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MULTILINGUALISM(S) AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN THE RUSSIAN MEDIA

1. Russian in a multilingual world

When the term multilingualism is used as an umbrella term covering a multitude of practices, it simplifies those practices into a general concept with stable characteristics. Multilingual practices in different situations may share features, it is true, but the common denominator – usage of more than one language – is overly basic. Multilingualism can only be studied meaningfully in context, that is, accounting for which combinations and linguistic repertoires are manifest and within which linguistic culture the multilingual situation evolved. Metadiscourse (that is to say, discussion and comments on any aspect of language) dealing with multilingualism is equally dependent on context. It is such metadiscourse, bound into its socio-political context, that this article examines, specifically, the metadiscourse on multilingualism in the Russian media. My aim is to look at how multilingualism is discursively constructed, by examining language attitudes and ideologies as expressed in the Russian media. Language attitudes that are presented as common-sense, when repeated frequently, can morph into collective truths, as Blommaert (2005) reminds us, and such collective truths have “real and often degrading effects on speakers” (Jaworska, Themistocleous 2018: 59).

I examine what different multilingualisms are thematised in the media, whether different combinations of languages elicit different reactions, and whether multilingualism is celebrated or fought against. In the process, I will look at links to identity building and othering, which are at the heart of any processes of linguistic ideologisation and discursive construction. For example, when a Russian media outlet writes about multilingualism in Ukraine, the term ‘multilingualism’ is understood one way, and differs sharply from the same publisher’s portrayal of multilingualism in London. In the Ukrainian context, as we shall see, the subtext is multilingualism with the state language (Ukrainian) and Russian, in a polity with a significant Russian-speaking minority which used to belong to the Soviet Union, whose lingua franca and pre-eminent prestige language was Russian. The London context is removed from Russian interest, and the linguistic situation can be exoticized safely from afar.

In the end, we shall see that whether multilingualism is constructed as a problem or an opportunity in Russian media depends on what specific kind of multilingualism is under discussion.

2. Media and contested linguistic space

In the post-Soviet area attitudes and language ideologies concerning multilingualism have incisive effects. As Aneta Pavlenko (2008: 275f.) puts it, “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 news and where disagreements over language- and education-related decisions have led to demonstrations and at times even military conflicts and secession”. To tease out which widely disseminated discourses pertaining to multilingualism are circulating in the language community, scholars have been drawn towards media and print media in particular (Johnson and Ensslin 2007: 4–5). The media are a primary forum for the perpetuation of positions on language (DiGiacomo 1999: 105; Horner 2011: 495, cited in Jaworska and Themistocleous). While linguistic matters may not be deemed newsworthy on a daily basis, statements on language and multilingualism over time form particular discourses of multilingualism, linked to other topics and taken as common sense or common knowledge. The body of research on metadiscourse of multilingualism has shown that the mainstream media are “key agents in disseminating contentious and ideologised representations of

multilingualism” (Jaworska, Themistocleous 2018: 57). In media outlets we can observe what is sayable on the topic of multilingualism at a given time. Furthermore, in the Russian media context, these representations also reflect what will pass muster within the restricted operational scope of a media that is effectively under widespread government control. Despite the fact that censorship is outlawed in Russia, it is widely accepted that “control of the media through loyal media elites is a crucial cornerstone of Putin’s political regime” (Schimpfössl, Yablokov 2017, 3). Media contributors are aware of what is acceptable to say, and demonstrate loyalty to the government.¹ Below, I describe the close attention the government pays to language questions – this attention demands that the media deal with language matters in a way that is deemed appropriate.

I examined the output of the 10 most popular print media news sources and the most popular radio and internet news sources (according to a recent Levada survey on the media landscape, Volkov, Goncharov 2017). The body of material dealing primarily with multilingualism amounted to 123 articles. The topic of multilingualism was particularly prevalent around 2007, the year of the Russian language, and post-2014, after the events of Euromaidan (on which more below). At other times, there was scantly coverage. The overall number is, of course, a small part of the total news output over this time. But observation of the different media outlets allows us to create a picture of what different types of multilingualism are dealt with and how, how the topic is reflected in the media, and what common argumentation is present in the dialectical relationship between reports on and formation of general societal trends. Multilingualism was mentioned in the following contexts:

The role and status of the Russian language in Former Soviet Union (FSU) countries

The role and status of the Russian language and other languages in the Russian Federation, including the national republics

Languages of and in the ‘far abroad’²

The following sections deal with these areas in turn.

3. Former Soviet Union countries – multilingualism and Russian

Multi- and bilingualism in countries of the FSU forms a significant part of media coverage of multilingualism. In those countries, Russian used to enjoy a dominant position during Soviet times. The language policies of the newly sovereign FSU countries mainly focused on establishing a secure position for the titular language. There are significant Russian-speaking minorities in post-Soviet countries, and the language situation in many states is volatile. There is a significant literature describing the state of language policies and language realities in the post-Soviet area.³ In the post-Soviet era, national mobilisers contend that additional languages, especially spoken by what now counts a large minority population (of Russian speakers), pose a threat to the national language, and it has been found that in post-Soviet countries the very term ‘bilingualism’ has a pejorative connotation of ‘russification’ (Pavlenko 2008: 306). The Russian media, as might be predicted, view the situation differently. Multilingualism in countries of the FSU, with Russian and the national language existing in a happy unity, would have numerous benefits, they contend. At the same time, the situation is described as difficult as Russian is perceived to be under threat. The following examples show how this image is created:

У нас позиция такая: ... Пусть страна [Ukraine] будет многонациональной, многоязыковой, разнообразной и богатой – это же прекрасно, если так будет. (Nezavisimaja Gazeta 27.02.2014)

¹ For more information on Russian media censorship, see also Schimpfössl, Yablokov (2014), Kiriya, Sherstoboeva (2015), Simons (2015), and particularly the special issue of *Russian Politics* (2.1 (2017)) on media ownership and censorship which the above-cited article by Schimpfössl and Yablokov introduces.

² The term ‘the far abroad’ (дальнее зарубежье) denotes countries not part of the FSU (which are, in turn, the ‘near abroad’).

³ For an overview of the development of Russian as prestige language in the tsarist and communist empires and the radical changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union, see Pavlenko (2008: 4–26).

This example shows the frequently employed rhetoric of positive consequences of multilingualism in the FSU. 'multilingual' is here nested with the adjectives multinational, diverse and rich, with the summary that such a state of things would be wonderful, underscored with the emphatic particle же. In the data, similar collocations of adjectives and setting the idea of multilingualism in a context of richness, diversity and peaceful coexistence appear 36 times and serve a range of functions. First, Russian is portrayed as an integral part of this vibrant multilingual vision, a tool to achieve such positive outcomes. Russian thus becomes a civilizing force, without which the country in question would be poorer. The argumentation uses the discourse of common sense, e.g., emphatic particles to state that of course this multilingual environment would be desirable. However, there are also frequent descriptions of the multilingual environment as a place of danger. This danger is connected mainly to intolerance of Russian. The following example uses a military metaphor:

По поводу многоязычной среды, непредсказуемой и нередко взрывоопасной, вспыхнула острая дискуссия. минное поле. ... Неверный шаг, неосторожное толкование сработает, как детонатор. (Novaia Gazeta, 31.08.2015)

The statement, dealing with Russia's regions and national republics, is made by Elena Penskaia, a literary scholar at Moscow's Higher School of Economics. Here, the multilingual sphere is described as unpredictable and often explosive. This metaphor is elaborated by the description of the situation as a minefield where one wrong step, a careless word, acts as a detonator. This war metaphor of organised fighting serves to convey the danger of the linguistic situation and the negative consequences that may follow. The danger, however, is not specified here – it is not said who will suffer and how. It is worthy of note that this portrayal of the danger of multilingualism occurs in Novaia Gazeta, which is regarded as a liberal, relatively government-critical media outlet (Schimpfössl, Yablokov 2017b: 36). Linguistic views can often act as a unifier and also a bastion of conservative thought where even liberal outlets weigh in in favour of retaining what they regard the linguistic status quo. This has been confirmed by Spitzmüller (2007: 253), who found that linguistic attitudes did not differ significantly between outlets with different political positions. This status quo, according to the media discourse, is that there should be a multilingual situation in the FSU with Russian retaining rights and its role there.

To aid this portrayal of the vital role of Russian, there is a highly prevalent discourse of the Russian language as a commodity. The commodification of Russian has been studied recently by Ryazanova-Clarke (2017), Ryazanova-Clarke, Muth (2017), and Pavlenko (2017). Ryazanova-Clarke (2017) analyses how "the theme of the Russian language emerges in the dominant Russian narratives of transnational and regional integration", where "the discursive construction of value of the Russian language as a means for material advancement in the Russian transnational situations ('profit') is constantly intertwined with manufacturing the transnational semantics of belonging to Russia" (2017: 444). The combination of themes of pride and profit recalls Gasparov's discussion of two historical approaches to language and identity in Russia, the nominalist tradition which considers language a tool which is shaped and adapted, and the realist tradition which sees language as embodying its speakers' mentality and national character (Gasparov 2004: 132). This opposition between the nominalist and realist view has also been detected in present-day media coverage on language issues (Streng 2012: 7). After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Russia continued to use Soviet-Style rhetoric of multilingualism, which eventually contradicted emerging utilisation of the Russian language to unify and consolidate the Russian national identity (Ryazanova-Clarke 2017: 445). This is a direct continuation of Soviet rhetoric of the role of the Russian language as *primus inter pares* in the multinational, multi-ethnic empire (as seen also in the discourse of multinational and multi-ethnic character in the media, cf. section above).

In the Russian media discourse on multilingualism, Russian is portrayed as a commodity, a way to let the world know about oneself in a world language, and that has many positive consequences. Thus, the historian Petr Tolochko¹ said in an interview with *Izvestiia* that

Чего греха таить, мы не такие многоязычные, как европейцы. Благодаря русскому мы можем заявить о себе миру. Потому что украинского языка никто вообще не знает. (*Izvestiia* 12.11.2008)

Tolochko generalises that ‘we’ (all Ukrainians) are not as multilingual as the Europeans (it is not made clear who exactly is meant) and thus need Russian to tell the world about themselves, as nobody knows Ukrainian. Russian is here portrayed as a handy tool. The interviewee claims there is no need to deny that Ukrainians are not multilingual – which here means with languages other than Russian – and that Russian is the solution to this issue.

Other examples show a discourse of more economic commodification, as in the following:

Двуязычие имеет прямой социально-экономический стимул. ... полноценное двуязычное общество ... является важным условием успешной глобальной конкуренции страны [Azerbaijan] на мировом пространстве, ее привлекательности. Наконец, мультилингвистический и мультикультурный потенциал является ресурсом для модернизации и научно-технического сотрудничества. (*Izvestiia* 26.05.2011)

This article describes a bilingual situation, namely, use of Azeri and Russian in Azerbaijan. This bilingualism is described as a socioeconomic stimulus, an important precondition for successfully competing on the global market; and multilingual and multicultural potential is a resource for modernisation and scientific and technical cooperation. This catalogue of miranda serves to underscore the message that Russian is extremely important in the FSU and it would be foolish to diminish its role. This point echoes speakers’ lived experience. As Pavlenko (2008: 301) states, “It turned out that speakers of a regional lingua franca [such as Russian] do not behave as immigrants or minority language speakers traditionally do. They are aware that ... Russian proficiency facilitates transnational business contacts across the post-Soviet space and within the Russian diaspora around the world.” Media coverage underscoring the usefulness of Russian do not mention the juxtaposition between using the regional lingua franca and wanting one’s own linguistic identity, and only cover this issue from the perspective of the usefulness of Russian.

As mentioned in the introduction, an important topic in the media coverage of multilingualism concerns the linguistic situation in Ukraine. This applies especially in the run up and after Euromaidan and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, but also generally. Comprehensive summaries of the historical development of multilingualism in Ukraine and its socio-political context can be found in Bilaniuk (2005), Shevchenko (2015). In many areas of Ukraine, significant parts of the population are native Russian speakers. Their linguistic rights have been a matter of debate since the early post-Soviet days, as has Ukrainian language policy. In the following, I will briefly discuss language issues in the context of the Euromaidan protest and subsequent annexation of Crimea and war in Eastern Ukraine, because those issues appear most frequently when the media deal with multilingualism in the FSU.

When on November 21st 2013 the Ukrainian government announced that it was suspending negotiations over the Association Agreement with the European Union, protesters set up demonstrations on Kyiv’s Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti). The protest, labelled on social media with #Euromaidan, quickly took on momentum and developed into a nationwide protest against Viktor Yanukovich’s regime.² After Euromaidan’s victory, language policy came into sharp focus as there was an attempt by parts of parliament to overturn the 2012 law that had raised the legal status of Russian (and some other minority languages) (which at the time led to fist fighting in the Verkhovna Rada, Besters-Dilger 2013: 23). The

¹ Tolochko is in the introduction to the interview described positively as a ‘Soviet scholar, a Soviet person’. He has had run-ins with the Ukrainian nationalist organisation Svoboda who accuse him of being anti-Ukrainian.

² For a comprehensive, lucid analysis of the background, different nuances and outcomes of the protest, including a timeline, see Zelinska 2017.

attempt was thwarted to avoid escalation of the language conflict but was used by Russia as the reason to annex Crimea and foment separatist fighting in Eastern Ukraine (Kulyk 2016: 96).

Russian enjoyed a position of prestige in Ukraine during the tsarist and Soviet empires, and the post-Soviet Ukrainian policy failed to change this state of affairs (Kulyk 2016: 91). The situation in the FSU does not fit the accepted narrative of postcolonial language realities because for many people ethnicity and the language they consider their native one may not overlap, and loyalty to a nation or a state may not be borne out in use of the titular language (Hogan-Brun and Ramonienė 2008: 430, Pavlenko 2008: 303). Kulyk echoes this when he states that “many Russian speakers insist that they can be full-fledged Ukrainians and true patriots without abandoning their native language” (Kulyk 2016: 91). Russian speaking was promoted heavily by naming Russian as the language of communication between the ‘brotherhood of peoples’ of the Soviet Union. For the first two decades of Ukraine’s independence, language policy thinking held that Ukrainian must be sole state language but that the widespread use of Russian should not be curtailed in any way. Thus, the status of Ukrainian as state language is symbolic (Kulyk 2016: 92). Since 2010, the political aim of the Russian minority in Ukraine has been to prevent consolidation of the Ukrainian nation on the basis of the titular language, and they try to achieve this by citing European initiatives to support minorities and minority languages, particularly the European charter of minority languages, and thus justifying de-Ukrainianisation (Besters-Dilger 2013: 26). Going beyond Euromaidan, though, Kulyk has found out that while perception of identity has changed radically as a result of the Euromaidan movement, with people reporting feeling more strongly Ukrainian and distanced from Russia, attitudes towards language have changed less. His research shows that the language situation emerging from Soviet rule is accepted as legitimate (Kulyk 2016: 96). Participants put special emphasis on the function of Russian as communicative medium within Ukraine but also between nations.

In the media, the coverage pleads for a diverse, multilingual environment, but considers Russian endangered. The following statement shows the plea for multilingualism:

Именно в этом органичном, исторически сложившемся двуязычии и заключается специфика генетического кода Украины. Многоязычие, кстати, весьма полезное для развития интеллекта, являет собой ее конкурентное и культурное преимущество. (Moskovskii Komsomolets 10.07.2012)

As before, this statement portrays multilingualism as positive – here, for the development of the intellect, and as a cultural advantage – and also claims that bilingualism in Ukraine is organic and historically created, and forms part of the country’s genetic code. Such argumentation strategies convey that the situation is natural and created not by human agents, but by inevitable biological processes. Not having Russian in this situation, then, would be unnatural and lead to negative consequences, and Russian cannot be rightfully taken away. The argumentation using the metaphor of genetics appears at different times, for example in 1997:

На огромных просторах многоязыковая народность была объединена единым языком, единой культурой, едиными традициями, и они уже вошли как бы в генный аппарат, в создание и поведение нации, и изменить это одному поколению невозможно. (Argumenty i fakty 14.01.1997)

The history of the land is evoked, and the one language, culture and tradition of Russian people living in a large area of land is argued to have entered the genetic apparatus of the nation and it’s impossible to change it quickly. The statement comes from E. S. Stroevev, who was at the time chairman of the Federation Council and one of the most powerful and well-known figures in Russian politics (Ortung et al 2000: 407); quoting this authority figure gives weight to the statement.

Language policies perceived to disadvantage Russian are met with disparagement, as the next example shows.

Верховная рада Украины сделает «мову» единственным госязыком ... За теми, кто позволяет себе общение на русском языке, проследят специальные инспекторы. (Rossiiskaia Gazeta 23.01.2017)

The Ukrainian word for language, мова, stands in here for the Ukrainian language. The article warns that special inspectors will persecute those who permit themselves to speak in Russian. The trigger for this article was draft law 5670 about the sole use of Ukrainian in the public sphere. This contribution from the government's mouthpiece Rossiiskaia Gazeta paints a picture of Russian speakers under grave threat.

In this discursive context of threat to Russian in Ukraine, the authority of international institutions is invoked both before and after 2014, as the following examples show.

русский язык нужно защищать ... в центральном и западном регионах Украины. Там проживает много людей, которых ущемляют в правах. На это неоднократно указывал Совет Европы. (Izvestiia 25.05.2012)

Izvestiia demands that the Russian language be protected in central and western regions of Ukraine and states that the Council of Europe has shown that the rights of inhabitants there are under threat. In a later article, Izvestiia makes this point even more strongly:

Возьмите ситуацию на Украине в последние два года. Там запрещены любые публичные проявления симпатии к России, русской культуре, русскому языку. Ликвидация надписей на русском языке, препятствование распространению российской прессы являются грубейшими нарушениями международных обязательств, которые Украина взяла на себя в рамках ООН, Совета Европы и ОБСЕ. (Izvestiia 27.10.2016)

The article argues that by banning any public declarations of sympathy towards Russia, its culture and language, and by getting rid of Russian in the linguistic landscape and curtailing the distribution of Russian press, Ukraine is in breach of its international obligations within the UN, the Council of Europe and OSCE. Ukraine is thus portrayed as a rogue state in disregard of international rules and violating human rights. This point is not only made in conjunction with Ukraine, incidentally, although most often there. We also find other examples, for example concerning Latvia:

действия латвийских властей полностью противоречат европейской политике многоязычия. Ведь ни Берлин, ни Брюссель не заинтересованы в том, чтобы в Евросоюзе устраивали гонения на нацменьшинства. (Izvestiia 02.06.2017)

This article paints a picture of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia being abandoned by the EU – neither Berlin nor Brussels care, they state, that within the EU in Latvia national minorities are being prosecuted. This discourse which evokes images of a fascist regime is expressed more directly in the following example which states that

Мнение европейских политиков – единственное ограничение, которое может сдержать эту пронацистскую волну. (Moskovskii Komsomolets 25.01.2017)

Linguistic policy is equated with a pro-Nazi wave, and European politicians are seen as the one potential bastion against this development. As Ryazanova-Clarke (2017: 451) has shown, this discourse is particularly prevalent in coverage on Ukraine, where the term 'fascists' has been adopted by Russian propaganda to denote Ukrainophones.

In the discourse on multilingualism in FSU countries outside Russia, multilingualism stands for the use of the titular language and Russian. The existence of Russian in these areas is associated in the media with economic progress, diversity, wealth and overall positive outcomes. When multilingualism is under threat, the discourse warns that the situation is dangerous and invokes international organisations to demand that Russian language rights be protected in the multilingual situation.

From this discourse of threat to multilingualism, the enumeration of benefits of multilingualism and appeals to international organisations which enshrine minority language rights, it might be assumed that the media discourse concerning multilingualism *within* Russia would also be broadly supportive and enthusiastic about multilingualism. This, we shall see in the next section, is not the case.

4. Multilingualism within the Russian Federation

The Russian Federation (RF) is a multilingual and multi-ethnic country, as the media coverage on language issues frequently reminds its audience. Within the Russian Federation exist 22 federal republics¹, which are based on the territory where the titular nations of these republics live². The interplay of different languages spoken there is a key topic in the metadiscourse on multilingualism. When the media describe the role and status of different languages within the RF, the general descriptions of multilingualism are positive:

Мы дорожим нашей множественностью и нашей многомерностью и многоязыкостью. Vesti 04.11.2015

Страна у нас уникальная с точки зрения многоязычия. И государство делает все, чтобы эти языки сохранялись. (Rossiiskaia Gazeta 22.02.2017)

Это основа существования и развития нашего многонационального, многоконфессионального государства, нашей богатой, впитавшей множество самых разных традиций, укладов и обычаев культуры, нашей многоязычной и многоликой российской нации (Vesti 4.11. 2010)

These contributions link multilingualism to diversity and rich culture and claim that it is unique to the RF. In the first quotation, president Medvedev's speech on the occasion of the day of national unity in 2010 is quoted. The state is portrayed as benevolently maintaining all languages of the Russian Federation. But frequently, multilingualism is described as a problem – both in republics, but also in Russia in general.

в этой республике [Azerbaijan] толерантно относятся к проблеме многоязычия (Rossiiskaia Gazeta 20.09.2006)

В России, как и во многих других странах, очень остро стоит проблема мигрантов. В частности, языковая. Как сделать, чтобы прибывшие на проживание в чужую страну сами безболезненно включились в обучение и при этом не тормозили его? (Rossiiskaia Gazeta 4.10. 2005)

в Краснодарском крае, к примеру, несколько лет действует специальная программа обучения русскому языку в местах компактного проживания национальных меньшинств. Проблема настолько остра, что, как выразилась директор одной из школ, федеральную целевую программу «Русский язык» «нужно сделать национальным проектом». (Rossiiskaia Gazeta 7.9.2006)

Although Azerbaijan is praised for being tolerant about multilingualism, multilingualism itself is called a problem. One might argue that the word can be taken to mean more 'issue, question', but undoubtedly the subtext of проблема suggests a problem to be solved, actions to be taken to remedy a situation. The next two examples use the 'problem' discourse as well, including questions on how to solve it and integrate immigrants or national minorities. All articles with the 'problem' discourse stem from the government's mouthpiece Rossiiskaia Gazeta. By framing multilingualism as a ubiquitous issue that needs to be dealt with somehow, the publication portray it as something negative and not the normal state of things, but a situation that needs fixing. The fact that such coverage occurs in the government's mouthpiece paper suggests that this view is at least semi-official. Below, I discuss that there is indeed a drive towards establishing Russian as the sole legitimate language.

The problems mentioned in the discourse are frequently described as concerning mutual understanding and integration of migrants so they can participate in public life, but at the core of the issue are concerns of nation-building. Russian governmental efforts of nation-building have been extensively analysed (see e.g. Tolz 1998; Shevel 2011; Monaghan 2012; Trenin 2015; Isaacs, Polese 2016). In this respect, the idea of the power vertical and the role of language in this vertical have also been examined closely by Ryazanova-Clarke (2006) and Gorham (2006). As regards multilingualism within the RF, Zamyatin (2015: 300) shows that in official policy documents on languages of the republics Russian is portrayed as the only valid state language of the RF, with federalism as merely a temporary compromise. Recently, there has been an emphasis on valorizing Russian as the state language of the whole country, and a portrayal of

¹ Including Crimea, which the RF considers a republic. Its status as such is not internationally recognised.

² For information about native languages of peoples of the Russian Federation, see the report on the latest census from 2010 (Федеральная служба государственной статистики, 2012, particularly pp. 78–80).

state languages of the republics as a problem. He points out that Russian nation-building and titular nation-building are in direct opposition to one another (Zamyatin 2015: 288). The media suggest some solutions for this conflict:

сплотить общество на основе любой вертикали власти было невозможно, если у населения многоязычной полиэтнической страны не было представления и понятия «нация». ... Увы, эта беда с нами и поныне. ... было бы важно увеличить процент передач и программ на русском языке на республиканском теле- и радиовещании, насытив их информацией и сюжетами из истории сотрудничества народов России, русской и мировой культуры. (Nezavisimaia Gazeta 25.09.2012)

In the view of this article, a multi-ethnic multilingual society cannot be united if there is no understanding of what the 'nation' is. The article starts with this statement about the Russian Empire, but then moves to present times, when this 'misery' also obtains. The proposed solution is to increase the amount of programmes in Russian on television and radio in the republics with information on cooperation of the peoples of Russia, on Russian and world culture. Such ideas are directly borrowed from historical Soviet discourse on friendship of the peoples. Language is here presented as the glue that will bind everyone together, no matter what nationality they belong to. An article in *Izvestiia* expresses this point particularly dramatically:

Не нужно иллюзий: нет единого языка – нет единого государства. Страны, исповедующие двуязычие (или многоязычие), всегда находятся на грани распада. (*Izvestiia* 11.03.2016)

Without a unified language, it claims, there can not be a unified state. (As example of countries that are bilingual and constantly at the edge of falling apart, the article lists Belgium and Canada.) And it is precisely *because* Russia is, as the media remind us, made up of different nationalities and people who speak many languages, that the Russian language must unify everyone. Thus, one might expect signs of an ideology of multilingualism as parallel monolingualisms, where speakers all use Russian but may in some contexts use a different language – in sum, a diglossic situation.¹ Instead, however, the question is framed as an issue of language choice. To achieve the one unified state language also in the republics where there is a policy of the official bilingualism, policy documents but also politicians and the media employ the rhetoric of language choice. Zamyatin has analysed how this rhetoric serves to promote the use of Russian over titular languages, and has been emphasised constantly in speeches by senior officials and key policy documents (Zamyatin 2012: 40).

А русский язык – это основа взаимодействия народов. ... Прекрасно понимаю тревогу национальной интеллигенции за судьбу татарского языка. Но зачем заставлять учить его из-под палки? (*Argumenty i fakty* 27.03.2013)

In this article about Tatarstan, Mikhail Shcheglov, president of the society for Russian culture in Kazan', is quoted. He states that although concerns of the national intelligentsia about the fate of the Tatar language is understandable, the Russian language is the foundation of the cooperation of the nations. Why, asks the author, force people to learn Tatar? This is an example of 'yes, but' argumentation, where a concession is made (the Tatar intelligentsia has a right to be concerned), but at the same time refuted with the rhetoric of common sense, that it is counterproductive to force people to learn it and that after all Russian is the basis for mutual understanding. This rhetoric is based on the notion that speakers have a free language choice. The following article is more directly concerned with language choice:

Русско-национальное двуязычие – это хорошо и это желательная норма для современного россиянина нерусской принадлежности. Полный переход на русский язык и забывание этнического языка – это жизненная реальность и результат, как правило, личного выбора, который следует признавать и не трактовать негативно, ибо если есть право на сохранение языка, то должно быть и право на его забывание и на языковой переход. (*Izvestiia* 27.11.2017)

¹ For an overview of the history of diglossia as a concept and definitions of it, see Ferguson (1959), Fishman (1967, 2002), Hudson (1992, 2002).

Again, a concession is made to bilingualism – that it is good and the desirable norm for a Russian citizen who is not of Russian nationality (not, incidentally, of ethnic Russian residents of the republic, who are not mentioned), but that a complete turn to Russian is a reality and the result of personal choice which must be accepted and not negatively treated. Again, multilingualism and diversity are praised here – but the media stress that use of languages other than Russian should be a choice and that nobody should be forced to learn titular languages. Structural advantages of Russian over titular languages and policy measures are not mentioned, thus, the competition between languages is portrayed as fair and equal.¹

When comparing the discourse on multilingualism in FSU countries outside Russia with the discourse on multilingualism within the RF, it is striking that outside Russia, multilingualism is supported, but within Russia discouraged. This dualism echoes Russian language policy, as has been mentioned by an observer of Russian language policy, Mikhail Kaplan: “The Russian government is applying double standards in their linguistic policies. On the one hand, we have an adoption of laws that demotivate people and create disadvantageous conditions for learning regional languages. On the other hand, Moscow criticises its neighbouring countries for initiating the same kind of policies towards Russian minorities” (Kaplan 2018). The media coverage of multilingualism within and outside Russia perpetuates this discourse.

5. Languages in and of the ‘far abroad’

In comparison with the multilingual settings examined in the above sections, languages in and of the so-called ‘far abroad’ are not frequently mentioned in Russian media discourse on multilingualism – there are six articles over the timespan examined. The discourse is characterized by valorising prestige languages and supporting the ideology of parallel monolingualisms.

When there is a discussion on, for example, the linguistic landscape of Manchester (Vesti 23.8.2013), or the uses of learning Chinese in Moscow, languages are exoticized. Jaworska and Themistocleous (2018), who have studied multilingualism discourse in the UK, have found that the language skills of individuals who have acquired competence in prestige languages either via education or within the family are regarded highly, whereas those speaking what are perceived as low-prestige migrant languages are considered to have faulty language skills.

In general, there is a dominant discourse of parallel monolingualisms that is widespread in the media, founded on the idea of languages as bounded entities. It has been found in metadiscourse dealing with multilingualism elsewhere too (Jaffe 2007: 69; Makoni, Pennycook 2007: 21; Kelly-Holmes, Milani 2011: 4). The following article written by writer and critic Alexander Genis is a good example of this notion. Alexander Genis, an émigré who has been living in the United States since 1977, might well reflect mainly on his own experience and opinion on multilingualism, and what is more, in New York rather than Russia. However, the newspaper would not print an article that did not at least broadly correspond to acceptable, sayable statements, disclaimers notwithstanding, and has deemed Genis’s article as newsworthy and acceptable to its audience.

Двуязычие, говорит их [Ellen Bialystok and Michelle Martin-Rhee’s] исследование, учит нас лучше управлять ресурсами сознания. Привычка жить в двух параллельных мирах делает ум гибким, как лук, и послушным, как стрела. В зависимости от ситуации (на работе или дома, с женой или другом, в бане или в банке) билингва включает то один язык, то другой, но никогда не смешивает их, оставляя эту манеру малограмотным, снобам и Толстому в «Войне и мире». (Izvestiia 29.03. 2012)

¹ The rhetoric of freedom of choice of language has received a boost since Vladimir Putin said in a speech at a meeting of the Council of Relations Between Nations on July 20th 2017 in Yoshkar-Ola that citizens should not be forced to learn any language other than Russian (transcript available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/councils/by-council/28/55109>). Indeed, on 25th July 2018, the дума adopted the final reading of a law that enshrines people’s right to choose the language of instruction for their children (<http://duma.gov.ru/news/27720/>), leading to fears that languages other than Russian will fade into the background (Kommersant 25.07. 2018).

Genis interprets a study by Martin-Rhee and Bialystok (2008) as stating that bilingualism promotes better use of resources and that living in two parallel worlds makes the mind flexible and efficient. Further, Genis claims, bilingual individuals switch on one or the other language for different situations but never mix them, something with only people with poor language skills, snobs and the characters in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* do. Thus, Genis describes bilingualism really as parallel monolingualisms, where languages are not mixed and any contact phenomena, which are after all widespread and completely normal for bilingual and multilingual individuals (already summarised in 1986 by Suzanne Romaine), are excluded as aberrations and errors.

Such parallel monolingualism ideology is an extension of standard language ideologies. Standard language ideology is found also in another facet of media discourse on multilingualism in Russia – a frequent emphasis on the purity of Russian in a multilingual world. In the final section, I will discuss how the discourse of language purism enters the topic of multilingualism in the Russian media.

6. Multilingualism and the purity of Russian

Linguistic purism in media discourse on multilingualism most frequently enters the debate when Russian in contact with other languages of the FSU is discussed. Russian needs to be pure, according to the media, to fulfil its role as lingua franca of the FSU. Frequently, a description of a multilingual situation and Russian's role in it is followed by a discussion of what problems Russian faces in itself, as in the following examples.

чтобы хорошо понять друг друга [in the republic of Mordovia], как правило, переходят на русский. Поэтому его называют языком межнационального общения. А вот говорить на нем грамотно становится все тяжелее. ... СМС, сокращения, социальные сети, где нет правил. (Vesti 19.05.2015)
В условиях такого многоязычия русский является языком межнационального общения. Однако ... в последние годы наблюдается определенное снижение уровня владения русским языком, особенно среди представителей молодого поколения. (Rossiiskaia Gazeta 01.02.2007)

In both examples, the contribution first states that Russian serves as a lingua franca before outlining the problems the language is facing nowadays. Text messaging, abbreviations, social networks and young people are blamed for the poor state of the Russian language. It is notable that it is not the language contact that is listed as the source of impure Russian here. These classic purist tropes – blaming the younger generation and new technologies – are used not directly as an argument against multilingualism, but use multilingualism to lead over to a discussion about the Russian language. Language mixing is condemned in the following two examples:

Второй процесс – наверное, более опасный – деградация русского языка в странах СНГ. Где-то более, где-то менее стремительно, но во всех республиках русский язык истончается и мертвоет, превращаясь в «пиджин-рашн». (Nezavisimaia Gazeta 14.03.2013)
В результате [of less Russian language and literature teaching], жалуются крымчане, уровень культуры понижается, ... русский язык начинает приобретать черты суржика. Мы живем в многоязычной среде. На нас влияет украинский. (Nezavisimaia Gazeta 02.07.2007)

The Russian language in the CIS is described as thinning out and dying, turning into 'pidgin Russian' or, in Ukraine, into surzhyk (a pejorative umbrella term for language contact phenomena between Russian and Ukrainian, see Bilaniuk 2004 for a detailed discussion). In the multilingual sphere, they contend, languages influence one another and lead to a lower level of language skills and a change in the language itself. But in the Russian discourse, more often it is not one of the commonly spoken languages which is blamed. Instead, the discourse switches over to a discussion of how Russian itself is getting worse, because of social media, SMS use, and young sloppy speakers. Interestingly, such discourse that is about multilingualism but then turns to discussion of one particular language that must be kept pure has not been noted by scholarship of other multilingual settings. Other contributions found claims in the

metadiscourse that it is the contact itself making the language impure. This facet of Russian commentary on multilingualism thus deserves further investigation.

7. Conclusions

Overall, the discourse on multilingualism in Russian media in the main reflects wider socio-political trends. Unity of the post-Soviet space is promoted as something desirable, with the Russian language as a unifying force for good. Where the language is perceived to be under threat, in non-Russian countries as well as within Russia, the media argue for Russian language rights and support for Russian. By consequence, in coverage about countries other than Russia, multilingualism is portrayed as overwhelmingly positive per se, because it would involve Russian. However, dangers are warned of – particularly when the status of Russian is considered to be threatened. Within Russia, on the other hand, arguing for a strong position and pre-eminence of Russian entails a rejection of multilingualism. Such a rejection is often framed as a question of language choice, with the common sense choice for Russian being given as the natural one. As for multilingualism in the ‘far abroad’ or with non-FSU languages, language usage that amounts to parallel monolingualism is encouraged and viewed positively, but language mixing and perceived influence of other languages on Russian is seen negatively. This chimes with standard language ideologies, and indeed “the deeply entrenched standard language ideology and one nation, one language ideology tend to underpin the ways in which multilingualism is represented in many parts of the world” (Horner 2011: 497). This may explain why the purity of Russian comes to the fore so frequently. Overall, the discourse perpetuates a standard language ideology and serves to reinforce the use of Russian as a soft-power tool to build an image of the nation and to establish a place for Russia as still preeminent in the FSU.

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