

'Language of the Enemy': Foreign Language Education and National Identity

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The focus of the present paper is on the relationship between national identities and foreign-language education policies and practices. The paper examines this relationship through a juxtaposition of three sociohistoric contexts in which sociopolitical events led to major changes in foreign-language education: post-World War I United States, post-World War II Soviet Union, and post-communist Eastern Europe. On the example of these case studies, it is argued that shifts in national identity images and sociopolitical allegiances have implications for foreign-language policies and practices. It is also argued that foreign-language learners may choose to construct oppositional identities in language classrooms: some, for patriotic reasons, may reject the languages imposed on them, while others may instead reject the dominant national identity and create an alternative one through the means of a foreign language.

Keywords: foreign language education, national identity, German, English, Russian

Introduction

The topic of this paper is a rather personal one. As a Soviet teenager studying foreign languages, I witnessed early on how much foreign-language (FL) study in the USSR was permeated with ideology and propaganda. My inculcation process started in 1975 when as a fifth grader I chose my foreign language, English, and attended the first class. The teacher welcomed us with a passionate speech: 'My dear fifth graders, today is a very important day in your life – you are starting to study English. Your knowledge of this language will prove crucial when we are at war with the imperialist Britain and United States and you will have to decode and translate intercepted messages'. This was a new idea for me, since my mother, herself an English teacher, conveniently forgot to inform me that one day we would have to confront the capitalist powers and interview their spies. The mission did not particularly appeal to me, neither did the delivery. Thus, I patiently waited until the end of the class and then asked to be transferred to the French programme. French, at the time, was the language of popular singers, Joe Dassin and Mireille Mathieux, of popular movies with Pierre Richard and Jean-Paul Belmondo, and, of course, of popular writers, Balzac, Dumas-père, and Maupassant. It was glamorous and non-threatening and I was delighted to delve into it both in middle and high school and later in college as a French major. Now, two and a half decades later, after having lived on both sides of the Iron Curtain, I am returning to the relationship between foreign-language education and national identity to examine ways in which the two may be linked in a variety of contexts.

While the role of the national language and the tensions between national and minority languages have been at the centre of the discussion on language policies, language ideologies, and language and national identity (cf. Blommaert, 1999a;

Golden, 2001; May, 2001), foreign languages, with the exception of English, often remain at the margins, if not in the shadows, as neutral and objective transmitters of the code and culture of a particular target group, devoid of ideological implications. Existing studies of trends in FL education often focus on changes in pedagogical paradigms or at best on transmission of cultural stereotypes, rather than on sociopolitical and ideological underpinnings of FL instruction (for a notable exception see Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000; Lantolf & Sunderman, 2001). The present study aims to attract attention to the largely unexplored potential of inquiry into sociohistoric and sociopolitical underpinnings of FL policies and practices. The study has three interrelated goals: (1) to show how sociopolitical and ideological considerations may affect FL policies and practices; (2) to highlight ways in which these decisions are linked to constructions of national identity; (3) to demonstrate that FL learners are not passive 'consumers' of institutionalised ideologies and may engage in resistance and opposition.

To illuminate different aspects of the relationship between national identity and FL education, I will juxtapose three contexts – post-World War I US, post-World War II USSR, and post-communist Eastern Europe – where transformations in the national image and the country's relationship with the outside world prompted changes in FL education policy and practice. The comparison between the first two case studies will allow me to illuminate different ways in which two national governments addressed the issue of teaching 'the language of the enemy' in the context of war. The comparison between the second and the third case will allow me to illustrate the fact that in the same context there may be competing constructions of 'the enemy' and that national allegiances and oppositions are not necessarily accepted as such by FL learners. Consequently, I will argue that national identities are constructed not only through language policies with regard to the national and minority languages, but – at least in some cases – also through FL policies and practices which are influenced by shifting national identity narratives.

Theoretical Framework: What is 'Foreign' in Foreign Language Education?

In their groundbreaking work on language ideologies in monolingual and multilingual contexts, Schieffelin *et al.* (1998) and Blommaert (1999a, b) emphasise the importance of historiography of language ideologies, i.e. a study of ways in which certain discourses, beliefs, and attitudes towards languages come into being and become hegemonic, while others remain in the background or disappear without a trace. The present study is situated within this area of inquiry, rather than within explorations of language policies *per se*. I will approach ideology as dominant or subaltern 'ideas, discourse, or signifying practices in the service of the struggle to acquire or maintain power' (Woolard, 1998:7). Consequently, I will pay attention not only to particular policies but also to their historical development and ideological underpinnings, to debates surrounding the policies, and to their execution and reception in the actual classrooms.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that the word 'foreign' is in itself an ambiguous and problematic label. In many contexts the boundary between minority, heritage, and foreign languages is far from clear-cut. Spanish, for instance, is the language of the most sizeable minority population in the US, and the language

of the majority of bilingual and heritage-language programmes. Nevertheless, US high schools and universities also offer Spanish as a foreign language, one of the World languages. A century ago, German was similarly named a 'foreign' language, which made it possible to conceive of second- or third-generation German-Americans as 'foreign elements in our population' (Edwards, 1923: 270). The complex relationship between a minority and a foreign language may be further compounded by the sociopolitical change. Thus, before the collapse of the USSR, Russian was an official language in the Baltic republics; now it has been demoted to the language of the Russian diaspora and a rather unpopular foreign language.

To theorise the 'foreign' in FL education, I will appeal to Anderson's (1991) view of nation-states as imagined communities which are often – though not always – constructed through a common language. In his work, Anderson (1991) traces ways in which the invention of printing technology gave new fixity to language and created languages-of-power, different from the older vernaculars. He argues that modern nation-states were conceived around these languages as imagined communities 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson, 1991: 6). Anderson's (1991) analysis presents imagination as a social process, emphasising the fact that those in power often attempt to do the imagining for the rest of their fellow citizens. This approach allows me to argue that in some cases the label 'foreign' is emblematic of constructed and imagined difference, which positions speakers of a particular language as different from the imaginary 'us'. Consequently, I will be using the term 'foreign' to refer to languages conceived of, or 'imagined', as such by institutional authorities in a particular context. Not surprisingly, since the fate of minority and immigrant languages has important implications for FL study, at times, in particular in the first case study, I will be compelled to weave together minority and foreign-language issues. Whenever possible, however, I will limit my discussion to the teaching of 'foreign' languages to non-native speakers of these languages.

Methodology

In order to examine ways in which FL education has figured in the building of national identities in the US, USSR, and Eastern Europe, I will examine a range of primary and secondary sources. My primary sources on the history of FL education in the US will include: (1) language policies adopted between 1917 and 1922; (2) articles on FL education published in *The Modern Language Journal* between 1918 and 1938; (3) other articles and reports on FL education published between 1913 and 1923. The secondary sources will include scholarship in the areas of bilingual and FL education, history of education, and FL teaching, in particular seminal work by Kloss (1977), Luebke (1980), Schlossman (1983), Wiley (1998) and Zeydel (1964).

My primary sources on the history of FL education in the USSR will include (1) language and educational policies adopted between 1944 and 1980; (2) FL textbooks published in the USSR between 1960 and 1980; (3) memoirs of Russian FL learners; (4) interviews with colleagues involved in FL education in the former

USSR; and (5) recollections of Western correspondents who had visited FL establishments in the USSR. The secondary sources will include scholarship on FL education in the USSR, in particular the work by Griffiths (1984), Kheimets and Epstein (2001) and Monk (1986, 1990).

Since at present I do not have direct access to language and educational policies adopted in Eastern Europe post 1990, my primary sources on the changes in FL education in post-Communist Europe (with the focus on Hungary) include: (1) interviews with colleagues involved in FL education in Poland and Hungary; (2) published memoirs of Eastern European FL learners. I will also rely on secondary sources which deal with FL education in Eastern Europe, in particular Medgyes (1997) and Medgyes and Miklosy (2000).

In examining discourses of national identity and FL education in the three contexts, I will draw on the discourse-historical approach to text analysis advocated by Wodak and associates (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Wodak *et al.*, 1999; Wodak & Matouschek, 1993). This interpretive approach attempts to integrate all available background information in analysis of the texts, with particular attention to discourses, codes and allusions involved in construction of implicit prejudice and stigmatisation of particular groups of individuals. I will also draw on the sociopolitical approach advocated by Blommaert (1999b) which adds to 'the history of language and languages a dimension of human agency, political intervention, power and authority' (p. 5). Thus, my discussion will be at all times placed within a wider context of social and political issues, such as nation-building and educational reform, and within more localised contexts of FL classroom practices. This means that I will highlight opinions and practices of 'the real historical actors' (Blommaert, 1999b: 7): FL policy makers, educators and learners. Whenever possible, I will also consider how specific policies translated into language teaching methodologies, teacher recruitment practices, textbook writing practices, and teachers' and learners' attitudes. I will pay particular attention to ambivalences and contradictions underlying competing views of FL education. While my arguments will rely on recurring patterns of discourse identified in the corpus, I acknowledge that the choice-making process of what is 'dominant' and 'representative' and what to highlight is a subjective one and may privilege a particular construction of reality. To remedy the subjective nature of the process, I aim to make my choices explicit. In ascribing authority to texts, I will view language and educational policies, textbooks and classroom materials as being in service of institutionally created national images. In turn, educational debates on the pages of US scholarly journals and memoirs of and interviews with Eastern European foreign-language educators and learners will allow me to reconstruct subordinated discourses and alternative national images.

Finally, it is necessary to note that the present study does not aim to 'uncover' new facts – it discusses trends and paradigm shifts well known to language educators. Instead, my goal is to point to intriguing and rarely acknowledged links between ideologies of national identity and FL education. Consequently, I will use the three contexts in question to explore different attitudes towards 'the language of the enemy' and different ways in which FL education could be affected and coopted by the shifting ideologies of national identity.

Foreign Language Education and National Identity in the US Post-World War I

In order to discuss a dramatic shift in the US foreign-language policy post-World War I, I will first sketch the historic context in which the change took place. Since virtually all educational arrangements at the time were subject to local and state policies and initiatives, it is impossible to speak of a consistent FL policy. At the same time, even though school districts and schools varied largely as to the range of foreign languages offered and the extent of the instruction, we can identify three distinctive features of pre-war FL study in the US.

The first such feature is a relatively modest yet stable place of foreign languages in the American secondary and higher education curriculum (Handschin, 1913; Zeydel, 1964). The second is the pervasive double standard which prompted many educators and politicians, Franklin and Jefferson among them, to see FL study as a desirable activity for middle- and upper-middle-class American children and native-language maintenance as an undesirable activity for immigrant children (Pavlenko, 2002). Franklin, for instance, expressed significant concerns about the lack of assimilation among German immigrants, while Jefferson was apprehensive about non-English-speaking immigrants transmitting their beliefs to the children with 'their language' (Crawford, 1992: 39). Most of the time, however, these concerns remained in the background, due to the necessity of forging political ties with the large and continuously growing contingent of German immigrants. Hence, the third feature is the fact that in the late 19th and early 20th century German was the most widely taught foreign language in the US (Handschin, 1913; Zeydel, 1964). Relative tolerance with regard to minority-language maintenance and a desire to attract German speakers to the public schools, led to the appearance of several public schools which offered extensive instruction in German. What is particularly important about this system is that in many places, such as Cincinnati, Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Indianapolis, German instruction was not limited to children of German descent: children of non-German-speaking parents were either encouraged or, as it was in Milwaukee, required to take German, either in separate or 'mixed' classes (Handschin, 1913; Schlossman, 1983). A positive attitude towards German was exhibited by the US Commissioner of Education who said in 1870: 'the German language has actually become the second language of our Republic, and a knowledge of German is now considered essential to a finished education' (cited in Zeydel, 1964: 345).

The decades before World War I were also marked by determined efforts of several educators, including Berlitz and Handschin, to move away from the grammar-translation pedagogy inherited from Greek and Latin to approaches which emphasised communicative ability, such as the Direct method, or its variation, Berlitz method. A belief in the growing importance of foreign languages is reflected in Handschin's (1913) report on the state of modern language instruction in the US, where he noted:

America has not felt the need of learning foreign languages, just as England did not in the past. But England is now awakening to the value of modern languages in trade and commerce, and in this America will follow her. Taking all into consideration, modern languages will continue to play an increasingly important role in our education. (p. 66)

This relatively stable situation changed radically in April 1917, when the United States declared war on Germany. While the anti-German sentiment had been growing steadily since the beginning of World War I, in the Spring of 1917 the anti-German campaign escalated. Directed against Germany, this campaign attacked not only the German Emperor and army, but also the nation, its language and culture, and the German-American community. Numerous vitriolic articles against the study of German, the language of the despised enemy, appeared in various newspapers and on the pages of educational publications. The school boards started receiving petitions to discontinue German instruction, and speakers of German faced sweeping accusations of participation in subversive pro-German activities. In some communities German-Americans were subject to threats, intimidations, and beatings, while German books were removed from church, school, and university libraries and destroyed or even publicly burned (Luebke, 1980; Wiley, 1998). Higher education institutions also suffered from this onslaught. Several German professors were dismissed due to perceived lack of support for the US and its Allies, and at the University of Michigan most of the German programme was dismantled (Wiley, 1998).

The anti-German sentiment led the state legislatures to reconsider the wisdom of offering German – now seen as the language of external and internal enemy – not only as a mother tongue but also as a foreign language. As a result of enormous public and political pressure, between the years of 1917 and 1922 German as a foreign language was practically legislated out of existence, with policies often spreading to all FL instruction. The majority of the states declared English to be the only appropriate language of instruction in all schools, at least at the elementary level. Louisiana, Indiana and Ohio made the teaching of German illegal, while Alabama, Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma and South Dakota passed laws that prohibited all FL instruction – even Latin! – in Grades 1 to 8, and Wisconsin and Minnesota restricted FL instruction to one hour a day. The new legislation effectively closed the dual-language programmes in Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee, as well as many smaller programmes that employed some form of dual-language instruction.

Many members of the educational establishment openly protested at the changes. For instance, a superintendent in North Dakota stated that ‘to drop German as a language-study because we are at war with Germany would be indicative of that sort of stupidity and lack of vision that we believe is native in the Prussian intellectual atmosphere’ (cited in Luebke, 1980: 6). A particularly heated debate about German study and eventually about the role of FL instruction in the curriculum erupted on the pages of *The Modern Language Journal*, the key publication for modern-language educators. The debate started with a survey of opinions of 55 prominent figures in education, politics, science, business and industry on whether German should be dropped from American schools (Barnes, 1918). Five respondents, including well-known businessman John Wanamaker, distinctly opposed the study of German; six, including president Shurman of Cornell, and Eliot, an ex-president of Harvard, saw advantages and disadvantages of both positions; all others, including presidents of Princeton and Columbia were unreservedly in favour of continuing the study of German language and literature in American schools.

Even a superficial look at the debates that took place on the pages of *The Modern*

Language Journal and other educational publications indicates that national concerns were central for its participants. Even the titles of the papers reflected these concerns, with papers entitled 'National ideals and the teaching of modern languages' (Whitney, 1918), 'National aspects of modern language teaching in the present emergency' (Fitz-Gerald, 1918), or 'Modern languages and citizenship' (Shelton, 1923). While most modern-language educators spoke fervently in defence of language study, others were openly doubtful as to whether it had any value for the American youth. The arguments of the proponents of the cultural and intellectual value of FL study are fairly self-evident and well-summarised in Lantolf and Sunderman (2001). In the present paper I analyse arguments offered by its opponents or those who were in favour of limiting FL education to a particular segment of the population. My analysis identifies four key discourses in this debate, all of which link FL instruction with particular images of American national identity, national unity and national future.

The first discourse constructed language as a major influence on the thought of its speakers (ironically, it drew on the work of German and German-American philosophers, anthropologists and linguists, including Humboldt, Boas, and later Sapir and Whorf). The proponents of this view argued that languages are not equal in theoretical, practical, and moral values, and that it is necessary to protect American youth from languages that could 'contaminate' them, notably German, but also Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and Italian (cf. Gordy, 1918). German in particular was at fault as it was the language of a nation that had 'lost all moral sense' (Giddings, in Barnes, 1918: 188) and as such 'the exponent of Mediaevalism in thought, in culture, in morals and in deeds' (Torossian, in Barnes, 1918: 189). Gordy (1918) declared on the pages of the *Educational Review* that there is no place in American education for the language that upholds the Teutonic philosophy, which 'prides itself in its inhumanity for it murders innocent children, rapes women, and mutilates the bodies of innocent men' (p. 262). These attitudes were amplified in the pamphlets of the American Defense League (ADL) which asserted that a 'language which produces a people of ruthless conquestadors [*sic*] such as now exists in Germany, is not a fit language to teach clean and pure American boys and girls' (cited in Luebke, 1980: 5).

The second discourse eschewed a direct critique of language, focusing instead on the practices and behaviours of its speakers, in particular German-born language instructors who presumably at times 'used their position for propagandist purposes' (Fitz-Gerald, 1918: 59). This discourse paints Americans as naive, trusting and 'asleep in a fool's paradise while allowing the widest opportunities for propaganda antagonistic to our national ideals' (Fitz-Gerald, 1918: 56). To 'awaken' the nation, Coffman, the dean of the College of Education at the University of Minnesota, asserted in his 1918 address to the National Education Association that subversive pro-German elements expected to achieve their goals 'by having German teachers teaching German ideals through the German language' (cited in Luebke, 1980: 5). Consequently, argued the supporters of this view, to ensure the ideological purity of FL classes, instruction should be taken away from 'foreigners who seldom are able to acquire the point of view of their pupils, and who, even in the rare cases that do acquire such a point of view, have had to go through a long period of residence during which they did not have this point of view' (Fitz-Gerald, 1918: 58). Instead, instruction should be entrusted to Ameri-

can-born teachers whose mother tongue is the same as that of their pupils and who understand the US, its institutions and traditions (Whitney, 1918).

The third, and the most important, patriotic discourse visible in the new language policies linked FL study and immigrant language maintenance. This discourse presented language maintenance and bilingual education as a threat to national unity (Fitz-Gerald, 1918; Thomas, 1920; Whitney, 1918). The National Education Association Commission declared 'the practice of giving instruction to children in the common branches in a foreign tongue to be un-American and unpatriotic' (p. 62). Nowhere does the link between national identity, minority-language maintenance, and FL education is as clear as in the address by a Vassar professor, Marian Whitney (1918), to the *War Time Conference of Modern Language Teachers*. Whitney (1918) stressed that during the war America had realised for the first time that its fate is bound with that of other people, enemies and allies. She also acknowledged that the knowledge of the language and literature of other nations is the best way to arouse interest in and promote understanding of those distant lands. And yet this knowledge may be a luxury the country cannot afford at the time:

In so far as teaching foreign languages in our elementary schools has been a means of keeping a child of foreign birth in the language and ideals of his family and tradition, I think it a bad thing; but to teach young Americans French, German or Spanish at an age when their oral and verbal memory is keen and when languages come easily, is a good thing. ... To give instruction in French to children of French Canadians, in German to those of German inheritance, or in Swedish to the Swedish born, is to keep up the barriers we want to throw down, and until our population is more homogeneous, more one in speech and ideals, it is probably better to banish all foreign languages from the lower schools. (pp. 11–12)

In a similar vein, Fitz-Gerald (1918), also a supporter of modern-language study in general, argued that:

Inhabitants of various countries have of their own free will left their home lands to emigrate to a land whose language was not their own. Such persons have no right to demand that the country of their adoption shall perpetuate the language of their home land. (p. 61)

The fourth discourse, both isolationist and utilitarian, positioned foreign-language study simply as a waste of time for an American child who would have no practical use for such knowledge. This position was commonly taken by educators situated in the schools of education who promoted integrated curricula based on functional considerations (Tharp, 1936; Thomas, 1920; see also Lantolf & Sunderman, 2001). 'How absurd it is,' argued Calvin Thomas (1920), a professor at Columbia, 'to push boys and girls, whose future is as yet quite indeterminate, into the study of any particular language on the general ground that its literature is worth knowing about' (p. 10). Rather, Thomas envisioned separate trade schools where languages would be taught exclusively to those for whom appropriate jobs were already waiting.

Even some of those who supported FL study were unable to imagine future learners needing to speak German or any other foreign language. Rather, they

argued that 'the value of conversational ability, so far as the American student is concerned, is ornamental' (Cerf, 1922: 436). Consequently, they advocated a move away from the Direct method towards the focus on reading skills, declared to be of greater importance and intellectual value (Cerf, 1922; Heuser, 1918; Perry, 1938). Heuser (1918) stated that it is unrealistic to require that after three years of high school German college students study entirely in German; he also pointed out, *inter alia*, that courses that stress oral proficiency are patronised largely by German-American and Jewish students (and thus may contribute to undesirable language maintenance). Instead, he suggested, German courses should stress reading vocabulary and allow students to write their essays in English.

Eventually, the constitutionality of the new English-only statutes was challenged in court and could not be upheld. However, even though the Supreme Court may have ended legal restrictions, the damage to foreign-language education – and in particular to German study – was already done. While in 1917 there were 31,000 students taking German in Milwaukee alone, there were none two years later. By 1922, high schools all over the country had less than 14,000 students of German, 0.5% of the overall high school enrolment (as compared to 15.5% in French and 10% in Spanish) (Zeydel, 1964). Moreover, because elementary schools eschewed German instruction and so did many high schools, university admissions requirements were also relaxed or amended, resulting in unprecedented decline in student populations in German-language courses. Many German instructors had to retrain as teachers of Americanisation and English as a second language. Fife (1920) described the situation as follows:

As a result of the drive against the study of the German language in the past two years, the whole field of German instruction is like a country swept by a hurricane. Here and there in some protected spot a farm or a grove has been spared, but in the main the work of destruction has been complete. (p. 18)

In sum, public discourses which emerged during and immediately after World War I constructed the knowledge of any language but English as incompatible with American identity for newly arrived immigrants and as a luxury, desirable but ultimately inconsequential, for middle and upper-middle class US citizens. These discourses were shaped by American isolationism, anti-German sentiments, and anxiety over the unprecedented influx of immigrants. What had started out as a language maintenance controversy, directed against 'hyphenated Americans', ended up affecting all areas of language education. Not only was bilingual instruction eliminated from the public, and at times also private, school curricula, but German language study was nearly eradicated, and all FL instruction was relegated to upper grades, where it had focused on translation and reading skills. It is quite likely that ideologies which solidified during the German controversy affected FL education in the US to the point from which it has never fully recovered. To this day, FL instruction in public schools starts either in middle or junior high school, and is considered to be a subject of secondary, if not least, importance.

Foreign-language Education and National Identity in the USSR Post-World War II

In contrast to the debates in the US about the value of German study during and after World War I, and in some cases its prohibition, the founding fathers of the former Soviet Union never doubted the value of studying the languages spoken by their 'enemy', namely, capitalist countries. The opponents of foreign-language study in the US believed in the intrinsic links between language, thought, and moral and cultural values, and thus tried to protect American children from undesirable influences. In contrast, Soviet educators, from the 1920s on, saw enormous possibilities in using 'the language of the enemy' to promote the ideological agenda of socialism and communism. They also underscored that while bourgeois elements do indeed speak English, German, French or Italian, so do workers in England, the US, Germany or Italy, and consequently encouraged the knowledge of foreign languages as an important attribute of citizens of the Soviet Union, leader of the world proletariat.

Soviet entry into World War II in June 1941 engendered an anti-German campaign reminiscent of the one discussed earlier. The pervasive hatred of Germany and everything German often impacted on members of the German minority who had lived in Russia for generations, as well as the families of German communists in exile. German as a foreign language, however, was not discontinued in the way it was in the US, as the authorities realised that it represented an important linguistic resource. Increased contacts with both enemies and allies during the war made the Soviet Government realise that the country had a shortage of people able to communicate in foreign languages. By the end of the war, there was a growing awareness of the importance of foreign-language study for the purposes of national security and economic and technological developments, and, as a result, the Government decided to transform the FL education system (notably, a similar reawakening took place in the US in the wake of World War II).

Typically, Soviet children would start the compulsory study of one foreign language, German, English or French (and later on Spanish), in 4th or 5th grade and continue until the end of high school, which resulted in at least six years of exposure to the language. However, due to the shortage of qualified teachers and laxity of standards, the instruction primarily focused on low-intensity reading and translation, and did not result in the level of preparedness needed by the country. In 1944 a leading Soviet linguist, Professor Shcherba, suggested instituting a two-track system, creating specialised schools for gifted pupils which would offer intensive instruction in foreign languages (Kheimets & Epstein, 2001). Such schools were first opened in Moscow and Leningrad in 1949, and soon appeared in other cities. There, the study of foreign language started in 2nd grade and resulted in three times as much instruction as offered by the regular schools. Not only did the students learn the language itself more intensively, the schools also used foreign languages as a medium of instruction, offering a number of subjects in the target language.

In 1955, the Ministry of Higher Education changed the curricula of institutions of higher education, increasing the number of hours allotted to FL instruction from 240 to 270 for science and engineering majors, and maintaining at least 140 hours for all others. Instructions were also issued as to the assignment of articles for

translation in the students' area, the formation of language clubs (which also existed in many secondary schools), and the establishment of special seminars to increase qualifications of FL teachers (Kheimets & Epstein, 2001). Ironically, these developments were taking place almost simultaneously with the adoption of governmental policies which prohibited marriages between foreigners and Soviet citizens and effectively restricted contacts between them.

Another major change in FL study in the USSR took place in 1961. While the importance of English steadily grew in the aftermath of World War II, it was not until that year that German was displaced by English as the most widely taught foreign language. The Council of Ministers decree of May 27, 1961, entitled *On the Improvement of the Study of Foreign Languages*, deplored the poor FL speaking skills of high school and university graduates, recommending urgent improvements of curricula and teaching materials; the decree also declared that German had been overrepresented in the school curriculum (Griffiths, 1984; Kheimets & Epstein, 2001). It is clear that this change of policy was influenced by the rise of the international visibility of English as the language of diplomacy, commerce, and science. However, it also coincided with the escalation of the Cold War, in particular the Cuban missile crisis. There was a new enemy on the scene, whose language the children now had to learn. By 1970, English accounted for 50% of the FL enrolments, with 30% in German and 20% in French.

In order to ensure that the children would not be 'contaminated' by the languages they were learning, the educational establishment created teaching materials and curricula permeated by texts, vocabulary and exercises of ideological value. A brief examination of a selection of popular college-level foreign language texts published in the USSR between 1962 and 1981 demonstrates that these texts offered a variety of 'imagined communities' to the learners. In line with the ideological position I would be exposed to in my English class in 1975, a short introductory English grammar by Markova (1972) presents the reader with a wide selection of military vocabulary. Vocabulary items include 'a tank' and 'a machine gunner', and intricacies of the English grammar are illustrated with sentences such as 'We were to launch an offensive at night' (p. 8) and 'The losses inflicted on the enemy were heavy' (p.128). Like many other language texts, this grammar was published by *Voennoe Izdatel'stvo* (Military Publishing House) and deemed suitable for a wide range of English majors and non-majors. A popular English text by Bonk *et al.* (1973) contextualised words like 'profit' by asking students: 'In what way do the capitalists increase their profits?' (p.19) and 'Do the imperialists make a lot of profit out of dependent countries?' (p. 19). The reading selections featured in Bonk *et al.* (1973) include excerpts from the work of leftist writers, such as Theodore Dreiser, 'a true friend to our country' (p. 111), Bernard Shaw, 'a true friend to the first Socialist State' (p. 144), or Albert Maltz, whose work showed 'the terrible exploitation, unemployment and racial discrimination in America' (p. 47).

French textbooks similarly feature writers who proved themselves to be 'true friends' of the USSR and relentless critics of the West. Thus, reading selections in a popular textbook for second-year college majors (Kazakova & Popova, 1978) depict French Resistance fighters during World War II (Pierre Gamarra, *Le maître d'école*; Jean Laffitte, *Nous retournerons cueillir les jonquilles*) and celebrate Soviet citizens in the French Resistance and members of the joint Russian-French air battalion, *Normandie-Nièmen* (Martine Monod, *Normandie-Nièmen*). Additional texts

include work by communist writers and editors of *L'Humanité*, such as Paul Vaillant-Couturier, Georges Sadoul and Elsa Triolet, who describe visits to the Soviet Union and expose corruption in a capitalist society.

A first-year Italian textbook (Karulin & Cherdantseva, 1981) offers a variety of texts which depict how the world celebrates the Great October revolution, how Italians celebrate Lenin's anniversary, and how Soviet citizens celebrate the achievements of the new, 1977 Constitution. An additional feature in every chapter is a carefully selected text from the communist Italian newspaper *L'Unità*. The introductory German text (Rauschenbach, 1964) emphasises allegiance to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and praises the glorious life in the Soviet Union and in the GDR, juxtaposing it to the struggles of German communists, such as Ernst Thaelmann, under the capitalist regime. The least critical of the capitalist world is the Arabic textbook (Segal, 1962) which simply describes the well-being of Soviet citizens and aligns the readers with Arab communists and peasants.

Even this extraordinarily brief survey shows that the Soviet Government adopted foreign-language instruction as a unique propaganda tool, used for four, often interrelated, discursive purposes: glorification of Soviet life and heroic Russian history; positive portrayal of countries, such as the GDR, which aligned themselves with the Soviet Union; scathing critique of life in capitalist countries and under the capitalist regime; and compassionate portrayal of the struggle of French (British, American, Italian, Arab, etc.) communists. In this, teaching materials created unique 'imagined communities' for the learners, imagined in two senses of the word: first, because they constructed the world in terms of the 'us vs. them' divide, favoured by the Soviet regime, and, second, because they portrayed travels and interaction that for most learners would never take place, as in reality regular Soviet citizens were not allowed to travel abroad and were discouraged from any contacts with foreigners, even those from the socialist bloc.

One example of what such instruction looked like in practice comes from a description offered by the *New York Times* correspondent, David Shipler (1983), who visited a number of Soviet schools in the 1970s. On one such visit he arrived at a third-grade class in a specialised English instruction school. Looking around, the journalist noticed numerous slogans and posters on the classroom walls, all of them in English: "'The Draft Constitution of the USSR"; "A New Step on the Road of Communism"; and below, long texts headed "Brezhnev's Commentary"; "All Education Available"; "Nationwide Discussions"; "Internal Commentary"' (Shipler, 1983: 94–95). The teachers incorporated the slogans into the lessons by asking younger children to count them and older children to read, translate, and memorise them. The lesson ended with the expression 'Long live!' which may not be extremely handy in an everyday English conversation but was ubiquitous in the Soviet Union at the time. The children thus were made to say 'Long live our school!' and 'Long live our pioneer organization!' (in the 1990s, older versions of these Russian children became a source of unending shock and delight for my ESL colleagues in upstate New York when they started their conversations with 'Long live teacher Jenny!').

Not surprisingly, while FL instruction was thoroughly incorporated in the Soviet curricula, the outcomes did not always live up to the expectations. To begin with, as already mentioned, it was close to impossible to practise the language with target-language speakers. Secondly, textbooks overflowing with descrip-

tions of celebrations of the umpteenth anniversary of the October revolution, Lenin's visits to London, Paris, or Zurich (depending on the language one was studying), and exploits of the brave pioneer Tanya during World War II, did little to increase students' interest and motivation. The majority of the students saw FL study as largely irrelevant to their everyday lives, and graduated with minimal if any proficiency. As one of the Russian educators interviewed for this study remarked, the languages studied were never meant to be used, at least not by ordinary citizens. University graduates, who saw the limited applicability of their training, often developed a working reading knowledge for dealing with texts in their field, but did not bother to work on communicative skills since only a selected few could attend conferences abroad or interact with colleagues from other countries.

On the other hand, there were also those who saw FL instruction as an opportunity. The first group, typically including people with 'clean' ideological and ethnic backgrounds, looked to the study of foreign languages as a way to enter professional careers in government, diplomacy, military or translation and interpretation that could eventually take them abroad and allow them access to material goods typically inaccessible to regular Soviet citizens. As a result, admission to specialised FL schools, Foreign Language Institutes and especially to the Moscow Institute of International Relations was highly selective, typically limited to children of high-ranking party and government officials, and off-limits to Jews who were considered ideologically unstable and thus undesirable. Kevin Klose (1984), a Moscow bureau chief for the *Washington Post*, who placed his children in a specialised English school in Moscow, recalls that 'most of the pupils were the children of well-placed party people and technocrats who knew that mastery of English, the world language, could be a ticket to astonishing world travel – such as to America, or England' (Klose, 1984: 14). As a downside, individuals who, through the knowledge of foreign languages, had access to foreigners and foreign travel, in particular interpreters and tour guides, were often mistrusted by the mainstream population and considered to be KGB agents and collaborators.

The second group of individuals committed to FL study were those who saw foreign languages not as a vehicle of communist thought or a gateway to a Soviet career, but as a means of escaping the oppressive regime, literally or metaphorically. Among those who saw the literal opportunity were Jews who, starting in the 1970s, were allowed to leave the country to emigrate to Israel (unofficially, many took this as an opportunity to emigrate to the US, Canada, or Australia). Many Russian women, in particular those in urban centres, saw foreign languages as a means to meet and marry foreign men. These encounters and marriages became fodder for many popular books and novels, including the 1980s blockbuster *Interdevochka* (Call Girl). Finally, there were also those who were resigned to never seeing Paris or Rome, and considered the study of foreign languages as a substitute, which would allow them access to foreign newspapers (albeit exclusively communist ones), foreign books, typically sold in secondhand bookstores, foreign movies, shown without subtitles in selected movie theaters in major cities, and perhaps even limited contacts with foreign citizens.

A beautiful and poignant example of what this learning looked like is offered in a memoir by Natasha Lvovich, a Russian Jewish woman, who had studied French in Moscow, first in a specialised school and then in college, in the 1970s. After

becoming a professional teacher and translator, Lvovich developed numerous contacts with French colleagues, and yet, she recalls, 'I could never travel to the country of my dreams to work, study, develop professionally, or see people who were dear to me' (Lvovich, 1997: 1). Instead, associating French with intellectualism, sophistication, and nobility, she created an imaginary French identity for herself, learning to speak with a Parisian accent, memorising popular French songs, reading French classics and detective stories in argot, mastering numerous written genres, cooking French food (from locally available ingredients), and even dipping 'the imagined croissant into coffee' (Lvovich, 1997: 2). For her, this was the only possible escape from the political reality: 'A French personality, after all, was much less confusing and safer than being a Jew in Soviet Russia. It was a beautiful Me, the Me that I liked' (Lvovich, 1997: 8-9).

In short, we can see that FL study in the USSR was implicated with national identity construction in three important ways. To begin with, national security concerns – and a deep belief in the power of language to create, rather than reflect, reality – led the Soviet Government to encourage its citizens to learn the language, or rather, 'languages of the enemy'. Secondly, Soviet teaching materials and foreign-language classes invited the learners to become members of an imagined international community of communists who delight in Soviet achievements and scorn capitalist exploitation. Finally, some learners also constructed oppositional identities using foreign-language learning as a magic means to escape the drab reality of socialist existence.

Foreign Language Education and National Identity in Eastern Europe

Comparing the stance toward 'languages of the enemy' taken in different periods in the US and the USSR, we can see that there is more than one way in which such languages can be treated: in some contexts, students are prohibited or at least discouraged to learn the language of the perceived 'enemy', and in others they are encouraged to do so. In turn, a brief consideration of changes in FL education in Eastern Europe allows me to problematise the actual notion of 'the enemy'. Following World War II and the 'liberation' by the Soviet army, several Eastern European countries were coerced into becoming satellites of the Soviet Union. Not surprisingly, after the communist takeover in the years 1948-1949, Russian became the compulsory foreign language in all types of schools in these newly socialist countries (Medgyes, 1997). From 1950 until 1990, every student received between eight and ten years of Russian-language instruction in secondary school, followed by two or three more years at university. In Hungary, for instance, between 1945 and the early 1960s all other modern languages were virtually expunged from the curriculum, in order to make sure that everyone got equal exposure to Russian (Medgyes & Miklosy, 2000). Andrei Codrescu (1990: 20), who grew up in Romania in the 1950s, recalls his teachers telling children that Russian language is the 'source of light'. In Polish schools Russian was compulsory and then students had a choice of one of the other three languages, English, German, or French. A Polish-American writer Eva Hoffman (1989) remembers that Polish school authorities in the 1950s presented compulsory Russian education that started in fifth

grade as a joyful task, 'because learning the international language of Communism is something we should naturally want to do' (p. 61).

Some school-age children, and even adults, sincerely enjoyed learning the language and the opportunities it offered. A very positive attitude towards Russian is displayed by a prominent Hungarian linguist and translator, Kato Lomb (1978), who recalls learning Russian during World War II in a bomb shelter from Gogol's book *Dead Souls*. When the Soviet Army occupied Budapest in 1945, this, somewhat lopsided, mastery of Russian immediately got her an interpreter's position with the City Hall. At the time Hungary severely lacked qualified Russian teachers and translators – as a result, over the years teachers of other modern languages were retrained as teachers of Russian. Eventually, many educators invested in the mastery of Russian language and literature, becoming leading figures in the fields of Russian linguistics and pedagogy. A prominent Hungarian linguist and author of several popular Russian textbooks stated in an interview conducted for this project that 'there were many intellectuals in Eastern Europe who learned Russian because they liked the language, and the culture that is represented by Dostoevski, Tolstoj, Gogol, Pushkin, Mussorgskij, Rimskij-Korsakov, Repin, etc.'

In turn, other educators engaged in acts of passive resistance to 'the language of the oppressor'. Hoffman (1989) recalls her Russian classes as the epitome of boredom:

the teachers assigned to this task prove uniformly unenthusiastic. In the other courses, discipline is rather strict. ... But in the Russian course, this never seems to happen, and after taking us through some lackadaisical exercises, the teacher chats with us – in Polish – about other things. (pp. 61-62)

Codrescu (1990) recalls that when the local authorities placed a big bookstore *Kniga Russkaia* (Russian Book) in the centre of his small Romanian town, the bookstore displays collected dust, since 'no self-respecting Romanian would have been caught dead in this place' (p. 20). The boredom and resistance displayed by students of Russian are not surprising since Russian textbooks – just like the majority of the Russian books proudly exhibited in the bookstore – were at the time as dogmatic and insipid as the Soviet FL textbooks discussed earlier, and similarly filled with biographies of Soviet communist leaders and descriptions of happy encounters between Soviet and Hungarian (Polish, Bulgarian, etc.) pioneers (Medgyes & Miklosy, 2000). The Hungarian linguist mentioned earlier also pointed out in the interview that children in Hungary started their Russian classes with great enthusiasm, because it was their first foreign language. However, this enthusiasm often dampened or even disappeared after one or two years because the parents, for political reasons, did not encourage them and because the materials, at least until the 1980s, were boring and highly politicised.

The status quo in FL education changed drastically with the collapse of the Soviet Union, and dissolution of Eastern European socialist governments. In order to align themselves with the Western powers and gain an entry into the global market, Eastern European democracies tried to refashion themselves as democratic and Westernised. This sociopolitical and economic change involved language education reforms, which stripped Russian of its privileged status and

offered learners a freedom of choice between a number of languages. This demise of Russian could be attributed both to the declining importance of the Soviet superpower on the international scene and to bitter feelings against the Soviet regime which controlled the socialist bloc for so long, drowning the 1956 Hungarian and the 1968 Czech uprisings in blood. Ironically, while 40 years ago former modern language teachers were forced to learn Russian, now, due to the drastically decreased demand, many Russian teachers lost their jobs and were forced to retrain to teach another language, most often English.

English, followed by German and French, emerged as a preferred choice in Eastern Europe, a key to national prosperity and global cooperation. Medgyes and Miklosy (2000) report that between 1982 and 1994 the number of English speakers in Hungary increased almost three times, and the gap between the numbers of German and English speakers significantly narrowed. The growing preoccupation with FL competence is continuously in the public eye as the one and only issue on which three different Hungarian governments elected since 1990 came to an agreement. The media endlessly discuss the insufficient language competence of the average Hungarian, employers publish increasing numbers of job advertisements in English to filter out the 'linguistically deficient', the bookstore windows are adorned by language books and dictionaries, and the streets of major Hungarian towns display 'Learn English Fast and Easy' language school ads (Medgyes & Miklosy, 2000). This preoccupation led to a striking increase in numbers of students enrolled in FL public and private schools and those who took certification exams in these languages. In 1996, three times as many people took FL proficiency exams as in 1987; this trend documents both the growing interest in FL education and realisation of the importance of certified knowledge (Medgyes & Miklosy, 2000). It is not surprising then that even Hungarians who previously did not see the relevance of English – or any other foreign language – to their personal and professional future, are now reconsidering their attitudes and reimagining themselves as sophisticated multilinguals, engaged members of the European Union. On the other hand, as citizens of any small nation, they also exhibit ambivalence as to the possible involvement with NATO and the West and fears that English may come to contaminate and displace their own language (Medgyes & Miklosy, 2000).

This brief sketch of the rise and fall of Russian in Hungary and the rest of Eastern Europe serves to show that 'the language of the enemy' is not necessarily a language of the nation with which one is at war or in conflict. In colonial contexts (a definition that, in some ways, could extend to Eastern Europe), a language of the coloniser imposed on the local population could also be perceived as 'the language of the enemy'. As a result, acts of passive resistance exhibited by teachers refusing to teach the language properly and learners refusing to learn it, could be seen, in Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) terms, as 'acts of identity', whereby being a patriotic Pole or Hungarian was seen by some as incompatible with being proficient in Russian.

Conclusions

Above, I have argued that FL education contexts may be influenced by shifts in national identity construction. Clearly, these are not the only influences on FL policies and practices – more often than not, they are also shaped by economic, social,

and cultural considerations. Yet the present discussion offers three intriguing possibilities that can be productively explored in other contexts.

To begin with, I argue that a country's current allegiances and oppositions could impact the choice of languages to be offered for modern language study – imposing the language of a coloniser/political ally (e.g. Russian in Hungary post-World War II) or discarding the language of the enemy (e.g. German in the US post-World War I). I have also shown that different countries take a different perspective on what is to be done with 'the language of the enemy' – while the US opted to legislate German out of existence, at least temporarily, the Soviet Union encouraged its citizens to learn German and, later, English.

The latter case brings me to the second important conclusion: in some contexts, it is not only the choice of the language that is influenced by the national image but also the delivery, or ways in which the learners are positioned with regard to the language and its speakers, and more generally, to the outside world. Thus, in the US, the national propaganda machine started with exposing German as a detrimental and potentially corrupting influence and then extended this influence to all FL study questioning its usefulness to American citizens. In turn, Soviet educational authorities coopted FL study for ideological purposes and positioned the learners as citizens of a global world, inhabited by capitalist leaders (with whom they might go to war one day) and communist comrades (who shared the learners' delight in Soviet achievements).

Finally, I have also demonstrated that learners have a choice of constructing oppositional identities in FL education contexts. Some Soviet students, like Natasha Lvovich (1997), appeal to 'languages of the enemy' to create alternative identities, and others, like Eva Hoffman (1989) and her teachers and classmates, refuse to engage in the instruction process to assert patriotic identities. Long ago, a child of Eastern European immigrants in the US, Alfred Kazin (1951) noted that 'to speak a foreign language is to depart from yourself' (p. 127). I believe that the present discussion offers a productive framework for understanding this 'departure' as linked to imagination and national identity.

Acknowledgements

For their advice and help with conceptualising the issues discussed in this article, I am deeply grateful to Larissa Aronin, Elzbieta Ciolkowska, Jean-Marc Dewaele, Istvan Kecskes, Ingrid Piller, Marya Teutsch-Dwyer and the two anonymous reviewers of this paper. I would also like to thank my research assistants, Bei Zhou and Chris Seymour, for their invaluable support. All remaining errors or inconsistencies are my own.

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