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Teaching Russian, learning multilingualism: Narratives of linguistic conviviality in language provision for migrant learners

Migrants coming from different post-Soviet countries to reside in Russia do not simply diversify its urban environments with their native languages or localized variants of Russian but also challenge the existing system of language provision for children and adults which is relatively unfit to answer their learning needs and language backgrounds. New emerging perspectives on adapting practices to growing numbers of non-native (or 'second-native') learners have recently sprung up in various educational contexts, e.g. compulsory primary and secondary schooling and supplementary diaspora-led classes, HE institutions and private tutoring, educational enterprises and activist groups. Moving the issue of language support for new-coming migrants to the foreground being an important shift in post-Soviet Russian education itself, its potential and prospective development are understood quite variably by professionals in the sector.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Russian cities carried out in 2017, the paper offers a glimpse on a selection of accounts from language providers for migrants, focusing on the ways their narratives are built around the ideas of perceived everyday multilingualism and urban civic activism, commodification of language resources and center-periphery relations in language policies.