements of weak ethnocentrism.

Most of the interviewees believed that both the Kazakh and Russian ethnic groups are nearly equally strong (PSD = - 0.05 on a scale of -1 to +1). This result is the highest compared with perceived strength differential of other ethnic groups, which is not surprising given that Russians are currently the second largest ethnic group after Kazakhs and that the Russian language remains quite strong in Kazakhstan.

The index of perceived interethnic discordance towards the titular nation (D = 0.28) is in a neutral range on the scale from -1 to +1. However, this value is more than two times higher than in other minorities in the study.

The main source of discordance comes from the worry about the status of the Russian language and culture in Kazakhstan and from the belief that the language policy that is pursued in the state does not contribute to the maintenance of Russian language and culture (41%). For example, in August 2011, there was an

intense discussion in the media related to an open letter that was signed by public and political figures of Kazakhstan and addressed to the President. This letter addressed exclusion from the Constitution, paragraph 2, article 7 in particular, which states that 'for government and local administrative bodies, along with Kazakh, the Russian language is officially used' (Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 1995). Such events have special resonance and naturally cause emotional outbursts. Changes in state language policies that aim to support the development of the Kazakh language and its vitality cause emotional outbursts in Russians because of their fear of cultural assimilation and of the future of their language. According to researcher Kuzio (2002), 'For Russians it is difficult to accept the fact that now they belong to ethnic minorities, as their presence in Central Asia was part of the classic civilizing mission'.

Thus, the vast majority of the Russian respondents gave categorical answers to the question of the status of the Russian language in Kazakhstan. Of these respondents, 83.7% expressed their complete agreement with the statement 'the Russian language should be the second official language in Kazakhstan'. Only 3.33% of the Russian respondents disagreed with this statement, and 12.97% found this item 'difficult to answer'. According to Sadovskaya (2001:112), 29.5% of Russians believe that it is necessary to pass a law that gives Russian the status of a state language to stabilise relations between ethnic groups.

On the other hand, the majority of the Russian respondents (76.6%) expressed their agreement with the statement that the situation of their ethnic group communities in Kazakhstan meets all international standards. In this case, the majority of Russians (86.6%) agree that all citizens of Kazakhstan, regardless of their ethnicity, should know the state language, which is Kazakh. Nearly all the informants (91%) support the idea that the goal of Kazakhstan's state is the long-term development and maintenance of the Kazakh nation, language and culture.

> *Of course, it is necessary to study the state language. We are the citizens of one country, and it's just our duty as citizens. I understand that the Soviet culture for over a century was trying to oust its autonomous republics' identity, and now is not so easy to restore everything, but each country should maintain it. And exactly the national language of the majority of citizens in the Republic should be the official one. We need to learn the Kazakh language, in order to be full citizens of the Republic. (Russian, male, 24)*

Some of the respondents admitted that there is the need to study the Kazakh language

but with no pressure..., without prejudice to the Russian language, which is actually the second official language of communication... (Russian, female, 21).

Members of the older generation of Russians are less inclined to study Kazakh because they consider this language unnecessary, and quite a large proportion (38%) expressed confidence in the future of Russian:

...Russian was and still remains the language of interethnic communication, at least in the coming decades until generational changes occur. (Russian, male, 44)

For Russians there is no need to worry, since all the studied literature is published in the Russian language, Internet resources, store signs, advertisements, the media are written in two languages, at work my colleagues and friends talk to me in Russian, we get along very well. (Russian, female, 52)

While the attitudes towards studying Kazakh are positive amongst Russians, their actual usage of Kazakh is low. This is expressed by a high language distance index R1 = 0.08, in the scale from 0 (minimum distance) to 1 (maximum distance). As many as 68% of Russian respondents do not use Kazakh in daily life at all, 26% speak the language 'very rarely' and only 6% speak the Russian and Kazakh languages equally. There were no respondents who used Kazakh more than Russian in their daily lives. However, the generational differences in attitudes towards studying Kazakh are reflected in reality, too.

According to the results of our analysis, the number of students wishing to enrol in Kazakh language courses in higher education increases every year. In recent years, a growing number of Russians are specialising in Kazakh language and literature at the university level. For example, in the L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University five ethnic Russian students enrolled for the specialty 'Kazakh language and literature' in the period from 2005 to 2012. Over these years more than 50 people trained in the Kazakh language courses at the university (from the data of annual statistical reports for the University 2005–2012).

While the language distance index R1 was quite high (R1 = 0.84), the cultural distance index R2 was considerably lower (R2 = 0.52). R2 was measured by a block of twenty questions regarding cultural differences in eating habits, clothing styles, religious beliefs, mentality, physical appearance, and respect for traditions. The index of ethnic distance (R = 0.68) was calculated as the arithmetic mean of R1 and R2.

As for the last variable, utilitarianism, Russian respondents showed a rather low value (U = 0.57 on a scale of 0 to 2 where U = 0 is maximal traditionalism, U = 2 is maximal utilitarianism, and U = 1 expresses the equality of the two value orientations). This indicates that Russians tend towards cultural traditionalism. The members of this group consider Russian to be their mother tongue, they speak and actively use the language in daily life, and they have a traditional system of values (which includes respect for the traditions and customs of their culture and the celebration of traditional religious holidays, such as Christmas and Easter).

> *... I follow the traditions of my people, I am fluent in written, oral and literary Russian language, I respect and love it, all the basic mental processes taking place in my head are in Russian, by birth, by conviction and character I am Russian. (Russian, male, 21)*

Following the mathematical formula for calculating the value of ethnolinguistic vitality according to Ehala (2010), we obtained the following results:

Russians: U (0.57) × (PSD (-0.05) + D (0.28)) / R (0.68) = V (0.19)

The results enable us to conclude that this ethnic group has been successfully integrated into the Kazakhstani community keeping its self-esteem rather high and maintaining its cultural and linguistic heritage.

6.2.2 *Vitality of Ukrainians and Poles*

We have placed the Polish and Ukrainian communities in this group based on the survey findings. The Indices of Perceived Strength Differential towards the titular nation are considerably low (PSD = -0.26 for Ukrainians, PSD = -0.25 for Poles). This result is an indication of a low identification with their ethnic group.

Among the respondents, 70.7% of Ukrainians and 55% of Poles regard themselves as members of their ethnic group. In answering the question regarding ethnic identity (whether they regard themselves as a 'true Ukrainian' or 'true Pole'), 11% of Ukrainians and 18% of Poles had difficulties, as shown in the following comments:

> *It is difficult to say. I don't feel myself to be a true Ukrainian representative. I feel more Russian because I speak Russian, know the history of this country better, and lived in the territory of the former USSR... (Ukrainian, female, 37)*

I cannot consider myself as a true representative of the nation because I don't know the language and the culture... (Pole, male, 41)

I consider it partially as I am studying Polish, learn the culture of my country, dance national dancing but I don't feel myself as a representative of my nationality. But on the other hand there is something to strive for, to hurry and to learn... (Pole, female, 42)

How can I consider myself as a full-fledged representative of my nation, as I don't live in my country and I have [only] recently had a chance to study the language and the culture? (Pole, male, 43 years old)

The Index of Utilitarianism (U = 0.81 for Ukrainians and U = 0.79 for Poles) demonstrates that these groups are less oriented toward maintaining traditions than Russians. In general, the older generation of Ukrainians and Poles attempt to maintain cultural values within families and simultaneously express interest and actively participate in Kazakh and Russian holidays and customs. In addition, 97% of the Ukrainian respondents and 95% of the Polish respondents enjoy celebrating the Kazakh national holiday 'Nauryz' and consuming Kazakh national cuisine.

The state is good, and so is the pension. Everything is done for us; each person is respected. Live and be happy! Thank you, Nazarbayev! (Pole, male, 72)

I think that the Ukrainian language in Kazakhstan will be in the list of those languages the speakers of which will be living in our territory and not more than that. (Ukrainian, female, 45)

However, while the older generation identifies itself with Kazakhstan and regards it as the motherland, there is a tendency for migration among young respondents, including both Poles and Ukrainians. The results of the interviews that were conducted with young Poles show that a majority of Poles aged 14 to 18 want to obtain their education in Poland and plan to visit at the first opportunity (68%):

I think the major representatives of my nationality will leave for the historical homeland. Those who stay in Kazakhstan will support the culture in small communities. Polish is not a widely spread language therefore there is no need for large-scale popularization and support of the state. It is enough to preserve culture and religion. (Pole, female, 17)

I want to go to Poland and enter the university. I think there are more opportunities there. (Pole, male, 16)

Concerning ethnic distance R, Ukrainians (R = 0.41) and Poles (R = 0.39) do not feel particularly distant from the nation they inhabit. The relatively low cultural distance is supported by a significantly low discord with Kazakhs, as indicated by the low value of the discordance index (D = 0.11); in fact, the respondents from this group acknowledge the strong position of the titular nation.

On the other hand, the analysis of language distance with respect to the Kazakh language (R1) showed that only a small portion of the respondents use the Kazakh language. To the question 'Do you know the state language of the Republic of Kazakhstan?', only 6% of Ukrainians and 7% of Poles responded positively. We consider that the language distance between the titular nation's language and an ethnic language is not fully felt by these individuals for two reasons: first, many Ukrainian and Polish representatives do not speak their ethnic mother tongues; second, the language of interethnic communication for these individuals is the Russian language, which is widely used in different communicative spheres:

> *I don't know. I have been living here for 60 years, and I cannot say that it was difficult for me because of my lack of knowledge of Kazakh; maybe it is necessary now. I understand what people say, and I can speak a little, but I cannot learn it for sure. I'm too old to learn. (Pole, 72)*

However, to the question 'Are you planning to teach your children the Kazakh language and culture?' 71% of the respondents provided positive answers:

> *Yes, I am. The more languages a person knows the more tolerant he is. (Pole, male, 72)*

> *I will if I live here. (Ukrainian, female, 21)*

> *If I live in Kazakhstan I will surely teach. As the language policy requires it and in the near future there will be no possibility to be educated and get job without proficiency in the Kazakh language. (Pole, female, 25)*

> *Yes, I am. I have to teach some notions about the nation and its culture although I don't know the culture and the language very well (smiling). (Ukrainian, male, 33)*

While the language distance towards Kazakh is large, the language distance indices towards Russian demonstrate that there are clear signs of assimilation (Ukrainians, R1 = 0.12; Poles, R1 = 0.11). To the questions regarding the use of language in daily life (e.g., with friends and neighbours, in state organisations), the Ukrainians and Poles responded that they conduct this communication 'Only in Russian' (68%) and 'More in Russian than in the mother tongue' (28%).

According to the R1 index, Ukrainians (0.68) and Poles (0.72) also feel a considerable language distance between the national language and the language of their ethnic group.

As the results of the study show, Ukrainians and Poles living in Kazakhstan are primarily Russian monolinguals, and their mother tongues are used in only certain daily life situations (primarily by the older generation): they read newspapers and watch TV in their mother tongue. The answers to the question 'Are you planning to teach your children your mother tongue and culture?' are ambiguous:

> *I won't; there is no necessity to do so. They can study the culture and the language if desired. (Pole, female, 52)*

> *It depends on their desire. Maybe I will cultivate the same values which were fostered in my family, I will take courses or send them to my relatives in Poland. (Pole, female, 25)*

> *I won't because I do not have information about my national culture. (Ukrainian, female, 45)*

> *I have never been to Ukraine. I don't like the pronunciation of the Ukrainian language. (Ukrainian, female, 32)*

The results of this study enable us to conclude that Ukrainians and Poles are characterised by uncertainty in their prospects, which is reflected in the nascent migration behaviour among the younger generation. This, in turn, prevents these individuals from pursuing complete integration with Kazakh society. The indices of interethnic distance (R = 0.41 for Ukrainians, R = 0.39 for Poles) indicate the presence of identity uncertainty. All of these characteristics contribute to the low vitality of these particular groups:

Ukrainians: U (0.81) × (PSD (-0.26) + D (0.11)) / R (0.41) = V (-0.29)
Poles: U (0.79) × (PSD (-0.25) + D (0.11)) / R (0.39) = V (-0.28)

Overall, the vitalities of both groups are rather similar: V= -0.29 for Ukrainians and V= -0.28 for Poles.

6.2.3 *Vitality of Koreans*

According to the results of the study mentioned above, representatives of the Korean ethnic minority belong to a group that is considered to be in strong danger of assimilation to a Russian linguistic environment. The Indices of Perceived Strength Differential display a high assessment of Kazakhs (PSD = -0.30). Kazakhstan's Koreans assess the status of the Korean language and its representation in mass media as low. To the question 'How highly is the Korean

language assessed in Kazakhstan?', only 8.1% of the respondents answered 'Very high'; 17.6% of these individuals answered 'Rather high'. The Index of Interethnic Discordance is neutral (D = 0.13): the Korean ethnic group perceives their existence in Kazakhstan positively: nearly all Koreans considered Kazakhstan their motherland (96%). The Index of Utilitarianism (U) was 0.86. The older generation strives to maintain the traditions of the Korean culture by preserving the language, customs and other values:

I am Korean; I consider myself a true Korean. I know the history of my country and the mother tongue. In my opinion, not knowing your mother tongue means betraying yourself and the whole nation. (Korean, male, 69)

I am the true Korean, descendant of the heroic Korean people who fought for liberty. I am Korean with all my heart and soul because I know my language, keep traditions and religion, grieve for the Korean people. (Korean, male, 73)

It is my nationality, my descendants are Koreans; I keep traditions as far as possible. There is chim-chi on my table, and I have narrow eyes (laughs). (Korean woman, 63)

However, the younger generation of Koreans do not consider it necessary to learn the language and culture of their ethnic group:

I consider proficiency in the mother tongue and native culture to be desirable but not necessary if there is no plan to move to the historic homeland. (Korean, male, 31)

It is not necessary if a person lives in another country and is not planning to move. (Korean, male, 28)

The Index of Interethnic Distance is not high (R = 0.42). In fact, 83.8% of Kazakhstani Koreans regarded the Kazakh culture and traditions highly. Koreans are actively integrating into Kazakhstani society. In comparison with other nations, they are primarily oriented towards Kazakhs and choose them as friends, business partners, and spouses. Koreans are more distanced from the titular nation in the cultural aspect (R2 = 0.61); nevertheless, they regard the study of the titular nation language as positive, and they actively celebrate national holidays:

... as I have said, my daughter studies Kazakh and knows our culture perfectly. I'm not afraid to say that this is our culture because I am proud to live in Kazakhstan. (Korean, male, 51)

... I think that every person who lives in Kazakhstan must study Kazakh. Personally I speak Kazakh fluently. My wife is Kazakh and my daughter goes to Kazak kindergarten. This is our future and the future of our children. (Korean, male, 47)

The Kazakh language is necessary in Kazakhstan and it is necessary to raise its status. I think that the younger generation should study the Kazakh language because it is profitable in economic and political aspects. You cannot get a job without knowledge in Kazakh. (Korean, female, 38)

An analysis of the language situation among Koreans indicates a language shift. The Kazakhstani researcher Son (1999:11) asserts that 'The vast majority of Kazakhstani Koreans do not speak a written form of the Korean language. The most stable sphere of preserving the Korean language is the affective sphere, followed by the sphere of phatic communication and folklore forms of speech.' All of these characteristics contribute to the lowest vitality amongst the groups studied:

Koreans: U (0.86) × (PSD (-0.30) + D (0.13)) / R (0.42) = V (-0.35)

However, Koreans in Kazakhstan are currently experiencing an era of 'spiritual renewal' and a type of national renaissance. Their lost language and culture are being reborn. New public entities, such as the 'Youth Movement of Kazakhstan Koreans 'Хвараң' (Khvaran) and the Korean-Kazakh research-technical society 'КАХАК' (KAKHAK), have recently been created to enable Korean Kazakhstani solidarity. This may affect their vitality in the future.

7 Conclusion

In modern conditions the processes of changing ethno-linguistic specificity of national identity have touched many of the ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan. Using the model developed by Ehala and Zabrodskaja (2014), we have attempted to determine the 'ethnic temperature' for each concerned ethnic group and to distribute them on a scale of 'hot' and 'cold' modes of ethnolinguistic vitality (see Ehala, 2011). An analysis of the indices for each parameter enabled us to distribute the 'temperature' of these ethnic groups as follows:

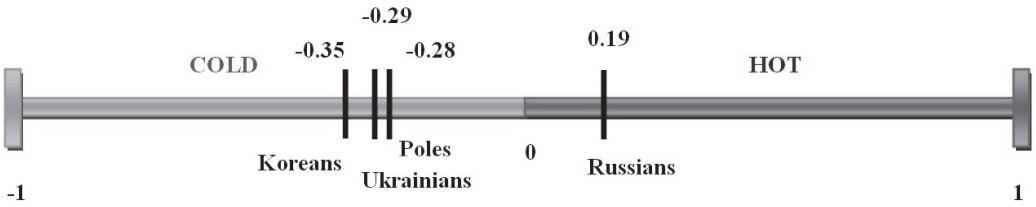

Figure 1. Hot and cold modes of ethnolinguistic vitality.

As Figure 1 shows, Russians fall under the 'hot' prototype, which can be interpreted as follows: a slight difference in evaluating in-group strength ($S_{we} = 0.59$) and the strength of Kazakhs ($S_{they} = 0.64$) shows that these respondents consider the Russian and Kazakh groups as almost equally powerful in Kazakh society. The indices of Utilitarianism, Perceived Interethnic Discordance, and Intergroup Distance are higher for this group compared with those of other considered ethnic groups. This 'temperature' balance is undoubtedly changeable. Clearly, during the period of the Soviet Union, the ethnolinguistic vitality of Russians was higher and characterised by obvious features of ethnocentrism, as demonstrated by the demographic power of Russians (when the number of Russians exceeded the number of Kazakhs), their political power, and the policy of Russification. And today, the degree of proficiency in the Russian language is high. The interventions aimed at maintaining and promoting Russian reflects its high demand. A desire to understand correctly the current policy of maintenance and development of language and culture of the titular nation is manifested in the desire to learn the state language.

The situation among the other ethnic groups differs. The relatively low perceived strength capacity of Ukrainians (0.45), Poles (0.42), and Koreans (0.39) and the low levels of their mother tongue skills enabled us to assign them to a cold mode of ethnolinguistic vitality. For these ethnic groups, a rational approach is more typical than an emotional attachment to their ethnic group; this finding may be explained by their desire to conform to social expectations. In our opinion, Russians, Ukrainians, Koreans, and Poles who have lived in Kazakhstan for a long time (in some cases, many generations) have weakened or erased any attitude of 'self vs. other'. In the self vs. other model, these diasporas did not reveal a state-territorial image of their homeland. In this context, the notion of minority (small) homeland (home, family, friends, and relatives) became more important for diaspora members, and the boundaries of this concept are beginning to narrow and coincide with its initial meaning. In our view, the characteristics of the language are not evolving; rather, the characteristics of state identity are being updated. These updates smooth over hidden or open oppositional attitudes

towards ethnic and linguistic features. The language policy of Kazakhstan likely has a substantial influence in this area, in addition to socio-economic conditions, the common roots that link Slavs and Turks in the Republic, and the tolerant attitude of these peoples towards one another.

However, the small number and thin demographic presence of Ukrainians, Poles, and Koreans render it difficult for these individuals and families to maintain their ethnic languages, and this difficulty can lead to the destruction of the ethnic representation of the world and subsequently to the destruction of ethnic identity. Ukrainians, Poles, and Koreans who live in Kazakhstan are in the process of marginalisation and are losing their mother tongue. Still, there is a desire to revive the national consciousness due to increasing concern for the maintenance of language, culture and traditions. Of course, the process of the regeneration of mother tongues and cultures is difficult.

The practical significance of this study is that assessing the ethno-linguistic vitality of ethnic groups in Kazakhstan can be helpful in planning state language policy, identifying prospects for the development of ethnic languages, and regulating inter-ethnic relations. Based on these research findings, a scientific programme of ethnolinguistic revival can be developed. The results of this study may be useful in the development of language policy measures and the revitalisation process for the maintenance of mother tongues, which could hinder the process of linguistic assimilation. Promising avenues for future research may include studies of the problem of language shift, the development of predictive models of language functions, and the development of ethnic education interventions that can be applied on a national level.

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Article

Maintaining ties:
Russian-speaking communities in Germany and Norway

Ekaterina Bagreeva and German Mendzheritskiy

Abstract

Russian-speaking migrant communities in Germany and Norway share a large part of a common history during the time of the Soviet Union, and each community has developed their unique ways of interaction in and with the accepting society. The article focuses on the main areas for communication between Russian-speaking migrants in Germany and Norway, as well as the wish to maintain contact with ones' home country. As the question of maintaining ones identity as well as the vitality of these communities is strongly linked to its members' wish to maintain their common language, these aspects were covered in particular through the study. The article uses a combined research method consisting of a quantitative and qualitative part. The findings indicate that while the groups are different from each other, particularly in their demographic composition, distribution and communication patterns, they do possess some similarities, for example having common elements defining and retaining their cultural heritage and approaches towards maintaining the Russian language.

KEYWORDS: ADAPTATION, COMMUNICATION, VITALITY, RUSSIAN-SPEAKING MIGRANTS, GERMANY, NORWAY

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1 Introduction

The aim of the article is to analyze the adaptation and vitality of the Russian-speaking migrant communities in Germany and Norway. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, Western Europe became an attractive destination for Russian-speaking migrants. The socio-economic crises in the home country acted as significant 'push'-factors on migrants, while well-developed welfare systems as well as a high level of socio-economic stability worked as 'pull'-factors to countries such as Germany and Norway. Since then, Russian-speaking communities in the two countries have developed significantly, maintaining some common characteristics, as well as having clearly defined differences.

We have focused on the main areas for communication between Russian-speaking migrants in Germany and Norway, as well as the wish to maintain contact with ones' home country. As the question of maintaining ones identity as well as the vitality of these communities is strongly linked to its members' wish to maintain their common language, these aspects were covered in particular through the study.

Despite being commonly used, there are a number of different aspects defining the terms migrant, migration and diaspora in contemporary literature. The Glossary on Migration defines migration as 'a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people, and economic migrants' (International Migration Law, Glossary on Migration, 2004:41). Yet the definition of the notion of migrant is considerably narrower: 'The term migrant is usually understood to cover all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned for reasons of "personal convenience" and without intervention of an external compelling factor' (International Migration Law, Glossary on Migration, 2004:40). As Massey, Arrango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino and Taylor (2010:310) conclude, 'there is no single, coherent theory of international migration, only a fragmented set of theories that have developed largely in isolation from one another, sometimes but not always segmented by disciplinary boundaries'.

In order to provide a framework for our research, we have considered the related theories of push and pull factors, as well as the concept of Rybakovskiy (2003), which is focused on different stages of migration. According to him, the first step represents the formation of territorial mobility of the population, and may, therefore, be understood as being an initial or preparatory stage. The second stage is migration flow; the actual relocation of the population, and, therefore,

the main stage of the process. The third and final stage of migration is understood as the process of adaptation at a new destination, and different steps connected to such a process.

In the interpretation of identity-related matters, the article is based on the assumption that the vitality of a community may play an important role in the process of adaptation of its members to a new place of living. The vitality of a community is defined as 'a group's ability to act as a collective entity, and it is assumed that the higher the vitality is, the more likely this group is to maintain its identity and language' (Ehala, 2010:363-364). Further, the notion of ethnic temperature (see Ehala, 2011) provides a better understanding of the vitality of certain communities and, consequently, the resources necessary for the adaptation, integration and maintenance of the identity.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section a short overview is provided about the nature of outmigration from the Soviet Union and the post-Soviet space, focusing specifically on the nature of immigration of Russian-speakers to Germany and Norway. The third section provides an overview of the methods used in collecting the data and the characteristics of the sampling. The results are presented in Section 4. The results concern the demographic nature and the patterns of distribution of the immigrant in Germany and Norway; the patterns of communication with their compatriots in the destination country as well as with relatives back home; the problems associated with maintaining the Russian language; and the general feeling of being 'at home'. The final section provides the discussion of the findings and a conclusion.

2 Socio-historical background

Over the last century, migration from the former Soviet Union is often understood as separated into four distinctive waves. The two first waves are related to crises – the Revolution of 1917 and the Second World War. The third is considered as the wave of ethnic emigration during the second half of the 20th century, while the fourth wave covers the migration connected to the socio-economic crises following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the opening up of the borders of countries of the former Soviet Union. This fourth wave of migrants is particularly relevant to this research, as it greatly influenced the current state of the Russian-speaking migrant communities in Germany and Norway.

A common outlook at migration to Western Europe is that the migration of today reverses earlier migrant flows from Western Europe, which is described by Massey, Arrango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino and Taylor (2010:310): '…In Europe meanwhile, countries that for centuries had been sending out migrants

were suddenly transformed into immigrant-receiving societies'. Such transformation of the society may, among others, be found in Germany and Norway. Both countries were 'exporting' migrants in the 19th and 20th centuries, while they have been attracting migrants at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. As a result, such Western European societies are changing (Massey, Arrango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino and Taylor, 2010:310): 'Most of the world's developed countries have become diverse, multi-ethnic societies, and those that have not reached this state are moving decisively in that direction'.

While the Russian-speaking migrant communities in Germany and Norway share a large part of a common history during the time of the Soviet Union, each community has developed in its unique way. The specifications of the development have been based on the type of geography of migration, the type of migrants moving, as well as on the legal and social frameworks surrounding the migrants in each of these countries.

2.1 Russian-speakers in Germany

The Russian speaking community in Germany is the second largest migrant community in the country with a population of more than 2.5 million. In a number of studies conducted within this community it is frequently considered as being comprehensively structured. One example of the complexity of a large part of this group is provided by Kiel (2009:155–159) who identifies five types of 'Russian Germans': (1) *Nicht richtige Deutsche* – 'not true Germans'; (2) *Deutsche mit Makel* – 'Germans with stigma'; (3) *Deutsche mit 'russischem Glanz'* – 'Germans with a Russian luster'; (4) *Die wahren Deutschen* – 'The "true Germans"'; (5) *Die 'sowjetischen Leute'* – 'The 'Soviet people''.

However, all these classifications are seen as subtypes of 'Russian Germans', implying that such an ethnic group is a valid definition of these members of the Russian-speaking community in Germany. During fieldwork one of our informants suggested the following about the described situation:

> *The main problem of 'Russian Germans' is the problem of their identification here, in Germany. They are not feeling themselves as Germans (Deutsch) as we are feeling ourselves. Those who were living many years in Russia or were born there 'volens nolens' preserved the connection with Russian reality and culture, so-called Russian identification. (34-year-old Denis, Germany, translated by authors)*

The entire Russian-speaking community in Germany is usually divided into three main groups with varying sizes and formal rights. The largest of these groups, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Germany, accounts for more than

two million people. These are migrants who have arrived in the country during the last 30 years, and have acquired a status of being ethnic Germans. Nevertheless, a significant part of this group still retains their Russian language, their affiliation with the Russian-speaking community as well as maintaining connections with the friends and families in the former Soviet Union. Another group, the so-called Jewish migrants, consists of about 200,000 people. These immigrants moved to Germany on the basis of a decision of the Innenministerkonferenz from 9 January 1991. The third and the smallest group of migrants from the former Soviet Union consists of people who moved as refugees, as a result of inter-cultural marriages with representatives from the local population, as well as academic and employment migrants. One of the interviewed experts provided clarifications on this subject:

> *In principle, there are two large groups: the first – the so-called 'Aussiedler' or 'Spätaussiedler', who have the status as Germans, although they came from the former Soviet Union. Their parents in the third or fourth generation came from Germany. The second largest group is the so-called Jewish line. These groups are not equal. There are smaller groups as well, such as students and those who came here to work. (38-year-old Elena, Germany, translated by authors)*

The whole Russian-speaking migrant group in Germany is a resourceful community with several related NGOs and substantial financial support. Furthermore, due to the background of its members, it is a fairly tightly connected society providing significant support to its members. There are opportunities for maintaining and learning Russian language through a large number of schools and courses, as well as cultural events – in addition to access to Russian-speaking TV channels, books, newspapers and numerous websites in Germany covering the life of the Russian-speaking community. Also, a large selection of services, such as doctors, hairdressers, teachers, lawyers, travel agencies specializing in the Russian community, as well as shops providing easy access to products typical of Russian cuisine have been developed for the members of the community.

2.2 Russian-speakers in Norway

Contrary to its German sister group, the Russian-speaking diaspora in Norway is a rather small and diffused community having a mere 15,000 members, according to the Bureau of Statistics in Norway. With few resources available to cover a large geographical area, the NGOs of this migrant group may only provide limited support to its members. Only two magazines are published, and numerous attempts at starting a Russian shop and restaurant have failed owing to poor

turnover. Part-time schools providing the opportunity to maintain the Russian language have only in recent years been available in the larger cities in Norway. As one of our informants told us about her family situation:

> *For my son, it was absolutely impossible to break connections with Russia completely. The language, culture, we travel often to Moscow... But not everybody has such a situation. And you never know what was in your heart and what was in your life. (42-year-old Natalya, Norway, translated by authors).*

At the same time, the composition of this community is quite unique, as 67% of the members have moved to Norway due to family reunion, and are mainly women. In addition to this, there is a small-cross border community in the north of the country, around the town of Kirkenes. The 30 kilometer zone on the Russian–Norwegian border was declared a visa-free zone in 2010, allowing people from the border area to cross the border without a visa. The representatives of the Russian-speaking community on the Norwegian side are well integrated into the society, as there is a market for both Russian specialists and people proficient in Russian. The third part of the community are largely represented by refugees from Chechnya, as well as those migrating for academic or work reasons.

3 Method and data

The analysis is based on data obtained during implementation of the scientific project: 'Common and special features of the adaptation of Russian-speaking migrants: Comparative analysis of the processes of adaptation in Russia, Germany and Norway' (see Bagreeva and Mendzheritskiy, 2012; Bagreeva, Denisova and Mendzheritskiy, 2012; Denisova, Mendzheritskiy and Bagreeva, 2012; Mendzheritskiy and Bagreeva, 2013). The project in Germany and Norway conducted a comparative study of the Russian-speaking migrant communities in 2008–2010 using a questionnaire specially developed for this research, as well as in-depth interviews in three federal regions of Germany: Bremen, Hessen and North Rhine Westphalia and the federal region of Oslo, as well as the Northern part of Norway, with 190 respondents in Germany and 62 respondents in Norway (pilot research). In 2010–2012 a follow-up series of in-depth interviews with experts from local NGOs was carried out.

For the quantitative study a questionnaire for self-completion was presented to the respondents. The original version of this questionnaire was composed in Russian, and had already been tested in other studies on migrant groups in the southern parts of Russia (Denisova, 2007). This questionnaire was further

developed, modified and adapted to focus on the stages of migration as specified by Rybakovskiy (2003), to the aspects of adaptation to the new place of living and preserving the heritage culture and language following Gergen (1994), and to the objective and subjective indicators of vitality (Ehala, 2010). The modified questionnaire consisted of 88 items with a combination of open and closed questions. In total, there were 9 open questions, 40 closed one choice questions, 20 closed multiple choice and 19 questions with Likert scale (mainly 9 Points version). A modified snowball method was applied for recruiting the respondents with the aim of reaching a wide majority of Russian-speaking migrants.

To clarify details in the research and on the basis of the questionnaire, a guide for in-depth interviews was developed. Among the topics covered in the in-depth interviews were the specifics of communication between members of the Russian-speaking communities, as well as the issue of maintaining the Russian language and discovering interior items in the house which have particular significance and reference to the Russian identity. Another important area was the question of requalification in the new country of living – its quality and perceived success. The guide was used during interviews with experts: leaders and employees of migrant NGOs, and persons working with migrants in these particular countries. A total of 12 interviews in two federal regions of Germany (Bremen and North Rhine Westphalia) and 6 interviews in the Oslo region in Norway were completed during 2008–2010, and next series of interviews was realized in 2012.

4 Results

4.1 Demographic composition and distribution

The composition of the migrating groups may be one of the factors influencing the functioning and vitality of the Russian-speaking migrant communities. The demographic character of the migration to Germany and Norway shows a noticeable difference due to the mainly ethnic nature of the migration to Germany, and a strong bias towards women in the migration to Norway due to cross-cultural marriages.

Table 1. Migration and family.

Who from the family moved with you?	Germany	Norway
Spouse	29.4%	21.2%
Parents	19.9%	9.1%
Children	27.4%	13.6%
Brother / sister	11.6%	
Other relatives	6.1%	
Moved without relatives	5.5%	56.1%

As seen in Table 1, more than half of the respondents in Norway moved alone without any accompanying family members, while only 5.5% of the respondents in Germany did the same. Furthermore, the respondents in Germany moved not only with their spouses, but also with their children, parents, brothers and sisters, and even other relatives besides close ones:

> *The advantages of German policies are that they allow entire families to migrate and not only the young part of it. Therefore, they do not break the family, and when the old people come, they take care of them and do quite a good job of it. (38-year-old Elena, Germany, translated by authors)*

However, this situation was not immediately the case for Norway. Based on the data above, we may define the migration to Norway as being mainly individual, and the immigration to Germany as being group-migration or family-migration. This is further emphasized by the fact that, in some cases, literally the population of whole villages of ethnic Germans from countries of the former Soviet Union such as Kazakhstan or Russia moved to Germany and settled down in close proximity to each other, providing an opportunity to maintain close family and community relations. As a result of this, many migrants moving to Germany were surrounded by their closest family and friends, were able to speak their own language, i.e., Russian, as well as follow their own traditions and practices. This, undoubtedly, influences the vitality of the community.

While the Russian-speaking communities in Germany may often be located close to one another, due to the history of migration to Norway, the migrant community in this country is generally quite dispersed, as Russian women often married Norwegian men from different locations, settling down at their husbands' homesteads. However, there are regions where the community is more concentrated, such as regions in the northern part of Norway bordering with Russia, such as Kirkenes, where the geographical proximity to Russia facilitates such extended communities.

Describing the current situation in Germany, where the Russian-speaking community is more compactly distributed over the country, Hans-Werner Retterath, the deputy director of the John Kunzig Institute in Freiburg, argued that:

> *The colony formation of the Russian German means a chance in the integration process and no life in the 'ghetto'... In his study, he [Hans Werner Retterath] concludes that ethnically concentrated settlements can absorb alienation and inferiority. Colony-forming and networking has a protective function against the majority society. At the same time, this does not prevent integration... Colonies therefore*

> *offer in terms of the majority of society not only anti-integration elements but are also promoting integration. (Siemers 2006, translated from German language by authors)*

Therefore, the density of a community may be both adaptational as well as a binding element in the integration process.

4.2 Communication patterns

The size of the networks and the spheres of communication also seem to play significant parts in the vitality of a particular community. To detail this aspect, a number of experts were asked to describe the spheres where migrants interact more frequently and actively with their compatriots. Language courses for children, as well as cultural events and traditional holidays, seem to be the main meeting points for representatives of the communities in both countries.

The size of the community combined with the distance between its members may influence the type of the communication used within the group. As an example, due to the small size of the community in Norway, the main meeting points for the representatives of the Russian-speaking community in Norway are religious centers and the Embassy of the Russian Federation:

> *People meet during a number of activities related to the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as gatherings connected to the Russian Embassy in Norway. (42-year-old Natalya, Norway, translated by authors)*

Because of the nature of these gatherings, the participants may only have a narrow set of common interests:

> *People of different ages and social levels meet, with the only common element being the language and living in Norway now. (42-year-old Natalya, Norway, translated by authors)*

It appears that members of the Russian-speaking community in Norway do not have a tendency to unite and communicate in real life, but seem to prefer indirect ways of communication:

> *The thing that characterizes the Russian-speaking community in Norway is a high level of activity online, combined with an avoidance of any real life gatherings. (38-year-old Olga, Norway, translated by authors)*

Partly due to the larger size and concentrated placement of the Russian-speaking community in Germany, its members communicate in a different manner. The groups, in which contacts are made, seem to be much more differentiated and targeted:

> *Russians meet in the cultural centers, Russian schools, Russian shops, and during tourist trips. The network is often formed around common ideas, previous areas of living, professional affiliations (doctors, musicians, etc.). (38-year-old Elena, Germany, translated by authors)*

> *Russians gather in places where they may share common memories, and may speak their native language. (44-year-old Maria, Germany)*

> *Many migrants often communicate with their compatriots in a search for life partners, as well as prefer to ask compatriots for advice due to a common life situation. (45-year-old Oxana, Germany, translated by authors)*

Thus, it seems that Russians in Germany gather to discuss common history in a common language, while Russians in Norway gather to discuss the common present in a common language – and preferably online. This avoidance of real-life contact with compatriots may be interpreted as a lack of emotional attachment to the migrant community, which, for small groups, may have a significant impact on its vitality as 'small ethnic groups need a stronger emotional attachment to the group from their members in order to remain ethnolinguistically vital than do large ethnic groups' (Ehala, 2011:193).

Therefore, it seems that an important indicator of vitality can be the density of communication between representatives of a particular community and the size of the network where such contact happens or appears. The communication network of Russian-speaking migrants in Germany is much more diverse and covers a larger variety of spheres than it does in Norway, and therefore, the vitality of this community is higher. Furthermore, it seems that the opportunity for real-life communication is much larger and differentiated in Germany as compared to Norway, where the vitality of the community can be found to be 'cold', with a preference for indirect communication.

4.3 Communication with compatriots

One aspect which required particular attention was if the members of these communities were interested in maintaining contact with either their compatriots in the destination country as well as in the home country, and to what extent? In order to clarify this topic, the research included questions covering the frequency of communication with compatriots, as well as the form of contact with relatives in the home country.

The two major differences between the Russian-speaking migrants to Germany and Norway were found to be related to how communication is made, and whether they have brought their relatives to the destination country as well. The community in Germany consists in many cases of entire families moving together. This particularity was also reflected in the research, with 15.5% of the respondents in Germany answering that all their relatives had moved to Germany, while for Norway this figure was only 3.3%. Also the community in Germany is significantly larger and has far more resources available.

Surprisingly, when looking at the answers to the question on communication with compatriots, it appeared that in Germany fewer respondents communicate regularly with their compatriots (43.2%) as compared to Norway (63.9%, see Table 2). This seems to be particularly significant, considering that the community in Norway is not only small in comparison, but is highly dispersed as well.

Table 2. Communicating with compatriots.

How often do you communicate with your compatriots?	Germany	Norway
Regularly, several times a week	43.2%	63.9%
Quite often, several times a month	31.1%	27.9%
Occasionally, once every two to three months	10.9%	3.3%
Rarely	10.4%	3.3%
Never	4.4%	1.6%

The majority of the migrants to both countries seem to appreciate and value communication with their relatives in the home country. Data from the study indicated that only 2.1% of the respondents in Germany and 1.6% in Norway showed no interest in such contact. However, the answers from the two communities differ significantly when looking at how communication is done.

In Norway, regardless of the common border with Russia, using the telephone is the most popular way of communicating with relatives. In Norway, 70.5% of the participants in the study confirmed this, while only 34.2% of the respondents in Germany answered the same. At the same time, three times more migrants to Germany communicated with and accepted relatives as guests as compared to Norway, with 18.2% in Germany and 6.6% in Norway. Consequently, representatives of the Russian-speaking community in Norway preferred indirect ways of communicating with compatriots in their homeland, while in Germany the contacts were more direct and close.

4.4 Communication at work

Communication of the members of the Russian-speaking communities in Germany and Norway in their working and leisure time is quite different. Even though the migrant's support network frequently offered assistance in finding labor opportunities, our research suggests that the number of migrants finding a job of their own was two to three times larger than those relying on help from relatives and other support networks in both countries.

At the same time, it was interesting to clarify if the ethnic structure of a team in a job environment is important, and if the migrants preferred working with compatriots or in a working environment dominated by the local population.

The results of the research shows that almost every fourth respondent in both countries preferred to have representatives of the local population as their colleagues, and only half would prefer sharing a working place dominated by ones compatriots. Furthermore, about 15% of the respondents in both countries found having a local manager at work to be important while 30.9% in Germany and 46.3% in Norway found other reasons important for creating an ideal working environment.

Another observation was that 15.4% of the respondents in Germany considered 'nice people' to be vital in creating an ideal job environment. This factor did not seem to be of any significance to the respondents in Norway when describing their working environment.

Table 3. The ideal working environment.

What is in your opinion an ideal team in a job environment?	Germany	Norway
Mainly consisting of one's compatriots	7.4%	13%
Mainly consisting of the local population	22.1%	24.1%
Mainly nice people	15.4%	0%
Whatever, as long as the manager is a member of the local population	14.0%	16.7%
Whatever, as long as the manager is a compatriot	3.7%	0%
Other	30.9%	46.3%
Good manager	0.7%	0%
Does not matter	2.9%	0%
Everybody understand each other, friendly atmosphere	2.9%	0%

Evidence suggests that there are strong similarities in the vision of an ideal workplace, especially related to the desire to work for a local manager and a team consisting mainly of the local population. As we have seen, Russian speaking migrants in Germany and Norway are likely to have little desire to surround themselves with compatriots at work. Indeed, finding work may be one of the key channels of adaptation.

4.5 Maintaining the Russian language

The question of maintaining ones native language is often presented as a key issue in the discussions of keeping ones identity abroad. At the same time it is closely connected with the vitality of a particular migrant community in a foreign country. Therefore, a number of experts in Germany and Norway were asked the question if Russian-speaking migrants want their children to speak, read and write Russian, and what are the most common reasons for this.

Based on answers from the respondents, the situation with the Russian language in both countries seems to be quite similar: The majority of Russian-speaking migrants want their children to speak and read Russian. However, the primary burden for this lies on the family, and children are used to visiting schools and taking part in courses organized with support from local governments.

The main reasons for teaching their children the Russian language in both countries was summarized by one of the experts:

> *The majority are trying to keep the Russian language in use by their children. Some do it because of habit, others due to a better prospect for employment, and yet others are 'charging' their children with a rich heritage of Russian culture – trying to bring up a person who will be creative and with an original mind and high level of morality and spirituality. (38-year-old Elena, Germany, translated by authors)*

Interestingly, teaching their children the Russian language in order to improve work prospects is more often found among Russian-speaking migrants in Norway than in Germany. This allows us to consider the community in Norway as cold based on the definition by Ehala (2011) who argues that for cold groups language is not necessarily considered as a link to the person's community and identity, but may be seen as useful purely on rational grounds.

Keeping contact with the motherland and an interest in the culture of your own country and identity does also seem to be one of the strong motives for learning a language.

> *Those who maintain contact with Russia definitely want to study Russian. (38-year-old Olga, Norway, translated by authors)*

> *The wish to maintain one's roots grows stronger when one is abroad. (44-year-old Maria, Germany, translated by authors)*

On the other hand, strong reluctance towards the Russian language is often connected with a negative experience in the home country, and therefore opposes identification with anything Russian.

> *On the question of language, there are basically two categories: Those who want their children to know Russian due to a highly positive relation to Russian culture, and those who connect a negative experience with their previous country of living – and therefore wish to destroy all ties with the Russian culture. (45-year-old Oxana, Germany, translated by authors)*

4.6 Sense of feeling 'at home'

It would appear that the questions of home and the feeling of being 'at home' are closely connected with the process of adaptation to a new place of living. Therefore, to gain a better understanding of this topic, the following questions were asked during the research: 'Where do you think is your home?', and 'Do you feel that you are at home, at the place you are living now?'.

According to the data from our project, the majority of the respondents in both countries define home as the place they are living now, with 68.9% in Germany and 76.3% in Norway. For every tenth respondent in the Russian speaking diaspora in Germany and Norway, 'home' is the place where they were born and grew up. 'Home is the place where the largest part of my family is living', was answered by 14.2% of respondents in Germany and 8.5% in Norway. One possible explanation for this minor deviation may be that for many migrants in Germany, their entire family is living in the same country while this is rarely the case in Norway.

Although the majority of the Russian-speaking respondents in both countries define their place of living as home, far from the same numbers of respondents in either country actually feel themselves 'at home': 38.0% of the respondents in Germany answered that they do feel 'at home' in this country, while 50.9% in Norway answered the same. 38.6% of the respondents in Germany and 35.7% in Norway did not feel 'at home', while 23.5% in Germany and 13.6% in Norway were unable to decide on this question.

Through a series of in-depth expert interviews, the study sought to identify factors influencing whether the migrants felt 'at home':

> *The feeling of being 'at home' is dependent on the time spent in a new country, as well as who remains in the home country. (39-year-old Galina, Norway, translated by authors)*

> *If everything goes well in the family, I feel at home. (39-year-old Galina, Norway, translated by authors)*

The Russian person is not a patriot of a fixed place or a piece of land. He feels good where he is, and where he has a wish to succeed. His cultural space – the habits, rituals and traditions which he identifies himself with – he always carry with him, in his home, in his soul, etc. (38-year-old Elena, Germany, translated by authors)

Feeling at home depends on the job situation and the lifestyle. Those who want to feel at home in their new place of living, often succeed. (45-year-old Oxana, Germany, translated by authors)

Feeling at home depends on the level of integration, and the second generation of migrants usually feel themselves at home. (34-year-old Denis, Germany, translated by authors)

There is basis to claim that the interior of a person's house and the objects in one's home create a comfortable atmosphere as well as contribute to the feeling of being at home. At the same time, these aspects reveal the identity of its owner and his connections with a particular culture. Research has shown that there are three main groups of objects which may be referred to as 'diasporic' and are often used for maintaining emotional contact with Russia and the Russian identity. The first group is different types of souvenirs such as matrioshkas, samovars, wooden spoons, khokhloma, etc. The second group of objects is religious orthodox objects – often icons – while the third group is books in Russian.

Recent research of Russian migrants to the USA and Finland (Boym, 1994; Zborovskiy and Shirokova, 2003) confirm that these groups of objects have a symbolic meaning, often connected with nostalgia about Russia (Boym, 1994), which allows us to deduce that the meaning of these objects is connected to the cultural identity of the migrants, which in turn is reflected inside the home. At the same time, these objects help to create a comfortable space as well as contribute to the feeling of being at home.

To clarify this issue, respondents were asked to provide examples of objects often found in the homes of Russian-speaking migrants which connect them with their previous place of living, as well as describe distinctive features of the interior of their homes:

In the houses of Russians, there are often folklore objects revealing the presence of Russian people. There are often icons and the interior is often more 'rich' in terms of the furniture style and chosen colors, than in Norwegians' houses. (42-year-old Natalya, Norway, translated by authors)

Young people in central regions and from large cities decorate their houses pretty much as the locals. The only elements which may provide clues to the country they grew up in are books, paintings, family albums, and souvenirs. Older generations have a closer connection to their previous life – the content of their refrigerator, their menu, and the interior. (38-year-old Elena, Germany, translated by authors)

In the houses of Russians, there are objects to remind them of their home country. From time to time they have such items due to cultural-patriotic feelings, but often due to practicalities. (44-year-old Maria, Germany, translated by authors)

5 Discussion and conclusion

The history and the structure of the Russian-speaking communities in Germany and Norway are very different from each other. This group in Germany is very large with a complex structure and a vast number of resources specifically provided for its members. A large part of the members of this society moved with their close relatives, and even entire family. In Norway, the Russian-speaking community is rather small and consists mainly of women who came to this country due to cross-cultural marriages without bringing other family members with them. The communication within these communities has been found to possess very specific characteristics.

Members in Norway seem to have rather limited access to events related to their Russian heritage, most of which are organized through language courses, religious organizations, as well as the Embassy of the Russian Federation. Another characteristic feature of this group is preference towards indirect ways of communication, such as the internet and telephone, instead of face-to-face contact. This is also true for communications with compatriots in the home country. This mode of communication seems to be a vital indication of a lack of strong emotional attachment to the community, which would suggest that the ethnic temperature of the Russian-speaking migrant community in Norway is 'cold'. The Russian-speaking community in Germany seems to have a tendency toward having a 'hot' ethnic temperature, based on the frequency of direct communication between its members, as well as the presence of a large and active network uniting the members in different activities.

A commonality between the two migrant communities was discovered in the area of preferences towards the work environment. Thus, the ideal working environment, according to representatives of both groups, did not consist mainly of compatriots, but was rather a mixed environment, preferably with a local manager.

The successful adaptation of the migrants to a new place of living may be partially measured through the subjective feeling of being 'at home'. According to the research, although having a large support network and resourceful community surrounding them, fewer than 40% of the respondents in Germany answered positively to this question. At the same time, more than 50% of the migrants asked mentioned that they indeed felt 'at home' in Norway. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants in the study in both countries named 'home' to be the place they live now.

As could also be seen from data discussed above, one of the largest problems of Russian-speaking migrants in Germany and Norway is identity categorization. Of course, that is a topic for further research and clarification, but it could be supposed that while in Germany this problem is mainly based on the history of major migrant groups and their common Soviet past, in Norway this issue is mainly routed in the personal experiences of migrants.

In the majority of 'Russian' homes, three main groups of objects which may be linked to a Russian identity were found: Souvenirs and folklore objects, books in Russian, and religious objects. Another question related to the migrants' identity was their wish to maintain the Russian language. Although the motivation for maintaining the language was different between the two communities, the desire to keep the language was clearly expressed by representatives of both groups.

Based on the aspects above and in particular due to the indicators in the sphere of communication within the communities, it would seem that the Russian-speaking migrant community in Germany possesses a stronger vitality than its counterpart in Norway. Furthermore, the research has revealed a number of factors influencing the concepts of vitality and ethnic temperature, indicating a successful employment of such theories on these groups. However, further studies will provide a more detailed view.

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Review

Language ideologies and the globalization of 'standard' Spanish
Darren Paffey (2012)

London and New York: Bloomsbury. Pp. vii + 196.
ISBN 978-1-44-11874-06

Reviewed by Angela Bartens

The volume under review is a revised version of Darren Paffey's 2008 University of Southampton doctoral dissertation. In it, the author addresses the issue of language ideologies in the globalization of Standard Spanish. Or 'Standard' Spanish, as he terms it. He considers that nowadays, the media constitute a or even the primary vehicle for the spread of ideologies about the Spanish language. Therefore, the material analyzed was gathered from two major Spanish newspapers, *El País* and *ABC*, over the time span 1997–2007, a period when the Royal Spanish Academy (Real Academia Española, RAE) was already clearly committed to its current modernization process. Diagnostic of this commitment, the period examined starts with the First International Congress of the Spanish Language (Congreso Internacional de Lengua Española, CILE) and terminates with its fourth edition. In addition, the *Panhispanic Dictionary of Doubts* (*Diccionario panhispánico de dudas*, DPD) was published in 2005 in response to the tens of thousands of questions received by the distinct language academies of the Spanish-speaking world grouped together under the umbrella of the Association of Spanish Language Academies (Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española, ASALE). The choice of precisely these newspapers is justified by the fact that within Spanish mainstream journalism, *El País* mostly seconds the views of the Socialist Party, *ABC* those of the center-right Popular Party. As with

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most studies couched in the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the purpose of the book is to raise awareness instead of constituting just an 'academic exercise'. In addition, the author points out that understanding how standard language ideology works, enables us to challenge it (pp. 4–5).

Chapter 1 of the volume is a general presentation of language ideologies, CDA and its aims, and media discourse. Paffey argues that '[o]ne of the many things that discourse can achieve is the legitimization and naturalization of particular understandings of society […] through the manufacturing [of] consent' (p. 25). In this case, consent is manufactured to justify the need for standardization as a response to linguistic globalization. Major topics of the chapter – and the entire study – are the role Spanish plays in the present-day world as well as the ensuing question of its linguistic unity and the role of the RAE and other 'language guardians' in this discussion. As discourses target the macro level of society through the micro level of texts and specific linguistic structures, the study 'investigates lexical choices (classifications, collocations, ideologically significant/contested terms, connotative vs denotative meaning, metaphors, metonyms, synonyms) and grammatical choices (agency, nominalizations, active vs passive, modality, deixis)' (p. 29).

Chapter 2 deals with language authorities and the standardization of Spanish and shows the interrelationships between these actors and the trafficking of influence which potentially (and actually) results from these connections. First, all Spanish language authorities – or 'guardians' – depend in one way or another on the Government of Spain which has, for obvious reasons, a keen interest in educational issues, a fact particularly emphasized in discourses targeted at national audiences. As far as The Cervantes Institute (Instituto Cervantes, IC), the institution in charge of teaching, learning and promoting the Spanish language and culture in countries the official language of which is not Spanish since its founding in 1991, is concerned, the King of Spain is its honorary president and the incumbent president of the Spanish Government is its executive president. The incumbent president of the RAE is president of Fundéu, a 2005-founded language planning institution which, for instance, offers advice on correct language use, has made agreements with the media, and awards certificates to companies using 'good language'. With the backing of transnational corporations such as IBM, Microsoft, and Telefónica, the RAE is rising to the challenge of an increasingly technology-literate society.

Chapter 3 discusses the linguistic unity of the global Spanish-speaking community. Whereas the RAE actively 'promotes the idea of unity and an international community to which all Spanish speakers belong' (p. 82), we are

rather dealing with an imagined community, *pace* Anderson (1983). The mainly Spain-based language authorities (and the companies behind them) associate Spanish with democratic values, solidarity, and peace, stressing the relational value of 'us' vs. 'them' (cf. Fairclough, 2001; van Dijk, 2003) in a common homeland based on a common cultural heritage and Pan-Hispanic unity – which, in turn, justifies standardization. However, this common heritage is unmistakeably associated with a historical territory: Spain and, more specifically, Castile.

In Chapter 4, the role and authority of the RAE and other guardians of the Spanish language come under closer scrutiny. While the RAE repeatedly stresses that its mission is descriptively to mirror and capture actual language use to the effect that the agency and responsibility for language change and innovation is placed with the users, its role continues to be, in practice, highly prescriptive. Indeed, the RAE justifies being the leading language policy and planning institution in the Hispanic world through its expertise arising from the historicity, continuity, and effectiveness of its activities. Whereas the RAE declares to labor at the service of the language and its unity, Paffey demonstrates that it clearly does so also at the service of the Spanish state (p. 125). The other guardians discussed in this chapter are the King of Spain, the IC, and the media.

Chapter 5 examines the role of the Spanish language in the world. Albeit a pluricentric language, *pace* Kloss (1967), the fact that modern capitalist discourses highlight the economic value of languages has led the RAE and other language guardians to emphasize the existence of a common, global, even 'total' Spanish. The Spanish from nowhere is to become the Spanish for everywhere (p. 153). However, as the language guardians and the commercial entities supporting them are predominantly based in Spain, Spain continues to dominate the norm, just not as overtly as before. The language guardians' discourses stress anonymity and downplay linguistic colonialism as well as the fact that Spanish constitutes a linguistic vehicle to assure Spain's economic, political, and cultural interests. Indeed, Paffey argues that the political, diplomatic, and commercial unity constitutes the hidden agenda of the RAE and the other language guardians which identify English as a particular threat. As a result, one of the goals of the Pan-Hispanic Language Policy is to enter the domains where English predominates and which thence have been pointed out as deficit domains of Spanish: scientific publishing, information technology, the internet, and international diplomatic forums. The 21st century has been declared a new golden age for Spanish – but it appears to be likewise the era of the economic re-colonization of Latin America.

In the Conclusions, Paffey summarizes the findings of his study. He found the newspaper press to constitute a discursive space which effectively carries out the RAE's prescriptive discourse and rightfully concludes that language standardization is not a value-free activity (p. 180), as ideological and political factors impact upon and inform public debates on language standardization and the discourses and practices of the institutions involved (p. 172).

This exemplary study shows in a minutious way what is behind the discourses on the standardization of global Spanish, and the 'historical legitimization' of Spain to act in Latin America (cf. del Valle, 2012: 476–477). In addition to functioning as the vehicle of the economic, political, and cultural interests of a specific nation or group of nations – and obviously also as a result of this – a language gains and maintains its market value (cf. Bourdieu, 1992). The case of Spanish is unique at least in the following respects: the former existence of an extensive colonial empire which came to an end with the loss of the last colonies in 1898, leading to a national trauma and the strengthening of the Pan-Hispanic Language Policy (e.g., del Valle, 2012); it is set in the tradition of language academies of the Romance language-speaking or -dominated world which has led to the founding of academies for totally unrelated languages such as the Guatemalan Academy of Mayan Languages (Academia de Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala, ALMG); there is a very strong tendency among all speakers to associate correct language use with a pronunciation which maximizes the phoneme-grapheme correspondence (cf. Bello, 1963). I consider that these characteristics, in conjunction, distinguish the case of Spanish from, for instance, the case of German. But there are also many common features: the Federal Republic of Germany is currently actively pursuing its economic, political, and cultural interests especially in Eastern Europe first and foremost through its network of Goethe Institutes. This expansionist language policy dates back to the 1880s but has lately been construed as an apolitical and ahistorical endeavor which, of course, it is not (cf. Nord, 2006). German, too, is a polycentric language where one state has assumed the leading role through expansionist language policy (cf. Borčić and Wollinger, 2008). Besides the valuable suggestions for future research made by Paffey which deal with language ideologies in the Hispanic world (pp. 180–181), it might therefore be insightful to compare the latest developments in language policy and language ideologies across different language areas.

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Review

Speaking Pittsburghese: The story of a dialect
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Reviewed by Holman Tse

The northeastern US city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is the setting of Barbara Johnstone's book about the story of a very distinctive dialect of American English popularly referred to as *Pittsburghese*. It is a dialect characterized by a set of lexical items such as the word *gumband* ('rubber band'), a set of phonological features such as /aw/ monophthongization (as in the word *downtown* [daːntaːn], also spelled as *dahntahn*), and morphosyntactic features such as the *need/want + X'ed* construction (ex: *this needs washed* vs. *this needs to be washed* in Standard English). Yet, what makes this dialect special is more than simply its linguistic features. As Johnstone shows, Pittsburghese is also special in how it came in to being, in how people have become aware of its existence, and in how people talk about it. A common theme that resonates throughout the book is that Pittsburghers talk a lot about Pittsburghese. Why is this so? How did this formerly unnoticed way of speaking become so consciously linked to local identity? Johnstone addresses these questions by examining the dialect from multiple angles. Each chapter presents a different piece of this captivating story.

The story begins with a linguistic description of Pittsburgh speech in Chapter 1. Here, Johnstone makes an important distinction between Pittsburgh speech, which refers to the local dialect as it is actually spoken, and Pittsburghese, which refers to the dialect 'as it is locally imagined' (p. 17). The differences are clearly outlined in more than a dozen pages of tables that list features of both Pittsburgh speech and Pittsburghese. Many of the lexical, phonological, and morphosyntactic

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features that characterize Pittsburgh speech are not even noticed by speakers. Yet, people also describe noticeable features that are not unique to Pittsburgh as part of Pittsburghese. What is important, Johnstone argues, is that Pittsburghese is more than simply about a set of features. It is also about 'how people act, how they interact, and how they experience the world' (p. 35).

The theoretical framework of the book, presented in Chapter 2, is grounded in cultural geography and semiotics. Johnstone follows recent scholarship in cultural geography by treating place as a social construct rather than as simply a physical location. Her approach is also phenomenological in its treatment of place as something that individuals experience. Yet, at the same time, Johnstone also considers material aspects of place as tied to topography and economics. The model of semiotics used is one that builds on the work of linguistic anthropologists. Key concepts include *indexicality* (Silverstein, 2003; Eckert, 2008), which refers to a relationship between signs and meaning, and *enregisterment* (Agha, 2003), which refers to the process through which linguistic forms become linked with a social meaning.

The explanation of how Pittsburgh speech became *indexically* linked to the city of Pittsburgh and how certain features consequently became *enregistered* as Pittsburghese begins in Chapter 3 with an overview of the history of the region. The first major group of English speakers in southwestern Pennsylvania were the Scotch-Irish who arrived in the 18th century. This set the model of English for subsequent generations of Pittsburghers, including the many Eastern European immigrant groups that settled in the region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These immigrants came primarily for employment opportunities in the steel factories, which would transform Pittsburgh into one of the wealthiest cities in America. Throughout much of this period, however, the mountainous topography of southwestern Pennsylvania isolated residents from the rest of the country making it possible for local speech to diverge from varieties of English spoken elsewhere. Then came increased mobility during World War II and even more mobility following the collapse of the steel industry in the 1970s when many Pittsburghers lost their jobs and moved out of the region. Johnstone argues that the socio-economic history and increased mobility in the second half of the 20th century created the social and material conditions for many Pittsburghers to notice differences in speech.

Yet, different Pittsburghers have come to notice Pittsburgh speech in different ways. Some hardly notice anything distinctive at all. Johnstone's phenomenological approach is highlighted in Chapter 4, which discusses experimental studies showing how different people perceive the actual features that are part of the dialect in different ways. These differences, however, are not always about

correlations with particular demographic groups. Johnstone argues that individual experiences can reveal many complexities about variation and change that are not clearly visible when the focus is on sociolinguistic groups.

Chapter 5 focuses on how the links between language and place are made in social interaction. This is illustrated in an analysis of sociolinguistic interviews as well as an online discussion forum in which speakers talk about Pittsburghese. The local dialect has become a popular topic of conversation among Pittsburghers whenever they discuss their city. Some have positive nostalgic feelings while others have negative opinions about the dialect because of a perceived link to working-class life. Yet, in all cases, there is a clear link between dialect and place. Talk about talk is, thus, a locally meaningful social practice that creates Pittsburghese even if people have different attitudes about it. This social practice also contributes to the spread of ideas about this unique dialect.

Chapter 6 moves from face-to-face interaction to a history of public discourse about Pittsburghese. An important theme in this chapter is the question of expertise, an issue that has frequently come into play in public discussions about the dialect. Johnstone shows that from the 1950s to the present, there have been a variety of actors including linguists, native Pittsburghers, and residents who moved to Pittsburgh from elsewhere who have all made claims to expertise about Pittsburgh speech. While frequent contestation no doubt contributes to dialect enregisterment, Johnstone argues that there are also material constraints to this process based on available technology. For example, printed publications such as newspapers and folk dictionaries were made possible in the second half of the 20th century. Yet, they had limited interactive potential compared to interactive websites in the early 21st century, which have made it possible for people to talk publicly about Pittsburghese in a way that was not previously possible.

Chapter 7 describes commodification as another way in which Pittsburghese becomes enregistered. This is exemplified in some of the products that have been sold over the years, including t-shirts that have lists of Pittsburghese words and even toy dolls that speak Pittsburghese. These commodities have become popular consumer items for Pittsburghers whether they are still living in the city or have moved elsewhere and have become nostalgic about their former home. They provide yet another way in which ideas about Pittsburghese circulate within a capitalist economy.

Chapter 8 presents yet another angle of the Pittsburghese story by focusing on performance of the dialect. This chapter includes excerpts from sociolinguistic interviews and radio shows in which people consciously perform Pittsburghese by exaggerating features associated with the dialect. Johnstone argues that such oral performances can both expand and loosen the forms that become linked to

Pittsburghese. This is due to the very nature of linguistic performance, which Johnstone describes as something that 'calls attention to itself, putting on display not only what the message means but also how' (p. 226). Thus, while some listeners may focus more on the message, others may focus more on the how. Yet, there are multiple ways of interpreting both the meaning and the how. So Pittsburghese features linked to Pittsburgh the place could alternatively be interpreted as indexically linked to gender or to working-class identity, or the performance could simply be seen as something funny. The creative nature of performance creates multiple possibilities allowing Pittsburghese to circulate into new territory.

Finally, Chapter 9 discusses the history of the word *yinz* (a second person plural pronoun), a word that originally was not noticed by Pittsburghers as anything special. In recent years, however, it has become the most visible and well-known feature of the dialect. The contexts of usage have expanded. New forms have also emerged such as *yinzer* and *Yinzburgh*. Even non-native Pittsburghers who have moved to the city have found the word *yinz* to be hip. By showing how this single word has taken on so many new meanings and usages, it is clear that Pittsburghese has a future even if dialect levelling has meant fewer people speaking with the features traditionally associated with the dialect.

In a world in which people talk about globalization being a threat to local culture, the story of Pittsburghese shows that the local is still very much alive in at least one place in the world. In telling this story, Johnstone successfully weaves together interdisciplinary insights from cultural geography, linguistic anthropology, sociology, and history. She also shows how micro-level social interactions are connected to macro-level social processes. Thorough in scope and description, *Speaking Pittsburghese: The story of a dialect* is an impressive masterpiece that pushes sociolinguists and dialectologists to take a more multi-faceted approach to the study of dialects.

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