



Offord, D., Argent, G., & Rjeoutski, V. (2015). The functions and value of foreign languages in eighteenth-century Russia. *The Russian Review*, 74(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1111/russ.10752>

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link to published version (if available):  
[10.1111/russ.10752](https://doi.org/10.1111/russ.10752)

[Link to publication record on the Bristol Research Portal](#)  
PDF-document

Gold open access granted by journal publisher

## University of Bristol – Bristol Research Portal

### General rights

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the reference above. Full terms of use are available:  
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/red/research-policy/pure/user-guides/brp-terms/>

---

FOREIGN-LANGUAGE USE IN RUSSIA  
DURING THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

## The Functions and Value of Foreign Languages in Eighteenth-Century Russia

GESINE ARGENT, DEREK OFFORD, AND VLADISLAV RJÉOUTSKI

Catherine II, who reigned from 1762 to 1796, conceived of Russia as a European power.<sup>1</sup> In this she followed Peter the Great (sole ruler from 1696 to 1725), with whom she implicitly linked herself in the inscription “To Peter I Catherine II” on the statue of Peter she commissioned from the French sculptor Falconet, which was unveiled in St. Petersburg in 1782. If the imperial Europeanizing project was to be fulfilled then it was essential that Russians should develop competence in foreign languages. This cluster of articles examines the rapid acquisition of such competence during the long eighteenth century, that is to say, from the age of Peter to the age of Alexander I (1801–25). The authors of the articles in the cluster outline who in Russia spoke or wrote which foreign languages, in what circumstances, with whom, and on what occasions, and they try to explain the reasons for this linguistic behavior. In thus examining the development of a multilingual environment in Russia we do not lose sight of the fact that the great majority of Russians remained monolingual (and largely uneducated and illiterate). We are examining the language practice of a minority. Yet the members of this minority, bilingual or often multilingual individuals, were *Kulturträger* who played a vital role in the portentous transformations that Russia underwent from the early eighteenth century. They were bearers of the civilization from which Russia’s rulers and elites now wished to learn and borrow and against which those rulers and elites began to measure themselves, or at least they were intermediaries between that civilization and their own.

Our overall aim in this introductory article is to provide a sufficiently dense and rich background to this collective study of the ways in which three modern European languages—German, French, and English—were used in eighteenth-century Russia. We begin with an

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of the UK, which has funded the multidisciplinary project on “The History of the French Language in Russia” out of which this publication arises. We also thank the editors of *Russian Review* and the anonymous referees they have consulted for their many valuable suggestions.

<sup>1</sup>See Paul Dukes, ed., *Catherine the Great’s Instruction (Nakaz) to the Legislative Commission, 1767* (Newtonville, MA, 1977), 43.

*The Russian Review* 74 (January 2015): 1–19

Copyright 2015 The University of Bristol. Published by Wiley Periodicals Inc. on behalf of *The Russian Review*. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution, and production in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

overview of sociolinguistic principles that bear on the study of such issues and an outline of the approaches taken by the authors to the data available. We highlight emerging themes from the field of historical sociolinguistics, showing how the articles engage with them. In our second section, we offer a brief overview of the development of foreign-language use in eighteenth-century Russia from the vantage-point of the historian of Russian society and culture, providing some contextual information on such matters as foreign-language communities and emphasizing the connection between the development of foreign-language use and modernization. In the third section, we consider the state of Russian at the time and perceptions about its capacity to compete with the foreign languages that were being used by the elite. We then go on to discuss the prestige enjoyed by French, making it clear that to modern linguistic scholars, unlike eighteenth-century writers and thinkers, prestige or value are not intrinsic properties of a language but qualities attributed to it. Finally, we refer to the anxieties eventually caused in Russia by Franco-Russian bilingualism and consider the extent—perhaps more limited than is sometimes supposed—to which they were warranted. The overarching purpose of the cluster is to provide a fuller and more accurate and nuanced account than we believe has yet been given of the ways in which foreign languages were used in eighteenth-century Russia, their relative roles in the Europeanization of the country's elite, and the value that was attached to them.

## THE HISTORICAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC FRAMEWORK

Linguistic behavior, including language choice, language commentary, and what Harold Schiffman terms linguistic culture (the “set of behaviors, assumptions, cultural forms, prejudices, folk-belief systems, attitudes, stereotypes, ways of thinking about language, and religio-historical circumstances associated with a particular language”), forms a vital part of the history of a community.<sup>2</sup> Examining such phenomena in Russia in the eighteenth century provides fresh insight into the sociopolitical and cultural circumstances of this place and time. What is more, since the “linguistic turn” in the social sciences, it has been a widely accepted tenet that language, far from being a purely referential tool for describing objects and processes neutrally, is a constructive force. Language matters are an intrinsic part of social processes such as nation-building, the identity-formation of individuals and groups, and the establishment, maintenance, and subversion of power hierarchies. Identity is now seen as central to language rather than a mere byproduct of communication, as studies of identity and language have moved from essentialism (“already-fixed identities are expressed in language”) to constructionism (“identities are constructed through language”).<sup>3</sup> Clearly, then, the multilingual character of Russian elite society potentially had an impact on the formation of the identity of groups, individuals, and the nation as a whole. However, these questions need more nuanced consideration than they have hitherto received in studies of multilingualism among the eighteenth-century Russian elite. Such studies—notably the work of Iurii Lotman, to which we refer below—have tended to focus on Franco-Russian bilingualism and link it to an identity crisis of the nobility, whereas we claim that multilingual life may have been considered by many speakers to be unproblematic in the long eighteenth century.

<sup>2</sup>Harold Schiffman, *Linguistic Culture and Language Policy* (London, 1996), 5.

<sup>3</sup>John E. Joseph, *Language and Identity* (Basingstoke, 2004), 41f.

The study of language use in eighteenth-century Russia that we have carried out falls within the field of historical sociolinguistics. The need to provide “a more comprehensive framework than an autonomous, e.g. ‘asocial,’ one” to study the language of the past and address sociolinguistic questions in particular was first underlined by Suzanne Romaine, who insisted that the social component must be borne in mind when studying language change.<sup>4</sup> The term “historical sociolinguistics” was first used in the late 1980s; until then this field of research had been largely ignored.<sup>5</sup> The body of work that has been done over the last twenty-five years, however, amply demonstrates that historical sociolinguistics is a multidisciplinary field which allows for numerous approaches to a wide variety of data, focusing on the same questions that interest sociolinguists who study present-day language use.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in their introduction to a recent handbook of historical sociolinguistics, J. Camilo Conde-Silvestre and Juan Hernández-Campoy trace the gradual inclusion of topics beyond variation and change, with which early sociolinguists were chiefly concerned. They define historical sociolinguistics in a broad way as “the reconstruction of the history of a given language in its socio-cultural context.”<sup>7</sup> In their comprehensive overview of the field and its genesis and development, Terttu Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg list several disciplines that inform historical sociolinguistics, which is placed at the intersection of linguistics, social sciences, and history. They call for an integrationist approach incorporating a variety of perspectives that contribute to an understanding of the linguistic past.<sup>8</sup> Following this approach, the articles in this cluster examine such varied topics as language use in educational and institutional settings, the status of languages as *lingua franca*, language policies steered by imperial rulers, and language commentary. They engage in what can be termed macro-sociolinguistics, that is to say, the study of the sociolinguistics of society, which is concerned with issues like multilingualism, language policy, and standardization.<sup>9</sup>

Few historical studies have been made of the multilingual environment of eighteenth-century Russia, or more specifically of such matters as bilingualism, language change, language choice, spoken language, and language attitudes there.<sup>10</sup> This dearth is no doubt

<sup>4</sup>Suzanne Romaine, *Socio-Historical Linguistics* (Cambridge, 1982), x.

<sup>5</sup>Roland Willemyns and Wim Vandenbussche, “Historical Sociolinguistics: Coming of Age?” *Sociolinguistica* 20 (2007): 146.

<sup>6</sup>Alexander Bergs, *Social Networks and Historical Sociolinguistics: Studies in Morphosyntactic Variation in the Paston Letters (1421–1503)* (Berlin, 2005), 4.

<sup>7</sup>Juan M. Hernández-Campoy and J. Camilo Conde-Silvestre, eds., “Introduction,” in *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, ed. Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy and Juan Camilo Conde-Silvestre (Oxford, 2012), 1.

<sup>8</sup>Terttu Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg, eds., *Historical Sociolinguistics* (London, 2003), 27.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 30; Romaine, *Socio-Historical Linguistics*, viii.

<sup>10</sup>On the use of French in prerevolutionary Russia see Ferdinand Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française des origines à nos jours*, 13 vols. (Paris, 1905–53, 1969–79), 8:489–529. More recent groundbreaking studies include D. K. Zhane, “Frantsuzskii iazyk v Rossii XVIII v. kak obshchestvennoe iavlenie,” *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta*, seriia filologična, 1 (1978): 62–70; Iu. M. Lotman and V. Iu. Rozentsveig, *Russkaia literatura na frantsuzskom iazyke XVIII–XIX vekov* (Vienna, 1994); V. Rjéoutski, “La langue française en Russie au siècle des Lumières: Éléments pour une histoire sociale,” in *Multilinguisme et multiculturalité dans l’Europe des Lumières (Actes du Séminaire international des jeunes dix-huitiémistes 2004)*, ed. U. Haskins-Gonthier and A. Sandrier (Paris, 2007), 101–26; Elena Grechanaia, *Kogda Rossiia govorila po-frantsuzski: Russkaia literatura na frantsuzskom iazyke (XVIII–pervaia polovina XIX veka)* (Moscow, 2010); Elena Gretchanaia and Catherine Viollet, eds., “*Si tu lis jamais ce journal ...*”: *Diaristes russes francophones 1780–1854* (Paris, 2008); Elena Gretchanaia et al., eds., *La francophonie européenne aux XVIIIe–XIXe siècles: Perspectives littéraires, historiques et culturelles* (Brussels, 2012); the collection of articles on French-language acquisition in *Vivliofika*:

partly due to the nature of the source material with which historical sociolinguists have to work. As historical sociolinguists do not have the same means of data collection as students of sociolinguistic phenomena in the twentieth century and beyond (sound recordings, interviews, survey data, large quantities of electronically searchable written language, and so forth), they have to make the best of what William Labov terms “bad data,” which may be fragmented, unreliable, or not representative of historical language use.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, historical sociolinguistic studies have fruitfully utilized such documents as letters and diaries, school inspections and reports, and newspapers and advertising, albeit with the caveat that the unavoidable gaps in such data must always be acknowledged.<sup>12</sup> The authors of the articles in this cluster concede that the data they have is limited and they therefore concentrate instead on qualitative studies. Wladimir Berelowitch and Kristine Dahmen, for example, use a wide range of document types for the study of the specific field of educational matters, including correspondence with the governors of noble children, employment contracts, and course plans and timetables.

Among the most important topics addressed by the articles in the cluster are questions of language choice like those formulated by Joshua Fishman in his seminal article “Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When.”<sup>13</sup> Fishman is concerned with multilingual settings where one community of speakers uses two or more languages or codes not only with outsiders but also for internal communicative purposes. In particular, he examines the use of languages in what he terms different domains. Fishman’s concept of domains of language use has seen wide use, but its validity is at times disputed. Hartmut Haberland, for instance, has warned of the pitfalls of using the concept of domains for studying a language community that features elite multilingualism for intergroup communication. (He takes Denmark past and present as an example.) Such a setting is crucially different from the language community studied by Fishman, where several languages are habitually used by all speakers, and where the choice depends on the domain rather than the language competence of the other groups with which the community is in contact.<sup>14</sup> In eighteenth-century Russia too it is elite multilingualism we are dealing with. (We define bilingualism and multilingualism, incidentally, not as more-or-less native command of two or more languages but as functional competence of some sort, that is to say competence in reading, writing, or speaking.<sup>15</sup>) Nonetheless, it is still valuable in the Russian context to examine

---

*E-Journal of Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies* 1 (2013) (cited in footnotes 29, 32, 47, and 50 below); and Derek Offord et al., eds., *French and Russian in Russia: From the Enlightenment to the Age of Pushkin*, 2 vols. (forthcoming from Edinburgh University Press). On the use of German see especially Kristine Koch (now Dahmen), *Deutsch als Fremdsprache im Rußland des 18. Jahrhunderts: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Fremdsprachenlernens in Europa und zu den deutsch-russischen Beziehungen* (Berlin, 2002).

<sup>11</sup>William Labov, “Some Principles of Linguistic Methodology,” *Language in Society* 1:1 (1972): 100.

<sup>12</sup>Stephan Elspass, “The Use of Private Letters and Diaries in Sociolinguistic Investigation,” in *Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, 156–90; Nils Langer, “Historical Sociolinguistics in Nineteenth-Century Schleswig-Holstein,” *German Life and Letters* 64:2 (2011): 169–87; Carol Percy, “Early Advertising and Newspapers as Sources of Sociolinguistic Investigation,” in *Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, 191–210.

<sup>13</sup>Joshua A. Fishman, “Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When?” *La linguistique* (1965): 67–88.

<sup>14</sup>Hartmut Haberland, “Domains and Domain Loss,” in *The Consequences of Mobility*, ed. Bent Preisler et al. (Roskilde, 2005), 232 ff.

<sup>15</sup>We thus follow, for example, Li Wei, who describes a multilingual individual as “anyone who can communicate in more than one language, be it active (through speaking and writing) or passive (through listening and reading).” See Li Wei and Melissa G. Moyer, eds., *The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism* (Oxford, 2008), 4. “Multilingual individuals,” Wei continues, “may have

domains or domain-like frameworks of language use and the purposes for which languages were used. For although multilingualism assisted intergroup communication, as in Haberland's example, the elite community used several languages for intragroup communication as well, in a setting where many participants could speak several languages and their choice depended on domain, genre, or topic. For example, Russians who had a command of several languages would speak French to one another at the salon because French was the accepted language in social gatherings of this type.

Research on contemporary multilingualism, as summarized in various handbooks, deals with questions such as how to measure multilingualism, whether and under what circumstances multilingualism is a problem, the influence of family, educational institutions, and workplace on multilingualism and vice versa, connections to identity and nationhood, neurological aspects, and language contact and change.<sup>16</sup> Research on multilingual environments sometimes conceptualizes the presence of several languages in a community as "language conflict," for example in *The War of Languages and Language Policies* or *When Languages Collide*.<sup>17</sup> However, the coexistence of several languages does not necessarily entail conflict, and in Russia it may be an intrinsic part of what has been called "uncomplicated cultural bilingualism."<sup>18</sup> We therefore find it helpful, following Pierre Bourdieu, to think of choices in a multilingual environment as due to value in the linguistic marketplace.<sup>19</sup> This approach enables us to account for the way in which languages were used in Russia: All the varieties used had value in the marketplace, but in different domains and for different purposes.

It will be equally helpful when examining language use in eighteenth-century Russia to consider not only who spoke what language to whom and when but also what speakers thought about language behavior and what prescriptions (of varying degrees of formality) for language use were in place. Such evaluative language commentary, which can be normative, constitutes metadiscourse: talk about talk.<sup>20</sup> Since metadiscourse gives expression to language ideologies (broadly speaking, conceptions of the nature, purpose, and function of language, and stipulations of what constitutes acceptable linguistic behavior), it is an important area of investigation in its own right. In historical sociolinguistic studies of metadiscourse, researchers have considered, first, whether discussions took place among political figures or intellectuals about the usefulness of particular languages and the need for them; second, whether any language policies were in place and whether their effects can be detected; and third, how language discussions found expression in policies and affected speakers' behavior.<sup>21</sup> The analysis of metadiscourse enables us to deduce whether a particular

---

become what they are through very different experiences: some may have acquired and maintained one language during childhood, the so-called first language (L1), and learned other languages later in life, while others have acquired two or more first languages since birth" (ibid.).

<sup>16</sup>Tej K. Bhatia and William C. Ritchie, eds., *Handbook of Bilingualism and Multilingualism* (Chichester, 2012); Marilyn Martin-Jones et al., eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Multilingualism* (London, 2012); Peter Auer and Li Wei, eds., *Handbook of Multilingualism and Multilingual Communication* (Berlin, 2009).

<sup>17</sup>Louis-Jean Calvet, *La guerre des langues et des politiques linguistiques* (Paris, 1987); Brian D. Joseph et al., eds., *When Languages Collide: Perspectives on Language Conflict, Competition and Coexistence* (Columbus, 2002).

<sup>18</sup>Michelle Lamarche Marrese, "'The Poetics of Everyday Behavior' Revisited: Lotman, Gender, and the Evolution of Russian Noble Identity," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 11:4 (2010): 704.

<sup>19</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, MA, 1991).

<sup>20</sup>Adam Jaworski et al., eds., *Metalanguage: Social and Ideological Perspectives* (Berlin, 2004).

<sup>21</sup>Langer, "Historical Sociolinguistics in Nineteenth-Century Schleswig-Holstein," 172.

way of speaking or writing is the norm or unusual, and which linguistic behaviors and elements provoke comment, and which do not.

An important element in this analysis is study of how metadiscourses become “authoritatively entextualized,” that is to say, what enables them to gain authority and acceptance as normative knowledge.<sup>22</sup> Language ideologies may claim to be grounded in the inherent qualities of a language, but in fact they are based on constructions of what the language is like and suitable for.<sup>23</sup> Berelowitch’s article on French, for instance, alludes to the genesis of ideas about the French language within the higher echelons of power and their far-reaching influence. The process of entextualization relies on endorsement by powerful individuals and institutions, such as the major French writers mentioned by Berelowitch who propagated the idea of the universality of French. Nor do language ideologies occur by themselves; rather, they are linked to other ideologies which have currency at the time (internationalism, cultural pluralism, and—what is of particular interest to us—nationalism, and so forth).<sup>24</sup>

### JOINING EUROPE: MULTILINGUALISM AND MODERNIZATION

Moving from the sociolinguistic dimension of our study to dimensions which have more to do with social, cultural, intellectual, and political history, we should consider the link between bilingualism or multilingualism and the rapid modernization that Russia underwent in the eighteenth century. This modernization, which is generally equated with Westernization or Europeanization, was greatly accelerated, if not actually initiated, by Peter the Great. It may be that the importance of the acquisition and use of foreign languages as part of the state-driven modernizing project undertaken by Peter and subsequent rulers has never really been clearly stated. Be that as it may, we contend that in fact Russian multilingualism was a prerequisite for fulfilment of this project. Familiarity with certain foreign languages—the ability to read them, write them, converse in them, and translate from and into them—was crucial to the emergence of Russia as a major participant in the European world, external acceptance of it as a European power, and its cultural development as a modern European nation (albeit one that was still socially and economically backward). Without such familiarity there could have been no engagement with modernity, with the Europe of the Age of Reason, the Enlightenment (or, rather, the several Enlightenments), the industrial revolution, or the numerous scientific discoveries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nor would the magnificent artistic creativity of nineteenth-century Russia, which on one level represented a response to these developments and to the intellectual, economic, and social change they entailed, have been feasible.

The sudden appearance of multilingualism in eighteenth-century Russia is all the more striking when placed against the seventeenth-century linguistic background. A telling indication of the state of knowledge of foreign languages in Russia during the reign of Tsar Michael Romanov (1613–45) is provided by information on the number of Russian translators working in the Foreign Chancellery (*Posol'skii prikaz*) at that time. Of sixty-eight translators, a mere seventeen were Russians, judging by their names. In fact, the

<sup>22</sup>Susan Gal and Kathryn A. Woolard, “Constructing Languages and Publics: Authority and Representation,” *Pragmatics* 5:2 (1995): 129–38.

<sup>23</sup>Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 107.

<sup>24</sup>Thomas Ricento, *Ideologies, Politics and Language Policies* (Amsterdam, 2000), 4.

needs of the Russian state for linguistic expertise were largely satisfied in the seventeenth century by members of foreign communities that had been established in Russia or by prisoners of war.<sup>25</sup> Ignorance of modern foreign languages and classical languages among Russians in the pre-Petrine period is attributable to many factors, including the lack of secular educational institutions in Muscovy and the introspective mentality encouraged by the autocracy and the Orthodox Church (whose clergy used Church Slavonic, not Greek or Latin, for liturgical purposes). Apprehension about contact with foreigners who had different faiths and cultural practices led to restrictions on their influx and on where they could dwell in Russia, the most notable of which was the removal of the foreign community in Moscow to the enclosed, out-of-the-way Nemetskaia sloboda in 1652.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, ignorance of the Russian language prevailed beyond Russia's borders. Few Westerners had traveled to Muscovy and some of those who had—Sigmund von Herberstein, Giles Fletcher, and Adam Olearius are cases in point—left accounts of it as a benighted non-European other, which discouraged further exploration.<sup>27</sup> This dearth of mutual linguistic comprehension could even bedevil diplomatic negotiations, not to mention commercial and cultural contact, as we see from accounts of a Russian mission to France in 1668.<sup>28</sup>

The high visibility attained by French among the Russian nobility from the mid-eighteenth century should not be allowed to obscure the fact that when Peter did force Russians in the early part of the century to interest themselves in what was said or written by foreigners, French was by no means the main foreign language they needed to acquire. Different foreign languages (especially Latin, German, English, and other modern languages, notably Italian, as well as French) were important at various times for various elites, including the third estate and even the clergy, who were acquiring knowledge in different domains and for the appropriation of all sorts of new social and cultural practices.<sup>29</sup> We shall provide a few examples.

When Peter's campaign for modernization began, for instance, Latin was an important tool for communication with European men of learning, thanks to the preeminence it still enjoyed as the European scientific language of choice. For most of the eighteenth century, it remained one of the major languages of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which Peter

<sup>25</sup>B. A. Kunenkov, "Perevodchiki i tolmachi Posol'skogo prikaza vo vtoroi chetverti XVII veka: Funktsii, chislennost', poriadok priema," available at <http://mkonf.iriran.ru/papers.php?id=50> (last accessed March 12, 2013); Ingrid Maier, "Foreign-Language Specialists in Muscovite Russia: 16th and Early 17th Century," in *S liubov'iu k slovu: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Arto Mustajoki on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday*, ed. Jouko Lindstedt et al. (Helsinki, 2008), 191–206.

<sup>26</sup>Lindsey Hughes, "Attitudes towards Foreigners in Early Modern Russia," in *Russia and the Wider World in Historical Perspective: Essays for Paul Dukes*, ed. Cathryn Brennan and Murray Frame (London, 2000), 1–23.

<sup>27</sup>Sigmund von Herberstein, *Rerum Moscovitarum Comentarii* (1549), translated as *Description of Moscow and Muscovy, 1557*, ed. Bertold Picard, trans. J. B. C. Grundy (London, 1969); Giles Fletcher, *Of the Rus Commonwealth* (1591), ed. Albert J. Schmidt (Ithaca, 1966); Adam Olearius, *Beschreibung der moskowitischen und persischen Reise* (1647), trans. and ed. Samuel Baron as *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Stanford, 1967).

<sup>28</sup>See, for example, the end of the third section in Vladislav Rjéoutski and Derek Offord, "French in Russian Diplomacy: Antiokh Kantemir's Address to King George II and His Diplomatic and Other Correspondence," at <http://frinru.ilt.bris.ac.uk/introduction/french-russian-diplomacy-antiokh-kantemir%E2%80%99s-address-king-george-ii-and-his-diplomatic> (last accessed March 27, 2014).

<sup>29</sup>On foreign-language use among the clergy see Ekaterina Kislova, "Le français et l'allemand dans l'éducation religieuse en Russie au XVIIIe siècle," *Vivliofika: E-Journal of Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies* 1 (2013): 48–74, available at <http://vivliofika.library.duke.edu/> (last accessed September 8, 2014).

had founded in 1724, where it was used for communication both within the Academy and with the international scholarly community.<sup>30</sup> Latin was also studied by the Russian Orthodox clergy, particularly from the second half of the eighteenth century, as an important theological language and more generally a mark of culture.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Latin was a useful tool for aristocrats who wished to pursue their studies in European universities, because teaching in those universities was always partly conducted in Latin. Lotman also has detected indications that toward the end of the eighteenth century the nobility—or perhaps more accurately, its higher echelons—began to consider it more important than before to teach their sons Latin, and thus that Latin, like French, had become a cultural asset distinguishing the aristocracy from the petty gentry.<sup>32</sup>

Peter the Great himself, as Dahmen notes in her article in this cluster, was said to converse with ease in German—a skill he had begun to acquire on his youthful visits to the Nemetskaia sloboda, where German-speakers were in the majority.<sup>33</sup> (He also had some familiarity with Dutch, having famously worked as an apprentice ship-builder in Zaandam, during his Grand Embassy to the West in 1697–98.) In post-Petrine Russia the position of German was consolidated by the presence of a substantial ethnically German population in the Baltic territories annexed by Russia as a result of Peter’s Great Northern War with Sweden (1700–21). This minority was well represented in the high ranks of the tsarist administration in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>34</sup> In any case, as Dahmen also shows, German was widely used in eighteenth-century Russia for many practical purposes in education, commerce, and technological spheres such as mining. Moreover, as the vernacular spoken in the lands to which young Russians of intellectual promise were sent to study, it was acquired by some prominent men of science and letters, including Mikhail Lomonosov (who spent about three years at Marburg and one in Freiburg in the period

<sup>30</sup>See Christopher Buck, “The Russian Language Question in the Imperial Academy of Sciences,” in *Aspects of the Slavic Language Question*, ed. Riccardo Picchio and Harvey Goldblatt, 2 vols. (New Haven, 1984), 2:187–234. The place of Latin in the Academy was challenged from the beginning by German (which was the language of the great majority of the members of the new Academy), by Russian (the official language of the empire), and by French (which was increasingly used by European scientists and scholars and was known to representatives of the Russian court, who did not usually understand Latin).

<sup>31</sup>On knowledge of Latin among the Russian clergy see Gregory L. Freeze, *The Russian Levites. Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1977): 83, 85, 91, *passim*.

<sup>32</sup>Iu. M. Lotman, *Pushkin. Biografiia pisatel'ia. Stat'i i zametki. 1960–1990. Evgenii Onegin. Kommentarii* (St. Petersburg, 1995), 551. However, teaching Latin to nobles being privately educated at home or in boarding schools seems to have been rather exceptional (at least among the middling and lower nobility). The position of Latin in public educational institutions, such as the Cadet Corps, also was extremely weak. See Vladislav Rjéoutski, “Les écoles étrangères dans la société russe au siècle des Lumières,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 46:3 (2005), 473–528; and *idem*, “Apprendre la ‘langue de l’Europe’: le français parmi d’autres langues dans l’éducation en Russie au siècle des Lumières,” *Vivliofika: E-journal of Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies* 1 (2013): 9, available at <http://vivliofika.library.duke.edu/article/view/14833> (last accessed September 8, 2014).

<sup>33</sup>V. A. Kovrigina, *Nemetskaia sloboda Moskvu i ee zhiteli v kontse 17–pervoï chetverti 18 v.* (Moscow, 1998).

<sup>34</sup>As attested by the names of many prominent statesmen, diplomats, and soldiers, such as Alexander von Benckendorff (first head of the Third Section established by Nicholas I in 1826) and numerous Lievens, Stackelbergs, Ungern-Sternbergs, Wrangels, and others. German was the official language in Estonia, Livonia, and Courland until Catherine decreed that German and Russian were both to be official languages. French rather than German generally would have prevailed in the social and service worlds that these families inhabited in the second half of the eighteenth century, though, once they had established close ties with the Russian ruling elite and high nobility. German was widely used in some branches of the civil service and some educational institutions, for example, in the postal service and at the Cadet Corps.

1736–40) and Aleksandr Radishchev (who was sent by Catherine II to study in Leipzig in 1767–71). Fedor Volkov, a Russian actor and founder of a public theater in 1750, frequented the German theater in St. Petersburg, where he met German playwrights and directors, and was reliably said to have a more-or-less native command of German, which he had learned in Moscow.<sup>35</sup> Mikhail Shcherbatov, writing to one of his sons in the 1770s, emphasized the importance of knowledge of German for a Russian nobleman preparing to serve his fatherland in the army or civil service.<sup>36</sup>

Knowledge of English, meanwhile, was important for officers in naval service, and it was therefore taught in the Naval Cadet Corps (though only there). However, English was generally not well known in eighteenth-century Russia, and since many of the quite numerous English and Scottish residents of St. Petersburg knew French, much of the communication between these communities and Russians, or at least Russians from the higher social strata, took place in French.<sup>37</sup> Knowledge of Italian also had value in eighteenth-century Russia. At the very beginning of Peter's reign some Russians had to learn it in order to undergo a nautical education, as Peter required. Petr Tolstoy, who would become a close confidant of Peter, for example, apparently gained a good knowledge of that language during the sixteen months he spent in Italy, mainly in Venice, in 1698–99.<sup>38</sup> In any case, Italian was widely used as a diplomatic language in the eighteenth century, particularly in the Mediterranean and for dealings with the Ottoman Empire, with which the expanding Russian Empire was repeatedly in conflict during the eighteenth century.<sup>39</sup> It was also the hegemonic European language in the domain of music, a status it enjoyed even after the ascendancy of French in most other cultural domains.

However, of all the languages which began to have currency in eighteenth-century Russia, it was French that acquired the greatest social, cultural, and political significance, even if it was not always so widely spoken as German and not always taught to so many pupils as German in public educational institutions such as the Noble Land Cadet Corps in St. Petersburg. Quite early in the eighteenth century—at least as far back as the 1730s—knowledge of French became an important qualification for Russian diplomats, irrespective of whether they were posted to France, and in the course of the century it replaced other languages, including Latin, as the principal European diplomatic language. The future diplomat Ivan Shcherbatov had presciently studied it after he had been sent to London by Peter in or around 1717. Antiokh Kantemir, the satirist and Russian envoy to London and Paris in 1732–38 and 1738–44, respectively, also would become proficient in

<sup>35</sup>L. M. Starikova, *O Fedore Volkove* (Moscow, 2013), 119–30.

<sup>36</sup>S. G. Kalinina, ed., *Perepiska kniazia M. M. Shcherbatova* (Moscow, 2011), 352–54, also available at <http://frinru.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/content/second-manuscript> (last accessed March 27, 2014). See also Derek Offord and Vladislav Rjéoutski, “French in the Education of the Nobility: Mikhail Shcherbatov's Letters to His Son Dmitrii,” <http://frinru.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/introduction/french-education-nobility-mikhail-shcherbatov%E2%80%99s-letters-his-son-dmitrii> (last accessed March 27, 2014).

<sup>37</sup>See Anthony Cross, *“By the Banks of the Neva”*: *Chapters from the Lives and Careers of the British in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, England, 1997).

<sup>38</sup>On Petr Tolstoy see Derek Offord, *Journeys to a Graveyard: Perceptions of Europe in Classical Russian Travel Writing* (Dordrecht, 2005), chap. 1.

<sup>39</sup>See, for example, Lucien Bély, *L'Art de la paix en Europe: Naissance de la diplomatie moderne, XVIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2007), 411; Joseph Cremona, “Italian-based Lingua Francas around the Mediterranean,” in *Multilingualism in Italy Past and Present*, ed. Anna Laura Lepschy and Arturo Tosi (Oxford, 2002), 24–30; and Alberto Varvaro, “The Maghreb Papers in Italian Discovered by Joe Cremona,” in *Rethinking Languages in Contact: The Case of Italian*, ed. Anna Laura Lepschy and Arturo Tosi (Oxford, 2006), 146–51.

it.<sup>40</sup> Knowledge of French was needed by students of architecture as well, since many influential manuals, including manuals on fortifications, were written in it. Although communities whose first language was French, unlike German-speaking communities, would not truly develop in Russia until after the middle of the eighteenth century, there were resident French-speakers who could help Russians (and some non-Russians too), very early in the century, to practice and polish their French.<sup>41</sup> Petr Apostol, the son of a Ukrainian hetman, furnishes an example: In 1725–27 he kept a private journal—in French—in which he made a record of his frequent visits to members of the French colony in St. Petersburg.<sup>42</sup>

The most important stimulus for the development of French-speaking in Russia, though, was the use of French as a court language from around the middle of the reign of Peter's daughter Elizabeth (1741–61), who had learnt it in childhood from a French lady at her father's court.<sup>43</sup> French now became a prestige language within the nobility and a language nobles used among themselves, as well as a *lingua franca* for communication with foreigners. It was thus associated with many social and material domains which developed as the nobility began to look upon itself as a corporation of a Western sort and as nobles adopted the habits of their counterparts in other European lands and cultivated the civility and *douceur de vivre* associated with the higher social classes there. It was the language, for example, of sociability in the salon, at the soirée, the ball, the theater, and the opera, and in many (but by no means all) of the Masonic lodges which sprang up in the age of Catherine, before the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, and which flourished again for much of the age of Alexander.<sup>44</sup> It was also the language of fashion, coiffure, cuisine, and new pastimes such as card-playing and gambling.

The value of knowledge of foreign languages to the eighteenth-century Russian elite is reflected in the resources and effort devoted to the acquisition of them, and the task of acquiring them was itself facilitated by the rapid spread—as elsewhere in Europe—of models of education in which the study of foreign languages had an important place.<sup>45</sup> This was particularly the case in the higher echelons of the nobility, whose children were privately educated at considerable expense. Whether they were molded at home by tutors resident in the household or at a boarding school, privately educated noble children were exposed from an early age to native speakers of foreign languages. Facility in French, and sometimes German, was increased by the fact that it was not only a subject of study but the medium for teaching and learning nonlinguistic subjects that had prominence in the noble curriculum, such as mathematics, history, geography, dancing, and fencing, which were taught by foreign tutors who did not speak Russian. For the high nobility, this educational provision was

<sup>40</sup>Rjéoutski and Offord, "French in Russian Diplomacy"; Rjéoutski and Offord, "Teaching and Learning French in the Early Eighteenth Century: Ivan Shcherbatov's Letters to His French Teacher," <http://frinru.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/introduction/teaching-and-learning-french-early-eighteenth-century-ivan-shcherbatov%E2%80%99s-letters-his> (last accessed March 27, 2014).

<sup>41</sup>Anne Mézin and Vladislav Rjéoutski, eds., *Les Français en Russie au XVIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Ferney-Voltaire, 2011).

<sup>42</sup>P. D. Apostol, "Dnevnik. (Mai 1725 g. – mai 1727 g.)," translation and preface by A. L., in *Kievskaiia starina* 50, no. 7–8 (1895): 100–55.

<sup>43</sup>Evgeny V. Anisimov, *Empress Elizabeth: Her Reign and Her Russia 1741–1761*, ed. and trans. John T. Alexander (Gulf Breeze, 1995), 10.

<sup>44</sup>On linguistic use in Masonic lodges see Vladislav Rjéoutski and Derek Offord, "Foreign Languages and Noble Sociability: Documents from Russian Masonic Lodges," <https://frinru.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/introduction/foreign-languages-and-noble-sociability-documents-russian-masonic-lodges> (last accessed March 27, 2014).

<sup>45</sup>Vladislav Rjéoutski and Alexandre Tchoudinov, eds., *Le Précepteur francophone en Europe, XVIIe–XIXe ss.* (Paris, 2013), 29–31, 39, 54–62, 72–82 (Central and Western Europe), 120, 122, 128, 139 (Russia).

often supplemented, from the age of Catherine, by a journey abroad (the famous Grand Tour) and a period of study in a Western university, during which knowledge of foreign languages could be improved or perfected.<sup>46</sup> Generally, French was the first foreign language a noble child learned, as we can judge from the records of the mandatory certification of tutors which was introduced in St. Petersburg and Moscow in 1757. For example, the great majority of the seventy or so tutors assessed in St. Petersburg in that year, including the Germans among them, wanted to teach French.<sup>47</sup> More rarely Italian was learned, probably only in aristocratic families.<sup>48</sup> Language study also had an important place in the curriculum in public education from the Petrine age on (for instance, in the school of the Greek Likhud brothers or that of Pastor Glück), although in the public sector German, rather than French, for a long time (at least until the early part of Catherine's reign) remained the first foreign language a noble pupil learned.<sup>49</sup> We find a similar predominance of German in schools for non-noble pupils: many did not teach foreign languages at all, but in those that did teach languages, German was of prime importance.<sup>50</sup>

If Russians were to communicate with outsiders and benefit from their knowledge, then, familiarity with foreign languages was vital and was recognized as such. Yet foreign languages in eighteenth-century Russia did not serve merely as tools for learning, in the broadest sense, that is to say, as a means of receiving the fruits of Western civilization. Knowledge of them also stimulated native creativity. For one thing, these languages, and French in particular, provided syntactic, phraseological, and lexical material for linguistic innovation in Russian.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the literatures written in those languages (particularly Latin, French, German, and, later in the century, English) provided models for original

<sup>46</sup>There is a large literature on the Grand Tour. See, for example, Jeremy Black, *The British and the Grand Tour* (London, 1985); and Rainer Babel and Werner Paravicini, eds., *Grand Tour, Adeliges Reisen und Europäische Kultur vom 14. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert: Akten der internationalen Kolloquien in der Villa Vigoni 1999 und im Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris 2000* (Ostfildern, 2005).

<sup>47</sup>Sankt-Peterburgskii filial Arkhiva Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk, f. 3, op. 9, dd. 78, 80. See also Vladislav Rjéoutski, "Le français et d'autres langues dans l'éducation en Russie au XVIIIe siècle," *Vivliofika: E-journal of Eighteenth-Century Russian Studies* 1 (2013): 33–34, also available at <http://vivliofika.library.duke.edu/article/view/14833> (last accessed September 8, 2014). Out of 69 teachers, 54 wanted to teach French and 44 German.

<sup>48</sup>See, for example, Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka, nauchno-issledovatel'skii otdel rukopisei, f. 19, op. 284, d. 7, l. 68 (copybook belonging to Stepanida Stepanovna Baranova); and *ibid.*, d. 8, ll. 39, 40–45, and subsequent *listy* (copybook belonging to Praskov'ia Zelenova). Both girls were educated in the 1780s in the families of the Bariatinskii princes.

<sup>49</sup>D. N. Ramazanova, "Bogoiavlenskaia shkola Likhudov – pervyi etap Slaviano-greko-latinskoi Akademii," in *Ocherki feodal'noi Rossii* 7, ed. Sergei Kisterev (Moscow, 2002), 211–37; D. N. Ramazanova, "Istochniki dlia izuchenii Ital'ianskoi shkoly Ioannikiia i Sofroniia Likhudov (chelobitnye uchenikov i uchitelei)," in *Ocherki feodal'noi Rossii* 13 (Moscow, 2009), 293–313; Kovrigina, *Nemetskaia sloboda*, 315–28; Iu. K. Vorob'ev and I. V. Sedina, *Zapadnoevropeiskie iazyki v russkoi kul'ture XVIII veka* (Saransk, 2007), 31–32; Rjéoutski and Offord, "French in Public Education in Eighteenth-Century Russia."

<sup>50</sup>Rjéoutski, "Le français et d'autres langues dans l'éducation en Russie au XVIIIe siècle."

<sup>51</sup>On lexical borrowing from French and other languages see especially Gerta Hüttl-Worth, *Foreign Words in Russian: A Historical Sketch, 1550–1800* (Berkeley, 1963); and (with regard to French only) May Smith, *The Influence of French on Eighteenth-Century Literary Russian: Semantic and Phraseological Calques* (Oxford, 2006). The influence of French on the prose of Nikolai Karamzin is a commonplace in literature on the history of the Russian language. See, for example, V. V. Vinogradov, *Ocherki po istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka XVII–XIX vv.*, chap. 4, esp. 157 ff. and 178 ff.; and B. A. Uspenskii, *Iz istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka XVIII–nachala XIX veka: Iazykovaia programma Karamzina i ee istoricheskie korni* (Moscow, 1985), 21–30. Vinogradov also wrote at length on the influence of French on the language of Leo Tolstoy. See Viktor Vinogradov, "O iazyke Tolstogo (50–60-e gody)," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 35–36 (1939): 117–220, esp. 147–60.

literary expression of many kinds, from public genres such as odes, tragedy, comedy, satires, fables, elegies, and prose fiction to more private literary forms which were popular in aristocratic circles, such as the *récit de voyage*, the diary, the family album, and of course personal correspondence. Last but not least, foreign languages were important vehicles for the transmission of information about Russia to the West and, in the final analysis, instruments of cultural propaganda. Catherine herself wrote an “Antidote” (first published in French in 1770) to rebut a negative account of Russia produced by the astronomer Chappe d’Auroche, who had travelled to Siberia in 1761 in the hope of observing the transit of Venus.<sup>52</sup> Mikhail Kheraskov, in 1772, produced a French discourse on the current state of Russian poetry.<sup>53</sup> Translation of works of Russian literature, such as the plays of Aleksandr Sumarokov (some of which appeared in French or German during Sumarokov’s lifetime), helped to place Russia in the mainstream of European culture by bringing Russian literary achievement to the attention of an elite European public and showing the affinities of Russian works, in genre, style, and content, with respected Western models.<sup>54</sup> Without the ability of Russians to communicate in foreign languages, especially French, we therefore claim, Russia could not have been transformed in the Western imagination from a barbarous kingdom with a government that was “plain tyrannical” (as Fletcher had put it in his influential work on late sixteenth-century Muscovy) into a member of the eighteenth-century European community of enlightened absolute monarchies.

On the whole, Western observers were appreciative of Russians’ sudden linguistic achievement, as well as the native cultural achievement which multilingualism made it possible for Russians to broadcast. A French visitor to St. Petersburg in 1757 reported that the courtiers of the Empress Elizabeth spoke French “comme à Paris” (as they do in Paris).<sup>55</sup> Voltaire referred to his Russian correspondents’ proficiency in French as a sign of the progress of culture in that country: Light was now coming from the North, he opined in a flattering epistle of 1771 to Catherine.<sup>56</sup> The English envoy Sir George Macartney, in an *Account of Russia* in 1767, was somewhat less complimentary, but even he acknowledged the extent of the new multilingualism among the Russian nobility: “The Russian gentlemen are certainly the least informed of all others in Europe; the chief point of their instruction is a knowledge of modern languages, particularly, the French and German; both which they usually speak with very great facility, tho’ incapable of writing either with precision or propriety.”<sup>57</sup>

<sup>52</sup>*Antidote ou examen du mauvais livre superbement imprimé intitulé “Voyage en Sibirie fait par ordre du Roi en 1761 ...”* (Amsterdam, 1771–72). On the debate between Catherine and Chappe d’Auroche see Marcus C. Levitt, “An Antidote to Nervous Juice: Catherine the Great’s Debate with Chappe d’Auroche over Russian Culture,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32:1 (1998): 49–63.

<sup>53</sup>Kheraskov’s *Discours sur la poésie russe* has been published in Russian translation with an introduction by P. Berkov (*Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 9–10 [1933]: 287–94).

<sup>54</sup>Vladislav Rjéoutski and Derek Offord, “Translation and Propaganda in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: French Versions of Sumarokov’s Tragedy ‘Sinav and Truvor,’” <https://frinru.ilt.bris.ac.uk/introduction/translation-and-propaganda-mid-eighteenth-century-french-versions-sumarokov%E2%80%99s-tragedy> (last accessed March 27, 2014).

<sup>55</sup>Quoted in Anthony Cross, ed., *Russia under Western Eyes, 1517–1825* (London, 1971), 34.

<sup>56</sup>See Elena Gretchanaia, “Je vous parlerai la langue de l’Europe ...” *La francophonie en Russie (XVIIIe–XIXe siècles)* (Brussels, 2012), 22; and Voltaire, “Épître à l’Impératrice de Russie,” ed. John Pappas, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire* 73 (Oxford, 2004): 435–50.

<sup>57</sup>George Macartney, *An Account of Russia* (London, 1768), quoted in Cross, *Russia under Western Eyes*, 203.

## UNREFINED RUSSIAN, PRESTIGIOUS FRENCH

The widespread use of foreign languages in Russia that we have just described must be considered against the background of the concurrent development of the Russian language, and perceptions of its state. Of course, Russian was only one of many indigenous languages used in the Russian Empire, alongside other Slavonic languages such as Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Polish, and non-Slavonic languages in the Baltic and Finno-Ugric linguistic families, not to mention languages spoken in the Caucasus. However, it is Russian on which we focus here, both because it was the indigenous language spoken by the people whose multilingualism we examine and because it was Russian, and its relation to other major modern European languages, that concerned those eighteenth-century writers who discussed the native language. The Russian-language situation, especially the situation of the written language, in the late seventeenth century has been described in a general summary as “close to chaotic.”<sup>58</sup> In broad outline, we find the written language group of Church Slavonic varieties, which were used for religious purposes but to some extent also for new secular genres of writing that were establishing themselves in Russia from the sixteenth century. Then there was the so-called chancery language used by the administration of the autocratic Muscovite state for record-keeping. The development of the Muscovite state paved the way for the creation of a single, centralized, national language, and indeed Muscovite Russian provided the basis for a national standard, not least because of Moscow’s position in the transitional belt between North and South Russian dialects.<sup>59</sup> Lastly, there existed a spoken Russian vernacular.

The reign of Peter the Great brought not only the vigorous development of foreign-language use we have described above, but also official initiatives relating to language, as to so many other areas, which were intended to break with the old Muscovite way of doing things.<sup>60</sup> In 1708, Peter introduced a simplified alphabet, the *grazhdanskii shrift* (civil typeface), to facilitate printing in Russian. It was during Peter’s reign that the distinction between a written language for the Church and a secular written language was more clearly drawn, and old registers of the written language such as official and hybrid Church Slavonic were reduced to the periphery as the new literary language became polyfunctional.<sup>61</sup> The second half of the seventeenth century saw far-reaching developments in the literary sphere, which lent great urgency to the discussions about Russian and how to optimize it for literary use. It was these developments that gave rise to the idea that Russian in its current form was not suitable for literary purposes and needed to be developed if it was to become a fully-fledged language. Consequently, writers began to think of ways of developing and systematizing it. The most important early contributions were made by Vasilii Trediakovskii in the 1730s and Lomonosov in the 1750s. They proposed systems of different styles to be used for writing in particular genres, and included in their plans some thoughts on the sources, Church Slavonic or Russian, from which the language of particular styles should draw.<sup>62</sup> It is important to bear in mind these developments in the Russian language and the

<sup>58</sup>Dean S. Worth and Michael S. Flier, “Language,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Russian Culture*, ed. Nicholas Rzhevsky (Cambridge, England, 2012), 32.

<sup>59</sup>Uspenskii, *Iz istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*, 3; G. O. Vinokur, *The Russian Language: A Brief History* (Cambridge, England, 1971), 82; Worth and Flier, “Language.”

<sup>60</sup>Victor Zhivov, *Language and Culture in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Boston, 2009), 53.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>62</sup>On Trediakovskii’s shifting views on what the basis of the literary language should be, spoken Russian or Church Slavonic, see especially Uspenskii, *Iz istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka*, 70–79 and 158–65. For

concrete measures taken by policymakers and writers to change both the language and use of it when examining eighteenth-century Russian discussions on whether certain foreign languages were needed in preference to Russian.<sup>63</sup>

The perceived unfinished and unrefined state of the Russian language in the eighteenth century is a recurring theme in metalinguistic discussions. The notion that Russian was not yet fit for purpose, for example as a literary language or for scholarship, found expression most prominently in the debates between the writer of prose fiction and historian Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826) and the essayist and statesman Aleksandr Shishkov (1754–1841), who proposed differing solutions to the problem they thought they had identified. Broadly speaking, Karamzin held that Russian should be receptive to any modes of expression that made it possible to meet the needs of European culture. Shishkov, on the other hand, presumed that only by sustaining the Slavonic tradition was it possible to preserve true Russian identity.<sup>64</sup> While recognizing that opinions about the lack of suitability of Russian for many domains had a major effect on language use, we must stress that the notion of an “unsuitable” or “unfinished” language is untenable from the linguist’s point of view.<sup>65</sup> Russian may have lacked the vocabulary for certain domains, but borrowing linguistic material, linguists insist, is a straightforward process and enables any language to be used in any domain.<sup>66</sup> That is not to deny, we repeat, that the *perception* of Russian as “unfinished” was influential, or to belittle the consequences of such a conceptualization. Indeed, the idea that Russian was unfinished went together (as Dahmen argues) with the idea that French was the language of social prestige.

Just as languages, in the opinion of linguists, do not have inherent qualities that make them superior or inferior to other languages, so French (like any other language) had no prestige *ex nihilo*. Although the metadiscourse often differs on this account, and writers may ascribe particular clarity or logic to a language (as we see, for example, in Marc Fumaroli’s *When Europe Spoke French*), in fact a language is *given* prestige.<sup>67</sup> Rather than objectively being most suitable, a particular language is *considered* the most suitable—the greatest capital is ascribed to it in the linguistic marketplace, as Pierre Bourdieu puts it in

---

M. V. Lomonosov’s views see especially “Predislovie o pol’ze knig tserkovnykh v Rossiiskom iazyke,” in his *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11 vols. (Moscow, 1950–83), 7:585–92; and (although it is now very old) A. Martel, *Michel Lomonosoff et la langue littéraire russe* (Paris, 1933).

<sup>63</sup>Lomonosov, it should be noted, attempted to establish Russian as the language of instruction at the Academy of Sciences and Moscow University. See [http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enc\\_biography/87419/](http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enc_biography/87419/) (last accessed March 11, 2014). Ivan Betskoi brought about a major development in language use in education when in 1764 he required that all non-language subjects (Geography, History, and so forth) be taught in Russian at the Cadet Corps. See [I. Betskoi], *Ustav Imperatorskogo shliakhetnogo sukhoputnogo kadetskogo korpusa uchrezhdennogo v Sankt-Peterburge dlia vospitaniia i obucheniia blagorodnogo rossiiskogo iunoshestva* (St. Petersburg, 1764), 63–64. See also A. I. Uman, “Didakticheskie idei Lomonosova i sovremennaia teoriia obucheniia,” *Pedagogika* 7 (2013): 103–08; and L. M. Perminova, “Didakticheskoe nasledie Lomonosova: sovremennyi vzgliad,” *Pedagogika* 2 (2012): 97.

<sup>64</sup>Boris Gasparov, “Identity in Language?” in *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction*, ed. Simon Franklin and Emma Widdis (Cambridge, England, 2004), 133. On this debate see also Vinogradov, *Ocherki po istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka XVII–XIX vv.*, chaps. 4 and 5, esp. 178–81 and 195–99. On Shishkov see also Alexander M. Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries: Conservative Thought in the Reign of Alexander I* (DeKalb, 1997), chap. 1, esp. 31–35.

<sup>65</sup>Laurie Bauer and Peter Trudgill, eds., *Language Myths* (London, 1998).

<sup>66</sup>Ray Harlow, “Myth 2: Some Languages are Just not Good Enough,” in *Language Myths*, ed. Laurie Bauer and Peter Trudgill (London, 1998), 9–14.

<sup>67</sup>Marc Fumaroli, *Quand l’Europe parlait français* (Paris, 2001).

his seminal work on linguistic capital.<sup>68</sup> Bourdieu describes language use in economic terms: Different ways of speaking have different values and speakers must produce appropriate language to negotiate their daily lives, as the wrong linguistic strategy may lead to social exclusion. Yet the value of different ways of speaking is not due to any inherent qualities of the language: “as soon as one treats language as an autonomous object,” Bourdieu argues, “one is condemned to looking within words for the power of words, that is, looking for it where it is not to be found.”<sup>69</sup> Whether a linguistic form is said to have high or low prestige depends on the perceived social status or importance of its speakers.<sup>70</sup> Essentialist discourses explaining the hegemony of French as due to something inherent in the language itself are therefore no longer academically acceptable, as Berelowitch reminds us: The reputation of French as the *sine-qua-non* foreign language in Russia and indeed throughout Europe was part of a myth that rested not only on the political weight of France in the eighteenth century but also on persuasive discourses of French cultural and linguistic hegemony.

By arguing that a language is not of itself particularly suited to or valuable for a given purpose, we by no means deny that the value accorded to a language has very tangible consequences. When a language has been named as the “best” for use in certain situations, it becomes an objective requirement to use it in those situations. The articles in this cluster are concerned with how this process functions, showing the mechanisms by which particular language choices can be dictated either by powerful linguistic agents, such as an imperial ruler, or by more informal means which nonetheless have an effect on the distribution of linguistic norms and rules governing language choice. There is often an overt connection between powerful individuals and language choice. Although the literature frequently talks of one language “influencing” the other, the population of the target community, and in particular, powerful individuals within it, are key to the adoption of a language. As Horst Munske reminds us, “it was not the ancient Romans or the French who spread their language and made their mark on European languages with Latin and French loanwords—it was the speakers of those languages themselves who voluntarily adopted Latin or French as a second language.”<sup>71</sup> The differences in the spread and use of various foreign languages in Russia in the eighteenth century and beyond are due to the agency of speakers, as shown in the articles presented here, whether groups or imperial rulers. Peter the Great, for example, had an instrumental role in the promotion of German, as Dahmen shows, since he knew the language well and invited German-speaking scholars to set up the Russian Academy of Sciences.

It also is important to note that use of a language as a sign of prestige does not necessarily imply a desire to align oneself with a particular country or indicate sympathy with the nation primarily associated with it. French had a dominant place in Russia, but Russian francophonie, as Berelowitch points out, did not imply Francophilia. Indeed, French might be used by Francophobes, and even for the expression of Francophobia.<sup>72</sup> Nor, conversely,

<sup>68</sup>Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 55 ff.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>70</sup>James Milroy, “Sociolinguistics and Ideologies in Language History,” in *Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, 572.

<sup>71</sup>Horst Haider Munske, “Ist eine europäische Sprachgeschichtsschreibung möglich?” in *Sprachgeschichte des Neuhochdeutschen: Gegenstände, Methoden, Theorien*, ed. Andreas Gardt et al. (Tübingen, 1995), 408.

<sup>72</sup>See Derek Offord and Vladislav Rjéoutski, “French in the Nineteenth-Century Russian Salon: Fiodor Rostopchin’s ‘Memoirs,’” <https://frinru.ilt.bris.ac.uk/introduction/french-nineteenth-century-russian-salon-fiodor-rostopchin%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98memoirs%E2%80%99>, and, with reference to a later date (the

did respect for a foreign culture necessarily entail the introduction of the foreigners' first language. Despite the fact that the Emperor Alexander I and his clique (the "Young Friends") were admirers of Britain and of English and were dubbed Anglomaniacs, the use of English did not take hold in Russia. Indeed, as Anthony Cross shows, one facet of Russian Anglophilia, the admiration of the pride the English took in their language, was a means of expressing support for better treatment of one's own mother tongue.

### THE PROBLEMATIZATION OF FRANCO-RUSSIAN BILINGUALISM

If we accept that familiarity with foreign languages was a means of bringing about modernization in Russia, and provided that we do not set our face against modernization, then foreign-language use on Russian soil, and Russian francophonie in particular, may seem beneficial phenomena. However, that is not the impression we would gain if we were exposed only to the treatment of the subject in classical Russian literature and in the twentieth-century tradition of scholarship on Russian culture inspired by Lotman. For the notion took hold among some influential nineteenth-century Russian writers and thinkers that multilingualism, or more specifically Franco-Russian bilingualism among the Russian nobility, was socially divisive and psychologically damaging at both national and personal levels. Bilingualism and biculturalism seemed indicative of, perhaps perpetuated, a deep fracture in the Russian nation, between the social elite and the common people, and weakened the sense of purpose and even the ontological security of Russians who were francophone. For Fedor Dostoevsky, for example, the use of French by the small Russian elite was symptomatic of loss of contact with their native soil; it indicated their dissociation from the monolingual Russian peasantry, in whom many members of the Russian intelligentsia considered authentic national essence to be concentrated. For Leo Tolstoy in *War and Peace*, Russian francophonie was characteristic of the artificiality and moral poverty of high society, especially the St. Petersburg aristocracy as opposed to the paternalistic Muscovite gentry, which still had a strong attachment, Tolstoy believed, to the rural heartland.<sup>73</sup> For Lotman, use of French was part of that performance of an alien role that estranged the Russian nobleman from his native environment.<sup>74</sup> Russian noblewomen, incidentally, were somehow thought to be less prone to this estrangement, despite their at least equal exposure to the French language and facility in it.<sup>75</sup>

The origins of Russian anxiety about bilingualism can be traced back at least to the mid-eighteenth century, when Gallophobia was already becoming a common trope in Russian comedy and in European literature more generally. However, it was in the nineteenth century

---

1860s), the same authors' article "Xenophobia in French: Count Andrei Rostopchin's Reflections in the Catalogue of His Library," <https://frinru.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/introduction/xenophobia-french-count-andrei-rostopchin%E2%80%99s-reflections-catalogue-his-library> (both last accessed January 26, 2014).

<sup>73</sup>For slightly more detailed treatment of this subject see Derek Offord, "Francophonie in Imperial Russia," in *European Francophonie: The Social, Political and Cultural History of an International Prestige Language*, ed. Vladislav Rjéoutski et al. (Oxford, 2014), 399–401.

<sup>74</sup>See, for example, "The Decembrist in Everyday Life," "The Theater and Theatricality as Components of Early Nineteenth-Century Culture," and "The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Russian Eighteenth-Century Culture," all in Ju. M. Lotman and B. A. Uspenskij, *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, ed. Ann Shukman (Ann Arbor, 1984), 71–123, 141–64, and 231–56, respectively. As Marrese points out, Lotman's argument depends heavily on evidence furnished by literary sources, which should not be taken as literal representations of reality (Marrese, "'Poetics of Everyday Behavior' Revisited," 711).

<sup>75</sup>On gender and the politics of language see Marrese, "'Poetics of Everyday Behavior' Revisited," 731–36.

that this anxiety became acute. There were various reasons for this. For one thing, the threat from Napoleon, and the invasion of 1812 in particular, understandably generated nationalistic feeling, which made many Russians question whether it was right that they should be speaking French to one another. Moreover, the attempt, which intensified in the post-Napoleonic period, to establish a distinctive Russian national identity encouraged the development of a standard Russian literary language and discouraged francophonie. Most importantly for our purposes, Russian language attitudes were at some level affected by changes in the view of the relationship between language and identity that took place in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the Romantic movement unfolded and as nationalism developed. Nations, Johann Gottfried von Herder had argued in his *Treatise on the Origin of Languages* (1772), were coterminous with language communities.<sup>76</sup> Alongside political nationalism, in the paradigm that has been proposed by Anthony Smith and other scholars, there thus developed a cultural form of nationalism in which a shared language, together with ethnicity and the folklore and folkways of a people, was now an important basis for the collective identity.<sup>77</sup>

A nuanced account of foreign-language use and its effects in eighteenth-century Russia needs to discard these later constructions of cultural nationalism, which have continued to the present day to color our thought about language spread, status, and maintenance, and about linguistic identity, purity, and rights, or at least it needs to reexamine those constructions critically. It is also necessary to consider who in particular found Franco-Russian bilingualism problematic. We can readily admit that this bilingualism did indeed pose a problem for the literary class, which came to regard itself as the authentic voice of the nation and the keeper of a national essence associated with the Russian language. However, that does not mean that such bilingualism seemed very problematic, or even problematic at all, to the majority of the bilingual aristocracy. On the contrary, as Michelle Marrese has demonstrated on the basis of close study of a large corpus of papers in the archival collections of noble families, “from approximately mid-century those nobles who left literary artefacts were comfortably bicultural and experienced both ‘traditional’ and ‘European’ forms of behaviour as ‘natural.’”<sup>78</sup> For them, no doubt, Li Wei’s generalization applies: “For many people bilingualism and multilingualism are a fact of life and not a problem.”<sup>79</sup> For the eighteenth-century cosmopolitan social elite with which we are chiefly concerned in this cluster of articles, bilingualism, indeed multilingualism, was quite compatible with an ardent patriotism in which the notion of duty to serve the fatherland was placed at the core of the

<sup>76</sup>“Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache” (Berlin, 1772), in *Johann Gottfried Herder, Frühe Schriften 1764–1772*, ed. Ulrich Gaier (Frankfurt am Main, 1985), 794. Herder is already developing these ideas in a speech of 1764 (“Über den Fleiss in mehreren gelehrten Sprachen,” *ibid.*, 23), when he describes the characteristics of different languages and the nations speaking them, and in his fragments “On the New German Literature” (“Über die neuere deutsche Literatur,” *ibid.*, 548, 570), especially with regard to language for national literary production.

<sup>77</sup>See, for example, Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London, 1991). Benedict Anderson emphasizes the central symbolic role of language in the creation of a nation in his seminal work *Imagined Communities* (London, 1991). John Joseph, however, modifies Anderson’s notion of the connection between language and nation. Language, for Joseph, is not the bedrock of the nation; rather the concepts of language and nation support each other in a dialectical relationship (*Language and Identity*).

<sup>78</sup>See the rich sections on “Language and Cultural Identity” and “Gender and the Politics of Language” in Marrese, “‘Poetics of Everyday Behavior’ Revisited,” 716–36 (quotation p. 718).

<sup>79</sup>Wei, *Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism*, 3.

value system and with attempts to develop Russian as a language worthy of the self-confident new empire that was asserting itself on the European stage.<sup>80</sup>

Perhaps, finally, we should question the extent of francophonie among the Russian nobility, as well as its alleged effects. We cannot uncritically accept the generalization that “French was the language of polite, cultured individuals” in prerevolutionary Russia if we take the generalization to imply that all such individuals, over a period of almost two centuries, mastered French and used it exclusively and that Russians who could not or would not use French were neither polite nor cultured.<sup>81</sup> The nobility, as Elise Wirtschafter has pointed out, was a broad estate that stretched all the way from the foot of the throne to the smallholder who possessed only a few serfs.<sup>82</sup> Within this social range command of French varied greatly, from the *beau monde* of St. Petersburg to the petty gentry whose provincial mores, social pretensions, and lesser linguistic accomplishments were mocked by classical Russian writers from the eighteenth-century playwright Denis Fonvizin to the nineteenth-century novelist Ivan Turgenev. Nor can we even say that within the high aristocracy command of French was universal over a long period. Noblemen’s and noblewomen’s facility in French depended on their personal abilities, of course, but also on their educational opportunities, their walk of life, the extent of their contact with foreigners, the frequency and duration of their foreign travel, and their place of domicile in Russia. Perhaps most crucial of all, in the formation of speakers’ linguistic habits, was the social network within which speakers operated. Habits would no doubt be affected by the density of their linguistic network (the number of contacts a speaker had within it) and the degree to which the network was “multiplex” (whether its members interacted in a variety of roles, which might be familial, social, or related to state service).<sup>83</sup>

Drawing together our findings on the importance of foreign-language use in Russia during the long eighteenth century, we should underline three points, the second and third of which may to some extent run counter to common assumptions in the historiography of prerevolutionary Russian society and culture.

First, the sudden acquisition of foreign languages by a substantial minority in eighteenth-century Russia played a major role in, or indeed was a prerequisite for, the modernization of the country to which rulers and significant parts of the elites committed themselves. Knowledge of foreign languages gave Russians access to Western sources of information (books, the press) and social networks (the *beau monde*, freemasonry) and to domestic and international activities (attending the theater, participating in literary salons) which had been unknown to them before the eighteenth century. It introduced the elites (including a partly non-noble literary class, the nascent intelligentsia, as well as the various strata of the nobility) to new forms of communication, including polite conversation and musical entertainment and many types of public and private literary writing. It made possible the

<sup>80</sup>Mary W. Cavender argues that this point also applies to large parts of the provincial nobility in her *Nests of the Gentry: Family, Estate, and Local Loyalties in Provincial Russia* (Newark, 2007), 200.

<sup>81</sup>The words quoted are from Suzanne Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 2d ed. (Malden, MA, 1995), 31.

<sup>82</sup>Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, 1997), chap. 2, esp. 36.

<sup>83</sup>We borrow the notions of “dense” and “multiplex” networks from Lesley Milroy, *Language and Social Networks* (Oxford, 1980), esp. 21, 51–52, 59–62, and 139 ff. However, Milroy uses the theory of networks for a different purpose from our own, as a tool to explain language change and choice. See also Rajend Mesthrie, “Race, Ethnicity, Religion, and Castes,” in *Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*, 358.

transfer of technological information, either through direct reading of Western textbooks, manuals, and treatises or through translation of them.

Second, we need at the same time to reconsider the supposed negative effects of Franco-Russian bilingualism. Following Marrese, we question the notion, to which Russian writers began to give currency as far back as the mid-eighteenth century, that this bilingualism was a harmful phenomenon leading to the general estrangement of the nobility from its native soil and even to its psychological disorientation and moral impoverishment. Not only did noble francophonie provide access to all the resources we have enumerated which enabled Russians to refashion their culture in a modern, secular mold. It also had a major impact on Russians' thinking about their own culture and language, helping to generate the self-reflection that gave rise to a strong new sense of national identity. It stimulated the formation of the standard vernacular which we know as the "Russian literary language" and supplied lexical material for the enrichment of that vernacular.

Third, the linguistic situation in eighteenth-century Russia was much more complex than a narrow focus on Franco-Russian bilingualism would allow us to suppose. The extent of the dominance of French, which has usually been considered the landscape's most notable feature, needs to be carefully reviewed. The French language undeniably had a central place in the repertoire of the Russian nobility from the second half of the century, although command of it varied within the class. It was used for many purposes and had particular social value. However, we should not lose sight of the other languages used in eighteenth-century Russia, where the linguistic situation was characterized not so much by elite bilingualism as by multilingualism. Members of the elite often had a command, to varying degrees, of more than one of the languages examined in this cluster of articles. Their knowledge might be more or less active and it might be applied to a greater or lesser extent in different areas of their life and work. The ability to understand and speak French, to be sure, would be necessary at court, or for the practice of novel forms of sociability such as the ball or the soirée, for the production of new literary forms such as the diary or the album, for intimate correspondence, and of course for communication with educated foreigners. At the same time German, besides being a mother tongue in Baltic regions that were acquired by Russia in the eighteenth century, was widely used in the army, in certain industries, in medicine, and in the academic world. In the first part of the eighteenth century, before the ascendancy of French, it was used at court. In public educational institutions it continued throughout the century to be both a language of instruction and an important subject of study. Borrowings from it left an enduring imprint on the Russian language in the imperial age. As for English, it was not nearly so widely spoken as French or German, but in the latter part of the long eighteenth century knowledge of it began to be valued, and English literature (and the products of the Scottish Enlightenment that were written in English) was highly respected. As for languages not examined in separate articles in this cluster, Latin was valuable for scholarship and for the pursuit of studies in European universities, as well as for such purposes as understanding inscriptions and mottos. Italian gave access to the world of opera, which was sometimes performed at court, or was useful during journeys in Italy that were part of the Grand Tour, as well as for reading. Thus, several languages might coexist in the repertoire of a cultured Russian in the long eighteenth century, and these languages had values which, while different, need not necessarily be considered greater or lesser when functional, temporal, institutional, geographical, and even psychological factors are all taken into account.