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**RUSSIAN LANGUAGE PRESTIGE IN THE STATES OF
THE FORMER SOVIET UNION**

by

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**RUSSIAN LANGUAGE PRESTIGE IN THE STATES OF THE FORMER
SOVIET UNION**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

The prestige of the Russian language has changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nicholas Ostler, a linguist and language historian, categorized four reasons why an imperial language would remain after the colonizing power leaves. He applied this theory to Russian in the states of the former Soviet Union. He found that only Belarus maintains a significant enough number of Russian speakers to fall into one of his categories. I find that the Russian language is prestigious in all fourteen former Soviet Union states because of its use regionally as a *lingua franca*. I begin with a review of language policy from Tsarist times through today's Russia. I follow this with a demographic survey of the major languages in each of the 14 former Soviet states, as well as a linguistic comparison of Russian with each republic's titular language. Next, using census data and language attitudes revealed through surveys and polls, I show how Russian is still a prestigious language in all FSU states, despite a decrease in the number of speakers, especially in younger generations. I conclude with a review of Ostler's four categories and reasons why I call Russian a dying regional *lingua franca*.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

How do we account for variation in the prestige of the Russian language in the states of the former Soviet Union? In other words, why did Belarus embrace Russian as the de-facto national language while all three of the Baltic states rushed to linguistically derussify their countries? The entire country of Kazakhstan is moving toward redefining what it means to be Kazakh. Then why do the majority of parents in Kazakhstan decline to send their children to Kazakh-medium schools, instead sending them to schools where Russian is the language of instruction?¹ The Russian language was considered necessary for all citizens of the Soviet Union. Is the Russian language still prestigious in the states of the former Soviet Union?

B. IMPORTANCE

So why do some former Soviet states continue to use Russian as an official language while some have attempted to wipe the existence of Russian from their shores? Is it simply a matter of linguistics, with Russian remaining as a common second language because it is closely related to the titular language of the former republic? Or are these former communist nations showing their preference for the west by changing their alphabets and enrolling their children in western language courses? Answers to these questions may explain why some former Soviet republics have good relations with Russia while others prefer to forget decades, and sometimes centuries, of their shared history.

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union were known for their imperial expansion into lands surrounding them. Like many colonizing peoples, their languages came with them. Whether the army or the Orthodox Church brought Russian into the newly conquered

¹ William Fierman, "Language and Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Kazakh-Medium Instruction in Urban Schools," *The Russian Review* 65, no. 1 (2006).

lands, the language eventually became known to the vast majority of the inhabitants. Russian remained the working language of the Soviet Union regardless of the nationality of the peoples.

Russian is not alone in this. The British spread the use of English around the globe. Thanks to them, English is considered the lingua franca of the world we live in today. Likewise, French was the lingua franca in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, French is still used in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Spanish is undoubtedly the most useful language in most of the western hemisphere.

Why did English, French and Spanish continue in the former colonies of Britain, France and Spain? Why did the newly independent peoples not reclaim their native languages? Ostler describes four reasons why an imperial language remains after the colonizing power leaves.² First, the conqueror's language is the first language of the people who ousted the conquerors. This is called "the *creole* reason" by Ostler.³ It was English-speakers who revolted against the British crown in America, and they had no other language to reclaim. Likewise, the Spanish had already been in America for hundreds of years, intermarrying and linguistically changing the landscape of Central and South America, prior to any independence movements. Spanish had been the language of many generations by the time any of the countries won their independence.

The second reason is related to a less than antagonistic relationship between the imperial power and the colonized people. This is Ostler's "*nostalgia* reason."⁴ The newly independent peoples want to maintain communications with the former power, and will continue to use its language. India's use of English as an associate language is an example of this.

² Nicholas Ostler, *Empires of the Word: A Language History of the World* (New York: Harper-Perennial, 2005), 444-5.

³ Ostler, 444.

⁴ Ibid.

Thirdly, some imperial languages hang on due to their usefulness in the new country, or for “*unity* reason[s].”⁵ This is a reason French is still used in sub-Saharan Africa. As Ostler states, “it just would not be practicable to administer Cameroon in any of its 270-plus indigenous languages.”⁶

Finally, the language may be viewed as a global lingua franca. Ostler calls this the “*globality* reason.”⁷ English’s universal appeal in today’s world is a good example of this, as was the adoption of French by many elites in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Where does Russian stand in the states of the former Soviet Union? Did every former republic rush to derussify their country? Which of Ostler’s reasons do Belarus, Kazakhstan and the remaining former Soviet states illustrate?

D. METHODS AND SOURCES

I will conduct a comparative study to determine Russian language prestige in the states of the former Soviet Union. I will group these 14 states into four areas: the Baltic states, comprising Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; the western former Soviet Union, comprising Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova; the Caucasus, comprising Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia; and Central Asia, comprising Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

I will determine Russian’s prestige by looking at its status as a foreign language in each of these states. Is it a language of education, both elementary and higher? Is it used as a lingua franca amongst workers with different native tongues in the workplace? Is it used at home or in other social settings? Is Russian the first language kids learn or has it been replaced by national languages?

⁵ Ostler, 444.

⁶ Ibid., 445.

⁷ Ibid.

I will use censuses from these states to answer some of these questions. Other primary sources include education records, higher education application requirements, conference proceedings, organizational and governmental web sites and internet social forums.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

“L[anguage] P[olicy] is not just an exercise in philosophical inquiry; it is interested in addressing social problems which often involve language, to one degree or another, and in proposing realistic remedies.”⁸ In Chapter II, I will review the language policies of Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation today.

In Chapter III, I will place Russian into context within the linguistic sphere and attempt to explain why some former Soviet citizens, while perfectly willing to learn Russian, were incapable of learning it to the level of “second mother tongue.”⁹ For this, I will start the chapter with a small primer on historical linguistics, which I believe is necessary for context. Next, I will cover the demographics and linguistic survey of each of the four regions in the study. I will conclude Chapter III with short linguistic comparisons of Russian with each of the 14 national languages of the former Soviet states.

In Chapter IV, I will reintroduce Ostler’s four reasons why an imperial language remains after the colonizing power leaves. I will assign one of Ostler’s reasons to each of the former Soviet republics based on the prestige of Russian in that country. My research will show that Russian as a whole cannot be lumped into one category; rather, the language’s prestige is different in each country. Chapter V will include my conclusions and some recommendations for further research.

⁸ Thomas Ricento, “Language Policy: Theory and Practice—An Introduction,” in *An Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*, ed. Thomas Ricento (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 11.

⁹ Mart Rannut, “Linguistic Policy in the Soviet Union,” *Multilingua* 10, no. 3 (1991): 246.

II. RUSSIAN LANGUAGE POLICY FROM TSARIST RUSSIA TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

A. LANGUAGE POLICY

1. Introduction

Should a voting ballot in Serbia be written only in Serbian, or should it also be written in Hungarian for the ethnic Hungarians living in the semi-autonomous province of Vojvodina? Should a ballot in Kosovo be written in both Albanian, the “national language” of the new state, and Serbian, for those native Serbs living in Kosova Mitrovica?

Should a new member of Latvia’s Saeima, who happens to be ethnically Russian, be required to prove her Latvian language proficiency? Must the Finnish government provide teachers who are fluent speakers of Lapp, so that Lapp children can be educated in their mother tongue?

All of these issues are central to a discussion about language policy. Language policy combines the use of language in a social context with policies surrounding organizations, international institutions, and states. Language policy advocates deal with three components: the language used by a speech community; beliefs about the language being used; and intervention to adjust the language used.¹⁰

2. Examples of Language Policy at Various Levels

Language policy can be found at different levels of organization, and can, in and of itself, be formal or informal. States may require applicants for permanent resident status to have some language proficiency, as New Zealand does with a minimum score on an English language test. Or private enterprises may require language proficiency for their employees, or in rare circumstances, demand it of its customers.

¹⁰ Bernard Spolsky, *Language Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5.

Recently the owner of a well-known cheese steak sandwich restaurant in Philadelphia found himself in legal hot water when customers complained about his posting of a potentially offensive, and possibly illegal, sign. However, after months and months of legal proceedings, the sign was ruled not discriminatory. The sign read, “This is America. When ordering, speak English.”¹¹

Another example of language policy within a private organization led not only to legal action, but to congressional action as well. Last year, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) sued the Salvation Army. The suit claimed that the Salvation Army fired two Spanish-speaking employees because they would not speak English on the job. One of the organization’s thrift stores in Massachusetts required its employees to speak English and posted signs to that effect. Additionally, the store’s management gave the employees a full year to learn English in order to fulfill its language policy.¹²

This case is an instance of an employer’s language policy leading to legal action. Additionally, the Salvation Army case itself has led to legislation in Congress to protect employers from legal action for requiring their employees to speak, in the words of Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), “America’s common language.”¹³ The Salvation Army’s insistence on their employees speaking English is an example of language policy at the organizational level.

States may also maintain language policies. Belgium is a good example of this. Belgium is a state with three official languages: French, Flemish (a mutually-intelligible

¹¹ Andrew Maykuth, “Ruling: ‘Speak English’ Sign at Cheesesteak Shop not Discriminatory,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 20, 2008, http://www.philly.com/inquirer/home_top_stories/20080320_Ruling__quot_Speak_English__quot__sign_at_cheesesteak_shop_not_discriminatory.html, (accessed March 22, 2008).

¹² John Fund, “Mi Casa, Sue Casa,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 19, 2007, <http://www.opinionjournal.com/diary/?id=110010881> (accessed March 22, 2008).

¹³ Ibid.

dialect of Dutch), and German. The government of Belgium recognizes the multilingual spirit of the country and encourages the use of many languages, especially in Brussels, the capital of Europe.

Beyond the state, each of the official languages' speech communities has its own language policy. Each has organized itself for defending and promoting its language, as well as cooperating with the other two language communities. Each community has placed emphasis on different aspects for their language policy. The French community, for example, has placed its emphasis in three areas: improving the French language's legibility; increasing the language's visibility in subject areas such as science and economics; and, organizing events to increase the public's exposure to the language. The Flemish community has joined with the Dutch Language Union in the Netherlands, and is cooperatively campaigning for more exposure for their language, both in Belgium and abroad. The German community has set up two annual prizes for authors and school children to ensure their language continues to thrive.¹⁴

B. LANGUAGE POLICY FROM TSARIST RUSSIA TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The Soviets' language policies, initially, encouraged their fellow non-Russians to continue using their native languages. During the Stalin era, language policy in the Soviet Union was changed to emphasize fluency in Russian as a key to *über*-Soviet-ness,

¹⁴ Council of Europe/ERICarts, "Belgium: 4.2.2. Language Issues and Policies," *Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*, 9th edition, 2008.

a “second mother tongue” for all.¹⁵ After Stalin, Russian was still pushed for all, but with an acknowledgement of native languages, if only to discourage their interference in speaking Russian.¹⁶

Is it this concept of a “second mother tongue” for all Soviet citizens that differentiates the response Russian received from the response received by other former imperial languages? Paradoxically, languages like English and French continue to be used as lingua franca in many parts of the world, despite the almost universally negative feelings toward the colonizing powers that brought them. Russian language policy under the Soviets initially was generally more positive towards minority language in the lands they conquered; despite this, Russian seems to be declining in use in many of the former Soviet republics.

Before the end of the Soviet Union, every republic (except Turkmenistan) enacted a language law that favored the national language over Russian.¹⁷ These laws affected the citizens of each country differently. In some of these “new” countries, there were more Russian speakers than speakers of the national language.¹⁸ In the majority of post-Soviet republics, Russian speakers were the most populous “minority” group. Some dissatisfied, disaffected, and potentially disenfranchised citizens responded with marches

¹⁵ While Stalin’s efforts could be described as promoting Russian as a second mother tongue for every Soviet citizen, the phrase “second mother tongue” was not used until the time of Brezhnev. Isabelle Kreindler, “Forging a Soviet People: Ethnolinguistics in Central Asia,” in *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, ed. William Fierman, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 219.

¹⁶ William Fierman, “Introduction: The Division of Linguistic Space,” *Nationalities Papers* 23, no. 3 (1995), 507-8; Aneta Pavlenko, “Russian as a Lingua Franca,” *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 26 (2006/Oct/25), 81; Isabelle Kreindler, “The Changing Status of Russian in the Soviet Union,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 33, (1982); Kreindler, “A Second Missed Opportunity: Russian in Retreat as a Global Language,” *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale De Science Politique* 14, no. 3, The Emergent World Language System, *Le systeme linguistique mondial en formation*, (July 1993); Bryon MacWilliams, “A Delicate Balancing Act,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 50, no. 37 (May 21, 2004); Ina Druviete, “Linguistic Human Rights in the Baltic States,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 127 (1997): 164-5.

¹⁷ Fierman, “Division of Linguistic Space.”

¹⁸ Kreindler, “A Second Missed Opportunity.”

against the government's language policy.¹⁹ Alternatively, Belarus, despite enacting a law making Belarusian the national language, reversed itself and Russian is currently the language of Lukashenko's government and the de-facto language of Belarusians.²⁰

Higher education in most of the new countries is now in the national language. This has led to some difficulty for the students. Many were brought up in Russian-language schools and homes and are thus weak in their "native" language. Additionally, the texts that the students use in college are not written in their national language; in essence, they are lectured to in their national language, but use Russian textbooks. Some countries, like Kazakhstan, have solved this problem by allowing the students to decide if they want to pursue their education in Russian or Kazakh. Another result of this new education policy is that more students are choosing western languages for their foreign language education, both for the availability of books and future prospects.²¹

So why does Russian language prestige seem to be lagging in the former republics? Why is it not still the "second mother tongue" of all former Soviets? To answer the first question, a definition of lingua franca is in order. To answer the second is a bit more difficult.

A lingua franca is a national language used as a common language among a linguistically-mixed population.²² UNESCO defined a lingua franca as "a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them."²³ English, as used in India, is a good example of this. India has over 400 languages in use by its citizens, but only two official languages: Hindi and English. There are over 400 living languages in India representing

¹⁹ Anna Fournier, "Mapping Identities: Russian Resistance to Linguistic Ukrainisation in Central and Eastern Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 54, no. 3 (May 2002): 422-4; Laada Bilaniuk, *Contested Tongues: Language Politics and Cultural Correction in Ukraine* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2005), 14-5.

²⁰ Ostler, 443; MacWilliams, "A Delicate Balancing Act"; Pavlenko, "Russian as a Lingua Franca," 85.

²¹ MacWilliams, "A Delicate Balancing Act."

²² Max K. Adler, *Pidgins, Creoles and Lingua Francas: A Sociolinguistic Study* (Hamburg: Buske Verlag, 1977), 101.

²³ Quoted in: Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 59.

five language families. Sometimes two Indians meeting on the street have no common language between them except English. English is the lingua franca between these speakers.

As opposed to the Indians' use of English, Russian was never intended to be the lingua franca of the Soviet Union. Despite Stalin's "second mother tongue" efforts, national languages were still used throughout the non-Russian republics of the USSR for daily communication, Russian being reserved for communicating with communist leaders, doctors, military commanders and others sent from the homeland. This is unfortunate, since Russian was the perfect medium for all activities normally conveyed by a lingua franca, like trade, science, education, military and government.

Had the Soviets simply emphasized Russian's use as a lingua franca, a "link language,"²⁴ it might remain prestigious today in the eyes of the former Soviet citizens. Unfortunately, the Soviet government pushed it. Their desire to make Russian the second mother tongue for all Soviet citizens is possibly one reason for the negative prestige of Russian. Interestingly, Soviet language policy mirrored that of Tsarist Russia. In both cases, as the reign's power was fading, more emphasis was placed on the learning of Russian as a requisite for belonging.²⁵ And in both cases, language policy presaged the same thing: collapse of the regime.

In answer to the second question, Russian is no longer the second mother tongue of all former Soviet citizens possibly because it never truly was the second language. (Estimates of Russian fluency range from a low of 15 percent in Central Asia to a high of 80 percent in Belarus.)²⁶ A mother tongue, after all, is one a person learned from his mother, his first language, and for many, the language one speaks and understands first. "A language is...part of one's personality, a form of behavior that has its roots in our

²⁴ Robert L. Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1989), 105.

²⁵ Kreindler, "Changing Status," 27.

²⁶ M. Mobin Shorish, "Planning by Decree: Soviet Language Policy in Central Asia," *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 8, no. 1 (April 1984): 45; William Fierman, "Language and Identity in Kazakhstan: Formulations in Policy Documents 1987-1997," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 31, no. 2 (1998); Fierman, "Division of Linguistic Space"; MacWilliams, "A Delicate Balancing Act."

earliest experiences.”²⁷ A Kyrgyz citizen expressed it thus in 1982, several years before the fall of the USSR: “[A] language can become a second mother tongue only when it is grasped emotionally...when behind its every word there stands an image, when it awakens a whole swarm of images.”²⁸ The Soviets attempted to make everyone in the Union a Soviet by giving them the same second mother tongue.

In today’s Russia, a rescue campaign for the language is underway, led by the Center for the Development of the Russian Language. The Center initially had some high-visibility with the help of then Russian president Vladimir Putin’s wife, Ludmila Putina.²⁹ The Center has since lost its well-connected spokesperson but that does not mean that recognizable names are missing from the list of the Russian language’s defenders.

Shortly before leaving office, President Putin signed a decree establishing the *Russkiy Mir* Foundation. Added to the list of language defenders are notable academics and cultural figures from throughout Russia, including the rector of St. Petersburg University, who herself is also the president of an international association of Russian language teachers.³⁰

Of the goals of the foundation, one is integral in improving the prestige of the Russian language. *Russkiy Mir* is established for the purpose of “promot[ing] the Russian language” and is tasked with “support[ing] Russian language study abroad.”³¹

²⁷ Kreindler, “Changing Status,” 26.

²⁸ This Kyrgyz citizen is a Russian raised in Krygyzstan who works as a Russian language teacher. Kreindler, “A Second Missed Opportunity,” 263; Kreindler, “Forging a Soviet People,” 223.

²⁹ “Supruga Prezidenta Vladeyet Iazykom” (“The Wife of the President Protects the Language”), *Moskovskii Komsomolets (Moscow Komsomol)*, October 4, 2001, online edition, <http://www.mk.ru/blogs/idmk/2001/10/04/mk-daily/40108/>, (accessed December 11, 2008), translation is mine.

³⁰ “Russian President Vladimir Putin Signs Decree Establishing the Russkiy Mir Foundation,” *Russkiy Mir*, June 26, 2007, <http://www.russkiymir.org/en/news/index.php?from4=44&id4=151>, (accessed October 7, 2008).

³¹ “Ukaz Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii o Sozdanii Fonda ‘Russkiy Mir’” (“Decree of the President of the Russian Federation on the Creation of the ‘Russian World’ Fund”), *O Funde (About the Fund)*, *Russkiy Mir*, <http://russkiymir.ru/ru/about/ukaz/> (accessed December 11, 2008), translation is mine.

This last point is important to stress. Only a few months after the Russkiy Mir decree, Putin emphasized the importance of the Russian language in the states of the FSU.

We, as you may be aware, have created a special organization called the Russkiy Mir Foundation for the purpose of supporting the study of the Russian language abroad, and of course this means, *above all else, countries of the former Soviet Union*. We will pay particular attention to this issue in Kazakhstan, keeping in mind the enormous number of people there who consider Russian their native language (emphasis mine).³²

This was in response to a question from an unidentified resident of the southwestern town of Aktau, in Kazakhstan, during the sixth airing of the world-wide teleconference “Direct Line with the President of Russia.”³³

³² “President Vladimir Putin Notes Important Role of the Russkiy Mir Foundation in the Support of Russian Language Studies Outside Russia,” *Russkiy Mir*, October 18, 2007, <http://www.russkiymir.org/en/news/index.php?from4=29&id4=153> (accessed October 7, 2008).

³³ Ibid.

III. LINGUISTIC SURVEY OF THE LANGUAGES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

A. HISTORICAL LINGUISTICS PRIMER

1. Introduction

A distinguishing feature of humanity is its use of language. Certainly an argument can be made that some animals communicate among themselves. Certain bird species use special warbles or songs to warn others of the presence of an enemy. Apes have been taught sign language and use the language to express desires and needs.

But humans use language to a degree beyond animal communication. With language, humanity can talk about events in time, past, present and future, as well as hypothetical and conditional. We have taken language to a level vastly beyond a simple expression of needs or the protection and continuation of a species.

All human languages are natural entities, created by humans' need to communicate. When two persons communicate by use of a language, we say they are speaking the same language. At a certain point in the distant past, it is possible that all humans spoke the same language. And that at another point in time, as humans began to move to new, isolated areas, this language split into different languages. We have no way of knowing if this is true, since we have no written records of this first proto-language.

2. Language Typology

Every language on earth today belongs to a family of languages. Some of these families are huge, with hundreds of languages as members, such as the Indo-European language family. Some are so small they have a membership consisting of only one language, such as the Basque language of Spain and France. Despite being spoken by a people living in the middle of western Europe, Basque is an isolated language, related to

no other language on earth, at least as far as linguists have been able to deduce.³⁴ Linguists believe that Basque is the surviving language of the people who inhabited Europe before the ancestors of modern English, French, Polish and other related languages moved into the continent.

Linguists who study these language relationships and how languages change over time are studying historical linguistics. Historical linguistics has been a recognized area of study since the late 18th century. Sir William Jones, a British judge in service in India, noticed that the Hindus' liturgical language, Sanskrit, possessed an incredible likeness to ancient Greek and Latin. In fact, Jones went further in his discourse on language:

The Sanskrit language...is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin...bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no [linguist] could examine them all three, without believing them to have sprung from some common source...there is a similar reason, though not quite so forcible, for supposing that both the Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had the same origin with the Sanskrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family...³⁵

The theory here is that every member of a language family descended from a single mother language. Jones discovered what has become known as the Indo-European language family. He identified above the source languages for our modern Hind-Urdu (Sanskrit); Greek; Spanish, French and Italian (Latin); German, English and Danish (Gothic); Irish and Welsh (Celtic); and Persian-Farsi (Old Persian). This language family got its name, Indo-European, due to the locales where the family's languages are found. In this family, besides those mentioned above, also belong Russian, Portuguese, Yiddish,

³⁴ Theories abound among linguists as to similarities between Basque and many of the world's languages. Most of these theories result from a branch of linguistics called lexicostatistics. Lexicostatistics is concerned with comparing word lists of two languages to determine genetic relationship; "chance similarities" up to 3.5 percent are normal, anything over 7 percent is considered "statistically significant." Some linguists have found statistically significant similarities between Basque and some "Soviet" languages, namely Avar and Circassian, both spoken in the Northern Caucasus. William H. Jacobsen, Jr., "Basque Language Origin Theories," in *Basque Cultural Studies*, ed. William A. Douglass, Carmelo Urza, Linda White and Joseba Zulaika (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1999), 28, 31.

³⁵ Quoted in Benjamin W. Fortson IV, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 8.

Dutch, Armenian, Latvian, Ossetian, Pashtu, Kurdish and Albanian, among others. In the end, linguists divided the Indo-European language family into 11 different branches. These branches and some of their representative languages are: Celtic (Irish, Welsh, Manx, Scots Gaelic, Breton, Cornish), Germanic (Norwegian, Swedish, Icelandic, Danish, English, Dutch, German, Yiddish), Balto-Slavic (Lithuanian, Latvian, Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovene, Polish, Czech), Italic (Latin, French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese, Romanian, Italian), Indo-Iranian (Persian-Farsi, Persian-Dari, Kurdish, Pashtu, Tajik) and a few languages that are a branch in and of themselves: Albanian, Greek and Armenian. Finally, there are a few branches that are extinct, but we have enough records of the languages to classify them as Indo-European: Tocharian (Tocharian A and B), Anatolian (Hittite, Lydian, Luvian), and some that can only be classified as Indo-European and not in a specific branch, such as Phrygian, Thracian, Lusitanian and Venetic.³⁶

One way that linguists can identify the family to which a language belongs is by comparing its lexicon to other languages of the family. As seen in the table below, there are similarities between many Indo-European languages in their lexicons. The Basque and Finnish words are included as examples of “European” languages which are not members of the Indo-European language family.

³⁶ From Figure 1.1 in Fortson, 10.

English	<i>one</i>	<i>two</i>	<i>three</i>	<i>ten</i>	<i>mother</i>	<i>father</i>	<i>brother</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>to be</i>
German	<i>eins</i>	<i>zwei</i>	<i>drei</i>	<i>zehn</i>	<i>mutter</i>	<i>vater</i>	<i>bruder</i>	<i>ich</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>sein</i>
Dutch	<i>een</i>	<i>twee</i>	<i>drie</i>	<i>tien</i>	<i>moeder</i>	<i>vader</i>	<i>broer</i>	<i>ik</i>	<i>jij</i>	<i>zijn</i>
Danish	<i>en</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>tre</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>moder</i>	<i>fader</i>	<i>broder</i>	<i>jeg</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>være</i>
Spanish	<i>uno</i>	<i>dos</i>	<i>tres</i>	<i>diez</i>	<i>madre</i>	<i>padre</i>	<i>hermano</i>	<i>yo</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>estar</i>
French	<i>un</i>	<i>deux</i>	<i>trois</i>	<i>dix</i>	<i>mère</i>	<i>père</i>	<i>frère</i>	<i>je</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>être</i>
Romanian	<i>unu</i>	<i>doi</i>	<i>trei</i>	<i>zece</i>	<i>mamă</i>	<i>tată</i>	<i>frate</i>	<i>eu</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>a fi</i>
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Serbo-Croat	<i>jedan</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>deset</i>	<i>majka</i>	<i>otac</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>biti</i>
Czech	<i>jeden</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>deset</i>	<i>matka</i>	<i>otec</i>	<i>bratr</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Hindi-Urdu	<i>ek</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>teen</i>	<i>das</i>	<i>mātā</i>	<i>pitā</i>	<i>bhai</i>	<i>mayn</i>	<i>aap</i>	<i>hōnā</i>
Persian-Farsi	<i>yek</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>seh</i>	<i>dah</i>	<i>mâdar</i>	<i>pedar</i>	<i>barâdar</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>boodan</i>
Greek	<i>enas</i>	<i>dyo</i>	<i>tria</i>	<i>deka</i>	<i>mana</i>	<i>pateras</i>	<i>adelfos</i>	<i>ego</i>	<i>eseis</i>	<i>eimai</i>
Albanian	<i>një</i>	<i>dy</i>	<i>tre</i>	<i>dhjetë</i>	<i>mëmë</i>	<i>baba</i>	<i>vëlla</i>	<i>unë</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>jam</i>
Basque	<i>bat</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>hiru</i>	<i>hamar</i>	<i>ama</i>	<i>aita</i>	<i>anaia</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>izan</i>
Finnish	<i>yksi</i>	<i>kaksi</i>	<i>kolme</i>	<i>kymmenen</i>	<i>äiti</i>	<i>isä</i>	<i>veli</i>	<i>minä</i>	<i>sinä</i>	<i>olla</i>

Table 1. Indo-European Lexicon Comparison

B. RUSSIAN'S PLACE IN THE LINGUISTIC SPHERE

One can see how Russian fits in with its Slavic cousins, Serbo-Croatian and Czech. Except for a few vowel differences, the words in Table 1 all look the same for these three Slavic languages.

The number *two* is a good illustration of Russian's place in the greater Indo-European family. All of the Indo-European languages represented here use /t/ or /d/ in initial position (note that in the German word *zwei*, the “z” is pronounced /ts/). Both are the same consonant, except for one characteristic: /t/ is the voiceless alveolar plosive and /d/ the voiced version.³⁷

³⁷ Voicing refers to whether or not the vocal cords vibrate when the consonant is articulated. The vocal cords vibrate when a voiced consonant is pronounced; they do not vibrate for a voiceless. David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), under the term “voice.” Cited hereafter as *Dictionary of Linguistics*.

Compare the Indo-European words to the Basque and Finnish. Basque speakers say *bi* for *two*, while Finnish speakers say *kaksi*. Likewise there is similarity among the Indo-European languages in the word *mother*. All of the Indo-European languages use an /m/ initially and most of them have an alveolar plosive in the second syllable. The same cannot be said for Basque and Finnish.

Table 2 shows select Russian lexicon compared with the national languages of the 14 former Soviet republics. One can see the similarities between Russian and the other Slavic languages, Ukrainian and Belarusian, especially the numbers, pronouns and the auxiliary verb *to be*. Looking further to the remaining Indo-European languages, Latvian, Lithuanian, Moldovan, Armenian and Tajik, similarities are again obvious. The number *two* begins with the voiced alveolar plosive /d/ for all but Armenian (whose *yerku* is probably a loan from the Turkic or Caucasian languages surrounding it). The same can be said for the number *ten* in all of the Indo-European languages except for Tajik's *on*, which is most probably a loan from the Turkic languages, and Armenian's *tas*. However, /t/ is also an alveolar plosive, like /d/, only it is the voiceless version of the pair. The opposite is happening with the second person singular pronoun, *you*. Russian and its relatives all start with the voiceless alveolar plosive, with Armenian choosing the voiced instead.

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Estonian	<i>üks</i>	<i>kaks</i>	<i>kolm</i>	<i>kümme</i>	<i>ema</i>	<i>isa</i>	<i>vend</i>	<i>mina</i>	<i>teie</i>	<i>olema</i>
Latvian	<i>viens</i>	<i>divi</i>	<i>trīs</i>	<i>desmit</i>	<i>māte</i>	<i>tēvs</i>	<i>brālis</i>	<i>es</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>būt</i>
Lithuanian	<i>vienas</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>trys</i>	<i>dešimt</i>	<i>motina</i>	<i>tėvas</i>	<i>broils</i>	<i>aš</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>būti</i>
Belarusian	<i>adzin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>try</i>	<i>dzésiac'</i>	<i>matka</i>	<i>bačka</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>być</i>
Ukrainian	<i>odyn</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>maty</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>buty</i>
Moldovan	<i>unu</i>	<i>doi</i>	<i>trei</i>	<i>zece</i>	<i>mamă</i>	<i>tată</i>	<i>frate</i>	<i>eu</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>a fi</i>
Georgian	<i>erti</i>	<i>ori</i>	<i>sami</i>	<i>ati</i>	<i>deda</i>	<i>mama</i>	<i>dzma</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>shen</i>	<i>var</i>
Azeri	<i>bir</i>	<i>iki</i>	<i>üç</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>qardaş</i>	<i>män</i>	<i>saen</i>	<i>olmaq</i>
Armenian	<i>mek</i>	<i>yerku</i>	<i>yerek</i>	<i>tas</i>	<i>mayr</i>	<i>hayr</i>	<i>eghbayr</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>em</i>
Kazakh	<i>bir</i>	<i>yeki</i>	<i>uś</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>bauryym</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>sen</i>	<i>bol</i>
Uzbek	<i>bir</i>	<i>ikki</i>	<i>uch</i>	<i>o'n</i>	<i>ona</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>aka</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>sen</i>	<i>bo'lmoq</i>
Turkmen	<i>bir</i>	<i>iki</i>	<i>uĉ</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>dogan</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>siz</i>	<i>bolmak</i>
Kyrgyz	<i>bir</i>	<i>eki</i>	<i>üĉ</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>birtuugan</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>sen</i>	<i>bolu</i>
Tajik	<i>yak</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>daĥ</i>	<i>modar</i>	<i>padar</i>	<i>barodar</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>budan</i>

Table 2. Russian Lexicon Comparison with National Languages of FSU Republics

C. FOURTEEN FSU LANGUAGES COMPARED WITH RUSSIAN

1. Introduction

In the following section I will briefly review the demographics of the four regions I have identified in this study: Central Asia, comprising the FSU states of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; the southern Caucasus, comprising the states of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia; the eastern states of Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine; and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Next I will conduct a linguistic survey of each region to identify the languages extant in the region. This survey will list all languages in the region with a sufficiently strong population as determined by me. For these surveys I use data collected by SIL International, “a faith-based organization that studies, documents, and assists in

developing the world's lesser-known languages.”³⁸ SIL International periodically publishes an online book entitled *Ethnologue* with up-to-date census data on numbers of speakers of many languages, including the languages in these surveys.

After the linguistic survey, I compare the 14 national languages of the FSU states with Russian. This is important and necessary to give the reader an idea of the difficulty Soviet citizens had in learning Russian, and likewise, this section will perhaps show why so few Russians cared to learn some of the languages of these states. Contrariwise, this linguistic survey will show how some languages, due to their typological closeness to Russian, resulted in higher levels of Russian proficiency among the titular peoples.³⁹

2. Central Asia

a. Demographics

Central Asia is a region of the Asian continent comprising an area of almost four million square kilometers, or one-and-a-half million square miles, a little bigger than the total area of the six biggest U.S. states (Alaska, Texas, California, Montana, New Mexico and Arizona). Within this vast area live 51 million people (or 34 people per square mile) of more than 100 different ethnic groups, such as Turkmen, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Kyrgyz, as one would expect. But more surprising to some are the numbers of Germans, Russians, Ukrainians and Koreans living in the area. More interesting for this study are the ethnic groups very few Americans have heard of, like the Karakalpaks, Uyghurs or Tatars.

All of these peoples are multilingual, in that they speak more than one language. For many, one of these languages is what identifies them as a member of their ethnic group. Central Asia is a linguistically diverse area; this section will describe the current state of the linguistic stock in the states of Central Asia, and then will consider the current state of the Russian language in the area.

³⁸ “What is SIL International?” *SIL International*, <http://www.sil.org/sil/> (accessed June 1, 2008).

³⁹ Aneta Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” *Russian Linguistics* 32 (2008): 76.

The populations of speakers described could be increased many times over if the censuses undertaken in the region asked about second and third languages spoken by the populations. For example, most of the population of Kazakhstan over the age of 20 speak Russian as well as, if not better than, they speak Kazakh.

Additionally, there is no way to tell from the data how well Central Asians speak the languages they claim as their mother tongues. Again, for many, Russian was their first language (if not the “second mother tongue” wished for by Soviet language policy experts), but for political or patriotic reasons they may claim their national language as their mother tongue, even if they do not speak it as well as they speak Russian.

b. Turkic Languages

The vast majority of the languages spoken by people in central Asia belong to the Turkic language family. This family is actually a sub-group of the Altaic group, to which also belong such languages as Mongolian, Manchu and Korean. The Turkic branch of Altaic spans from the western reaches of Asia in today’s Turkey, all the way east as far as western China where one finds the Uyghurs. At one time in history, of course, this language family was spread farther west with the vast Ottoman empire, from Andalucía in today’s Spain to much of the south Slavic lands of Bosnia, Serbia and Bulgaria.

The Turkic languages are then subdivided into regional groups. Southwestern Turkic includes modern Turkish, Azerbaijani (or Azeri) and Turkmen. Northwestern Turkic includes Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Tatar and Karakalpak. Southeastern Turkic includes Uzbek and Uyghur. Northeastern Turkic comprises languages of Siberia; none of these languages are extant in Central Asia. Two final Turkic groups are the Oghur and Arghu. Chuvash is the sole surviving language of the Oghur Turkic group,

with only about 33,000 speakers in Central Asia, mostly in Kazakhstan. Khalaj is the only language of the Arghu Turkic language group, with no speakers in Central Asia.⁴⁰

The titular Turkic languages of Central Asia are Uzbek, Turkmen, Kazakh and Kyrgyz. While many would call these languages simply mutually intelligible dialects,⁴¹ for political reasons it is easier to think of them as individual, separate languages. Each of these languages is spoken by at least one million people in Central Asia today.

Tajikistan is the sole non-Turkic country in Central Asia. The majority of the population of Tajikistan speaks Tajik, an Indo-European language related to Persian-Farsi, and more distantly, to English, Russian, German and hundreds of other languages. In the discussion below about the Turkic languages of Central Asia, I exclude Tajikistan, unless otherwise noted.

When we look at each Central Asian country specifically, we see that the Turkic languages represent varying percentages of the populations. The speakers of Turkic languages vary from a low of 46 percent of the population of Kazakhstan to a high of over 83 percent in Turkmenistan. Even our Indo-European cousins, the Tajiks, have over one million Uzbek speakers in their country, totaling about a quarter of their population. This is understandable when one looks at the map of Central Asia we have today thanks to Stalin's cartographical skills in the 1930s.⁴²

In real numbers, however, these percentages lose their impact. Kazakhstan, with the lowest percentage of speakers at 46 percent, still has over seven and a half million people who have a Turkic language as their mother tongue. Turkmenistan, with a high of over 84 percent, reaches less than half the number of Turkic language speakers in Kazakhstan.

⁴⁰ Lars Johanson, "The History of Turkic," in *The Turkic Languages*, ed. Lars Johanson and Eva Agnes Csato (New York: Routledge, 1988), 81-125.

⁴¹ Jerry F. Hough, "Sociology, the State and Language Politics," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 12, no. 2 (1996): 109.

⁴² Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1994), 438-9.

Specifically, Kazakhstan's seven and a half million Turkic speakers are mostly speakers of the titular language, Kazakh. The remaining Turkic speakers, totaling about 9 percent combined, are speakers of Uzbek and Tatar. It is important to remember that these Turkic speakers in Kazakhstan still are a minority; the majority of the population in Kazakhstan speaks an Indo-European language.

Moving clockwise through Central Asia (skipping Tajikistan) we come to Kyrgyzstan next. Over 65 percent of the Kyrgyz population speaks a Turkic language, amounting to just over three million speakers. Of these, 80 percent speak Kyrgyz as their first language. The remaining Turkic speakers are all native speakers of Uzbek.

In Uzbekistan, the next stop on our clockwise tour, we find four Turkic languages attested. Of these, the most widely used is of course Uzbek. Over 15 million people, or 89 percent of the Turkic speakers, speak this as their mother tongue. Kazakh speakers total almost a million at over 885,000. Tatar and Karakalpak speakers round out the group with very close to a million speakers combined.

Turkmenistan is our last stop, with the largest majority of Turkic speakers of any of the Central Asian states. Of the three and two-thirds million Turkic speakers in Turkmenistan, 87 percent of them speak Turkmen, the national language. The remaining Turkic speakers are our ubiquitous Uzbek speakers, at almost 400,000. Kazakh speakers round out the total with about 86,000 speakers, or just 2 percent of the Turkic total.

But let us not forget Tajikistan. Despite being home to an Indo-European speaking majority, there is a significant population of Turkic speakers there. Fully one quarter of the population speaks Uzbek. This is no small group; Uzbek speakers total almost one and a half million in Tajikistan.

c. Indo-European Languages

The Indo-European language family is represented in Central Asia by over 20 languages, to include Armenian, German, Russian, Ukrainian, Farsi, Tajik and even

some unexpected ones, such as Lithuanian and Romanian. Of the 51 million people living in Central Asia, fully 34 percent speak an Indo-European language as their first language, totaling some 17 million people.

One would think that Tajikistan would have the greatest number of Indo-European speakers since Tajik is the sole Indo-European national language in the Central Asian region. However, at 3.7 million speakers of Indo-European languages, Tajikistan actually ranks second to Kazakhstan's 8.5 million. Of course, Kazakhstan also has more than twice the population of Tajikistan. Still, percentages reveal that only 53 percent of those living in Tajikistan speak an Indo-European language to Kazakhstan's 56 percent.

Kazakhstan is the reigning champ in this linguistic bout due to the large number of Russian, German and Ukrainian speakers, a legacy of Stalinist nationalities policies. Of the 8.5 million Indo-European speakers in Kazakhstan, 6.2 million speak Russian, followed by a million speakers of German and almost a million speakers of Ukrainian. The remaining Indo-European speakers use Belarusian, Polish, Romanian, Lithuanian, Greek, Armenian and Tajik.

Retracing our clockwise tour brings us to Kyrgyzstan next. Kyrgyzstan has the third most speakers of Indo-European languages as a percentage of its population at 33 percent. Of this 1.6 million, 1.4 million are speakers of Russian. Next most widely spread are the German and Ukrainian speakers at about 100,000 each. The rest are made up of Armenian, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Kurdish, Romanian and Tajik speakers.

While Kyrgyzstan is the third most populous as a percentage of population, it is fourth in actual numbers to Uzbekistan, our next stop on the tour. Uzbekistan's Indo-European speakers comprise only 11 percent of the population, but that amounts to 2.9 million people. Again, the vast majority of these speakers use Russian, at about 1.6 million. Another million speak Tajik. The rest are speakers of Armenian, Ukrainian, German, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Tajik and Farsi.

And finally we come to Turkmenistan, with only 10 percent of its population speaking an Indo-European language. Russian again sits on the top of the list,

with about 349,000 speakers, which is about 80 percent of the Indo-European speakers. The rest are made up of Armenian, Balochi, Kurmanji, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Farsi and Tajik speakers.

d. Other Languages

Other language families are represented in Central Asia. The most populous at just over 82,000 are speakers of Uralic languages. Uralic languages that are familiar to most Americans include Finnish and Hungarian, both part of the Finno-Ugric branch of the Uralic family. However, in Central Asia, the Uralic languages attested by the most speakers are Erzya, Udmurt and Eastern Mari. Erzya has the most speakers, who are found mostly in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, but are represented throughout the Central Asian states.

The Sino-Tibetan language family, known mostly for its two largest members, Chinese Mandarin and Tibetan, is represented with over 40,000 speakers of Dungan in Kyrgyzstan, and a few scattered throughout the Fergana valley in Uzbekistan. Dungan is part of the Chinese branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. The Dungan are Chinese Muslims who moved into the Central Asian area over 100 years ago.

The Caucasian language family in Central Asia consists of six languages and over 39,000 speakers. Languages represented include: Georgian, Chechen, Ingush, Lak, Lezgi, Dargwa and Tabassaran. The majority of Caucasian speakers are Georgian, with 14,000 speakers, half of which reside in Kazakhstan. Lezgi is widely attested as well, with over 10,000 of them in Turkmenistan alone. The Caucasian languages are well represented throughout Central Asia.

There are even 700 people in Uzbekistan who claim Arabic as their first language. Arabic is a member of the Semitic branch of the huge Afro-Asiatic language family, and shares the branch with Hebrew and Aramaic. No other language families have enough speakers to show up on any censuses in the area.

e. Russian and Central Asia's Turkic Languages

Russian and Kazakh are not genetically related, members of the Indo-European and Altaic language families, respectively. This fact is obvious when one looks at the lexical items in Table 3 below. The relationship is clear, however, when Kazakh lexicon is compared with lexical items from the other Altaic languages of Central Asia. (Tajik, the sole titular Indo-European language in the region, is obviously related to its cousin, Russian. Turkish is included as a relative to the four Altaic Central Asian languages.) Words in the four Altaic languages are similar enough that a Kazakh speaker can easily count his way across Central Asia and address his friends' parents.

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Turkish	<i>bir</i>	<i>iki</i>	<i>üç</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>birader</i>	<i>ben</i>	<i>sen</i>	<i>bulumak</i>
Kazakh	<i>bir</i>	<i>yeki</i>	<i>uś</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>bauryym</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>sen</i>	<i>bol</i>
Uzbek	<i>bir</i>	<i>ikki</i>	<i>uch</i>	<i>o'n</i>	<i>ona</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>aka</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>sen</i>	<i>bo'lmoq</i>
Turkmen	<i>bir</i>	<i>iki</i>	<i>uĉ</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>dogan</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>siz</i>	<i>bolmak</i>
Kyrgyz	<i>bir</i>	<i>eki</i>	<i>üĉ</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>birtuugan</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>sen</i>	<i>bolu</i>
Tajik	<i>yak</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>daĥ</i>	<i>modar</i>	<i>padar</i>	<i>barodar</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>budan</i>

Table 3. Lexicon Comparison between Russian and Languages of Central Asia

Morphologically, the Turkic languages differ from Russian (and many Indo-European languages) in their lack of noun and verb classes. Many branches of the Indo-European language family classify their verbs and nouns. The Slavic languages, for example, divide their verbs into several classes depending upon how they are conjugated. The Slavic languages are not alone in this; the Germanic languages all divide their verbs into classes. The Turkic languages are different from Russian in that they do not separate their verbs into different classes. In the Turkic languages, all verbs conjugate the same.⁴³

⁴³ Bernard Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1981), 73-4.

The same can be said for the Turkic languages with respect to noun declensions.⁴⁴ The Slavic languages divide their nouns depending upon their endings, primarily based on the gender of the noun. Russian (and Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, and the like) nouns have three genders, masculine, feminine and neuter. The gender of the noun can sometimes be guessed by the sex of the person described, as in *otets* ‘father’ and *brat* ‘brother,’ both of which are of masculine gender, or *sestra* ‘sister’ and *tetja* ‘aunt.’ But what makes a *gazeta* ‘newspaper’ feminine, while a *žurnal* ‘magazine’ is masculine? Why does the masculine *pol* ‘floor’ hold up the feminine *stena* ‘wall’ which in turn holds up the masculine *potolok* ‘ceiling’? These distinctions need to be learned, because grammatical declensions differ depending upon the gender of the noun. Turkic speakers need not worry about this. Turkic languages have no grammatical gender.⁴⁵

What the Turkic languages have that is similar to Russian is a case system, and like Russian, they have six of them, with only minor differences (ablative instead of instrumental, for instance).⁴⁶ The two languages differ, however, in how possession is treated. Russian uses separate adjectives, like ‘my,’ ‘your’ and ‘their.’ The Turkic languages, by contrast, add a suffix to the noun to denote possession. The basic structure of a Turkic noun is noun, number, possessive suffix, case ending, as in sentences (1-2).⁴⁷

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| <p>(1) <i>at-im-da</i>
 horse-1SG-LOC
 “...by my horse...”</p> | <p>Kyrgyz</p> |
| <p>(2) <i>kitob-lar-im-da</i>
 book-PL-1SG-LOC
 “...in my books...”</p> | <p>Uzbek</p> |

⁴⁴ Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 73-4.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Sentences from Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 75.

The two example sentences also show an additional benefit to Turkic speakers. Kyrgyz and Uzbek share identical suffixes for first person singular and the locative ending. The Slavic languages are not as similar, as shown in the following sentences.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------|
| (3) | <i>okolo</i> | <i>mojej</i> | <i>lošadi</i> | Russian |
| | near | my-GEN SG | horse-GEN SG | |
| | “...near my horse...” | | | |
| | | | | |
| (4) | <i>u</i> | <i>mojim</i> | <i>knjigama</i> | Serbian |
| | in | my-LOC PL | book-LOC PL | |
| | “...in my books...” | | | |

The first obvious difference is the Turkic use of a suffix where Russian (and English for that matter) uses a preposition. Next is the separate possessive adjective, as previously mentioned, as opposed to the Turkic suffix. Finally, there is the Slavic use of a separate case ending depending upon whether the noun is singular or plural. Compare sentences (3) and (4) with (5) and (6) below.

- | | | | | |
|-----|------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------|
| (5) | <i>okolo</i> | <i>mojikh</i> | <i>lošadej</i> | Russian |
| | near | my-GEN PL | horse-GEN PL | |
| | “...near my horses...” | | | |
| | | | | |
| (6) | <i>u</i> | <i>mojom</i> | <i>knjizi</i> | Serbian |
| | in | my-LOC SG | book-LOC SG | |
| | “...in my book...” | | | |

In the Russian examples, the ending on the adjective and noun differs between the singular and plural, *-ej* for singular feminine adjectives in genitive case versus *-ikh* for plural, and *-i* for singular feminine nouns in genitive case versus *-ej* for plural. The Turkic languages avoid this by simply appending the noun with a plural suffix, then adding the same possessive suffix and grammatical case ending regardless of the number.

One feature that the Turkic languages share with the Baltic languages (but not any other Indo-European language of the former Soviet Union) is inferentiality. This feature allows the speaker to report on the actions of another while indicating that he did not witness the event and thus cannot verify its truthfulness.⁴⁸ Additionally, the Turkic languages can use the inferential with first person singular sentences, thus indicating the speaker has no idea how the occurrence came about, as in sentences (7) and (8).⁴⁹

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| (7) | <i>xato</i>
mistake
<i>qili-di-m</i>
make-PAST-1SG
“I made a mistake.” | Uzbek |
| (8) | <i>xato</i>
mistake
<i>qili-b-man</i>
make-PAST INFER-1SG
“I have supposedly made a mistake.” | Uzbek |

The inferential is not the only difficulty awaiting Russian students of Uzbek. The Turkic languages are agglutinative, meaning many affixes can be added to words to express mood, tense, voice and the like. Sentence (9) shows how one verb, *to wash*, can be expounded with the ‘simple’ addition of four suffixes.⁵⁰

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| (9) | <i>juv-in-tir-il-moq</i>
wash-REFL-CAUS-PASS-INFIN
“...to be forced to wash oneself...” | Uzbek |
|-----|---|-------|

f. Russian and Tajik

Tajik is considered a dialect of Persian-Farsi, the language of Iran. Soviet language planners promoted Tajik as a distinct language from Farsi, to “separate the Tajiks from Persian speakers outside the USSR.”⁵¹ Table 4 shows the similarity between

⁴⁸ Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 77.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 76.

⁵¹ Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change*, 144.

the two languages. The differences between them are minimal. The table also reveals the familial relationship between Russian and Tajik.

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Tajik	<i>yak</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>daḥ</i>	<i>modar</i>	<i>padar</i>	<i>barodar</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>budan</i>
Farsi	<i>yak</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>dah</i>	<i>mâdar</i>	<i>pedar</i>	<i>barâdar</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>budan</i>

Table 4. Russian and Persian Languages Lexicon Comparison

Unlike many Indo-European languages, Tajik does not mark its nouns for gender. Missing are the masculine, feminine and neuter nouns that students of Russian are made to memorize. Tajik does, however, have an infix which can be used as a prefix or suffix attached to the noun if the Tajik speaker wants to stress the gender of the word.⁵²

There is more in common between Russian and Tajik than first meets the eye. Grammatically, a Russian-speaking student of Tajik has much to look forward to. Tajik has two numbers, singular and plural, like Russian. Additionally, Tajik does not have articles, like Russian. Even easier, adjectives do not take case markings. One less thing for the Russian speaker to worry about.⁵³

However, it is not all an easy road for the Russian student. Long years of contact with neighboring Turkic languages have left their mark on Tajik. For one, Tajik uses a suffix appended to nouns to express possession, much like the Turkic languages.⁵⁴ Add to this the multitude of loanwords from Turkic which await Tajik learners. One example is *kitob* ‘book,’ a loan from the Turkic languages which itself is probably a borrowing from Arabic’s *kitab*.

⁵² John R. Perry, *A Tajik Persian Reference Grammar* (Boston: Brill Academic Publications, 2005), 61-2.

⁵³ Ibid., 63.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 112-3.

3. The Southern Caucasus

a. Demographics

The Caucasus is situated in Asia between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea. This region includes the countries Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, as well as parts of southern Russia. The southern Caucasus is the focus of this study and comprises the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Alone these states constitute an area of 186,000 square kilometers, or just about 72,000 square miles, a little bigger than Washington State. Almost 16 million people, or about 222 people per square mile, live in these three states.

More than 50 ethnic groups inhabit the Caucasus, to include some familiar to American ears, like Russians, Chechens, Armenians, Azeris and Georgians. More exotic sounding to our ears are the Avars, Bats, Ingush and Ubykh.

The Caucasus also is known as a uniquely diverse region of the world from a linguistic standpoint. Three major language families are represented in the Caucasus: Caucasian, Altaic and Indo-European. This chapter will describe the current state of the linguistic stock in the Caucasus, followed by a treatment of the Russian language in this area.

b. Caucasian Languages

Caucasian language speakers account for 4.7 million people, or 30 percent of the population of the Caucasus. The Caucasian languages are divided into three groups. The South Caucasian languages, also known as the Kartvelian, include Georgian, Mingrelian and Laz. The Northeast Caucasian languages are certainly the most numerous, with over twenty languages attested. Some of these are Avar, Udi, Chechen, Ingush, Hunzib and Bats. The Northwest Caucasian languages, or the Circassian, include Abkhaz and Adyghe. Georgian is perhaps the most recognizable of the South Caucasian languages, and is the titular language of Georgia. Chechen is the most common

representative of the Northeast Caucasian languages. The Northwest branch of the Caucasian language family has fewer members, most of which are alien to American ears.

c. *Turkic Languages*

The language family with the most speakers in the Caucasus is the Turkic family; one of every two persons living in the Caucasus speaks a Turkic language. The Turkic languages of the Caucasus are represented primarily by Azeri, the national language of Azerbaijan, with over six million speakers in Azerbaijan alone; there are an additional million speakers of Azeri in other countries, to include Russia, Estonia, Central Asia and the remaining Caucasian countries. Other Turkic languages attested in the Caucasus include Tatar, Turkish, Urum and Karachay-Balkar, adding a little over 150,000 more Turkic speakers.

d. *Indo-European Languages*

Of the three national languages of the Caucasus, Azeri, Georgian and Armenian, Armenian is the one with the fewest speakers. This does not, however, mean that the Indo-European language family is the least attested. On the contrary, because of the large number of Russian speakers (just shy of one million), the Indo-European language family is the second largest family in the three states of the Caucasus, after the Turkic language family, with just over six million speakers. Throw in the nine Caucasian republics of the Russian Southern Federal District and you get approximately eleven million more Indo-European speakers (mostly Russian, of course), making it the largest family in the Caucasus.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ It is difficult to determine exactly the number of speakers of Russian in these nine republics. The 2002 *All-Russia Population Census* gathered data on the number of Russian speakers by nationality, not by republic. Thus some of the ten million Russian-speaking Ingush, Chechens, Kabardinians, etc. could live outside the Caucasus. Additionally, the census does not distinguish between first language and second language for these Russian speakers. Still, if only half of these Russian speakers live in the Caucasus, Indo-European would still be the largest attested group. 2002 *All-Russia Population Census*, Table 4.3 "Population by Nationalities and Command of the Russian Language," <http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=17> (accessed October 21, 2008).

By far the largest Indo-European language in the Caucasus is Armenian, spoken by 3.4 million people in Armenia. Armenian occupies a branch of its own in the Indo-European language family, although some linguists have suggested closer relationships with Greek or even the Anatolian branch of Indo-European.⁵⁶ Besides the Armenian speakers in Armenia, there are almost half a million speakers in Georgia, bringing the total for the region to almost four million. The *2002 All-Russia Population Census* reports another 900,000 Armenian speakers in Russia.⁵⁷

Russian is the second most spoken Indo-European language in the three states of the Caucasus. This is understandable due to the shared history in the region. What is more surprising to some are the other Indo-European languages attested to in the region: Greek, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Kurdish, Ossetian, Polish, Romanian, Tat (both Judeo- and Muslim-), and Talysh. All told, these additional languages add another 1.4 million speakers to the total Indo-European speakers to the region.

e. Russian and Armenian

Both Russian and Armenian are members of the Indo-European language family, and as such should have some typologically similar lexical items. This is most obvious in the words for *ten*, *mother* and *you*. (Greek is included in Table 5 due to the theory of a relationship between it and Armenian. Hittite, a dead Indo-European language of the Anatolian branch, is included for the same reason.)

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Armenian	<i>mek</i>	<i>yerku</i>	<i>yerek</i>	<i>tas</i>	<i>mayr</i>	<i>hayr</i>	<i>eghbayr</i>	<i>yes</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>em</i>
Greek	<i>enas</i>	<i>dyo</i>	<i>tria</i>	<i>deka</i>	<i>mana</i>	<i>pateras</i>	<i>adelfos</i>	<i>ego</i>	<i>eseis</i>	<i>eimai</i>
Hittite	<i>asma</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>tri</i>	--	<i>anna</i>	<i>atta</i>	<i>negna</i>	<i>uk</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>es/as</i>

Table 5. Lexicon Comparison between Russian and Armenian

⁵⁶ William M. Austin, "Is Armenian an Anatolian Language?" *Language* 18, no. 1 (1942): 22-5.

⁵⁷ Again, the *2002 All-Russia Population Census* does not report where in Russia these speakers lived. *2002 All-Russia Population Census*, Table 4.4 "Prevalence of Language Knowledge (Other than Russian)," <http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=17> (accessed October 21, 2008).

In syntax, Armenian uses both SOV and SVO. This flexibility is similar to Russian's ability to use any word order because of its case system. The following examples show Armenian's syntactical flexibility.

- (10) *jes* *t'esa* *ka ak-*
 I-NOM see-1SG PAST town-DEF
 "I saw the town."
- (11) *menk* *lav* *dasat'u-ner* *unenk*
 We-NOM good teacher-PL have-1PL
 "We have good teachers."

Sentence (10) is an example of an Armenian sentence in SVO order, while (11) is an example of SOV.⁵⁸ Russian has the same flexibility due to its case system.⁵⁹

- (12) *ja* *videl* *gorod*
 I-NOM see-1SG PAST town-ACC
 "I saw the town."
- (13) *U* *nas* *khoroshiye* *uchiteli* *yest*
 at we-GEN good-PL teacher-PL have-INF
 "We have good teachers."

Morphologically, both languages mark certain grammatical relationships by use of a case system. Armenian has six cases: nominative, genitive, dative, ablative, instrumental and locative. This is very similar to Russian's cases, which include five of the Armenian cases, replacing ablative with accusative. Armenian's case system is a bit more rational, with the endings for each case being the same between the singular and plural. Armenian simply appends the case ending to the noun, whether it is singular or plural. The same cannot be said for Russian.

⁵⁸ Sentences (10) and (11) from: Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, sentences (81) and (82) respectively, 181.

⁵⁹ Sentences (12) and (13) my translation.

	Armenian		Russian	
	Singular	plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	<i>ban</i>	<i>baner</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>brat'ya</i>
Genitive	<i>bani</i>	<i>baneri</i>	<i>brata</i>	<i>brat'yev</i>
Dative	<i>bani</i>	<i>baneri</i>	<i>bratu</i>	<i>brat'yam</i>
Ablative/Accusative	<i>banic</i>	<i>baneric</i>	<i>brata</i>	<i>brat'yev</i>
Instrumental	<i>banov</i>	<i>banerov</i>	<i>bratom</i>	<i>brat'yami</i>
Locative	<i>banum</i>	<i>banerum</i>	<i>bratye</i>	<i>brat'yev</i>

Table 6. Armenian and Russian Case Comparison⁶⁰

As can be seen in Table 6, the Russian word *brat* ‘brother,’ takes various endings depending upon the case, with seemingly no relationship between the singular and the plural. For instance, the dative ending *–u* is not appended to the plural ending *–ya*, like it is in the Armenian example. Additionally, the genitive and accusative endings are the same, but this only pertains to animate nouns in Russian. Otherwise, the word would not have declined in the accusative.⁶¹

f. Russian and Azeri

Azeri is a member of the Turkic language family, a branch of the much larger Altaic family. Thus it is not related to any languages in the Indo-European family, to include Russian. Azeri speakers cannot rely on typological similarities between the two languages when learning Russian.

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Azeri	<i>bir</i>	<i>iki</i>	<i>üç</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>qardaş</i>	<i>män</i>	<i>sän</i>	<i>olmaq</i>
Turkmen	<i>bir</i>	<i>iki</i>	<i>uç</i>	<i>on</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ata</i>	<i>dogan</i>	<i>men</i>	<i>siz</i>	<i>bolmak</i>

Table 7. Lexicon Comparison between Russian and Azeri

⁶⁰ Armenian example adapted from: Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, Table 4.7: Declensional Forms of Armenian *ban* ‘word, thing,’ 181.

⁶¹ This only follows for words of masculine and neuter gender. If the sample word were of feminine gender, then the accusative and genitive endings would have been *–u* and *–y* respectively.

Table 7 shows our basic vocabulary in Russian and Azeri, with Azeri's closest relative, Turkmen, thrown in for comparative purposes. It is clear in this small sample that there is little, typologically, for an Azeri speaker to rely on to make the task of learning Russian easier. In fact, it would be far easier for the Azeri speaker to become a Turkmen speaker, at least in the area of lexicon.

Morphologically, Azeri, like most of the Turkic languages, adds suffixes to nouns and adjectives to mark number. Sentence (14) is an example of this.⁶² The second person plural (2PL) suffix is added to the nouns *all* and *murderer*. Russian appends a plural suffix to the singular *ubitsa* 'murderer,' but the plural suffix does not distinguish for person (Sentence (15)).⁶³ Additionally, Russian does not add a plural suffix to the adjective; *vse* is plural in and of itself. Interestingly, these sentences show that both Russian and Azeri do not express the present tense of the verb *to be*.

- | | | | |
|------|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (14) | <i>siz</i>
you-NOM
"You are all murderers." | <i>ham-iniz</i>
all-2PL | <i>gatil-siniz</i>
murderer-2PL |
| (15) | <i>vy</i>
you-NOM
"You are all murderers." | <i>vse</i>
all | <i>ubitsy</i>
murderer-PL |

Syntactically, Azeri is an SOV language. Adverbs denoting time or place are placed before the subject,⁶⁴ unlike Russian. Russian speakers would only put time or place adverbs at the beginning of a sentence if they wanted to stress when or where an activity occurred.

⁶² Adapted from: Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 76.

⁶³ My translation.

⁶⁴ Claus Schoenig, "Azerbaijani," in *The Turkic Languages*, ed. Lars Johanson and Éva Ágnes Csató (New York: Routledge, 1988), 258.

g. Russian and Georgian

Georgian is a Caucasian language, of the Kartvelian branch. It is not genetically-related to Russian in any way. As the lexical items in Table 8 show, there are even some words that could confuse a Georgian wanting to learn Russian. For instance, the Georgian word *mama* ‘father’ is similar to the diminutive Russian word for ‘mother,’ *mama*. Additionally, the Georgian word *deda* ‘mother,’ sounds dangerously similar to the Russian word for ‘uncle,’ *dyadya*.

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Georgian	<i>erti</i>	<i>ori</i>	<i>sami</i>	<i>ati</i>	<i>deda</i>	<i>mama</i>	<i>dzma</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>shen</i>	<i>var</i>

Table 8. Lexicon Comparison between Russian and Georgian

The Georgian case system would make any Russian run for cover, and conversely, the Russian case system, simple at only six cases, would be welcome to a Georgian learning Russian. Georgian has six cases, similar to Russian. But add to these eleven secondary cases, for a total of 17 cases. These eleven additional cases include the common ablative, and a few which sound understandable, like temporal and directive. But Georgian also includes some obscure sounding cases like the superessive (marking ‘on’ or ‘on top of’), inessive (marking ‘in’) and adessive (marking ‘at,’ ‘on’ or ‘near’).⁶⁵ Where Russian would use a combination of a preposition and the locative case to express the superessive, inessive and adessive, Georgian uses one of its standard cases (genitive and dative mostly) and affixes an additional ending to the genitive or dative ending.⁶⁶

These cases reveal some interesting points when looking at Georgian syntax. Georgian is generally a SOV language, as shown in sentence (16).⁶⁷ Georgian marks person on the verb, as Russian does, and deletes the subject, as Russian does not

⁶⁵ Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 210-1.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Adapted from Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, sentence (97), 216.

do. (Thus the null subject in sentence (16), marked with a zero.) Unlike Russian, Georgian marks the reflexive as a prefix on the transitive verb, whereas if Russian uses a transitive verb, it must use a possessive adjective, as in sentence (17).⁶⁸ (The Russian adjective *svoe* is a reflexive adjective; it references the subject. The actual Russian word for ‘his’ is *yevo*.) Appending a reflexive suffix to a Russian transitive verb makes it intransitive, as in sentence (18).⁶⁹

(16) *0* *p’irs* *i-ban-s*
 (null subject) face-ACC REFL-wash-3SG
 “He washes his face.”

(17) *on* *moet* *svoe* *litso*
 he-NOM wash 3SG his-ACC face-ACC
 “He washes his face.”

(18) *on* *moet-sya*
 he-NOM wash 3SG-REFL
 “He is washing.”

4. Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine

a. Demographics

Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine comprise an area of about 845,000 square kilometers, or 326,000 square miles, or about the size of Arizona, Colorado and Nevada put together. The population of these three countries totals just over 60 million people, or almost 184 people per square mile.

Ethnic makeup of these three countries is what one would expect for the region. Each country is populated mostly by the titular ethnic group, with representative populations of ethnicities from neighboring countries. The second most populous ethnic group in Belarus and Ukraine is Russian, with 11 and 17 percent, amounting to about one million and almost eight million Russians, respectively. In Moldova, Ukrainians make

⁶⁸ Author’s translation.

⁶⁹ Author’s translation.

up the most populous non-titular ethnicity, with 8 percent of the population, or almost 350,000. Other groups are what one would expect for the area: Hungarians, Poles, Bulgarians, Crimean Tatars. An interesting ethnic group extant in Moldova (almost 200,000 of them) is the Gagauz. Their origins are not completely known, but two prevailing theories center on their orthodox belief, and when they adopted it. Some believe the Gagauz are “Turkified Bulgarians” while others think they are descended from a Turkic tribe that settled in the area and later adopted Orthodoxy.⁷⁰ Their language belongs to the Altaic language family and the Turkic branch specifically.

b. *Indo-European Languages*

All three of the national languages in this region belong to the Indo-European language family, making it the most populous family in the area. Speakers of Indo-European languages comprise over 58.8 million individuals, or just over 98 percent of the entire population of the three countries.

By far the most attested Indo-European language in these three countries is Ukrainian, with almost 32 million speakers. Ukrainian, along with Belarusian and Russian, belongs to the eastern Slavic branch of the Indo-European language family. Other Slavic languages extant in this region include Polish, Czech and Slovak (all of the western branch of the Slavic family) as well as Bulgarian and Serbian (both of which are members of the southern branch of the Slavic family).

Russian is by far the second most numerous Indo-European language spoken in these countries, thanks mostly to the large number of Russians living in the eastern part of Ukraine. The number of Russian speakers is just over 13 million, 11 million of which live in Ukraine.

Besides the Slavic languages in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, other branches of the Indo-European language family are represented in these countries. The Baltic language family, closely related to Slavic to the point that some linguists call the

⁷⁰ Dennis Deletant, “Language Policy and Linguistic Trends in Soviet Moldavia,” in *Language Planning in the Soviet Union*, ed. Michael Kirkwood (New York: San Martin’s Press, 1990), 210.

family “Balto-Slavic,” is represented by fewer speakers than one would presume, given the proximity of the Baltic states. The languages of the Baltic family, Lithuanian and Latvian, are only attested in Belarus and Ukraine. In Belarus, both are represented, totally only 11,000 speakers. In Ukraine, Latvian speakers total about 2600; there are no reported Lithuanian speakers in Ukraine.

There are more speakers of Germanic languages in these three countries than any other non-Slavic Indo-European language family. This is due to the relatively healthy numbers of Yiddish speakers in Ukraine and Belarus. Yiddish is a Germanic language spoken by more than three million Jews today. Historically, it “was the vernacular language of most Jews in Eastern and Central Europe before World War II.”⁷¹

Germanic language speakers total almost a million speakers in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. As discussed above, this is mostly due to the large number of Yiddish speakers (865,000). The rest are speakers of German.

The Indo-Iranian family of Indo-European languages is attested in these three countries by the speakers of Tajik, Romani, Osetin and Jakati. These speakers number some 48,000 individuals, the Jakati of Ukraine being the most numerous at over half the total. These four languages can be further divided into the Indo-Aryan (Romani and Jakati) and Iranian (Tajik and Osetin) branches.

A few other Indo-European languages are represented in the area, to include Armenian, Greek and Albanian, at about 54,000, 7000 and 5000 speakers, respectively. All three of these languages are found in Ukraine only.

c. Other Languages

The non-Indo-European language family with the most speakers in the states of Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine is the Turkic family. Turkic languages attested in this area include Crimean Turkish, Kazakh, Uzbek and Gagauz. All told, Turkic language speakers total approximately 560,000 individuals. By far the largest number of

⁷¹ “What is Yiddish: Overview,” *YIVO: Institute for Jewish Research*, <http://www.yivoinstitute.org/about/index.php?tid=57&aid=146> (accessed November 10, 2008).

Turkic speakers in the region are the Crimean Turks, with 200,000 individuals in Ukraine and a couple thousand in Moldova. Crimean Turkish is followed closely by Gagauz, spoken by about 138,000 individuals in Moldova, mostly in urban centers in the south.⁷² Urum, a Turkic language spoken by some 94,000 individuals in Ukraine (as well as almost 100,000 in Georgia), is the third most populous Turkic language. Other Turkic languages found in these three states include Tatar, Bashkir, Kazakh and Uzbek.

A surprisingly large number of speakers of Uralic languages reside in Ukraine. Uralic languages further divide into more familiar sounding families, to include the Finno-Ugric. Recognizable Finno-Ugric languages include Finnish and Estonian, of the Finnic branch of Uralic, and Hungarian, of the Ugric branch of Uralic. In Ukraine, there are about 176,000 speakers of Hungarian and almost 20,000 speakers of Erzya, an Uralic language of the Mordvin branch of Uralic.

The Caucasian language family is represented by several languages, to include Georgian and Lezgi, with 24,000 and 1700 speakers in Ukraine, respectively. Lesser attested Caucasian languages include Abkhaz, Dargwa and Lak, each with fewer than a thousand speakers and all in Ukraine.

d. *Russian and Belarusian*

Belarusian and Russian are typologically very close, to the point of mutual intelligibility.⁷³ I have added Polish to show the possible borrowing between Belarusian and Polish, who have a long shared history.⁷⁴ While the three languages appear to end in a different sound in the word ‘ten,’ they in fact all end in the voiceless retroflex affricate, expressed in Russian with the letter ‘т’ followed by the Russian “soft sign” which softens the previous sound. This changes the voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ to the voiceless retroflex affricate, which sounds like a weak /ts/ to American ears. Polish and Belarusian both express this sound with the letter ‘ć.’

⁷² Lenore A. Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union* (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 89.

⁷³ Aneta Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” *Russian Linguistics* 32 (2008): 64.

⁷⁴ Fortson, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction*, 376.

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Belarusian	<i>adzin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>try</i>	<i>dzésiać</i>	<i>matka</i>	<i>baćka</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>być</i>
Polish	<i>jeden</i>	<i>dwa</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>dziesięć</i>	<i>matka</i>	<i>ojca</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>być</i>

Table 9. Lexicon Comparison between Russian and Belarusian

A feature which Belarusian and Russian share is *akan'e*.⁷⁵ This is a condition whereby an unstressed /o/ is changed to /a/. Thus in Russian *odin* 'one,' the word is pronounced /ah-deen/. However, unlike Russian, Belarusian actually changes its spelling to show the effect of *akan'e* on its lexicon.⁷⁶ (The bolded vowels indicate stress.)

- (19) Russian: *golova* [gah-lah-vah] 'head'
 Belarusian: *galava* [gah-lah-vah] 'head'

Akan'e is even stronger in Belarusian than in Russian. In Russian, it is limited to unstressed /o/. In Belarusian other unstressed vowels are reduced to /a/, including /e/.⁷⁷

- (20) Belarusian: *čerap* 'skull' *čarapy* 'skulls'
 Belarusian: *bjazzuby* 'toothless'
 Belarusian: *bezadkazny* 'irresponsible'

In the first example, the stress is on the /e/. But when the plural suffix /y/ is added to the word, the stress changes to the final vowel. *Akan'e* changes the pronunciation of the first vowel from /e/ to /a/.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Bernard Comrie and Greville G. Corbett, *The Slavonic Languages* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 891.

⁷⁶ Adapted from: Roland Sussex and Paul Cubberley, *The Slavic Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) (22), 132.

⁷⁷ Adapted from: Sussex and Cubberley, *The Slavic Languages* (56-7), 160-1.

⁷⁸ Sussex and Cubberley, *The Slavic Language* (56), 160.

Akan'e's effect on the prefix *bez* 'without' is shown in the next two examples. When the stress falls on the syllable after the /e/, as in the first example, then akan'e changes that vowel to /a/. Thus, *bez* changes to *bjaz*. In the second example, the stress is on the penultimate syllable, two syllables away from *bez*. Therefore akan'e has no effect on *bez*.⁷⁹ Akan'e is missing in Ukrainian.⁸⁰

Grammatically, Belarusian has six cases and three genders like Russian. And much like Russian, the vocative case, still an active case in the west and south Slavic languages, remains only in certain set phrases in Belarusian, as in *boža moj*, 'My God.'⁸¹

e. *Russian and Moldovan*

Moldovan is a Romance language, akin to Spanish, French and Portuguese. For all intents and purposes, it is identical to Romanian. (I include here Italian and Rhaeto-Romansh, the two eastern-most Romance languages for comparative purposes.)

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Moldovan	<i>unu</i>	<i>doi</i>	<i>trei</i>	<i>zece</i>	<i>mamă</i>	<i>tată</i>	<i>frate</i>	<i>eu</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>a fi</i>
Italian	<i>uno</i>	<i>due</i>	<i>tre</i>	<i>dieci</i>	<i>madre</i>	<i>padre</i>	<i>fratello</i>	<i>io</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>essere</i>
Rhaeto	<i>in</i>	<i>dus</i>	<i>trais</i>	<i>diesch</i>	<i>mama</i>	<i>bab</i>	<i>frar</i>	<i>jau</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>esser</i>

Table 10. Lexicon Comparison between Russian and Moldovan

Long years of contact with Slavic language speakers, however, have had their affect on Moldovan. There are lexical loans from Russian that exist in Moldovan, but even in this case, the words take Moldovan grammatical endings. One such example is the Moldovan word *korsat* 'village correspondent,' a compound word taken from the words for correspondent, *korespondent* and village, *sat*. In Moldovan, adjectives follow

⁷⁹ Sussex and Cubberley, *The Slavic Language* (57), 161.

⁸⁰ Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 145; Sussex and Cubberley, *The Slavic Languages*, 51.

⁸¹ Comrie and Corbett, *The Slavonic Languages*, 900.

the noun they modify, thus *korsat* and not *satkor*, like it would be in Russian.⁸² There are no grammatical differences between Moldovan and Romanian, only political ones. In fact the Moldovan people overwhelmingly voted to name their language Moldovan in 2004.⁸³ The dispute is no better exemplified than in an exchange between the president of Moldova and the Romanian Foreign Minister, both of whom speak, for all intents and purposes, the same language. However, at a conference in Munich, the Romanian spoke to the Moldovan president in French while the president responded in Russian.⁸⁴

Romanian has articles, both definite and indefinite, unlike Russian and most other Slavic languages. Unlike the other Romance languages, however, Romanian appends the definite article to the end of the noun. This is a phenomenon of many languages of the Balkan region, like Bulgarian, Albanian and Macedonian.⁸⁵ This results in constructions such as *omul*, from *om* ‘man’ and *ul* ‘the.’⁸⁶ The Russian equivalent would be *čelovek* for ‘man,’ ‘a man’ and ‘the man.’ Interestingly, the indefinite article in Moldovan precedes the noun, like in English and the other Romance languages.

Syntactically, Moldovan uses subordinate clauses where Russian would use an infinitive. This is again a feature of Balkan languages; I include examples from Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian in sentence (21) below for comparative purposes.⁸⁷ (Note that the designation ENC refers to a clitic. Clitics are words which cannot stand alone and must accompany another word. In this case, the clitics must follow the main verb and thus are called enclitics. In these languages, the enclitics introduce the subordinate clause.)⁸⁸

⁸² Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 188.

⁸³ Ahto Lobjakas and Valeria Vitu, “Romania/Moldova: Divided By a Common Language,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 21, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1079514.html>, (accessed February 22, 2008).

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 187-8.

⁸⁶ Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 188.

⁸⁷ Examples adapted from Maria Luisa Rivero and Angela Ralli, “Introduction,” in *Comparative Syntax of Balkan Languages*, eds. Maria Luisa Rivero and Angela Ralli (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7, 11. Serbian: my translation.

⁸⁸ David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, under the term “clitic(-ize, -ization).”

- | | | | | | | |
|------|----|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|-----------|
| (21) | a. | <i>Sonja</i> | <i>khočet</i> | <i>čitat'</i> | | Russian |
| | | Sonja | want-3SG | read-INF | | |
| | b. | <i>Sonja</i> | <i>vrea</i> | <i>să</i> | <i>citească.</i> | Moldovan |
| | | Sonja | want-3SG | ENC | read-3SG | |
| | c. | <i>Sonja</i> | <i>iska</i> | <i>da</i> | <i>pročete.</i> | Bulgarian |
| | | Sonja | want-3SG | ENC | read-3SG | |
| | d. | <i>I</i> | <i>Sonja</i> | <i>theli</i> | <i>na</i> | Greek |
| | | the | Sonja | want-3SG | ENC | read-3SG |
| | e. | <i>Sonja</i> | <i>želi</i> | <i>da</i> | <i>čita</i> | Serbian |
| | | Sonja | want-3SG | ENC | read-3SG | |

“Sonja wants to read.”

f. Russian and Ukrainian

Russian and Ukrainian, like Russian and Belarusian, are typologically close.⁸⁹ In fact, a special form of bilingualism exists in Ukraine reflecting the mutual intelligibility of Russian and Ukrainian. This “two-way bilingualism” allows a Ukrainian to speak to a Russian in Ukrainian, and vice-versa, and be understood.⁹⁰ Studies have shown that anywhere from 50 to 75 percent of the word stock of Ukrainian comes from a common Slavic stock,⁹¹ as Table 11 illustrates. Other lexical items are borrowings from neighboring Slavic languages, like Polish and Russian. One example is Ukrainian’s adoption of the Russian word for ‘ninety,’ *dev’janosto* instead of Ukrainian’s original *devjatdesat*.⁹²

⁸⁹ Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” 61, 64; and Dmitry Gorenburg, “Rethinking Interethnic Marriage in the Soviet Union,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 22, no. 2 (2006): 158.

⁹⁰ Timothy J. Colton, et al., “Russia in the Year 2004,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 21, no. 1 (2005): 16.

⁹¹ Comrie and Corbett, *The Slavonic Languages*, 989.

⁹² Original Ukrainian *devjatdesat* means “nine tens” versus *dev’janosto* and Russian *devjanosto*, whose etymology is unknown. Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 146.

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Ukrainian	<i>odyn</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>maty</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>buty</i>
Polish	<i>jeden</i>	<i>dwa</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>dziesięć</i>	<i>matka</i>	<i>ojca</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>być</i>

Table 11. Lexicon Comparison between Russian and Ukrainian

Morphologically, Ukrainian distances itself from Russian, and even Belarusian in its treatment of adjectival endings. In Russian, and most of Belarusian, adjectives, the ending are “long.” That is they consist of two vowels, aligned to the gender of the noun. In Ukrainian, only the masculine singular (MAS-SING) has the long ending; all other genders and numbers have the “short” ending. This is more akin to the western (e.g., Czech and Polish) and southern Slavic languages (e.g., Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian). An example is shown in (22) for the adjective “new.”⁹³

(22)	<i>novyj</i>	<i>nova</i>	<i>nove</i>	<i>novi</i>	Ukrainian
	<i>novy</i>	<i>novaja</i>	<i>novae</i>	<i>novyja</i>	Belarusian
	<i>novyj</i>	<i>novaja</i>	<i>novaje</i>	<i>novyje</i>	Russian
	MAS-SING	FEM-SING	NEU-SING	PLU	

Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian form a continuum from east to west. The most divergent forms are between Russian and Ukrainian, with Belarusian as the “typologically intermediate step” between the other two.⁹⁴

5. The Baltics

a. Demographics

The Baltic states comprise the countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Together these states fill an area of just over 175,000 square kilometers, or about 67,600

⁹³ Adapted from: Sussex and Cubberley, *The Slavic Languages* (27), 52.

⁹⁴ Sussex and Cubberley, *The Slavic Languages*, 48.

square miles, a little bigger than the state of Florida. Within these three countries live over 7 million people, or 105 people per square mile.

b. Indo-European Languages

The Indo-European language family is hands-down the largest language family in the Baltics, due to the healthy populations of Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian speakers. Add to these languages the numbers of speakers of other Indo-European, specifically Slavic, languages such as Ukrainian, Belarusian and Polish and one finds that six of every seven Balts speak an Indo-European language. Russian is by far the most frequently found Indo-European language in the region (besides the national languages of Latvia and Lithuania) with well over 1.6 million speakers in the region, almost a million speakers in Latvia itself.

c. Finno-Ugric Languages

There are about a million speakers of Finno-Ugric languages in the Baltics, almost all of whom speak Estonian. Practically all of the Estonian speakers live in Estonia; there are a few thousand in neighboring Latvia. A smaller number of Finnish speakers (about 5000) in Estonia add to the number of Finno-Ugric speakers. The Finno-Ugric languages are the second most populous in the Baltics due to the large number of Estonian speakers. Still, Finno-Ugric speakers are but a small percentage in the region (about 14 percent) compared to the number of Indo-European speakers.

d. Other Languages

The Turkic language family is attested in the Baltic region by the Tatar, Chuvash and Azeri languages. Tatar speakers are found in each of the three Baltic states, while Chuvash and Azeri speakers live in Estonia.

e. Russian and the Baltic Languages (Latvian and Lithuanian)

Russian, Latvian and Lithuanian are members of the Indo-European language family, Russian of the Slavic branch and Latvian and Lithuanian of the Baltic branch. The two branches are so close in fact that most linguists think of them as one

family, the Balto-Slavic.⁹⁵ Table 12 shows the similarity between some lexical items in Latvian, Lithuanian and Russian. (Estonian, a Finno-Ugric language extant in the Baltics, is included for comparative reasons.)

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Latvian	<i>viens</i>	<i>divi</i>	<i>trīs</i>	<i>desmit</i>	<i>māte</i>	<i>tēvs</i>	<i>brālis</i>	<i>es</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>būt</i>
Lithuanian	<i>vienas</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>trys</i>	<i>dešimt</i>	<i>motina</i>	<i>tėvas</i>	<i>broilis</i>	<i>aš</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>būti</i>
Estonian	<i>üks</i>	<i>kaks</i>	<i>kolm</i>	<i>kümme</i>	<i>ema</i>	<i>isa</i>	<i>vend</i>	<i>mina</i>	<i>teie</i>	<i>olema</i>

Table 12. Lexicon Comparison between Russian, Latvian and Lithuanian

Latvian and Lithuanian have a close relationship and thus share some linguistic features. An interesting linguistic feature in Latvian that is absent in Lithuanian, however, is its use of a prefix to express necessity. Where some languages would use a modal (e.g., *must*) or a compound verb pair (e.g., *have to*), Latvian uses a prefix added to the verb. This is known as the *debitive mood*, and is marked as DEB in the sentences below.⁹⁶ Additionally, the subject expressing the need and the object of the verb are switched, as in sentence (23a); this gives a literal translation close to *The book must be read by me*. In other words, necessity is expressed in Latvian with an impersonal sentence.⁹⁷

- (23) a. *man* *jā-lasa* *gramata* Latvian
 I-DAT DEB-read-1SG book-NOM
 ‘‘I need to read a book.’’
- b. *aš* *turiu* *skaityti* *knygą* Lithuanian
 I-NOM have to-1SG read-INF book-ACC
 ‘‘I have to read a book.’’

⁹⁵ Fortson, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction*, 364.

⁹⁶ Fortson, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction*, 384 and Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 152.

⁹⁷ Sentence (23)a. from Fortson, 384.

- c. *ja* *dolzhen* *čitat'* *knigu* Russian
 I-NOM have to-MASC read-INF book-ACC
 "I have to read a book."
- d. *mne* *nado* *čitat'* *knigu* Russian
 I-DAT need read-INF book-ACC
 "I need to read a book."

Interestingly, Russian can use either an active sentence (sentence (23c)) like Lithuanian, or an impersonal sentence (sentence (23d)) like Latvian, meaning roughly *It is necessary for me to read a book*. The choice is up to the speaker, based upon whether he wants to stress the action or the actor. Latvian, by contrast with Russian and Lithuanian, affixes the prefix *jā-* to the verb to express necessity.

The debitive is used not only in transitive sentences, like the examples above, but also in intransitive sentences, as in sentence (24a) below.⁹⁸ Again, Russian has two options for expressing the same sentiment, depending upon what the speaker wants to emphasize.

- (24) a. *mums* *jā-iet* Latvian
 we-DAT DEB-go-1PL
- b. *nam* *nado* *idti* Russian
 we-DAT need go-INF
- c. *my* *dolzheny* *idti* Russian
 we-NOM have to-PL go-INF
 "We must go."

A peculiar feature of Latvian is how the language expresses possession. Much like Russian, the object possessed is the subject of the sentence and is in the nominative case. However, unlike Russian, Latvian uses the dative case for the person doing the possessing.⁹⁹ Russian would use the genitive.

⁹⁸ Sentence (24) a. from Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 152.

⁹⁹ Latvian sentence from: Laimute Balode and Axel Holvoet, "The Latvian Language and its Dialects," in *Circum-Baltic Languages: Volume One: Past and Present*, ed. Osten Dahl and Maria Koptjevskaja-Tamm (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2001), 6.

- (25) a. *man* *ir* *māja* Latvian
 I-DAT be-PRES-3SG house-NOM
- b. *u* *menya* *dom* Russian
 at me-GEN house-NOM
 “I have a house.”

Lithuanian, by contrast, uses a verb meaning *to have* and keeps the subject in the nominative and the object in the accusative. Russian again shows its flexibility with the use of the verb *imet.*’

- (26) a. *aš* *turiu* *namus* Lithuanian
 I-NOM have-PRES-3SG house-ACC
- b. *ya* *imeyu* *dom* Russian
 I-NOM have-PRES-3SG house-ACC
 “I have a house.”

Lithuanian and Latvian are close to Russian syntactically. All languages have a vibrant case system, with Lithuanian sharing the same cases as Russian, but with the addition of the vocative case. Despite being characterized as an SVO language, the case system allows flexible syntax, again like Russian. The speaker will chose between sentence (27) a. or b., based upon what he wants to emphasize.¹⁰⁰

- (27) a. *māte* *gaida* *māsu* Lithuanian
 mother-NOM wait-3SG sister-ACC
- b. *māsu* *gaida* *māte* Lithuanian
 sister-ACC wait-3SG mother-NOM
 “Mother is waiting for sister.”

The genitive case is used to mark possession. Both Russian and the Baltic languages use the genitive case; however, in different ways. The difference can best be illustrated using English.

¹⁰⁰ Lithuanian from Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 148.

- (28) a. *father's house*
 b. *house of father*

Both sentence (28) a. and b. mean the same thing. Russian expresses this concept with the genitive case most like sentence b. In sentence (29), the possessor is in the genitive case.

- (29) *dom* *otsa* Russian
 house-NOM father-GEN

Lithuanian and Latvian treat possession more along the lines of English sentence (28) a. They place the possessor, in genitive case, before the possessed.¹⁰¹

- (30) a. *tėvo* *namas* Lithuanian
 father-GEN house-NOM
 b. *tēva* *māja* Latvian
 father-GEN house-NOM
 “Father’s house.”

Finally, an interesting feature of both Lithuanian and Latvian is the use of different participles which allow the speaker to report an action without taking responsibility for the truthfulness of the statement (similar to Uzbek as described above and Estonian below). In Latvian, a special verbal ending, *-ot* (designated below by INFER, for *inferential*),¹⁰² is used which allows the speaker to “express uncertainty about the veracity of a statement.”¹⁰³ English speakers get by with adverbs, such as *supposedly*, *apparently*, *evidently*, *purportedly* and others. Russian also expresses uncertainty by the use of adverbs. (The zero in sentence (32b) represents Russian’s lack

¹⁰¹ Latvian and Lithuanian from Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 148.

¹⁰² Ibid., sentences (60) and (61), 154.

¹⁰³ Latvian and Lithuanian from Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 154.

of a present tense for the verb *to be*.) Lithuanian's and Latvian's use of the inferential is a result of its close historical relationship with Estonian, which also uses this special verbal form.

(31) a. *vinš* *esot* *bagāts* Latvian
 he-NOM be-PRES-INFER rich-NOM

b. *on* *yakoby* *bogat* Russian
 he-NOM allegedly rich-NOM

“He is supposedly rich.”

(32) a. *vinš* *ir* *bagāts* Latvian
 he-NOM be-PRES-3SG rich-NOM

b. *on* *0* *bogat* Russian
 he-NOM to be-PRES rich-NOM

“He is rich.”

f. Russian and Estonian

Estonian is a Finno-Ugric language, of the larger Uralic family, specifically of the Finnic branch, sharing it with languages such as Finnish and Karelian. Being in another family altogether, its lexical stock is vastly different from Russian (see Table 13).

English	one	two	three	ten	mother	father	brother	I	you	to be
Russian	<i>odin</i>	<i>dva</i>	<i>tri</i>	<i>desyat</i>	<i>mat</i>	<i>otets</i>	<i>brat</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ty</i>	<i>byt</i>
Estonian	<i>üks</i>	<i>kaks</i>	<i>kolm</i>	<i>kümme</i>	<i>ema</i>	<i>isa</i>	<i>vend</i>	<i>mina</i>	<i>teie</i>	<i>olema</i>
Finnish	<i>yksi</i>	<i>kaks</i> <i>i</i>	<i>kolm</i> <i>e</i>	<i>kymmene</i> <i>n</i>	<i>äiti</i>	<i>isä</i>	<i>veli</i>	<i>min</i> <i>ä</i>	<i>sin</i> <i>ä</i>	<i>olla</i>
Karelian	<i>yksinä</i> <i>h</i>	<i>kaks</i> <i>i</i>	<i>kolm</i> <i>e</i>	<i>kymmeni</i>	<i>muam</i> <i>o</i>	<i>isäntä</i> <i>ä</i>	<i>velli</i>	<i>mia</i>	<i>sie</i>	<i>olla</i>

Table 13. Lexicon Comparison between Russian and Estonian

The genetic relationship between the three Finno-Ugric languages is apparent upon looking at the lexical items in Table 13. It is equally obvious the lack of association between Russian and these three languages. These ten lexical items are chosen because they are basic terms common to all languages. Words for basic numbers and family relationships tend to not change by contact with other languages. To contrast, see the lexical items in Table 14.¹⁰⁴ Due to the long shared history between German speakers and inhabitants of the Baltics, Estonian has many loanwords from German.

English	priest	to confess	chalk	dress	king	glass	field
Estonian	<i>preester</i>	<i>pihtima</i>	<i>kriit</i>	<i>kleit</i>	<i>kuningas</i>	<i>klaas</i>	<i>põld</i>
German	<i>priester</i>	<i>beichten</i>	<i>kreide</i>	<i>kleid</i>	<i>könig</i>	<i>glas</i>	<i>feld</i>

Table 14. German Loanwords in Estonian

As described above, Estonian makes use of the inferential, a special verbal form used in order to relieve the speaker of responsibility for the truthfulness of a statement. Estonian's version of the inferential, *-at*, is not marked for person or number,¹⁰⁵ much like Latvian's *-ot*. And again, as in the Latvian example above, Russian and English make use of adverbs for the inferential

- (33) a. *ma tulevat* Estonian
I-NOM come-PRES-INFER
"I am said to come."
- b. *sa tulevat* Estonian
you-NOM come-PRES-INFER
"You are said to come."

¹⁰⁴ Adapted from Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 100, and W.K. Matthews, "Linguistic Aspects of Estonian," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 32, no. 79 (June 1954): 305.

¹⁰⁵ Examples from Comrie, *The Languages of the Soviet Union*, 125.

IV. RUSSIAN LANGUAGE PRESTIGE IN THE STATES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

A. WHY TYPOLOGY CANNOT EXPLAIN RUSSIAN'S PRESTIGE

1. Introduction

In Chapter III, I compared each of the 14 FSU titular languages to Russian. With this comparison, I tried to show how difficult it might have been for some Soviet peoples to learn Russian, and conversely, perhaps give a reason why so few Russians bothered to learn the titular languages.

Typologically, the languages most closely related to Russian, and theoretically easiest for its speakers to learn, are Belarusian and Ukrainian. Both lexically and grammatically, Belarusian and Ukrainian speakers should have no problem becoming Russian speakers, and for that matter, maintaining their proficiency.¹⁰⁶

The Baltic languages of Latvian and Lithuanian are probably the next closest typologically. Despite years of attempting to combine varied branches of the Indo-European language family into larger groups (e.g., Italo-Celtic), linguists today consider Balto-Slavic as the only viable “higher-level” grouping.¹⁰⁷ We would expect that Latvians and Lithuanians would also be able to become proficient in Russian fairly easily.

Speakers of other FSU languages that are Indo-European, Moldovan, Armenian and Tajik specifically, should have less of a problem learning Russian than speakers of the non-Indo-European languages, like the Turkic, Finno-Ugric and Caucasian languages that round out our list. Still, except for some similarities in syntax (Armenian) and

¹⁰⁶ Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” 76.

¹⁰⁷ Merritt Ruhlen, *A Guide to the World's Languages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 57-8; and Rosalind M. Harding and Robert R. Sokal, “Classification of the European Language Families by Genetic Distance,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, USA* 85 (December 1988): 9370-2.

lexical loans (Moldovan and Tajik), there is little for these people to latch on to when learning Russian. The typological distance is simply too great.¹⁰⁸

2. Numbers, Numbers, Numbers: Censuses Then and Now

a. *The 1989 All-Union Population Census of the USSR*

The last census to occur in the Soviet Union was in 1989.¹⁰⁹ This census revealed that more than 285 million people lived in the Soviet Union in 1989. A little more than half, or 147 million, lived in what is today the Russian Federation. There were 145.2 million Russians in the Soviet Union, 144.8 million, or 99.7 percent, of whom considered Russian to be their native language.

But what is important for this study is the number of other nationalities with Russian language proficiency. After decades of “second mother tongue” propaganda, how many non-Russians claimed fluency in Russian? The 1989 Soviet census is beneficial to this study because it asked respondents to identify what they considered to be their native language. Additionally, the census asked what other languages of Soviet nationalities they were fluent in. The choices for this second question were Russian and Other.

According to the 1989 census, 18.7 million non-Russians considered Russian to be their native language. Taking genetic distance into account, one would expect that Ukrainians or Belarusians would make up the vast majority of these millions. And, in fact, most of the non-Russians claiming Russian as their native language were Ukrainians (8.3 million) and Belarusians (2.8 million). A few other ethnic groups were represented with at least a million people (Tatars, Germans and Jews), but none of the remaining FSU titulars had as many.

An additional 68.8 million non-Russians were fluent in Russian as a second language. Again, the Ukrainians head the list with 22.3 million speakers. But

¹⁰⁸ Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” 76.

¹⁰⁹ All 1989 census data in this chapter from: “Vsesoyuznaya perepis’ naseleniya 1989 goda (The 1989 All-Union Population Census),” *Vestnik Statistiki* 10 (1990): 69-79.

twelve other groups also have at least one million speakers of Russian as a second language, including speakers of the typologically close Belarusian. Added to this number are Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Azeris, Armenians, Tajiks, Georgians, Moldovans, and Lithuanians.

When we combine the numbers of those claiming Russian as their native language and those claiming to be fluent in it as a second language, we get interesting results. Again, considering typological distance, we expect the number of Russian speakers to decrease in number from a high in either Ukraine or Belarus, fewer in the Baltic states of Latvia and Lithuania, then Moldova, Armenia and Tajikistan, and finally the fewest in the Finno-Ugric, Caucasian and Turkic nations.

This expectation holds true for the first two countries. Ukraine and Belarus have the most Russian speakers, with just over 34 million in 1989. As far as raw numbers go, there are more Ukrainians who speak Russian than Belarusians. But the more important gauge is percent of population. When looked at this way, there are more Belarusians (7.1 million or 81 percent of the population in 1989) who know Russian than Ukrainians (26.8 million, or 71 percent of the population).

Next we expect the Baltic republics to be numbers three and four in our list. Latvia, in fact, is number three, with 68.5 percent of its Latvian population (967,000) claiming Russian fluency. Number four, however, is not Lithuania; Kazakhstan is number four with over 60 percent of its titular population (or 4.5 million Kazakhs) proficient in Russian.

The remaining three “Indo-European” states should rank numbers five, six and seven. Moldova and Armenia are five and six. Almost 60 percent of Moldova’s titular population in 1989 (1.9 million) claimed Russian fluency, while almost 50 percent of ethnic Armenians (2 million) did the same. But Tajikistan is far down the list at number 12, with only 28 percent, or 1.1 million Tajiks able to speak Russian. Spot number seven is held by Lithuanians, 1.1 million of which could speak Russian fluently in 1989 (38.3 percent of the population).

The rest of the FSU republics round out the list, ranging from number eight Estonia, with 35 percent of its 1989 titular population (347,000) speaking Russian,¹¹⁰ to number 14 Uzbekistan, with only 24 percent of Uzbeks fluent in Russian. (Interestingly, in raw numbers Uzbekistan had the fourth largest number of titulars claiming Russian fluency: 3.9 million.)

b. Censuses in the Independent States

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, each of the 14 FSU republics conducted their own census. Some of the data are available freely on the internet, some are not (for example, Turkmenistan conducted a census in 2001, but none of these data are available). Only a few of the countries ask the same language questions that the Soviet Union did in 1989. Estonia, Latvia and Belarus asked respondents to identify the language they considered their native language, as well as any other language they had fluency in.

Despite what many consider draconian citizenship laws, both Estonia and Latvia experienced an increase in the number of Russian language speakers. In the 11 years between the Soviet census and the first Latvian census, the number of Latvians with Russian as a second language increased by 46,000 to a little over 966,000 speakers, or 70 percent of all Latvians.¹¹¹ This is an increase over the 65 percent of Latvians who knew Russian as a second language in 1989. During this same period, the number of Latvians in the country decreased by about 41,000 people to 1.3 million.

Estonia also conducted their first post-Soviet census in 2000, and also experienced an increase in titulars with Russian as a second language.¹¹² An amazing 215,000 more Estonians knew Russian than in 1989, for a total of 544,000 Estonians, or

¹¹⁰ See below section 2c for comments on the problems with census data.

¹¹¹ All Latvian census data from: Latvian Central Statistics Bureau, "Population Census 2000 in Brief," <http://data.csb.gov.lv/DATABASEEN/tautassk/databasetree.asp?lang=1> (accessed December 10, 2008).

¹¹² All Estonian census data from: Statistics Estonia, "2000 Population and Housing Census," http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/1_Databas/Population_census/ (accessed December 15, 2008).

58 percent of Estonians. In 1989, only one in three Estonians knew Russian as a second language. In 2000, there were 930,000 Estonians living in Estonia, a decrease of 50,000 Estonians from the census in 1989.

With respect to native language, Estonia had a statistically insignificant 60 fewer Estonians claiming Russian. Despite this decrease in raw numbers, the percentage of Estonians claiming the Russian language as their native tongue increased from 1989 (1.8 percent) to 2000 (1.9 percent). Latvia had 1600 more Latvians claiming Russian as their native language. This is a slight increase (3.5 percent) from the 1989 census (3.2 percent).

In the ten years between the last Soviet census and the first Belarusian one, the number of Belarusians has decreased, as has the number claiming Russian as their native or second language.¹¹³ The number of Belarusians has decreased by 671,000, from 8.8 million in 1989 to 8.1 million in 1999, a decrease of 8 percent. During the same period, 921,000 fewer Belarusians claimed the Russian language as their native language. In 1989, 23 percent of Belarusians spoke Russian as their native language. The 1999 Belarusian census revealed that only 14 percent of Belarusians still considered Russian to be their native tongue. The same occurred with respect to Russian as a second language. In 1989, over 57 percent of Belarusians were fluent in Russian. Ten years later, this percentage dropped to only 44 percent.

Some censuses from the FSU republics asked one or the other language question (Russian as native language or second language). A few of the countries asked for native language information from their citizens. Moldova, Armenia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan and Ukraine each asked their citizens to identify which language they consider their native language.

Moldova, Armenia and Lithuania lost numbers in population and titulars claiming Russian as their native language. The number of Moldovans decreased from 3.1

¹¹³ All Belarusian census data from: National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, "Population Census 1999," <http://belstat.gov.by/homep/en/census/main.php> (accessed December 10, 2008).

million in 1989 to 2.5 million in 2004, a decrease of 20 percent.¹¹⁴ During this same period, 131,000 fewer Moldovans claimed Russian as their native language. In 1989, 6 percent of Moldovans had Russian as their native language. Fifteen years later, only 2.4 percent make the same claim.

The population of ethnic Armenians in Armenia also fell between the 1989 Soviet census and the first Armenian census in 2001.¹¹⁵ There are 945,000 fewer Armenians in Armenia, representing a decrease of 24 percent. Even more dramatic is the number of Armenians claiming Russian as their native language. In 1989, 4 percent of Armenians had Russian as their native language, or about 182,000. Twelve years later, only 0.4 percent of Armenians, or 14,000, claim Russian as their native tongue.

The number of ethnic Lithuanians also dropped.¹¹⁶ There were 90,000 fewer Lithuanians 12 years after the 1989 Soviet Census, a decrease of 3 percent. The number of Lithuanians claiming the Russian language as their native language has always been low. In 1989, only 27,000 claimed it, representing less than 1 percent of all Lithuanians. Twelve years later, only about 8,000 claim Russian as their native language, or 0.2 percent.

Kazakhstan, like the other four Central Asian states, enjoyed an increase in titular population.¹¹⁷ Kazakhstan carried out their first census ten years after the 1989 Soviet census. It found that the population of Kazakhs increased from 7.5 million to almost 8 million. However, the share of ethnic Kazakhs who claimed Russian as a native language decreased by more than half, from 110,000 to 48,000.

¹¹⁴ All Moldovan census data from: Biroul Național de Statistică al Republicii Moldova (National Bureau of Statistics of the Moldovan Republic), "Population Census 2004," <http://www.statistica.md/pageview.php?l=en&idc=295&id=2234> (accessed December 10, 2008).

¹¹⁵ Armenian census data from: National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia, "Results of the 2001 Census," <http://docs.armstat.am/census/engcontent.php> (accessed December 11, 2008).

¹¹⁶ Lithuanian census data from: Statistics Lithuania, "Population Census," <http://www.stat.gov.lt/en/pages/view/?id=1503> (accessed December 10, 2008).

¹¹⁷ O.B. Altynbekova, "Migratsiya v Kazakhstane: novyy status russkogo yazyka (Migration in Kazakhstan: the New Status of the Russian language)," *Demoskop Weekly*, no. 251-2, July 19-August 20, 2006, <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2006/0251/analit05.php> (accessed January 10, 2009).

Ukraine is the only country of these five which enjoyed an increase in both population of its titular group and the number of those claiming the Russian language as their native tongue.¹¹⁸ Ukraine held its first census in 2001, and showed that the number of Ukrainians increased by 122,000 people, representing 100.3 percent of the number from 1989. In 1989, 4.6 million Ukrainians had Russian as their native language, or 12 percent. Twelve years later, the number increased by almost a million to 15 percent of all Ukrainians.

Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan asked their citizens to report second language data.¹¹⁹ Both countries experienced an increase in titular population; there were 25 percent more Kyrgyz and 12 percent more Azeris in 1999. However their data on Russian as a second language are different. The number of Kyrgyz with second language proficiency in Russian increased, while the opposite is true for Azerbaijan.

In 1989, one of every three Kyrgyz knew Russian as a second language (35 percent). Ten years later, the raw number increased (from 867,000 in 1989 to 1.03 million in 1999); however, due to the increase in population, the percentage fell to 33 percent. Likewise, during the last Soviet census, 32 percent of Azeris (2 million) claimed Russian as a second language. Ten years later, the percentage dropped dramatically to 8 percent (590,000).

c. Other Sources of Language Data

Despite limited data accessible from state census departments, information is available on second language and mother tongue. The Institute of Demography, Moscow State University, gathered data on the Russian language in the 14 FSU republics

¹¹⁸ Ukrainian census data from: State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, "Population Census 2001," <http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/> (accessed December 10, 2008).

¹¹⁹ Kyrgyz census data from: National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, "Itogi pervoy natsional'noy perepisi naseleniya Kyrgyzskoy Respubliki 1999 goda (Results of the First National Census of the Population of the Kyrgyz Republic in 1999), <http://www.stat.kg/rus/census1999.htm>, (accessed December 10, 2008). Data for Azerbaijan from: The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "1999 Census," <http://www.azstat.org/statinfo/demographic/en/007.shtml> (accessed December 10, 2008).

in 2008. From this report some information is available on Russian as a second language in Ukraine, Armenia, Moldova, Uzbekistan and Georgia. In the 19 years between the last Soviet census and this 2008 report, significantly more Ukrainians, Georgians and Uzbeks speak Russian as a second language. In sum, these three countries added 8.4 million Russian speakers to the world. Uzbekistan's population increased by 5.3 million during the same period, and almost half of this increase (2.01 million) are fluent in Russian.¹²⁰ The institute also conducted a study in 2005 and reported on Russian second language proficiency in Tajikistan. Between 1989 and 2000, the number of Tajiks fluent in Russian increased by 50 percent, or 574,000 people.¹²¹

The opposite is true of Armenia and Moldova, but to a lesser degree. Both countries experienced a drop in population between the 1989 census and their first national census (2001 for Armenia and 2004 for Moldova). Likewise, both lost fluent Russian speakers. Armenia had over 800,000 fewer Russian speakers in 2008, 44 percent fewer than in 1989. Moldova's Russian speaking population dropped by 23 percent or 390,000 fewer speakers.¹²²

According to the Institute of Demography's *Demoskop Weekly*, Kazakhs fluent in Russian as a second language increased from 4.4 million to almost 6 million speakers. This means that three out of every four Kazakhs have proficiency in Russian today.¹²³

The Institute also has reported on the Russian language as a native language in Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Azerbaijan. In 1989, only four of every 1,000

¹²⁰ "Russki Yazyk Na Postsovetstkih Prostorah (the Russian Language in the Post-Soviet Space)," *Demoskop Weekly*, Elektronnaya Versiya Byulletenya "Naseleniye i Obshchestvo" (*Demoskop Weekly*, Electronic Version of the Bulletin of "People and Society") no. 329 (2008), <http://www.polit.ru/research/2008/04/30/demoscope329.html> (accessed May 1, 2008).

¹²¹ Mikhail Tul'skiy, "Itogi perepisi naseleniya Tadzhikistana 2000 goda: natsional'nyy, vozrastnoi, polovoi, semeynyy i obrazovatel'nyy sostavy (The Results of the Census of the Population of Tajikistan in 2000: Nationality, Age, Sex, Family and Education Statistics)" *Demoskop Weekly*, no. 191-2, February 21-March 6, 2005, <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2005/0191/analit05.php> (accessed January 10, 2009).

¹²² "Russki Yazyk Na Postsovetstkih Prostorah (The Russian Language in the Post-Soviet Space)."

¹²³ O.B. Altynbekova, "Migratsiya v Kazakhstane: novyy status russkogo yazyka (Migration in Kazakhstan: the New Status of the Russian Language)," *Demoskop Weekly*, no. 251-2, July 19-August 20, 2006, <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2006/0251/analit05.php> (accessed January 10, 2009).

Kyrgyz had Russian as their native language. By 2006, the number had fallen to one.¹²⁴ Georgia and Azerbaijan, by contrast, gained new speakers. More than twice as many Georgians claimed Russian as their native language in 2006, from 28,000 to 63,000. Azerbaijan almost doubled their number from 64,000 to 110,000 Azeris who claimed Russian as their native language.¹²⁵

Some important comments are in order with respect to censuses. For one, census bureaus do not give language tests to census takers. No one is going to check to make sure the 3.9 million Uzbeks who claimed Russian fluency are actually fluent. Numbers could be vastly different than those reported on these censuses. The Estonian census illustrates the danger of relying on mother tongue data to determine nationality. Over 406,000 responded that they consider Russian to be their mother tongue, while just over 99 percent of all Estonians answered Estonian. But only 351,000 listed Russian as their nationality. Who are the other 55,000 who consider Russian to be their mother tongue? Are they Ukrainians? Belarusians? Ukrainians and Belarusians only make up 47,000 people.¹²⁶

Additionally, it is clear that typological distance is not reason alone for the numbers of Russian speakers. Sure, genetic relationship may account for the huge numbers of Ukrainians and Belarusians who speak Russian fluently. The three languages are all closely related members of the Slavic branch of the Indo-European language family. However, if typology were the only factor, then we would expect to find the other five “Indo-European” states (Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Armenia, and Tajikistan) at the top of the list, just below Ukraine and Belarus. In fact, the list is Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Armenia and Lithuania.

¹²⁴ Aleksandr Aref'ev, “Skol'ko lyudey govoryat i budut govorit' po-russki? (How Many People Speak and Will Speak Russian?),” *Demoskop Weekly*, no. 251-2, July 19-August 20, 2006, <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2006/0251/analit05.php> (accessed January 10, 2009).

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Statistics Estonia, “2000 Population and Housing Census.”

3. Language Choice in Polls and Surveys

One indicator of Russian's prestige, however, is revealed when one conducts polls in any of these 14 former republics. Gallup Polls conducted surveys in nine of the former republics in 2006 and 2007. The polls were concerned with "attitudes toward the Russian language in post-Soviet states."¹²⁷ Gallup polled approximately 1,000 persons in each country. One of the preliminary questions dealt with the language the person wanted the survey to be in. The choices were the titular language of the country, Russian, or other. A huge percentage of Belarusians and Ukrainians chose Russian (92 and 83 percent respectively), as expected by the typological closeness of the languages and the large number of Russian speakers in each country. Fewer, but still a significant number of Kazakhs chose Russian at 68 percent. In Kyrgyzstan, 38 percent chose Russian, while in Moldova only 23 percent did. In the remaining countries (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Tajikistan), between 3 and 7 percent selected Russian as the survey language.¹²⁸ Initially, these results show us that typological distance has little to do with current Russian fluency. Perhaps these findings prove that Russian is prestigious due to Ostler's *unity* reason. (See Chapter V for a further discussion on this and Ostler's other reasons.)

Interestingly, when asked whether it is important for children in their country to learn Russian, a total of 92 percent of Georgians polled said it was somewhat (28 percent) or very important (64 percent), despite only 7 percent of respondents asking for a Russian-language survey. Armenia's results were similar. Of those polled, 75 percent thought it was very important and 19 percent thought it was somewhat important for Armenian children to learn Russian. Only 3 percent of Armenians asked for a Russian-language survey.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Sergei Gradirovski and Neli Esipova, "Russian Language Enjoying a Boost in Post-Soviet States," *Gallup*, August 1, 2008, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/109228/Russian-Language-Enjoying-Boost-PostSoviet-States.aspx>, (accessed October 10, 2008); and Gradirovski and Esipova, "Russia's Language Could Be Ticket in for Migrants," *Gallup*, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/112270/Russias-Language-Could-Ticket-Migrants.aspx> (accessed December 24, 2008).

¹²⁸ Gradirovski and Esipova, "Russian Language Enjoying a Boost in Post-Soviet States."

¹²⁹ Gradirovski and Esipova, "Russian Language Enjoying a Boost in Post-Soviet States."

Of the remaining two countries with low numbers of persons completing a survey in Russian (Azerbaijan and Tajikistan), results to the question about children were similar. In Azerbaijan, 84 percent believe Russian is important for children to learn, while in Tajikistan, fully 98 percent of respondents felt the same. Uzbekistan also polled high; 97 percent of Uzbeks agree that the Russian language is important for children to learn.¹³⁰

B. LANGUAGE AS A CHOICE

1. Websites and Alphabets

There are indirect ways to determine Russian's prestige in the FSU republics. The Internet offers the opportunity to see how each state values Russian. Is Russian among the language options on official governmental websites? Additionally, orthographical conventions may show us how certain states regard the Russian language. Do they continue to write their language in Cyrillic, or have they switched to another alphabet since the collapse of the Soviet Union?

a. Language Options on Official Websites

Russian's prestige as a regional lingua franca is evident when one visits governmental websites of the 14 FSU republics. Is a Russian version of the website offered for visitors? What language is the default language for the site? What other languages are available?

I visited at least two governmental websites for each of the republics, most often the website of the president or prime minister, and the website of the parliament. For some republics these websites were not available. In these cases, I visited other governmental websites. For example, in the case of Tajikistan, I was only able to find the president's web page. Searches for any other governmental web page failed to find any official sites. To fulfill my requirement for two websites, I had to accept a private Tajik company's site, "Tajikistan Development Gateway," which was replete with information

¹³⁰ Data for language survey choice were unavailable for Uzbekistan. Gradirovski and Esipova, "Russia's Language Could Be Ticket in for Migrants."

on the Tajik government. Searches for any Turkmen presence besides a governmental information site also failed. No other site was found. In total, I discovered 27 websites. (State statistical agencies or census bureaus are another matter which I will deal with below.)

Three former republics and four governmental websites did not include Russian as an optional language. The republics were Georgia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine. Both the presidential and parliament websites of Georgia offered only Georgian and English versions. The parliament of Azerbaijan website has only an Azeri version; no other language was available. The official government website of Ukraine has English and Ukrainian versions only.

The remaining 23 websites, representing every former republic except Georgia, all offered a Russian version. With the exception of the Azerbaijan parliament site and the prime minister of Kazakhstan's site, all offered an English version. Three sites did not offer a version in the titular language of the former republic: Kazakhstan's prime minister page only offered the Russian version, while both the Kyrgyz government site and the Kyrgyz ministry of external trade and industry's site offered Russian and English versions. All other websites offered a version of the state's official language, including Kazakhstan's government page which offered a Kazakh version in both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets.

Another possible indicator of Russian's prestige is evident when one visits each webpage. When the home page is visited, what language does the visitor encounter first? To test this, I ensured that the webpage address did not include any indicator of language; for example, instead of visiting www.valitsus.ee/?lang=en, I went straight to www.valitsus.ee.

Only 15 of the 27 websites took me to the titular language version. Estonia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Moldova all took me to native language versions for both websites, while Latvia, Armenia and Tajikistan directed me to their official languages on one of the websites.

Of the remaining 12 websites, 7 took me directly to a Russian version. Four took me to an English site,¹³¹ while one (the Kazakhstan government page) took me to a page where I had to choose which language I wanted before entering the main site.

Finally, one can look at the number and variety of language choices visitors have when going to these websites. The average is three languages. Only nine of the websites offered fewer than three language choices. The remaining 18 websites offer from three to six language choices. The hands-down winner for language choice is the Lithuanian parliament website, which offers not only Lithuanian, English and Russian, but also French, German and Chinese versions. Lithuania aside, most of these 18 websites offer a Russian, English and titular language version. Moldova's parliament webpage, along with the aforementioned Latvian and Lithuanian sites, offered a French version, perhaps due to their European Union desires.¹³²

Official governmental statistics or census bureau websites are another story. There is a desire to disseminate the data collected, thus one can expect that the websites will offer languages considered *lingua francas*. I was able to find an official government website for census data for all FSU republics except Turkmenistan.

Unlike the governmental sites I searched, the census sites offered fewer languages, two on average. All sites offered a version in the titular language, except for Belarus and Kyrgyzstan's sites, which only offered Russian and English. Russian was a language choice for all except the three Baltic states, Georgia and Azerbaijan. In fact, in only six months from my first visit to the website of the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Russian was removed as a language option. English, on the other hand, is an option on every census website. However, while English may be an option for the webpage, not every country offers English versions of their census documents.

¹³¹ Armenia's presidential site (www.president.am/) redirected me to the English page (<http://www.president.am/president/cover/eng/>), no matter what I did. This is most likely due to programming by the webmaster which allows the website to determine what country I was from.

¹³² "The Eastern Partnership—An Ambitious New Chapter in the EU's Relations with its Eastern Neighbours," EU Press Release, December 3, 2008, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/1858&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> (accessed January 6, 2009).

b. Alphabets

Most of the FSU peoples had a long literary history prior to the Soviet Union. Some of these FSU languages had their own alphabets prior to the days of the Soviet Union, like the Mkhedruli alphabet of the Georgians, or the distinctive alphabet of the Armenians. The alphabets used by speakers of Armenian, Georgian, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian did not change during the Soviet period.

Moldovan provides an interesting example of “alphabet nationalism.”¹³³ Moldovan was written in the Cyrillic alphabet from the 14th century until the middle 19th, when the alphabet was changed to the Latin alphabet with Moldova joining the Romanian kingdom.¹³⁴ Shortly thereafter the language switched back to the Cyrillic alphabet under the Soviets. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Moldovan intelligentsia spoke out against the Cyrillic in favor of the Latin alphabet.¹³⁵ By this point, Cyrillic was synonymous with Soviet power and a change to the Latin alphabet was seen as a way for Moldova to flex its muscles, despite the many centuries that the language was written in Cyrillic.¹³⁶ Moldova’s language law of 1989 requires the language be written in the Latin script as does the 1994 constitution of Moldova.¹³⁷ Despite this, alphabet nationalism continues to bring about conflict in the Transnistrian regions, where the language continues to be written in Cyrillic.¹³⁸

¹³³ Levon Hm. Abrahamian, “Mother Tongue: Linguistic Nationalism and the Cult of Translation in Postcommunist Armenia,” *Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Papers Series*, Summer (1998): 17.

¹³⁴ Claus Neukirch, “National Minorities in the Republic of Moldova—Some Lessons Learned, Some Not?” *South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs*, no. 3 (1999): 47.

¹³⁵ Michael Bruchis, *The USSR: Language and Realities: Nations, Leaders, and Scholars* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988), 206.

¹³⁶ Abrahamian, 17.

¹³⁷ Matthew H. Ciscel, “Language and Identity in Post-Soviet Moldova,” in *The Consequences of Mobility: Linguistic and Sociocultural Contact Zones*, ed. Brent Preisler et al. (Roskilde: Roskilde University Press, 2005), 109-10.

¹³⁸ Ciscel, “A Separate Moldovan Language? The Sociolinguistics of Moldova’s *Limba de Stat*,” *Nationalities Papers* 34, no. 5 (2006): 587-8; and Steven D. Roper, “The Politicization of Education: Identity Formation in Moldova and Transnistria,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 38 (2005): 509.

The Turkic languages of Central Asia and the Caucasus, as well as Tajik, however, did change. Originally, these languages were written in the Arabic script, the same used by present day Arabic, Persian-Farsi and the languages of Afghanistan. Following the Turkish language reform, the Soviet Turkic languages switched their alphabets to the Latin alphabet in the 1920s. Soviet language planners changed these alphabets to Cyrillic versions in the late 1930s,¹³⁹ purportedly to make it easier for the non-Russians to learn Russian,¹⁴⁰ and to loosen the grip that Muslim clerics had on their people.¹⁴¹ All five Soviet Turkic languages and Tajik had their alphabets changed to Cyrillic.

But today, things are different. All of the old Soviet “Muslim languages” as well as Moldovan have instituted changes to their language’s orthography. As stated above, the Moldovan constitution declared the Moldovan alphabet to be the Latin one, and today Moldovan is written in the same alphabet as Romanian (except in Transnistria, where Cyrillic is still used). All of the Turkic languages of the FSU republics have declared the end of the Cyrillic alphabet.¹⁴² Tajikistan has thrown its support toward the

¹³⁹ Bruchis, 38.

¹⁴⁰ Cooper, 157; and Simon Crisp, “Soviet Language Planning 1917-53,” in *Language Planning in the Soviet Union*, ed. Michael Kirkwood (London: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1990): 29; and Shorish, “Planning by Decree: Soviet Language Policy in Central Asia,” 44.

¹⁴¹ Bruchis, 223; and David Laitin, Roger Petersen, and John W. Slocum “Language and the State: Russia and the Soviet Union in Comparative Perspective,” in *Thinking Theoretically about Soviet Nationalities: History and Comparison in the Study of the USSR*, ed. Alexander J. Motyl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 146.

¹⁴² Adam Kesher, comment on “Debates over Latinization of Kazakh Language,” The Neweurasia Blog, comment posted December 25, 2007, <http://kazakhstan.neweurasia.net/2007/12/25/debates-over-latinization-of-kazakh-language/> (accessed November 7, 2008); Sebastian Peyrouse, “The Russian Minority in Central Asia: Migration, Politics, and Language,” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Occasional Paper #297, 16; “Mneniya ‘Za’ i ‘Protiv’ Perekhoda Kyrgyzstana na Latinitsu” (“Opinions ‘For’ and ‘Against’ Kyrgyzstan’s Change to Latin”), Kabar.ru Novosti Kyrgyzstana (Kabar.ru News of Kyrgyzstan), <http://kabar.ru/?p=260> (accessed November 3, 2008).

Arabic alphabet, most probably because of its growing ties with Iran,¹⁴³ although current leadership in the country has more pressing priorities.¹⁴⁴

While this alphabet nationalism is not in and of itself proof that Russian's prestige is declining, it is an indication of the way each nation leans politically. Reasons for alphabet change range from rekindling literary pasts to easing the language's entrance into the world of the internet.¹⁴⁵ Inherent in these moves is the publication of new textbooks for the children of these countries. But not just school books; books, journals and magazines all will have to be published in the new alphabet. The move away from Cyrillic will have a drastic effect on Russian language learning and maintenance. In the ten years since the Uzbek government mandated teaching Uzbek in the Latin alphabet, the number of elementary and secondary students who studied through the medium of Russian declined by half, from 560,000 in 1993 to 277,000 in 2005.¹⁴⁶

2. Russian is Still Used in the Region

It is clear that typology does not explain Russian's continuing prestige in some states of the FSU. If so, Tajikistan would not have so few speakers and Kazakhstan would not have so many. Belarus would not have over a million fewer Russian speakers and Uzbekistan would not have two million more between the 1989 Soviet census and their respective national censuses.

Language attitudes, as revealed in surveys conducted in the FSU republics, as well as language choices on these surveys help us determine how prestigious Russian is today. Furthermore, the languages available on governmental websites and the "alphabet

¹⁴³ "Tajikistan to Use the Persian Alphabet," PressTV, May 2, 2008, <http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=53991§ionid=351020406> (accessed November 7, 2008).

¹⁴⁴ Avaz Yuldashev, "Prezident Protiv Smeny Tadzhijskogo Alfavita" ("President Against the Change of the Alphabet"), July 22, 2008, http://www.toptj.com/ShowNews.aspx?news_id=CBA75841-5C41-4D8B-AF18-C569B36FB35A (accessed December 12, 2008).

¹⁴⁵ Suzanne Wertheim, "Language Purity and the De-Russification of Tatar," Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies Working Papers Series, Spring (2002): 18; Kesher, "Debates over Latinization of Kazakh Language."

¹⁴⁶ Peyrouse, 17.

nationalism” that some states are experiencing are indicators as to the direction the state is leaning, and indirectly show us how the status of Russian is changing.

Yet, Russian is still being used in all the fourteen FSU states. For some, it is used as a regional lingua franca, for Ostler’s *unity* reason. Others may continue to use Russian for Ostler’s *creole* reason, because the titulars cannot speak their “native” language. But which state falls into each of Ostler’s four reasons?

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V. RUSSIAN IS A DYING REGIONAL LINGUA FRANCA

A. RUSSIAN IS A DYING REGIONAL LINGUA FRANCA

1. Review of Ostler's Four Reasons

To review, Ostler listed four reasons why a “colonial” language would maintain its prestige after the colonizing peoples leave. The reason could be that the people remaining after the colonizers left speak the colonial language as their first language, and had been speaking it for some time. The experience in the Americas is an example of Ostler's first reason, with English, French and Spanish being the first language of both the colonizers and the colonized peoples. This is known as the *creole* reason.

Secondly, the people who shook off the shackles of the colonizers may still desire some sort of relationship with the former colonizing power, and thus may maintain the language to stay in communication with them. English in India, Spanish in the Philippines, and Portuguese in East Timor are all examples of the *nostalgia* reason.¹⁴⁷

While some countries of Sub-Saharan Africa have good relations with France, many do not. Still, French remains a useful language in this huge region. The countries that maintain French as a regional lingua franca are illustrating Ostler's *unity* reason.

English today and French a couple centuries ago both demonstrate Ostler's fourth point, the *globality* reason. In many countries around the world, English as a Second Language classes are full, not because everyone loves America, England or any other Anglo state. The classes are full because the students see the usefulness of knowing a language that is a second language to millions of people around the world, not to mention the language of television, popular music and the Internet.

Ostler has already applied his four reasons to the case of Russian. He sees the *creole* reason as applying only to the peoples of Siberia, an area not dealt with in this thesis. However, he mentions the cases of Estonia, Latvia and Kazakhstan as possibly

¹⁴⁷ Ostler, 444.

fitting into this area. With respect to *nostalgia*, he points to Belarus, with their heavy reliance on Russian as an indicator of their close relations with the government of Russia. (However, he recently added Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the nostalgia group.)¹⁴⁸ Ostler sees no reason for any of the former Soviet states to “persist with Russian” for unity reasons. Finally, he believes that Russian has no chance of overcoming English’s use as a lingua franca in the world.¹⁴⁹

Russian is spoken in each of the 14 FSU republics as a regional lingua franca. There are just too many speakers for it to be otherwise. There are over 54 million speakers of Russian in the 13 former republics for which there are data.¹⁵⁰ If Russian were not a useful language, there would not be so many speakers.

However, I would argue that the reason the language is spoken by so many is not from *nostalgia* or for *creole* reasons. Instead, *unity* connects these neighbors for no other reason than economics.

2. Creole is Not the Reason

Ostler mentions that the creole reason fits only with the peoples of Siberia, and possibly Estonia, Latvia and Kazakhstan. He comes to this conclusion based on the population of Russian-speakers in the affected areas. The creole reason, to review, results when the people who are left in the region speak the colonial language as a first language and have no other language to go back to. Granted, Ostler admits that the creole reason only applies when the colonizers overwhelm the current inhabitants and remain there,¹⁵¹ in effect becoming American, Venezuelan, Canadian, or, in this case, Estonian, Latvian or Kazakh.

This certainly did not happen in the case of any of the FSU republics. Not only did many Russians repatriate themselves shortly after they woke up in another country,

¹⁴⁸ Nicholas Ostler, personal communication, February 2, 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Ostler, *Empires of the Word*, 445.

¹⁵⁰ Turkmenistan is the only state for which I cannot find official census information.

¹⁵¹ Ostler, 445.

but even those who remained did not suddenly become Kazakh, Estonian or Latvian. They may continue to be residents in the countries of the FSU, but they are still Russians. The evidence is in the censuses conducted in each of these new states. Likewise, Russophone Kazakhs, Estonians and Latvians did not become Russians, simply because they speak Russian.

Latvia and Estonia were severely affected by immigration of Russians, especially after World War II. Latvians made up 77 percent of the population of Latvia in 1935. That percentage fell to 52 percent by the last Soviet census (1989).¹⁵² In 1939 Estonia, 92 percent of the population was Estonian. By the time of the 1989 Soviet census, that number had fallen more than 30 percent, to just below 62 percent.¹⁵³ Additionally, Russian became the working language of both states, and many Estonians and Latvians knew the language fluently. It is no wonder that Ostler lists Estonia and Latvia under his *creole* reason. But knowing Russian fluently does not a Russian make.

Things have changed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Estonians comprised 68 percent of the population of Estonia in 2000.¹⁵⁴ Russians comprised only 26 percent of the Estonian population.

Over half a million Estonians speak Russian as a second language. But this is a significant decrease from 1989, when almost 710,000 considered themselves “good” at Russian.¹⁵⁵ Still, this does not mean that their reason for maintaining the language is a result of Ostler’s *creole* reasoning. More likely, this is a case of using Russian as a lingua franca in the Baltics. Certainly, Latvian and Lithuanian are close enough typologically that it would be easy for a Latvian to learn Lithuanian (and vice versa).

¹⁵² Juris Dreifelds, *Latvia in Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7; Daniel A. Kronenfeld, "The Effects of Interethnic Contact on Ethnic Identity: Evidence from Latvia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 21, no. 3 (2005): 248.

¹⁵³ Rein Taagepera, *Estonia: Return to Independence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 233; Kronenfeld, "The Effects of Interethnic Contact on Ethnic Identity," 248.

¹⁵⁴ Statistics Estonia, "2000 Population and Housing Census."

¹⁵⁵ Laitin states "a 1988 poll found that 73.7 percent of Estonians knew enough Russian to communicate on a good level." David D. Laitin, "Language Planning in the Former Soviet Union: The Case of Estonia," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 118, (1996): 48; I used the Estonian population from the 1989 Soviet census, as reported in Taagepera, *Estonia*, 233.

However, Estonian is a Finno-Ugric language, unrelated to its neighbors, Latvian, Lithuanian, and Russian. It is no easy feat for Estonians to learn Russian, and vice versa.¹⁵⁶ Russian may be surviving in the Baltics in order to *unify* the region. In fact, Estonia is a popular destination for vacationing St. Petersburg residents.¹⁵⁷ It is to the Estonians' monetary benefit to maintain some level of Russian language proficiency.

In 2000, Latvians made up 57 percent of the total population of Latvia, with Russians making up another 30 percent.¹⁵⁸ In 2006, Latvians were 59 percent and Russians were only 28.5 percent of the population of Latvia.¹⁵⁹ In real numbers, this is a loss of a quarter million Russians from the population.¹⁶⁰

Latvia's law on citizenship is one of the harshest, attracting criticisms from the European Union.¹⁶¹ One is a citizen of Latvia automatically if he was a citizen of Latvia on June 17, 1940, the date of the Soviet occupation of the country, or a direct descendent of someone who was a citizen then.¹⁶² However, it is possible to become a citizen of Latvia through naturalization, which includes a test of Latvian proficiency. However, since the collapse, only about 200,000 people have become Latvian citizens through this means.¹⁶³ Equally interesting, a majority of Russians (87 percent) in the Baltics agreed

¹⁵⁶ Ray Taras, "Nations and Language-Building: Old Theories, Contemporary Cases," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1998), 91.

¹⁵⁷ Hough, "Sociology, the State and Language Politics," 114.

¹⁵⁸ Latvian Central Statistics Bureau, "Population Census 2000 in Brief," <http://data.csb.gov.lv/DATABASEEN/tautassk/databasetree.asp?lang=1> (accessed December 10, 2008).

¹⁵⁹ Ina Druviete and Dace Strelevica-Osina, "Some Aspects of the Sociolinguistic Situation in Latvia: Causes and Effects," *Suvremena Lingvistika (Contemporary Linguistics)* 65 (2008): 90.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Gabrielle Hogan-Brun, "Language in Society Across the Baltic Republics: A Comparative Overview," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 36, no. 3 (2005): 277.

¹⁶² Druviete and Strelevica-Osina, "Some Aspects of the Sociolinguistic Situation in Latvia," 101.

¹⁶³ Ibid..

that they should learn the titular language; indeed they stated it was “an obligation of residents in these countries”¹⁶⁴ to learn the local language.

Russian knowledge among Latvians is still strong, most likely for Ostler’s *unity* reason, and not the *creole* reason. In 1996, only 5 percent of Latvian-mother tongue respondents to a language survey reported to not know any Russian.¹⁶⁵ Only four years later, in the 2000 census, this percentage was 25 percent.¹⁶⁶

An indicator of the decreasing prestige of Russian in Latvia is school enrollments. In Latvia, parents have a choice of sending their children to a school that uses Latvian as the language of instruction, Russian as the medium, or a combination of the two.¹⁶⁷ In the 2000-2001 school year, less than 6 percent of Latvian children attended a Russian-medium school,¹⁶⁸ despite a third of Latvian children knowing Russian.¹⁶⁹ Additionally, 18 percent of Latvian children have no proficiency in Russian.¹⁷⁰

Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russians accounted for 40 percent of Kazakhstan’s population, equal to the number of Kazakhs.¹⁷¹ Even more telling is the percentage of Russians and Kazakhs in urban centers. Russians constituted over 50 percent of the urban population according to the 1989 census, while Kazakhs were only 27 percent.¹⁷² Things have changed over the years. By 2004, Kazakhs were over 57

¹⁶⁴ Richard Rose, “Baltic Trends: Studies in Cooperation, Conflict, Rights and Obligations,” (Glasgow: University of Strathclyde, Centre for the Study of Public Policy, no. 288 (1997)), table 2, 8, in Ray Taras, “Nations and Language-Building: Old Theories, Contemporary Cases,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 1998), 91.

¹⁶⁵ Baiba Metuzale-Kangere and Uldis Ozolins, “The Language Situation in Latvia 1850–2004,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 36, no. 3 (2005): 336.

¹⁶⁶ Latvian Central Statistics Bureau, “Population Census 2000 in Brief.”

¹⁶⁷ Ina Druvieta, “Republic of Latvia,” in *Linguistic Minorities in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Christina Bratt Paulston and Donald Peckham (Philadelphia, PA: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 176.

¹⁶⁸ Kronenfeld, “The Effects of Interethnic Contact on Ethnic Identity: Evidence from Latvia,” 258.

¹⁶⁹ “Russki Yazyk Na Postsovetskih Prostorah (the Russian Language in the Post-Soviet Space).”

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ William Fierman, “Language and Identity in Kazakhstan,” 173.

¹⁷² Fierman, “Language and Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan,” 100.

percent of the population of Kazakhstan, while Russians were only 27 percent.¹⁷³ The urban population changed appreciably. Almost one of every two urban dwellers was a Kazakh (48.5 percent), while one of every three was a Russian (37 percent).¹⁷⁴

In the 1989 census, more than 64 percent of Kazakhs claimed Russian proficiency, while almost 78 percent of Kazakhs in urban areas claimed to be fluent in Russian.¹⁷⁵ In 1999, 75 percent of Kazakhs nationwide claimed fluency in Russian.¹⁷⁶

In the 1988-1989 school year, 73 percent of urban schools taught all classes in the Russian language, while only 11 percent were in Kazakh. Rural schools were a little closer to equal, with 47 percent in Russian and 37 percent in Kazakh.¹⁷⁷ Numbers have vastly changed in the years since. In 1999, 72 percent of ethnically Kazakh urban children and an incredible 88 percent of ethnically Kazakh rural children attended schools in which classes were conducted in the Kazakh language. Country-wide, only 18 percent of ethnically Kazakh children attended Russian-medium schools.¹⁷⁸ Like many of the FSU republics, parents have a choice to send their kids to Kazakh-only, Russian-only or mixed schools. In 2005, in urban areas of Kazakhstan, 712,000 school children attended schools where Kazakh was one of the languages of instruction. A bit more than 60 percent of these students attended Kazakh-only schools, while the remainder attended mixed schools, where some kids learn through the medium of Kazakh while others learn through another language, most often Russian.¹⁷⁹ Despite this growth since the collapse, approximately 20 percent, and possibly as high as 30 percent, of all Kazakh children

¹⁷³ Fierman, "Language and Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," 110.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 101.

¹⁷⁶ Bhavna Dave, "Entitlement through Numbers: Nationality and Language Categories in the First Post-Soviet Census of Kazakhstan," *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 4 (2004): 443.

¹⁷⁷ Fierman, "Language and Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," 105.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 107.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 109.

attend classes in which Russian is the language of instruction.¹⁸⁰ Much like the cases of Latvia and Estonia, the reason is probably less *creole* and more *unity*.

3. Friendly Relationship with Russia, Because of *Nostalgia*

Belarus is Ostler's one example of a population maintaining Russian for nostalgic reasons (except for his more recent additions of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). Scholars, Ostler included, have pointed to the close relationships between the Russian and Belarusian governments as the reason for Russian's prestige.¹⁸¹ If this is the case, inclusion of Belarus into Ostler's *unity* group seems more appropriate. Besides, a nostalgic feeling for the days of communism and the Soviet Union in the Belarusian government does not equate to a nostalgic feeling to the Russian language for the same reasons by Belarusian people.

For example, a recent study asked Belarusians what their mother tongue was. Fewer than 7 percent said Belarusian, while 69 percent answered Russian. These results initially lead one to surmise that Belarusian is dying, in favor of Russian. But they are in stark contrast to the second question in the survey, the question of the respondent's native language. In answer to this question, just over 30 percent answered Belarusian, while 27 percent said their native language was a mixture of Russian and Belarusian. Only 34 percent responded Russian to this question.¹⁸²

Belarusian census data give us even greater discrepancies. The most recent census conducted in Belarus was in 1999, about six years before the study above. In this census, 85.6 percent of Belarusians (6.98 million) consider Belarusian to be their mother

¹⁸⁰ Fierman, "Language and Education in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," 112.

¹⁸¹ Chloe Bruce, "Fraternal Friction or Fraternal Fiction? The Gas Factor in Russian-Belarusian Relations," *Oxford Institute for Energy Studies* NG 8, March 2008, 5-6; Rosaria Puglisi, "The 'Normalisation' of Russian Foreign Policy," in Graeme P. Herd and Jennifer D.P. Moroney, *Security Dynamics in the Former Soviet Bloc* (London: Routledge, 2003), 77; Clelia Rontoyanni, "Belarus and the East," in ed. Stephen White, Elena A. Korosteleva and John Lowenhardt, *Postcommunist Belarus* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 123-42.

¹⁸² N. Anthony Brown, "Language and Identity in Belarus," *Language Policy* 4 (2005): 329.

tongue (there was no question on the census about native language).¹⁸³ Again, these data lead one to believe that the status of the Belarusian language is safe.

But another question asked on the census reveals the strength of Russian. Of the 8.15 million Belarusians in 1999, 58.6 percent of them consider Russian to be their home language. Additionally, almost 63 percent of the population of Belarus speaks Russian at home, despite Russians comprising only 10 percent of the population.¹⁸⁴ This, more than any other datum, spells the doom of Belarusian. It is difficult to maintain a language without the support of children. And if Belarusian children are not hearing their mother tongue spoken at home, the chances of them passing it on to their children are less. As the author of the study above says, “[a]bandonment of Belarusian...has progressed to what some linguists would consider a point of no return.”¹⁸⁵ The fact that so few Belarusians consider it to be their mother tongue or even speak it at home certainly will not help.

In summary, I agree that the Belarusian government may consider Russian nostalgically, as shown on official government websites. If the website is available in the Belarusian language, it is listed after Russian.¹⁸⁶ Some official government websites are only available in Russian and English.¹⁸⁷ However, I do not agree with Ostler’s placing Belarus in the *nostalgia* group. The country is an example of a combination of Ostler’s reasons: *unity* because of all the Russian speakers in and around Belarus, *nostalgia* because of no ill will between the two countries and *creole* because so few Belarusians truly can speak Belarusian.

¹⁸³ National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, “Population Census 1999.”

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ N. Anthony Brown, “Language and Identity in Belarus,” 329.

¹⁸⁶ The official Belarusian government website (<http://www.government.by>) and the President of Belarus website (<http://president.gov.by>) are both examples. Interestingly, Pavlenko (2006) states that the Belarusian “president’s official website exists only in two languages, Russian and English.” Two years later, I found a Belarusian version. Pavlenko, “Russian as a Lingua Franca,” 85.

¹⁸⁷ The website for the National Statistical Committee (<http://belstat.gov.by>) and the Ministry of Education (<http://www.minedu.unibel.by>) are just two examples.

Most Belarusians speak Russian because their neighbors, whether Russian or Belarusian ethnically, speak Russian (*unity*). Most of their children attend Russian-language schools or colleges; an amazing 76 to 77 percent of children from nursery school through high school attended Russian language schools in the 2005-2006 school year¹⁸⁸ (*creole* and *unity*). This is no surprise due to the close relations between Russia and Belarus (*nostalgia*), and these school data are an example of parents' recognizing where success lies for their children (*unity*).

Interestingly, *nostalgia* can be seen as a reason for abandoning Russian. There is no love lost between Russia and the Baltic republics, and they were some of the first to derussify their countries. In fact, Estonia erected a monument in 2004 to celebrate Estonians who donned the German uniform and fought with the Nazis against the Soviets during World War II.¹⁸⁹ As already mentioned, citizenship laws in Estonia and Latvia are quite restrictive, at least in the opinion of Russia and the EU. Additionally, each of the Baltic countries guarantees its citizens the right to contact the government in their native language. Because of this, all three countries require government employees to pass a language exam.¹⁹⁰ Despite all this, Russian is still spoken in the Baltics as a regional lingua franca.

4. Russian is a Dying Regional Lingua Franca

One area where Ostler errs in his prediction of Russian prestige is in the area of *unity*. Unity as defined by Ostler is the use of Russian by a population because it is useful as a regional lingua franca. This is the area where the FSU republics fall.

I have already reviewed the cases of Estonia, Latvia and Kazakhstan, mistakenly put into the *creole* group by Ostler; these three countries more properly fall into the *unity* group due to their use of Russian as regional lingua francas. Belarus represents a

¹⁸⁸ Pavlenko, "Russian in Post-Soviet Countries," 61.

¹⁸⁹ "Estonia Unveils Nazi War Monument," *BBC News*, August 20, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3585272.stm>, (accessed January 6, 2009).

¹⁹⁰ Uldis Ozolins, "Upwardly Mobile Languages: The Politics of Language in the Baltic States," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 15, no. 3 (1994): 166-7.

combination of three of Ostler's reasons, including *unity*. The remaining FSU republics all use Russian as a regional lingua franca to varying degrees. However, in all of the states, except possibly Belarus, Russian's use as a lingua franca is slowly dying.

In order for a language to remain as a regional lingua franca, younger generations must embrace its usefulness. This is not happening. According to the deputy director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Russian Language Academy, fewer schools teach Russian in the FSU states, and as a result, fewer children know it.¹⁹¹

Uzbekistan had a rise in the number of Uzbeks with fluency in Russian as a second language since the collapse of the Soviet Union. But these numbers surely will fall as fewer and fewer children study Russian in school. In Uzbek middle schools, children only study Russian for 70 hours *per annum*. Russian is only required in the first two years of college, for a total of 120 hours.¹⁹²

Add to this the fact that current textbooks are Uzbek-made, concentrating on local Uzbek culture and not covering Russian history or culture. Even supplemental Russian textbooks, donated by Russia, are used in only 8-10 percent of schools.¹⁹³ In Uzbek schools where Russian is the language of instruction, officials have reduced the number of hours of Russian language tuition. Additionally, the number of college majors in Uzbek universities where Russian is the language of instruction has been greatly reduced.¹⁹⁴ Uzbek is increasingly the language of everyday communication for the younger generations of Uzbeks.

In Kazakhstan, where a huge percentage of Kazakhs maintain Russian proficiency and relations between the two countries are strong, Kazakh parents are choosing to send their children to Kazakh schools. Fully 80 percent of Kazakh children were educated

¹⁹¹ Chloe Arnold, "Russia: Is Russian Language Dying Out in Former Soviet Republics?" *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 26, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1078355.html> (accessed December 11, 2008).

¹⁹² S. I. Zinin, "Russkiy Zakyk v Uzbekistane" ("The Russian Language in Uzbekistan"), *Rus' Yedinaya (Russia United)*, <http://russedina.ru/frontend/former/uzbekistan?id=2955> (accessed December 11, 2008).

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

through the medium of Kazakh in 2004.¹⁹⁵ Russian still dominates in colleges and universities, especially in technical areas, mostly because of the lack of textbooks in Kazakh.¹⁹⁶ With the appearance of Kazakh textbooks, enrollment in Kazakh-language higher education should rise. More telling are age-group data: In 2007, over 90 percent of Kazakhs aged 55 or older spoke Russian fluently, while only 45 percent of Kazakhs 23 years old and younger could.¹⁹⁷ The same is found in Tajikistan, where a state law mandates Russian language instruction from the second grade and up. Still, only a quarter of Tajik college students attend Russian-language schools.¹⁹⁸ In Turkmenistan, the government shut down the Russian department at the Turkmen State University.¹⁹⁹

Kyrgyzstan is the one possible hold-out. Kyrgyz is the majority language in Kyrgyz homes, but Russian is still strong in the schools. One such school is in Naryn province, a rural area of Kyrgyzstan reputed to be the “center of pure Kyrgyz ethnicity.”²⁰⁰ Even here, the best secondary school according to parents is the Russian-language one. A graduate of this school dismissed criticisms that the school was “a threat to national identity” by pointing out that not only is Russian a useful language to know, but they “will know Kyrgyz anyway [because they] live in this [Kyrgyz] environment.”²⁰¹ Still, country-wide, only 23 percent of schools offer Russian as a language of instruction, and only two institutions of higher learning offer instruction through the medium of Russian.²⁰²

¹⁹⁵ Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” 71.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Juldyz Smagulova, “Language Policies of Kazakhization and their Influence on Language Attitudes and Use,” *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 11, no. 3-4 (2008): Table 4, 464.

¹⁹⁸ Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” 73.

¹⁹⁹ Arnold, “Is Russian Language Dying Out?”

²⁰⁰ Alan J. DeYoung, “Instructional Language, National Identity, and Higher Education in Rural Kyrgyzstan: The Debate at At-Bashy,” *Central Eurasian Studies Review* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 15.

²⁰¹ DeYoung, “Instructional Language,” 15.

²⁰² Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” 72.

Lithuania offers an excellent illustration of the decline of Russian proficiency. The Lithuanian census of 2001 organized language data along age groups. Of those Lithuanians below 15 years old, 70 percent know only Lithuanian. Only 14 percent know Lithuanian and one other language.²⁰³ This age group represents Lithuanians who were no more than five years old at the end of the Soviet Union, if they had even been born yet.

In 2001, only 9 percent of schools in Lithuania were “minority language schools.” Of these, half were Russian-language schools; the other half were multilingual schools where Russian was one of the languages of instruction. Five years later, less than 5 percent of school children attended a school where Russian was the language of instruction.²⁰⁴ Trends were similar in Estonia, where only 13 percent of schools use Russian.²⁰⁵

In Ukraine, as recent after the collapse as the 1993/1994 school year, fully “88 percent of first-graders were taught in Ukrainian.”²⁰⁶ Twelve school years later, 78 percent of Ukrainian high school students attend Ukrainian-language schools.²⁰⁷ During the 2006-2007 school year in Moldova, 80 percent of students attended secondary schools where Moldovan was the language of instruction. More than two-thirds of college students study through the medium of Moldovan.²⁰⁸

In the whole of Armenia, there are only eight Russian-language schools, and half of these are run by the Armenian government.²⁰⁹ In Azerbaijan, only 7 percent of elementary and secondary education is completed through the medium of Russian.²¹⁰ In

²⁰³ Statistics Lithuania, “Population Census.”

²⁰⁴ Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” 66.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Dominique Arel, “Language Politics in Independent Ukraine: Toward One or Two State Languages?” *Nationalities Papers* 23, no. 3 (1995): 606.

²⁰⁷ Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” 61.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 63.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 68.

²¹⁰ Valery Tishkov, “The Russian World—Changing Meanings and Strategies,” *Carnegie Papers* no. 95 (August 2008): 13.

Georgia, fewer than 7 percent of the students attended Russian-language schools, and many of these are ethnic Russians and non-Georgians.²¹¹ Quite possibly, the number of Georgian children attending Russian-language schools will fall with the aftermath of the conflict between Russia and Georgia in 2008. Before the conflict, Saakashvili said, “What changes if you know Russian? You can’t get Russian visas, trade with Russia is going down, we have our own TV channels now. To have a career, you don’t need to know Russian. You need to study English, Turkish.”²¹² Relations have only gotten worse after the conflict.

Typically, parents make a choice of school in the best interests of their child’s future. Previously, FSU parents chose to have their kids educated through the medium of Russian, because Russian provided a better opportunity for success. More and more, parents are choosing to educate their children in their mother tongue and a western tongue as a second language, for example in Moldova where most children learn English or French as a second language, rather than Russian.²¹³ Even in Ukraine, where there is more sympathy for Russia and the Russian language, the intelligentsia sees the “center” as being in Germany or New York, not in Moscow.²¹⁴ Russian’s use as a regional lingua franca in the 14 FSU republics is dying a slow death.

B. CONCLUSION

The Russian government recognizes the perilous state of the Russian language. Demographically, the Russian population is declining, losing about three million people every ten years.²¹⁵ Fewer people are learning Russian in the states of the FSU and

²¹¹ Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” 69.

²¹² Quoted in Pavlenko, “Russian in Post-Soviet Countries,” 70.

²¹³ Ciscel, “A Separate Moldovan Language,” 580-1.

²¹⁴ M. Riabchuk, “Vozvrashchenie k norme” (“A Return to Normal”), *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, no. 43 (October 1991), in Kreindler, “A Second Missed Opportunity,” 268.

²¹⁵ Julie DeVanzo, Olga Oliker, and Clifford Grammich, “Too Few Good Men: The Security Implications of Russian Demographics,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 4 (Summer/Fall 2003), 17.

Warsaw Pact. Typology alone is not enough to guarantee the continued use of Russian. If so, Lithuania would have a higher percentage of its population fluent in Russian, and Kazakhstan fewer.

The Russian language enjoyed a year all its own when Putin declared 2007 to be the “Year of the Russian Language.”²¹⁶ He described Russian as “a language of true international communication...[a] common heritage of many peoples” and expects that Russian “will never become a language of hatred...or isolationism.”²¹⁷ This was an attempt to halt the decline in speakers that the Russian language has suffered since the end of the Soviet Union.²¹⁸ Of course, the Russian language seems to be doing just fine according to the latest All-Russia census (2002). Slightly more than 98 percent of all residents of the Russian Federation claim to “know Russian.”²¹⁹ But this is 98 percent out of a population of just over 145 million. The last Soviet census, conducted in 1989, revealed a population of 147 million persons in the area that today is the Russian Federation.²²⁰ This is a loss of almost two million people, despite an increase in Russia’s population of 3.8 million due to migration of diasporic Russians returning “home” after the fall of the Soviet Union.²²¹

Russia should have recognized the need for emphasis on Russian’s universality immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Students in former Warsaw Pact nations dumped Russian language instruction as soon as possible, and students in East

²¹⁶ Sergei Gradirovski and Neli Esipova, “Russian Language Enjoying a Boost in Post-Soviet States.”

²¹⁷ Putin’s address to Federal Assembly on April 27, 2007, quoted in Tishkov, “The Russian World,” 10.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ *Vserossyskaya Perepis Naseleniya 2002 Goda (2002 All-Russia Population Census)*, Table 4.3 “Population by Nationalities and Knowledge of Russian,” <http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=12> (accessed September 29, 2008).

²²⁰ *Federal’naya Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoy Statistiki (Federal Service of Government Statistics)*, Table 5.1, “Chislennost’ Naseleniya” (“Number of Residents”), http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b08_11/IssWWW.exe/Stg/d01/05-01.htm (accessed December 11, 2008).

²²¹ Timothy Heleniak, “Migration of the Russian Diaspora after the Breakup of the Soviet Union,” *Journal of International Affairs* 57, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 103.

Germany “celebrated the occasion by burning their Russian textbooks.”²²² There was no immediate response by the Russian government.

The response came, finally, in 2005, when the Russian government approved the federal program “The Russian Language (2006-2010).” The goals of the program include not only “the creation of conditions for the full realization of the functions of the Russian language as a governmental language of the Russian Federation” but also as “a language of international communication for strengthening the state, national security and the prestige of the country.”²²³ The program goals also include “the dissemination and study of the Russian language and culture in foreign countries.”²²⁴

Most of the “foreign countries,” as declared in the Russian government decision, are the countries of the FSU. This is understandable, as there is still a healthy population of Russian speakers among the titular nationalities, from which to draw teachers and advocates. However, the Russian government has not ignored non-FSU nations. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs celebrated the Year of the Russian Language by opening an exhibition in Paris.²²⁵ The event was even observed in the U.S. with a grand opening at the Russian Cultural Center in Washington, DC.²²⁶ In China, right across the border from Russia, a new museum branch was opened as part of a project related to the Year of the Russian Language program.²²⁷

²²² Kreindler, “A Second Missed Opportunity,” 267.

²²³ Russian Governmental Decision, no. 833, December 29, 2005, from: *Demoskop Weekly* <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/knigi/zakon/zakon052.html> (accessed December 11, 2008), my translation.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ “Russian as the Leading Language in Space—Interview with Anatoly Perminov, Head of the Federal Space Agency,” *Russkiy Mir* July 10, 2008, <http://russkiymir.org/en/publications/interviews/index.php?from4=2&id4=2490> (accessed February 13, 2009).

²²⁶ “V S.Sh.A. Sostoyalas’ Torzhestvennaya Tseremoniya Otkrytiya Goda Russkogo Yazyka (The Opening Ceremony for the Year of the Russian Language Took Place in the U.S.),” *RIA Novosti (RIA News)*, Society section, February 8, 2007, <http://www.rian.ru/society/20070208/60388536.html> (accessed February 13, 2009), my translation.

²²⁷ “Branch of Harbin Russian Museum Opens in Heihe,” *Russkiy Mir Foundation*, January 16, 2009, <http://russkiymir.org/en/news/index.php?from4=2&id4=7073> (accessed February 13, 2009).

The Russian government has recognized, albeit a little late, the need for a program to increase the number of fluent Russian speakers. “The Russian Language (2006-2010)” is a positive step in that direction. The program includes concrete goals for increasing the number of children being educated through the medium of Russian in the states of the FSU, as well as increasing the number of students in foreign countries studying the Russian language.²²⁸ In the five-year life of the program, organizers aim to “increase the number of participants in organizations which deal with the Russian language, and the literature and culture of Russia from 5 to 25 percent.”²²⁹ The program also recognizes the need to further educate children of diasporic Russians in foreign countries: one aim is to increase “television and radio programming consumers from 15 to 40 percent.”²³⁰ The Russian government is putting 1.58 billion rubles to this effort.²³¹ “The Russian Language (2006-2010)” will, perhaps, halt the slow death of the Russian language’s prestige in the states of the former Soviet Union.

The *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) Foundation, one of whose goals is the promotion of the Russian language abroad, features a poem by Anna Akhmatova, one of Russia’s most renowned poets. The poem, more than any other words, explains the Russian Federation’s current emphasis on the Russian language.

And we will preserve you, Russian speech,
The great Russian word.
We will keep you free and pure,
And pass you on to our grandchildren,
Free from bondage forever!²³²

²²⁸ Russian Governmental Decision, no. 833, December 29, 2005, from: *Demoskop Weekly* <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/knigi/zakon/zakon052.html> (accessed December 11, 2008).

²²⁹ Ibid., my translation.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² *Russkiy Mir Foundation* homepage, <http://russkiymir.org/en/> (accessed October 7, 2008).

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