

“The Crystallization of Structures”: Linguistic Culture in Putin’s Russia

Lara Ryazanova-Clarke

THE interface between language practice, language policy and opinions about language in a given society forms a complex and dynamic linguistic landscape. Socio-cultural, political and historical factors impact on this landscape, redefining it in times of dramatic change. The late Soviet and post-Soviet periods have seen not only radical transformations in the usage of the Russian language but also the renegotiation of its status and value within the speaking community.

Commenting on the trajectory of recent Russian usage, Vladimir Elistratov singles out two distinct periods.¹ He labels the first as “the destabilization of the norm” (разнормирование), which he claims resulted in a dangerous situation where people stopped understanding one another.² National realization of the harm produced by the “destabilization of the norm” has led to a second period, of “the crystallization of structures” (кристаллизация структур), from the late 1990s to date. The defining feature of this period, according to Elistratov, is that speakers are returning to “the authority of the norm.”

1 Vladimir Elistratov, “Natsional’nyi iazyk i natsional’naia ideia,” URL: http://www.gramota.ru/mag_arch.html?id=54 (accessed 22.07.2005); all translations from Russian are my own.

2 The thesis that users of Russian have only a partial understanding at present of the modern texts produced in Russian is echoed in academic discourse, see Maksim Krongauz, 2005, “Zametki rasserzhennogo obyvatelia,” *Otechestvennyye zapiski* 2, URL: http://magazines.russ.ru/oz/2005/2/2005_2_4.html (accessed 11.11.2005), as well as in the media: *Argumenty i fakty*, 04.02.2004. However, none of the publications offer academically valid evidence to this statement.

Michael Gorham, in discussing opinions about the language rather than its actual use, arrives at two similar phases. He observes that after a time, starting from Gorbachev's *perestroika* and characterized by a celebration of language change and a polyphony of opinions about the language, the momentum shifted towards a more purist view.³

My objective is to further explore this trend, whose contours became more pronounced as the new century approached, and to analyse the dynamics of the linguistic question in the recent years of Vladimir Putin's presidency. My analysis will examine manifestations of the public linguistic debate as well as issues of language policy. It will also contextualize them with regard to underlying ideologies and power structures, as they struggle to assert themselves and define a new version of Russian identity. Discussions on the "deterioration" of the quality of language usage, the increased demand for active intervention in language practice, as well as the debates surrounding the subsequent adoption in June 2005 of the *Law on the State Language of the Russian Federation* (LSL-2005), form the content of my investigation.

The relationship between opinions about language and language policy continue to be a matter of debate in contemporary scholarship. While the narrow approach to language policy examines only a small number of variables, focusing mainly on the actions of the authorities and the content of official documents, Bernard Spolsky advocates a broader view, seeing language policy as an overarching concept, which includes not only traditional forms of language management, but also such components as language ideologies, opinions and beliefs.⁴

In exploring the nexus between language policy and wider cultural issues, Harold Schiffman introduces a notion of "linguistic culture," which he defines as "the set of behaviours, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language."⁵ Placing the major emphasis on linguistic culture,

3 Michael S. Gorham, 2001, "Natsiia ili snikerizatsiia? Identity and Perversion in the Language Debates of Late and Post-Soviet Russia," *Russian Review* 58 (4), pp. 614–29.

4 See, for example, Bernard Spolsky, 2004, *Language Policy*, Cambridge, pp. 5–15.

5 Harold Schiffman, 1996, *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy*, London p. 5. Referring to similar phenomena, Michael Gorham follows Grigorii Vinokur in using the term "language culture" (культура языка). He admits, however, that since the later Soviet period, the term has been used in the didactic sense and has become a concept in the

Schiffman sees language policy as its derivative, as a cultural construct grounded in the linguistic culture of a particular society.⁶ Always interconnected and co-dependent, the overt elements of language policy, such as legislation, may have a full or partial correspondence with, or, in some cases, a contrasting character to the linguistic culture of the wider speaking community. I will follow Schiffman's definition of linguistic culture and view Russian linguistic culture and language policy as fluid, co-dependent notions, the borderline between which is often blurred. Taking a broad view of language policy I will discuss the government's overt language policy documents as part of the state discourse on the language.

The discourse of linguistic culture is a locus for the on-going negotiation of opinions about linguistic cultural forms and the status of a language. The reflexive enculturation of the language, as Talbot Taylor describes such negotiation, is not a product (*ergon*) but an on-going, creative activity (*energeia*).⁷ The following discussion will centre on this *energeia*, on the dynamics in contemporary Russian linguistic culture, through exploring its components: expression and negotiation of opinions and beliefs, "language ideologies" and myths that inhabit the public discourse about Russian language.

In referring to the discourse about language, I will use Talbot Taylor's term *metalinguistic discourse*.⁸ My focus is on two versions of Russian metalinguistic discourse: *the state discourse*, including the domains of legislation⁹ and comments by politicians; and *the popular discourse*, or, to use Deborah Cameron's term, the discourse of *verbal hygiene*,¹⁰ which subsumes the domains of the media and popular—as well as scholarly—linguistic publications within a prescriptive agenda.¹¹ Media sources

discourse of purism (Gorham, 2001, p. 616). By contrast, Schiffman's term appears unbiased and distinct from the research material itself.

6 According to Schiffman (1996, p. 59), "language policy is [...] not just a text, a sentence or two in the legal code, it is a belief system, a collection of ideas and decisions and attitudes about language. It is of course a *cultural construct* [...]."

7 Talbot Taylor, 1997, *Theorizing Language: Analysis, Normativity, Rhetoric, History*, Amsterdam & New York, p. 24.

8 Taylor, 1997, pp. 10–17, 110–69.

9 This includes the LSL-2005 and the Federal target programme "Russian language" for 2002–2005.

10 Deborah Cameron, 1995, *Verbal Hygiene*, London, p. vii.

11 The legitimacy of linguists engaging in the evaluative and normative metadiscourse, discussing "the state of the language" and making prescriptive pronouncements, is a

will include radio programmes about the Russian language, and columns that discuss language issues in the newspapers *Argumenty i fakty*, *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, *Literaturnaia gazeta*, and *Rossiiskaia gazeta*.

The discourse of threat

In recent times, earlier confidence in the Russian language seems to have given way to a general mood best defined as collective anxiety, reaching at times the level of moral panic.¹² Language debates that shape the popular metalinguistic discourse are increasingly framed by metaphors of threat and protection. For example, the newspaper *Argumenty i fakty* warns its readers that Над русским языком нависли угрозы посерьезнее¹³ and calls for the authorities to спасти язык законами.¹⁴ The radio station *Ekho Moskvy* refers to the state of the language as катастрофа,¹⁵ while holding a debate on Почему мы портим русский язык?¹⁶ Служба спасения русского языка is the expression that *Rossiiskaia gazeta* uses in an article about the Russian language telephone inquiry service run by Voronezh University.¹⁷

matter of debate. While the Western tradition in language theorizing places opinions relating to the rights and wrongs, to the ethics and aesthetics of language use, firmly in the realm of folk linguistics (see, for example James Milroy, 1992, *Language Variation and Change*, Oxford, pp. 31–32, or Cameron, 1995), in the Russian linguistic tradition the division between scholarly views and prescriptiveness is not so obvious. Of the numerous academic publications debating the “state of the Russian language,” see for example: V.G. Kostomarov, 1994, *Iazykovoï vkus epokhi*, Moscow; Iu.N. Karaulov, ed. 1993, *Rusistika segodnia, funktsionirovanie v iazyke: leksika i grammatika*, Moscow; Iu.N. Karaulov, 1995, “O nekotorykh osobennostiakh sovremennogo sostoiianiia russkogo iazyka i nauki o nem,” *Rusistika segodnia* 1, pp. 5–23; L.K. Graudina et al., 1995, *My sokhranim tebia, russkaia rech'!*, Moscow; E.A. Zemskaja, ed. 1996, *Russkii iazyk kontsa xx stoletia (1985–1995)*, Moscow; Iu.N. Karaulov, 2001, “O sostoianii sovremennogo russkogo iazyka,” *Russkaia rech'* 3, pp. 25–30; E.N. Shiriaev, 2003, “Opyt kul'turno-rechevoi kritiki,” *Rusistika na poroge XXI veka: Problemy i perspektivy*, Moscow, pp. 225–28; also the latest debate by professional linguists in *Otechestvennye zapiski* 2, 2005.

12 On moral panic as a social phenomenon see Stanley Cohen, 1987, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of Mods and Rockers* (new ed.), Oxford.

13 *Argumenty i fakty*, 04.02.2004. “More serious threats are hanging over the Russian language.”

14 *Argumenty i fakty*, 04.02.2002. “save the Russian language with laws.”

15 *Ekho Moskvy*, 21.11.2004. “catastrophe.”

16 *Ekho Moskvy*, 31.10.2004. “Why are we damaging the Russian language?”

17 *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 26.08.2004. “Service for saving the Russian language.”

The work of similar centres recently established at other universities, at The Russian Academy of Sciences and on the internet portal *The Russian Language* (<http://www.gramota.ru>) is often described through the image of an ambulance service, implying that an emergency situation has been caused by damage to the “linguistic health of the nation.”¹⁸

Consequently, the present state of the Russian language is regularly conceptualized through metaphors of disease, dirt and death:

С октября 1996 года ОЛРС¹⁹ проводило некоторую «санитарную» работу по контролю за состоянием культуры русской речи в средствах массовой информации;²⁰ Культура языка—вообще, это дело, оно такое невидное, такое заболевание, как радиация...;²¹ язык замусоривается²²

Correspondingly, the mythological “pure” state of the language, which the metadiscourse aims to achieve, is associated with metaphors of life and cleanliness: Помочь языку выжить и выздороветь мы можем.²³ Существуют слова живые и мертвые. Живые слова [...] чисты, глубоки по смыслу.²⁴

The metalinguistic discourse of the state goes hand in hand with the popular version. In its first draft, the *Law on the State Language* was conceived as the *Law on the Protection of the Russian Language*, with the in-

18 See, for example, the reference to the Russian Language Service at the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Linguistic Research as служба скорой лингвистической помощи “the linguistic ambulance service” in the list of Consulting and Training services given for St Petersburg, URL: http://www.treko.ru/show_news_186 (accessed 24.02.2006).

19 Общество Любителей Русской Словесности (Society of Lovers of Russian Literature —SLRL).

20 M. V. Gorbanevskii, Iu. N. Karaulov, V. M. Shaklein, 1999, *Ne govori shershavym iazykom: O narusheniikh norm literaturnoi rechi v elektronnykh pechatnykh SMI*, Moscow, p. 7. “From October 1996, SLRL conducted some ‘sanitary’ work in order to control the state of Russian language culture in the mass media.”

21 *Ekho Moskvy*, 07.11.2004. “Language culture is such an invisible matter, a disease like radiation...”

22 *Argumenty i fakty*, 04.02.2004. “the language is becoming dirtied by litter.”

23 *Argumenty i fakty*, 24.04.2002. “We can help the language to survive and to recover (from the disease).”

24 L. I. Skvortsov, 1996, *Ekologiya slova, ili pogovorim o kul'ture russkoi rechi*, Moscow, p. 28. “Words can be alive or dead. Words that are alive [...] are pure, profound in their meaning.”

tention that it would form part of the *Law on the Protection of the Russian People*.²⁵

Both types of metalinguistic discourse interpret the dangers besieging Russian as coming from both outside and inside of its own domain. External threats are furnished with the themes of invasion, violation and loss of power and prestige to which the language is supposedly entitled, while the internal ones are marked by the motif of irresponsible ruination and pollution.

In Russia, the West is traditionally perceived as a source of threat and the linguistic domain is no exception: the metalinguistic discourse regularly discusses the diminishing status of Russian in the countries of the “far abroad.” The media report with anxiety a decline in Europe and the United States in interest in the Russian language, interpreting this as evidence of a decline in its international status. For instance, *Literaturnaia gazeta* quotes a reduction in the number of university Russian departments as well as Russian-interest periodicals and publishers, which, so it claims, proves that русский язык в связи со своим мировым статусом находится в большой опасности.²⁶ *Rossiskaia gazeta*, publishing an interview with Deputy Foreign Minister Eleonora Mitrofanova, stresses that the level of interest in the Russian language abroad is a matter of national urgency.²⁷

The “near abroad” is seen as another location of external threats to the language. The anxieties expressed in the metadiscourse about the treatment of the Russian language in the successor states of the Former Soviet Union have imperial overtones. The reduction of the influence of Russian and the growing prestige of the national languages are generally met with negative, often lamenting comments, accompanied by an overtly expressed suspicion and anger towards the language policies of the respective countries. Neither the state nor the popular version of the metadiscourse appears to fully acknowledge the freedom and entitlement of these independent countries and their governments to devise their own, independent language policy. A whiff of Soviet-style nostalgia

25 “Zaochnyi kruglyi stol na temu: ‘Iazykovaia politika v mnogonatsional’noi Rossii’ i proekt federal’nogo zakona ‘O rusском iazyke kak gosudarstvennom iazyke Rossiiskoi Federatsii’ (K X Kongressu MOPRIAL),” 29 June–5 July, 2003, *Mir russkogo slova* 2, 2003.

26 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 14, 2003. “the Russian language is in grave danger with regard to its world status.”

27 *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 19.10.2005.

may be sensed in the slogan *Моя родина—русский язык* (“The Russian language is my Motherland”), chosen for a Russian language competition for teachers of Russian in the CIS and Baltic countries in 2001–2002. The competition was launched on the initiative of the State Duma and Moscow city government and was promoted by *Rossiiskaia gazeta*.²⁸

The reduction in the significance of Russian, especially in the Slavic countries, is often projected as a kind of treachery and caving in to a Western agenda. For example, *Rossiiskaia gazeta* interviewed a teacher of Russian in Ukraine, Nadezhda Il'ina, who complained how it was impossible to explain to children during the first lesson of the school year, “the greatness of the Russian language,” when the Ukrainian Ministry of Education required the class to be dedicated to “the European choice of Ukraine.”²⁹

The metalinguistic discourse constructs the position of Russian in the countries of the former Soviet Union as that of a passive sufferer, while the agency involved is presented as unjust and often violent. A common-sense conclusion derived from this discursive positioning might therefore be that measures of retaliation and protection would be the natural, expected reaction to this mistreatment. For example, the language policy document entitled *The Federal Target Programme “Russian Language” for 2002–2005* describes actions towards Russian in some countries of the CIS and the Baltic states, with the verbal noun *вытеснение* (“squeezing out”), thus foregrounding the sense of its passivity and victimization and of unjustified pressure:

В ряде государств—участников СНГ и стран Балтии вытеснение русского языка из государственных учебных программ исключает возможность его организованного изучения. [...] Необходимо также отметить [...] ограничение информационного, образовательного и культурного пространства в связи с вытеснением русского языка из печатных и электронных средств массовой информации.³⁰

28 See *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 11.10.2001; 30.11.2001; 25.01.2002.

29 *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 13.09.2005.

30 *Federalnaia tselevaia programma “Russkii iazyk” na 2002–2005 gody*, URL: http://www.ed.gov.ru/ntp/fp/rus_lang/dok/ (accessed 20.07.2005). “In a number of states—members of the CIS and the Baltic countries—the squeezing out of Russian from the state school programmes excludes the possibility for its organized learning. [...] It is

The mass media echo and amplify the sense of language violation, presenting it as mutilation (possibly with the hint even of castration): one of the articles discussing Russian in the former Soviet territories uses the passive impersonal construction Язык отрезали³¹ as its title.

The theme of foreign threats to the well-being of Russian also occurs in a mutated version—as the dangers emanating from foreign words and expressions, predominantly English, as well as their graphic basis—the Latin alphabet. The metalinguistic discourse constructs the contemporary, active process of adopting loanwords in terms of an invasion of cunning foreigners, who, like the spies of the Cold War mythology, slip into Russia through certain “loopholes”: Новая лексика проникает в русский язык через несколько лазеек.³² In an *Argumenty i fakty* article on loanwords, the journalist Ol’ga Kostenko-Popova tries to frighten readers by stating that the level of foreign “barbarisms” in Russian is such that the language is about to disappear:

наш с вами «великий и могучий» стремительно становится все труднее для понимания. Филологи бьются в конвульсиях. Ежедневно в русский язык вливается по 6–7 иностранных варваризмов образца «портфолио» и «топлес». Казалось бы, ну и что? А то! Если активно заимствующаяся лексика в языке превышает 2–3%, лингвисты уверенно прогнозируют очень скорое ИСЧЕЗНОВЕНИЕ языка. А у нас количество всех этих «тампаков» перевалило за 10%!³³

also necessary to note [...] the restriction of informational, educational and cultural space in connection with the squeezing out of Russian language from the print and electronic mass media.”

31 *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 13.09.2005. “The Tongue has been Cut Off.”

32 *Argumenty i fakty*, 04.02.2004. “The new lexis slips into the Russian language through a number of loopholes.”

33 *Argumenty i fakty*, 04.02.2004. “The ‘great and powerful [Russian language]’ that is mine and yours is becoming rapidly more and more difficult to understand. Linguists are writhing in fits. Every day 6–7 barbarisms of the kind ‘portfolio’ or ‘topless’ pour into Russian. You might think: so what? This is what! If the actively borrowed words amount to more than 2–3% of a language, the linguists predict with certainty that the language will very soon DISAPPEAR. And we have over 10% of these ‘tampaxes.’” Emphasis in the original.

A new term—декириллизация (de-Cyrillization)—has been coined to reflect “the attack of the Latin graphic system on the Cyrillic alphabet.”³⁴ The metalinguistic discourse applies this notion to disparate phenomena, such as the Republic of Tatarstan’s decision in 1999 to transfer Tatar to the Latin script,³⁵ the occasional use of Latin letters in advertising and the media, and the rapid spread in Russia of Latin-based SMS text and e-mail communication.³⁶ The narrative of de-Cyrillization is characterized by the same prevailing paradigm of threat, invasion and destabilization: когда сплошь и рядом в кириллические устоявшиеся графемы внедряются латинские и иные графические символы, то это ведёт не к обогащению языка, а к нарушению его функционирования.³⁷

Even playful graphic shifts, such as in the pop-star Zemfira’s promotion campaign where her name appears spelled with the initial Latin Z—Земфира, are taken in complete seriousness as proof of the increased dominance of those кто сильнее и богаче.³⁸ Alluding to the foreign backing behind the appearance of any instance of Latin script, the article predicts, not in the most cultured way, that тогда уже точно для нашей культуры может наступить полный абзац.³⁹

Apart from the external threats, the metalinguistic discourse is similarly vocal about threats to the Russian language from within. Both the state and the popular variants name linguistic elements associated with nonstandard varieties of Russian as being among the threatening agents: colloquialisms, demotic expressions, invectives, criminal and professional argots, slang, and certainly, their users. In line with the folklinguistic tradition, popular “verbal hygienists” and professional linguists alike base their judgements on the mythological premise that the language can exist apart from its users, as “ideal and perfect structures,” and that it is

34 “Pokushenie na Kirillitsu,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 7–8, 2005.

35 For a more detailed discussion of the Tatarstan case, see below.

36 See for example, “Grafolomaniia: Azbuka—eto prosto bukvy ili ob’edinitel’nyi simbol Rossiiskoi Federatsii?” *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 29.01.2001; “Besslovesnaia skotina,” *Moskovskii komsomolets*, 16.10.2002; “Kirillitsa pobedila Latinitsu,” *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 17.11.2004; “Tainyi iazyk SMS,” *Komsomol’skaia pravda*, 17.02.2005.

37 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 7–8, 2005. “when everywhere Latin and other graphic symbols intrude into the established Cyrillic graphemes, this leads not to the enrichment of the language but to the breakdown of its functioning.”

38 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 7–8, 2005. “who are more powerful and richer.”

39 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 7–8, 2005. “then it will definitely be curtains for our culture.”

the speakers who are the “awkward creatures who violate these perfect structures by misusing and corrupting language.”⁴⁰

It is still possible to come across a “positive” view on substandard usages. Such is the opinion of Aleksander Shakhnarovich, who claims that slang is beneficial for a language as it represents a diversity of subcultures and is a feature of any developed megapolis.⁴¹ However, the prevailing tone of the metalinguistic discourse tends to assert the opposite: Обилие грубых культурно-речевых ошибок в информационных программах плюс засилие сниженных элементов в художественно-развлекательном блоке и рекламе далеко не безобидно.⁴² This prescriptive view purports to represent the voice of “the average Russian speaker,” illustrating it through exclamations of panic, vigilant suspicion, appellations to authority and calls for punitive measures: Значит, действительно язык погибает или его сознательно портят, — делает вывод рядовой носитель языка, — лингвисты должны спасать положение, куда смотрит Академия наук, наказывать за это надо, штрафовать!⁴³

The dominant themes of the metalinguistic discourse are legitimized here by the linguistic authorities, the facilitators of language policy. For example, the already familiar motif of scary intruders appears in an interview given to *Rossiiskaia gazeta* by the adviser to the Russian Government on issues of language, the President of the Russian Society for Teachers of Russian Language and Literature, Liudmila Verbitskaia. She talks about substandard, demotic vocabulary which is “flooding into our language”: Нас, русских филологов [...] пугает просторечный пласт лексики, устремившийся в наш язык.⁴⁴ In this discursive contribu-

40 Milroy, 1992, p. 31.

41 *Argumenty i fakty*, 27.09.2000. И такая вещь, как сленг, идет ему [языку] на пользу. Мегapolis не может обойтись без сленга, который отражает мозаичность населения и разнообразие субкультур. “And such a thing as slang is beneficial for it [the language]. A megapolis cannot exist without slang which reflects the diversity of population and a variety of subcultures.”

42 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 16, 2003. “An abundance of crude mistakes in the speech culture of information programmes plus the domination of low [linguistic] elements in the features and entertainment block of programmes and advertising, are far from harmless.”

43 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 16, 2003. “It means that language is indeed dying or it is deliberately being damaged,—the average speaker concludes.—Linguists must come to the rescue, what is the Academy of Sciences doing? This has to be punished, fined!”

44 *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 25.02.2004. “We, the Russian linguists [...] are frightened by the demotic elements, flooding into our language.”

tion, Verbitskaia legitimizes a purist position, according to which sub-standard elements are placed outside “our language” and are treated as the linguistic “other.” Her use of the words *устремившийся* (“flooding”) and *пугает* (“frightens”) frames her beliefs within the dominant context of threat and attack.

The negotiation of the position of the Russian language within the linguistic culture of twenty-first-century Russia has thus taken a dominant direction: it is shaped and articulated by the metalinguistic discourse in both its popular and state variants, which define Russian, a language that has 288 million speakers world-wide,⁴⁵ as predominantly vulnerable, besieged by external threats and corrupted from within, and therefore in need of protection and intervention.

The discourse of threat and protection is one that has a deeply ideological underpinning. In the following, I will look further into the metadiscourse in order to question the linguistic attitudes that shape and propel this prominent theme. Certain ideologies find symbolic expression in the articulated fears and anxieties, in this way vying to achieve authoritative status through their discursive exposition.

The ideology of purism: a case of “inappropriate” loans

Purism hinges upon a folklinguistic view that the linguistic system is a fixed code as well as upon non-recognition of its inherent variability and mutability. Based on a suspicion of innovation and change, it receives prominence during times of language modernization.⁴⁶ The usual targets of the purist paradigm—the “dirty and impure” linguistic elements—are those identified as the main aggressive elements in the discourse of threat: foreignisms, invectives and nonstandard language (slang, argots and demotic elements). This part of my article deals with the dominant ideology of purism in present metalinguistic discussions of foreign linguistic elements, such as loanwords and Latin letters.

Throughout Russian history, attitudes to foreign words have been subjected to ideological negotiation, to mention only the ideological significance of the new loans adopted during the reign of Peter the Great,

45 *Ethnologue: Languages of the World: An Encyclopaedic Reference Work Cataloguing All the World's 6912 Living Languages*, URL: <http://www.ethnologue.com> (accessed 30.11.2005).

46 Spolsky, 2004, p. 22.

such as *мачта* (“mast”) or *ассамблея* (“assemblée”), Admiral Shishkov’s battle to retain the indigenous *мокроступы* (“galoshes”), or the banning of the English loanword *голкипер* in favour of *вратарь* (“goalkeeper”), a word derived from Church Slavonic and adopted during the Cold War.

Observation of the present state of linguistic culture suggests that there is a growing discrepancy between the high rate of borrowing from foreign languages (mainly English) and the public reception of innovations. While the lexical system reveals an unprecedented tolerance in absorbing foreign lexis,⁴⁷ attitudes towards the recent loans demonstrate the dominance of a negative value judgement.

Proponents of purist ideology, ignoring the fact that a significant proportion of Russian vocabulary consists of loanwords from different periods,⁴⁸ attack the recently acquired foreign elements for corrupting and distorting the “pure,” balanced state of the indigenous language. In order to advocate purist principles and to delegitimize foreign influence, the metadiscourse puts forward the notion of “inappropriate” loans. According to this perspective, linguistic loan elements are divided into those that occur legitimately, or are “appropriate,” and those that are “inappropriate.” Two reasons are quoted to explain the status of “inappropriate.” The first is that the words refer to morally reprehensible concepts that introduce depravity into the Russian worldview, such as *киллер* (“contract murderer”), or *киднеппинг* (“kidnapping”). The second reason is that if they already have equivalents in Russian, then the loanwords are unnecessary. Examples of the latter, according to *Literaturnaia gazeta*, are: *нюсмейкер*, *хедлайн*, *бэбиситтер*, *кастинг*, and *киллер* (“news-maker,” “headline,” “babysitter,” “casting,” “contract murderer”).⁴⁹ The distinction between appropriate and inappropriate loans was one of the major themes in the experts’ debates on the *Law on the State Language* (LSL) between 2003 and 2005.⁵⁰ It is also central to formulations of language policy in the documents of the state metadiscourse and is found in

47 L.P. Krysin, 2004, *Russkoe slovo, svoe i chuzhoe*, Moscow, p. 198.

48 The quoted figures of the proportion of loanwords in Russian have varied from the conservative estimation of 25% in the Soviet period (F.P. Filin, 1981, *Istoki i sud’by russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*, Moscow, p. 76), to the liberal contemporary of 99% (Aleksei Plutser-Sarno, “Polit-X,” *Avtorskoe televidenie*, 02.03.2004).

49 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 16, 2003.

50 See, for example, a discussion in February 2003 on *gramota.ru* of the Law draft, URL: http://www.gramota.ru/mag_arch.html?id=293 (accessed 15.07.2005).

both the “Russian language” Federal programme and the LSL-2005, for example: Нормы литературного языка не соблюдаются, слова-паразиты, неоправданные иноязычные заимствования все чаще встречаются в речи ведущих теле- и радиопередач.⁵¹

Often, terms that are thought to be Russian indigenous equivalents are themselves of foreign origin, the only difference being that they were borrowed into Russian earlier and their “foreignness” has been erased from the popular perception. The *Radio Rossiia* programme “S russkogo na russkii” (“From Russian into Russian”) broadcast a piece on “weed words,”⁵² in which the use of words of the latter category were condemned and ridiculed, and exemplified by such loans as коуч (“coach”) and фасилитация (“facilitation”). While insisting that the introduction of such words into Russian is both unjustifiable and “daft,” the programme presenters Kseniia Mikhailova and Sergei Khromov drew the attention of their listeners to “the Russian equivalents” for such inappropriate “weeds.” However they failed to mention that “the Russian native equivalents” репетитор and тренер, suggested instead of коуч, are also words of foreign origin.⁵³

Ironically, a similar misconception of “inappropriate” foreignisms occurs at a crucial point in the official language policy, in the wording of the article 1, paragraph 6 of the LSL-2005. The article prohibiting the use of those foreign words that have widely used equivalents in Russian, is happy itself to use the loanword аналог (“equivalent”).

При использовании русского языка как государственного языка Российской Федерации не допускается использование слов и выражений, не соответствующих нормам современного русского литературного языка, за исключением иностранных слов, не имеющих общепотребительных аналогов в русском языке.⁵⁴

51 Postanovlenie pravitel'stva RF ot 27.07.2001, no. 483, Feredal'naia tselevaia programma “Russkii iazyk” na 2002–2005 gody, URL: http://www.ed.gov.ru/ntp/jp/rus_lang/dok/ (accessed 16.07.2005). “The norms of the standard language are not observed, parasite words, unjustifiable foreign loans are occurring more and more often in the language of television presenters and radio programmes.”

52 “S russkogo na russkii,” *Radio Rossiia*, 15.01.2006.

53 While репетитор was an eighteenth-century loan, the word тренер is a much more recent loan in the Russian language, dating from 1911. P.Ia. Chernykh, 1994, *Istoriko-etimologicheskii slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka*, Moscow, vol. 2.

54 LSL-2005, URL: <http://www.akdi.ru/gd/proekt/089059gd.shtm> (accessed 03.06.2006).

It is worth pointing out that аналог sounds quite foreign to the Russian ear and does not have commonly used Russian equivalents such as соответствие, сходство, замена.

The history of loanwords in Russian demonstrates that, linguistically, the distinction between the two types of loans is unreliable and untenable. Ideologically, however, it allows ethnocentric, essentialist and nationalist views to be promoted while maintaining the appearance of a debate about balancing different linguistic elements.

The academician Evgenii Chelyshev uses the argument of inappropriate loans to delegitimize foreignisms. In an interview given to *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, while claiming that Russian has always been open to foreign words, he also uses the word беспредел, usually reserved for situations of unlimited and uncontrollable lawlessness, to describe the flood of recent “inappropriate” Americanisms.⁵⁵

The delegitimization of foreignisms also takes place by bringing linguistic issues into the domain of morality. One example of a moral crusade against loan elements in scholarly discourse is Lidiia Savel’eva’s monograph *Russkoe slovo: Konets xx veka*.⁵⁶ In this book, loaned Anglo-Americanisms are consigned to a contested ideological territory. Without trying to hide her ethnocentric position, Savel’eva argues that:

злоупотребление модными англо-американизмами [...] это искусственное внедрение чужеродных элементов в самобытное мировидение этноса. Это влечет за собой утрату этнических ориентиров русской культуры, а значит, вносит свой вклад в разрушение нравственного здоровья нашего общества.⁵⁷

“When using Russian as the state language of the Russian Federation, it is forbidden to use words and expressions that do not comply with the norms of the modern Russian language, excluding foreign words which do not have commonly used equivalents.”

55 В последнее десятилетие мы наблюдаем особенно сильный—граничащий с беспределом—наплыв американизмов. *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 25.02.2000. “During the past decade, we can observe an especially forceful flood that borders on unbridled lawlessness—of Americanisms.”

56 L. V. Savel’eva, 2000, *Russkoe slovo: Konets xx veka*, St Petersburg.

57 Savel’eva, 2000, pp. 60–61. “the abuse of fashionable Anglo-Americanisms [...] is an artificial intrusion of alien elements into the unique worldview of the [Russian] ethnos. It entails a loss of the ethnic orientations of Russian culture, and therefore [...] it contributes to the destruction of the moral health of our society.”

While valorizing the indigenous Slavic forms as vessels for pure and chaste meanings, Savelieva alongside other proponents of the purist ideology uses the language of immorality and depravity to describe foreign elements. In her book, recent loan acquisitions are labelled *лишенные нравственного потенциала*.⁵⁸ Among many odd and subjectively interpreted examples given in support of this claim, the author dwells on the loanword *секс* (“sex”), contrasting it with the indigenous Russian *любовь* (“love”). She declares *любовь* to be a concept deeply ingrained in Russian cultural models together with similar words of “the highest moral value.” The word *секс*, on the other hand, by instilling in Russians a strongly physiological concept, redrafts the “semantic grid” of the Russian world-view and corrupts the moral purity of the nation.⁵⁹

Apart from the contrast between moral and immoral, the dichotomy of foreign versus Russian assumes other highly charged forms. While Russian is presented as clear and making sense, recent loanwords are perceived to be obscure and incomprehensible. Foreign words are widely blamed for speakers’ failures to fully understand modern Russian—for instance, in the popular linguistic works by Vladimir Elistratov⁶⁰ and Maksim Krongauz.⁶¹

Savel’eva’s book also highlights the opposition between the apparently profound meaning pertaining to the Russian word, which she calls *труженик тысячелетней культуры*⁶² and the “shallow sense” of the foreignism which she disdainfully labels *протез, лишенный памяти*.⁶³ Throughout her work, Savel’eva construes loanwords as the personified “other”: using the typical language of the discourse of threat, she refers to the process of lexical borrowing as *грубое вторжение слов-иноземцев*.⁶⁴

Acknowledging that for some people today, loanwords may sound “flattering,”⁶⁵ “fashionable and prestigious,”⁶⁶ the purist metadiscourse makes no attempt to offer a sociolinguistic explanation of this curious

58 Savel’eva, 2000, p. 53. “lacking a moral potential.”

59 Savel’eva, 2000, pp. 58–59.

60 Elistratov, “Natsional’nyi iazyk i natsional’naia ideia.”

61 Krongauz, 2005.

62 Savel’eva, 2000, p. 53. “a hard worker with a thousand years of culture.”

63 Savel’eva, 2000, p. 53. “an artificial limb which lacks memory.”

64 Savel’eva, 2000, p. 52. “a crude invasion of foreigner-words.”

65 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 29, 2001.

66 Savel’eva, 2000, p. 51.

appeal to the users. Instead, its moral narrative rushes to condemn them as gullible philistines, and concentrates on unmasking the “evil” hidden behind the glittering linguistic surface: Пороки, замаскированные льстиво звучащими американизмами, пытаются скрыть омерзительный облик, притворяются respectable, хотя и непривычным для обывателей стилем жизни [...].⁶⁷

To summarize, the dominant voices in the loanwords debate associate indigenous Russian vocabulary with essential Russianness. The legitimacy of this connection is supported by their transposition of the linguistic question into the moral one, and by their appeal to tradition and to a mysterious and indigenous ethnic worldview. These themes mark the ethnocentric and nationalist vision of Russian identity, lurking behind the purist attitudes.

Language cultivation and the discourse of the Great Tradition

The reverse side of the purist coin is the aim to improve language. Language cultivation⁶⁸ denotes establishing, or defending, the norms of the standard literary language. Theories based on the assumption that all linguistic signs are equally valid, suggest that no absolute values and standards of correctness exist in any language. However, practitioners of language cultivation claim an almost divine knowledge as well as the right to be guardians of usage and of the correct form, without considering the problem of how this form might be established. Similarly to the discourse of inappropriate loans, the rhetoric of language cultivation is based on the dichotomy of right versus wrong and pure versus corrupted forms.

By drawing on the authority of linguistic experts, the metadiscourse legitimizes the diagnosis of the sick state of the Russian language. The symbolic power of the guardians over the state of the language is highlighted by expressions such as the following: Лингвистов тревожит другое: в последние годы разговорной нормой становится ненормативная лексика. И пока трудно сказать, к чему это приведет в даль-

67 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 29, 2001. “The vices, masked by flatteringly sounding Americanisms, are trying to hide their disgusting face, they are pretending to present a lifestyle which is respectable albeit unusual for the philistines.”

68 The term was coined by Paul Garvin, 1973, “Some Comments on Language Planning,” *Language Planning: Current Issues and Research*, eds. J. Rubin & R. Shuy, Washington, pp. 24–73. This is an English version of the German term *Sprachkultur*.

нейшем.⁶⁹ Русский язык болен. Так видят сложившуюся ситуацию ученые-лингвисты.⁷⁰

The themes of language cultivation are fundamental to the popular discourse. On the one hand, calls are heard for driving out a diverse variety of impurities such as spelling and phonetic (stress) errors, low stylistic varieties, slang, vulgarisms and obscenities, as well as social, professional and regional variations. On the other hand, appeals to promote “pure” literary language models, which use as their source the best examples of Russian classical literature, are gaining more prominence and weight.

The state discourse follows this trend: it emphasizes that launching the language policy measures, aimed at combatting bad language, is one of its main duties. The government document of January 2000 strengthens the position of the Russian Language Council, established by the government of the Russian Federation. The main task of the Council has been to articulate to the Duma their main recommendations for language policy, including state policy on the development, propagation and preservation of the purity of the Russian language.⁷¹ Yet another state organization concerned with linguistic issues is the Ministry for the Press, Radio Broadcasting and the Mass Media, which announced generous funding for a number of programmes dedicated to the promotion of a pure and correct Russian language. The following radio programmes were supported by the Ministry: three programmes broadcast by the *Ekho Moskvy* station: “Kak pravil'no?” (“What’s correct?”), the game programme and the almanac with the same title “Govorim po-russki” (“Let’s speak Russian”); on *Radio Maiak*, the programme “Gramotei” (“The one who can read and write”); a series of programmes on the *Kul'tura* channel entitled “Na kakom iazyke my govorim?” (“What language are we speaking?”); the programme *Likbez* (i.e. *likvidatsiia bezgramotnosti* “eradication of illiteracy”) on *Russkoe radio-2*. In addition, the radio channel *Radio Rossii* programme “S russkogo na russkii” was funded by the Federal

69 *Argumenty i fakty*, 16.07.2003. “Linguists are worried about some other things: in recent years, the nonstandard lexis is becoming the colloquial norm. And for the time being it is hard to say what this will lead to in the longer term.”

70 *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 31.05.2005. “The Russian language is sick. This is how the language scholars see the present situation.”

71 “Polozhenie o Sovete po russkomu iazyku pri Pravitel'stve Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” no. 41, from 17.01.2000.

Language programme “Russkii iazyk.”⁷²

The extent of the state’s ideological and financial backing for radio programmes promoting language improvement demonstrates the high priority it gives to language cultivation. In December 2005, the same ministry, by then renamed as the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communication, established a competition “for exemplary competence in Russian language” under the slogan: Грамотно, по-русски!⁷³ More competitions and monitoring activities have been established by other bodies. The internet portal *gramota.ru*, for example, runs an on-going mass monitoring of errors of speech that occur on the radio. The public is encouraged to contribute in identifying mistakes, specifying on which programme the incorrect linguistic form was used and by whom. A similar campaign for naming and shaming is also led by the newspaper *Argumenty i fakty*, which organizes an annual “competition” entitled “Golden Language.” The newspaper awards mock prizes for the most awkward expressions used by politicians and public figures.⁷⁴

Legitimization by the state of language cultivation is evident in the wording of the LSL-2005. Article 1, paragraph 6 of the Law, quoted above, decrees that in the use of the Russian language as a state language, words and expressions that do not comply with the norms are “not accepted.” This, together with the claim in Article 1, paragraph 3, that:

Порядок утверждения норм современного русского литературного языка при его использовании в качестве государственного языка Российской Федерации, правил русской орфографии и пунктуации определяется Правительством Российской Федерации.⁷⁵

72 As stated in a speech by A.Iu. Romanchenko, Depute Minister for the Press, Radio Broadcasting and the Mass Media, delivered at the *Language policy in Russia* round table, St Petersburg, 16.04.2002, URL: <http://spravka.gramota.ru/offdocs.html?id=123> (accessed 08.03.2006).

73 “Correctly and in Russian!”

74 “Zolotoi iazyk,” *Argumenty i fakty*, 26.12.2001; “ZhPS-2003. Final,” *Argumenty i fakty*, 24.12.2003; “ZhPS,” *Argumenty i fakty*, 29.12.2004; “ZhPS-2005,” *Argumenty i fakty*, 28.12.2005.

75 “The manner of the adoption of norms of contemporary Russian language used as the state language of the Russian Federation, as well as the orthography and punctuation rules, are determined by the Government of the Russian Federation,” *Zakon o gosudarstvennom iazyke Rossiiskoi Federatsii*.

places the state firmly in control of the norm. Thus, through the narrative of language cultivation, the symbolic power of language control is located at the very heart of state power.

The ideology of pure forms requires positive evaluative judgements. The popular metadiscourse of language cultivation tends to employ emotive, value-laden rhetoric. The Russian language is seen as a national treasure, an encapsulation of national history and culture. A large proportion of media texts refer to it using Turgenev's epithets, as великий и могучий ("great and mighty"),⁷⁶ while the semantics of enormity informs other typical references: громада русского языка-великана,⁷⁷ великое русское слово,⁷⁸ язык—не море, а океан.⁷⁹

Usually, language cultivation falls back on the discourse of the Great Tradition, which supports the symbolic status of the language and which is based on a set of beliefs, often of a mythological nature, about the relation of language to the history of the people.⁸⁰ Generally, in the narrative of the Great Tradition, the past is believed to be a realm of perfection, whereas innovation is suspected of being corrupt. Evoking the image of the Golden Age of the Russian language, for instance, Liudmila Graudina writes: Русская речь ведет свое существование [...], но в ней давно нарушены и содержание, и формы того совершенного языка, который мы зовем языком Пушкина, Блока [...], Достоевского и Толстого.⁸¹

The Pushkin myth, for almost two centuries used as a symbol of Russian national identity,⁸² has also experienced a successful transposition into the new linguistic culture. The name as well as the image of Pushkin, who is perceived to be "the father of modern Russian," represents metonymically the Russian language itself: in the book *Ne govori shershavym iazykom* (*Do Not Speak Rough Language*), for example, lan-

76 Compare, for example, *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 12.09.2002; *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 25.02.2004; *Argumenty i fakty*, 04.02.2004; "Kak eto po-russki," *Radio Rossii*, 31.07.2005.

77 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 9, 2005. "the enormity of the giant which is the Russian language."

78 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 20–21, 2004. "the great Russian word."

79 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 17, 2003. "the language is not a sea but an ocean."

80 Schiffman, 1996, pp. 75–123.

81 Graudina et al. 1995, p. 3. "The Russian language drags on its existence [...] but both the content and the forms of that perfect language which we call the language of Pushkin, Blok, [...] Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, were broken a long time ago."

82 Stephanie Sandler, 2004, "Pushkin and Identity," *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction*, eds. S. Franklin & E. Widdis, Cambridge, pp. 197–216, notes 228–30.

guage corruption is symbolized by advertising billboards attached to the Pushkin monument.⁸³ Meanwhile Evgenii Chelyshev, the Secretary of the Department of Language and Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences, evokes the same symbol in his emotional reference to “national linguistic shame”:

Здесь нет ни одной вывески, ни одного лозунга, ни одного транспаранта на русском языке. В одну сторону посмотришь—огромными буквами SAMSUNG, в другую—DAEWOO, в третью—McDonald’s, в четвертую—MOSCOW NEWS. И посреди всего этого Пушкин, опустив голову, что просто символично. Это издевательство над нашим великим национальным поэтом, родоначальником русского литературного языка.⁸⁴

Negotiation of the Great Tradition is a central aspect of the present Russian linguistic culture. The notion of a “Golden Age” of normativity is a disputed issue and is ideologically fraught. The norm that the adepts of language cultivation are calling to preserve was in fact established under the Soviet regime, although the mythological search for the Great Tradition bypasses the ideologically tainted twentieth century. Whilst making a concessionary critical gesture towards Soviet *newspaper* (*novoiiaz*), the metadiscourse of linguistic purification harks back to the iconicity of the safe and the unquestionable, and evokes the “purity” and flawlessness attributed to the language of pre-revolutionary Russian writers.

Any Great Tradition narrative is rooted in a myth of origins. The Russian metalinguistic discourse vacillates between two points of origin: the narrative of Pushkin, as the founder of the language, competes with the story of the creation of the Cyrillic alphabet. The discourse of veneration of Cyril and Methodius as the creators of the Russian alphabet is more recent: the impetus came in 1991, when the Presidium of the Supreme

83 M.V. Gorbanevskii, Iu.N. Karaulov & V.M. Shaklein, 1999, p. 7.

84 “A kak ne nashe slovo otzovetsia?” *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 25.02.2000. “Here there is not a single sign, a single slogan, a single billboard in Russian. You look to one side and see Samsung in large letters, you look to another and there is Daewoo, to a third—McDonald’s, and to the fourth—Moscow News. And among all this stands Pushkin with his head lowered, which is simply symbolic. This is a mockery of our great national poet, the founding father of the Russian literary language.”

Council of the Russian Federation declared 24 May, the Orthodox Saints' day commemorating Cyril and Methodius, a state holiday.

The holiday has now turned into a sequence of Days commemorating the Founders of Slavic Literacy and Culture, celebrated with the combined pomp of a double—state and church—official endorsement. Several cities compete for the honour of being the centre of celebrations and the lucky winner holds a large-scale event featuring church processions, concerts and conferences, visits paid by the Minister of Culture and the Russian Patriarch, and ceremonies unveiling monuments. Thus, during the commemoration days in 2004, a new Orthodox cathedral dedicated to Cyril and Methodius was consecrated in Samara, while two monuments to the founders of the alphabet were simultaneously unveiled in Moscow and in Samara.⁸⁵

The metadiscursive narrative of the creators of the alphabet tends to depict them as the founders of all the landmarks in the Russian cultural heritage: Учителям словенским мы по большому счету обязаны всем, что у нас сегодня есть: религией, культурой, письмом.⁸⁶ With the church never far away, the rhetoric of this narrative shows vivid signs of its colonization by ecclesiastical discourse. The high-flown register and words with religious overtones characterize stories of the creation of the alphabet: references such as святое слово ("sacred word")⁸⁷ are common. Rather than as warriors or scholars, Cyril and Methodius are consistently portrayed as saints who were implementing God's will, and consequently the story of the origin of Cyrillic becomes invested with the qualities of a sacred narrative:

Они [Кирилл и Мефодий] были убеждены, что языками с человеком говорит Господь, а потому языки—это создание Бога, и поэтому они защищали не славянский язык как таковой, а один из языков Бога, Божью волю, которую они, переводя с божественного на человеческий, воплощали в понятные для человека формы общения.⁸⁸

85 "Prazdnichnaia stolitsa vsekx slavian," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 11.02.2004; "Velikoe russkoe slovo," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 20–21, 2004; *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 30.05.2002.

86 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 20–21, 2004. "The truth of the matter is that we owe to the Slavic Teachers all that we have now: religion, culture, literacy."

87 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 19, 2003.

88 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 14, 2003. "They [Cyril and Methodius] were convinced that

Like the celebrations, the ecclesiastically charged discourse of the brothers' linguistic feats carries ideological messages. The "language policy" implemented by Cyril and Methodius is presented as a sacred mission ordained from above. A leap of association connects their linguistic endeavours to the notions of patriotism and Motherland, hence projecting the argument into a new ideological domain:

Миссия дается сверху. Это призвание, которое не предполагает возможности выбора, оно сакрально. Точно так же миссией является Родина. Понятие «Родина» не включает в себя возможность выбора, потому что выбирать можно только место жительства, но не Родину.⁸⁹

The above observations on the discourse of linguistic cultivation point to the concerted efforts of the state, and associated with it the guardians of the norm, to propagate an imaginary notion of language perfection and to regulate its use. Closely linked with language cultivation, the myth of origin is also used to re-position the linguistic discussion as a narrative of patriotism and veneration of the motherland.

"Types of language culture": the hierarchical model

A dominant concept in the metadiscourse, the understanding of "good language" is rooted in the ideology of a hierarchical "language culture." The theoretical stratification of the Russian language community into several types of "language culture" has been elaborated by linguists⁹⁰ and popularized by radio programmes and newspaper articles dedicated to language improvement. According to this model, at the top of the hier-

through languages, God speaks to man and therefore languages are God's creation. Hence they protected not just the Slavic language as such but one of the languages of God, God's will, which they translated from God's language to the language of humans, embodying it in forms of communication understandable to man."

89 *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 14, 2003. "Mission is given from above. It is a vocation which does not allow for choice, it is sacred. In the same way, the Motherland is a mission. The notion of Motherland does not include the possibility of choice, because one can choose a place of residence but not a Motherland."

90 O.B. Sirotinina, 1993, "Teoreticheskie osnovy kul'tury rechi," *Voprosy stilistiki* 25, Saratov, pp. 3–9; V.E. Gol'din & O.B. Sirotinina, 1993, "Vnutrinatsional'nye rechevye kul'tury i ikh vzaimodeistvie," *Voprosy Stilistiki* 25, Saratov, pp. 9–19; O.B. Sirotinina, N.I. Kuznetsova & E.V. Dziakovich, 2001, *Khoroshaia rech'*, Saratov.

archy are the representatives of “the elite culture.”⁹¹ Only the speech repertoire and linguistic choices of this group are deemed to be appropriate and are met with unequivocal approval. The other levels or types—“the mid-literary” (or “the failed elite”), “the literary-colloquial,” “the vulgar-colloquial,” “the demotic,” “the folk speech” (dialect) and “the restricted professional speech”—are marked as erroneous to differing degrees and are considered conducive to making inappropriate linguistic choices.⁹² While maintaining “the elite culture” as the golden standard of Russian language quality, the level to which all speakers should aspire, the theory admits that nowadays speakers of such competence are few and far between, even among the educated classes.

Although it claims socio-linguistic credentials, this theoretical stratification of language culture in fact belongs to the domain of language attitudes. It resembles Bernstein's ill-fated distinction between the restricted and elaborate codes.⁹³ Based on the separation of language from its speakers, the model of hierarchical “language culture” concludes that inadequate expression or even lack of linguistic identity, pertains to a large proportion of Russians.⁹⁴ Behind this vision for language cultivation there stands, in effect, a unitary model of linguistic identity. This view legitimizes a sociolinguistic hierarchy in society and the idea that only a minority of native speakers can speak “proper Russian,” as opposed to a recognition of linguistic variety and the inherent ability of a speaker of any language to express multiple identities and switch codes. The notion of the “appropriateness” of use, central to this belief, misrepresents sociolinguistic variation and the fluid contextuality of language use.

This hierarchical model of “language culture” informs many popular articles and programmes constituting the metadiscourse.⁹⁵ Popular versions of such articles, developing further the idea of “types of language

91 The term was coined by N.I. Tolstoi, 1991, “Iazyk i kul'tura (nekotorye problemy slavianskoi etnolingvistiki),” *Russkii iazyk i sovremennost': Problemy i perspektivy razvitiia rusistiki*, Moscow.

92 V.E. Gol'din & O.B. Sirotinina, 1993.

93 Basil Bernstein, 1964, “Social Class, Speech Systems and Psycho-therapy,” *British Journal of Sociology* 15, pp. 54–64.

94 V.E. Gol'din & O.B. Sirotinina, 1993, p. 10.

95 For example, “Chto takoe kul'tura rechi,” “S russkogo na russkii,” *Radio Rossii*, 04.06.2004; “O tom, chto takoe khoroshaia rech,” “Govorim po-russki,” *Ekho Moskvyy*, 30.10.2005; *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 18, 2002; *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 26.08.2004.

culture,” are posted on the internet portal *gramota.ru*.⁹⁶ These narratives are characterized by a mistrust of the speakers of Russian, blaming them for not being of the right type and for what they call *речевая вседозволенность и распушенность*.⁹⁷ After reporting to their listeners the flaws characteristic of different types of “language culture,” the presenters of the radio programme “Govorim po-russki” arrive at the pessimistic conclusion that whatever type the speakers represent their language product remains woefully erroneous:

Фамильярно-разговорная речь может быть хорошей только в непринужденном разговоре с близкими или друзьями. Речь носителей среднелитературного типа речевой культуры вполне может быть хорошей не только в дружеском общении, но и в профессиональной деятельности, однако за пределами указанных ситуаций они могут оказаться беспомощными. По-настоящему хорошая речь в любой ситуации встречается только у носителей элитарного типа речевой культуры, хотя какие-то погрешности могут быть и у них.⁹⁸

The hopes and aspirations for a “good language” for all thus seem to have hit the rocks of the inherent contradictions in “language culture” teaching. The voices expressing its unforgiving assertions cannot accept that natural, on-line produced language is naturally imperfect and full of performance errors.⁹⁹ The neat hierarchy that they promote is founded on the expectations and judgements of scriptism, that is the demand for the

96 A.V. Osina, “Khoroshaia rech’ i sredneliteraturnaia rechevaia kul’tura” (2001); O.B. Sirotinina, “Elitarnaia kul’tura i khoroshaia rech’” (2001); O.B. Sirotinina, “Razgovornyi tip rechevoi kul’tury i khoroshaia rech’” (2001); O.B. Sirotinina, “Osnovnye kriterii khoroshei rechi” (2002), URL: http://www.gramota.ru/mag_arch.html?id=139 (accessed 24.03.2006).

97 “Chto takoe kul’tura rechi,” “S russkogo na russkii,” *Radio Rossii*, 04.06.2004. “permissiveness and dissipation in speech.”

98 “Govorim po-russki,” *Ekho Moskvy*, 30.10.2005. “Vulgar-colloquial speech can be good only in familiar talk with people close to us and friends. The language of those having the mid-literary type of language culture may well be good not only in friendly conversation but also in professional activity, however outside these situations they can become helpless. Good speech in all respects can occur only in those possessing the elite type of language culture, although they too may have some flaws.”

99 Taylor, 1997, p. 45.

spoken language to correspond to written, literary patterns,¹⁰⁰ a demand inherited from Soviet requirements for an acceptable public language. It is not surprising, therefore, that interpretations of “good language” theories in the popular metadiscourse tend to arouse panic and disappointment and contribute to the sense of national linguistic inadequacy.

Attitudes to variety

Broad and consensual disregard of variety in the process of language cultivation reveals the emptiness of the regularly repeated declaration that dialects are a national treasure and a major source of language enrichment. (Cf: Диалект—это замечательно. Без диалекта не было бы литературного языка;¹⁰¹ Диалект—это живая жизнь языка¹⁰²). Removed from such declarations, regionalisms and dialectisms are constantly referred to as language errors and as agents in watering down the norm. Prejudice rules in the discussion of dialects on the radio. For example, the programme “Govorim po-russki” broadcast by *Ekho Moskvy* presents dialects as something amusing and curious. On a programme devoted to the Vologda dialect, listeners are asked to guess the meanings of regional words that are introduced as ужасно смешные.¹⁰³ The patronizing tone of the programme presenters and, unusual for linguists, lack of knowledge about the dialect which is the focus of the programme, are revealed in their comments: очень трудно говорить по-русски в условиях, когда радио существует в городе, где все все-таки говорят с каким-то акцентом или на диалекте,¹⁰⁴ от: Они, вообще, понимают, вологжане, русский язык?¹⁰⁵ The 11 November 2004 broadcast of the programme “Govorim po-russki” discussed the eradication of regional accents, among which the Malorossian accent was declared to be самый опасный.¹⁰⁶ The guest on the programme, a Moscow elocution teacher,

100 Taylor, 1997, p. 52.

101 *Ekho Moskvy*, 21.11.2004. “Dialect, this is wonderful. Without dialect there would be no literary language.”

102 Iu.N. Karaulov, “Pritcha vo iazytsekh,” URL: http://www.gramota.ru/mag_rub.html?id=293 (accessed 01.06.2006). “Dialect is the living life of the language.”

103 “Govorim po-russki,” *Ekho Moskvy*, 19.12.2004. “terribly funny.”

104 “it must be so difficult to speak Russian on the radio in a town where everybody speaks with some kind of an accent or in a dialect.”

105 “These Vologdians, do they understand Russian at all?”

106 “Govorim po-russki,” *Ekho Moskvy*, 21.11.2004. “the most dangerous.”

went on to contrast a form of speech with “regional deviations,” which might be “great” when spoken “somewhere where he [the dialect speaker] lives,” with what is required by the institutions of Moscow: Но когда он приезжает в столицу, [...] то хотелось бы все-таки, чтобы была какая-то норма, звучала норма.¹⁰⁷ The linguistic value judgement moves into the aesthetic domain as the norm is presented to be the bearer of aesthetic value: in the same programme, the elocution specialist claimed that Moscow speech is beautiful, in contrast to the regional variants.

Thus, the metadiscourse places dialects and regionalisms in the position of the alien “other,” which at best should be got rid of or at least not heard outside their natural local habitat. This ideology of the centrally-positioned norm and the marginalized and defective periphery promotes prejudice as a common sense value. This is contrary to “the variation ideology” adopted in democratic postmodern linguistic cultures, which represents a move towards diversity and variation and the equal access of all speakers to important linguistic practices.

The state metadiscourse: the linguistic “vertical of power”

The last five years have been marked by an increased intervention by the state in metalinguistic discourse. The covert and overt forms of governmental language management have intensified. New measures for control and interference in the linguistic culture at home and for addressing the changing status of Russian abroad have been introduced with vigour and on a large scale. One illustration of this trend is the launching of the above-mentioned Federal target programme “Russian Language.” Of the programme’s total budget of 80,47 million roubles, 50,83 million roubles were allocated from the Federal budget for language management undertakings, whose objectives were formulated as: Пропаганда русского языка в средствах массовой информации; Меры, направленные на сохранение позиций русского языка в России и за рубежом.¹⁰⁸ A year later, the Depute Minister for the Mass Media Andrei Romanchenko

¹⁰⁷“But when he arrives in the capital [...], we would want there to be some kind of norm, that what we hear [from him] is the norm.”

¹⁰⁸“Postanovlenie pravitel’stva RF ot 27.07.2001, no.483, Federal’naia tselevaia programma ‘Russkii iazyk’ na 2002–2005 gody,” URL: <http://spravka.gramota.ru/offdocs.html?id=127> (accessed 20.07.2005). “Propaganda of the Russian language in the mass media; Measures aimed at preserving the status of Russian in Russia and abroad.”

quoted a figure of 500 million roubles already spent on language-related projects “of a socially valuable nature.”¹⁰⁹

It appears that language legislation has shifted its direction and emphasis. While the early post-Soviet language policy was concerned with linguistic decentralization and protecting the rights of linguistic minorities, the law of the later period is mostly preoccupied with essentially Russian linguistic values.

The period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet system produced two pieces of language legislation: an article of the Russian Constitution, and *The Law on Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation*. Article 68 of Chapter 3 of the Constitution declares Russian to be the state language of the Russian Federation and affirms the right of the country's republics to establish their own state languages. It also guarantees all peoples of the Federation a right to preserve their native languages and to create the necessary conditions for their learning and development. *The Law on Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation* of 1991 (amended in 1998) seems to reflect the liberal spirit of the time underwritten by values of linguistic equality and liberty: it legislates for the detailed linguistic rights of the nations, even allowing them the right to create their own written culture from scratch.¹¹⁰

The situation whereby the regions and republics could take, to rephrase Boris Yeltsin's famous words, “as much linguistic freedom as they could swallow,” did not last long. The state discourse of the past five years points to a dramatic about-turn. In an article entitled “On the Legal Foundations of State Language Policy,” the co-authors, Duma member Nikolai Benediktov and Consultant to the Government on Education and Science Anatolii Berdashkevich, express concern that certain republics are behaving with too much liberty. They use the examples of the Republics of Komi and Marii El, which have two state languages and where Russian is not compulsory throughout their territories, to justify the urgent need for a Federal law to counteract this trend.¹¹¹ The participants of many

109 A.Iu. Romanchenko, *Language policy in Russia*, round table, St Petersburg, 16.04.2002, URL: <http://spravka.gramota.ru/offdocs.html?id=123> (accessed 08.03.2006).

110 “Zakon o iazykakh narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii,” URL: <http://www.peoples.org.ru/zakon.html> (accessed 21.07.2005).

111 N.A. Benediktov & A.P. Berdashkevich, “O pravovykh osnovakh gosudarstvennoi iazykovoi politiki,” *Mir russkogo slova* 2, 2003, URL: http://www.gramota.ru/mag_arch.html?id=492 (accessed 20.09.2005).

round table expert discussions on the nature of the proposed Federal law use a similar argument. For example, the Vice President of ROPRIAL¹¹² Iurii Prokhorov remarks as follows on the republics' linguistic freedoms: Любой татарин считает, что раз татарский язык государственный, а Татарстан пока еще в России, он в Москве может, вообще говоря, и в суде, и всюду говорить на татарском языке.¹¹³ In another minute of the same discussion, Prokhorov suggests: Я вам принесу бланк, который я получил из Казани. Заголовок слева—на татарском языке, справа—на английском. И все.¹¹⁴ Another Vice President of ROPRIAL, Evgenii Iurkov, agrees with his peer and gives this recommendation for a future law: На сегодняшний день, по-моему, такая ситуация. Мы бы хотели, например, чтобы где-нибудь в Башкирии официальный документ был только на русском языке.¹¹⁵

An event that became a catalyst for the articulation of anxieties about linguistic federalism was the attempt by Tatarstan to transfer Tatar to the Latin alphabet. It provoked an outburst of emotional response in the metadiscourse. In September 1999, the Parliament of the Republic of Tatarstan passed a law *On the Reinstatement of the Tatar Alphabet on the basis of Latin Script*, the idea being inspired by the original *Federal Law On the Languages of the Peoples of the Russian Federation*. Reacting rapidly, the Federal Government introduced amendments to the Law, now legislating that the alphabet for all languages of the Russian Federation must be Cyrillic, and if this is to be changed, it should be done only by means of the Federal Law. Tatarstan appealed to the Federal Constitutional Court and, in 2004, lost its appeal.

The state discourse emphatically supports the Court's decision. In her comments on the outcome of the appeal the representative of the Russian Duma in the Constitutional Court and Principal of Moscow Linguistic

112 Rossiiskoe obshchestvo prepodavatelei russkogo iazyka i literatury ("Russian Society of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature").

113 "Kruglyi stol: Proekt Zakona o russkom iazyke kak gosudarstvennom iazyke RF," held on 6 July 2003, URL: <http://gramota.ru/mirrs.html?socnlng05.htm> (accessed 23.05.2006). "Any Tatar thinks that since the Tatar language is a state language and since Tatarstan is still in Russia, then, generally speaking, when he is in Moscow, in court or anywhere else, he can speak Tatar."

114 "I'll bring you a form which I got from Kazan. On the left there is a heading in Tatar, on the right in English. That's all."

115 "To my mind this is the situation today. We would like, for example, that even in God forsaken Bashkiria an official document should be in Russian only."

University, Elena Mizulina, symbolically associates the question of the choice of scripts with the choice of political sovereignty, concluding: На мой взгляд, даже обсуждать такие вещи опасно.¹¹⁶ She interprets Tatarstan's attempt to change its alphabet as a threat to the indivisibility and "sovereignty" of the Russian Federation: Судя по всему, Татарстан мыслит себя суверенным государством не внутри России, а наравне с ней, наряду с ней.¹¹⁷ This interpretation, grounded in an ideology of centralized power and control, tries to counteract the linguistic and historical arguments brought forward by the supporters of the change. Specialists in Tatar phonetics claim that the Cyrillic alphabet does not adequately represent the sound system of the Tatar language, making even the transliteration of names difficult. Some linguists maintain that since it is a Turkic language, its spelling should be brought into line with its closest relative, Turkish.¹¹⁸ The history of Tatar includes a succession of alphabet changes. In 1927, the Arabic script, which had been used for a thousand years, was replaced by the Latin, and eleven years later, in 1939, by the Cyrillic.

In the 1920s, the move to the Latin script was accepted by the Soviet authorities with great enthusiasm; in the contemporary press, the Latinized form of Turkic was hailed as "the alphabet of October" and "a weapon of the proletarian revolution." But now, the bodies of symbolic power, the Institute of Eastern Studies and the Academy of Sciences Institute of Linguistics, commissioned to provide expert advice on the dispute, find that Tatarstan's wish to change its alphabet is an attempt to join the Latin-speaking community and to win favours from the USA.¹¹⁹

The case of Tatarstan illustrates a general trend: the state discourse, in the form of legislation and the publication of expert opinions, reinterprets the linguistic rights and freedoms of minorities in Russia's multilingual society that were granted earlier. Linguistic initiatives encouraged in the early Soviet period and guaranteed by the early post-Soviet Law are perceived at present as being a dangerous threat to Russia's statehood itself. The newly invented term *российское графическое пространство* ("the

116 *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 28.10.2004. "To my mind even to discuss these things is dangerous."

117 *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 28.10.2004. "Judging by all this, Tatarstan sees itself as a sovereign state, not within Russia, but equal to it, standing alongside it"

118 See, for example, the contribution to the discussion in *Rossiiskaia gazeta* by Fatima Khaledeva, Professor of the Tatar language at Kazan State University, 28.10.2004.

119 *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 28.10.2004.

Russian alphabetical space”),¹²⁰ which, according to the state discourse, is under attack, is made to correspond symbolically to the territorial unity of the Russian Federation.

It is no surprise then that the LSL-2005, emerging from these debates, appears to be a linguistic version of the main political project of Vladimir Putin’s government, “the vertical of power.” The Law legislates for the obligatory use of Russian in public domains, providing an exhaustive list of such domains. Allowing no flexibility for language choice in such areas as advertising, road signs, publishing and editorial houses, and by claiming that, in situations where other languages are also used, the texts should be идентичными по содержанию и техническому оформлению,¹²¹ it betrays suspicion of foreign elements and a lack of confidence in multilingualism. By affirming the dominant position of Russian, the Law exercises status management, but in addition to that, it also engages in corpus management in regulating specific language forms and usage (see Article 1, Paragraph 6, quoted above). In the language policies of other countries, however, corpus management normally pertains to monolingual societies,¹²² whereas the Russian Law sets out to project a monolingual ideology onto a multilingual state.

The ideological values of “the vertical of power” often permeate the debates surrounding the LSL-2005, where Russian is openly given a symbolic role as representing a centralized state and its territorial integrity. For instance, the Secretary of the Russian Language Council Iurii Vorotnikov, admits that Russian has been designated by the government as the символ новой российской государственности, наравне с гербом, флагом и гимном страны.¹²³ Continuing this theme, Duma member and academician Kaadyr-Ool Bicheldei makes no secret of the government’s language management objective: стратегическими задачами языковой политики России в настоящее время является укрепление единства и целостности государства на основе всесторонней поддержки государственного языка Российской Федерации.¹²⁴ Defending corpus

120 It is worth noting here that there was no single alphabetical system among the republics of the Soviet Union.

121 LSL-2005. “identical in content and technical form of presentation.”

122 Spolsky, 2004, p. 6.

123 “Zaochnyi kruglyi stol...” 2003. “a symbol of the new Russian statehood, alongside with the heraldic symbol, the national flag and the anthem.”

124 “Zaochnyi kruglyi stol...” 2003. “the strategic objective of the language policy in Russia

management in the Law, Bicheldei connects the “quality” and “extent” of Russian language use with the question of national security:

Поддержка и развитие русского языка как государственного языка Российской Федерации тесно связаны с обеспечением национальной безопасности страны, поскольку использование русского языка в необходимых объемах и на качественно высоком уровне позволяет сохранять единое политическое, экономическое, образовательное и культурное пространство [...].¹²⁵

At the same time, in listing the most important public spheres to be controlled by the Russian language, Vorotnikov pointedly gives priority to the Army: Нормальное функционирование русского языка как государственного обеспечит нормальное функционирование армии, судебных органов, органов региональной и федеральной власти.¹²⁶

The government's construction of Russian as a tool of statehood, national security and centralized control, is further supported by its dissemination in media interviews and comments of linguistic officials and advisers to Kremlin policy-makers. A good example is Liudmila Verbitskaia's interview with *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, which reaffirms the role of Russian as the pillar of national security: Проблема сохранения языка это проблема безопасности России.¹²⁷

In short, the ideological underpinning of the state metalinguistic discourse is manifestly clear. It favours the defence of a strongly centralized state and a preoccupation with issues of security and control. The Russian language, obligatory in an increasing number of domains, is conceived of as a symbolic tool for purging the regions of центробежные силы суве-

today is to strengthen on the basis of comprehensive support for the state language of the Russian Federation, the unity and indivisibility of the state.”

125 “Zaochnyi kruglyi stol...,” 2003. “Support and defence of the Russian language as the state language of the Russian Federation is closely linked with the provision of Russia's national security. This is because the use of Russian to the necessary extent and at a level of high quality will preserve the country's common political, economic, educational and cultural space [...].”

126 “Zaochnyi kruglyi stol...,” 2003. “The normal functioning of the Russian language as the state language would ensure the normal functioning of the Army, courts, and the institutions of the regional and federal power.”

127 *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, 25.02.2005. “The problem of the preservation of the [Russian] language is a problem of the security of Russia.”

рени́теля,¹²⁸ while its usage, perhaps for the first time in Russian history, is to be regulated by the state. Patriotic, Russian-centred and suspicious of “the other,” this ideology is reminiscent of its Soviet predecessor.

Conclusion

Analysis of the metalinguistic discourse in recent years shows that the linguistic culture of contemporary Russia is responding to the major sociopolitical changes. In the period of “the crystallization of structures,” responses to the complex processes connected with language modernization, and the shifts in the paradigms of usage and identities, seem to have moved from a multiplicity of voices to a dominant mode of suspicion and recriminations against the speaker.

As in any system of ideas and beliefs, linguistic culture is compounded by the mixture of the real, the imagined and purely mythological. Both the state and the popular narratives of the period of “the reinstatement of the norm,” are characterized by centripetal trends: the supremacy of concepts of centrality, fixed codes and values, the ideology of a strong state and return to tradition. While borrowing from the Soviet attitude to normativity, the discourse harks back to the imagined purity of pre-revolutionary Russian. In both cases, the needs of Russian multiculturalism and multilingualism remain peripheral to discussions, as the policies produced veer towards essentialist and monolingual solutions.

Although present Russian usage is substantially influenced by globalization, its linguistic culture does not appear to follow many progressive issues raised internationally in democratic linguistic cultures, such as the ideologies of variety, multiculturalism or political correctness.

Although Elistratov’s period of “crystallization” refers to the state of usage, it seems more appropriate to apply it to the metalinguistic discourse. Contrary to his argument, the ever increasing nervousness of the metadiscourse hardly corresponds to an image of the speaking nation returning to the norm. As John Trim has noted about usage, “the dynamic forces at work in everyday activity of language communities are far more powerful than conscious, ideologically motivated policies.”¹²⁹ So it is quite possible that Russian usage and the discourse reflecting on it are moving

128 Benediktov & Berdashkevich, 2003. “the centrifugal forces of sovereignty.”

129 John Trim, 2002, “Review Essay: Gabriella Hogan-Brun (Ed). National varieties of German outside Germany: a European perspective,” *Language Policy* 2 (1), pp. 69–73; p. 73.

in different directions. The advocacy of the norm and the construction of a linguistic “vertical of power,” however, places the metadiscourse within the central dichotomy of the times, that of order and disorder.¹³⁰ As opposed to the chaotic disorder of the “liberal discourse” of the previous decade, with its current connotations of destruction and decay, it is creating a new myth, announcing an era of orderly language.

130 Svetlana Boym, 2002, “Stil’ PR,” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 6, URL: <http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2002/6/boim.html> (accessed 20.09.2005).