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# 4. RUSSIAN AS A LINGUA FRANCA

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This chapter surveys recent work on Russian as a lingua franca in the territory of the former Soviet Union. This discussion is subdivided into three sections. First, I review recent historiographies and sociolinguistic analyses of russification policies and practices of the Russian empire and the USSR. Then, I review the work on the changes in the status of Russian in the fourteen post-Soviet countries, which display a wide spectrum of approaches: from continuous Russian dominance in Belarus to vigorous derussification in the Baltic countries. I end with an overview of methodological and theoretical challenges facing this area of study and of its contributions to debates on minority language rights, to definitions of postcolonialism and diaspora, and to the study of negotiation and transformation of identities. I also point to productive directions for future research, such as microsociolinguistic studies of regional varieties of Russian, of language choice and use in daily communication, and of intergenerational transmission.

## A Recent Example: Using Russian As Lingua Franca

The last time I used Russian as a lingua franca was in the summer of 2005, at a conference in Amsterdam where I found myself in the company of a colleague from Russia who now lives in the United States, a colleague from Lithuania who currently lives in Israel, and two graduate students, one from Belarus and one from Germany, working on their degrees in the Netherlands. None of us were ethnically Russian, but for three of us, born respectively in Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, Russian was a native language, and for the other two, the Lithuanian and the German, who grew up in the former German Democratic Republic, it was a strong second language, imposed through the Soviet-era education. There were several reasons we settled on it. First of all, it was the most convenient language, because two colleagues were stronger in Russian than in English. Second, we enjoyed the opportunity to practice it and to laugh at our own loan translations, as all of us now live outside of the Russian-speaking context and are plagued by concerns about language attrition (incidentally, the topic of the conference). Some of us also derived joy from flouting the convention of using English as the lingua franca of



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international communication. Yet I could not help but wonder: How much longer will Russian remain a lingua franca for those born outside of Russia proper and what factors will affect its status?

These questions are also asked in the current scholarship on Russian as a lingua franca. The key characteristic of this work is its interdisciplinarity: Studies of russification in the Russian empire and the USSR and of derussification in post-Soviet countries are carried out by sociolinguists, historians, sociologists, political scientists, and language policy and education scholars in post-Soviet countries and in the West. The resulting diversity of views, perspectives, and approaches makes the field extremely vibrant, yet it also makes a scholarly dialogue across geographic and disciplinary boundaries a very challenging enterprise.

The purpose of this overview is to bring together different strands of study of Russian as a lingua franca and to offer an introduction to the topic with the focus on the work that appeared in the past decade. This research can be subdivided into two main categories. The first consists of historiographies and sociolinguistic analyses of language policies of the Russian empire and the USSR. The second, rapidly growing category, examines the changing status of Russian in post-Soviet states. In what follows, I will discuss each set of studies in turn. For reasons of space, I will not discuss studies of Russian in Eastern Europe, nor studies of Russian in immigrant communities, where it is also used as a lingua franca among immigrants from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.

## Russification Policies and Practices

### Language Policies in the Russian Empire

In the post-Soviet era of national self-definition, language policies of the Russian empire have attracted new interest from both linguists and historians (Alpatov, 2000; Belikov & Krysin, 2001; Metuzāle-Kangere & Ozolins, 2005; Schlyter, 2004; Weeks, 1996, 2001). To date, the most comprehensive, albeit not always the most objective, overview of the language situation in the Russian empire can be found in Belikov and Krysin (2001, pp. 332–368). The authors show that a traditionally multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic state, Russia had no consistent language policy until the 18th century (a conclusion also reached by historians, cf. Weeks, 2001). In many contexts russification took place very slowly or not at all, and Russian administration was content to use translators to communicate with local populations. In other contexts, such as Siberia, Russian, in its pidginized form, became the lingua franca of the local populations. Peter the Great, according to Belikov and Krysin (2001), was the first to formulate consistent—and fairly liberal—policies with regard to ethnic and linguistic minorities, keeping German as the official language in the Baltic territories, Swedish as the official language in Finland, and Polish in the Kingdom of Poland.

A change in language policy in the direction of russification occurred in mid-19th century under Alexander II whose administration aimed to unify the empire

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through a number of measures, including the spread of Russian. Thus, after the Polish rebellion of 1863, Russian was designated the official language of the Kingdom of Poland. By 1872 all secular education there was offered in Russian; it also became a required subject in Polish and Baltic religious schools. A 1873 decree prohibited Polish-speaking students in gymnasiums to use their language even during the breaks. Similar measures were taken to limit the uses of Ukrainian, Belarusian, Moldovan, Lithuanian, and German. In the Caucasus and in Central Asia, local populations were now obligated to study Russian—their assimilation and russification through education became one of the key goals of the new administration. Particularly strong incentives to invest in Russian-language competence were offered to local elites: As a result, by the end of the 19th century co-opted elites and intelligentsia throughout the empire, from the Baltics to Georgia and Kazakhstan, displayed fluency in Russian (Laitin, 1998).

Scholars who examine tsarist language policies stress that russification often assumed different meanings in different contexts: In the context of the Baltics, for instance, it meant to reduce the cultural power and influence of Poles in Lithuania (Weeks, 2001) and Germans in Latvia and Estonia (Metuzāle-Kangere & Ozolins, 2005). Among the key russification policies was replacement of local languages by Russian in primary education and in secular establishments of secondary and higher education. Russification was also promoted through publishing practices, whereby local-language and bilingual newspapers were replaced by Russian-language editions. These policies were not consistently applied throughout the empire—rather, there existed numerous contradictions and discrepancies between laws and policies, on the one hand, and specific measures, on the other. Some laws and measures were met with either resistance or dismissal. In the Muslim communities, for instance, Russian language never moved beyond the bureaucratic structures and native languages enjoyed an unprecedented revival. This revival spread to other languages when a more tolerant language policy was introduced after the revolution of 1905. During the decade that followed, numbers of minority language schools increased, and there appeared literature and periodicals in a variety of languages, including Ukrainian, Belarusian, Polish, Georgian, Latvian, Estonian, and Lithuanian.

Existing scholarship also indicates that the Russian government applied russification policies selectively to particular ethnic groups. Thus, russification of Orthodox Christian Slavs, such as non-Catholic Ukrainians and Belarusians, was considered critical (in fact, in some contexts these peoples were simply considered Little Russians). In the case of racial and religious minorities, such as Kalmyks or Uzbeks, russification was considered less important, and in the case of Jews, russification and assimilation were oftentimes forcefully prevented (Alpatov, 2000; Weeks, 2001). Class and opportunities for further social mobility were also at play, consequently, regional elites were more russified than members of the lower social strata (Laitin, 1998).

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## Language Policies in the USSR

Although there are still relatively few sources on language policies and practices of the Russian empire, recent years witnessed an appearance of several new studies of the Soviet-era policies (Alpatov, 2000; Grenoble, 2003; Smith, 1998) that complement earlier work on this topic (Blank, 1988; Bruchis, 1982, 1988; Kreindler, 1982, 1985; Lewis, 1972). Early studies of Soviet language policies often suffered from problems of access to empirical data and archival materials and from overdependence on rather problematic census data. The collapse of the USSR and ensuing transition to various forms of democracy opened, or at least facilitated, access to potential research sites and to demographic data and historic documents, buried in a variety of archives. Both post-Soviet and foreign scholars rushed to take advantage of this opening and to see what light the new data can shed on language practices of the Soviet era.

Two monographs occupy a central place among recent works based on archival research: Alpatov's (2000) overview of language politics of the USSR and the post-Soviet states and Smith's (1998) insightful and nuanced study of language reforms introduced in the USSR between 1917 and 1953. Using a variety of documents and memoirs, the two authors confirm the conclusion reached in earlier work that the goal of language policies advanced post-1917 by Lenin, Stalin, and their followers was *korenizatsiia* (nativization) and linguistic autonomy, with Russian used as a lingua franca in the central government and in the army. To remake the country into a new image, Bolsheviks needed to convey their ideas promptly to people who spoke more than a hundred different languages and were often illiterate to boot (Smith, 1998). Consequently, the policies advanced in the 1920s aimed to support and develop national and ethnic languages on the assumption that the new regime will be best understood and accepted by various minority groups if it functions in their own languages. These equitable goals translated into systematic efforts to ensure that local administrations, courts, and schools function in local languages, to translate world literature into local languages, to standardize titular languages, to support the development of new literary languages, to create alphabets for languages that did not yet have literacy, and to teach local populations to read and write in their native languages. Linguists became the government's primary agents in these language and literacy reforms, using their theories and methods in the service of language planning.

The change from pluralist policies of the 1920s to assimilationism and russification of the 1930s is traditionally presented as a dramatic pendulum swing in the scholarship in the field. Smith (1998) uses a variety of documents from Russian, Azerbaijani and Uzbek archives to show that Soviet language policies at all times had a dual imperative—nativization and russification—and that even when pluralist tendencies were dominant, centrist tendencies were still present. Thus, in the 1920s, concurrent with nativization, there were increasing concerns about the poor mastery of Russian by non-Russians, followed by public campaigns to promote Russian and improve its teaching in places like Azerbaijan. The spread of Russian was also assisted by the difficulties experienced in Latinization of local alphabets: "National

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elites preferred to use Russian in their official business, sensing that Latin, a script without history or tradition, lacked promise for career advancement" (Smith, 1998, p. 137).

Over time, poorly conceived and hastily implemented standardization projects and language reforms began to fall into disarray, and the administration developed a new appreciation for Russian as a language of state consolidation, industrialization, and collectivization. Prompted by concerns about "nationalist bourgeois" attitudes, in the early 1930s the focus of language planning shifted. Language propaganda began to glorify the great and mighty Russian language, compared to which all other languages were implicitly substandard. The ensuing russification had taken a three-pronged approach. In the area of orthography, a decree published in 1935 required the transfer of all Soviet languages with Latin alphabets to Cyrillic ones. Because Latin alphabets only began to be introduced, this decree did not change much in practice, but it did signal an important shift in language attitudes, as the change facilitated the study of Russian. In the area of language standardization, efforts were made to base grammars of the local languages on the Russian grammar and to ensure that Russian was the only or at least the main source of neologisms. The result was a massive influx of Russian terms into local languages, in particular in domains concerned with socialism, communism, industrialization, science, and technology.

Finally and most importantly, Russian was imposed on all areas of life where local languages may have functioned earlier. In particular, to address concerns about poor teaching of Russian to non-Russian students, a 1938 decree required an obligatory study of Russian in all schools of the Soviet republics and ethnic regions starting with the primary school. Whereas most schools already offered Russian, the decree established a set of universal standards, centralized the curriculum, increased the number of hours dedicated to Russian, and made textbook publication and teacher training a priority. In doing so, the decree highlighted the role of Russian as a de facto official language of the country and a necessary prerequisite of a true Soviet citizen. Smith (1998) notes, however, that as a standard the decree remained unfulfilled and Russian language teaching in non-Russian schools continued to be in dire straits. An additional russification strategy was continuous immigration of Russian speakers into traditionally non-Russian territories, such as the Baltic republics occupied at the end of World War II.

In the postwar climate, the language of the victorious army became an even more sacred object, and Russian classes were described in the party documents as the preferred foundation for "the cultivation of Soviet patriotism and national pride, love of the motherland, and loyalty to the ideas of communism" (cited in Smith, 1998, p. 164). The new standards for teaching Russian were set by none other than comrade Stalin in his celebrated *Marxism and the Problems of Linguistics* (1951). Stalin also declared that non–Russian-speaking Soviet citizens should strive for bilingualism in Russian and the local language, using his own example, whereby he acquired Georgian in his childhood and Russian in adulthood.

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Under subsequent administrations, russification continued to intensify and numbers of schools offering education in languages other than Russian continued to decrease. For instance, if in 1960 secondary education was offered in the Russian federation in 47 languages, in 1970 it was only offered in 30 languages, and by 1982, in 17. By 1974–1975 in some of the Soviet republics, in particular in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belorussia, numbers of Russian-language schools superseded those of local language schools (Alpatov, 2000). Russian also replaced national languages in these republics in the administration and the media. As a result, the overwhelming majority of Soviet citizens spoke Russian either as a first or a second language. At the same time, notes Alpatov (2000), postwar language policy has not been consistent, and periods of intense russification were followed by periods of pluralism and tolerance.

Overall, access to historic archives and increasing interdisciplinarity have been extremely beneficial for the study of Soviet language policies and practices. In their attempts to understand the sources and the impact of the policies, sociolinguists now go beyond the traditional sources of information, such as census data or data on publications in particular languages, and successfully integrate archival documents, memoirs, and interviews, displaying an unprecedented richness of factual information and detail. At the same time, the newly uncovered documents serve different agendas in different contexts. Some scholars use the materials to argue that Soviet authorities perpetrated linguicide on their native languages (cf. Masenko, 2005), and others examine both the failures and the accomplishments of the Soviet era, such as language standardization, creation of new literary languages, and rapid growth of literacy rates (Alpatov, 2000; Schlyter, 2004; Smith, 1998). All agree, however, that titular languages of the USSR enjoyed the right to autonomy but not the right to equality (Smith, 1998) and that minority languages without the titular status were even more disenfranchised than titular languages.

## Derussification in the Post-Soviet States

The situation has changed dramatically after the breakup of the Soviet Union, when Russian lost its status of a supra-ethnic language, and 36 million Russian speakers—only 25 million of whom were ethnic Russians—found themselves in the so-called Near Abroad countries (for more demographic information, see Zevelev, 2001). In the rest of this chapter, I will follow the tradition of the field and refer to this population interchangeably as a Russian diaspora and Russian-speaking population, with the understanding that not all of its members are ethnically Russian. The presence of this, often monolingual, population created major challenges for the nation-building efforts of local authorities. In several places the situation was further complicated by high levels of russification among members of the titular nation and by the practice of using Russian in all or almost all domains of public life. Consequently, derussification and dominance shift in the direction of titular languages emerged as the key goals of post-Soviet language policy and planning.

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Kreindler's 1997 paper entitled *Multilingualism in the successor states of the Soviet Union* published in *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* offered a comprehensive overview of the language situation in post-Soviet countries in the years after the break-up. Rather than duplicate this paper, I will take up the discussion where it ended and examine the impact of post-Soviet language policies on the present and future of Russian as a lingua franca in the fourteen states. In doing so, I will rely on a variety of studies, including several large-scale surveys and ethnographies (Laitin, 1998; Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001; Lebedeva, 1995; Savoskul, 2001; Smith, Law, Wilson, Bohr, & Allworth, 1998).

In terms of language policies and practices, current language situations in post-Soviet countries can be roughly divided into five categories: (a) dual-language policy with Russian functioning de facto as the main language (Belarus); (b) dual-language policy with titular language as the state language and Russian as an official language or the language of interethnic communication (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan); (c) single language policy with de facto bilingualism in the titular language and Russian (Ukraine); (d) single language policy with Russian functioning de facto in some public contexts (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), and (e) single language policy with the titular language as the main language both de jure and de facto (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia).

What is particularly intriguing about these choices is that at times countries similar in terms of linguistic, cultural, or demographic factors approached derussification in very different ways. Two clusters of factors are commonly used to explain these differences. The first cluster involves historic, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic factors, such as the history of the incorporation of the country in question, and economic, political, and religious orientation of the new country and its relationship with Russia. Thus, countries that were incorporated by force and those that orient themselves toward the West would be most likely to attempt immediate derussification, whereas countries that were created during the Soviet times and ones that maintain an economic relationship with Russia may be more likely to agree to some Russian maintenance.

The second cluster considers the interplay between demographic factors and linguistic competence and attitudes of the local population, including the level of russification reached by the time of the collapse of the USSR. This cluster includes the following six factors: (a) the size of the Russian diaspora with regard to the overall population; (b) the role of the Russian diaspora in the local economy; (c) the level of Russian competence and attitudes toward Russian among members of the titular ethnicity and other ethnicities; (d) the level of titular language competence and attitudes toward the language among members of the titular ethnicity; (e) the level of titular language competence and attitudes toward the language among members of the Russian diaspora and other ethnic minorities; (f) distance between Russian and the titular language and culture.

Thus, the presence of a large Russian diaspora in the context of high russification of the titulars may lead to acceptance of the ongoing role of Russian

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(e.g., Kazakhstan), while a large diaspora in the context of low levels of russification among the titulars, high levels of language loyalty, and negative attitudes toward Russian, is likely to elicit immediate attempts at derussification (e.g., Latvia). The distribution of Russian and titular nationals in the local economy and migration patterns of the Russian diaspora further complicate the picture. For instance, Central Asian states, and in particular Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, have adopted pro-Russian language laws partially to decrease emigration of highly qualified professionals. In contrast, Latvia and Estonia, where local resources appear sufficient, adopted their stringent laws in part to encourage emigration of the Russian diaspora.

Belarus. Belarus is the only post-Soviet country—outside of Russia proper—where Russian has remained a dominant language, despite the initial efforts to revive Belarusian. The Constitution adopted in 1994 proclaimed Belarusian the sole state language, but after a 1995 referendum where the majority voted to make Russian the second official language, the Constitution was revised in 1996 (for a detailed discussion of events that led to this revision, see Goujon, 1999; Koriakov, 2002; Zaprudski, 2002). Currently, Article 17 of the Constitution designates both Belarusian and Russian as official languages of the Republic of Belarus. Russian however functions as a de facto main language: the numbers of Russian-language secondary schools continue to increase and higher education establishments function exclusively in Russian, with the exception of Belarusian language and literature programs (Koriakov, 2002). Russian is also the language of official institutions and even the president's official website exists only in two languages, Russian and English (http://www.president.gov.by/).

The dominant position of Russian in Belarus is explained by a combination of factors: (a) the highest level of russification of members of the titular ethnicity in all of the republics (according to the census of 1999, 59 percent of Belarusians use Russian as their main language, Koriakov, 2002); (b) a weak sense of national identity among many Belarusians, accompanied by low language loyalty; (c) a traditionally high prestige of Russian as a language of science, culture, technology, and the media; (d) typological similarity between the two languages that made the transition to Russian easier; and (e) russophone attitudes of the country's post-Soviet government headed by the dictatorial Aleksandr Lukashenko (Alpatov, 2000; Goujon, 1999; Koriakov, 2002; Kreindler, 1997; Mechkovskaya, 1994, 2003, 2005; Smith et al., 1998; Woolhiser, 1995; Zaprudski, 2002; Zevelev, 2001).

Ukraine. A different approach to Russian is taken in Ukraine, even though both the degree of russification of ethnic Ukrainians and linguistic and cultural proximity bear similarity to the situation in Belarus. On declaring independence in 1991, Ukraine found itself with the largest Russian diaspora of all the former Soviet republics, numbering 11.4 million out of 47 million Ukrainian citizens. In addition, 72 percent of eastern Ukrainians spoke Russian as their first language (Zevelev, 2001), and so did Jews and members of many other ethnic minorities. Thus, for the majority of the population Russian was either a native or a fluent second language.

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Nevertheless, according to Article 10 of the 1996 Constitution, Ukrainian is the only state language of Ukraine. Outside of Crimea, Ukrainian is now the sole language of official documentation and the main language of secondary and higher education. Russian is taught alongside other foreign languages, such as English or German, and selected works of Russian literature are incorporated in Ukrainian translation into the course on world literature. The choice of a single, rather than dual, language policy can be understood as a strategy of resistance to the high degree of russification, motivated by the following factors that also differentiate Ukraine from Belarus: (a) a strong nationalist movement that was able to anchor a new Ukrainian identity in a new ideology and historiography; (b) a much higher degree of titular language maintenance, in particular in Western Ukraine; (c) competence in the titular language among members of the Russian diaspora who received secondary education in the Ukraine, and (d) a relatively pro-Western orientation of the country's administration (Bilaniuk, 2005; Kuzio, 1998, 2005; Masenko, 2004; Savoskul, 2001; Smith et al., 1998; Wanner, 1998).

The policy of ukrainization carried out by Ukrainian authorities since 1991 met with resistance in the traditionally Russian-speaking areas of the country and in particular in Crimea, where education establishments continue to subvert the policy and teach in Russian (Wanner, 1998). In 2000, new ukrainization measures proposed by the Ukrainian government have also elicited a negative response from the Russian government and the two governments engaged in a heated exchange, soon termed a "linguistic war" (Savoskul, 2001). According to Savoskul's (2001) survey, 46 percent of the population of the country favor the idea of making Russian a second official language (see also Menshikov, 2003). At the same time, although Russian speakers in Ukraine disagree with the current legal status of their language, they do not experience the same anxieties as Russian speakers in the Baltic countries. To date, Russian continues to occupy a visible space in eastern Ukraine, and in particular in Kiev, Donbass, and Crimea: Both Russians and Russophone Ukrainians living in these territories use Russian on a daily basis, including at work, and favor Russian press, media, and literature; at the same time, the competence in and prestige of Ukrainian have significantly grown in these areas (Arel, 1996, 2002; Bilaniuk, 2005; Melnyk, 2005; Pavlenko, 2006; Savoskul, 2001; Smith et al., 1998; Wanner, 1998).

Moldova. In Moldova, Article 13 of the Constitution declares the national language as the sole state language; the Constitution also acknowledges and protects the right to preserve, develop and use the Russian language and other languages spoken within the national territory of the country. The choice of a single-language policy in Moldova can be explained by a combination of: (a) a small size of the Russian diaspora (13 percent in 1989); (b) history of incorporation: a large part of Moldova was annexed by the USSR in 1940; (c) high levels of nationalism; and (d) an orientation toward Romania and the West (Savoskul, 2001). The adoption of this policy led to the secession of the largely Russian-speaking Trans-Dniestr region and to a military conflict in 1992 (for a detailed discussion see Chinn & Kaiser, 1996). A communist government of Vladimir Voronin that came to power in 2001 originally

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planned to resolve the conflict by making Russian the second official language, yet so far these plans have not succeeded and the tension in the region continues.

Central Asia. The five republics of Central Asia have several characteristics in common: all are multilingual and multiethnic, with the predominance of the Muslim population, none had previous independent political history nor did they want to break away from the Soviet Union (Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001). Nevertheless, when the dissolution of the empire became final, they adopted somewhat different strategies in addressing the role of Russian within their borders. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan eventually legalized the role of Russian. Article 5 of the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic now proclaims Russian an official language in the Republic (a 2001 amendment). Article 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan declares that Russian may be officially employed on a par with Kazakh in state institutions (a 1995 upgrade from the earlier designation as the language of interethnic communication). Article 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan proclaims Russian the language of interethnic communication. The two remaining states, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, have the titular languages as the sole languages of the state (Article 4 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan and Article 13 of the Constitution of Turkmenistan). In Turkmenistan, however, the Law on Language states that Russian is a language of interethnic communication.

These choices are best understood through the interplay of the demographic, political, and economic factors. Just like Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan found themselves with large Russian diasporas. In 1989 in Kazakhstan there was an almost equal number of Kazakhs (39.7 percent of the overall population) and Russians (37.6 percent) and in Kyrgyzstan Russian diaspora represented 21.4 percent of the overall population (Altynbekova, 2004; Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001). Both countries also have a sizeable population of other ethnic minorities, including Ukrainians, Germans, Koreans, and Tatars, for whom Russian traditionally served as a lingua franca. Titular populations also succumbed to russification: Both countries had members of local urban elites who favored Russian, identified with the Russo-European culture, and had low levels of competence in the titular language; russified Kazakhs also had their own political leaders such as the poet Olzhas Suleymenov, who wrote mostly in Russian (Alpatov, 2000; Dave, 1996; Fierman, 1998; Laitin, 1998; Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001; Schlyter, 2004; Smith et al., 1998). Russians, on the other hand, had low levels of competence in the local languages.

Finally, both governments chose to maintain close political and economic relations with Russia. It is not surprising then that Russian continues to function as a lingua franca in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan: It is used on a par with the titular languages in administration, secondary education, marketing, and advertising, and it is still dominant in higher education; consequently, both diaspora members and some titulars continue to speak Russian and send their children to Russian-language schools and universities (Altynbekova, 2004; Laitin, 1998; Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001; MacWilliams, 2003, 2004; Shaibakova, 2004).

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The other three countries, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan had relatively small Russian diasporas, located mainly in urban centers, and their distinct choices are best explained by sociopolitical and socioeconomic factors. In Tajikistan attitudes toward Russian were relatively positive, hence, its commitment to legalize the role of Russian (Alpatov, 2000). The high levels of immigration, following civil war and unrest, significantly reduced the size of its Russian diaspora, yet Russian remains the language of interethnic communication in northern, central and south-western regions of the country (Nagzibekova, 2006). The other two countries, on the other hand, took a more direct course toward derussification. This trend is particularly visible in Uzbekistan where efforts were made to eliminate the Russian language from the public view and to limit the number of available Russian TV channels and newspapers. This orientation is commonly explained through low levels of russification, high levels of national consciousness and competence in the titular language, and Islamic orientation adopted by the new governments (Alpatov, 2000; Kosmarskii, 2004; Podporenko, 2001; Smith et al., 1998).

The response to this trend on the part of the Russian diaspora has been a high level of migration to Russia. Eventually, the situation stabilized and the number of available Russian TV channels and newspapers has increased (Podporenko, 2001). For now Russian remains a lingua franca for the majority of nontitular populations in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and for a significant proportion of the ethnic elites, particularly in higher education, medicine, science, technology, business, and diplomatic relations with other post-Soviet countries (Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001; Mechkovskaya, 2005; Podporenko, 2001; Smith et al., 1998). Russian speakers also remain slow in learning the titular languages: According to the survey conducted by Smith and associates (1998), 70 percent of Russians with poor or non-existent Uzbek skills had no intention of learning the language (see also Kosmarskii, 2004).

Transcaucasus. The three countries in the Transcaucasus also opted for single language policies that make the titular language the language of the state (Article 12 of the Armenian Constitution, Article 21 of the Constitution of Azerbaijan, and Article 8 of the Constitution of Georgia). In addition, in a 2002 revision, Georgian Constitution made Abkhazian an official language in Abkhazia (Article 8). The decision not to give Russian normative status in these countries can be best understood through historic and demographic factors: Language loyalties and nationalist feelings have been traditionally high in the Transcaucasus and Russian diasporas relatively small and fairly bilingual (Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001; Lebedeva, 1995; Savoskul, 2001; Smith et al., 1998). The high level of emigration from all three countries is explained by the unstable political situation and ongoing ethnic conflicts, rather than discrimination against Russian speakers (Savoskul, 2001).

The members of the Russian diaspora who decided to stay are facing somewhat different situations in respective countries. In Georgia, Russian language continues to play a role in both secondary and higher education (Savoskul, 2001). In Azerbaijan Russian is still frequently used in government offices, in the media and in

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schools, and the country's long-term president Heydar Aliev repeatedly said that all Azeris are Russophones, and it would be impossible to separate Azeris from the Russian language (Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001, p. 79; see also Lebedeva, 1995). A somewhat different situation is observed in Armenia where the sphere of use of the Russian language has significantly narrowed and higher education establishments function exclusively in Armenian (Lebedeva, 1995; Savoskul, 2001).

Baltic Countries. The three Baltic countries also declared their titular languages the sole languages of the state (Article 4 of the Constitution of Latvia, Article 14 of the Constitution of Lithuania, Article 6 of the Constitution of Estonia). Having done so, they immediately began replacing Russian with titular languages in the public sphere, in particular in government, administration, education, and science. This derussification course—unlike that taken by any other post-Soviet country—is best understood through a combination of historic and sociopolitical factors. Annexed by the Soviets in 1940, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania already had an experience of independent statehood and returned to it after a little more than four decades of the Soviet rule. They had spent the least time in the Soviet Union and their citizens had high levels of national consciousness and language loyalty, vehemently opposing russification. These states also chose to orient themselves toward the West economically, socially, and politically.

And yet there are also differences in the ways in which the three countries approached Russian speakers, and they are particularly visible in citizenship laws. Latvia and Estonia granted citizenship only to those who could trace their citizenship to the pre-war states, leaving more than 30 percent of the population in Latvia and 25 percent in Estonia without citizenship and thus effectively excluding the majority of nontitulars from voting in the post-Soviet elections. To become naturalized, these noncitizens had to meet several preconditions, including passing a language proficiency test (for descriptions of the laws, see Druviete, 1997; Rannut, 2004; Romanov, 2000). Lithuania, on the other hand, offered automatic citizenship to all of its inhabitants, although Russian speakers were still required to master Lithuanian.

The key difference between Lithuania and the other two Baltic countries lies in demographics. Latvia and Estonia had sizeable Russian-speaking populations: 42.5 percent of the Latvian population and 35 percent of the Estonian population had Russian as a first language (Hogan-Brun, 2003). Of these, only 34 percent and 30.3 percent respectively were ethnic Russians, the rest were Belarusians, Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, and members of other ethnic groups. These largely monolingual Russian speakers were perceived as a threat to revival of national languages and as a reminder of more than 40 decades of occupation. In contrast, in Lithuania in 1989, only 11.7 percent of the population had Russian as a first language (9.2 percent of them ethnic Russians), and 38 percent of these Russian speakers claimed fluency in Lithuanian (Kreindler, 1997).

The rest of the language policies introduced by the Baltic countries are relatively similar—all require the official state language to be the language of secondary and higher education (although provisions are made for some minority

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language schooling), that public information be distributed in the official language, and that employees of state institutions, organizations, and businesses that have contact with general public must know and use the official language (Druviete, 1997). These policies have negatively affected the socioeconomic status of Russian speakers and their employment and educational opportunities (Aaslund, 2002; Laitin, 1998; Romanov, 2000). Nevertheless, the number of Russians who immigrated from Latvia and Estonia is relatively small, reaching a height in the immediate aftermath of independence (Jubilus, 2001; Savoskul, 2001; Smith et al., 1998). Instead, after the initial shock, many Russian speakers, especially members of the younger generation, began adjusting to the situation, studying titular languages and sending children to schools where the state language is the language of instruction—as a result, levels of titular language competence among Russophone populations have significantly increased (Hogan-Brun, 2005a; Savoskul, 2001; Verschik, 2005). In contrast, levels of Russian competence among the titulars are decreasing, and parents sometimes "go out of their way to help eliminate Russian from their children's repertoires" (Laitin, 1998, p. 130). Teaching Russian to Russophone students is also becoming more difficult, as the students are less familiar with Russian geography, history, and culture (Gavrilina, 2004). Nevertheless, Russian speakers in the Baltics—and everywhere else—have high levels of language loyalty and continue to favor Russian-language media, press, publications, and theaters (Burenina, 2000; Verschik, 2005); in cities and towns with large numbers of Russian speakers, Russian remains a main means of communication (Fein, 2005; Hogan-Brun, 2003, 2005b).

## Russian in the Post-Soviet Era: Challenges for Future Scholarship

Conducting research in an emerging and novel linguistic situation is always a challenge from a methodological and theoretical point of view and the study of Russian as a lingua franca is no exception. A continuous methodological weakness of this work is an overreliance on census and survey data (on problems with Soviet and post-Soviet census data, see Alpatov, 2000; Arel, 2002). Only recently did researchers begin supplementing demographic data with ethnography, participant observation, individual and group interviews, linguistic biographies, analyses of media texts, and experimental data from matched-guise tests (Altynbekova, 2004; Barrington, 2001; Bilaniuk, 2005; Dickinson & Malanchuk, 2005; Laitin, 1998; Landau & Kellner-Heinkele, 2001). Language policies continue to dominate the research agenda, and microsociolinguistic studies of regional varieties of Russian and of actual language behaviors, including code-mixing and code-switching, are still few and far in between (see however Avina, 2004; Bilaniuk, 2004; Mechkovskaya, 2005; Podporenko, 2001; Shaibakova, 2004; Sinochkina, 2004; Verschik, 2004). Last but not least, little attention has been paid so far to intergenerational transmission of Russian, be it changes in the competence of Russian speakers (see concerns in Gavrilina, 2004) or attrition and deliberate "deskilling" (Laitin, 1998, p. 132) among the titular populations.

The changing status of Russian in post-Soviet countries also raises several theoretical challenges for the fields of applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, bilingualism, language policy, and post-Soviet and postcolonial studies. To begin

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with, are Russians in post-Soviet countries indeed a diaspora? Western scholars frequently refer to the "new Russian diaspora" and Kolstoe (1995) traces this usage to a 1978 conference on Russians living in non-Russian republics. Since 1995, the term has also gained currency in Russian political and scholarly discourses. Zevelev (2001) points out that the reconceptualization of this large group of people as a diaspora, rather than a national minority, is politically convenient for Russia, because it emphasizes the people's connection to Russia rather than to the states in which they currently live. Savoskul (2001), on the other hand, argues that the term is imprecise, because the time since the breakup of the USSR has been insufficient for formation of the diasporic mentality and institutions. The historic relationship between Russians and members of the titular nation also belies the development of a traditional diaspora—hence Laitin's term "beached diaspora" (1998, p. 29).

Another debate concerns the designation "postcolonial." Some scholars argue that "the term 'postcolonial,' and everything that goes with it—language, economy, politics, resistance, liberation and its hangover" (Moore, 2001, p. 115) apply just as much to the Baltic countries or to Central Asia as they do to post-1947 South Asia or post-1958 Africa (Druviete, 1997; Kuzio, 2005; Masenko, 2004; Račevskis, 2002). In turn, Smith and associates (1998) argue that the Soviet Union was neither fully colonial nor federal but contained elements of both systems: Soviet republics did not have a de facto right to national self-determination but they did have the social space for nation building. Consequently, in the authors' view, the relationship between the center and the republics is better termed "federal colonialism". At the same time, even in the absence of an actual colonial situation, the "post-Soviet states can be considered post-colonial in the sense that they are constructed and labeled as such by their nation-builders" (Smith et al., 1998, p. 8).

The stance particular scholars take on postcolonialism and postimperialism has an impact on their view of whether linguistic rights of Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic states are violated by naturalization language testing. Russian scholars, politicians, and public figures, from Yeltsin to Solzhenitsyn, have vehemently objected to Latvian and Estonian citizenship laws arguing that these laws violate human rights of the Russian minority and accusing the two countries of "social apartheid" and "ethnic cleansing" (Alpatov, 2000; Dulichenko, 1999; Payin, 1994; Savoskul, 2001; Sidorov, 2002; Zevelev, 2001). Several Western scholars concurred, showing how "ethnopolitics of exclusion" confer benefits on members of the core nations and preclude full participation of diaspora members (Aaslund, 2002; Dobson, 2001; Laitin, 1998; Smith et al., 1998). Over the course of the 1990s, several European organizations, including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, monitored the situation and only after some liberalization of the laws were the Baltic countries accepted as members of the European Union (Hogan-Brun, 2003, 2005b; Metuzāle-Kangere & Ozolins, 2005).

The European interference is resented in the Baltics and some scholars argue that the minority-rights based approach of European institutions is not directly applicable to the Baltic situation (Druviete, 1997; Jubilus, 2001; Ozolins, 2000, 2003; Račevskis, 2002). They state that the Baltic situation is one where titular

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languages were effectively minoritized and thus endangered under the Soviet regime, while a de jure minority language was majoritized—thus, to attain a de facto status of a national language the titular language has to reassert its status against a former superpower and against members of the Russian-speaking diaspora, whose mere presence is seen by some as "oppressive" (Račevskis, 2002, p. 41). As Jubilus puts it, "it would be difficult to imagine a concept of justice which would require Latvians to remain bilingual in order to converse in Russian while Russian-speakers retain their Soviet right to monolingualism" (2001, p. 204). The outcome of this debate has great potential to transform the current understanding of language minority rights (for an up-to-date treatment, see Hogan-Brun, 2005b).

The scholarship on Russian in diaspora also offers a major contribution to our understanding of transformation of identities. Several studies show that after the breakup of the USSR many members of the Russian diaspora have experienced a profound crisis of ethnic, social, national, and civic identities (Barrington, 2001; Laitin, 1998; Lebedeva, 1995; Savoskul, 2001). A dramatic shift from a Soviet citizen to minority member left them unclear as to where they belong emotionally and in some cases also legally—neither Russia nor the post-Soviet country in which they found themselves adequately fulfill the role of the motherland formerly played by the Soviet Union. The situation was made even more difficult by the fact that many new countries built their national identities in direct opposition to Russia, positioned as the former colonial power. As a result, some members of the Russian diaspora in the Near Abroad are dissatisfied with their current citizenship (and even more so with the lack thereof) and some, in particular members of the older generation, are openly nostalgic for the Soviet Union.

The crisis, according to Lebedeva (1995), is commonly resolved in one of three ways: (a) migration to Russia; (b) construction of a diasporic Russian identity through participation in Russian institutions and organizations; (c) construction of a bilingual and bicultural identity, integrated in the local context. Laitin (1998) further suggested that a new identity category, the "Russian-speaking population" has emerged in the post-Soviet space, and that it may transform into a new nationality, like Hispanics in the United States or Palestinians in the Middle East. Other scholars argue that this is not the case and that current identity options emerge from a mix of preexisting ethnic and civic identity categories, resulting in such local identities as "citizens of Ukraine, Belarus, or Kazakhstan" (Barrington, 2001; Poppe & Hagendoorn, 2001) or "Estonian Russians" (Fein, 2005; Verschik, 2005; Vihalemm & Masso, 2003).

In sum, looking back we can see that the initial stages of the derussification process were perhaps the most dramatic and painful for the Russian-speaking population. As time went by, several newly independent states acknowledged the usefulness of Russian and legalized its role and functions, if only as a language of interethnic communication. The situation has also stabilized in states where the role of Russian has not been legalized. All in all, although its functions have been significantly reduced, Russian is still used on a daily basis by 23 million ethnic Russians, 11 million Russophones, and many more bi- and multilingual non-Russians

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in the Near Abroad (Zevelev, 2001). The popularity of Russian TV channels, press, and literature significantly contributes to the process of Russian maintenance. It is now up to future research to examine the processes of maintenance and shift and to see how Russian language is learned, used, negotiated, transformed, and, in some contexts, forgotten in post-Soviet countries.

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Alpatov, V. M. (2000). *150 iazykov i politika: 1917–2000.* [150 languages and politics: 1917–2000]. 2nd ed. Moscow: Kraft+ IV RAN.

This is a very popular and widely-cited monograph by a leading Russian sociolinguist and historiographer of Soviet linguistics. His comprehensive overview of Soviet and post-Soviet language policies is based on a variety of sources, from archival materials and memoirs to media texts and personal recollections.

Dulichenko, A. (Ed.). (1999). *Etnosotsiolingvistika "perestroiki" v SSSR: Antologia zapechatlennogo vremeni.* [Ethnosociolinguistics of 'perestroika' in the USSR: An anthology of the time captured]. München: Verlag Otto Sagner.

This is a unique collection of texts that, true to its title, captures the spirit of time and of the heated negotiations of linguistic, ethnic, and national identities that took place in the late 1980s through the early 1990s, as the Soviet Union was falling apart. Among the language-related texts included in the anthology are census data, newspaper articles and letters to the editor, and speeches by and interviews with prominent literary and political figures. This anthology is an extremely valuable resource for specialists interested in this transitional period—the texts collected by Dulichenko convey the emotional atmosphere of the time and allow the reader to trace the changes in discourses on language issues.

Grenoble, L. (2003). *Language policy in the Soviet Union*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

This clearly structured overview draws on a range of secondary materials and census data. In doing so, it offers a useful introduction to the study of Soviet language policies for newcomers to the area but contains no surprises for experts in the field.

Kreindler, I. (1997). Multilingualism in the successor states of the Soviet Union. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 17*, 91–112.

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Written by the leading specialist on Soviet language policy, this article offers an excellent overview of the overall linguistic situation in the post-Soviet space in the early 1990s; it is accompanied by an extensive bibliography.

Laitin, D. (1998). *Identity in formation: The Russian-speaking populations in the Near Abroad*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

This seminal book is the most widely cited monograph on Russian-speaking populations in post-Soviet states. Laitin outlines his competitive assimilation theory, drawing on game theory and on data from empirical research conducted by him and his associates in Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, using ethnography, participant observation, surveys, interviews, media texts, and a matched-guise test. Regardless of whether one agrees with all of Laitin's conclusions, the book is a pleasure to read—it offers a vivid and nuanced portrayal of the early years of independence and an insightful analysis of individual and group decision-making behaviors. It is of great value to all interested in construction and transformation of linguistic, ethnic, social, and national identities.

Landau, J., & Kellner-Heinkele, B. (2001). *Politics of language in the ex-Soviet Muslim states*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

This text examines language politics in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in the years 1988–1998, using empirical data collected in all of the countries but Tajikistan (which the authors were unable to visit), printed materials, interviews with public officials and scholars, and demographic data. A comparative analysis reveals both common trends and sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and ethnolinguistic particularities of the six states. This informative monograph is well-written and well-illustrated and discusses not only language laws and politics, but also alphabet change, lexical and orthographic intervention, and languages of instruction.

Lebedeva, N. (1995). *Novaia russkaia diaspora: Sotsial'no-psihologicheskii analiz*. [New Russian diaspora: Socio-psychological analysis]. Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences.

A study of psychological traits of members of the new Russian diaspora conducted in 1994–1995 in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, through surveys administered to members of diaspora and titular nations.

Savoskul, S. (2001). *Russkie novogo zarubezhia: Vybor sud'by*. [Russians of the Near Abroad: Choice of destiny]. Moscow: Nauka.

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This comprehensive monograph offers an informative overview of Russian diasporas in post-Soviet countries, based on the surveys conducted in 1992–1996 in Ukraine, Estonia, Lithuania, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan, questionnaires administered to language and policy experts in 1999, media texts, and data from other similar studies.

Smith, G., Law, V., Wilson, A., Bohr, A., & Allworth, E. (1998). *Nation-building in the post-Soviet borderlands: The politics of national identities*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

This truly interdisciplinary text, a product of collaboration between scholars in geography, linguistics, and political science, offers a lucid, comprehensive, and original overview of negotiations of national and linguistic identities in post-Soviet countries in the period between 1991 and 1996. Well-theorized and based on empirical data, this reader-friendly text will offer many insights to scholars in applied linguistics, of particular interest is the authors' discussion of the role of language myths in the nation-building discourse.

Smith, M. (1998). *Language and power in the creation of the USSR, 1917–1953*. Berlin/New York: Mouton De Gruyter.

Extensively researched in Russian, Uzbek, and Azerbaijani archives, this monograph places Soviet language policy within the larger social, political, and linguistic context, highlighting ways in which Soviet linguistic movements and debates intersected with language policy and planning trends.

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