

Two Languages and three Empires: About the Discourse on Russian and Church Slavonic in Today's Russia

Per-Arne Bodin, Stockholm University

Language has always been the perfect instrument of empire.
-- Antonio de Nebrija, *Granidtica Castellana*

Even if an empire disappears, its language is preserved. This is the case, for example, with Latin, French, Spanish and English. For the former colonies the dependence on the earlier, imperial language is manifold and profound in many aspects of public and private life. Often the imperial language remains the high status language even after decolonization.

The Russian language of today, after the demise of the Soviet Union, is in the same position as French and English once were. I will here follow the Russian debate on the relationship between empire and language, using primarily the web. I am interested in these aspects of the discourse on language in contemporary Russia but not in the distinctions and nuances between different parties in these discussions, nor in variations of scientific discourse. I am thus concerned with the discussion in its entirety and not primarily with the real situation of the Russian language - or any other language. As a working definition of the term 'imperial language' I will use Robert Phillipson's definition that pertains to English, in his book *English Language Teaching and Imperialism*:

/.../ the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages. Here structural refers broadly to material properties and cultural to immaterial or ideological properties.¹

The empire is lost, but the Russian language still plays an important role in almost all of the countries in the so-called "Near Abroad" - the Russian term for the countries once belonging to the Soviet Union. This is stated in one of the numerous articles on the destiny of the Russian language published in the press and on the web over the last years, as in this almost triumphant statement on the situation of the Russian language today:

The language of the empire did not die together with the empire; the region where it remained alive was not confined within the borders of the Russian Federation.²

¹ Phillipson, Robert, *English Language Teaching and Imperialism*, Trønninge 1990, p. 41.

² Zhukov, Boris, "Zhivoi iazyk mertvoi derzhavy", http://www.itogi.ru/paper2000.nsf/Article/Itogi_2000_10_26_182348.html, 2006-07-04.

In almost all of these countries new language laws have been instituted, laws which stress the hegemony of the titular language of the country, formally giving Russian a new and diminished, secondary role in various ways. At the same time, the Russian language is still de facto very important in all parts of the former Soviet territory, with the exception of Estonia, and partly Latvia, although more than 30 percent of the inhabitants in those countries are Russians. The inequalities between Russian and almost all the other languages in the territory of the former Soviet Union mainly remain. Due to the fact that Russian was taught throughout the Soviet Union, it is still often used as the common language in official contacts between former Soviet countries even today, both out of necessity and as a practicality.

In the Russian context of today, from a political perspective the Russian language is seen as a way of holding the Russian Federation together:

But the Russian language is not only a medium of communication between nationalities. It is a powerful factor in shaping the system; it is the foundation of our multinational state. And if cracks appear in this foundation, then there is reason for concern about the fate of the entire building.³

'Multinational' is used as an honorary word in the same way as in the Soviet propaganda. Russia, as well as the Soviet Union, is a multicultural state with Russian as its leading language. Multi-nationality is one of the terms used in the definition of the country, in the preamble of the new Russian constitution from 1993.

Even more so, the promotion of Russian is a way of protecting the geopolitical interests of the Russian Federation outside of its own territory, in the Commonwealth of Independent States and in the rest of the world:

In connection with the development of processes of integration between nationalities and states, it is at the present time imperative to secure support for the Russian language at the common state level as a powerful social factor for the consolidation of the CIS countries, as a stimulus for the development of cultural, legal, economic and political conditions within the Russian Federation, and **for the realisation of Russia's geopolitical interests**. The programme envisages **a strengthening of the position of the Russian language in Russia, in the CIS states, and beyond their borders**.⁴

This role of the Russian language as a world language - as a language of intercommunication and science, including its civilisating properties - is stressed in various ways by the Russian government and by nationalists of different kinds. I will dwell on this issue for a while. I will thus not go into details of differences in this discourse but try to paint the over-all picture. This discourse has many similarities with the corresponding ones that defend the role of English in today's world, though one can debate whether English needs defending. I will make a short comparison of the situations of the two languages and use Phillipson's study on the role of the English language in today's world⁵, and I will use his notions.

³ Kolin, K., K., "Russkii iazyk i natsional'naya bezopasnost'", <http://www.slavmir.ru/arhiv97/sib30okt.htm#1>, 2006-07-04.

⁴ Informatsionno-poiskovaia sistema, zakon, http://www.vcom.ru/cgi-bin/db/zakdoc?_reg_number=%D09603718, 2006-07-04.

⁵ Phillipson, *op.cit.*, p. 217-233.

The ability to use Russian as well as English in the English imperial discourse is seen by the Russians as part of **universalism**, that is, being a part of the international community:

There is absolutely no doubt that Russia's greatest contribution to the development of the human spirit and world civilization, to world culture, is her language, and her great literature.⁶

Other terms used by Robert Phillipson are **mobility** and **access code**, which mean that English opens up to different spheres of culture and civilisation. This is also an argument used to promote Russian: in such a view, to use Russian is to open up to the civilisation of the world, which is otherwise closed. Since Russian is a universal language, the knowledge of this language makes the peoples of different local languages parts of this universality. This line of argumentation can be seen in this extract from a text about the situation in Islamic republics:

Since in both cases this was followed by the mass annihilation of the bearers (living or in paper form) of this previous book-culture, of a generation of these peoples, those who entered life in the second half of the century found themselves cut off from their own literary tradition as well as from world literature, of which only an insignificant part had been translated into their languages (and that often not from the originals but from Russian translations). By mastering the Russian language they can, to some extent, bridge this gap.⁷

The 'two times' mentioned here are the changes from Arabic to Latin and then to the Cyrillic alphabet in the Islamic area of the Soviet Union. The continuation of the use of Russian is according to this argumentation a way to open up these cultures to the world. However, it can not be taken for granted that everyone would agree with this line of argument.

To master Russian also means to master technology and science, that is, **modernity** in general; it is the language of learning, especially at university. This is a second parallel to the imperial discourse on English:

The Russian-speaking inhabitants of the post-Soviet countries are people who belong to contemporary society; they are the recipients of information flows, the bearers and creators of a culture which does not coincide with the culture of the "titular" people.⁸

One more attribute given to the Russian language pertains more specifically to the Russian imperial discourse: that it is holy or, in any case, closely connected not only to the nation but also to faith:

Language is a gift from God. Guard it as you would your mother, your child. Remember: The nation stands on two pillars: faith and language. This you must know: What happens to our language happens to ourselves.⁹

The Russian language is thus understood as sacred in the context of holistic speculations in the Russian religious tradition.

Even this argument, however, has a parallel in the discourse on English, as we can see in this summing up of the traits given to English in Phillipson's book:

⁶ Pavliuk, C. V., "Russkii iazyk i biblioteka", <http://pushkin.kubannet.ru/1/ibo/rus22012004.html>, 2006-07-04.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Zhukov, op.cit.

⁹ "Obrashchenie k zhiteliam detskogo goroda-kurorta Anapa", http://www.orthodox.kubannet.ru/chron/c_2_chr.htm, 2006-07-04.

If one conflates the English-intrinsic arguments one can conclude that English "is" god-given, civilizing, noble, a vehicle of the entire developing human tradition.¹⁰

There are thus a great many parallels between the discourses on English and Russian in this respect. But apart from all these positive aspects of the Russian language, it is also seen to be exposed to threats, which do not have any parallels with the discourse on English. The threats are, according to the Nationalistic discourse on language, mostly coming from two sides: loans from other languages - on the one hand from English (to an overwhelming degree), and on the other hand from colloquial language, especially *mat*, - vulgar language.

These are the threats: The Russian language may be polluted by terms and turns of phrases of foreign extraction not typical of the traditions of Russian literature: the ever growing use in Russian speech of words and phrases of a slang character.¹¹

The threats from English and from vulgar language are seen as a pollution of the Russian language, as an ecological catastrophe. Ecology, as a modern and popular science, is intermingled with an attack on the use of English and vulgar language in Russian, in an article by V. S. Milovatskii, "Ob ekologii slova":

At the same time we can see in everyday life how low, dirty and vulgar words ruin the moral buttresses and obliterate spirituality; the language is ruined and souls are ruined. Is the truth not that the domination of the English language destroys the integrity of our language and our spirit? We will not be able to restore the ecological integrity of nature, if we do not understand that a precondition for the integrity of nature is the integrity of the human spirit and of the kinship between different levels (family, people). And linguistic integrity is essential for that. A full-blooded, intact development of one's own language is essential. Words are full of life just as everything living in nature. Words are not less alive than herbs, trees or rivers.¹²

The discourse makes use of a term already coined - 'the ecology of language' - but uses it not as a term for the scientific study of language and of the environment, but as a catch-word for the protection of languages, very much in the same way as ecology is used regarding nature preservation.¹³ The words used when describing these threats are often the same as when as describing war: "zasil'e", "napadok", and so on:

The Russian language is exposed to attacks even in Russia itself. Over the past decade up to 10,000 foreign words have entered it, such as *baksy* [bucks], *vaucher* [voucher], *biznesmen* [businessman] and *bizneslanch* [business lunch].¹⁴

The Russian language is in this context given a crucial importance for the state and for the imagined Russian empire, and it is given a string of imperial attributes as "velikii", great, and "moguchii", powerful, attributes derived from the discourse on Russia and not on Russian language.

¹⁰ Phillipson, *op.cit.*, p. 221.

¹¹ Kolin, *op.cit.*

¹² Milovatskii, V. S., "Ob ekologii slova", <http://durnoypony.livejournal.com/>, 2006-07-06.

¹³ For the scientific study use of the term see: Einar Haugen, *The Ecology of Language*, Selected and Introduced by Anwar S. Dil, Stanford 1972.

¹⁴ Conant, Eve, "Govoriu 'net' russkomu iazyku ('MSNBC', SSjA). Za predelami rodnoi strany russkii iazyk idet na ubyl'", <http://www.inosmi.ru/text/translation/150475.html>, 2006-07-06.

These are the arguments for the use of Russian in the non-Russian speaking areas of the Russian Federation, or in the “Near Abroad”, and the reason for the sense of a threat. The logical response to this discussion from the side of the Russian government has been the forming of Russian language and cultural centres of the same kind as the British council, which has taken place over the last years. Some have already been opened in the Near Abroad, according to numerous articles on the subject, and the opening ceremonies have often been led by Putin’s wife, who is a philologist by profession.

As a result of this discussion, the Russian government has also issued a special language law, where the imperial status of Russian inside of the Russian Federation is stressed:

1. In accordance with the Constitution of the Russian Federation the state language of the Russian Federation on all of its territory is the Russian language.¹⁵

4 The state language of the Russian Federation is a language which promotes mutual understanding and the strengthening of the links between the peoples of the Russian Federation within one single multinational state. ¹⁶

The law also forbids the use of words and expressions that do not adhere to the norms of Russian literary language. Obscene language is also forbidden - in most cases English **loan words** –which can be referred to the threats discussed in the articles quoted above. This part of the law was issued as late as in 2005.

6. When the Russian language is used in its capacity as the state language of the Russian Federation, it is not allowed to use words and expressions which do not conform to the norms of the contemporary Russian literary language, with the exception of foreign words without analogues commonly used in the Russian language.¹⁶

In this law there are also passages about the importance of Russian language studies, both for the different peoples of the Russian federations and for those abroad. In another, earlier law, the Cyrillic script was prescribed to be obligatory for all languages in the Russian Federation, which was also a geopolitical step to stop the influence from the West and preserving the peoples of the Russian Federation in the Russian sphere of influence.

In the Russian Federation the alphabets of the state language of the Russian Federation and of the state languages of the republics are based on the Cyrillic script.¹⁷

As we can see, the issue here is not the imperial status of the language but that of the script.

The Russian language in this discourse is seen as one way of stabilizing the Russian federation and preserving its unity, but also as an instrument to preserve and strengthen the Russian influence in the former territory of the Soviet Union. The Russian language is seen as one of the ways to re-imperialise Russia - an important aspect of the politics of the president, Vladimir Putin.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Zakon RF ot 25 oktiabria 1991g. N 1807-I "O iazykach narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii", <http://www.internet-law.ru/law/smi/iazuk.htm>, 2006-07-06.

The second empire

At the same time, another empire exists in the nationalistic discourse in Russia of today – that of Slavia Orthodoxa, the Slavic Orthodoxy, with Russia as its centre and Church Slavonic as its language.¹⁸ The Old, originally south Slavonic liturgical language of the Slavs, with its pretensions of being a holy language, is also given a territorial or imperial status:

The special role of the Church Slavonic language in the history of the Russian language is connected with the fact that originally, old Slavonic (i.e., Church Slavonic from the period of Cyril and Methodius), and then the special Church Slavonic language, was a supra-national language. It developed as the language of the sermon, addressing all Slavs. Its centres changed. In the course of only the first one and a half centuries of Christianity, among the Slavs the centres of book and linguistic culture changed twice: first Moravia and Pannonia, then Eastern Bulgaria, and, finally, Kiev and Novgorod. However, it retained its general Slavic character and its appeal to all Slavs everywhere.¹⁹

Along the same lines, a Ukrainian bishop under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate somewhat surprisingly includes Poland in this unity, but leaves out the Czechs:

The Church Slavonic language is the uniting origin of the Polish, Belorussian, Ukrainian, Russian, Serb, and Bulgarian peoples. But someone does not like that we are one.²⁰

Church Slavonic is at the moment also seen as a uniting bond between the three East Slavonic countries: Russia, Ukraine and Belarus:

The Church Slavonic language is the language of the Orthodox Russian Church, a means by which our people are drawn within the fold of the church and learn the catechism; the Church Slavonic language is the language of the vast expanse of our Fatherland given to us by God in answer to our prayers; it is the language which now for the second millennium defends and guarantees the unity and integrity of the Equal of the Apostles Prince Vladimir's legacy. And if we cannot retain the Church Slavonic language in the Russian Church, it will be difficult to retain the unity of the Orthodox Church of Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus.²¹

Church Slavonic has united these countries both historically and still unites them today, although to a lesser degree. This link is also established between generations of earlier Slavs. Thus the area of the empire of Church Slavonic embraces what is called Slavia Orthodoxa, but very often in the post-Soviet discourse the area is more or less limited to the East Slavonic countries: Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus. This is especially important in the political situation of today, when Russia is attempting to draw the other two East Slavonic countries nearer. Sometimes this empire is expanded to include even the orthodox world as such, then taking into consideration the strong substratum of the Greek language in Church Slavonic; the ac-

¹⁸ The term Slavia Orthodoxa was coined by the Italian scholar Picchio. His articles on this subject has recently been published in Russia: Riccardo Picchio, *Slavia orthodoxa : literatura i jazyk*, otvetstvennyye redaktory N. N. Zapolskaja, V. V. Kalygin, Moskva 2003.

¹⁹ Panin, L. G., "Tserkoslavianskii iazyk i russkaia slovesnost'", http://vvv.image.websib.ru/03/text_article_point1.htm?49, 2006-07-06.

²⁰ "Svidetel'stvovat' zhizn'iu", http://www.pravoslav.odessa.net/Andreevkiy_vestnik/1_2002/sv_zhiznyu.htm, 2006-07-06.

²¹ "Tserkovnoslavianskii iazyk v sovremennoi natsional'noj shkole", <http://slovník.hgsa.ru/rus/shuravlev/07.html>

companying geographic notion is "vselenskoe pravoslavie", "the universal orthodox area"²². Greek and Church Slavonic are then equated. Sometimes this area is restricted to Russia and all other areas are neglected in the image of Holy Rus, with Church Slavonic as its language. This empire is hard to pinpoint geographically and ontologically.

The structural inequality, in the words of Philipson, is here between Church Slavonic, holding the higher position, and Russian or other Slavonic vernaculars, being in the second position, and not in the first position as in the first discourse.

It is not a matter of talents but of the strength and expressiveness of one language and the inertia and limpness of another. To convince oneself of this, it is sufficient to say familiar prayers in the Russian language.²³

Russian is not only seen as inadequate for liturgical life, but as an inferior language in general - not only, as in the first discourse, momentarily polluted. In this second discourse, Church Slavonic is the 'clean' language, and the ecological argument is here used to distinguish the 'polluted' Russian from the clean Church Slavonic:

The Church Slavonic language is, to use an expression that is fashionable and thus understandable to all, an "*ecologically pure*" spring; there are no harmful admixtures or distortions of meaning in it.²⁴

The Church Slavonic language is also 'clean' in the sense that it lacks associations to modernity, and it even has the quality to purify the Russian language by existing beside it:

It is the language of a noble culture; there are no dirty words in it, you cannot talk in a coarse tone in it. It is a language which presupposes a certain level of moral culture. The Church Slavonic language in that way not only has significance for the understanding of Russian spiritual culture but it is also of great educational and pedagogical importance. The rejection of its use in the Church, and the learning of it in school, would lead to a further decline of culture in Russia. The Russian language "is purified", it is ennobled in the Church.²⁵

Church Slavonic is placed on a high cultural level; it also includes a moral quality. Church Slavonic, which in the 19th century was often linked to seminaristic coarseness and barbarism, is seen in a quite different light by the traditionalists of today. Church Slavonic can even clean the unclean Russian language.

As in the first case, in which the defenders of the Russian language propagated laws and prohibitions, the representatives of Church Slavonic want some kind of laws or prohibitions against the use of Russian in the divine services of the Orthodox church. The notion of constancy is even more important for Church Slavonic than for Russian. In a holy language all parts are sacred; vocabulary, syntax, grammatical forms, even orthography. One scholar claims that the Slavonic script, together with the Church Slavonic language, will fall to pieces with the least change of the orthography.

²² Nazvanov, D., "Pochemu nel'zia sluzhit' Bogu na iazyke mira sego", *Bogoslužebnyi iazyk russkoi tserkvi*, ed. by arichimandrit Tikhon (Shevkunov), Sretenskij monastir' 1999, p. 307

²³ Ibid., p. 305.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 307.

²⁵ Likhachev, D. S., "Russkii iazyk v bogoslužhenii i v bogoslovskoi mysli", *Vozrozhdenie*, 1998, http://www.gumer.info/bogoslov_Buks/Life_church/Article/Lih_RussBogosl.php

The home of the Russian art of writing was created by God himself through His chosen, and this house must not be destroyed. It is time to repulse decisively all enemies of the Church Cyrillic script and to return to the **traditional** norms of church orthography. The grace of the Holy Ghost resides in the letters of the Church Slavonic alphabet!²⁶

The patriarch of the Russian Orthodox church has also de facto forbidden all attempts to use Russian as a liturgical language. One of the critics of this situation has said that the Russians are the only people in the world denied the possibility to hear the divine service in their own language.

This second discourse has clear political implications, evident, for example, in the support of Serbia in the conflict on the Balkans in our time, or in Russia's participation in the wars against the Turks on the Balkans in the 19th century.

The issue of Church Slavonic contra the vernacular is also important in Bulgaria and Serbia, but not in the same way. The vernacular is used there with much less controversy, and one scholar means that Serbian and Church Slavonic exist with equal right in the Serbian church today.²⁷ The debate is most infected in Russia, and it is difficult for the Russian traditionalists to find support for their total denial of the vernacular.

Church Slavonic, being a South Slavonic language, is still perceived to be a Russian commitment by the Russians, and the south Slavonic origin of this language is often blurred. The centre for this language is perceived to be Moscow, and, as a matter of fact, all the orthodox Slavs today use the Russian redaction of Church Slavonic. During the Turkish hegemony over Serbia and Bulgaria, the Russians helped them with liturgical books, and thus this version of the language was set. The defence of Church Slavonic in Russia is a defence of that language also in Serbia and Bulgaria:

The Church Slavonic language is preserved in the Orthodox Churches of Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, cementing the feeling of kinship of peoples of the same faith and of the same blood. And if we do not succeed in restoring the tradition of the sound and teaching of the Church Slavonic language in the Russian school, it will become more difficult to maintain its position in the Russian Church, and it will be more difficult for the Bulgarians and the Serbs, the Ukrainians and the Belorussians, to hold on to Church Slavonic services in their churches.²⁸

The empire in this discourse is thus also geographic and cultural, with strong political implications. It differs from the first empire in its historical dimension and its concrete, geographical location, and, in addition, it differs with regard to the positive and the negative characteristics ascribed to the languages. What is also common is Moscow and Russia in the centre for these empires.

²⁶ Novikova, A., "Iz istorii tserkovnoslavianskoi azbuki i o normakh sovremennogo tserkovnogo pravopisaniia", <http://212.188.13.168/izdat/JMP/03/6-03/11.htm>, 2006-07-11.

²⁷ <http://www.russian.slavica.org/article106.php>

²⁸ <http://churchslavic.narod.ru/zhuravlev.html>

The Day of the Slavic Alphabet and Culture

The two discourses mentioned above encounter each other without confrontation on one occasion, that is on The Day of the Slavic Alphabet and Culture, celebrated on the 24th of May, a day dedicated to Kirillos and Methodios, the two brothers who created the Church Slavonic literary language. This day is widely celebrated in Bulgaria, and was celebrated in Russia before the revolution but begun to be observed again in the last years before the demise of the Soviet Union. In Moscow it has been celebrated from 1992 with a divine service in the Uspenskij cathedral and a procession to the statue of the two brothers, which was erected and unveiled in 1992 at the Slavonic Square. This feast means a special rapprochement between the church and the profane powers in Russia.

The accent here is, on the one hand, the close connection between the Slavonic peoples and the Slavonic languages, especially the Southern Slavonic languages and peoples, who in different degrees are influenced by the traditions of Kirillos and Methodios. Today the Russian language is also celebrated on this day:

The appearance of the Slavonic alphabet united all Slavic peoples, and this unity runs through our entire history – from Kiev Rus to the present day. Today we celebrate the Day of the Russian Language – in fact, it is the day of our national culture. It is, in truth, a feast full of significance.²⁹

In the rhetoric connected with this feast, yet another fellowship is alluded to, that is All Slavs, echoing the views of the Pan Slavists in the 19th century. During the feast in 2000, for example, a special conference was organised with this purpose:

The main objective of scientific conferences held within the framework of the feast is the search for an answer to the question: what stands in the way of the restoration of cooperation and trust between the Slavic peoples?³⁰

The close relation between the Russian language and Church Slavonic is also stressed during this holiday. The demands of the study of Church Slavonic at school is often put forth, a study which was forbidden after the revolution in 1918.

Let us secure the introduction of the Slavonic language into the school programme as the basis of the safety of the “great and powerful” Russian language.³¹

In this discourse the difference between Church Slavonic and Russian is often blurred, and the day is also often called the day of the Russian language. Two different names are used for that day: “The Feast of the Russian Language, Slavic Literature and Culture” and “The Feast of Slavic Literature and Culture”. On this day the common elements in these two discourses are stressed, and the conflict about the liturgical language is hidden.

This day is thus an attempt to join these two discourses, and in a way also to join the whole territory of these two imperial discourses: a strive for Russia’s geopolitical influence.

²⁹ "Edinaia Rossiia' chtit sviatykh ravnoapostol'nykh Kirilla i Mefodija, i napominaet o znachenii russkogo iazyka", <http://www.edinros.ru/news.html?rid=147&id=106264>, 2006-07-06.

³⁰ *Etnosfera*, No. 4, 2000.

³¹ "Obrashchenie k zhiteliam detskogo goroda-kurorta Anapa", op.cit., 2006-07-06.

The third empire

And now to the third empire: in the contemporary discourse Church Slavonic is not only the language keeping Slavia Orthodoxa together, and the liturgical language of the church - it is also the language per se in which to talk with God. Also, in the Kingdom of Heaven, carstvo nebesnoe, Church Slavonic and not Russian is used. This is the third imperial discourse on language in post-Soviet Russia, but one closely connected with the second discourse:

Everyone who sincerely wishes to join the ancient culture of the Spirit will easily find an opportunity to familiarize himself with the invaluable treasure of the holy Slavonic language, which in an amazing way corresponds to the great sacraments of the liturgy. A few peculiarities in this language facilitate a temporary withdrawal from the passions of our ordinary lives: *now we will put aside every worldly care.*³²

The last italicized words is a quotation from one of the most famous hymns from the Orthodox liturgy sung when the priest comes from the altar to the nave with the Bread and the Wine, giving the use of Church Slavonic almost a sacramental status. Another quotation from an old believer's source, which is by far the most conservative element of Russian orthodoxy:

The centuries-old experience of praying of the Russian Church shows that the Church Slavonic language is best suited to communication with God through prayer. In this language we can also communicate with God's saints, who have already left this life on earth and are now praising God and the Heavenly Church while interceding for us before God's throne.³³

One more example defines Church Slavonic as God's most beloved language: one of the most maximalistic utterances in this polemics.

"Church Slavonic is the language God loves most", affirmed the Venerable Ioann Vyshenskii, and thus we will talk with the Lord in this ancient and beautiful language.³⁴

The foe is here perhaps not the modernists who want to use Russian but the devil himself, as is stated in this article on the use of Russian:

I don't know what there is more of – the sincere wish to bring the Church nearer the people or the political intrigues. Someone is of course interested in splitting the Slavonic peoples for good. Moreover, here I see the force of sheer evil at work.³⁵

Church Slavonic is the language of heaven - carstvo nebesnoe - and a part of the idea of Russian messianism. A large part of the polemic is here drawn from the Orthodox dispute against Latin in the Ukraine in the 17th century, where Church Slavonic. In contrast to all other languages, Church Slavonic was regarded as sacred, with a redeeming power. Ioann Vyshenskii, quoted above, was the most important representative of the Orthodox side in the dispute.

Both Russian and Church Slavonic are characterised by a double function, both as imperial and sacred languages. The ideological stand creates a very complex relation between them. Three empires and two languages – that is the paradoxical situation in post-Soviet Russia in

³² Archimandrit Sofronii (Sakharov), "Liturgicheskii iazyk", <http://www.ipmce.su/~cyril/orthodox/apologet/slavic4.htm>, 2006-07-07.

³³ "Kratkaja istoriia Tserkvi", www.nita-press.de/Doklad.doc, 2006-07-07.

³⁴ Zarutskii, Sergei, 2005.

³⁵ <http://svet.orthodoxy.ru/2003/n6/s019.htm>

broad groups of nationalists and orthodox believers - and sometimes also in the rhetoric of the Russian government.

Translation of quotations Erland Janson

References

- Arkhimandrit Sofronii (Sakharov), "Liturgicheskii iazyk", <http://www.ipmce.su/~cyril/orthodox/apologet/slavic4.htm>, 2006-07-07
- Conant, Eve, "Govoriu 'net' russkomu iazyku ('MSNBC', SSJA). Za predelami rodnoi strany russkii iazyk idet na ubyl'", <http://www.inosmi.ru/text/translation/150475.html>, 2006-07-06
- <http://churchslavic.narod.ru/zhuravlev.html>
- "'Edinaia Rossiia' chtit sviatykh ravnoapostol'nykh Kirilla i Mefodiia, i napominaet o znachenii russkogo iazyka", <http://www.edinros.ru/news.html?rid=147&id=106264>, 2006-07-06
- Etnosfera*, No. 4, 2000
- Haugen, Einar, *The Ecology of Language*, Selected and Introduced by Anwar S. Dil, Stanford 1972
- Informatsionno-poiskovaia sistema, zakon, http://www.vcom.ru/cgi-bin/db/zakdoc?_reg_number=%D09603718, 2006-07-04
- Kolin, K., K., "Russkij iazyk i natsional'naiia bezopasnost'", <http://www.slavmir.ru/arhiv97/sib30okt.htm#1>, 2006-07-04
- "Kratkaia istorija Tserkvi", www.nita-press.de/Doklad.doc, 2006-07-07
- Likhachev, D. S., "Russkii iazyk v bogosluzhenii i v bogoslovskoi mysli", *Vozrozhdenie*, 1998, http://www.gumer.info/bogoslov_Buks/Life_church/Article/Lih_RussBogosl.php
- Milovatskii, V. S., "Ob ekologii slova", <http://durnoypony.livejournal.com/>, 2006-07-06
- Nazvanov, D., "Pochemu nel'zia sluzhit' Bogu na iazyke mira sego", *Bogosluzhebnyi iazyk russkoi tserkvi*, ed. by arkhimandrit Tikhon (Shevkunov), Sretenskii monastir' 1999
- Novikova, A., "Iz istorii tserkovnoslavianskoi azbuki i o normakh sovremennogo tserkovnogo pravopisaniia", <http://212.188.13.168/izdat/JMP/03/6-03/11.htm>, 2006-07-11
- "Obrashchenie k zhiteliam detskogo goroda-kurorta Anapa", http://www.orthodox.kubannet.ru/chron/c_2_chr.htm, 2006-07-04
- Panin, L. G., "Tserkoslavianskii iazyk i russkaia slovesnost'", http://vvv.image.websib.ru/03/text_article_point1.htm?49, 2006-07-06
- Pavliuk, C. V., "Russkii iazyk i biblioteka", <http://pushkin.kubannet.ru/1/ibo/rus22012004.html>, 2006-07-04.
- Phillipson, Robert, *English Language Teaching and Imperialism*, Trønninge 1990
- Picchio, Riccardo, *Slavia orthodoxa : literatura i jazyk*, otvetstvennye redaktory N. N. Zapolskaja, V. V. Kalygin, Moskva 2003
- <http://www.russian.slavica.org/article106.phpl>
- "Svidetel'stvovat' zhizn'iu"
http://www.pravoslav.odessa.net/Andreevkiy_vestnik/1_2002/sv_zhiznyu.htm, 2006-07-06
- "Tserkovnoslavianskii iazyk v sovremennoi natsional'noi shkole", <http://slovník.hgsa.ru/rus/shuravlev/07.html>
- Zakon RF ot 25 oktiabria 1991 g. N 1807-I "O iazykakh narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii", <http://www.internet-law.ru/law/smi/iazuk.htm>, 2006-07-06
- Zarutskii, Sergei, 2005, <http://svet.orthodoxy.ru/2003/n6/s019.htm>
- Zhukov, Boris, "Zhivoi iazyk mertvoi derzhavy", http://www.itogi.ru/paper2000.nsf/Article/Itogi_2000_10_26_182348.html, 2006-07-04