

Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries

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Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries: Language Revival, Language Removal, and Sociolinguistic Theory

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Introduction

In December of 2007, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine announced that starting in 2008 all foreign-language movies shown in the country will have to be translated into Ukrainian via dubbing, subtitles, or synchronous translation.¹ There would be nothing attention-worthy about this announcement if the ‘foreign language’ category didn’t also include Russian, the native language of 30% of the population of Ukraine (www.ukrcensus.gov.ua), and one used and understood by the majority of the remaining 70%. The new law thus was not driven by linguistic needs, as it would be in the case of movies in French, Danish or Hindi. Nor was it driven by economic needs – the demand for Russian-language books and media continues to be high in Ukraine, and the measure may actually be detrimental to the already struggling film industry. In fact, it is the popularity of the Russian-language media – inconsistent with Ukraine’s nationalizing agenda and political aspirations and alliances – that drives the new law whose purpose is to ensure that Ukrainian citizens live in a Ukrainian-language environment.

The announcement sparked a stormy debate in the media. Russian media have decried the law as yet another illiberal step taken by the Ukrainian government to deprive consumers of free choice and to impinge on the rights of Russian speakers.² President Yushchenko contradicted this accusation stating that Ukrainian language policy conforms to all liberal European standards and that Russian is the language of another country that would not allow Ukrainians to identify themselves as Ukrainian.³

This heated discussion is not unusual – rather, it is just another chapter in the ongoing saga of the Russian language in Ukraine (Bilaniuk & Melnyk, 2008).⁴ Nor are concerns about language status, policies and rights in the post-Soviet space limited to Ukraine. As will be shown in this collection, in the past two decades, post-Soviet countries as a whole have emerged as a contested linguistic space, where emotional exchanges over language-related issues are fodder for the daily news⁵ and where disagreements over language- and



Map 1 (Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bo.html>)

education-related decisions have led to demonstrations and at times even military conflicts and secession (cf. Cisel, 2008).

For decades, and sometimes centuries, many inhabitants of what is now called post-Soviet countries have watched their native languages take second seat to Russian, the lingua franca of the Russian empire and then of the USSR. The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 has created conditions for a unique sociolinguistic experiment, in which 14 countries previously united by the same language and political system could renegotiate this linguistic imbalance, strengthen the status of the titular languages and snatch the safety net from under the feet of monolingual Russian speakers, imposing new linguistic regimes in the process of building new nation-states.

A comparative analysis of language shift outcomes and of challenges faced by the 14 states in implementing new language laws and restructuring educational systems offers a unique contribution to contemporary theories of language policy, shift, minority rights and language education. It is all the more surprising then that the post-Soviet context as a whole has been largely ignored in the scholarship on language policy and bi- and multilingualism. Foundational work in this area was conducted by political scientists, most



Map 2 (Source: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bo.html>)

notably Laitin (1998), Kolstø (1995, 2002) and their teams, that rushed to the newly independent countries to document the change of linguistic regimes. Other cross-country investigations have been conducted by the interdisciplinary teams of Smith and associates (1998) and Landau and Kellner-Heinkele (2001), and, in the post-Soviet context, by the teams headed by Lebedeva (1995) and Savoskul (2001). The resulting monographs have documented the initial stages of the negotiation of national identities and laid the theoretical and methodological foundations for the future study of the area.

In the years that followed, linguistic anthropologists, sociolinguists and education scholars have joined the fray to examine sociolinguistic and educational changes in single countries (e.g. Bilaniuk, 2005; Ciscel, 2007; Korth, 2005). This work offered nuanced, detailed and theoretically sophisticated sociolinguistic portrayals of the countries in question but without the integrative drive displayed by political scientists. Moreover, until recently, investigations conducted by Western and local scholars proceeded in parallel, rather than in collaboration.

At present, we are witnessing a transition to a new stage in the study of post-Soviet sociolinguistics, ushered in by pioneering efforts of three scholars intent on creating conditions for sustained and systematic collaboration between East

and West. The efforts of Gabrielle Hogan-Brun have created conditions for such collaboration between Lithuanian, Estonian, and Latvian scholars and their international colleagues (Bulajeva & Hogan-Brun, 2008; Hogan-Brun, 2005a,b; Hogan-Brun *et al.*, 2007). The efforts of Ekaterina Protassova and Arto Mustajoki have united scholars of Russian diaspora from around the world (Mustajoki & Protassova, 2004) and spearheaded a large-scale international investigation of multilingualism in Central Asia under the auspices of the INTAS project (Orusbaev *et al.*, 2008; Smagulova, 2008).

In the same spirit, the first aim of the present collection is to support and expand the collaboration between scholars working inside and outside of the post-Soviet countries.⁶ Its second aim is to introduce language developments in the post-Soviet countries to the larger scholarly community. The third aim is to begin the process of integrating and theorizing the findings and to reflect on the challenges these findings present for sociolinguistic theory, in particular with regard to articulation of minority rights of speakers of a 'postcolonial' language.

Since the post-Soviet context is not particularly well known to the majority of readers, I will use this introduction to provide a general background against which developments in particular countries can be better understood. I will begin by placing these developments in the sociohistoric context of language policies of the Russian empire and the USSR. Then, I will offer a comparative overview of the outcomes of language shift in 14 post-Soviet countries, separated into three geographic groups: Eastern European countries, Transcaucasus and Central Asia. Throughout, I will highlight historic, demographic, linguistic and sociopolitical factors that shaped distinct language shift outcomes in geographically close countries. Then, I will outline the contributions and challenges to contemporary sociolinguistic theory that emerge from this work and point to productive directions for future research.

Language Policies and Practices in the Russian Empire and the USSR

Russification in the Russian Empire

Despite its multilingual and multiethnic character, until the eighteenth century Russia had no consistent language policy (Belikov & Krysin, 2001; Weeks, 2001). Russification took place slowly or not at all, while Russian administration used translators to communicate with local populations. Peter the Great was the first to formulate consistent language policies with regard to ethnic and linguistic minorities: German was kept as the official language in the Baltic territories, Swedish in Finland, and Polish in the Kingdom of Poland (Belikov & Krysin, 2001).

In the mid-nineteenth century, the administration of Alexander II attempted to unify the empire through a number of measures, including the spread of Russian, and thus began articulating its russification policies. Alpatov (2000) and Weeks (2001) argue that these policies were not an across-the-board mandate, rather they applied selectively to particular ethnic and social groups. Thus, russification of Orthodox Christian Slavs, such as non-Catholic

Ukrainians and Belarusians, was considered critical. Russification of racial and religious minorities, such as Kalmyks or Uzbeks, was considered less important, and russification and assimilation of Jews was often forcefully prevented.

Class and social status were also at play – whether through added incentives of social and educational advancement, or through enforcement, russification measures often targeted primarily or exclusively local elites. To give but one example, upon annexation of Georgia the tsarist regime closed all Georgian schools and opened Russian ones, where Georgian was taught as an optional subject. Yet in 1860 Georgia had only 145 primary and secondary schools catering to 7850 pupils (1% of the total population) (Hewitt, 1985). Consequently, these measures did not have a wide-reaching effect.

The Georgian example also brings to attention the concomitant policy to limit the uses of other languages, replacing them with Russian. Once again, these measures were not applied across the board. Rather, they were taken in order to reduce the cultural power and influence of particular ethnic groups, such as Poles in Lithuania or Germans in Latvia and Estonia, and to subjugate groups that might foment nationalistic rebellions. Thus, in the European territories measures were taken to limit the uses of Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Moldovan, Lithuanian and German and to replace them with Russian in primary education and in secular secondary and higher education. Russian-language newspapers came to replace local-language and bilingual newspapers. On the other hand, in Central Asia, the Russian language never moved beyond the bureaucratic structures, and native languages enjoyed an unprecedented revival.

As Belikov and Krysin (2001) point out, language 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. Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, throughout the Russian empire, with the exception of Finland, secular secondary and higher education could only be obtained in Russian (Belikov & Krysin, 2001). After the revolution of 1905, a more tolerant language policy was introduced: numbers of minority language schools increased, and literature and periodicals appeared in a variety of languages, including Ukrainian, Belarusian, Polish, Georgian, Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian (Alpatov, 2000).

The goal of imperial russification policies was bilingualism of the titular elites, and by the time of the 1917 revolution, the elites throughout the empire had integrated Russian into their linguistic repertoires (Laitin, 1998). On the other hand, non-Russian peasants and members of many other social strata had neither incentives nor opportunities to develop competence in Russian.

Nativization and Russification in the USSR

Following the October Revolution of 1917, Bolsheviks began to remake the country in a new image. To do so, they needed to convey their ideas quickly to people who spoke over a hundred different languages and were often illiterate to boot (Liber, 1991; Smith, 1998). Consequently, early language policies advanced by Lenin and his followers aimed to support and develop national

and ethnic languages on the assumption that the new regime would be best understood and accepted by various minority groups if it functioned in their own languages. This support for national languages was part of a policy known as *korenizatsiia* (nativization or indigenization), which itself was part of a larger nation-building program that supported national territories, cultures, languages and elites in an attempt to organize the population into economically and administratively viable and stable national-territorial units. In this nation-building process, the Soviets drew and redrew borders, dissolved ethnic groups (e.g. Sarts), created new ethnicities and languages (e.g. Moldavians/Moldavian), reinforced boundaries between fluid identity categories and dialects (e.g. Uzbek/Tajik), formed new national territories (e.g. Turkmenistan), and eventually firmly embedded national categories into the very fabric of Soviet life (Edgar, 2004; Fierman, 1991; Hirsch, 2005; Martin, 2001; Slezkine, 1994).

The USSR is commonly viewed as a country that had the longest and the most extensive experience with language planning (Anderson & Silver, 1984). *Korenizatsiia* of the 1920s involved systematic efforts to ensure that local administrations, courts and schools function in local languages, to translate world literature into local languages, to standardize a variety of languages, to support the development of new literary languages, to create alphabets for languages that did not yet have literacy, to encourage Russians to learn local languages, and to teach local populations to read and write – and sometimes even speak – in ‘their own’ languages (Alpatov, 2000; Edgar, 2004; Fierman, 1991; Kreindler, 1982; Liber, 1991; Martin, 2001; Slezkine, 1994; Smith, 1998).

As a result of these initiatives, titular languages began to assume their functions across all domains, albeit to varying degrees. In Armenia and Georgia, two territories with large native intelligentsias, strong nationalist movements, and small Russian populations, national languages quickly assumed hegemonic functions (Martin, 2001; Suny, 1994). Great success was also achieved in Ukraine, despite strong opposition from Russians and russified titulars and minorities; belarusification was also making great strides, with documentation, press, and primary education shifting to Belarusian (Martin, 2001). On the other hand, in republics relying on Turkic languages advances were complicated by illiteracy and difficulties linked to language standardization and Latinization of the alphabets (Edgar, 2004; Fierman, 1991; Smith, 1998).

In the 1930s, concerns about bourgeois nationalism led to a wave of repressions and purges of national elites. Coupled with apprehensions about the poor mastery of Russian by non-Russians and the difficulties in implementation of Latin alphabets, these concerns led to retreat from linguistic nativization. The administration began to realize that ‘presiding over 192 languages and potentially 192 bureaucracies was not a very good idea after all’ (Slezkine, 1994: 445) and developed a new appreciation for Russian as a language of state consolidation, industrialization, and collectivization. Language propaganda began to glorify the great and mighty Russian language. However, a course towards the greater spread of Russian did not entail a complete rejection of the nativization policies. Native languages continued to be used in education, the arts and the press. Thus, between 1928 and 1938 the

number of non-Russian newspapers increased from 205 titles in 47 languages to 2,188 titles in 66 languages (Slezkine, 1994).

The russification of the 1930s took a three-pronged approach that involved status and acquisition planning (Russian) and corpus planning (local languages) (Alpatov, 2000; Slezkine, 1994; Smith, 1998). In the area of acquisition planning, a 1938 decree declared Russian an obligatory second language in non-Russian schools. While 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, it highlighted the role of Russian as the *de facto* official language of the country and a necessary prerequisite of a true Soviet citizen. As a standard, however, the decree remained unfulfilled and Russian language teaching in non-Russian schools continued to be uneven, particularly in Central Asia (Fierman, 1991; Smith, 1998). Three decades later, the 1959 educational reform gave parents the right to choose the language of instruction for their children. This law led to an increase in enrollment in Russian-medium schools, which offered opportunities for social mobility, and a rise in Russian-language competence.

In the area of corpus planning, a 1935 decree required the transfer of all Soviet languages with Latin alphabets to Cyrillic. Since Latin alphabets had only just begun to be introduced, this decree did not change much in practice⁷ but it did signal an important shift in language attitudes, as the change facilitated the study of Russian (Smith, 1998). Another corpus planning change involved efforts to base the grammars of 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, science and technology.

While tsarist russification may have been more blatantly aimed at people, Soviet russification was more pervasive – it was no longer just people who were russified but also languages, their lexicons, grammars, and orthographies, and even territories, russified as a result of state-sponsored migration. This argument, however, requires two caveats. First, to say that russification was pervasive does not mean that it was fully successful. Even when language policies and rapid urbanization supported russification, other factors, such as inefficient instruction, nationalist consciousness, and settlement and occupation patterns, counteracted its spread. In many regions of Central Asia and the Transcaucasus local populations had no need for Russian and little if any knowledge of it. For instance, in Georgia in 1970, 91.4% of rural and 63% of urban Georgians lacked Russian fluency (Suny, 1994). Georgians, Armenians and the titulars in the Baltic republics also engaged in passive resistance, refusing to either learn Russian or to use it even when they knew it (Raun, 1985; Suny, 1994). The resulting low levels of Russian-language competence continued to raise concerns of the Soviet administration that launched another Russian-teaching campaign as late as the 1980s (Fierman, 1991).

Secondly, russification in the USSR did not imply – at least outwardly – replacement of local languages with Russian. Rather, the government pursued a dual course, enacting russification policies at the same time that it

maintained and strengthened national institutions (Gorenburg, 2006; Slezkine, 1994; Smith, 1998). As a result of this support and the massive spread of literacy, many national languages enjoyed linguistic and cultural revival, emerging as urban, literary and academic languages (Alpatov, 2000; Fierman, 1982; Snyder, 2003; Suny, 1994). In Georgia, by the 1950s Georgian-language theater, film, literature and scientific research began to flourish and more people spoke, read, and were educated in Georgian than ever before (Suny, 1994).

Most importantly, in the titular republics and in some areas of the Russian Federation secondary schools offered a form of bilingual education, whereby Russian-medium schools incorporated the study of titular languages and literatures, and titular-medium schools the study of Russian language and literature (for detailed discussion, see Lewis, 1972; for exceptions, see Smagulova, 2008). Russian, however, received more hours in the titular school curricula than titular languages in Russian-medium schools (Fierman, 1991; Lewis, 1972). Students were also required to study a foreign language, most commonly German, English or French. Education was also offered in non-titular languages, although the number of languages had steadily diminished over the years: in 1934–1940 primary and secondary education was offered in 65 languages, in 1976–1980 in 53, and in 1989 in 43 languages (Anderson & Silver, 1984; Belikov & Krysin, 2001; Lewis, 1972).

At the same time, titular languages in the USSR enjoyed the right to autonomy but not the right to equality (Smith, 1998). Minority languages were often disenfranchised – in some republics their speakers were subject to forceful assimilation to the titular languages (e.g. Uzbeks in Tajikistan or Abkhazians in Georgia) (Alpatov, 2000). As a result of this imbalance, Russian speakers could afford to be monolingual, speakers of titular languages aspiring to social advancement had to be bilingual, and minority language speakers had to be either bilingual (with Russian or the titular language as a second language) or multilingual. This situation had changed dramatically in 1991, when the USSR fell apart and Russian lost its status of a supra-ethnic language. Derussification and shift in the direction of titular languages emerged as the key goals of post-Soviet language policy and planning.

Language Shift in Post-Soviet Countries

As Fishman (2006: 318) reminds us, ‘most language shift of formal and written language is caused or consciously facilitated’. In the post-Soviet context, unlike in postcolonial Africa (cf. Simpson, 2008), the intended shift was accompanied by a deliberate ‘removal’ of the ‘colonial’ language from the public sphere. This derussification, part of the more general de-sovietization process, included all areas where russification had previously occurred. In language use, it included elimination of Russian from official paperwork, official communication, the state-sponsored media and public signage. In language acquisition, it involved the closing or reduction in number of Russian-language schools and Russian-language tracks in higher education and either elimination of instruction in Russian as a second language or reduction in the number of Russian-language classes per week. In the area of

orthography, several titular languages replaced Cyrillic with Latin. In language corpora, some Russian neologisms were replaced with alternative terms, and geographic names underwent what Smith and associates (1998: 147) refer to as a 'toponymic overhaul', whereby Russian names were changed to local-sounding names (e.g. Frunze > Bishkek; Tselinograd > Akmola > Astana). Territorial derussification involved out-migration of Russian speakers (for a detailed discussion of the out-migration trends see Korobkov & Zaionchkovskaia, 2004).

Both language shift and derussification would have been fairly unproblematic if the populations of all 14 countries were homogeneous and consisted mainly of titulars who favored the titular language. Yet this was not the case. Four factors complicated the implementation of language shift and removal in post-Soviet countries, even though they did not apply to all countries across the board: (a) large populations of monolingual Russian speakers; (b) russification of members of the titular population; (c) multiethnic populations accustomed to relying on Russian as a lingua franca of interethnic communication; and (d) functional limitations of some of the titular languages.

To begin with the first factor, in 1991 the 14 countries were home to 25 million ethnic Russians and 36.5 million native speakers of Russian. Table 1 provides information on the numbers and proportions of titulars, ethnic Russians, and first language (L1) Russian language speakers, in each of the countries. The numbers of L1 Russian speakers are invariably higher than those of ethnic Russians because they include russified members of other ethnic groups (both titulars and minorities). Thus, in 1989, in Belarus, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Moldova and Ukraine, L1 Russian speakers constituted between 23 and 47% of the total population.

Immigrants come to a new country with full awareness that its inhabitants speak a different language and that they need to learn this language in order to conduct their business. The Russian-speaking population in post-Soviet countries does not easily fit this description because they woke up one morning to a political and linguistic reality not of their doing and found themselves involuntary – and at times unwelcome – migrants in what they had previously considered their own country. Their native language, previously used throughout the country, was no longer sufficient to ensure employment and educational opportunities. In Latvia and Estonia, Russians who could not trace their residence to the pre-1940 states also found themselves stateless⁸ and threatened with deportation (Laitin, 1998). The presence of this largely monolingual, Russian-speaking population created major challenges for the nation-building efforts of local authorities.

The second factor that complicated the intended language shift in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, were the high levels of russification among the titulars, in particular those living in urban centers (see Bilaniuk & Melnyk, 2008; Giger & Sloboda, 2008; Orusbaev *et al.*, 2008; Smagulova, 2008). These titulars had shifted to Russian and, in many cases, displayed low levels of competence in the titular language. The new language shift in such contexts had to reverse the effects of the previous language shift.

The third complicating factor in some of the countries was the multiethnic and multilingual composition of the population, with Russian traditionally

Table 1 Numbers and proportions of titulars, ethnic Russians and L1 Russian speakers in Soviet republics in 1989 and in post-Soviet countries in 1999–2004 (based on the 1989 USSR Census and respective post-Soviet Censuses)

	1989	1989	1989	1999–2004	1999–2004	1999–2004
	<i>Titulars</i>	<i>Russians</i>	<i>L1 Russian speakers</i>	<i>Titulars</i>	<i>Russians</i>	<i>L1 Russian speakers</i>
Armenia	3,083,616	51,555	67,519	3,145,354	14,660	29,563
	93.3%	1.6%	2.0%	97.9%	0.5%	0.9%
Azerbaijan	5,804,980	392,304	529,723	7,205,500	141,700	N/A
	82.7%	5.6%	7.5%	90.6%	1.8%	
Belarus	7,904,623	1,342,099	3,274,235	8,159,073	1,141,731	
	77.9%	13.2%	32.3%	81.2%	11.4%	62.8%
Estonia	963,281	474,834	551,551	930,219	351,178	406,755
	61.5%	30.3%	35.2%	67.9%	25.6%	29.7%
Georgia	3,787,393	341,172	483,733	3,661,173	67,671	N/A
	70.1%	6.3%	9.0%	83.8%	1.5%	
Kazakhstan	6,534,616	6,227,549	7,800,575	7,985,039	4,479,618	N/A
	39.7%	37.8%	47.4%	53.4%	30.0%	
Kyrgyzstan	2,229,663	916,558	1,091,334	3,128,147	603,201	N/A
	52.4%	21.5%	25.6%	64.9%	12.5%	
Latvia	1,387,757	905,515	1,133,298	1,370,700	703,200	N/A
	52.0%	34.0%	42.5%	57.7%	29.6%	
Lithuania	2,924,251	344,455	444,390	2,907,300	219,800	277,318
	79.6%	9.4%	12.1%	83.5%	6.3%	8.0%
Moldova	2,794,749	562,069	1,008,486			
	64.5%	13.0%	23.3%	75.8%	5.9%	16.0%
Tajikistan	3,172,420	388,481	495,616	4,898,400	68,200	N/A
	62.3%	7.6%	9.7%	79.9%	1.1%	
Turkmenistan	2,536,606	333,892	421,332	N/A	N/A	N/A
	72.0%	9.5%	12.0%			
Ukraine	37,419,053	11,355,582	17,081,347	37,541,700	8,334,100	
	72.7%	22.1%	33.2%	77.8%	17.3%	29.6%
Uzbekistan	14,142,475	1,653,478	2,153,599	N/A	N/A	N/A
	71.4%	8.3%	10.9%			

functioning as a lingua franca in interethnic communication and in communication between minority communities and the state authorities. To give but one example, in Georgia, even today, Russian may be used in oral and written communication between Armenian and Azeri communities and the state authorities because Georgian authorities are much more likely to understand documents in Russian than in Armenian or Azerbaijani, while members of the local communities may be more fluent in Russian than in Georgian (Bezyrganova, 2006a; Bulghadarian, 2007; Kock Kobaidze, 2001; Popjanovski, 2006; Wheatley, 2006).

Last but not least, in some countries, most notably Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, titular languages were not sufficiently developed to immediately assume all relevant functions and required further corpus planning and standardization (Alpatov, 2000; Orusbaev *et al.*, 2008; Smagulova, 2008).

As will be seen below, these four complicating factors, coupled with the historic, demographic, economic, social and political particularities of individual countries, have shaped distinct outcomes of intended language shift and removal.

Eastern Europe

Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova and Ukraine are located in the European territory of the former USSR (see Map 1). Between 1988 and 1990, all six countries proclaimed their titular languages to be the sole state languages. Upon achieving independence, they have begun implementing these laws. Since then, only one major change has occurred in these laws, when Belarus adopted Russian as a second state language in 1995. By 2007, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova and Ukraine have managed to raise the status of the titular languages and to spread their use to all areas of public life. They have also made significant steps towards derussification of the public sphere, which resulted in decreases in Russian-language competence among the titular populations (Arefiev, 2006; Bulajeva & Hogan-Brun, 2008; Ciscel, 2008). The degree of the shift however varies from country to country, with Belarus being the least and Lithuania most successful in shifting towards the titular language.

In Belarus, the adoption of Russian as a second state language has effectively hampered Belarusian language revival. At present, Russian functions as the *de facto* main language, while Belarusian plays a symbolic function, indexing the nation in official documents and public spaces (Brown, 2007; Giger & Sloboda, 2008). Secondary education in Belarus is offered in the two state languages, Belarusian and Russian, and two minority languages, Lithuanian and Polish, with 76% of the children attending Russian-medium schools (Giger & Sloboda, 2008). Both state languages and one foreign language are obligatory in secondary education. Higher education functions in both state languages, with the predominance of Russian. The population also favors Russian-language literature, TV and print media (Koriakov, 2002). This language situation makes Belarus a welcome refuge for Russian-speaking immigrants from other post-Soviet countries (Nechapaika, 2007).

Ukraine has succeeded in making Ukrainian the main language of the state government and political life and in spreading its use to all spheres of public

life. The presence of Russian, while reduced, has not been eliminated and in the eastern part of the country Russian is still used on a par with Ukrainian (Bilaniuk, 2005; Bilaniuk & Melnyk, 2008; Taranenko, 2007). This use is not restricted to members of the older generation – in eastern Ukraine, Russian still has a high status among the youth (Bilaniuk, 2005; Marshall, 2002). Secondary education is offered in Ukrainian (78% of all students) and in minority languages, most prominently Russian (21%) and also Moldovan, Romanian, Hungarian, Polish and Crimean Tatar (Bilaniuk & Melnyk, 2008; Report, 2006a). The choice of the language of schooling is not fully up to the parents; rather, local authorities determine the number of schools operating in particular languages on the basis of the ethnic composition of the population, which may obscure the preferences of russophone Ukrainians (Hrycak, 2006). In some places the policies are established without any recourse to demographics. For instance, in the national capital Kyiv, Russian-language schools (with Ukrainian as a second language) have been largely eliminated and Russian-speaking parents have no choice but to send their children to Ukrainian-language schools where Russian literature is taught in Ukrainian translation. Higher education is offered in Ukrainian and in some regions, such as Crimea, in Russian. The informational space functions mainly in Ukrainian and Russian, only a few publications are available in other minority languages (Report, 2006a). This space continues to be a terrain of struggle, where policies privilege Ukrainian, while the free market forces favor Russian, in particular in the media and the book market (Taranenko, 2007).

Moldova has succeeded in shifting to the Latin alphabet, in restoring the titular language across all domains, and, to a degree, in recognizing the identity of the titular language as Romanian. The exception is the breakaway Transnistrian Republic that refused to acknowledge the 1989 language law and adopted three official languages, Russian, Moldovan (in the Cyrillic alphabet), and Ukrainian (for more on Transnistria, see Ciscel, 2008; Protsyk, 2006; Roper, 2005). The new laws and the military conflict over Transnistria led to out-migration of large numbers of Russian speakers from Moldova (Arutiunian, 2003; Dreizler, 2007; Skvortsova, 2002). Despite this migration, language shift and the derussification of the country are not complete: Russian is still widely spoken on the streets of Moldovan cities, public signage in urban contexts is often bilingual, the levels of Russian-language competence among the titulars remain high, and the levels of Moldovan/Romanian language competence among Russian speakers remain relatively low, possibly due to ongoing accommodation towards Russian speakers and to the negative perceptions of the status and usefulness of Moldovan/Romanian (Kolstø & Melberg, 2002).

Secondary education on the territory of Moldova is offered in Moldovan/Romanian, and in the minority languages Russian, Ukrainian, Gagauzi and Bulgarian, with Moldovan/Romanian obligatory in all schools. In the break-away Transnistria, secondary education functions in the three official languages, with Russian classes mandatory in Moldovan- and Ukrainian-medium schools (Ciscel, 2008). In the rest of Moldova, Russian is no longer obligatory in the education system. Higher education functions predominantly in Moldovan/Romanian but Russian speakers have access to Russian-

language sections. Mass media function in Moldovan/Romanian and also in Russian and other minority languages.

In Estonia, secondary education is offered in Estonian (82.3%) and in the minority languages Russian, Finnish and Swedish, with Estonian an obligatory language in minority language schools (Rannut, 2008). Higher education is offered in Estonian. The media function in Estonian and in minority languages; Russian speakers have access to TV channels broadcast from Russia, Russian news on Estonian TV, and Russian press and literature (Maloverian, 2007).

In Latvia, the aim of the 2004 education reform is Latvian-only secondary education; its transitional phase involves bilingual schooling for Russian speakers where up to 60% of the subjects are taught in Latvian and up to 40% in Russian (Adrey, 2005; Hogan-Brun, 2006; Priedite, 2005; Schmid, 2008). The reform was subject of heated debates, protests, and demonstrations, with Russian-speakers appealing for protection of their minority rights and demanding Latvia's ratification of the Council of Europe Framework Convention (Hogan-Brun, 2006). These protests failed to alter the course of the education reform. Higher education in Latvia is offered in Latvian, with a few private institutions providing instruction in Russian. The informational space functions in Latvian and in minority languages, most visibly Russian.

Both Estonia and Latvia have succeeded in returning to the use of titular languages in all areas of public life but are still struggling with raising levels of titular-language competence among Russian speakers. These speakers – or their parents and grandparents – settled in the Baltics during the Soviet times, when Russian functioned as a *de facto* official language. As a result, many did not develop proficiency in the titular languages. To encourage these Russian speakers to either assimilate or emigrate, both countries have adopted stringent *ius sanguinis* citizenship laws that offered automatic citizenship only to citizens or descendants of citizens of the inter-war republics. In turn, the descendants of those who settled there after the integration into the USSR had to apply for naturalization and pass a language test and a history and civics test (for details see Bulajeva & Hogan-Brun, 2008; Galbreath, 2006; Rannut, 2008). Upon adoption, these laws had left over 30% of the population in Latvia and 25% in Estonia without citizenship (at present, the stateless constitute 18% and 9% of the respective populations) (Ozolins, 2003; Rannut, 2008; Uzulis, 2007). The new laws created major employment and educational hardships for Russian speakers with low-level titular language skills, because they could no longer occupy jobs in the public sector nor attend institutions of higher education (Aasland, 2002; Kolstø & Melberg, 2002; Savoskul, 2001; Siiner, 2006).

The response of the Russian community to these measures and resulting economic disparities was quite unexpected. Policy analysts predicted that they would either leave en masse or assimilate (Laitin, 1998). While approximately 10% of the Russian population of the two countries left in the early 1990s (Smith *et al.*, 1998), the majority decided to stay, mainly due to the higher economic standard in the Baltic countries. Yet these speakers did not assimilate linguistically as rapidly as expected: almost two decades after independence, levels of Estonian and Latvian language competence are still lower among

Russian speakers than levels of Russian-language competence among Estonians and Latvians (Round of population and housing censuses, 2003; Rannut, 2008). This relationship appears to be slowly changing in the youngest generation where levels of Russian-language competence among the titulars are decreasing and levels of titular-language competence among Russian-speakers are on the rise (Arefiev, 2006; Bulajeva & Hogan-Brun, 2008; Rannut, 2008).

Lithuania is the most successful among the six Eastern European countries in implementing the shift towards the titular language and assimilating its non-titular populations. The evidence of this assimilation can be found in a 2002 survey, where Russian speakers reported using Lithuanian more frequently with their children (27%) and grandchildren (33%), than with their brothers and sisters (12%) and parents and grandparents (3–8%) (Hogan-Brun & Ramonienė, 2005). Secondary education in Lithuania is offered in Lithuanian and in the minority languages Polish, Russian and Belarusian; the percentage of students attending Russian-medium schools is steadily decreasing. Foreign language instruction includes two obligatory and one optional language, with English as the most popular first and Russian as the most popular second foreign language (Bulajeva & Hogan-Brun, 2008). Higher education functions in Lithuanian but a few institutions also offer instruction in English. The rapid rise of English raises some concerns about the threat it may present to the development of national identity (Bulajeva & Hogan-Brun, 2008). The informational space functions predominantly in Lithuanian. Some minority-language media are also available but Russian speakers complain about limited access to Russian-language publications (Radzevichiute, 2007).

Given the fact that in 1989 Lithuania had the most homogeneous population among the six countries (see Table 1) and the highest levels of titular-language competence among L1 Russian speakers (see Table 2), this success is not surprising. Yet a cross-country analysis shows that distinct language shift outcomes in the six countries cannot be fully attributed to demographics, rather they are shaped by an intricate interplay of sociopolitical, historic, economic and demographic factors. The success of the three Baltic countries in restoring the status of the titular language is best understood in the light of their history of incorporation into the USSR. Previously part of the Russian empire, between 1920 and 1940 Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia enjoyed independent statehood with titular languages used across all domains. Annexed by the Soviets in 1940, as a result of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, then invaded by the Nazi Germany, and then reannexed by the USSR in 1944, the three countries vehemently opposed the occupation and ensuing russification.⁹ In 1991, their titular populations, returning to independence after a little more than four decades of Soviet rule, had high levels of national consciousness, language loyalty, and titular language competence, and negative attitudes towards all things Russian. These attitudes were consistent with the countries' political orientation towards the West and further strengthened by their accession into NATO and the European Union (EU).

According to Rannut (2008), the accession is also part of the reason behind the slow rise of titular language competence among the Russian speakers: under pressure from the international community, the countries had to slow

Table 2 Language fluency data based on the 1989 USSR Census and respective post-Soviet Censuses (fluent speakers include speakers who declare the language as the L1 or a fluent L2).

	1989	1989	1999–2004	1999–2004
	<i>Titulars fluent in the Russian language</i>	<i>Russians fluent in the titular language</i>	<i>Titulars fluent in the Russian language</i>	<i>Russians fluent in the titular language</i>
Armenia	1,374,580	17,315	N/A	N/A
	44.6%	33.6%		
Azerbaijan	1,863,712	56,687		
	32.1%	14.4%	8.2%	16.6%
Belarus	6,335,952	358,518	N/A	N/A
	80.2%	26.7%		
Estonia	333,426	71,208		N/A
	34.6%	15.0%	42.2%	
Georgia	1,212,665	80,898	N/A	N/A
	32.0%	23.7%		
Kazakhstan	4,195,221	54,063		
	64.2%	0.9%	75.0%	14.9%
Kyrgyzstan	830,720	11,196		N/A
	37.3%	1.2%	33.0%	
Latvia	947,797	201,669		N/A
	68.3%	22.3%	51.5%	
Lithuania	1,100,113	129,255		N/A
	37.6%	37.5%	60.3%	
Moldova	1,609,233	66,466	N/A	N/A
	57.6%	1.8%		
Tajikistan	968,726	13,763	N/A	N/A
	30.5%	3.5%		
Turkmenistan	716,819	8,500	N/A	N/A
	28.3%	2.5%		
Ukraine	26,837,304	3,899,247	N/A	N/A
	71.7%	34.3%		
Uzbekistan	3,215,908	75,937	N/A	N/A
	22.7%	4.6%		

down the implementation of language and education reforms and make adjustments for minority language support and protection of minority rights (see also Adrey, 2005). Additional reasons include the shortage of bilingual teachers and textbooks and difficulties in creating and implementing workable titular language and bilingual curricula. Moreover, not all Russian speakers in Latvia and Estonia were eager to study the titular languages. Some were too old or unwilling to study the language of what they perceived to be a hostile host population (Aasland, 2002; Maloverian, 2007; Uzulis, 2007). Others found that the titulars reacted negatively to their attempts to communicate in the titular language, expressing condescension and anger at the 'broken' language (Siiner, 2006). More importantly, in both Estonia and Latvia, Russian speakers are highly concentrated in industrial cities and often have no everyday need for the titular language nor opportunities to practice it (Laitin, 1998; Siiner, 2006). In Latvia Russian speakers also appear to attribute less value to the titular language (Hogan-Brun, 2006) – instead of learning it, they have created an independent business community, where Latvian competence is not obligatory (Commercio, 2004).

Political orientation and the history of incorporation have also shaped distinct language laws and language shift outcomes in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. As seen in Table 1, in 1989, Ukraine housed the largest Russian-speaking population outside of Russia (more than 17 million, 33.2%), yet it is Belarus that made Russian the second state language, while in Ukraine it has no official status. This decision is best understood in the light of the processes of linguistic domination that for centuries operated on the territories inhabited by ethnic Belarusians that were in turn part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian empire and Poland. At the turn of the twentieth century, cities on this territory were inhabited by speakers of Yiddish, Polish and Russian, while 98% of ethnic Belarusians were peasants living in the countryside (Marples, 1999; Snyder, 2003; Zaprudski, 2007). Belarusian national revival, thus, lacked an urban base and never reached the proportion of the Ukrainian revival. As a result, the Belorussian republic, created by the Soviets in 1919, was seen by many as an artificial creation that cultivated a non-existent titular nation (Hirsch, 2005: 149–155). In 1924–1926 the republic had doubled in size through the addition of large territories – formerly part of the Russian Federation – inhabited by a mix of Russians and russified ethnic Belarusians, who opposed the perceived 'forced belorussification' (Hirsch, 2005: 152–154).

The belorusification that took place in the 1920s and the 1939 incorporation of the western territories that previously belonged to Poland did not tip the language balance in Belarus, in part because Poles did not support the use of Belarusian and had closed all Belarusian schools (Snyder, 2003). In post-war Belarus, rapid urbanization and dwindling numbers of Belarusian-language schools assisted further russification. As a result, Belarusians displayed the highest levels of russification and the lowest levels of titular language maintenance among the Soviet peoples (Marples, 1999; see also Table 2). The trends persisted post-1991: according to the 1999 Belarusian Census (www.belstat.gov.by), 81.2% of the population of Belarus self-identify as Belarusian, yet 62.8% of the same population uses Russian as their main

language, in and outside of the home. It is not surprising then that the popular vote in the 1995 referendum allowed the government to restore Russian to its status of the second state language.

A similar outcome was likely in Ukraine when a promise to make Russian a second official language got president Leonid Kuchma elected in 1994 (Bilaniuk, 2005) and in Moldova when the Communist government of Vladimir Voronin came to power in 2001 (Ciscel, 2008). Eventually though neither country elevated the status of Russian because they had much stronger nationalist movements than Belarus: already in the 1920s, Soviet leaders noted that 'while the Belorussians "lacked" national consciousness, the Ukrainians had too much' (Hirsch, 2005: 158). The opposition movements and titular language maintenance and loyalty were particularly strong in the more recently incorporated territories: western Ukraine, annexed in 1944, and Bessarabia, annexed in 1945 (Ciscel, 2007, 2008; Skvortsova, 2002).

The revival of Russian in Belarus is also consistent with the political orientation of the Belarusian government, led by the authoritarian Aleksandr Lukashenko. In 1991, Belarus was reluctant to leave the Soviet Union; since then the government has adopted a pro-Russian stance, incorporating the Soviet past into its conception of the modern Belarusian state and promoting the idea of historic, political, and economic unity with Russia (Marples, 1999, 2006; Smith *et al.*, 1998). In contrast, the Ukrainian government, oriented towards the West and motivated by the desire to be accepted into NATO and the EU, is loosening historic, social, political and economic ties with Russia and rewriting the history of Ukraine to serve its current political needs (Kuzio, 1998, 2005, 2006; Smith *et al.*, 1998). The return of Russian as an official language would be portrayed in this context as a first step on the road to becoming Little Russia, while the spread of Ukrainian is equated with acquiring a new European identity (Bilaniuk & Melnyk, 2008; Kuzio, 1998). In Moldova, the view of the titular language as Romanian is similarly linked to a European identity (and an orientation towards Romania and the EU), while the view of Moldovan as an independent language and elevation of Russian to official status, are viewed as an orientation towards Russia (Ciscel, 2007, 2008; Roper, 2005).

At the same time, the situation in Ukraine is somewhat different from that in Moldova, due to the higher proportion of native Russian speakers, some of whom are russified titulars. Several reasons have been cited to explain the persistence of Russian in Ukraine, most commonly genetic similarities between the two languages and language ideologies that assign different values to these languages. Both in Belarus and eastern Ukraine, dominant language ideologies reproduce the historic urban/rural divide and position Russian as the language of urbanity, progress, high culture, science, technology, and the media, and Belarusian and Ukrainian as provincial, backward, rural languages, to be discarded in an urban environment (Bilaniuk, 2005; Bilaniuk & Melnyk, 2008; Giger & Sloboda, 2008). And while the status of Ukrainian has risen since 1991, it has not overtaken Russian. Consequently, just as Russian speakers in Ukraine raise concerns about linguistic discrimination, Ukrainian elites voice concerns about the low status of the Ukrainian language, its poor institutionalization, and the low quality of Ukrainian

literature and media (Bilaniuk, 2005; Kostenko, 2004). Official bilingualism is not viewed as a viable option by the country's political and cultural elites: they argue that 'without affirmative action in its favor, Ukrainian could not hope to compete' with Russian (Kuzio, 1998: 186).

In the near future, the six European countries are facing somewhat different language management challenges. Estonia and Latvia need to raise levels of titular language competence among Russian speakers, while simultaneously protecting their linguistic rights; in elementary and secondary education, educational authorities need to find optimal models for bilingual and multilingual instruction, produce appropriate materials, and train more bilingual teachers. The Baltic countries also aim to raise levels of competence in global lingua francas, including but not limited to English (Bulajeva & Hogan-Brun, 2008; Rannut, 2008). Ukraine and Belarus are primarily concerned with raising the status of the titular languages among Russians and russified titulars; Ukraine is also attempting to decrease the visibility of Russian and to increase the use of Ukrainian. Moldova continues to struggle with both the status and identity of the titular language, two conceptions of which, that of Moldovan as Romanian and that of Moldovan as an independent language, are competing in the public space (Ciscel, 2008).

Transcaucasus

The three countries of the Transcaucasus, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (see Map 2), were the only countries where the national languages were already declared official under the Soviet regime. After the break-up of the USSR, these languages became the sole state languages (in addition, in Georgia, Abkhazian was declared official on the territory of Abkhazia). By 2007, the three countries have succeeded in expanding the use of titular languages across all public domains; Azerbaijan also implemented a transition from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet (Khruslov, 2006). In turn, spheres of Russian-language use and levels of Russian competence have significantly decreased (Arefiev, 2006; Khruslov, 2006). This success is not surprising: all three countries had long histories of nationhood and of linguistic and literary development, and, as a result, high levels of national consciousness, language loyalties, and titular language competence among titular populations (Smith *et al.*, 1998; Suny, 1994). Despite these similarities, the three countries differ in the outcomes of intended language shift, with Armenia being most and Georgia least successful in a shift to the titular language.

The present goal of language education in Armenia is trilingual competence, in the state language (Armenian), in Russian, and in another foreign language, commonly English, French or German. Russian is taught as an obligatory foreign language, from 2nd to 10th grade, between two and four hours a week (Aleksanian & Ter-Arakelian, 2001; Grdzelian, 2007; Report, 2003, 2006b). Secondary education is offered in Armenian and in five minority languages, Assyrian, Greek, Kurdish, Russian and Yezidi (Report, 2006b). Higher education functions mostly in Armenian, with Russian-language education available at the Russian-Armenian University and through commercial satellite campuses of Russian universities (Manvelian, 2007; Report,