

AN OFFICIAL STATUS FOR  
MINORITY LANGUAGES?



KONSTANTIN ZAMYATIN

# An Official Status for Minority Languages?

A STUDY OF STATE LANGUAGES  
IN RUSSIA'S FINNO-UGRIC REPUBLICS

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I started this project around the year 2000, when national revival and language revival in Russia's republics were still on the political agenda. At that time my specialization was human rights law and minority rights. Soon, however, it became clear that the core of identity politics in Russia shifts with the overall changes in the country. I realized that not so much normative approaches, like that of law, but more pragmatically oriented perspectives, including those of policy science and sociology, could enrich understanding of changing social realities. In the new situation I was looking for a broader interdisciplinary perspective and was lucky enough to receive the necessary impulse from the University of Helsinki.

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Helsinki, Metsätalo, 5th December 2013  
Konstantin Zamyatin



Map of the Finno-Ugric Republics of Russia (including Finno-Ugric and Samoyed Autonomous Districts and Volga Turkic Republics).



# Status, Language, Minority: an Introductory Sketch

## 1. Background to the Study

This research is conducted for an academic dissertation for the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Finno-Ugrian studies and consists of this publication, that includes an introductory sketch and a summarizing report, and six previously published peer-reviewed scientific articles divided into four thematic parts corresponding to the research objectives as listed below. Collectively they form a single treatise on the problems of language politics in the Finno-Ugric Republics of post-Soviet Russia (Karelia, Komi, Mari El, Mordovia, Udmurtia).

The articles were published elsewhere: in the collection of articles *Equally Diverse: Comparing Language and Culture Minorities in the Russian Federation and the European Union* and in internationally refereed journals *Finnisch-Ugrische Mitteilungen*, *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*, *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*. In this publication the articles are not listed in order of appearance, but in an order that is most logical from the point of view of their content, as will become clear in the introductory sketch.

The articles have both an empirical and theoretical dimension. Although the articles are empirically based and provide, first of all, insights into Russian politics, they also have clear theoretical implications that specify the application of some concepts. While addressing the problem of applicability of the concept of 'official status' to minority languages, the study draws upon factual material from the Finno-Ugric Republics of Russia.

This dissertation is the first comprehensive study on the formation of language policies in the Finno-Ugric Republics for more than two decades. It is not restricted to the exploration of the formal

solutions but also provides some insights into policy implementation. This study could be of interest to scholars working in the fields of Finno-Ugrian and Russian studies. Scholars interested in Russia's language policy and nationalities policy may find this study especially useful. Also, those scholars who study ethnicity and nationalism as well as ethnic and national dimensions in political science and law may find it interesting.

The study is written within the framework of Finno-Ugrian studies, but it can be characterized as an interdisciplinary project that also utilizes the relevant viewpoint of the language policy theories and nationalism studies.

### 1.1. Historical Context

The historical narratives concerning the rise of the nation-state, such as those of Benedict Anderson (1983), Ernest Gellner (1983) or Erik Hobsbawm (1992), bear witness to the fact that in the Age of Empires the state did not penetrate so deeply as to significantly influence the lives of ordinary people (Gellner 1983: 38). The nobility was supposed to speak a 'sacred language' of the holy text common for dynasties in different empires, first of all Latin or, later, for example, French and German were used in the Russian Empire; the peasants typically continued to use the local vernaculars (see Kappeler 2001 for the Russian case). The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian Empires after the First World War signified the further march of the idea of the nation-state throughout Eastern Europe. Rearrangement of post-war Europe in line with Wilson's principles included the self-determination of 'second-generation' nations and the creation of a number of new states. The congruence of the cultural, linguistic and political entities became the pattern in state formation in the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. The nation-states typically promoted one dominant culture and one dominant language: the latter altered its previous role from the mere language of bureaucracy and administration to that of the national language, the knowledge of which was obligatory for all (see Section 3).

The developments in the territories of the former Russian Empire took a more complicated twist. There are many studies (see, e.g., Martin 2001, Hirsch 2005) on the formation of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR or Soviet Union) that take different views on the place and importance in this process of the ‘national question’ (as the problem of the need to accommodate multinational diversity was termed in Marxist writings). Scholars usually recognize, addressing the ‘national question’, that the Bolsheviks hoped to gain the support of non-Russians, who composed about half of the population, and also intended to spread the World Revolution by incorporating emerging Soviet Republics into a communist state. To solve the ‘national question’, the founders of the USSR, too, inserted the nationality principle at the very core of its state structure in the Soviet Constitution of 1924 and preferred federalization to autonomization (see, e.g., Martin 2001, 25–26, Hirsch 2005: 3–4, Connor 1984: 38).

Soviet federalism had, as one of its cornerstones, the principle of ‘national self-determination of the peoples’ that was exercised depending on the place of an ethnic group in the hierarchy of the peoples in the form of the Union Republics (SSRs) and Autonomous Republics (ASSRs) as well as Autonomous Regions and National (later Autonomous) Districts, and, in its early years, even National Rural Districts and Administrations. The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) became the biggest Union Republic. The RSFSR itself was a federation that hosted national-territorial units titled after non-Russian peoples. Among the other units, the political entities in Russia’s North-West and the Volga Area titled after the peoples speaking Finno-Ugric languages emerged in the form of Autonomous Regions in the 1920s. The creation of ethnically defined units was conjoined with the early Soviet policy of ‘nativization’ (‘korenizacija’), according to which non-Russians had to be promoted to bureaucratic positions in the state apparatus. In addition, unprecedented Soviet language planning encouraged the expansion of the official use of autochthonous languages in the public sphere of particular regions and envisaged for this purpose the development of the standardized written forms that sometimes was accompanied with the creation of new identities (see Martin 2001: 23–24, Hirsch 2005: 7–8).

Even if through formal federalization, Soviet Russia and from 1922 the Soviet Union, soon annexed most territories of the former Russian Empire and became a *de facto* imperial state. When it was realized that the World revolution was not going to happen, it was postulated that the state had resolved the 'national question'. However, despite all its 'affirmative action' and internationalist rhetoric, from the mid-1930s the Russian language started to be promoted among non-Russians, initially out of practical considerations, such as the need for a common language. Since the late 1930s and especially since the Second World War, the dominant position of ethnic Russians, along with their culture and language, started to be emphasized, which marked the gradual shift of state policy from diversity promotion to Russification (Hirsch 2005: 185–186, Martin 2001: 463–464, Slezkine 1994: 445).

Yet, these developments were not reflected in the nominal state structure: in the mid-1930s Autonomous Regions titled after Finno-Ugric peoples were even upgraded by their transformation into 'titular' Autonomous Republics and the Karelian, Komi, Mari, Mordovian and Udmurt ASSRs emerged. The Karelian ASSR was even temporarily transformed into the Karelian-Finnish SSR in the period between 1940 and 1956. The ASSRs existed throughout the Soviet times from the mid-1930s until the late 1980s. Yet, in the late Soviet years, more and more, economic considerations began to prevail over national issues. Due to a number of reasons, including the modernization of society through the policies of collectivization and industrialization initiated in the 1930s, urbanization and deliberate migration policy, and, finally, outright Russification, the share of non-titular populations was increasing in the SSRs and ASSRs. By the late 1980s, the Finno-Ugric peoples were in a numerical minority in their titular ASSRs (see, e.g., Kreindler 1989). Thus, the existence of the titular ASSRs within the RSFSR somewhat suspended but did not prevent the processes of accelerating language shift to Russian and ethnic assimilation.

Unsurprisingly, then, the national resentment among non-dominant groups ignited a new wave of national liberation in the 1980s that triggered the processes of disintegration of the Eastern European multinational states, including the USSR, Yugoslavia and

Czechoslovakia. Yet, while all 15 SSRs became independent states, all the ASSRs stayed within the newly formed Russian Federation. In fact, as a part of the disintegration and decentralization processes in the USSR, the attribute 'autonomous' was dropped and the ASSRs of the RSFSR became the national-state formations and formally equal to the SSRs. In effect, in 1990–91 the political status of the ASSRs was once more upgraded to that of the 'constituent republics' of Russia and even nominally 'sovereign states'.

As one of the Soviet legacies, the federal structure of contemporary Russia is based on a mixed principle, because it has both ethnically and administratively defined federative units. Geographically ethnically defined units are concentrated in three large areas of Russia: 1) the European part of Russia (the North-West and the Volga Areas), 2) the North Caucasus, 3) Siberia and the Far East. These units include the national-state formations (Republics), national-territorial formations (Autonomous Districts (Okrugs) and Autonomous Regions (Oblasts)) as well as ordinary territorial formations (Regions, Territories (Krais) and the Federal Cities). According to the Russian Constitution (12 December 1993), among the different types of regions only the Republics have the right to have their constitutions and the right to establish their state languages (Art. 66 and 68). Autonomous Districts can introduce only some official functions for their titular languages.

Since a new epoch in the political history of post-Soviet Russia started with the turn of the millennium, there is a growing scientific interest in the processes of the rapid social changes of the 1990s. Nowadays Russia faces problems similar to those that emerged in the late Soviet times, including the aggravation of inter-ethnic tensions. What went wrong at that time that the democratization failed? More than two decades have passed since then, so from that distance some results of these processes can already be seen. An important layer in the understanding of these processes could be provided by the assessment of the consequences of the process of 'sovereignization' and of the implementation of national and language revival projects in the SSRs and ASSRs during the *perestroika* years and up to the present date that crystallized, inter alia, in the official status of languages.

## 1.2. General Context and the Key Concepts

The collapse of the Communist bloc and the abandonment of the bi-polar international system intensified the debate concerning nationalism and the roles of languages in society. The transitioning Eastern European countries had to harmonize the interests of the state with the position of languages. The solution used most frequently has been designating languages as the official languages. It is perhaps unsurprising that, in the nationalizing states, the designation of some languages with the official status has usually given them a privileged position in comparison to other languages. Speakers of minority languages, on the contrary, have typically found themselves in a disadvantaged position.

Yet, while the official language may serve as an instrument of state language policies forcing minorities to abandon their languages, it may also encourage the minorities to maintain them. The latter scenario is probable when the minority languages are given an official or co-official status in an autonomy/province/other territorial unit or in the whole country along with the majority language, as it was done, notably, in Russia. However, the theoretical conceptualization of the phenomenon of the official designation of minority languages and its implications is still needed. This study tackles the possible contradictoriness in application of the concept of 'official status' to minority language. Why does it happen and what does it imply when a minority language is designated as official? To answer this question, one should understand what an official language is and, furthermore, what is a minority language.

### 1.2.1. Official Language, National Language, State Language

The focus of this study is on official languages of states and outside its scope are some other situations, where languages are made official, for example, in international organizations. There are no international standards or scholarly consensus to what the official status of a language should mean. The *Concise Oxford Companion to the English*

*Language* defined official language rather broadly as a language that is given a special legal status in a particular state or other territory (see ‘official language’ in McArthur 1998). One strength of this definition is that it is inclusive and can also be applied to minority languages. Its problem is that it does not reveal what it is in particular that makes the status of an official language special. Basically, any respective political or legal decision makes the language official. The vagueness of this definition limits its functionality.

Somewhat better definitions are those which provide more descriptive accounts. According to a recent edition of the *Oxford Companion*, an official language is a language used for official purposes, particularly as the medium of a national government (McArthur 2012). A definition used in the UNESCO context (UNESCO 1953: 46) is even more descriptive: an official language of a country is one ‘used in the business of government – legislative, executive and judicial’. The problem with the latter definitions, however, is that typically minority language is either *not* used as working language or used only symbolically (see Sallabank 2011: 280).

The terms ‘official language’, ‘national language’ and ‘state language’ are sometimes used synonymously, but essentially they are distinguishable. UNESCO experts, on the one hand, point out the practical role of ‘official language’ as the working language of public authorities and institutions; while on the other, they define ‘national language’ as a language of a political, social and cultural entity (UNESCO 1953: 46). Hence, they emphasize a primary function of ‘national language’ as a symbol of unity and as a tool of integration in political, social and cultural spheres, where integration means that minorities preserving their own culture acquire majority culture.

‘National language’ is associated, first of all, with a nation and does not have necessarily to be designated official language of the state. Yet, when a country constitutes itself as a ‘nation-state’, it typically designates ‘national language’ also as an official language. In effect, official language in some countries is called a ‘national language’. A ‘national language’ is considered then one of the national symbols to represent the national identity of a people in the modern nation-state, but it also does its practical work as ‘official language’.

In some European countries with a ‘state-nation’ tradition, official language is directly associated with the state and usually bears the name ‘state language’ (‘*Staatssprache*’). ‘State language’ simultaneously has both practical and symbolic functions. In the same manner, Russian scholars, while disagreeing on some issues, also typically draw the distinction between the terms ‘official language’ (‘*oficial’nyi jazyk*’) and ‘state language’ (‘*gosudarstvennyj jazyk*’), recognizing a dual character of the latter (see, e.g., Djačkov 1996, Krjučkova 2002, Neroznak 2002, Pigolkin 1992, Truškova 1994, and others). As the USSR and post-Soviet Russia were established not as a ‘nation-state’ but as a multinational state, the term ‘national language’ (‘*nacional’nyj jazyk*’) was reserved there for the languages of the ‘peoples’ (‘nations’, ‘nationalities’ or ethnic groups) and is not directly comparable with its English counterpart (see further discussion on terms in the Russian context in Sections 4.1 and 4.2).

### 1.2.2. ‘Official’ Minority Language and ‘De Facto’ Minority Language

There are numerous case studies on the official and co-official status of minority languages in individual countries and some comparative studies on minority languages that take into account their ‘officiality’ (see, e.g., Fishman 1991). Yet, the generalization in the application of the concept of official language towards minority languages might be problematic, because such application strongly depends on the context of political culture and legal culture in a country. This is partly so, because the use of the term ‘minority language’ also varies greatly. The term ‘minority language’ is often used to refer to a language spoken by a minority of the population of a country, even if the language is given official status. An important aspect is that the minority languages are often also ‘threatened languages’ or ‘endangered languages’, because they are at risk of falling out of use as their speakers (are forced to) shift to using the dominant language (see Grin: 1995: 37–38, Austin & Sallabank 2011: 1).

The picture is further complicated by the existence of the term ‘official minority language’ used in some countries, e.g., in

the context of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML). This notion is applied to those minority languages recognized with such a status by the State Parties of the convention. The purpose of the Charter is to promote minority languages that are those languages traditionally used in a particular territory and distinct from the official language of the country. However, the Charter and some other documents foresee the situation when some minority languages are simultaneously also official languages. Depending on a country's policy a minority language can be given the status of an official language, regional language, or officially recognized minority language. The Charter uses the terms 'minority languages' and 'regional languages' as synonyms (see Charter's Explanatory Report, pp. 15, 51), although in some countries, like Germany or Poland, the latter term refers to a language, whose speakers typically do not have a separate ethnic identity, e.g., Low German or Kashubian.

At the same time, in other cases, e.g., in post-Soviet countries and, notably, Russia, speakers of non-dominant languages have separate ethnic and even national identities, reinforced by the existence of political units and official status of languages in question. For that reason, ethnic activists typically reject the application of the term 'minority language' to their language, even if this was correct in sociolinguistic terms, and prefer the term 'national language' that was traditionally used for that purpose in the Soviet discourse (see previous Section). To avoid this problem, this study uses the term '*de facto* minority language'.

## 2. Study Design

Along with China and India, Russia has the largest amount of official languages, which include the minority languages designated official in Russian regions, notably, in its Republics. A paradox of the nationalities and language policy in Russia is that it is intended simultaneously to promote Russian nation-building and to preserve the traditionally established linguistic diversity. It might be that in Russia, despite the proclaimed linguistic diversity, official status of

minority languages is just a result of previous policies conducted in the early 1990s and no longer reflects the current political situation, but rather signifies a temporary compromise on the way to the unification of the federation into a nation-state. So the concept itself could cover up reality, being merely a simulacrum to show 'visible diversity'.

## 2.1. Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study is focused on the phenomenon of the official status for *de facto* minority languages in the Russian context. For the purpose of the empirical study, the theoretical question about the applicability of official status for minority languages has to be slightly modified: why were the *de facto* minority languages designated the state languages of Russia's Republics? The aim of this research is to examine the formation and configuration of the official status of state languages in national Republics of the Russian Federation in order to understand whether this status was established as a symbol in identity politics, as an instrument in political rivalry, as an ethnic institution and/or as a mechanism of language maintenance.

According to the principle of federalism and vertical division of powers, state policy formation is divided in Russia between the federal center and regional authorities as the two major power levels. Federal legislation has supremacy over regional legislation and serves as a framework for regional policies. The study on regional developments would be very limited unless it is addressed within this general framework. For this purpose, the study *as a whole* explores the following questions:

The first question: why was status planning chosen as the main policy device at the federal level not only in regard to the dominant Russian but also to some non-dominant languages in Russia's Republics? (See Section 6.)

The second question: what were the reasons for establishing the state languages at the regional level? (See Section 7.)

Furthermore, based on the distinction between the federal and regional level, the research pursues the following four objectives:

1) to ascertain the significance of state languages of Republics for Russia's language policy, 2) to observe the position of state languages in regional political landscapes and to study regional policies towards titular languages in Russia's Finno-Ugric Republics, 3) to elucidate the positions of different languages depending on their statuses in language-in-education policy as the most important branch of language policy in Russia and its Republics, and 4) to evaluate what impact official status had on language maintenance in language-in-education policies of the Republics. For the purpose of evaluation of the policy impact, education was chosen among the domains of language use, because it is the most transparent sector that is accessible to both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The objectives are addressed in the corresponding parts of the dissertation, where the study proposes some answers to empirical questions in the *individual articles*:

- 1) What is the ideological basis of Russia's language policy and how does it accommodate the official status of the state languages of the Republics? What determined such a visible role given in the new political system to state languages? How did language status planning become a dominant approach of linguistic diversity management in Russia? (Articles 1 and 2, see the structure in Section 5.)
- 2) What were the driving forces and different interests behind the twenty years of efforts towards the official designation of state languages in Republics? How was the institutional solution for establishing the state languages reached also in the Republics where the titular groups were in a numerical minority? Is the instrumentalist argument for the designation of the state languages valid for understanding the processes in this category of Republics? What were the possible instrumental uses that the official status could bring? To what extent are alternative (or complementary) legal, sociolinguistic and other explanations applicable? How does the official status of the state languages fit into the context of language revival? (Articles 2, 3 and 4.)

- 3) How have the positions of different languages in the educational process diverged depending on their statuses? How has education reform affected the institutional status of languages in Russia's education system? In what ways were the different modes of language teaching dependent on the official status of a language? (Article 5.)
- 4) What was the policy impact on the teaching of the titular languages in the Finno-Ugric Republics? Did the official status enhance this teaching? What influence did the different configurations of the official status have on the expansion of language teaching in the education systems of Republics? Why were some Republics more successful in promoting and sustaining their titular languages in education? (Article 6.)

The study does not pretend to provide exhaustive answers to all aspects of the issues raised but strives to create a coherent narrative of the development of official language policies in the Republics. Further, the empirical study raises a number of theoretical questions. Although the articles do not always provide direct answers, they shed light on possibilities in addressing the following issues from the perspective of the theories of language policy: What purposes does the officialization of the languages serve? What are the differences in official statuses of majority language and minority language? What is the rationale behind granting a *de facto* minority language an official status? How does the official status of languages correlate with the territoriality principle and the personality principle of linguistic diversity management? How do language rights and obligations correlate in the official status? How does the concept of official-language rights fit this context? From the perspective of the studies on ethnicity and nationalism: How do the symbolist, revivalist, instrumentalist or institutionalist arguments explaining the rise of nationalism respond to the question about the reasons for official designation of languages? Can the designation of a language with an official status be the means of language revival? Does an official status given to a minority community indeed promote diversity in a deeper sense? (See Section 8.)

Finally, the theoretical question is repeated once more as the third question for the whole study: What might be the reasons for official status in the case of minority languages? (See Section 9.)

The central argument advanced in this study is that the distinction between the primary functions of the official language as language in office, on the one hand, and national language as a symbol of identity, on the other hand, provides a necessary framework for understanding the specifics of the official status in the case of minority languages. The designation of language with an 'official status' in a political and legal act is a historical one-time event and as such symbolic, while in practice an official language operates as a continuing state, 'legal regime'. A language spoken by the majority population usually already functions as language in office anyway and designating it with an official status often is a formal act, but in addition it might be provided with an extra meaning to signify national identity – in that case it is usually called 'national language' or 'state language'. On the contrary, the official status of a minority language always functions as a national symbol and only in addition it might function as language in office – in the latter case the process of implementation of its function as a working language is typically protracted in time.

## 2.2. Methodology and the Position of the Researcher

The phenomenon of official language can be approached with the help of methods of both social sciences and humanities. As the official designation of languages in Russia in the 1990s is already history, one cannot always exclusively rely on methods of social sciences but should involve a wider perspective of human sciences. While the official documents are within direct reach of the instruments of political science and law, the motivation of the political actors behind them is not directly attainable. The intention of the political actors that gives the meaning to the act of official designation could be understood in the context of the social change of the time through historical reconstruction of the developments in

the early 1990s. What simplifies this task is the fact that the state languages are present in a continuing state also nowadays, which enables figuring out the reasons for their officialization by inductive logic in terms of its consequences for inter-ethnic relations and language maintenance or shift.

This section will introduce the utilized methodologies and develop the approach and limitations of the study. The study under consideration is an interdisciplinary treatise that does not limit its interpretation tools to those of theories of language policy but involves a wider perspective of the studies on ethnicity and nationalism. Common perspectives for both interdisciplinary fields are symbolist, revivalist, instrumentalist and institutionalist approaches that explain the social phenomena connected to ethnicity. These theoretical approaches are employed in the interpretation of results of an empirical study on the state languages in post-Soviet Russia and its national Republics.

Reliable present-day research material on the sociolinguistic situation of Finno-Ugric languages in Russia is often lacking. To address this problem, the study of official documents is not sufficient and had to be supplemented by case studies. One immediate source of data would have been the knowledge of the people involved in designation – members of elites themselves. Yet, due to a number of circumstances, including the uncomfortable political situation in Russia and its regions for ethnic activists and dependent position of officials, this is often a biased source providing personal, sensitive and not-to-be-disclosed data. For ethical considerations, interviews with members of political and cultural elites as well as other key figures are not accentuated as one of the formalized methods of this study. However, a lot of data used in the study is based on the personal communications and consultations of the author with members of regional elites. The anthropological method of participatory observation was used for obtaining the data, including informal interviews, visits to political and cultural events as well as analyses of documents from personal and public archives.

One of the advantages of the research project is the researcher's personal knowledge of the political situation in Russia and its regions as well as his contacts with ethnic activists and politicians. Before

starting my academic career I worked as a lawyer of the Committee of Nationalities Affairs at the Government of the Udmurt Republic, later the Ministry of Nationalities Policy of the Udmurt Republic (1996–1999) and prepared one of the last drafts of the language law of the Udmurt Republic. Later, I worked as an information officer and, later still, as acting head of the Information Center of Finno-Ugric Peoples SURI in Tallinn (2004–2006). After the start of this research project on official status of minority languages, I participated in 2010 as a researcher in the team that conducted an in-depth study on the language situation of Karelian in the titular Russian Republic of Karelia (case-specific study report, executive summary of which was published as an ELDIA Working Paper (see Klementyev et al. 2012, Karjalainen et al. 2013) in the framework of the EU project *European Language Diversity for All (ELDIA)*).

The federal framework for the officialization of languages in the Republics is studied in the context of the historical narrative of Soviet and post-Soviet developments. In the current research, the legal-institutional approach is applied in the articles on the institutional and legal framework of Russia's language policy (see the structure of the study in Section 5: Part I, Article 1) and language-in-education policy (Part III, Article 5). The reasons for the choice of this approach instead of the rights-based approaches are as follows. It is stated in the Russian Constitution that 'the universally recognized norms of international law and international treaties and agreements of the Russian Federation shall be a component part of its legal system' (Art. 15). Among the international treaties on language protection, Russia is a party to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and has signed but not yet ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. However, these documents lay down the State Parties' obligations but not rights. The system of language rights protection in Russia remains rather undeveloped despite their partial recognition (see Bowring 2012). The Russian legislation acknowledges some minority language rights, most notably the right to education in the mother tongue. Typically, these rights are not self-executing directly through the judicial system; their guaranteeing requires transformation into the legislation and systemic enforcement measures under the state policy. Therefore,

in studying the Russian legislation, the legal-institutional approach would reach deeper than the linguistic human rights approach or the normative political theory approach (see Leontiev 1995 for an example of a rights-based study; also Section 4.1).

The focal point of this research is on regional developments regarding the official status of languages. The study intends to ascertain the reasons for officialization of languages in individual Republics through the analysis of diverging popular and elite interests. Popular concerns with the state of inter-ethnic relations were transformed in the mid-1980s into cultural and linguistic demands for change presented on the side of national movements. With the introduction of *glasnost* (transparency) as the core component of *perestroika* (restructuring), it started to be possible first to discuss ethnic issues and later also to present political demands. The programmatic documents of 'national organizations' and 'national congresses of the peoples' also included the demand for the designation of state languages of the Republics. Even if presented as the popular demands, in the ASSRs these political goals were first and foremost promoted by the ethnic elites who participated in formulating first the sovereignty declarations and later the constitutions and language laws and pursued in this their own interests (see Section 4.3 and Article 2 for the discussion on national and ethnic elites). The hypothesis is that the public formulation of political demand for the official status of languages was an indispensable precondition and the demand itself was the immediate cause for the designation of state languages in the official documents. However, the demand did not go straight to the official documents but went through the political process, where alternative economic, political, legal and ethnic interests competed and segment of regional elites had to bargain for their own vision, which also influenced the resulting formulations.

The study employs inductive and deductive reasoning to find out the reasons for the official designation of languages and other variables that influenced the outcome of the political process. In this respect, one limitation of the study is that it does not strive to present an all-inclusive survey of the political landscapes in the Republics or of the dynamics of political processes in the transition period in connection with the ethnicity. It provides only some necessary facts

about the framing of national movements in the Republics, which were the main driving forces behind the presentation of cultural and linguistic demands. The study discusses in some detail the relationships between the activists of the national movements and the nationally minded politicians represented among regional political elites. It is argued that the elites typically strived for official recognition not for the sake of language(s) *per se*, but for language as an attribute of identity or even a nation (see Toivanen 2007: 105). The study discusses briefly how the language shift was identified by elites as a problem and status planning as its solution but virtually does not explore grass-root activism (see for a possible perspective on minority language activism: Zamjatin et al. 2012, also Saarikivi & Toivanen 2014, Tanczos & Puura 2013).

The study of the developments in regional languages policies (Part II, Articles 2, 3 and 4) and language-in-education policies (Part IV, Article 6) is based on both the legal-institutional and the policy analysis approaches. The policy analysis approach differs from the other methodologies in that it concentrates not so much on the question ‘why’ a certain policy goal should be chosen, but instead provides some insights concerning ‘how’ the chosen policy should be achieved in terms of its effectiveness. In that, this approach is of limited use for the purpose of the current study: indeed, economic cost arguments were used as a pretext that regional officials presented to explain non-implementation of language revival policy, but these arguments were not decisive for the policy adoption. At the same time, an important contribution of the policy analysis approach is that ‘it helps to compare (and select) between ways of reaching a certain goal’ (Kymlicka & Grin 2003: 16–18, Grin 2003: 38–39), which enables the use of a comparative method.

### 2.3. Comparative Analysis

The main analytical tool of this study is the comparison of official statuses of minority languages in varying contexts and, thus, the creation of the framework for an inductive argumentation by providing evidence from concrete situations. A comparison of minority

languages in different countries by the means of comparative politics would have been valuable for mapping diversity and typologization of the linguistic situations in which languages are officialized (see, e.g., *Words and Worlds* 2005: 92–118). Such a comparison would have produced some structural explanations of why minority languages become official, and a bold conjecture would be that this outcome depends on how ‘powerful’ the ‘push’ is towards officialization, either ‘from below’, from the group demanding its language, or ‘from above’, on the side of elites. ‘Strength of demand’ could have been conceptualized in a number of variables, starting from measuring ethno-linguistic vitality of a group, the level of popular support for nationalism or historically conditioned position of regional elites and their search for political resources to acquire a stronger position in political bargaining with the federal center. However, not everything can be attributed to power politics and there is a risk that in this way less evident variables connected to human agency would fall out of the picture.

In looking for the human motivations, it is interesting how minority languages become official even in a situation where it was unlikely to happen due to a lack of strong demand ‘from below’. In order to pursue this more focused task, the comparative strategy is then to induce the hypothetical reasons for officialization by causal inference from their correlation to a few explanatory variables and, thus, to reduce multiplicity of variables influencing the linguistic situations by figuring out and excluding the impact of contingent factors on language policy (possible contrasts from a comparison among countries are only briefly outlined in Sections 3.1 and 3.2). The Russian context fits this task because the regional developments provide a rich variety of situations of languages’ officialization while keeping institutional settings alike. Synthesizing the results in deductive argumentation will then reinforce the validity of conclusions drawn from comparative political and legal analysis and enable some predictions regarding the development of the official status for minority languages in Russia.

The functional method of comparative legal analysis will be used in dealing with the legal and political acts and other research materials on the Republics. This method makes it possible to focus

on legislation in different places providing various solutions to a similar problem (Michaels 2006). The comparison is typically used to find similarities through dissimilarities, similar trends in dissimilar contexts. The political and legal documents that contain solutions for national and linguistic issues are viewed as manifestations and results of political processes. From this perspective, the official status of the titular languages is seen as achieved through interplay within the system of power relations, the composition of which was unique for every Republic. Using the comparative method allows the seeing of similarities behind contingencies of political processes. The study analyzes dissimilarities in the dynamics of the regional political regimes and their positive and negative effects on language status planning. It thus becomes possible, with the help of the method of comparative analysis, to analyze various solutions to similar problems in the legislative regulations of different regions (Michaels 2006: 369–372).

Notably, the comparison in this study does not include all Russian regions and not even all the republics, although it would have been possible. The state languages of the Republics titled after the Finno-Ugric peoples will be the focus of this comparison. The first reason for this choice is that the cases of Finno-Ugric Republics prove to be a representative sample for a study of the official designation of languages in Russia's national Republics. Their political regimes and the sociolinguistic situations of their communities differ in many ways. This sample includes a republic that did not declare its sovereignty (Mordovia), a republic that adopted the language law as early as 1992 (Komi) and a republic that postponed the adoption of such a law until 2001 (Udmurtia). It also includes a republic that introduced language requirements for the presidency candidates in the constitution (Mari). Furthermore, it includes a republic (Karelia), where it proved to be impossible to establish titular language as another state language, which makes it an outlier case for the purpose of comparison.

The second reason is that the positions of Finno-Ugric languages in Russia's Republics also have many features in common. These are languages with relatively large numbers of speakers: from approximately 25,000 speakers in Karelia up to more than 300,000

speakers in Udmurtia, yet their speakers are in the minority in all the Republics. Due to language corpus planning, these are relatively well developed languages from a linguistic point of view. At the same time, these are languages still spoken predominantly in a rural environment. According to the data of population censuses, despite the efforts spent at language planning since the early 1990s, there is a wide language shift going on especially during the last two decades (see, e.g., Saarinen 2008, Strogal'sčikova et al. 2008). Despite the attempts to expand these languages in the public sphere, there are still few signs of a reversed language shift and the maintenance of the Finno-Ugric languages in the longer perspective is not guaranteed.

Finally, the third reason is that the field of Finno-Ugrian studies includes not only cultural studies and linguistic studies but also area studies that can provide rich empirical material. It is also an important fact for the comparative analysis that the Finno-Ugric co-operation was not restricted to scholarly activities but had a strong international political dimension and became a mode of social reality that deserves academic attention in its own right (see Section 4.4). Presidents and other top officials of Estonia, Finland and Hungary attended the Finno-Ugric fora, expressing their support for 'kindred peoples' in Russia. Due to political co-operation, some transnational bodies were established such as the International Consultative Committee of Finno-Ugric Peoples, an executive body of the World Congresses of Finno-Ugric Peoples (1992), a NGO that acquired consultative status at the UN Economic and Social Council. As a result of activists', executives' and expert collaboration, ethnic elites shared ideas about language planning methods, which, however, had to be tested in the unique conditions of each Republic.

Comparison in this study is organized according to the stages of developing and conducting a policy, despite the highlighted below problem with the stages approach in the study of political process (see Section 3.3). In a stable situation, the stages approach to policy analysis might be outdated, but the transition period of the late 1980s to the early 1990s was characterized by a clear distinction of stages in the shaping of policy in sovereignty declarations, constitutions and language laws of Republics, its implementation

and evaluation. Accordingly, in order to find out what route was taken in the formation of their official status, the study employs the analysis of the three types of official documents which institute the official status of the state languages of the Republics: 1) Declarations of State Sovereignty, 2) Republican Constitutions and 3) Language Laws of the Finno-Ugric Republics as well as their drafts. The study, therefore, does not restrict itself only to a synchronic comparison but also involves the exploration of a diachronic development of the official status in its different functions (see, on benefits of a diachronic study: May 2005b: 322). This way the study reveals how different types of documents represent different functions of the state languages and comes to reassess the question of ‘why’ the language status planning was chosen as the policy.

Here is where the perspective of the studies on ethnicity and nationalism will be applied in the discussion to interpret the study results of what the reasons of the official designation of minority languages were. Despite the use of a political and legal analysis in dealing with the research materials, the study only tests the applicability of the existing theories and does not propose normative solutions. By looking at the differences and similarities in the political and sociolinguistic situations of the languages under consideration, it is possible to gain a better understanding why some language communities decline despite legal and political support that even go as far as to guarantee the co-official status of languages. Language planning of *de facto* minority languages in connection with their co-official status is probably the best that could have been done for their maintenance in the context of Russia. Although some activities directed at language standardization and the development of infrastructure are also undertaken in the autonomous districts, the scale of such activities is much narrower than in the Republics and does not ensure the language maintenance.

An important issue, only briefly dealt with in this study, is what impact the official status of languages and, in general, language policy of the state has on the sociolinguistic situation. While language shift is a general tendency, there are some sociological research studies in the republics that witness a certain change in language attitudes and even in rare cases an increase in language

use (see, e.g., Strogalščikova et al. 2008). There are various possibilities for employment of both quantitative and qualitative studies within the sociological and sociolinguistic research. Due to its limited scope, this study tackles the problem of the implementation of language revival projects only in the context of language education. The problem of the evaluation of the policy efficiency by looking at implementation of language legislation in the republics is destined to be the subject of a forthcoming study (Zamyatin 2014a) that proceeds in two directions. First, evaluation of the language laws' formal implementation against their own goals by composing the catalogue of those domains of the official status where titular languages were actually introduced and, second, the evaluation of the actual implementation of language laws in the according domains by looking not only at qualitative but also at some quantitative indicators such as the amount of resources spent on the laws' implementation programs.

The rationale for this study is that answering the question about the applicability of the official status for minority languages allows for better understanding of the role and functions of the 'official status' of a minority language in a larger context of linguistic cultures, language planning and national politics. Furthermore, it pinpoints the various situations and sets of domains of its public use where applying the official status to a language could be a hindrance to development, a temporary solution or a vision for the future. A lack of awareness of the problems accompanying the application of the concept of official status to a minority language may, in a wider context, lead to the overlooking of the limitations of this tool for the description of political and sociolinguistic realities. A lack of understanding would, in turn, entail the ineffective policies having significant consequences such as the disappearance of languages and cultures, a decline in the overall diversity, as well as injustice and the social and psychological drama for those people who are deprived of the right to acquire and use their mother tongue.

## 2.4. Research Materials

Primary research materials for the purpose of this comparative study are, in the first place, a variety of official documents, both legal and policy acts, addressing the official status of languages; and secondly, analytical sources that shed light on public debates around language and other issues that have been ample enough to reflect the influence of various domains on the real situation regarding language usage. The research is limited to the period of the language acquiring its official status, and aims to describe how the status is phrased on paper and how it is implemented through language policies.

The texts of legal and political acts both of the federal and regional authorities are available online (<<http://zakon.scli.ru/>>). Besides the official documents, the research materials include some initial analytical sources available, inter alia, in: *K Sojuzu suveren-nych narodov* 1991, Abdulatipov et al. 1993, *Konstitucii respublik* 1995, *Status maločislennyh narodov Rossii* 1994, *Gosudarstvennye jazyki Rossijskoj Federacii* 1995, *Pis'mennye jazyki mira* 2000, *Gosudarstvennye i titul'nye jazyki Rossii* 2002, *Informacionnyj bjulleten' Minnaca Komi* 1994–2003, *S'ezdy naroda mari* 2008, *Jazykovaja situacija Volgo-Kamskogo Regiona* 2005, *Jazykovaja politika v Respublike Tatarstan* 1999, *Sovremennye jazykovye processy* 2007.

Secondary analytical sources were also used, among them: 1) the publication series 'National Movements in the USSR and in the Post-Soviet Space' by the Center of Research on Inter-Ethnic Relations at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, from 1989 onward that includes *Karely* 2005, *Karel'skoe nacional'noe dviženie* 2009, 2012, *Štrichi etnopolitičeskogo razvitija Komi respubliki* 1994, 1997, *Nacional'nye dviženija Marij El* 1995, 1996, *Obščestvennye dviženija v Mordovii* 1993, *Fenomen Udmurtii* 2002–03; 2) Materials of the Political Monitoring, Institute for Humanities and Political Studies, Moscow, 1992–99 and *Regiony Rossii* 2000, 2003; 3) Bulletins, Annual Reports and other materials of the Network for Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning of Conflicts (EAWARN), run by the experts of the Institute

of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, from 1998 onward; 4) Materials of the Finno-Ugric Bulletin issued by the Consultative Committee of Finno-Ugric Peoples, 2000–06. Also some monographs were consulted that most notably depict the development of the national movements and regional politics in the individual republics (e.g., Butvilo 1998, Mares'ev 1996, Popov & Nesterova 2000, Belokurova & Denisova 2003, Egorov & Matsuzato 2000).

### 3. Theoretical Framework

A century ago Wilhelm Dilthey (1883/1989) famously drew a distinction between natural and human sciences. According to his view, the task of the natural sciences is to arrive at law-based explanations, while the task of the human sciences is the understanding of human life. Within the latter task, humanities and social sciences also differ in their methods. The first tends to be more analytic and interested in individual free will while the second is empirically based and thus, could permit some law-based explanations. The problem of whether social structure or human agency is the primary source of human action is still among today's most debated topics in the social sciences. Among the different disciplines in these two spheres of knowledge, respectively, sociolinguistic and sociology of language address the relationships between language and society from opposite directions and have different subjects. Sociolinguistics explores how languages are influenced by social conditions, while the sociology of language explores how societies are influenced by linguistic diversity (see Wardhaugh 2009: 13–15, also Spolsky 2011).

The problem of language is central for post-modern philosophy. Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953/1986) doubts the possibility of the use of language as a tool for objectively describing 'truth' because, according to him, language is socially conditioned. We understand the world solely in our linguistic and social constructs, i.e., in Wittgenstein's terms, play 'language games'. As a way to proceed, philosophers address the issues of deconstruction, language pragmatics and language politics. The official status of both the

majority and minority languages could be best approached within the context of language politics. Michel Foucault (1969/2002) wrote about the power of language and argued that a given discourse is a reflection of power structures and that what one deems to be truth or valid knowledge is based upon the discourse of a particular period of time. While the post-modern philosophers were problematizing the language of knowledge in general, language politics lies at the core of their reasoning both within the language system as well as between the languages.

Scientists like Pierre Bourdieu (1977) have made an attempt to link the social structure and human agency. Bourdieu (1991) criticized the view of linguists on language as a pure structure and emphasized its belonging to the world of politics where it has symbolic power. The official language becomes one of the power structures, because both the dominant and dominated groups ‘misrecognize’ it as a superior language (Bourdieu 1977: 30). Bourdieu shows how historically it were members of the upper classes who gained a *de facto* monopoly over political power through literally *possessing* the official language, i.e., through their exclusive linguistic competence. The official status of language was, thus, linked to the modern nation-state. Moreover, the making of the nation forges a standard language, in the creation of which ‘the educational system plays a decisive role’ (1991: 44–46).

Bourdieu was not alone in emphasizing the link between the official language and the modern nation-state. One of the central parts of Benedict Anderson’s argument in explaining the emergence of the nation as ‘imagined community’ was his stressing of the role of print technologies in the dissemination of languages-of-power (Anderson 1983: 44–45). Ernest Gellner links nationalism to the development of homogenous ‘high culture’, transmitted through a written language (Gellner 1983: 55). There are about 200 states in the world, and most of them constitute themselves as nation-states, i.e., the states that draw their legitimacy from sovereign nations. These are the states, in which the principle of nationalism is declared to be exercised. Such a state of affairs was famously defined by Ernest Gellner as the congruence of the political and geographical unit with cultural and ethnic entity (Gellner 1983: 1).

Moreover, since the Herderian idea of ‘one state, one nation, one language’ was first disseminated in the 19th century, the modern nation-state typically granted the official status to a national language. With the arrival of the modern era, language shift and ethnic assimilation of minority communities were considered to be natural and even needed for the formation of the nation-states. In the modern state, official language served the policy of the integration of minorities by acquiring majority culture at the expense of their own culture, i.e., in the long run, the policy of assimilation and unification of the population.

### 3.1. Official Language as a Political and Legal Phenomenon in the Multilingual Context

Researchers are not tired of repeating again and again that there are practically no culturally and ethnically homogenous states. The nation-state often designates the language associated with its nation as the official language of the country, even though its population might be multilingual and often due to the fact that it is multilingual. In recent decades the position of languages in the multilingual contexts has been the subject of extensive academic research. Typically these are interdisciplinary projects which often emerge at the crossroads of the sociology of language, studies of language policy and language revitalization (for example, *ELDIA* or *Poga*: see Saarikivi & Marten 2012). In the case of the official status of minority languages such an approach would not suffice precisely because of the presence of a political component. This phenomenon could be best understood in the interchange of political science, law, sociology, ethnology, anthropology, linguistics, history, economics and some other disciplines.

In some countries, e.g. in Australia, the United States, Chile or Mexico, the state authorities *de facto* work in a certain language without any official statement regarding its status. In some other countries such as Albania, North and South Korea, or Iceland, this designation is a trivial act, which does not have any other consequences for the actual official language use, but rather conveys a

symbolic message regarding the position of that language in society. As there is no common international standard, this formal designation is, nevertheless, valid, because any special status given to a language in a particular state or other territory makes it official, as pointed out previously in Section 1.2.

Yet, in other countries two or more languages are designated official: more than a third of world's countries fall into this category (de Varennes 2012: 11). In the case of the coexistence of two or more languages, the designation of a language with an official status often is a decision about its future and no longer a trivial act. The decision is in effect pressure from the side of the state upon its citizens to use a certain language in certain public contexts at the expense of other languages (see de Varennes 1996: 86). It is not surprising then that non-dominant ethnic groups strive to designate their languages as official at least in particular regions. That is how sometimes multilingual states emerge also as multinational states, where two or more nations are politically recognized through the territorial solutions such as autonomy or federation, and also the functioning of languages is bound through official recognition to the territoriality principle (see McRae 1975). In multinational countries, such as Canada, Switzerland or Belgium, the designation of official languages is an important political decision that can be understood in the context of relations between the central government and regions (see next Section).

The designation of the official language can be accomplished as a legal or political act. It is legal if it creates rights and/or obligations. Yet, even if it was a legal act, a political decision is usually behind it (May 2001). Therefore, in looking for functions of the official designation of languages in a multilingual situation, the argument could be structured against the background of at least two academic disciplines, where the official status of languages is meaningful, law and political science. Accordingly, the phenomenon of the official designation of languages as both a political and legal act should be studied in the context of interconnectedness of the political science and law (see, e.g., Kymlicka & Grin 2003). Moreover, in order to provide insights on the dynamics of interplay between the driving forces of linguistic politics, the study should not be restricted to the

language policy analysis and legal analysis, but should engage the perspective of the studies on ethnicity and nationalism. Of course, legal and political approaches to finding the place of ethnicity in society should not be viewed as a separate strategy, but rather as the adjacent processes, when the political decision takes the form of a legal act (see for details on approaching the ‘national question’ in the relationship between law and politics in Zamjatin 2005: 259).

### 3.2. Official Languages and the State Structure: A Perspective of Federalism Theories

The political decision on the status of languages will be a part in the distribution of political power that takes into account the principles of accommodation of ethnic diversity in a country. In those countries, where ethnic and linguistic minorities are typically numerically small and live on territories conjoined to their homeland behind an international border, the issue of their language protection is solved in legislation on national minorities. In other countries there are mixed populations, which consist of different ethnic and national groups, relatively big in numbers and often autochthonous to their homeland territories. In the latter case the term ‘national minorities’ is not used domestically towards the autochthonous groups, even if *de facto*, numerically and in the context of international law, they could be referred to as such. These communities demand public recognition of identity-related differences and are often integrated in the state structure in the form of autonomy or territorial unit of a federal state, which is typically interpreted as internal implementation of the right to national self-determination. In such countries ethnic and linguistic issues are typically regulated in constitutional legislation (see Tully 2008: 186–187, 215–217).

The most widespread way of constitutional regulation of language issues would be the designation of languages, usually the majority language, but in some cases also minority languages, with official status. In federative and multinational countries at times official status is given simultaneously to majority language and

minority languages, both at federal/central and regional level or only at regional level. Countries diverge depending on the level and volume of official bilingualism and multilingualism. Typically, minority languages with the official status of national language or state language are not used by all state's government bodies and in all institutions in public sectors of society. Different countries solve the issues of official bilingualism and multilingualism differently.

For instance, in Britain the central government works exclusively in English. Apart from England, other historical administrative-political parts of Britain are officially bilingual. In Wales and Scotland the official languages are English and, accordingly, Welsh and Gaelic. The position of Welsh is relatively strong in comparison to other minority languages with an official status. For example, Welsh is a compulsory subject in school for all students in Wales (Huws 2006: 144). In Spain the central government is unilingual too and uses Castilian. At the same time, some minority languages are either co-official languages or otherwise officially recognized in some autonomous communities. Remarkable success was achieved in the revitalization of the Basque language (Arzoz 2014). In Finland the national languages are Finnish and Swedish, and the central authorities use both. Provincial authorities work in Finnish and in the province of Åland islands in Swedish. Municipal authorities can be Finnish or Swedish, or be bilingual, while some municipalities composing the Saami homeland can also use this language. Regarding the history of establishing of its national languages, Finland is an interesting case, because this act was interpreted as intended to be only about the languages of the state and disconnected from any symbolic recognition of the status of the Swedish-speaking minority as another nationality (Modeen 1999).

In Canada the language policy is official bilingualism both at federal and regional level (in provinces and territories). The federal government works in two languages. In the province of Quebec the sole official language is French, in the province New Brunswick and also in Manitoba both English and French. In other provinces only English is official. In the Yukon Territory both English and French are official. In the territories Nunavut, North-West Territories, and the northern part of Quebec, Nunavik, the official languages in

addition to English and French are the indigenous languages (see, e.g., Kymlicka 1995). The situation of Canada with its diversity of state-founding nations, first nations, minorities and migrants as well as its reflection in the federative structure of the state is the closest to the situation in Russia.

The comparison of the federal political systems in Canada and Russia is in many respects illustrative of the fact how the normative concept of federalism as a political ideology might have different readings in its practice as an institutional arrangement. Russia and Canada are the largest countries in the world by area and are also among the most ethnically diverse societies. Both factors represent a challenge for efficient governance and both in Russia and Canada this problem was addressed by the means of federalism, which was famously defined by Ronald Watts as a normative concept according to which 'multi-tiered government' should combine 'elements of shared-rule and regional self-rule' (Watts 1996: 6–7).

At the same time, the differences in political organization between the countries are remarkable. Writing about the origins of federalism, William Riker described the formation of the federation as the process of 'coming-together' of political units into a single nation under such incentives as existence of an external threat and their ability to retain decision-making over some issues, which is then a matter for bargaining between the center and regions (Riker 1975: 114). Alfred Stepan criticized Riker's model as one based on the American experience and not fit for generalization. For example, in the case of Canada the 'coming-together' model could be applied only towards the British colonies, while Quebec represented a territory different by language and claiming its status of a separate national community. Stepan suggested to conceptualize the cases when a federalist system emerged as a result of constitutional devolution of powers (for example, in post-Soviet Russia) as a model of 'holding together' political units of different linguistic, cultural and religious groups that retain their status as national communities, and the cases of forming federation by an utterly coercive centralizing power as a 'putting together' model, of which he names the USSR as an exemplary case (Stepan 1999: 22–23, Gagnon 2001: 333).

In interpreting the events of the early 1990s, Russian theorists used to distinguish two basic approaches to federalism that were conceptualized as ‘constitutional-treaty federation’ and ‘treaty-constitutional federation’, depending on whether the center is said to have delegated its powers to regions or vice versa (see Chakimov 2009). The treaty component stemmed from the declarations of sovereignty and was fixed first in the Federation Treaty of 1992 and later in bilateral treaties of 1994–1998 on the delineation of powers between the federal center and regions (Kahn 2000: 80–86). Yet, the Russian constitution of 1993 was imposed from above and has not incorporated the Federation Treaty, and since 1999 the recentralization reforms marked a further move towards a pseudo-federation. John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary note that a ‘coming-together’ and genuine democratic federation are more likely to endure than a ‘hold together’ undemocratic pseudo-federation (McGarry & O’Leary 2005: 285–286).

Among the challenges to the federal government that strives to hold together different national communities are, then, also linguistic and ethnic tensions, when the elites bargain for a higher status of their regions because they form separate nations. That bargaining might result in the creation of a democratic multinational federation, which, however, does not only reflect power relations but also has normative justifications (see, e.g., Gagnon 2001). Since Alexis de Tocqueville’s famous work, federalism is typically considered essential for the creation and maintenance of democracy (Tocqueville 1835/1840/2000). Yet, democracy is not always a prerequisite for federalism and in countries with authoritarian regimes, such as contemporary Russia, it is used also as a device of diversity management, a mechanism of political stabilization and even a method of conflict resolution (McGarry & O’Leary 2005). The peculiarity of multinational federations as democracies is that, besides individual rights, they might recognize also some group rights in national sub-units as acknowledgement of alternative forms of belonging in ‘deep’ diversity (Taylor 1993). Group rights become, then, one source of asymmetry between sub-units of multinational federations.

Both Canada and Russia established constitutional asymmetry that refers to the differences of the legal status and self-government

of sub-units of the federation (Requejo 2001: 313–314). However, in terms of diversity management, Canada could be a case of ‘linguistic federalism’ (see typology of the language policies in Kraus 2008: 95–96), whereas Russia is typically described as a case of ‘ethnic federalism’ (Roeder 1991, Bowring 2010). Russia’s level of constitutional asymmetry is sometimes reported to be higher than in other countries because of the complexity of its political system (Ross 2002: 7–8), but the constituent republics have only two additional rights in comparison to other regions: the right to have their own constitution and the right to designate their state languages (see Section 1 above). While Stepan emphasizes that Russia does not work constitutionally as a democratic federation, he admits that its asymmetrical federalism is not an exception but rather proves the rule that nearly all multinational federations are asymmetrical (Stepan 1999: 31).

Federalism, thus, creates the institutional framework for identity politics by linking diversity with territorial self-government, where sub-national units can pursue their policies according to the needs of the respective linguistic or national community. David Cashaback argued that Russia’s asymmetrical federal design puts no major constraints on regional language policy in Tatarstan (Cashaback 2008). It is argued in the current study that the federal design had a restrictive effect on language policy in the Finno-Ugric Republics, even if the Russian constitution does not institute asymmetry between the constituent republics. Will Kymlicka notes that ‘federalism can only serve as a mechanism for self-government if the national minority forms a majority in one of the federal sub-units’ (Kymlicka 1995: 29), which, however, is not the case in the Finno-Ugric Republics. The study of regional language policies should be conducted, then, in a vertical federal center – regions dimension in addition to horizontal dimension of the regional political cycle (see Articles 1 and 2).

### 3.3. Theories of Language Policy and Their Approaches

Several other disciplines have at their disposal instruments to tackle the problems of understanding how different languages function in the public sphere. The closest projects involved in the study of this phenomenon are the interdisciplinary academic fields of language policy theories and nationalism studies, both of which contribute to understanding the subject of this study. The interdisciplinary character of this study is enhanced by the interfunctionality of these two fields that often operate with similar or conjoined concepts.

The distinction between language politics and language policy is not immediately evident in some languages as the terms might coincide, but the first term relates to interactions between different actors in a society regarding language and its place in the political arena, while the second signifies an actor's intention to achieve some change with regard to language issues. Depending on the actor, one can speak about a school's language policy, family language policy and even individual language policy. Of course, the state is a major player in language politics because in the modern and postmodern era it can penetrate unprecedentedly deeply into the life of society by using such policy devices as the designation of languages with an official status.

According to Elana Shohamy's definition, language policy is what a government does either officially through legislation, court decisions or policy to determine how languages are used and cultivates those language skills needed to meet certain national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals or groups to use and to maintain languages (Shohamy 2006: 1–3). In fact, language policy can be directed at the promotion and maintenance of linguistic diversity or at the elimination of diversity and the promotion of a linguistically unified state.

Today, it is widely recognized that languages form an essentially important part of culture and that linguistic and ethnic diversity is a value for human development. For example, linguistic diversity is constituted as a cultural value, that is especially important in education, in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2 November 2001). Languages of the linguistic and

national minorities are typically among the endangered ones (see Austin & Sallabank 2011: 3–4). In order to ensure linguistic diversity and maintenance of the languages of minorities, steps are taken by states either in the form of the protection of language rights or in the form of legal regulations directed at the promotion of languages. These steps are formulated as the language policy of the state.

Sometimes language policy and language planning are distinguishable: while the former is described as top-down government activity, the latter is described as a grass-root activity (Sallabank 2011: 277–278). Yet, the level of involvement of different actors varies rather depending on the type of language planning: status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning. Robert Cooper defines language planning as ‘deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure or functional allocation of their language codes’ (Cooper 1990: 45). Acquisition planning aims at increasing the number of language users through education and can involve both state, regional and local educators as well as non-governmental organizations. Planners of the language corpus aim at changing the structure of language and typically are linguists. Status planning implies ‘the allocation of languages or language varieties to given functions’ and is a matter of politicians (Cooper 1990: 29–34).

If there is an official language in a country, it probably means that behind the official status there is a policy of promotion of that language in the public sphere at the expense of other languages. In the conditions of globalization, the governments will sometimes pursue the policy of protection even of world languages, such as French, German or Russian, in the face of global English, domestically and internationally. When languages of national minorities are given an official status, this is considered to be a sign of the policy for promotion of diversity. Recent history provides some examples of successful stories like those of Welsh, Basque or even Hebrew when language revival was enhanced by the official policy (see, e.g., Fishman 1991).

From the perspective of the theories of language policy, officialization is a possible tool of status planning that can be directed at language maintenance or revival, which in turn is considered a

legitimate goal of language policy (Hornberger 2006). The endeavor of language maintenance and revival is opposed from the position of language rationalization, e.g., by the arguments of economic inefficiency and the impracticality of designation of several official languages (see, e.g., Pool 1991). Some theorists also presented their responses to the instrumentalist critiques (see, e.g., Fishman 2001, May 2005a).

The authorities are often reluctant to give an official status to minority language and use the instrumental line of argument: officials assume that designation of two and more official languages would make governance 'unworkable' and 'unmanageable' and, further, that such designation would pose a threat to national unity by inspiring minority political aspirations. Jan Blommaert criticized 'the efficiency assumption' and 'the integration assumption' and pointed out that one-official-language policy is rooted itself in essentialist views and based in the nation-state model (Blommaert 1996: 210–212).

Language rationalization and its economic line of argument correspond to instrumentalist language planning. The instrumentalist approach to language policy sees in revivalist rhetoric marks of the primordialist account. The instrumentalist argument goes that the language does not represent intrinsic value in itself but only as a tool that is valuable to the extent that it helps to achieve some other ends (Robichaud & De Schutter 2012: 124). François Grin gives a minimum of sociolinguistic criteria for official designation of languages such as demographic strength of a language, its asymmetrical position etc. (Grin 1995: 37–38). All in all, the theories of language policy tend to explain the officialization of languages in sociolinguistic terms and for linguistic needs, while largely underestimating the importance of extralinguistic variables in this process.

Yet, in many instances these are foremost political considerations that prevail at the stage of policy adoption, particularly if it takes place in the conditions of the overall changes in the society and the rebalancing of the political regime. That is why the political discourse sometimes reaches deeper into the dynamics of the official language planning. Notably, the problem of understanding the political context for officialization remained understudied in the

two dominant research approaches to research on language policy in the 1990s: the legal-institutional approach and, more recently, the linguistic human rights approach. The first is mostly limited to the question of compatibility in legal provisions but typically does not explore in depth why some languages would be designated official (see, e.g., de Varennes 1996, Ruíz Vieytez 2004). The linguistic human rights approach places the emphasis on universal linguistic rights and does not deal so much with the obligations stemming from the official status (see, e.g., Skutnabb-Kangas 2000).

In the 2000s, the role of a minority language as the official language was tackled by researchers using new approaches, including the approach based on the normative political theory and the policy analysis approach. From the positions of the former approach the concept of 'official-language rights' was suggested as one of the normative models of linguistic diversity management (see, e.g., May 2001, 2005a, 2005b, Réaume 2000, Patten & Kymlicka 2003, Patten 2001, 2006, Ricento 2006, Arzoz 2010). Among the models, de Varennes notes that the use of more than one official language in practice of most countries is done either through the territoriality principle or the personality principle or their combination (de Varennes 2012: 22).

Regarding the policy analysis, the issues of policy efficiency and costs are among the most discussed. So far, the policy analysis attempts traditionally to consider the policy as a complex phenomenon and study it as the political process of the development in a sequence of stages. For example, writing about the stages in the language policy, Bernard Spolsky (2004: 5–15) distinguishes between language practices, language ideology and language planning. François Grin, then, perceived also language planning as a sequence of stages: policy adoption, its implementation and evaluation, in his C-O-D model of creating capacity, opportunity and desire to speak minority language in the context of its protection and promotion (Grin 2003: 47).

From the perspective of political science, language policy is one of the public policies, which could be studied in different ways. A traditional conceptual framework for the policy analysis was the stages approach that divided the policy process into a series of stages, which is, however, considered to be outdated, *inter alia*, because in

reality all the stages take place simultaneously (Sabatier 2007: 6–7; see Section 2.3). This study leaves the process of policymaking in the ‘black box’ and does not go into details as to how the political decisions are taken. It is rather restricted to the inference of the outputs in the form of the official documents from inputs, such as official demands of popular movements. The realized problem is that there are no perfect methods in social sciences for studies of social actions in their connection to human agency and it is also realized that the problem of methods should not prevent the study itself.

#### 3.4. Functions of the Official Language and Possible Justifications of Official Status in the Case of Minority Languages

Eduardo Ruíz Vieytez (2004) considered the official status of languages as a legal category and, from a comparative legal perspective, studied constitutions of European countries, suggesting taxonomy of groups of constitutional language provisions, such as linguistic declarations, non-discrimination clauses, knowledge requirements, recognition of linguistic rights and others. His comprehensive study across countries elucidated structural components that make minority languages official and his taxonomy is useful for providing different-level perspectives, such as the policy perspective and the linguistic rights perspective. Yet, in order to understand the reasons for the official designation, one should not restrict oneself to the structural analysis but should also consider official status as a political phenomenon and look for the agency behind it. This study combines both strategies: in line with new institutionalism it approaches official language as a social institution, but it also understands demands for its designation as a social action.

In order to analyze not only *official* policy, but also *de facto* policy, one should look beyond legislative provisions and address their institutionalization in the light of language use. Language use is a complex phenomenon and its analysis can produce a classification of the domains of language use like the one suggested by Joshua Fishman (1972, 1991). Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption

Scale (GIDS) can be elaborated on and utilized for the purpose of this study as the basis for textual analysis of the language laws in looking for the elements of the official status of language (Fishman 1991: 87–109). His first four stages in reversing language shift refer to language use in family and represent steps needed to ensure stable diglossia, i.e., bilingualism of a community, when one language or dialect has a better position, higher prestige etc. than the other. They belong to the private sphere and, thus, are not within the scope of the official status. The other four stages are aimed at transcending diglossia and normalizing language use in public domains (Fishman 1991: 400). Based on Fishman's scale, the four domains that constitute the public sphere of language use are: 1) languages in office of authorities and organization, 2) language in the work environment, 3) languages in mass media, and 4) languages in education.

The distinction between the public and private sphere is important in the context of the official status of language. An official language not merely is, but has to be used in the work of the public bodies. Therefore, in a multilingual context, its official status in effect demands the compulsory use of certain languages in the public sphere. A qualification has to be made here that 'the use of a language by state authorities does not necessarily correspond to its official status' and that 'a presumption that the choice of an official language should as a consequence carry with it an obligation on state authorities to use it' is not correct for all countries (de Varennes 2012: 4). Indeed, as it is argued in this study, the official status of non-Russian languages in the Russian regions often remained symbolic because these languages were not actually used or were used only randomly by authorities. Yet, this is rather a matter of definition.

For example, Robert Cooper distinguishes three types of official languages: statutory, working, and symbolic. If the first type implies the formal fact of the official designation, the second 'a government uses as a medium for its day-to-day activities' and the third is 'a language which a government uses as a medium for symbolic purposes' (Cooper 1990: 100). For the purpose of this study, while Cooper's first type constitutes a necessary condition for the official status, the second and the third types represent the two main functions of the

official languages. In most cases compulsory use is essential for official language, while the distinction between ‘official language’ and ‘national language’ helps to reveal nuances of symbolic and practical use (see Section 1.1), which de Varennes categorizes as the distinction between the official status and the use of a language by authorities (de Varennes 2012: 4–7). It has to be added here that instead of symbol or use sometimes one can speak about symbolic use of official languages, which should be incorporated in the two main functions rather than ignored in categorization of types or left in the gray zone between formal designation and the actual use.

De Varennes further points out that, while the designation of the official languages is clearly within a state’s sovereignty, the state authorities do not have totally free hands in defining the scope of its use. One important limitation is that official language cannot preclude the use of other languages by authorities, if this violates international human rights. He cites the case of *Diergaardt v. Namibia* of 1997 as an example of the situation when official language operated in a discriminatory way by unreasonably and unjustifiably prohibiting the use of other languages (Ibid.: 7–10). At the same time, often compulsory use of an official language actually restricts individual freedoms to choose the language of communication only in the private sphere. This latter confinement does not automatically contradict the international standards of human rights protection, because they are intended, *inter alia*, to protect an individual from the state and its intrusion in private affairs.

The non-interference is warranted by human rights such as the right to privacy and the freedom to express oneself in a language of one’s choice (see, e.g., a famous case *Ballantyne, Davidson, McIntyre v. Canada*, of 1993). Still, the official language can affect language use in private life too in the issues that have importance for the welfare of the society, but such interference has to be justified. For example, in *Ford v. Quebec (Attorney General)* of 1988 the court found violation of freedom of expression in a legislative demand from private business to ensure access to goods or services only in an official language (by requirement that food products are labeled accordingly). In addition to the right to private life and the freedom of expression, international human rights law provides an abundance of cases,

inter alia, on limitations of the use of official languages by the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of language or the right of persons belonging to national minorities to use their languages (see an overview of the case law in de Varennes 1996, 2012), but does not say much about the content of the official status, which is a prerogative of the state.

What does it practically mean that a language functions as an official language? Different classifications could be suggested. In its practical function, the official language operates as: 1) a working language of state authorities and institutions, 2) a language of communication between authorities and citizens as well as other public communications, 3) when public institutions provide public services in the official language (which are, actually, the most important areas of communications: see Zamyatin 2014a). If the three practical functions of official languages are conjoined with the domains of official language use, then the distribution of the functional spheres is the following. The first domain on language of state authorities represents the functioning of the official languages as working languages and languages of communication. The second, third and fourth domains on work environment, mass media and education represent the functioning of the official languages as the medium of public services.

Further insights into domains and corresponding functions revealing sectors of official language use can be obtained by engaging structural analysis of the bodies of state power and other public institutions. According to one of the broadest definitions, the official language is used in parliament, administration, and the judicial system. Further, it is used as a medium of public services in state institutions, first of all, in official periodicals and other official mass media, including TV and radio broadcasting, as well as state-funded public schools, but also in public health, social services etc. Finally, it is used in local self-government.

When the state has a federative structure, the official language is used at central, regional and municipal level. In countries where there is more than one official language, minority languages are given an official or co-official status in the autonomy/province/other territorial unit and/or in the whole territory along with the

majority language: in other words, both at central and regional level or only at regional level. Given these possibilities, it is important to understand what parts of the state mechanism have to be bilingual according to the language legislation, interact bilingually with citizens or provide bilingual public services (see Section 3.2.).

What are the reasons for designating a language as being official? Language use by authorities is central for the official language, but practical consideration that authorities have to operate in some language is not sufficient reason for an official language. Neither was the need for official language always justified solely by correlation of language and nation in the nation-state and in the ideology of nationalism (see Section 3 above). In the context of classical liberalism, it has been argued that the people not only have to share common values for democracy to work properly, but also a common language is crucial for citizens to be able to participate in public debate (Mill 1859/1972). As multinational states became widespread in the 20th century, liberal thought had to address the challenges of nationality both from within, through communitarian critique, as well as from the standpoint of alternative doctrines (see Kymlicka 1995, Miller 1998; also Article 4: 127–128).

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the official recognition of a language puts it in a much more advantageous position in comparison to other languages in a country. In practice it frequently means that this language becomes an obligatory working language of authorities and that this language will be the language of their communications with citizens. All inhabitants of a country have to have good command of this language to be successful citizens. This situation was addressed not only in terms of efficiency but also justice (see, e.g., Kymlicka 1995: chapter 6).

What could be possible justifications for an official language in the case of minority languages? One justification for the co-official status of minority languages is to provide public services to those minority members who do not speak the majority language or speak it badly. Another justification is that in the conditions of the dominant language serious measures are needed for the minority languages protection. So the (co-) official status could be given to ensure protection of the minority language. That is

why in the case of minority languages not only official designation, but also the functioning of a language in the capacity of an official language is important. The latter implies the need for the adoption of language legislation, and first of all, the adoption of a language law.

International standards for protection of minority languages can include certain measures for ensuring the language use of minority languages also in public life, as do, for example, both conventions of the Council of Europe directed at minority languages' protection. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) encourages the states to recognize the right of persons belonging to minorities to use their language in public and to introduce minority language use in relations between these persons and authorities (Art. 9). One of the principles of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (1992) is the encouragement of minority language use in public life. Substantial provisions of the Charter include measures in sectors of education, courts, administration, mass media, cultural and economic life, i.e., reflecting all domains of official language use. Nevertheless, despite all these measures, a minority language receives an official status only after it has explicitly been designated to be an official language.

Therefore, yet another justification of the (co-) official status of minority language, which is connected to the protection, might be the need for the symbolic political recognition of a group not as a (linguistic) minority, but as a constituent nation/people having the right of national self-determination, being in a minority situation within a larger society and implementing its right of self-determination internally in a form of autonomy, a province or other historical territorial unit within a larger state (see previous Section). According to the same liberal logic, the territorial community needs a common language or languages for its normal functioning, which becomes, then, an aspect of sovereignty of this territorial unit. Incidentally, this need is used as an argument by authorities for introducing the compulsory study of official languages of this territory by all its inhabitants irrespective of their ethnicity. Symbolic recognition becomes particularly important for raising

the prestige of a minority language, inter alia, for reinforcement of national identity.

An empirical study could test these and other hypotheses and produce evidence, whether the official status can work in the case of minority languages as a tool of languages protection and promotion or symbolic recognition is behind their official designation or it has some other reasons.

#### 4. Framework for Empirical Study

Soviet language planning of the 1930s produced remarkable results: many languages for the first time in history acquired their written forms and started to be taught in school. The languages of the peoples of the USSR were proclaimed equal, but in the following decades their functional distribution and actual use differentiated more and more. In the last years of the Soviet period Russian acquired the position of the *de facto* official language, but the sphere of language use remained under-regulated. In Russia and other post-Soviet countries, it was precisely the status of languages that became one of the most controversial issues around the language policy formation.

It is no coincidence that both the SSRs and later ASSRs concentrated their language policies and language planning around status planning and legal planning. The political status of 'peoples' and their languages was implanted in the hierarchy of Soviet federalism. As a consequence, language policy in both the Soviet Union and in the Russian Federation, at least until recent times, was considered as an integral part of nationalities policy which in turn was conjoined to federalist policy. In the processes of the disintegration of the USSR, the formation of language policy coincided with wider overall policy changes. The transition period of the late 1980s – early 1990s was characterized by the simultaneous enforcement of the new goals in language policy and nationalities policy. One should look beyond the language policy goals and take into consideration the context of state-building and nation-building, in order to understand the language policy formation in the Russian regions. Area

studies may lack a depth of abstraction but they can significantly contribute to substantiation of theoretical claims with empirical material (Bunce 1999: 162–164). This part will outline the dimensions of empirical study of languages' officialization within Russian studies and Finno-Ugrian studies.

#### 4.1. Language Policy in Soviet and Russian Studies

Both the Soviet and Russian cases with their multitude of languages are particularly interesting for a study on language policy of a country from the perspective of the official status of languages. Soviet and Russian studies is an interdisciplinary academic field that can provide comparative studies with plentiful empirical materials that are available since the collapse of the USSR. Studies on Soviet language policy and multilingualism have been an integral part of Soviet studies (Comrie 1981, Grenoble 2003, Kirkwood 1989, Lewis 1972 and others). The *ideologeme* (signifying the 'right thinking') of the equality of 'peoples of the USSR' and their languages predetermined the particular use of corresponding termini throughout the Soviet period and beyond it. Due to Soviet legacies, in many post-Soviet countries the usage of terms connected to languages in the public sphere is exceptional (Lallukka 1990: 78–82, Haarmann 1998: 226). The term 'minority languages,' was usually not used with regard to the languages of the USSR. Instead, such terms in use were 'languages of the peoples of the USSR', 'titular languages', 'native languages' and 'language of internationality communication'. The term 'national language' was reserved for 'the languages of the peoples'; that is why in the new times, only the term 'state language' was available (see Section 1.2 above).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, language policies of the post-Soviet successor states became the subject of some comparative studies (e.g., Hogan-Brun, Ozolins, Ramonienė & Rannut 2007, Hogan-Brun & Melnyk 2012, Laitin 1996, 1998, Leprêtre 2001, *Language Policy in the Successor States* 2000, *Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries* 2008 and others) and numerous case studies on individual states appeared. The language policy of the Russian

Federation has been the subject of Russian studies. In Russia in the early 1990s, along with Russian as the official language of the whole country, more than thirty languages were designated official state languages of the republics. The complexity of the Russian case is usually approached in state-wide surveys and only some studies on regional policies exist. Typically, this would be the case studies on the republics such as Tatarstan or Bashkortostan (e.g., Cashaback 2008, Garipov & Faller 2003, Gorenburg 2005, Graney 1999, and others) and only occasionally on some other republics (e.g., Grin 2000). In contrast with the plentitude of studies in comparative politics on the language policies of the former SSRs, there are practically no comparative studies on the former ASSRs.

There is a problem with the application of normative approaches in studies on Russia's language policy. The official status of the state languages of the republics could be broadly seen as an example of the official-language rights model within the normative approach. However, these are not individuals but Republics that have the right to designate their state languages, and the act of designation does not in itself produce individual rights (see Section 2.2). For that reason the language rights-based approaches, either in its linguistic human rights or language rights perspective, have rarely been applied in research on the contemporary language policy in Russia. It should be said that, in the Russian context, these are not language rights but political actions defining the core of linguistic politics, because not the rights enforcement mechanism but the status planning of state languages is the cornerstone of Russia's language policy. In that sense the normative political theories come closer to the Russian realities than studies in language rights.

The official status of languages in Russia could be more adequately approached from the legal-institutional perspective as a dimension of the territoriality principle of linguistic management within ethnic federalism, in which state obligations are not supplemented by the corresponding individual rights (de Varennnes 2012: 18–21). Both international and Russian scholars have addressed the issues related to Russia's language policy, including the status of state languages in its republics, from the legal-institutional perspective (Dorovskich 2005, Galdia 2009, Neroznak 1996, 2002, Oeter 2012,

Tishkov et al. 2009, Ulasiuk 2011, Voroneckij 2009 and others). From the institutional perspective, the language status provides the key for understanding the language policy, because the place of languages in society is reflected in the hierarchy of their statuses as 1) 'state language of the Russian Federation', 2) 'language of the people of Russia', 3) 'state language of the republic' or 'titular language of the republic or autonomous district', 4) 'native language'.

Some Russian legal scholars deny the capacity of languages to be the legal subjects and to have rights and, for that reason, reject the possibility for the language to have a legal status, suggesting substituting the term 'official status' with the term 'legal regime' (e.g., Vasiljeva 2007). Despite its presence in Russia's language law, the concept of legal 'rights of languages' is problematic, indeed. Yet, semantic fields of the terms 'official status'/'legal status' and 'legal regime' do not coincide and their delineation is meaningful. Russian lawyers typically distinguish, on the one hand, 'legal facts' (of which 'legal act' is one type), when change in a life circumstance, condition or situation triggers emergence of legal relations, and, on the other hand, 'legal regimes', when legal relations exist in a continuing state as long as there is no change. Accordingly, the act of momentary designation of language with an 'official status' should be distinguished from its continuing state-of art as a 'legal regime' (see Section 2.1 above).

This distinction is useful for a study of officialization as an extended in time process. The approaches specific to policy analysis were sometimes employed in research conducted into various aspects of language policy in the Soviet Union. For example, in his analysis of the stages of language planning in the USSR, Michael Kirkwood (1989: 2–5) distinguishes the stages of initial fact finding and procedures, implementation, and evaluation of language policy. The approaches specific to policy analysis were sometimes used in research conducted into various aspects of Russia's language policy (Alpatov 2000, Djačkov 1996, Guboglo 1993, 1998, Solncev & Michal'čenko 2000, Vachtin 2001, and others). However, no systematic research from the perspective of the policy analysis has been conducted on the phenomenon of the state languages at the level of Russia's republics.

#### 4.2. Collapse of the USSR and Russian Nation-Building through the Prism of Studies of Ethnicity and Nationalism

Official designation of language is a political and legal act and at least in multinational and multi-ethnic countries it should be considered not just from the perspective of theories on language policy but from a wider perspective of studies on ethnicity and nationalism. The studies of ethnicity and nationalism provide the necessary context for understanding of the interactions between ethnic groups, the majority-minority relations in society and the impact of the public policy on them and, important for this study, the significance of language for identity and nationalism (see, e.g., Edwards 2009).

Some specific terminology in the field was historically developed in the Russian context that often differs from the terms usually used in academic English to signify the according phenomena and in many instances represents translations from Russian (see Lallukka 1990: 43–45, Haarmann 1998). The ‘equal-in-rights’ Soviet peoples were hierarchically instituted as ‘Socialist nations’ of the SSRs and (since the Stalin constitutions of 1936–37) of the ASSRs as well as Soviet nationalities, including smaller ethnic groups, which could be described as ‘national minorities’ in a narrow sense, which is usually used to refer to those ethnic groups that reside behind the borders of ‘their national-state’ or ‘national-territorial’ unit or do not have one (see Sections 1.1 and 4.1 above). Over the decades dissatisfaction with the state of inter-ethnic relations aggravated tensions and manifested itself in the conditions of weakening totalitarian political regime into violent inter-ethnic conflicts such as those in Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh or the Fergana Valley.

Whether economic inefficiency and grievances, that motivated the political liberalization of *perestroika*, or the rise of nationalism, that followed immediately after it, was the primary reason for the disintegration of the Communist bloc and collapse of the USSR, remains a disputable issue (see, e.g., Beissinger 2002: 1–11, 441–442, Breuilly 1993: 343–350, Suny 1993: 154–160). As importance of different factors is recognized, authors usually write about the chain of the events in the cascade effect. Nationalist ideology was one of

the grounds for social mobilization as a broad scale movement that involved the masses in a struggle for political change through mass actions such as demonstrations or even inter-ethnic violence and not through political bargaining in the 'normal' structured politics of political parties.

There are two major lines of scholarly argument that suggest interpretation for the reasons of the rise of nationalism. One source of disagreement around the events and processes of the late 1980s and early 1990s is what impact had democratization through mass popular mobilization of ethnicity on the political change in comparison with intra-elite conflicts and their consolidation through elite settlement. In fact, it is argued in this study that these seemingly opposing views might be partly reconciled by the qualification that there was a wide range of variation in the extent of social mobilization around the nationality principle in different SSRs and ASSRs with a clear tendency that, while in many of the former category of republics it was mass politics pushing the change, in autonomies inside Russia the role of elites was crucial. Another problem, conjoined with the first one, is the question of whether the driving force of mass mobilization was national movements driven from the grass-root level or inspired from above, in either case, through the activities of ethnic entrepreneurs.

At the scholarly level, the debate was reinforced by the shift of the scientific paradigm in Russian ethnology, which benefited from the Western philosophical debate on the problem of language as the tool of knowledge because of its socially constructed nature, and its reflection in the studies on nationalism in the works of Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm and others. The Soviet ethnographic tradition was criticized for its essentialist or primordialist standpoint that treated nations as realistic entities and held the ethnic ties as given (see Hirsch 2005: 8).

Social constructivism quickly gained ground and became the dominant understanding of the phenomena related to ethnicity. It remains in this position despite some post-modernist critics up to the present date. From the constructivist viewpoint, national and ethnic identities are socially constructed. Within the constructivist paradigm, the 'instrumentalist' approach takes ethnicity

as a resource for the political mobilization of the masses used by the national elites to achieve their own political goals. The ‘institutionalist’ approach emphasizes the role of social institutions in the formation of a group identity. In other words, instrumentalism and institutionalism share the view on ethnicity a constructed phenomenon (see Smith 1998 for an overview of nationalism theories). However, while instrumentalists see human agency as the driving force of construction, institutionalist thinkers argue that the social structures create identities. Both variants have found their proponents for understanding the events in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see, e.g., Beissinger 2002, Bunce 1999, Dallin 1992, Solnick 1998).

Literature on the collapse of the USSR and national mobilization is abundant. While some scholars continue to stay in ‘primordialist’ positions and point at the importance of cultural nationalism, many scholars tend to explain the ethnic mobilization in the Soviet Union and Russia either from the ‘instrumentalist’ or ‘institutionalist’ perspective. Among the proponents of the second line of thought are such scholars as Rogers Brubaker (1996), Dmitry Gorenburg (2003), David Laitin (1991, 1998), Philip Roeder (1991), and Ronald Suny (1993). Many Russian scholars gravitate to the first position and see mobilization in the republics as the result of activities of ethnic entrepreneurs. Among them is Valery Tishkov (1996), former head of the State Committee for Nationalities Affairs and a long-time Director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, who was among the key persons to lobby for the construction of the Russian nation as a government agenda. His colleague, the Institute’s Vice-Director Michail Guboglo (1993, 1998) adapted the instrumentalist position to the study of language status planning in the republics.

It was largely due to the efforts of Tishkov that the scholarly debate found its public counterpart. On the one hand, the Russian authorities inherited some late Soviet legacies, including the formula of ‘the multinational people’, postulating equality of the peoples and their languages. Yet, on the other hand, these legacies were criticized for their rootedness in primordialist assumptions. In the early 1990s, it was a matter of wide public debate in Russia, whether the approach of diversity management should be changed. From the second half of Yeltsin’s presidency, the choice was made to

follow the way of other Eastern European states and former SSRs to the construction of a nation-state, although the question remained open which nation should be constructed and whether Russia had to become a civic or an ethnic nation. The attempt to reconceptualize the political landscape by changes in the use of terminology became a part of the further shift in Russia's nationalities policy since 2000. The aspiration was to restrict the use of 'national' to 'federal' and 'state' level, while the republican and autonomous regions were now described as 'ethnic'. It would appear that behind the 'word play' the authorities actually intend to deconstruct the alternative nations and to shift, in the long run, from 'multinational federation' to 'multiethnic federation' (see Section 3.2, also Zamyatin 2012b).

However, in recent years the debates on Russian nation-building shifted under the pressure of the rising ethnic Russian nationalism. The core demand of this platform is the *de jure* recognition of the status of ethnic Russians as the 'state-founding nation'. While the presence of 'Staatsvolk' might be a stabilizing factor in a multinational federation (see McGarry & O'Leary 2005: 281–282), change in symbolism of identity politics might just cause the next phase in the cycle of an 'ethnopolitical pendulum' (Pain 2004). It remains to be seen whether such an attempt at nation-building would prevent the disintegration rather than provoke further resentment in non-Russian regions (see Zamyatin 2012a).

#### 4.3. National Movements and Elites in Studies of Ethnicity and Nationalism

The studies into the processes of disintegration of the USSR often put emphasis on the national republics and their authorities in their confrontation with the central authorities. However, it makes sense to distinguish between the activities of authorities and the mass mobilization of population especially in the republics where the national demands have only partially become the government agenda. To describe the driving force of ethnic mobilization from below, international scholars often wrote about 'nationalist movements'. The term 'nationalist' is usually intended in English to be

used as a neutral designator in contrast to the negative ‘nationalistic’. Yet, it is not an entirely correct translation from Russian, where the according term ‘nationalist’ bears negative connotations, while the term ‘national’, that originated from the national liberation discourse, bears both positive and neutral connotations (see Gellner’s preface to the Russian edition of *Nations and Nationalism*). In this situation, the notion of ‘national movements’ (‘nacional’nye dviženija’) is preferred for use throughout this study as a more accurate and neutral term in the Soviet realities. Note also that this study builds on Miroslav Hroch’s understanding, who defined national movements as ‘organized efforts to achieve the attributes of a fully-fledged nation’ (Hroch 1985: 66).

After the collapse of the USSR, the new authorities in Moscow strived to maintain Russia’s territorial integrity. As a result of their efforts as well as an ever growing economic imbalance, social inequality and other structural factors, the importance of national and other public movements in the former ASSRs of the RSFSR was diminishing in 1991–93 and after that they entered a period of decline in most Republics in 1993–95 (Gorenburg 2003: 68–75). Simultaneously, democratization and the transition to a more democratic regime largely failed to establish the rule of law and to ensure submission of authorities under popular control through an institutionalized system of checks and balances, where one of the balances could have become genuine federalism. As a result, the elites became the main political actors in federal and regional politics.

The failure of democratization and the turn to authoritarianism explains why the study of the elites started to be important to understand the political dynamics in post-Soviet Russia. The elite theory, which holds that only a small group of people has most of the power in the political decision-making and retains it largely independently of democratic procedures such as elections, became extremely popular in political science and sociology in Russia (Gel’man & Tarusina 2003: 188). According to the classical definition of Charles Wright Mills (1956), the ‘power elites’ are the union of those who hold the military, economic and state power. In the Russian case, the military was not as important a pillar as the other two (Gel’man & Tarusina 2003: 193).

Thomas R. Dye based his study on the USA realities and argued that its public policy does not result from the 'demands of the people', but rather is reached through the elite consolidation (Dye 2000). In the late Soviet period, the CPSU and the *nomenklatura* composed 'ideologically unified elite', where the term *nomenklatura* refers to a list of key political and administrative positions filled through the system of recruitment by the CPSU. A Russian researcher of elites Vladimir Gelman notes that after the demise of the USSR the main development trend was 'the transformation of elite and political systems from a disunified elite toward a consensual unified elite'. Based on a comparative-historical observation and using John Higley's terms, Gelman suggests that consolidation is possible either as long-term 'elite convergence' or as short-term 'elite settlement', i.e., 'a compromise among elite groups regarding the major political institutions' (Gelman 2002: 344, Higley 2008). The need for elite settlement came to the forefront in the political life in Russia in the early 1990s through intra-elite bargaining both in horizontal and vertical dimensions (see Dusseault 2010: 60–71).

Who were the elite groups that participated in bargaining? One complication for the study of post-Soviet elites is that in the early 1990s the elites quickly changed their formal characteristics, first converting political power to economic status in 1990–91 and then back to power around 1993: this way in many republics *nomenklatura* succeeded in preserving power. Scholars tend to associate the fact that authoritarian regimes were soon established in republics with the prevalence of *nomenklatura* over democrats and its turn to nationalism rather than democracy to legitimize its rule (see, e.g., Ross 2002: 22). Whether this association is correct or not, it witnesses the importance of the ethnic dimension that should be taken into account in the study of elites. Typically, scholars in Russia, in line with the English tradition, distinguish 'national elites' and 'regional elites' (see, e.g., Gelman & Tarusina 2003: 190–194). However, this dichotomy is not sensitive to the ethnic dimension. In the conditions of centrifugal processes in the Soviet Union and Russia of the early 1990s, it was far from clear which elites would become 'national', because the elites in the SSRs and ASSRs under the influence of national movements, formulated their own national agenda.

Some scholars regard those elites in the Republics who pursued the ideology of nationalism, regionalism and separatism in a separate category as 'nationalist elites' or 'nationalists' as opposed to the 'democrats' and 'nomenklatura' (Kondrashov 2000). Yet, for the same reason as in the case of popular movements, such a notion would not be neutral enough for the Russian case. The term 'ethnocratic elites' ('etnokratičeskie elity') used by some Russian scholars also seems to be not neutral enough and being based on misrepresentation of regional political regimes as 'ethnocracy' (see, e.g., Toščenko 2003). Furthermore, both terms describe the situation only in some Republics and, in this respect, it cannot be applied to the republics where the groups guided by the ideology of nationalism were not significantly represented among the ruling elites (see Zamyatin 2012a). To solve the complication, this study refers to the according elites as 'national elites' ('nacional'nye elity') prior to the disintegration of the USSR.

When it became clear, perhaps after the state coup of October 1993, and then after the adoption of the Russian Constitution in December 1993, that Russia was not going disintegrate in the same way that the USSR did, the public discourse changed. With the decline of national movements in the Republics, nationally minded activists found themselves among the regional elites in a country where ethnic Russians became the largest national community. While economic, social, political and legal interests were at the forefront in drafting the republican constitutions, some issues connected to ethnicity also remained potentially dividing for the elites. For example, when inter-ethnic splits coincided with economic interests in the redistribution of powers, conflicts emerged. In this situation, the interests of the elite groups claiming to represent the interests of ethnic Russians and titular groups diverged. In this study the different segments of regional elites that acted 'in the name of the people', proposing their solutions to ethnic and linguistic issues in the republican constitutions and language laws, are referred to, accordingly, as (titular) 'ethnic elites' vs 'Russian elites'.

These were ethnic elites who backed the national revival and language revival in the republics and initially sought to attach their demands to the platform for overall democratic changes. In the conditions of political liberalization some national organizations were

created that had as their goals national revival and language revival that represented urban intellectuals and rural agrarians. However, the co-operation of ethnic elites with regional democrats largely failed with the progression of the 'sovereignty parade' in the SSRs and ASSRs. As a reaction some regional Russian national organizations emerged. Yet, Soviet ideology of internationalism still governed people's minds and impeded the spread of nationalist rhetoric. In the Finno-Ugric republics the population remained largely passive and ignorant of their ethnicity and did not join the national movements on mass (Lallukka 2003: 266–267). As a consequence, throughout the 1990s nationalist parties in the Finno-Ugric republics remained rather marginal, until regional parties and parties based on ethnic background were prohibited by law (Federal Law of 11 July 2001). Because of the ability of regional *nomenklatura* to transform and preserve its power, the representativeness in the 'party of power' (as previously, the representativeness in the CPSU) was more important than mass popular support (see Article 2). The ramification of political balance was a matter of intra-elite settlement and depended on the abilities of different segments to bargain for their visions.

The study of national movements and elites are, thus, relevant for the exploration into the reasons for the official designation of languages. Linguistic demands were at the core of the agenda of the national movements. Yet, for example, John Edwards cites Anthony D. Smith and denies the essential character of the link between nationalism and language, because in his view, 'emphases upon language' follow the rise of nationalism and do not create it (Edwards 2009: 211, Smith 2009). The question becomes important for the study about motivations in revivalist rhetoric of national/ethnic elites and national movements, who proclaimed the officialization of their languages as one of their central goals. In a wider context of the nationalism studies the goals of national movements can be conceptualized differently depending on the principles of the chosen approach. Both the instrumentalist and institutionalist explanations would seek the group interests behind the act of officialization and would deny the revivalist rhetoric as insincere, because, in their representation, it would be primordialist, as it assumes that in certain conditions 'rebirth' or 'revival' of nations is possible.

#### 4.4. Political Developments in Russian Regions and Finno-Ugrian Studies

Among the republics of the European part of Russia, that are in focus of this study, mass mobilization of ethnicity into national movements especially in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan gained intense attention among domestic and international scholars, because '[a]mong the polities not granted independence arguably the most successful in negotiating sovereignty with Yeltsin's government and consequently under the greatest threat from Putin's re-centralization policies is the Republic of Tatarstan' (Zaripov & Faller 2003: 165). National revival in Tatarstan was put on the political agenda and formulated as a regional government policy. Even if the implementation of its language part in Tatarstan was later assessed to have failed, *inter alia*, because of the change in the Russian federalist policy and nationalities policy towards recentralization, some scholars evaluated the successful launching of the policies in the respective Republics as a potential source for the next wave of mobilization in the future (Gorenburg 2005: 258; he later changed this view, see: Gorenburg & Giuliano 2012).

The comparative studies of the nature and extent of the national movements in different regions in the early 1990s could reveal variables in the vitality of non-Russian communities and, thus, shed light on their future and the future of Russia itself. There are some comparative studies on the popular national mobilization in the 'titular' Republics named after the peoples of the Turkic language family. For example, Dmitry Gorenburg (2003) undertook a comparative study on the ethnic mobilization in Bashkortostan, Chuvashia, Khakassia and Tatarstan. His use of the term 'ethnic mobilization' and 'ethnic republics' in the case of the former ASSRs is contrasted with 'national mobilization' and 'national republics' used by scholars in the case of the SSRs. The ethnic and linguistic processes in the other former ASSRs, where events did not take as dramatic a turn as in Tatarstan or Chechnya, have received notably less attention in the scholarly literature.

The political developments of the 1990s in individual Finno-Ugrian regions have been the subject of some scientific research.

However, no comparative studies have been conducted on the language politics in the Finno-Ugric Republics of Karelia, Komi, Mari El, Mordovia and Udmurtia that would pay due attention to the exploration of their state languages and reveal the systemic variables behind their designation. It was assumed that the processes there were similar to those in the republics like that of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, the policies repeated the same pattern on a smaller scale and their implementation was a bigger failure. Yet, one big difference is that ‘ethnocratic elites’ in the Volga Turkic Republics were able to assert their will in policies, while ‘ethnic elites’ in the Finno-Ugric Republics were only minor partners in the processes of policy formation. In these conditions, how was it still possible to achieve similar solutions to the language issues in the Finno-Ugric Republics? Evaluation of these policies, the success or failure of their implementation, would contribute to building a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of Russian identity politics in general a decade later.

It was language divisions that largely predetermined the development of ethnographic studies along the Russian imperial conquest spreading towards the Orient. The academic field of Finno-Ugric studies emerged from the assumed kinship of Finno-Ugric languages that was discovered to form a distinct language family. Finno-Ugric studies, therefore, have traditionally dealt mostly with linguistics and, to some extent, with ethnology of the ‘Finno-Ugric peoples’. There are relatively few international studies into political aspects of the situation among these peoples in Russia (among remarkable exceptions are Lallukka 1990, Taagepera 1999 and others) and very few into the language policy of the regions they inhabit (see, e.g., Bartholomä & Schötschel 2012).

Yet, the need for comprehensive research, especially from the beginning of the 20th century, when these peoples emerged onto the world’s political map, has grown substantially. While linguistic kinship *per se*, is not reason enough for political categorizations, the academic activities throughout Soviet and post-Soviet history resulted in the creation of an imagined community out of the Finno-Ugric myth or, really, a complex of myths. ‘It is not the language kinship as such that has united and still unites the Finno-Ugric

peoples. Rather it is the feeling of “other” which can be seen as the bond of union’ (Saarinen 2001: 49). ‘The underlying rationale for the Finno-Ugrian kinship beliefs has been a shared feeling of isolation among Indo-European and Turkic populations. Given such a feeling, it is perhaps a relief to Finno-Ugrians to find another language that shares similar grammatical features with one’s own tongue’ (Taagepera 2001: 181).

The history of most of the Finno-Ugrian peoples has for centuries been connected to the history of Russia. When Russia became an Empire in the 17th century during the rule of Peter the Great, it put great efforts to open the ‘Door to Europe’ through the Baltic Sea. At the peak of its might in the 19th century, the Russian Empire managed to annex Poland, Finland and the Baltic Provinces, where, accordingly, Polish, Swedish and German were used as official languages (*Multilingualism in Post-Soviet Countries* 2008: 4). Despite the attempts of Russification in the late 19th – early 20th century, the Empire never succeeded in fully incorporating these territories, inter alia, because their nobility had a distinct sense of identity rooted in German romanticism and Herderian nationalism that reached the periphery of the German world. Openness to the Western world through the ‘Door to Europe’ resulted, inter alia, in the import of nationalist ideas to Russia.

The imagined Finno-Ugric community was an important source of inspirations in the processes of Finnish and Estonian national identity formation. The first wave of national self-determination after the First World War led to the creation of the independent states of Estonia, Finland and Hungary, and of autonomous regions of Finno-Ugric peoples in the Soviet Union. These developments led to a short rise in Finno-Ugrian studies in the 1930s. The annexation of Estonia during the Second World War and the softening of the regime in the Khrushchev era led to the reappearance of Finno-Ugrian studies in the USSR, when Tartu became one of its centers (see Kreindler 1989: 51). Since 1960, every five years the International Congress of Finno-Ugrists has been held in Finno-Ugric countries and regions.

During the *perestroika* era Estonia and other Baltic Republics can be considered to have been the flagship of nationalist mobilization in

the USSR. Despite their constructedness, the beliefs of national activists in common Finno-Ugric ancestry and primordial ties inspired networking. The Finno-Ugric political co-operation that originated in scientific contacts became one among the important channels that enhanced nationalist mobilization and, thus, turned out to be a factor in international and domestic politics. Starting with the first international meeting of Finno-Ugric writers in Yoshkar-Ola in May 1989, many international events were arranged, where leaders of national movements borrowed the ideas of language revival and national revival from each other. The significance of this channel for the comparative analysis is that the same set of ideas, including the official designation of state languages, was spread among ethnic elites (see, e.g., *Appeal of the First World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples to the Parliaments and Governments of the Russian Federation and Its Finno-Ugric Republics*, 3 December 1992) that were tested in the unique situation of different regions.

It is interesting that, while language shift was universally identified as the problem and language revival as its solution, it was not the idea about the reversal of language shift as a grass-root activity but the idea of the need of a top-down status planning that was spread as the strategy of the national movements across the Finno-Ugric regions. A strong point in this strategy was that theoretically it could lead to the spread of the use of titular language in the public domains along with the dominant language, but a weak point was that in practice, typically this was the only symbolic designation and sometimes language teaching in school was all that was achieved. Perhaps, the goal was not only to promote the language but also to reinforce identity, because language was considered as the central element of identity and there were no other significant markers available (like world religion in the Volga Turkic republics).

## 5. Structure of the Study

The study is organized in a way that reflects the federal and regional layers of government in Russia: the issues concerning the federal level (Parts I and III) and the regional level (Parts II and IV) are considered separately.

Part I of the dissertation (Article 1) explores the legal and institutional framework of the language policy in post-Soviet Russia's politics and the status of the state language of its Republics. In order to enhance the understanding of contemporary language politics in Russia's republics, Part II of the dissertation (Articles 2, 3 and 4) focuses on the official designation of the state languages in the Finno-Ugric Republics of Russia. The bulk of this part consists of a synchronized analysis of the three main stages of the process of institutionalization of the titular languages as the state languages of these Republics. The argument advanced in Part II is that the official designation of state languages reflects three different types of recognition of the multinational nature of republican statehood: symbolic declarative designation, formal designation in constitution and legal designation by language law.

In assessing the potential impact of language revival projects on the actual implementation of the official status of languages and on language practices, this study addresses education, because this sector among many other domains of language use in the public sphere is the most transparent, as it allows both qualitative and quantitative studies. Part III of the dissertation (Article 5) explores the legal and institutional framework for minority language education in Russia and its national republics. Part IV (Article 6) employs sociological methods in order to evaluate the implementation of the language-in-education policy in regard to the titular languages in the Finno-Ugric Republics in contrast with the Volga Turkic Republics.

The publications included in this study are the following:

Part I

Article 1

Evolution in Language Ideology of Post-Soviet Russia and the Fate of State Languages of Its National Republics. *Equally Diverse: Comparing language and culture minorities in the Russian Federation and the European Union*. Heiko Marten, Michael Rießler, Janne Saarikivi & Reetta Toivanen (eds.). Berlin: Springer. [In print.; pp. 106–152.]

Part II

Article 2

Sovereignisation and State Languages: Early Formation of Language Policy of Russia's Finno-Ugric Republics in the Conditions of the USSR Disintegration. *Finnisch-Ugrische Mitteilungen*, Vol. 36. 2013. Pp. 123–165.

Article 3

Finno-Ugric Republics and Their State Languages: Balancing Powers in Constitutional Order in the Early 1990s. *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne*, Vol. 94. 2013. Pp. 337–381.

Article 4

Official Status As a Tool of Language Revival? A Study of the Languages Laws in Russia's Finno-Ugric Republics. *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*, Vol. 7, No 1. 2013. Pp. 125–153.  
<<http://www.jef.ee/index.php/journal/article/view/139>>

Part III

Article 5

The Education Reform in Russia and its Impact on Teaching of the Minority Languages: an Effect of Nation-Building? *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol. 11, No 1. 2012. Pp. 17–47.  
<<http://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2012/Zamyatin.pdf>>

## Part IV

*Article 6*

From Language Revival to Language Removal? The Teaching of Titular Languages in the National Republics of Post-Soviet Russia. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol. 11, No 2, 2012. Pp. 75–102.

<[http://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2012/Vol\\_2\\_Dezember\\_2012/5.\\_JEMIE\\_Zamyatin.pdf](http://www.ecmi.de/fileadmin/downloads/publications/JEMIE/2012/Vol_2_Dezember_2012/5._JEMIE_Zamyatin.pdf)>

An empirical study could assess efficiency of the policy of language revival and demonstrate how the expansion of official language use actually influenced language practices; this task, however, remained largely behind the scope of this study. In a separate study the author explores how the titular languages were institutionalized in language legislation and how normative provisions were actually implemented (Zamyatin 2014a). Also a popular scientific monograph was published on issues related to language extinction and revitalization, possibilities provided for this purpose by Russian legislation and existing techniques where the authors attempted to bridge the institutional level with enhancing the actual language use in revitalization strategies (see Zamjatin et al. 2012).

Another separate quantitative study was conducted by the author that compares teaching of all Finno-Ugric and Samoyed languages in different types of Russian regions: Republics, Autonomous Districts and ordinary Regions (see Zamyatin 2013a). This study on the basis of the sociological and legal-institutional analysis draws the conclusion that the frameworks and amount of teaching of the titular languages in Finno-Ugric Republics and Autonomous Districts are comparable, despite the absence of the state languages in the latter category of regions. Due to the limited scope of the current study, this lengthy article was not included in the dissertation.

## Summary: Status as a Symbol, an Instrument or an Institution?

The results of the study are presented here on two levels: first, the principle results of the individual articles are set out briefly and, then, these results are reassessed from historical and structural perspectives and discussed in the light of their theoretical implications.

Article 1 depicts the evolution of ideas around language in post-Soviet Russian politics and the special place occupied by the state languages of its Republics. There is a tangible difference in the official statuses of the majority language and minority languages in Russia. Russian, as the majority language and the state language for the whole country, is in a privileged position. The *de facto* minority languages, even those that under republican legislations are formally put on an equal footing with Russian as co-official languages, enjoy only 'limited officiality'. Those domains in the public sphere where non-dominant languages are used are small in number. Moreover, in the same category of state languages of the Republics, the status of languages is regionally asymmetrical to a greater or lesser extent. In practice, this asymmetry implies a different amount of usage domains for different languages.

Article 2 reconstructs the history of the early formation of the language policies in the Finno-Ugric Republics and the circumstances of the official designation of their co-official languages in the Declarations of State Sovereignty. It explores what kind of documents the sovereignty declarations were, outlines political landscapes and the ideological background for the language status planning in the Republics, discusses when and how the demands for the status of the state language of the Republics were proposed in the negotiations among the regional elites and set in the political agenda, how the ideas fitted the political landscapes and what obstacles the recognition faced. Finally, it summarizes findings concerning similarities and dissimilarities between the Republics. It is argued that the instrumentalist explanation for the designation of state languages might underestimate the correlation in the interests

of elites and the population by unnecessarily setting them in conflict with each other.

Article 3 on formal constitutional designation explores the demands for 'ethnic institutions' that the ethnic elites presented in the process of drafting the constitutions and the solutions that entered the final texts of the constitutional provisions as the result of intra-elite bargaining. It is argued that while the instrumental use of language could have been the motive of the ethnic elites behind their demand for a language requirement for top officials, the designation of the state languages itself is better understood as an act of institutionalization of ethnicity that fixed the political balance of interests of the ethnic groups in constitutions as elite agreements.

Article 4 on designation by language law, addresses in detail language revival as the third possible reason for the designation of the official languages. The article compares the legal provisions in two domains of institutionalization of the official languages: education and the work environment. As in the case of the sovereignty declarations and constitutions, the adoption of language laws was primarily an elite agreement, even if it did not generally touch directly the interests of elites and mainly affected the population. It is argued that the laws indeed had language revival as one of their goals, even though they provided only some additional opportunities for the expansion of the use of titular languages.

Article 5 is devoted to the study of education legislation in Russia and its national Republics. In the Russian education system, even those few rights to learn one's native language that are recognized are not self-executing and need state policy to back them. The available data shows that so far, the compulsory teaching of the titular state languages of the Republics is being continued, although the current political situation will hardly allow the introduction of state language teaching in those Republics that have not yet done so. However, further changes are to be expected that would challenge the position of the titular state languages in education.

Article 6 deals with the implementation of the language-in-education policy with regard to the titular languages in the Finno-Ugric Republics in contrast with the Volga Turkic Republics and employs sociological methods. The results demonstrate there was

some growth in the number of children having access to native language learning, either as native or state languages, in the 1990s. However, the mere attribution of the official status of state languages to the titular languages of the Republics did not improve the situation because it did not entail automatic compulsory teaching. A separate decision would have been needed to make language teaching compulsory for all pupils. Since 2000, access to titular language learning has been falling in most Republics. Moreover, the compulsory study of state languages actually worsened the situation, although indirectly, because after the enforcement of the free choice of language teaching, schools have tended to switch their curriculum from voluntary native language to compulsory state language teaching.

All of the articles, in one way or another, deal with status planning of titular languages. Status planning, as a device of language policy, implies designation of a certain language or languages with an official status that ensures exclusive use of that language(s) in the public sphere. The official designation of the state languages became the main element of language policy in Russia and its Republics. Why was status planning chosen as the main policy device not only with regard to the dominant Russian language but also to some non-dominant languages in Russia's Republics? This choice is not evident, because various ideas were present in the public discourse as the possible answer to the 'national question', which became acute in the USSR in the late 1980s. In connection with the 'national question', the role of language(s) in society became one of the topics of the most heated debate.

In order to summarize the complex answers to the research questions, different aspects of which were provided in the articles of which this study is composed, the summary is divided into four sections. Section 6 will present the results of historical reconstruction of recent developments in the language policies of the USSR and Russia. It will outline the structural conditions that were 'external' for Russia's Republics and framed their language policies. It will address the question of why status planning was chosen as the main device of language policy both in Russia and its Republics. Section 7 will present the results of an empirical study in the Finno-Ugric

Republics. It will delineate political developments in these Republics that led to particular configurations of the official status of their state languages. This section will deal with the question of what the reasons were for establishing the state languages at the regional level. Section 8 will discuss some theoretical implications that the case studies provide for understanding the phenomenon of official status for minority languages. This section will suggest some propositions about what specific attributes the official status might have in the case of a minority language. Finally, Section 9 will return to the theoretical question. This section will overview functions of the official status and suggest possible reasons for the official designation of minority languages.

## 6. The Compulsory Use of Language as a Political Instrument: Historical Context

Among the possible policy devices, the official status was one that did not have a good pedigree in the Soviet context. This section reconstructs the historical context of the late Soviet and early post-Soviet Russia's language policy formation and attempts to answer the following questions: First, what predetermined the choice of the officialization of languages as the main approach to regulation of language issues in the late Soviet times? Second, how did status planning become the dominant approach in the Union Republics? Third, why did most SSRs designate sole state languages and most ASSRs designated co-official state languages?

### 6.1. Freedom or Obligation of Language Use

The origin of the ideas about how to manage ethnic and linguistic diversity in Russia could be historically traced back to two traditions, which Isabelle Kreindler (1985: 345), somewhat simplifying, names after Joshua Fishman, Western and Eastern tradition (Fishman 1982: 5–6). These traditions can be said to embody the lines of thought representing two worldviews: collectivism and individualism.

Collectives were assigned with a crucial role in developing the communist view that dominated the political landscape throughout the Soviet times (Lapin 1973: 425). The extension of the collectivist viewpoint to ethnic groups, which were also seen as collectivities, was the essence of the early Soviet nationalities policy of the post-Wilsonian 1920s. The policy aimed at solving the ethnic and linguistic problems with a strategy that was based on the advanced for that times idea about the equality of 'peoples' and their right to national self-determination. This right had to be exercised through the creation of national-state and national-territorial units depending on the size of the group, the stage of its 'socio-economic development' and some other criteria. Ethnicity and languages became associated with these territorial units of the federative system, and later in the Soviet times the attribute 'titular' started to be applied to Republics, languages and peoples. In other words, the territoriality principle for managing ethnic and linguistic diversity became the cornerstone of the State structure (see Martin 2001: 21–23).

At the same time, the use of Russian was not tied to a certain territory or group but was promoted, especially since the mid-1930s, everywhere in the country and among all citizens. In effect, the ethnic Russians had a privileged position because a special device of migration policy was employed after the Second World War that granted to Russian speakers the possibility to use the Russian language throughout the Soviet Union. As a consequence, it was not necessary for them to learn any local languages (see Article 1: 108–113; preliminary page numbering).

Since the beginning of the era of *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the mid-1980s, Russian scholars started to reconceptualize the nationalities policy of the Soviet Union as one that was based on the principle of primordialism, which assumed inborn and insurmountable differences between ethnic groups. In the 1990s, the policy's rootedness in primordialism or essentialism, as the view on the groups as entities that really and naturally existed side by side, started to be an object of criticism, and the idea of the constructedness of identities and possibility of social constructivism gradually came to the forefront (see, e.g., Tishkov 1996). The communist views were gradually replaced by a new political thought that entered the Soviet

political debates and had as one of its sources a complex of Western ideas about democratization and individual human rights. In ethnology, this turn was marked by the paradigm shift and the import from the West of constructivist understanding which considers ethnic groups not as really existing collectivities but as 'imagined' and constructed communities (see, e.g., Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1992, and others).

These collectivist and individualist views were not consistent with each other, but the coexistence of contradicting ideas is typical of countries in the transition periods. It was this dualism that determined the configuration of Russia's language policy that was developed in the early 1990s and had language status planning at its core.

At first glance, the rootedness of the official language in Soviet thinking is not obvious, and might seem even counterintuitive. The Soviet practice of state construction denied the official status for languages, because it would have contradicted the idea about the equality of peoples. Vladimir Lenin saw in the proposals to make Russian the state language a manifestation of Great Russian chauvinism (Lenin 1958: 57–58). At the same time, extensive Soviet language planning of the 1920s and 1930s was not restricted to corpus planning and acquisition planning. The 1920s policy of 'nativization' promoted the official use of non-Russian languages in order to reach equality and local Russian officials were required to learn them, but the officials were unwilling and the policy was gradually put on hold starting in the mid-1930s (see Martin 2001: 526–527, 590–592, Slezkine 1994: 430–431). At the dawn of the Soviet system, only the Trans-Caucasian Soviet Republics had sole state languages designated in their constitutions, which remained more a symbolic statement estranged from everyday politics, as was the case for a significant part of the Soviet-style constitutions anyway (see Simon 1991: 331–333).

New Russia's language ideology included both liberal and etatist ideas that were fixed in language policy. And it was precisely this understanding of 'peoples' as collectivities having their own interests and even the right to national self-determination exercised in form of ethnically defined territorial units that opened up the possibility for the official designation of their languages in the new era (see Article 1: 108–109).

As in the USSR, the territoriality principle was supplemented by the personality principle, when some individual language rights were proclaimed. The execution of rights, however, depended on facilities that could be provided only in certain territories. Among the individual rights and freedoms, the right to use one's native language and to freely choose the language of communication was recognized first in the USSR language law (24 April 1990) and soon in Russia's language law (25 October 1991). Yet, again, as in the 1920s and 1930s, only ethnic Russians could enjoy language rights everywhere in the country, while the rights of other languages' use and official designation of some languages were linked to the territories of the ASSRs and Autonomous Districts (see Article 1: 108–113).

In some years, Russian authorities addressed the problem of inequality that stemmed from uneven application of the territoriality and personality principles by passing the Federal Law on National-Cultural Autonomy (22 May 1996), which theoretically created the possibility to ensure minority rights also in non-titular regions. In many ethnically defined territories, this law was perceived as a mechanism intended towards their abrogation by non-territorial national-cultural autonomy. In practice, this law had only a marginal effect on ensuring the rights of smaller ethnic groups because of numerous problems with its application and financing and remained rather symbolic (Osipov 2004, 2010).

In the legislation of the Republics, the mechanism was to spread the compulsory use of some non-Russian state languages for all inhabitants, including ethnic Russians and people of other nationalities. It was arguably this element of coercion attached to the compulsory character of official languages that attracted the attention of national elites in the SSRs and ASSRs. The compulsory use, however, was problematized especially after emergence of inter-ethnic conflicts around language issues in some SSRs, e.g., Moldova. Yet, the non-discrimination clause was not included in the original text of Russia's language law, and was only later enshrined in the Russian constitution (12 December 1993). In effect, only later the principle of non-discrimination could be employed to challenge the implementation of the compulsory use of non-Russian

languages (see Osipov & Sapožnikov 2004 for the discussion on the place of antidiscrimination clauses in the Russian legislation).

Enforcement of provisions on compulsory use would have been problematic in the liberalizing atmosphere of the late 1980s. However, memorable injustices and new facts revealed about the Soviet period during the *glasnost* campaign raised awareness about falling share of autochthonous populations as a result of deliberate mass population transfers and inter-ethnic mixing of the populations, and became the issues of concern not just for intellectuals but for a wider public and inspired nationalist sentiment. In response to arbitrary Soviet nationalities policy, language policy and migration policy, the national elites, first of all, in the SSRs, envisaged a nation-state building agenda as a part of a democratization program which gained mass public support (see Besseinger 2002).

A country could become a democracy only on the basis of a consensus between elites that would be reached by the precondition of national unity (Rustow 1970: 350–351, 361–362). Historically, since the French revolution, through the emergence of the nation-states after the First World War and in the context of decolonization of the 1950s and 1960s, national liberation was associated with democratization (see, e.g., Hobsbawm 1992). This agenda, however, had to be achieved in the Soviet tradition of a ‘top-down’ approach through administrative measures and was, thus, not consistent with democratization. Yet, even though the nation-state model implied deprivation of the rights of minorities, the national elites felt themselves justified when insisting on preferential treatment of autochthonous non-Russian populations because of the need to redress the injustices of the Soviet era (see Laitin 1998: 93–98). How was it possible to enforce such a policy in the Republics?

## 6.2. Sole State Languages in the SSRs

There is a dispute among historians about the primary cause of the collapse of the USSR, whether it was economic incapacity or nationalist mobilization. Leaving aside this discussion, it should be noted that the Soviet Union disintegrated along the national border of the

SSRs. The founders of the Soviet Union wanted to ‘definitively’ solve the ‘national question’ once and for all by implanting the principle of ethnicity in the very structure of the Soviet state (see Section 1). Many researchers point out that the institutionalization of ethnicity reinforced or sometimes even created identities (see, e.g., Brubaker 1996). Generally, scholars agree that ethnic institutions played a crucial role at least in predetermining the configuration of borders between the post-communist states, if not in the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself (see Sections 4.2. and 4.3).

An important question regarding nationalist mobilization in the late 1980s is how much it was an elite-dominated process or bottom-up mass movement politics. Those scholars who hold an institutionalist view on the late Soviet developments tend to explain the disintegration of the USSR as an outcome of the activities of the elites. At the same time, when the Soviet leadership started to liberalize the country’s political regime, it became possible for the grass-root social movements to enter the political debate and represent themselves on the free market of ideas in order to gain popular support. They started with environmental, cultural and linguistic demands, which were followed soon by pro-democratic political demands. Various ideas about the ways to achieve democratization opened up channels of political mobilization through the public debate (see also Article 2: 124–125).

In the Baltic Soviet Republics historical memory of independent statehood, the legacy of the Herderian world view inherited from the Baltic Germans, old elites in the area, relatively late annexation by the Soviet Union and other circumstances led to a conjunction of ideas about democratization with the nationalist ideology. These republics became the gate through which the nationalist ideas were disseminated throughout the Soviet intellectual space. The popular national fronts were the driving force of this development and very quickly reached the phase of mass nationalist mobilization. Notably, grass-root activities found support and sometimes were directly inspired on the side of the republican leadership. The republican authorities adopted popular demands as the government policy. The Baltic Republics were the first that demanded greater self-governance and then proceeded on this path up to full independence (see

Raun 2001; also Article 2: 127–128). The other Republics, including Russia, followed the forerunners not only in ‘an attempt to capitalize on the prior successes of others’, but also as a result of a deliberate dissemination of nationalist ideas (Alpatov 2000).

Despite the extensive language planning of the 1920s and 1930s, the language issues in the late period of the Soviet Union’s existence remained mostly under-regulated. If there were any regulations, then these were typically not laws but administrative decisions or Party edicts. This was due to the lack of the rule of law in the Soviet administrative-command system. The absence of an official policy is also a policy: while acceleration of the processes of language shift and ethnic assimilation into Russians remained the *de facto* policy at least within the RSFSR, it was the migration policy that shifted the ethnic composition and, thus, changed the sociolinguistic situation in the non-Russian SSRs, sometimes dramatically and within a short period of time, as in the Baltic Republics.

Among others, in Estonia, the issue of concern was a rapid decline in the social status of the Estonian language (see Raun 1985: 26–28). The Declaration of State Sovereignty passed in November 1988 unilaterally proclaimed the supremacy of Estonian laws over Soviet ones. In the absence of legal norms, nothing prevented the Estonian SSR Supreme Council in the *perestroika* times from passing the constitutional amendment that first designated titular Estonian as the sole official state language in December 1988. The constitution made the sole state language one of the key elements of political order, fixed the new political configuration and redistributed access to the political system’s resources in favor of the titular group by including the demand to know the local language. The language law of the Estonian SSR, adopted in January 1989 and legally designating Estonian as the sole state language, was legitimized through legacy of the pre-war independence period. It demanded that the knowledge of the titular language be acquired within one to four years by all officials and public servants (see Rannut 1995: 189–191, 203–205, 2004: 4–7; also Article 2: 127–129).

In some months, the two other Baltic Soviet Republics and later most other Union Republics followed the same pattern due to the equal status of the SSRs. In practice, these official documents

did not outright challenge the official use of Russian but intended for the local languages to be used only in addition to it (see Laitin 1998: 87–91, Beissinger 2009, texts of the laws in Guboglo 1994).

The territoriality principle of ethnic diversity management in the Soviet framework predetermined its use in language status planning of the SSRs. The reason for the selection of status planning as the key solution for rebalancing the political order lay in the fact that the republican authorities were careful to present the shift not as preferential treatment on the basis of ethnicity but as a requirement of language knowledge, which is theoretically available to everybody. In Soviet times, the ethnic Russian and Russophone populations had no obligation to learn the local languages and typically had only low or no knowledge of these languages. Now, the requirement of official language knowledge for official and public servants according to the language law limited access of Russian speakers to political and administrative posts. Besides the immediate goal of changing the sociolinguistic situation, a covert long-term goal of sole official language policy might have also been the endeavor to infuse demographic change in favor of the titular group (see Article 2: 129).

Therefore, these were the pragmatic political expediency behind the language policy goals of the SSRs and their instrumentalist understanding became the most wide-spread argument in discussions about the reasons for official designation of languages during the *perestroika*. According to the instrumentalist interpretation, while pretending to represent public interests, ethnic entrepreneurs see in ethnicity a resource for political mobilization, which they use to pursue their own political ends (see Article 2: 124–125, also Section 4.2).

### 6.3. Co-Official State Languages in the ASSRs

The situation inside Russia was influenced by developments in the Union Republics, inter alia, because the language laws provoked at least in some SSRs an escalation of inter-ethnic tension and, in response, the counter-mobilization of Russian speakers took

place both in the SSRs and ASSRs (see, e.g., Leprêtre 2001). In these explosive circumstances, the ASSRs dared to join the 'parade of sovereignties' only after the RSFSR itself declared sovereignty in June 1990 and Boris Yeltsin, RSFSR Supreme Council Chairman at the time, encouraged the elites in autonomies during his tour in August 1990 to do the same in hope for their support in his conflict with Mikhail Gorbachev and the Union authorities. Passing the declarations in the Supreme Councils, most elites in the ASSRs did not have separatist inclinations but used sovereignization as a way to bargain for more favorable conditions and a higher level of regional self-rule in the face of the central authorities (see Article 2: 132–133).

In the matryoshka-like federal system, the SSRs and ASSRs did not have equal status, because the former were national-state formations that had nominal sovereign status, while the latter were only the national-territorial units. However, the state-of-art in the 'national question' was perceived as unjust, for example, among Tatars, who numbered more than five and a half million but 'had' only titular autonomy, while about one million Estonians 'had' a 'sovereign Republic'. With the liberalization of the political regime in the late 1980s, the authorities of the Tatar ASSR looked to upgrade the status of their Republic to that of the SSR and unilaterally did so in their sovereignty declaration, when the political situation gave this opportunity in the conditions of the confrontation between the Union and the RSFSR authorities (see Chakimov 2009: 133, also Article 2: 133).

Again, the other ASSRs felt themselves justified to follow on the same path due to the equal status of the Republics in the same category, in that case of the ASSRs. However, the upgrade in their status did not overwhelm the federal structure in Russia. The power centre shifted soon to the new Russian authorities, who managed to prevent the centrifugal tendencies by engaging regional authorities in negotiations and concluding the treaties on power-sharing. The time gap in sovereignization between the SSRs and ASSRs resulted not only in the maintenance of Russia's territorial integrity, but also in a certain configuration of language policies in former ASSRs (see Article 2: 130–131).

One can see from the analysis of recent historical developments in the Republics that the driving forces, the time and circumstances of the adoption of official language policies diverged in the SSRs and ASSRs. In contrast to the SSRs, in the ASSRs of the RSFSR the first documents proclaiming the state languages were, without exception, the declarations of state sovereignty. The declarations contained only symbolic recognition of the state languages and besides this did not bring any immediate instrumental benefits to the national elites that advocated for the inclusion of language provisions. As in the SSRs, the national movements in some ASSRs demanded establishment of the sole titular state language, which was supposed not to exclude the use of Russian. This move could not at that time be prevented by a non-discrimination clause, as there was none in the legislation (see Article 2: 130–131).

Yet, among the ASSRs, only the Tuvian ASSR designated its titular language as the sole state language of the Republic. All the other ASSRs declared both the titular language and Russian as their state languages. Even in the Tatar ASSR, with its strong nationalist mobilization, both public opinion and national movement after all were in favor of the two-state-language solution (see Giuliano 2000: 304–308). Not only Russian but also predominantly Russian-speaking Tatar urban elites did not support the idea of a sole titular state language. Despite some confrontation, at a certain point the compromise was backed by most segments of the regional elites, including the Russian-speaking elite, some parts of Russian-speaking Tatar urban elites, and the Tatar-speaking Tatar agrarian elites (see Article 2: 134–136). This outcome was a part of a compromise that was achieved by regional elites in the face of the central authorities and could hardly be explained by the instrumentalist argument alone (see the previous section).

It must be emphasised that the co-official status of state languages in the ASSRs proclaimed in the second half of 1990 did not yet differ principally from the sole state language status in some SSRs (and the Tuvian ASSR), because the USSR language law made Russian ‘the language of internationality communication’, ‘the official language of the USSR’ and, in effect, another official language also in the SSRs. It is worth to notice that drafters of the USSR law

were precarious to designate Russian not as ‘the state language’ but as ‘the official language’, i.e., without the reference to national identity (see Article 2: 130). In other words, the USSR Law was the formal reason for the co-official status of Russian. Moreover, the initial designation of the state languages in the sovereignty declarations did not mean the actual compulsory use of languages in public domains but conveyed primarily their additional meaning as a symbol of the national identity, where the Republics were represented as multinational communities with two co-official state languages.

Moreover, in some other ASSRs, especially those with a titular group in the minority, popular support for the designation of the titular language as another official language was low and it was harder for ethnic elites to advocate such a move because they were in the minority among elites (see Article 2: 137–138 and the next section). The fact that even in this context the co-official status of languages was still extended beyond symbolic recognition cannot be explained by the instrumentalist theory and an alternative explanation is required. Therefore, the discussion about language in politics should be broadened beyond its conceptualization as a mere policy instrument and possible alternative functions of the official language should be explored.

## 7. Official Designation of Languages as a Symbolic, Political and Legal Act: Results of the Empirical Study

The choice of the officialization of languages is equivocal, because official status can be a double-edged tool of nationalities policy and language policy. When given to a dominant language, it can be directed at the elimination of differences and further unification of the population. At the same time, when given to a minority language, it can maintain diversity, especially if this becomes the sole official language in the region. In either case, a political decision is made as to whether the act of official designation is supposed to satisfy a common public interest or the interest of a particular group. Language is often connected to identity and one particular

interest is that of the corresponding ethnic group (Edwards 2009). In both its interest-related aspects, the dynamics around the official designation of languages is a part of the politics of identities and it is discussed in this section, *inter alia*, as a dimension of political recognition. What were the reasons for establishing the state languages in the Finno-Ugric Republics?

In the current section official language status is analyzed as a complex phenomenon and its functions and reasons for its designation are illuminated, which could have diverging interests behind them. The interests and motivations around status planning are multifaceted and can only be induced. In this section, I shall concentrate on the following questions: First, how was it possible to establish the co-official languages also in the ASSRs with low public support for sovereignization? What were the different interests behind the official designation of the state languages? Second, what route did the designation of the state languages take in the Finno-Ugric Republics? What factors influenced the outcome of this process? Third, what were the different functions of the state languages that underlay the reasons for their designation? How do the functions change if both the majority and minority languages have parallel official status, as it is the case in the Republics? Fourth, how did the official status fit into the context of language revival? How was this status institutionalized in language legislations with regard to its functions? Fifth, how was the status of the state languages implemented beyond symbolic and formal designation? What were the different patterns of implementation?

### 7.1. The Role of Ethnic Elites in the Sovereignization of the Finno-Ugric Republics

The Republics titled after Finno-Ugric peoples are situated in the European part of Russia and their territories have been under Russian imperial rule for at least four and a half centuries. Before the conquest, the groups speaking Finno-Ugric languages had not yet formed large-scale political communities and lacked an urbanized ‘high culture’, to use Gellner’s term. For this reason, they

did not have their 'own' historical statehood either, nor were the upper strata of their communities included after the conquest into the nobility of the Russian Empire, as was the case for some other groups, such as the Tatars, Poles, Georgians or Finns (see Kappeler 1982, 2001). They were mostly peasants who had been baptized and in that respect, they did not differ from the majority population in terms of their religion. Due to centuries-long mixing of the population their phenotypes usually do not significantly differ from the majority population and the most important ethnic marker, apart from traditional culture and some animist beliefs, is the language, which according to genetic classification belongs to a different language family than Russian. Up to the First World War and the October Revolution in 1917, the villages continued their isolated life, in which the vast majority of peasants remained illiterate.

The industrialization and collectivization of the 1930s in the early Soviet times destroyed traditional lifestyles and embroiled the Finno-Ugric peoples in the wave of modernization and urbanization (see, e.g., Taagepera 1999, Chapter 2). Accomplishments of the early Soviet language planning were remarkable. The written standardized languages were often created from scratch and were then proliferated in the school system, so that the first generation of national intellectuals emerged. In the following years, not all languages retained their achieved positions. Among the languages of the ASSRs, the attempt to introduce the written form for Karelian was short lived (see Article 2: 139–141). With the shift in languages of instruction from the native language to Russian, which started with the 1958 education reform and reached its fullest extent in the 1970s, a whole generation of parents emerged who had never had native language instruction and were fluent in Russian (see Bilinsky 1981, also Article 6: 89–90).

As a result of migration policy and ever-accelerated language shift and ethnic assimilation among the non-Russians to Russian, by the time of the disintegration of the USSR, ethnic Russians outnumbered the titular groups in the ASSRs titled after the Finno-Ugric peoples, as in many other ASSRs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, unlike in many SSRs and in some ASSRs, in the Finno-Ugric ASSRs there was less ground for nationalist mobilization in the late 1980s, which

resulted in relatively weak national movements (see, e.g., Beissinger 2002). The cultural demands did not enjoy wide popular support, but there was some support for political demands, mostly for more regional powers. The general atmosphere of the processes of disintegration of the Soviet Union and, in particular, chain effects made sovereignization possible also in the ASSRs. However, in many ASSRs, unlike the SSRs, it was mostly a top-down project and the role of elites in its initiation was decisive (Article 3: 337–338).

The study of elites is crucial for understanding the processes of sovereignization in the Finno-Ugric Republics. However, the elite theory has found only some reflection in the Russian regional studies (see, e.g., *Regiony Rossii* 2000, 2003) and practically no place in the Finno-Ugric studies (see Sections 4.3. and 4.4). The studies conducted in the Volga Turkic Republics demonstrate that ‘ethnocratic elites’ held power in Bashkortostan and to a lesser degree in Tatarstan (Galljamov 1998). While no such studies have been conducted on the Finno-Ugric Republics, there is some evidence that the ethnic elites were only minor stakeholders in the Republican pie (see, e.g., the dynamics of minority ethnic representation in the Republican parliaments in Article 2: 149, Article 4: 136–137, Table 1). It is no wonder, then, that most demands of the national movements for establishing ‘ethnic institutions’ in constitutions were rejected by the majority in the Republican parliaments. However, the co-official status of the titular and Russian languages, and sometimes preferential support for the titular languages, was included in the package of the regional elite settlement in the constitutions of the Finno-Ugric Republics (Article 3: 338–339). How did ethnic elites succeed in lobbying at least these demands?

To answer this question, some excursion into the historical development of elites is needed. The national intellectuals and bureaucrats emerged as a product of the 1920s ‘nativization’ policy (see, e.g., Simon 1991: 38–42). This policy failed in, among other aspects, spreading the knowledge of local languages among the ethnic Russians. Therefore, abandonment of the ‘nativization’ policy did not exclude the demand for ‘national cadres’ for whom ethnicity became their social lift. Although since the 1930s, economic considerations had come to the forefront (Hirsch 2005: 62), the principle of ethnic

representation in bureaucracy was not abandoned throughout the Soviet times and ‘national cadres’ got used to being appointed as a result of their ethnicity. For example, it was unwritten Soviet practice that the first figures in the SSRs and some ASSRs would be of local ethnic origin (Simon 1991: 274–278). There were never formal language requirements, because local languages were practically not in use as the working languages of authorities. However, ‘national cadres’ were chosen not only based on their ethnic descent, as members of the working classes of proletarians or peasantry were co-opted into Soviet bureaucracy based on their social descent. The ethnic descent was not enough, as the peasants also had to recognize the representative as ‘theirs’. The national language could mark belonging and serve as the instrument that allowed the Socialist message to be conveyed to the masses. There was thus a link between the predominantly rural population and the ‘national cadres’, although for the latter their belonging to *nomenklatura* could be more important than their nationality.

After the collapse of the USSR, little changed in the composition of the political elites in many Russian regions. Depending on the region, up to 80–85% continued to be the offspring of the old Soviet *nomenklatura* (Gel’man & Tarusina 2003: 196), who effectively changed their posts in the Communist Party, Soviet bureaucracy or *Komsomol* to the economic positions of heads of previously state owned and now privatized enterprises, and then back to their posts in the Republican state apparatus. Despite the authoritarian political regimes that had been established both at the federal level and in regions since 1993, it was only in some regions that a political situation emerged that can be characterized by the formula ‘winner takes all’ (Galljamov 2003: 315–316), while in most regions the elite settlement appeared to be possible.

The terms of this settlement as regards its ethnic aspects depended on many factors. As the analysis demonstrates, an important political resource of the ethnic elites was their contact with national movements as the focus of popular mobilization (see Article 2). By the end of the Soviet times, most non-Russians in the RSFSR possessed at least some knowledge of Russian, so the monopoly on communication with the population among members of ethnic elites,

who usually originated from the countryside, was not as important a factor as it was in some SSRs, in comparison to the support they enjoyed on the side of national intellectuals. Also in the other contexts, the national intelligentsia has typically been the most numerous group among those who publicly expressed their concern over language loss and assimilation and spread awareness among political elites or, in other words, were involved in the activities which Miroslav Hroch conceptualized as Phase B in the development of national movements of small nations in Central and Eastern Europe (Hroch 1986: 179; see discussion in Article 2: 148).

In the Finno-Ugric Republics, writers, teachers and those in other creative professions were the most active force of mobilization in the late 1980s. Their activities, however, never reached the scale of mass mobilization, which Hroch described as Phase C. Many members of ethnic elites sympathised with the national demands but were reluctant to join the national movements openly because they did not want to be labelled minority nationalists with no chance to become part of the ruling elite (Article 2: 150–151). Unfit for the new conditions, with the abolition of the Soviet system of quota for ‘national cadres’ ethnic elites were rapidly losing political weight. However, there was demand for justification of the republican state-building ‘from above’ on the side of the *nomenklatura* which in a changed situation was looking for legal and political legitimacy of its power and in some instances directly supported activities of national movements, because ethnicity was the precondition for the existence of republics. According to the nation-state model, the upgraded republic as the state had to acquire also its nation and language. Therefore, in the ASSRs state building was, even on a larger scale, a top-down project, or amounted to Phase D in Terry Martin’s wording (Martin 2001: 15; Article 2: 147–148).

As unilateral upgrading of the political status of republics was against the Soviet laws, it was important for the governing elites that national movements would present their demands as the expression of the popular will. They were therefore formulated as the decision of national organizations and, somewhat later, the national congresses, bodies of ethnic representation (on the problem

of representation see: Osipov 2011). The idea to form such bodies, like many other ideas, was borrowed from the experience of the SSRs. Notably, the Estonian Citizens' Committees and the Congress of Estonia were taken as a pattern, which, however, had not ethnic but civic legitimation by the means of legal continuity with the pre-war Republic (see Raun 2001: 228).

Success of ethnic elites in including national revival as part of the elite pact depended on their ability to negotiate and co-operate with other segments of elites as opposed to outright confrontation, as opposite scenarios in Komi and Mari El demonstrate (see discussion in Article 3: 345–350). The authorities have taken into account ethnic diversity, inter alia, because the Soviet system had its devices, such as law enforcement as well as public opinion monitoring and propaganda bodies, which tried to keep a hold on and direct the developments in society, the importance of which grew especially under the conditions of social mobilization in the times of *perestroika*. Inter-ethnic clashes in some former SSRs played their role both in spreading awareness among the majority elites of the need to take ethnic issues into account and in their unwillingness to grant ethnic institutions, which could be used instrumentally by ethnic elites to take hold of power and engage in further nationalist mobilization. This is why most demands for the establishment of ethnic institutions were not included in the elite pact. However, the dominant Russian-speaking elites had to make at least some concessions to the ethnic elites.

Above all, all segments of regional elites needed national symbols to legitimize Republican statehood in order to be able to bargain for more power in the face of federal authorities (Article 2: 151–153). The official status of state languages was an institution that fitted the latter end: it was the national symbol, much like a national flag or anthem. Russian-speaking elites only wanted the status to be cleared of its associated risks, such as its possible instrumental use in political processes and the potential financial expenditure for its implementation. However, the official designation of the state languages went beyond its symbolic aspect due to multiple functions of official language.

## 7.2. Stages in the Designation of State Languages in the Finno-Ugric Republics

The comparative study of the process and circumstances of the adoption of official documents that established the political status of Finno-Ugric Republics in the 1990s sheds light on the main reasons for the designation of their state languages that appear across the cases, and also reveals some independent variables that became obstacles or have otherwise influenced the outcome. First of all, the timing is crucial in understanding the dynamics of state-building in Russia's Republics (see Table 1).

If SSRs had virtually no formal restrictions in shaping their language policy, then the ASSRs, with some exceptions, adopted their declarations of state sovereignty, and later constitutions and language laws, after the according documents were adopted in Russia. The Republican policy and legal acts reproduced most provisions of the Russian documents, except for some, such as the designation of their state languages.

The sovereignty declarations were the political acts that unilaterally changed the political status of the ASSRs by establishing them as sovereign states within the USSR. If approval of the sovereignty declarations of the ASSRs was inspired by the RSFSR leader Yeltsin, then establishing the state languages was a step that ASSR authorities initiated themselves, copying the experience of SSRs (Article 2: 128). While the Finno-Ugric ASSRs, with the exception of Karelia, designated their co-official state languages in their declarations of 1990, it took time for constitutional designation and designation by language law. Designation in constitutions and laws proved to be impossible without declarative designation, as the case of Karelia demonstrates (Klementyev et al. 2012). If the regional elite had not found it necessary to include the state languages in their common vision of the future polity embodied in the sovereignty declaration, its inclusion at the further stages became problematic.

What changed in language politics after the approval of the ASSRs' sovereignty declarations was the position of Russian, which acquired the status of the state language of the whole country first in Russia's language law and then in the Russian constitution. Both

documents recognized the right of the Republics to have their state languages, which means that since their adoption, status planning in the Republics has remained within Russia's legal space. Neither of the documents said that Russian was to become another state language of the Republics. Theoretically, those Republics, that have not yet designated their languages, could have followed the route taken by the Tuvinian ASSR and proclaimed the titular language as their sole state language. Therefore, also after 1991 the co-official status of languages was not so much predetermined by federal design but largely reflected political developments inside the ASSRs themselves.

Constitutional recognition in the Finno-Ugric Republics of Russia took place in the period 1994–95, whereas recognition by law occurred in 1992–2001. There were only some sequential exceptions in the case of the constitutions and the language laws of the ASSRs, and among the Finno-Ugric Republics it was only in Komi that the language law was adopted before the constitution (in 1992; see Table 1). In other words, with the exception of the Komi Republic, the three stages in the assertion of the official status typically followed one another, but they did not constitute a predetermined sequence and do not demand chronological order for their study. One regularity, however, should be pointed out: in general, the earlier the steps for language status planning were taken in a Republic, the stronger impact they had on the framing of 'ethnic institutions' within the political system.

For example, Komi and Mari El were the only Finno-Ugric Republics in which professional language requirements were established in the language laws that were adopted early (accordingly, in 1992 and 1995; see Table 1). Furthermore, learning of the state languages was made compulsory at this time for all students in the language laws of Komi and Mari El, but only in 2004 in Mordovia. The latter obligation is based on the recognition of bilingualism as a feature of the multinational societies in these Republics.

Altogether, the processes of the development of the language legislations and, particularly, the adoption of the language laws in the Republics resulted in significantly different configurations of the domains where the use of the titular languages became compulsory.

Table 1. Stages in the Designation of the State Languages in the Republics.

RSFSR / Russian Federation	Karelia	Komi
Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Russian SFSR	Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Karelian ASSR	Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Komi SSR
12 June 1990	9 August 1990	29 August 1990
No provision on the state languages	No provision on the state languages	The equal functioning of Komi and Russian as the state languages (Para 15)
Constitution of the Russian Federation	Amendment to the KASSR Constitution	Constitution of the Komi Republic
12 December 1993	24 December 1993	17 February 1994
Russian as the state language of the Russian Federation; the right of the Republics to establish their state languages (Art. 68)	The right of the Republic to designate its state languages by the Republican law (Art. 1)	Komi and Russian as the state languages of the Republic (Art. 67); Komi as an object of particular state concern (Preamble)
Law "On the Languages of the Peoples of RSFSR"	Law "On the State Support of the Karelian, Veps and Finnish languages in the Republic of Karelia"	Law "On the State Languages of the Komi Republic"
25 October 1991	19 March 2004	28 May 1992
Language requirements can be introduced in the RSFSR and its Republics (Art. 15)	No provision	Language requirements for some professions of both state languages (Art. 7, 13, 18)
Russian to be learnt in all education institutions; state languages of the republics according to their legislation (Art. 9, 10)	Native language as a subject (Art. 5)	Native language as a subject; Komi and Russian as the state languages in all schools (Art. 19)

Udmurtia	Mari El	Mordovia
Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Udmurt Republic 20 September 1990 Russian and Udmurt as the state languages of the Republic and guarantees for their equal functioning (Para 7)	Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Mari SSR 22 October 1990 The equal functioning of Mari (Hill, Meadow) and Russian as the state languages of the Republic (Para 5)	Declaration on the State Legal Status of the Mordovian SSR 7 December 1990 Moksha, Erzya and Russian as the state languages of the Republic; guarantees for equal-in-rights functioning (Para 7)
Constitution of the Udmurt Republic 7 December 1994 Russian and Udmurt as the state languages of the Republics (Art. 9 (later 10))	Constitution of the Republic of Mari El 24 June 1995 The Mari (Hill and Meadow) language and the Russian language as the state languages of the Republic (Art. 15). Knowledge of state languages by President (Art. 76)	Constitution of the Republic of Mordovia 21 September 1995 The Russian language and the Mordvin (Moksha and Erzya) language as the state languages (Art. 13)
Law "On the State Languages of the Udmurt Republic and Other Languages of the Peoples of the Udmurt Republic" 27 November 2001 No provision Native language as a subject (Art. 13)	Law "On the Languages of the Republic of Mari El" 26 October 1995 At least some bilingual employees with some command of languages (Art. 14) Native language instruction; Mari and Russian as the state languages in all schools (Art. 11, 62)	Law "On the State Languages of the Republic of Mordovia" 24 April 1998 No provision Native language instruction; optional study of the state languages of the Republic (Art. 10).

Among other issues, the amount of institutionalized support for the expansion of official languages differs greatly depending on the Republic (see Article 4: 138–139). How one can explain these findings, which have revealed dissimilar circumstances and outcomes in the promotion of the state languages among the Republics?

Pure sociolinguistic factors, such as the presence of more than one form of the titular language as in Mordovia, Mari El and Karelia, somewhat postponed the status planning, and thus had an indirect but not crucial impact. Arguably, it was not a lack of the written form itself and the corresponding impossibility for a language to function in the public sphere, but the resulting absence of the demand on the side of the national organization that prevented Karelian from becoming official (Article 2: 140–141).

In addition to the chronological determinacy, 'political factors are important to the point of being decisive', Michael Kirkwood notes (1989: 7). He also lists a number of factors that influenced language planning. All in all, the analysis demonstrates that socio-demographic factors paired with political factors were central for status planning in all five Finno-Ugric Republics (see Article 3 and 4).

The sociological fact that the titular groups were the minorities in the total populations of their titular Republics appeared to have a direct impact on the balance of political powers in the Finno-Ugric Republics especially at the time of the adoption of constitutions and language laws. Here, in fact, the socio-demographic factors are reinforced by socio-psychological factors. The lower the share of the titular group, the further the trends of language shift were gone that caused deformations in the sociolinguistic situation of languages. More importantly, the low minority participation in the political process, including policy-making and decision-making, correlated with low political representation that usually did not proportionally reflect even the actual share of the titular groups. Furthermore, there is no strict determinacy between the support of a parliamentarian for linguistic and ethnic demands and his or her ethnicity, even if it is fixed in the passport, as it used to be in Russia up to 1998.

In this situation the laws that favored minority demands could not get enough votes to pass through the majority vote (see Article 4: 140–142). Yet, for example, in Bashkortostan's population ethnic

Bashkirs were the third group by size after Russians and Tatars and their share was only from one quarter to one fifth, but the titular elite was predominant both in regional parliament and government as well in local administrations (see Galljamov 1998, 2000). The question is then not in the share of the group *per se* but in ability of its elite to ensure the control over the regional authorities; and the higher share of the ethnic group in the republican population makes this an easier task (see Article 4: 138–139).

One can broadly conclude that the lower the share of the titular group, the smaller the ability of leadership of national movements and the ethnic elite to bargain and co-operate with Republican authorities (Article 3: 360). What was the meaning and reasons for the designation of the state languages in different documents and varying contexts?

### 7.3. Three Types of Official Designation of State Languages

Developing a normative theory, Alan Patten (2001: 695–697) distinguishes three interests on the side of language speakers in official multilingualism as a model of language recognition: communication, symbolic affirmation and identity promotion. By the interest of communication he means accommodation of the communication needs by persons who lack fluency in official languages, which makes them unable to get access to public services.

According to the data of population censuses, since the introduction of the obligatory learning of Russian in 1938 the level of Russian knowledge among non-Russians constantly increased and by the time of the disintegration of the USSR, very few non-Russian monolinguals were among Russia's inhabitants. The process of expansion of Russian continues and today virtually all non-Russians in the Finno-Ugric Republics have at least some knowledge of Russian.

More relevant for the late Soviet and post-Soviet Russian realities are the other two interests: the interest in symbolic affirmation, which is rooted in the need for respect, and the interest in identity promotion, which is a part of a strategy directed at a group's survival

because for many groups language lies at the core of their identity (see Patten 2001, Taylor 1994). Further, Patten (2001: 697–700) argues that official multilingualism is an appropriate solution also to balance the interests that speakers of different languages have in public recognition of their languages, because it manifests their symbolic equality.

If Patten's model is applied to the finding of this empirical study, the interests in symbolic affirmation, the balance of interests and identity promotion roughly correspond with the three types of designation of the state languages in Russia's Republics: symbolic, political and legal designation. Symbolic designation conveys information about the society as a whole and creates its self-image, political designation fixes the political balance between different ethnic or national groups, and legal designation promotes certain identities through enforcement of the legal norms, including the compulsory use of languages, upon individuals, and changes their language attitudes and language practices.

It is important to add to Patten's model that these were ethnic elites who represented all interests in the name of the group. Based on the elite theory and its application to the findings of the case studies in the Finno-Ugric Republics, I would like to propose the model of understanding the power relations behind the different stages of official designation of languages that reveals the correlation of elite interests with different functions of the official language. Symbolic designation was usually done in the sovereignty declaration, designation in the Republics' constitutions because of its formal character tended to be more political and designation in the language laws more legal, although all documents contain elements of each type of designation to a different degree. All in all, the reasons for the three acts of recognition correspond to different functions of the state languages:

(1) The echelons of Soviet *nomenklatura* reflected the hierarchy of Soviet federalism and were composed of the level of central and regional elites, the latter including elites in SSRs as well as ASSRs and other territorial units within SSRs (see Section 4.3 for the discussion on terms). Under the conditions of the collapse of the USSR,

the ‘parade of sovereignties’ and unclear future perspectives, the regional elites tried to justify the upgraded polity emerging. The Declarations of State Sovereignty of the ASSRs were the channel for the demand for greater self-governance. Regional elites in SSRs and ASSRs strived to maximize their benefits in the conditions of the centrifugal processes of the year 1990 by challenging the legitimacy of central authorities on the basis of the nationality principle.

In the multilayered set of power relations, the alliance between the RSFSR democrats and regional elites of its ASSRs against central authorities proved to be crucial for providing the context for the officialization of languages. Russian democrats needed regional support in the face of central authorities, while all segments of regional elites had a common interest in designating the state languages as yet one more attribute of national sovereignty and needed to justify the emerging polity (see Figure 1: here and in the following figures those power relations that were significant for officialization are marked with white arrows; the most important dimension of power relations for the stage is marked with a black arrow; double-edged arrows mark relations that brought mutual benefits for the elite segments and unidirectional arrows mark the ability of a group or population to advance for its interest over those of the group or population the arrow is directed at).

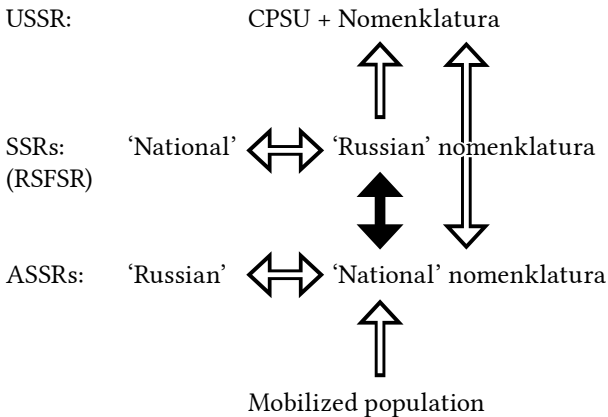


Figure 1. State languages as the national symbol in the sovereignty declarations (1990).

The presence or absence of demand for state languages in a declaration did not become an indispensable element in justification of greater rights to self-governance. For example, in Karelia, such demand was not included into the Declaration of 9 August 1990. There are a number of circumstances that all could have contributed to the absence of demand in the Karelian declaration, starting from the weak position of the ethnic elite in the present up to the recent collective memory of the previously existed higher level of statehood in the form of a Union Republic that might have compensated for the lack of other justifications. However, as it has already been pointed out above, the absence of the political demand on the side of national organization was arguably the most important among these (see also Article 2).

Nevertheless, the argument for the importance of the state languages also for the Republic of Karelia is reinforced by the fact that later also this Republic used its right and established its state language, although a titular language was not designated (see Article 2: 139–141). Both Union authorities and Russian authorities sought the support of regional elites. It was, however, the call of Yeltsin that triggered the sovereinization in the ASSRs. There was no conflict over the designation of two languages at that stage, because the symbolic capital that could be obtained from this act did not suppose the ‘zero-sum’ game between the regional elites as all their segments won.

(2) After the collapse of the USSR, the political regime in Russia was stabilized and fixed in the Russian constitution of 1993 that significantly curtailed regional powers but still approved the upgraded status of the Republics. With the Republics’ political status ensured, the regional political elites continued competing over powers within the upgraded political units. In this context, the recognition of state languages was no longer seen as a mere symbolic act, but the very division of powers depended on it, because ethnic elites attempted to employ the language requirement for top officials as an instrumental resource in the elite bargaining, while Russian-speaking elites were intended to prevent this from happening (see Figure 2).

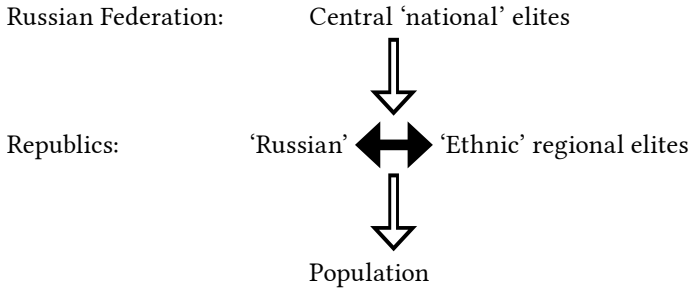


Figure 2. State languages as instruments and institutions in the constitutions (1994–1995).

The new political regimes fixed the balance of power in the constitutions of the Republics. This elite pact established the regime that included, inter alia, the state languages as an ethnic institution which structured horizontal power relations by ensuring the balance of ethnic groups and that, however, could not be used as an instrument in the political processes (with some exceptions, e.g., in Tatarstan and Mari El: see Article 3; 361). Apart from language requirements, implementation of actual official bilingualism was not in the elite settlement agreement and had to be negotiated separately in connection with the language laws. This disconnection was in the interest of the Russian elites, who usually preferred the settlement not to be prevented by a disagreement about language status but did not have an interest in its actual implementation, especially when such measures lacked popular support. Common origin of elites in *nomenklatura* and their transformation in informal clientelistic networks led to the establishment of authoritarian regimes and enhanced elite settlement (see *Regiony Rossii* 2000, 2003 on clientelism in the Finno-Ugric Republics).

Ethnic elites were not powerful enough in the Finno-Ugric Republics to push their interests through and also preferred to reach an agreement rather than being excluded in the ‘winner takes all’ situation (as happened in Mari El in 2001). In Tatarstan, for example, the constitutional pact was ‘thicker’ and contained more language provisions. In the light of later changes in the balance of powers between elites and possible challenges to this pact, especially since the mid-2000s, when the interference and changing the local

republican leadership with the ‘Varangians’ from Moscow also to ‘stronger’ regions, like Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, became a common approach of the federal center in dealing with regions (interference occasionally happened in ‘weaker’ regions also before, e.g., in Mari El in 1997). It is important to note, however, that the constitutions by their nature of ‘basic law’ are intended to embody standing solutions, because they contain not just political compromise between elites but constitutional compromise in principles (see Réaume 2000: 258–259).

(3) Simultaneously with bargaining in the political processes, ethnic elites advocated for the adoption of language revival projects as government policies. In the latter case, the status of the state languages was seen not so much as a symbol nor as political instrument advancing the group interest to reach appropriate solution in balancing the interests of different groups but as a tool for the promotion of group identity by the expansion of the titular languages in the public sphere through the adoption and implementation of the language laws (Article 4: 125–126). The language laws related to two groups of interests: those of the elites and those of the population. The laws promoted the use of titular languages in activities of public authorities, their communications with the population and the provision of public services (see Section 3.4) through a top-down approach (see Figure 3).

The language laws also contained a compromise of elites: on the one hand, the policy-makers included as one the legislative goals

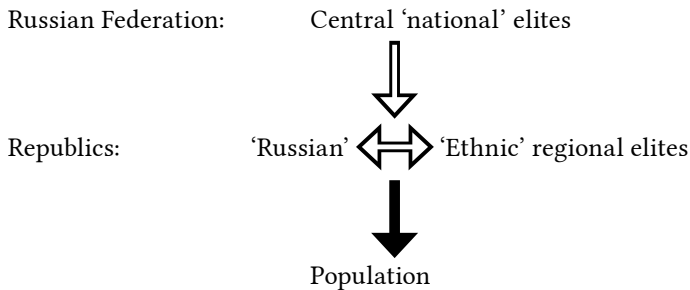


Figure 3. State languages as institutions in the language laws (1992–2004).

‘the maintenance and development of languages’ (the official term for ‘language revival’: see Article 4: 14o), but, on the other, they also produced the co-official status of languages, which restricted the law’s potential for the promotion of titular languages. This compromise embraced not only the level of goals of the laws, but also their content through the institutionalization of elements of the official status in provisions of language legislation and the implementation of these provisions, which should be studied separately (see Zamyatin 2014a).

The question about the possibility to use the official status as a tool of language revival deserves separate consideration, because researchers vary in their opinions about the link between the official status and language revival: while in many countries the proactive government policy enhanced language revival, in some cases, such as that in Ireland, official recognition ‘from above’ is said to have discouraged the grassroots enthusiasm of activists (Sallabank 2012: 116–117).

#### 7.4. Institutionalization of the Elements of Official Status in the Language Laws

While the mere recognition of the official status is sufficient to satisfy the interest of the titular group in symbolic affirmation of its political status, the group’s interest in identity promotion can be accomplished through language planning. Republics’ language legislations included measures of all its types: status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning. Started in the Soviet times, work on corpus planning and acquisition planning was continued in the new realities. Language boards were created in all republics that approved neologisms and prepared dictionaries. Research institutes in the field of education prepared textbooks and teaching materials, developed teaching methods and trained native language teachers (see Zamyatin 2013a for more details).

Status planning provided for expansion of the parallel use of the titular language throughout the domains of the public sphere. The first function of the state languages as the working languages

of state authorities touched directly upon elite interests. Language legislation scarcely institutionalized elements of this function and they were rarely used in practice. For example, the right to speak in one's language at the parliamentary sessions is enshrined in rules of procedure of all Finno-Ugric republics but it was never used except for greetings and other symbolic acts of speech.

As for the second function of the languages in authorities' communication with the population, language requirements for some professions were established in several Republics, although were not in use (Article 4: 136–140). Members of ethnic elites themselves often lacked the knowledge of titular languages and the exclusive use of titular language as the means of communication was not on the agenda, *inter alia*, because the non-discrimination principle prevented it. Typically the official status of the titular languages was not institutionalized in this part except for some symbolic aspects such as the language of signposts, road signs, etc. Among the public services, the school system remained the sector where titular languages were most institutionalized in legal provisions and the latter were implemented to some degree (see also Zamyatin 2014a on institutionalization).

## 7.5. Implementation of the Language Laws

The revival of titular languages was equated to the expansion of their official functions through implementation of the language legislations. The problem of the first wave of language laws both in SSRs and ASSRs, many of which were adopted at the time when the USSR still existed, was that their provisions were written in the Soviet style as declarative statements that did not have implementation mechanisms and left too much at the discretion of executive officials (Solomon 2008: 118–119).

In the former SSRs, after their independence, the second wave of language laws was no longer declarative but contained legal norms promoting the compulsory use of the sole state languages in all public domains. In Russia, too, even if later, the Federal Law on the State Language of the Russian Federation (1 June 2005) laid

down the lists of domains where the use of the Russian language was obligatory (see Article 1: 127–128). Among the former ASSRs, Tatarstan only recently adopted the according Law On the Use of Tatar as the State Language of the Republic (12 January 2013). In Russia's other republics such laws that would prescribe the compulsory use of state languages by composing a list of the domains were never adopted.

That is why a legal-institutional analysis in a study of the regional laws provides only the first layer of understanding, while the study of implementation from the perspectives of both political science and sociology offers deeper insights into language policy. Political scientists, as Peter Solomon witnesses, long ago identified implementation as a distinct phase of the political process. Implementation of a policy becomes complicated, *inter alia*, by such conditions that were present in Russian republics as their stay in federal structure, consequent involvement of many actors in the policy-making and the policy adoption as a series of decision (see Solomon 2008: 119–120, also Section 3.3).

The peculiarity of this phase is that official and other actors in charge of implementation may have their own interests in the issues at stake or may be influenced by external forces. Many factors, including bureaucratic inertia, lack of commitment and opposition to the policy as well as self-interest may form the position of officials. Inertia and lack of commitment are likely if new ideology contradicts the officials' own perceptions. For example, the goal of expansion of titular languages has not found understanding especially among regional Russian-speaking officials, first of all, because of the issues of efficiency and economic cost, but also because of inconsistency of such policy with their language attitudes, according to which these were undeveloped languages of the countryside. Furthermore, they were sensitive to the signs of a gradual shift from Soviet multilingual ideology to Russian monolingual ideology coming from the center.

A new policy is likely to provoke opposition, also because many interests are already invested in the status quo. Self-interest of officials consists mainly in career-related incentives. For example, the case of language requirements in the republics is a clear example of

negative incentives for officials (see Solomon 2008: 120–121, 127–128, also Zamyatin 2014a).

While the problem of the influence of officials' self-interest on the policy (non-) implementation is common for the bureaucracies of many countries, democracies have usually the institutional mechanisms of constraints in their pursuit. However, in Russia, as Steven Solnick witnesses, the decay of formal institutions in the late Soviet times led to their substitution by informal ones (Solnick 1998). 'The actual interests of officials relating to power and policy are more likely to derive from informal institutions such as clientelistic networks' and, thus, officials 'are more likely to impede or distort the implementation of policies through such techniques' as selective, virtual or manipulative compliance (see Solomon 2008: 130–131).

All these obstacles contributed to the situation when regional officials were typically reluctant to expand the use of titular languages (Article 5: 26). Nevertheless, if there was the political will in a republic, the wide proxies of executive officials and their informal institutions actually enhanced implementation of the language policy (see previous section). Even the absence of official status or a long absence of language law did not become a principle obstacle for language revival, for example, in Karelia (see Article 4: 133–134). All in all, the implementation of language policy in Karelia was assigned with more funds in the executive programs than, for example, in Mari El (Article 4: 139–140).

One should not mix up government officials, including those of titular nationality, and members of ethnic elites who lobby for their vision of ethnic settlement (Article 2: 152–153). While those in government are comprised of the ruling elite, the latter group is part of broader political elites, who have a say but do not directly influence political decision-making. Another meaningful divide is between ethnic elites and activists, where the latter are members of civil society. Yet, the leadership of national movements, chairs of national organizations were often co-opted into ethnic elites or, in the later years, rather members of elites were appointed to lead national NGOs to keep activists under control and part of the system. The Soviet legacy of discouraging activism and substituting it

with hopes for the protective state resulted in the prevalence of ‘top-down’ policy in Russia, which is a problem from the perspective of the revival of minority languages. The problem is aggravated by the virtual absence of self-executing individual language rights, which hampers language revival ‘from below’ (see Section 4.2).

The question is, then, whether language revival can be enhanced by language laws in principle and in that case, what are the minimum standards for their effectiveness. A separate evaluation, not included in this study, was conducted on how the language laws in Republics were institutionalized against their own goals and implemented against the measures prescribed (Zamyatin 2014a). In the current study, the implementation of language policy in education was taken for the purpose of an in-depth evaluation, because it turned out that the introduction of the compulsory study of languages to students of titular nationality or to all students (in addition to language preferences for some professions) became one of the central measures directed at language revival (Article 4: 127–128).

Since the 1920s, it was assumed that students would study in their native language, and learning of the native language was compulsory in the sense that in 1930 universal education was established for all. Yet, first by the introduction of obligatory learning of Russian since the late 1930s and then by the element of free choice of language learning introduced in the context of the 1958–9 education reform, both the principle of native language of instruction and the obligation to learn the native language were removed (see Blitstein 2001, Kreindler 1989, also Article 5). Drawing parallels with the 1920s, ethnic elites wanted to use the same mechanism of compulsory teaching in the early 1990s. However, since the late 2000s, the free choice of language learning is again being used against compulsory teaching of titular languages and for the promotion of Russian in the framework of nation-building. In effect, the compulsory teaching of non-Russian languages either as native or as state languages of Republics has been removed (Article 5: 40–42). The quantitative evaluation of the access to minority language learning in the Finno-Ugric Republics demonstrated that the existing system of minority language education does not ensure the reproduction of language knowledge by a significant part of students (Article 6: 98–99).

Another article, supplementary to this study, addressed the implementation of regional education policy for the revival not only of state languages of the republics but also for the other categories such as the languages of numerically small indigenous peoples and the languages of ‘national minorities’ in a narrow sense (Zamyatin 2013a). The comparative data on education in different types of constituent units provides evidence in support of the argument that since the Soviet times and up to the present time different patterns in policy could be still identified behind seemingly inconsistent policy (see Grant 1989: 72–73). Furthermore, these patterns can be found not only between different types of constituent units but also between individual units in the same type, for example, among the republics. While there might be some in-between cases, in general, different patterns for Volga Turkic and Finno-Ugric republics can be observed (see Article 6: 16, 18).

## 7.6. Results of the Empirical Study

The empirical study demonstrated that one should distinguish at least three types of official designation of the *de facto* minority languages that were parts of parallel processes with different goals, meanings and consequences. These types of designation reveal different functions of the official status and correspond to the three types of recognition: symbolic, political and legal recognition. The first of these should be viewed, above all, as being a part of the center-periphery relations, the second should be considered in the context of the political bargaining between segments of regional elites, and the third interpreted mainly in terms of the interactions between authorities and the population.

In the historical situation, when the central authorities were weak, elites in Russian regions strived to maximize their self-government and bargained for the higher political status of their regions, inter alia, using ethnic and linguistic justifications. The officialization of languages by the regional authorities directly depended on the presence of a corresponding demand put forward by ‘national congresses’. The absence of a timely demand in Karelia resulted in

the denial of official status to a titular language. Despite the problems of representation, the demand of national congresses expressed as the will of the peoples (conceptualized as ‘ethnoses’) were at a certain point an argument strong enough for titular elites to persuade the other segments of regional elites of their common interest and to include the official status of languages into the elite pact. The analysis highlights the role of ethnic elites as the key advancers of the official status demands.

Titular elites presented language revival as the goal of officialization. Under certain conditions, official status can serve as a device for the revival of minority languages. Policy documents of the Finno-Ugric Republics approved since the mid-1990s had only some statements relating to their state languages and in some cases explicitly promised to guarantee support for their revival (see Article 1: 113–116). However, in these Republics the institutionalized set of conditions proved to be unfavorable for titular language promotion due to the weak position of ethnic elites inside the Republics. Compulsory use has largely failed to become the mechanism of expansion of titular languages, with some notable exceptions in education. In effect, the official status of titular languages was only fragmentarily implemented. By contrast, status planning in some other Republics, notably, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, was more successful. However, also there it only slowed down but did not reverse the language shift.

Both attempts of extensive planning of minority languages in Russian history of the 20th century appeared to be short-lived. In the early 1990s, Russian authorities remained quite detached. When it comes to Russia’s language policy documents approved since the mid-1990s, neither the 1996 Concept of the State Nationalities Policy, the 2006 Concept of the State National Education Policy nor the 2012 Strategy even mention state languages of Republics (see Article 1: 127, Zamyatin 2013b, 2014b). Given the failure of democratization and the establishment of an authoritarian regime, it is easy to feel reassured in pessimism about Russia. Yet, this study attempted to avoid oversimplifications and proposed the answers to what might be the level of the problem in language policy.

Despite the policy variations throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet times in the ethno-political pendulum from the promotion of diversity to assimilation, synchronically Soviet and post-Soviet Russia's language policy is a symbiosis of different goals depending on the target group. Seemingly contradictory tendencies coexist: there is a trend of ever increasing valorization of the Russian language, delivery of some bilingual public services through official territorial bilingualism for titular languages of the republics and autonomous districts, and plain assimilationist policy towards the other languages. Reflecting the theoretical debate, since 2000 language planning shifted from the sociolinguistic to the instrumental type with an emphasis on the economic side (see Kirkwood 1989: 1), and the further expansion of official use in the observable future is unlikely (even if there are attempts, as in Udmurtia).

The empirical analysis provides the basis for the further theoretical discussion about the specifics of the official status in the case of minority languages and distribution of functions between the co-official languages. It remains a topic for sociolinguistic study to establish how the language planning has actually influenced language practices (for some results see: Karjalainen et al. 2013).

## 8. Some Implications for the Theoretical Understanding of Specifics of the Official Status in the Case of Minority Languages

National movements emerged in the Republics in the late 1980s out of popular concerns and dissatisfaction with the state of inter-ethnic relations. The ethnic elites claimed to articulate these concerns and justified their demand for the official status of the titular languages as a part of their endeavor towards political recognition of the 'titular peoples'.

The elites argued that this status was needed as a part of the national revival of the 'titular peoples' and, in particular, for the revival of their languages. There were direct borrowings from the practice of language policy in other countries: for example, in drafting the first Estonian ASSR language law of 1989, the text of the

Charter of the French Language, a provincial law in Quebec, was consulted (see Rannut 2002). Moreover, the elites looked for scientific substantiation for their revivalist claims in the cultural argument and the ideas from theories like that of Joshua Fishman (1991). Fishman proposed the model of reversing language shift (RLS), which was viewed as an achievable task that implied a set of actions (Fishman 1991: 381; the RLS concept is self-explanatory and less ideologically charged than the concept 'language revival').

Some Russian scholars (e.g., Guboglo 1998, Alpatov 2000; see Section 6) objected to the sincerity of the revivalist rhetoric and interpreted activities of national elites as actually intending to use the official status of languages instrumentally to ensure a privileged position for the titular groups and, above all, for themselves. At the same time, international scholars have illuminated a special role that institutions had in the Soviet 'construction of nations' and post-Soviet nation-building (e.g. Brubaker 1996, Gorenburg 2003), which should also have relevance in the language policy.

The ethnosymbolist approach to ethnicity and nationalism was proposed by Anthony D. Smith (2009) as an alternative to a primordialist-constructivist divide and is largely shared and used in relation to language by John Edwards (2009, 2011). This approach attempts to reconcile the primordialist and constructionist views in that it emphasizes importance of symbols, myths, values and traditions in the formation and persistence of the modern nation-state, while recognizing an invented and constructed nature of identity.

The plan in this section is to discuss the results of the empirical study in the light of symbolist, revivalist, instrumentalist and institutionalist theories in order to find out what implications study might have for conceptualization of the official status in the case of minority languages. What specifics might the official status have in the case of a minority language? What are the peculiarities in its symbolic and practical use? How does this status fit revivalist and constructivist argumentation? What are the strong points of the instrumentalist and institutionalist explanations? What were the reasons for the official designation of minority languages?

The section addresses the following questions: First, how the symbolist function works in the case of minority languages? Do

symbolist and revivalist motives in official designation complement or contradict each other in the case of minority languages? Second, what influence were different configurations of the official status able to have on language revival? What were the elements of the official states that impeded its use as a tool of language revival? Third, is the instrumentalist argument for the designation of the state languages valid also for understanding the processes in the Republics with low support for nationalism? What were the possible instrumental uses that the official status could bring? Fourth, what is the function of the state languages as ‘ethnic institutions’? What interests do elites have in establishing ethnic institutions and how does society in general benefit from their existence?

### 8.1. Symbolic Perspective

The conceptual framework of the ethnosymbolist approach fits well in comprehending the social role of language. John Edwards notes that members of the mainstream society might not distinguish the communicative and symbolic functions of their language. When language is in a dominant position, its symbolism is not obvious and remains unmarked but is always present implicitly, because languages are not neutral (Edwards 2011: 95–113). Moreover, Pierre Bourdieu argued that ‘language should be viewed not only as a means of communication but also as a medium of power’. The dominant social group exercises most symbolic power and, by defining the value of languages, re-translates social and economic differences. The state then imposes the dominant language by designating it with an official status and, thus, delegitimizes other languages. In this way symbolism of language reinforces the social order as a set of social structures, institutions and practices (Bourdieu 1991: 51–59).

For the minority-group members the two functions of language are separable. Minority members are typically among those who have less access to the legitimate competence of the dominant language that functions as linguistic capital within the linguistic market. The desire to succeed in life may compel them to acquire the dominant language and improve knowledge up to the level of excellence, if

not by themselves then by the choice of school for their children. Diglossia causes a typical two-generation language shift towards the dominant language which is the highway of assimilation.

Yet, change of identity is not the only option available. Despite all political pressures to change the language, the ability of the people to retain their language can be remarkable (see, e.g., Raun 2001). Furthermore, while stigmatization and oppressive conditions may have already caused communicative language shift, the people continue to identify themselves with their 'native' language and resist the symbolic order (see, e.g., Fought 2006: 23). Erving Goffman suggested the concept of the interactional order to describe how humans are not just passive recipients of the state policy but how individual interactions form the foundation for the social structures (Hoffman 1983: 6–8).

In this context, the official status for a minority language provides the locus for reference and functions as the channel that reinforces people's ethnic and linguistic identity. In the case of minority languages their official status works always and often only as a national symbol. Officialization has significance as yet another act of symbolic affirmation of the place of minority groups in society through the political and constitutional recognition of the multilingual characteristics of national statehood.

Yet, the act of officialization itself does not automatically bring change in the symbolic order because the latter demands also a change in language practices. The study of institutionalization of official status for titular languages in language laws demonstrates that among the institutionalized and actually implemented measures these were mostly symbolic elements (see Section 7.3 above; Zamyatin 2014a). Symbolism of the official status manifests itself not only in the act of recognition, but also continues to be present in its legal regime through the elements contributing to linguistic landscapes such as bilingual street signs etc. and sometimes through symbolic acts of speech and, therefore, creates conditions for change in practices.

At the same time, in separation of symbolic and communicative aspects of language lies a potential danger for minority language, because toleration of symbolic recognition is not the same

as promotion of actual communication. After all, a symbol can be a sign of the idea that does not have its counterpart in the world: e.g., the state language of the republic conveys the message about the republic as the state, which, however, does not have other substantiation in political reality. That is to say, the corresponding duality of the official status allows authorities to disconnect the symbolic recognition from the promotion of language use.

Exploring Russian policy of diversity management, Alexander Osipov writes about ‘systemic hypocrisy’, when ‘deliberate avoidance of implementing certain normative provisions generates no criticism in the given society and goes in combination with the overall silent consent on this state of affairs of all the stakeholders, including minority activists themselves’. As he points out, ‘symbolic policies aimed at ethnic relations become values in themselves as a non-controversial ground of communication for different social and political actors and thus supersede instrumental policies’ (Osipov 2012: 425). Osipov describes this situation in Russia as typical also for the other countries, but a case-specific analysis can provide some insights into this particular phenomenon.

For one thing, his explanation of ‘systemic hypocrisy’ seems to lack a diachronic perspective when he considers as a lasting phenomenon such its aspects as the absence of genuine federalism or drawbacks of laws. In the conditions, when controversial principles were laid down in the country’s language policy (see Article 1), a delay in implementation and its initial limitation to those measures that correspond to explicitly stated non-controversial grounds, such as symbolic recognition, is perhaps not surprising in the short run in terms of the elite settlement. Furthermore, a lack of such settlement manifests itself in the inconsistency of laws themselves. However, instead of being the sign of the regime consolidation through symbolic discourse, chronic non-implementation might reveal the inability of elites to change the overall settings.

Peter Solomon (2008) might have come closer to explaining specifics of the Russian public administration by displaying an important role of informal institutions. Indeed, the political culture that overcomes criticism on the side of non-systemic actors through systemic hypocrisy must be very specific. An oppressive

political regime and pressure on minority nationalisms are likely to be behind the silencing of the activists who are controlled and governed through subordinated NGOs. A Soviet legacy of 'folklorization' of identities could be named among the mechanisms that promote nation-building by establishing the hegemony of the Staatsvolk. Therefore, establishment of the official status of minority language as a mere symbolic act instead of language promotion might actually be a form of hegemonic control, which makes it even more challenging to reunite communicative and symbolic functions of minority languages in language practices in an attempt of language promotion.

## 8.2. Revivalist Perspective

The instrumentalist interest of elites might have been important in some former SSRs in the designation of their sole state languages, but dramatic expansion in the use of the titular languages in the public sphere at the cost of Russian had an immediate effect on the population and resulted in a total shift in the sociolinguistic situation in favor of local languages. In the former ASSRs, both those with a titular demographic majority or minority, it proved to be impossible to effectively employ the titular state languages either as political or as language revival resources due to their co-official status. The study data in this part reassert the proposition that only selective language recognition, when a minority language becomes the only official language in a region of the country, could be an appropriate device of language maintenance and language revival (Kymlicka 2001: 79). Otherwise, co-official designation in itself does not guarantee the maintenance of the minority language or any significant expansion in its official use, even if it is accomplished as a legal designation. In the latter scenario, many more sociolinguistic and extralinguistic variables are at stake than just the official policy (Patten 2001: 705, Laitin 1998).

The co-official status of the minority languages, even if formally equalized, differs in its function as the language in office from the corresponding status of the majority language. When the goal

of status planning is precisely to expand the functions of minority language into prestigious domains, this a difficult task to achieve (see Fishman 2001: 9–13). The revivalist idea was that the minority languages would continue to retreat and disappear unless they were used in the domains associated with contemporary life. However, it was the revivalist project that posited the goal of expansion of the minority language in the public sphere not through redistribution of functions between the languages, e.g., in territorial solutions that would allow exclusive use of minority languages in some domains and territories but through the establishment of official nation-Russian bilingualism.

In this endeavor, the revivalist project had to constrain its goal to the formal compulsory use of both languages as working languages. In this respect, its compulsory character as an attribute of the official status did not contradict the freedom to choose one's language of communication or other individual freedoms. However, if the compulsory character use is unquestioned as one of the main features of the official language in the case of majority languages, then it is not self-evident in the case of minority language. Unsurprisingly, the majority public opinion did not favor such measures and language attitudes also had their impact on the state policy by complicating and in many instances even preventing its implementation.

Using the experience of the former SSRs, ethnic elites in former ASSRs also insisted on the quick implementation of language revival projects. However, for example, even in Estonia the 1989 language law had a three-year implementation period and only after the USSR collapse did the second-wave language laws impose radical changes. In a quite different sociolinguistic situation inside Russia, the forced implementation was unrealistic not only because language attitudes changed slowly, but because the languages themselves lacked a tradition of being used in public affairs.

These were ethnic elites who knew the official language and rushed expansion was in their interest, because the clock was ticking and the window of opportunity for change closing. After all, such moves as, for example, the translation of laws into the titular language, as is done in Komi, do not need many resources and help to develop vocabulary in new domains. However, the population was

and is currently still estranged from the standardized official language, especially since a large portion of individuals who continue to identify themselves with the group did not have the possibility to acquire the standard form in school. Presence of several standard varieties disorients the people even more. A lack of standardization as well as language shift and insufficient language knowledge, code-switching and code-mixing did not allow the closing of the gap between communicative and symbolic functions and failed to bring positive change in the language attitudes. All these circumstances contributed to the lack of support for language revival on the side of the titular group.

Another complication was that proponents of the creation of unified standard forms from existing varieties of minority languages in the Republics considered their standardization to be the precondition for the possibility to make their study compulsory for ethnic Russians and this way to promote mutual national-Russian bilingualism. The idea might have been good but its forced implementation typically led to intra-elite conflicts. Moreover, the problem with the main varieties is only the tip of the iceberg. In co-official language settings, the policy advocates should have been cautious and more sensitive with regard to language attitudes. Yet, this was exactly a likely deficiency of top-down language revival that it largely ignored the attitudes and needs of the group actually speaking that language.

This experience demonstrates how important it is to distinguish two aspects of compulsory use depending on the target group: whether the language is made obligatory to use only as the 'native language', i.e., for the according ethnic group, or as the state language for all, including the majority population. With the given attitudes, language revival might have been more successful if it had been restricted to compulsory use only as one's 'native language', i.e., the language of one's ethnic group. Compulsory use in this narrow application might have been more effective by appealing to one's ethnic identity, because in the sociolinguistic situation, when individuals could always use the majority language, it was indeed possible to let people to learn and speak minority languages only under constraint.

The campaign in the 1990s for language revival through extensive expansion of non-dominant language use in Russia's Republics is sometimes compared with the Soviet 'nativization' policy of the 1920s. In the 1920s, the central authorities forced 'nativization' upon the often reluctant regional authorities. What made the attempt to expand the local languages in the 1990s distinct from the comparable efforts of the 1920s was the inverted position the central authorities. Given a lack of pressure 'from above' in the 1990s, the regional policy-makers were satisfied with symbolic designation of the state languages and supported, but did not actually intend to implement the official status for the titular language (see Osipov 2012).

The symbolic and formal designation of the official language was disconnected from its legal designation. In some cases, the adoption of language laws was significantly postponed. A proclaimed equal-in-rights or equal-in-functioning status typically is a part of symbolic politics, while in political reality the use of non-dominant language is narrower than that of the dominant language and the extent of the use depends on power relations. A co-official non-dominant language has not become another working language of many state authorities and public institutions. The *de facto* policy did not aim for the promotion of actual bilingualism, which is still one-sided, as very few Russians know the titular languages.

Therefore, it could be argued that, unless the minority language is the sole official language in the region, the official status has only a limited value as a tool of language revival. De Varennes sceptically evaluates the capacity of official language as a tool of its 'promotion' and contrasts it with the actual compulsory use of official languages (de Varennes 2012: 52–56). According to him, 'to use the language is not the same as to promote its use'. While in the former case, the authorities have no other excuse but to use the language according to their obligations in detail provided in the legislation, then in the latter the authorities only express their 'commitment' and leave the issue of implementation at the discretion of public officials.

Incidentally, Russia was criticized by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities for the fact that 'in most cases the relevant norms lack mechanisms that would guarantee their implementation, leaving

too much discretion in the hands of the executive authorities' (ACFC Second Opinion on Russia of 11 May 2006). This said, it should be noted that even if the official status of Finno-Ugric languages does not influence language practices directly, its symbolic function without any doubt contributes indirectly to language revival through raising prestige.

### 8.3. Instrumentalist Perspective

The discourses of the theories of language policy and the studies of ethnicity and nationalism partly overlap: in both, the revivalist and instrumentalist approaches are represented in understanding of the conjoined phenomena of ethnicity and language. Both national and language revival are ideologically charged, because they are connected to nationalism and nationalist mobilization. The difference is that within sociolinguistics and the theories of language policy, languages are not seen as reducible to their instrumental use and language revival is considered as a legitimate goal, although this project would still need a normative justification, e.g., in the context of human rights, minority rights or on the basis of language's expressive value for cultural identity (Kraus 2008: 38–41). The particular language as a complex system of communication can be revived in its social dimension as the reversal of language shift and in its linguistic dimension in the form of corpus planning. Fishman was careful to emphasize that most of those who support RLS are not primordialists but understand constructedness of the phenomena around ethnicity and language (Fishman 2001: 8–9) and for that very reason consider it an achievable task.

Yet, the dominant constructivist understanding in the studies on ethnicity and nationalism denies the validity of revivalist arguments, because it sees them as an example of primordialist claims. According to the constructivist interpretation, the nation itself is usually viewed as a 'chimera', a social construct (e.g., Brubaker 1996, Tishkov 1996). Instead of the revival of the nation and its culture, those looking at the phenomena from the instrumentalist perspective see behind the accomplishment of a national revival project

the interests of ethnic entrepreneurs and the invention of new traditions. The instrumentalist argument in the theories of language policy is complementary to this and sees in the language revival the attempts of the entrepreneurs to reach their political ends by using the language demands as a political instrument (see, e.g., Robichaud & De Schutter 2012).

Professional language requirements particularly would be used as evidence for the instrumental use of language. In connection with the official language, the demand for compulsory knowledge of minority language by top officials or parliamentarians often is presented as an example of instrumental use. However, this interpretation is already laden with a presupposition that *de facto* minority language is not working as a language in office. If one goes to the extremes with this logic, even activities for the promotion of minority languages in education could be interpreted instrumentally as the attempt of ethnic elites to reinforce their social capital for the future. Yet, the European Court of Human Rights recognized as legitimate the demand for official language knowledge to be elected not only to the national parliament (see the case Podkolzina v. Latvia 2002) but also the knowledge of regional language to regional parliament (Birk-Levy v. France 2010).

Another issue is that when language preferences are established, they also have to be justified, because when official language creates a distinction based on language, this can be discriminatory from the perspective of international human rights law. Yet, when justified and reasonable, authorities must use another official language, in order not to be discriminatory, because this is a part of decentralization and, thus, ensures the stability of government (see the analysis of the Belgian linguistic case 1968 and Mathieu-Mohin and Clerfayt v. Belgium 1987 in de Varennes 2012: 26–35). Indeed, some authors stress the importance of perceived labor discrimination as a resource for nationalist mobilization (Gorenburg & Giuliano 2012).

It seems that one problem here is that the instrumentalist approach oversimplifies the nature of the relationships between ethnic elites and popular movements by setting their interests in opposition, even though they have not been, at least, by the adoption of the sovereignty declarations (see Article 2: 126). Ethnic elites, indeed,

attempted to include ethnic institutions, such as language requirements for top officials, into constitutions and language laws that could be used instrumentally in the political process (see Section 6 above). Yet, in doing so, they not only pursued their own goals but also envisaged these instruments as a part of a national revival in the broader nationalist agenda. Failure to include language preferences into constitutional systems in many former ASSRs became an obstacle for national aspirations because it does not allow the language to be spread to the upper social strata. However, as Miroslav Hroch argued, a necessary condition for the successful national project is that the ethnic group must be represented at all strata of society.

At the same time, language requirements for ordinary professions in public services and in the school curriculum could not be used as political instruments by default, but rather enhance the creation of the strata who earn a living from working with language. They could be better understood as a reaction to language attitudes among the population, which were also instrumental, because the people perceive the dominant language as more advantageous and choose first and foremost the language of opportunity for their children and themselves. However, in explaining the activities of the elites, the revivalist and instrumentalist options are not mutually exclusive but are, in fact, complementary to each other. The ethnic elites may advocate for language revival on behalf of the people they claim to represent because it is, after all, in their interest to maintain the support of the people.

Both revivalist and instrumentalist arguments have their influence on the normative thinking of political science and law that elaborate models for ethnic and linguistic diversity management in forms of political institutions or legal rights. Ethnic elites are aware of the vulnerability of the revivalist argument and often present their endeavor to preserve group identity as demands for language rights rather than as national demands. At the same time, the ruling elites wish to have and preserve a monopoly over the instrumental use. Nevertheless, the official status and other devices of language policy could not be used as instruments, either for the advancement of particular group interests or for the purpose of language revival, without the creation and functioning of ethnic institutions.

#### 8.4. Institutional Perspective

Based on the findings of the institutionalist theories, this study extends the institutionalist view to the official status of state languages. The institutionalist approach explains why the ethnic elites advocated for inclusion of institutional solutions to ethnic and linguistic issues in the foundational documents of the Republics that were built in the political system in the 1990s. The results of the case studies demonstrate that the official status for minority languages could be considered yet another 'ethnic institution'. It proved to be possible to use the official status of languages as an 'ethnic institution' that structures the relationships between the authorities and the population as well as between groups. This institution had only a restricted symbolic significance for the reinforcement of ethnicity and did not serve as an actual instrument of nationalist mobilization. However, it continues to work effectively as an element that balances the interests of different groups and keeps society together.

A century ago, the founders of the Soviet State believed that the establishment of the federal structure on the nationality principle and the promotion of national construction of the Soviet nations would provide a permanent solution to the 'national question'. As Walker Connor notes, one nation-building is another nation-destroying (Connor 1972). Almost a hundred years later, the opposite approach in contemporary Russian politics holds that the removal of 'ethnic institutions' up to the liquidation of ethnically defined federative units would solve the 'national question'. An unstated assumption is that if 'ethnic institutions' disappear, ethnicity will not be politicized. The main concern is the territorial integrity of the State and the main threat to it is believed to be the political mobilization of ethnicity. In the longer run, integration and assimilation of non-Russians into the single Russian nation is viewed as the solution.

Federalism as a model for ethnic diversity has begun to be presented as a temporary compromise. The ethnically defined units of the federation are being challenged, their nations deconstructed. Ethnicity is declared a cultural issue and not a political one. However, even according to normative liberal theory, on 'the market of ideas', the idea of Tatarstan as a civil nation of the Tatarstani

people is as justified as the idea of the Russian civil nation. What is a better polity? This is not only an issue of power relations, but the problem is how authorities will manage to justify the level of statehood (Zamyatin 2004). One can expect over the longer perspective that the policy of recognition through the federal structure will be stopped and the existence of the Republics as the constituent units of the legal-political landscape will be under challenge. One can expect that the policy of recognition will be challenged also in its linguistic dimension.

However, the salience of national identities varies and they may move to the background of politics and may again come to the forefront (Roeder 2012: 172–173). The problems not actualized through minority political representation might provoke conflicts. Instead of solving the ‘national question’, this approach might provoke minority nationalism and lead to a new aggravation of inter-ethnic tensions (see Gagnon 2003). Contrary to the rhetoric often used in recent Russian political discourse, it might not have been the ethnic institutions established in the 1920s and 1930s that were the reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union, but the policy directed at their erosion in the later Soviet period that provoked nationalist resentment among non-Russians.

Institutions are the means of conflict resolution that create a framework for negotiation of diverging interests. Even if an institution is established in the interest of a particular group, society in general benefits from its existence. Power relations in society are fixed in institutions and the way in which they structure the interaction between authorities and population. In the context of conflict prevention, federalization and autonomization became widespread as institutional methods of diversity management, power-sharing and territorial solutions (McGarry & O’Leary 1993: 4). Based on analysis of post-communist regimes, Brubaker and some other scholars argued that multinational federations are doomed to collapse (Brubaker 1996), but other scholars see ethno-federalism as a viable solution (see, e.g., McGarry & O’Leary 2005, Requejo 2001, Tully 2001). In the same way, an official status for non-dominant languages has an important capacity as a social institution that structures social relations.

## 9. Conclusion

What does it mean that a language is designated official? In the framework of this study it was argued that official status has two main functions. First of all, the language with an official status serves as the working language of authorities and, second, in addition it may be also used as a symbol of identity. What are the reasons for the designation of a minority language with an official status? First, the official status of minority languages serves foremost as a symbol of identity and, second, this status may also provide an opening for the language to access political or administrative office.

Whether a minority language becomes a working language also in reality depends on the configuration of its official status with regard to the majority language and the limitations imposed on it by the state, e.g., through its federal structure. If a minority language is designated as a sole official language in the region, its practical functions would not principally differ from those of a majority language, but its symbolic status will be always present. If a minority language is designated as being co-official along the majority language either in a region or in the whole territory, then, again, first of all, in their designation the minority language functions as a symbol of group identity and, thus, is an element of recognition. The issue of practical use in the case of co-official status is more complicated.

In the political discourse both functions are typically assumed to be two sides of the same coin and associated with the undividable official status. This assumption causes a logical vacuum of mismatch, if the ideal image representing a duality of functions of the official status is not reflected in social reality, when minority language is designated official but remains a mere symbol and does not work as the language in office. Perception of mismatch becomes stronger in a more frequent situation, when, along with being a symbol, the minority language penetrates some areas of official use. The language activists, then, interpret this situation as ‘systemic hypocrisy’ and call for the expansion of official use of minority languages in the name of ‘language revival’.

In practice, it is usually a certain degree of implementation of the co-official status that could be seen as a mark on a range

of extent in official use spreading from the score 'o' representing the absence of any practical use beyond the symbolic recognition to the score 'i' of the complete expansion of the minority language to all elements of official status that amounts to full-scale official bilingualism, which, however, hardly ever happens. The problem is that due to functional distribution of diglossia the co-official status leads to a 'zero-sum' game where either the majority or minority language has to win over the other. Typically, the dominant majority language already functions as a full-scale official language and has the score 'i', while the minority language often starts from 'o'.

What makes the problem even bigger for minority language is the circumstance that the score of the dominant language has to remain 'i' because of the design of co-official status that makes the use of the dominant language compulsory. The move to expand the use of minority language in real communicative situations is opposed on the basis of the 'efficiency assumption'. The communicative use of more than one language is perceived as superfluous and utterly non-pragmatic. For example, if a deputy used his or her right and started speaking in the non-dominant language at a parliamentary session, this speech has to be translated simultaneously or even consequentially back and forth. This situation would be considered as a violation of the symbolic order despite the co-official status, because everybody is expected to know and use the dominant language.

In other words, the co-official status does not in itself automatically change the symbolic order but could be filled with interactional practices that contest it. Such contestation will naturally be counteracted not only by the wider public, but also by those who are responsible for policy formation and implementation: parliamentarians and public officials. And due to political correctness and formal obedience to the symbolic order, this counteraction would rather remain unexpressed publicly, but implementers would 'thumb their nose' at minority activists behind their back and hamper fulfillment even of those status elements that were instituted (see Section 7.5). Therefore, non-complete implementation is typical and its extent reflects the strength of the 'push' beside the minority language.

Implementers are more ready, *inter alia*, as concession to minority demands in political bargaining, to expand the minority language use in the elements of domains that do not demand oral communication and, therefore, are not perceived as a part of 'zero-sum' game. These elements are, e.g., the names of authorities in two languages, bilingual street signs, even short audible announcements in public places such as bus stations and train stations, sometimes addresses and rarely speeches of public officials and the like. These are elements of practical use but they simultaneously perform symbolic function. Moreover, those elements that are not associated with symbolism but exclusively with practical use, simultaneously add visibility or audibility to the language, i.e., also perform a symbolic function. In effect, official bilingualism functions to a fuller extent in symbolic function.

What are the reasons for the designation of a *de facto* minority language with an official status? Three possible avenues have been explored: revivalist, instrumentalist and institutionalist explanations. While the study reveals documented evidence for the link between the demand of elites, legitimized as the popular will, and the officialization of languages, the motives behind the demand remain controversial and can be only inferred from the resulting configuration of the official status. Regarding the revivalist argument, what defines how successful expansion of the *de facto* minority language will be in the public sphere? The designation of the official language is an act that could best be understood within the dimension of power relations. In the case of the co-official status in a region, the key variable is whether the local ethnic elite is dominant and, in that case, how restricted it is in term of power-sharing.

In addition to the motive explicitly presented in their revivalist rhetoric, some evidence can be found that ethnic elites also pursued their own interests in attaining power by means of the instrumentalist use of compulsory knowledge of languages. However, the co-official status of minority languages has become neither an effective mechanism of language revival nor a political instrument for attaining power because of the position of majority elites. The majority elites are reluctant to support the move of the expansion of the *de facto* minority language on the 'integration assumption'

that the change in language practices would challenge their political status and trigger further ethnic demands. Furthermore, guided by instrumentalist considerations, the majority elites do not see that this move of the expansion would benefit them and see that it benefits only the ethnic elites.

A compromise among the elites results in a configuration of the co-official status, where the *de facto* minority language performs, first of all, the symbolic function, because this benefits all segments of regional elites providing the regional political unit with political legitimacy. The elite settlement typically includes the co-official status of languages in their function as a symbol of the multinational society but also as an ethnic institution. The institutionalist explanation connects the institutional level to identity politics in the logic of ethnosymbolism: institutions promote identity which might benefit certain instrumental interests but which is also the way to achieve a more stable society.

In summation, the official status of the minority languages is, first and foremost, the symbol of identity. Under certain conditions, this status can also serve as an instrument of minority language promotion, although not very effectively. Official status is a necessary but not sufficient condition for language revival. It is also a political and social institution that structures power relations between different branches of authorities in their horizontal and vertical dimensions as well as the authorities and citizens. It is enforced less through obligatoriness of its use and more through its symbolic power.

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