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## LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES WITHIN, ACROSS & AGAINST BORDERS

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH SEMINAR, 16 MARCH 2017

DURHAM UNIVERSITY, RUSSKIY MIR CENTRE (A29)

### Seminar panels and paper abstracts

Panel 1, 12:00-13:30, Russkiy Mir Centre (A29)

#### **Switching to Post-Soviet: Language Discourses in Nation-Building and Border-Making**

Chair: Andy Byford (Durham University, [andy.byford@durham.ac.uk](mailto:andy.byford@durham.ac.uk))

Alena Pfoser (Loughborough University, [A.Pfoser2@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:A.Pfoser2@lboro.ac.uk))

#### **Rebordering Estonia: Visions from the Periphery**

This paper analyses the processes of rebordering Estonia from the perspective of the periphery. Much has been written about the remaking of political communities in former Soviet republics after the break-up of the Soviet Union and EU accession through language policies, shifting mobility regimes and citizenship laws. In Estonia these policies have led to the exclusion of the local Russian-speaking population who moved to Estonia during the Soviet period and due to the border changes were turned into “migrants without migration” (Feldman 2015) and whose status has been the subject of on-going debates, particularly in the context of Russian imperial ambitions reaching out to these populations. The paper will draw attention to their narrative practices of Russian-speakers trying to reinsert themselves into the Estonian political community: through practices of claims-making and selective bordering in relation to Russia. The paper will make a case for considering peripheral visions in nation-building processes, showing their contested nature as well as power relations at play.

Teresa Wigglesworth-Baker (independent researcher, drtwb2015@gmail.com)

### **Multilingual Education Reforms in Georgia in the Post-Soviet Period: Discourses of Ethnic Minority Integration**

This research analyses how effective multilingual educational reforms (MLE) have been in post-Soviet Georgia in helping ethnic minorities to learn Georgian as a second language in order to integrate into Georgian society. It also examines the language ideologies at play within the interactive dynamics of top-down and bottom-up discourses. This research used qualitative methods of analysis and the data was collected in February and March 2015. The research revealed that MLE processes in Georgia at the current time have not been effective in bridging the language gap for ethnic minorities due to the low proficiency of the Georgian language among ethnic minority teachers. Furthermore, MLE reforms have produced ideologies of exclusion rather than inclusion and the research has revealed a social hierarchy of languages (Weber 2009) is prevalent within Georgian society and in all spheres of language use. However, at the grass-roots level the research discovered that language shift is happening as a natural process externally to multilingual education processes among ethnic minorities in Georgia. This has been attributed to an increase in the motivation of ethnic minority populations to improve their economic opportunities within Georgian society through the use of social media and information technology.

Anna Mkhoyan (Universite de Geneve, Anna.Mkhoyan@unige.ch)

### **Russian Language and Education in Armenia since 1991: A Brief Overview**

Since the 2000s, Russian or federal institutions or multilateral institutions have gradually been evolving in the post-Soviet space alongside already present Western or Asian counterparts in order to promote the Russian language or to reinforce the position of the Russian language in the 'near abroad'. My presentation based on my article entitled "Soft power, Russia and the former Soviet states: a case study of Russian language and education in Armenia" focuses on the evolution of the Russian language and education in Armenia. First, I will question the impact (if any) of the promotion of the Russian language in Armenia since 1991. Where does the Russian language stand as a foreign language within the Armenian primary and secondary education system as compared to other foreign languages? How does Armenia, one of the most reliable partners of Russia in the former Soviet space, compare with neighbouring Azerbaijan and Georgia with regard to the evolution of Russian? Second, language and education being interlinked, I will question whether Russia still plays a significant role in the training of Armenian elite. The findings suggest that even if the previous decline in the usage of Russian has been reversed, the monopoly once enjoyed by this language seems to be over. Russian is promoted in a multicultural environment – alongside English, French, German or Chinese – which reflects the new geopolitical reality. Multicultural landscape characterises also the Armenian higher education system.

Panel 2, 14:30-15:30, Russkiy Mir Centre (A29)

## **UK's Post-Soviet Migrants Contesting Boundaries through Language Practices**

Chair: Polina Kliuchnikova (Durham University, p.s.klyuchnikova@durham.ac.uk)

Nina Ivashinenko (University of Glasgow, Nina.Ivashinenko@glasgow.ac.uk)

### **Educational Practices: Implementation of Different Approaches in the Russian Schools in Scotland**

Russian schools in Scotland are free to create their own educational programmes like many other complementary schools in Scotland already do (Issa & Williams, 2009). Approaches to teaching heritage language cannot be standardised, as every community is different and has diverse needs which can be supported by heritage language learning and teaching (Kagan & Dillon, 2008:151).

Teaching approaches carried out in the Russian schools tend to be the subject of a negotiating process between the parents and teachers. Both sides try to shape the teaching process according to their beliefs, attitudes and evaluations of the Russian and Scottish educational systems. Based on my participant observations and interviews with teachers and parents from the four Russian schools in Scotland (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee), I discovered three main approaches implemented in these schools:

1) *Supporting the language based identity and community integration*. This approach to teaching Russian as a native language, is based on a nostalgic attitude of education in the USSR, and the belief that the Russian educational system has some advantages. Active employment of Russian symbols and referring to the Russian teaching standard, helps school communities highlight their 'Russianness'.

2) *Supporting migrant integration into local school life and increasing children's learning motivation*. This approach incorporates the idea of keeping in line with the everyday learning practices of mainstream schools when teaching Russian in the Saturday schools, helping to ease the process of studying the language.

3) *Hybrid approach* was identified following analysis of those Russian teachers who mentioned, they could use both Russian, and Scottish educational methods.

The increase in the number of Russian teachers implementing the second approach, can help make studying Russian easier and increase attendance numbers. However, this can potentially reduce the notion of Russianness, and contradict the intention of some parents who want to support their Russian-speaking identity.

Katie Harrison (University of Nottingham, [Katie.Harrison@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Katie.Harrison@nottingham.ac.uk))

### **Language Practices and Ideologies in the Ukrainian Diaspora**

My project examines the link between language and identity in the Ukrainian diaspora of the United Kingdom, providing an insight into the current sociolinguistic situation in this community and thus contributing to our wider understanding of the role language plays in migrant groups in the United Kingdom. The Ukrainian diaspora in the United Kingdom comprises members of various generations and backgrounds, and from different migration waves. The first main wave of Ukrainian migration, after WWII, comprised mainly displaced persons from Western Ukraine, who were primarily Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians. The second wave (from approximately 1991 – present) consists of post-Soviet Ukrainian migrants, whose lives and linguistic practices have been influenced by their Soviet pasts. Thus, the diaspora today is made up of two contrasting groups of Ukrainians, and people of Ukrainian heritage.

This diversity – linguistic and otherwise - makes for (potentially) interesting sociolinguistic analysis. Data has been collected combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods: via a sociolinguistic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and ethnographic observations at a Ukrainian Saturday school.

This paper will outline some of the preliminary findings of my research – primarily from the questionnaire data, but supplemented with data from interviews and observations conducted to date. It will focus on the language practices and ideologies of Ukrainians in the UK, and will discuss issues such as when, where and how often Ukrainian is used, the role language is perceived to play in the formation of Ukrainian identity, and attitudes towards and the influence of other languages spoken by Ukrainians (English, Russian).

Panel 3, 15:45-16:45, Russkiy Mir Centre (A29)

### **Transnationalising Languages: Identity Politics in Large Eurasian Spaces**

Chair: Dusan Radunovic (Durham University, [dusan.radunovic@durham.ac.uk](mailto:dusan.radunovic@durham.ac.uk))

Mamtimyn Sunuodula (Durham University, [m.a.sunuodula@durham.ac.uk](mailto:m.a.sunuodula@durham.ac.uk))

### **Multilingualism, Language Policy and Negotiating Identity in China**

The magnitude of linguistic change in China in the last four decades is no less than the economic, political and social transformations that have attracted worldwide attention. While the rise of English as an international language is widely discussed in the context of China's economic globalization and integration into the world trading and political systems, much less attention is paid to the effect of the linguistic change

on the 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities who make up 8% of the country's population.

In this research, I investigate the dynamics of interaction between multilingual ideologies and practices of the Uyghurs, a Turkic speaking minority who is among the most populous, and China's language policies pertaining to Uyghur, Mandarin Chinese and English languages, situated within the social and historical contexts of Xinjiang. Focus of the research is on the predicament of Uyghurs as social agents as they engage in linguistic practices in a rapidly changing linguistic environment. Primary objectives of the research are to uncover the ways in which: a) the language ideologies and practices of the Uyghurs are discursively shaped; b) the dynamic interaction between the state language policies and the Uyghur language ideologies and practices; c) the effect that language has on the social relations of symbolic and material power in the wider society.

The research adopts a mixed methods approach, integrating ethnographic qualitative case studies with online ethnography, documentary analysis and quantitative questionnaire research. The research finds that Uyghur language ideology and practices are socially and historically embedded and discursively constructed in social interaction and shape the ways in which Uyghurs experience and make sense of the world. The changes in state language policies in recent years promoting Mandarin Chinese oracy and literacy among the Uyghurs have negatively impacted on the symbolic and material value of Uyghur language in public domain and widened the imbalance of power. Meanwhile, the promotion of English and rise of its material and symbolic value in Chinese society has made strong impact on the Uyghur youth and provided them with an opportunity to shift the balance of symbolic relations of power in their favour.

Ammon Cheskin (University of Glasgow, Ammon.Cheskin@glasgow.ac.uk)

### **Language, Politics and Identity: The Russian-Speaking Population in the Post-Soviet Space**

Since the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Ukraine's Donbas region, Russia's asserted role in the region and policy toward its self-designated "compatriots" has shaken regional security as well as widely accepted European norms, and has imparted significant policy relevance and interest to the study of Russian-speaking communities in the post-Soviet realm. This paper offers critical multidisciplinary perspectives on the often complex and nuanced identity dynamics among Russian-speakers in these states, within the context of nation-building practices in their states of residence and Russia's asserted role as cultural homeland.

We draw upon the literature on borders and identity boundaries to examine Russia's claim to be at the center of a "Russian World" which is bounded by culture and identity and which transcends Russia's geographic boundaries. Identity boundaries

are an inter-subjective social construct created to distinguish “us” from “them” in order to provide the basis for group identity. In cases where geographic borders do not match up with identity boundaries, the possibility for conflict increases, especially as the boundaries, most importantly, may not be perceived in the same manner for each group. That is, groups may not see the boundary in the same terms: they may not agree on how groups are separated. In divided societies, where the national identity, which identifies who is a legitimate part of the collective “we”, is itself contested, the majority may see the minority as part of an outside “other” even if the minority does not share this perception. Or, neighboring states may view citizens outside of their borders as part of their collective “we.”

The incongruence of perceived boundaries offers a good illustrative tool through which to critically examine Russian-speaking communities in the post-Soviet realm. Specifically, Russia’s claim to be at the center of a “Russian World” bounded by language and culture portends a special role in the region, especially with regard to Russian-speaking “compatriots.” Yet, recent research indicates that this view is not reflected in the identities or everyday experiences of the majority of Russian-speakers living in the post-Soviet space. We conclude with a set of theoretical perspectives on the study of Russian-speakers outside of Russia.

The event is organised as part of the *Language & Identity in Post-Soviet Spaces* event series within the transnational strand of the interdisciplinary research programme, ‘Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community’, funded through the AHRC’s Open World Research Initiative.

More on the *Language & Identity in Post-Soviet Spaces* event series is available here: [languageidentityfsu.wordpress.com](http://languageidentityfsu.wordpress.com)