

# **'Invisible minorities' and 'hidden diversity': the linguistic landscape of Saint-Petersburg and discourses about migrants in language planning**

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**Keywords:** linguistic landscape, migration, interethnic communication, multilingualism

Moscow and Saint-Petersburg are undoubtedly ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous global cities (on Moscow see Baranova, Fedorova forthcoming), but nevertheless the real multilingualism of two Russian biggest cities is totally ignored in the census and in the formulation of urban language planning. Blommaert (2016) proposes linguistic landscape as a good explorative method for studying multilingualism. The recent researches on linguistic landscape (Blommaert 2013; Shohamy et. al. 2010; Backhaus 2006) shed some light on the reflection of power relations between different ethnic groups in urban public space.

The proposed paper has two primary goals. One goal is a comprehensive description of how non-Russian languages are symbolically represented in Saint-Petersburg's urban space in regard to languages of both immigrant population and "official minorities" from Russia, like Tatar, Kalmyk, Chuvash, etc. The second goal of this study is to propose an explanation for mismatch between diversity of the city and the underestimation of this fact both in official policy and in the discourse of citizens. Why the mobility of St. Petersburg's non-Russian population does not increase visibility of the languages other than Russian? A related but more narrow question is how exactly people choose the language for written communication with non-Russian speakers in case of informal and unofficial interaction?

The data analyzed in the paper were gathered through fieldwork (in 2016) in two districts with high proportion of migrant population, *Dyevjatkinno* and *Parnas*, and on one old market in the center of the city, '*Apraksin dvor*'. Interviews with migrants and discussions from Internet forums were used as well as an additional source of information. The communication between the majority and ethnic minorities are conducted only in Russian, both in official settings, as in the case of Federal Migration Service for newcomers who very often have insufficient language skills), and in informal exchanges, such as between commercial agencies (working as mediators between migrants and FMS) and non-

Russian speakers. Even in places where there is no official regulation non-Russian languages' use is significantly rare and predominantly in the frame of in-group communication. There are just two languages, Chinese and Uzbek, which occasionally can be used in advertisements but again targeted exclusively to minorities. Uzbek at the same time starts to function as a lingua-franca for different migrant groups from Central Asia. According to Backhaus (2006: 64), both official and non-official multilingual signs work 'towards an increase in linguistic diversity and a challenge to the existing monolingual language regime', however, we can see that the border between these levels in Russian cities is still very strong, and both official language policy and attitudes of ethnic majority tend to ignore actual diversity, maintaining therefore urban monolingual 'façade'.

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