**PREFACE**

This is as much a study on the languages of the Russian Federation, in particular, as on the sociology of language, in general. For, *multilingualism*, as such, is in many respects the foundation field out of which all of the sociology of language grows and ramifies.

One of the important issues that has come on the scene as a result of the disintegration of the Soviet Union is the linguistic cauldron in New Russia affecting its multilingual configuration. Although, the erstwhile USSR was also a multinational state, the issue of language and various problems emanating from it assumed a novel importance in New Russia. Through this study, we have tried to put forth concept, information and suggestion towards the construction of as yet an unrealised, and admittedly distant, general theory or model or typology, which should give fuller understanding of the complex conjunctions of variables affecting the over-all language situation in the Russian Federation. We have thus occupied ourselves, for the most part of this study, in projecting a profile of this linguistic issue with the hope that our efforts will make a significant contribution to the development of a more reflexively aware and culturally focussed field of language study. We anticipate that our study may be useful for a wide audience of anthropologists, linguists, rhetoricians, sociologists, cultural theorists, and political scientists.
We now present a thematic presentation of our study in a systematic chapter framework.

Language is historical memory of any people. Thus, language, depicting more or less realistically the present, ties it up with the mastered past and desirable future. Language situation in Russia today is therefore a product of the policies put in place in years past. The processes of language planning and language policy carried on since 1991 in the Russian Federation cannot be explained without a short reference to the historical, political and social outcomes raised by the nationality and language policies implemented during decades in the former USSR. Chapter I – The Soviet Legacy - deal primarily with sociolinguistic background, in which the language policies right from the Tsarist period up to the disintegration of the former USSR have been discussed. Language legislation, right through, had a close bearing on the language situation in general and on linguistic pluralism and syncretism in particular. We have also critically analyzed policy anomalies in the Soviet period, and the role of oscillating language ideologies over the years in constructing perceptions of social, ethnic and national difference. The construction of this whole thesis is made on the foundation of this legacy.

The disintegration of the USSR was one of the most unprecedented events of our times. It has impelling impacts on the sociolinguistic and socioeconomic situation of Russia. Chapter II deals with this impact on language distribution and language maintenance in the Russian Federation. Massive changes in the population structure of Russia after 1991, together with factors other than population movement, have added a new dimension to the already existing sociolinguistic complexity.
The ethnic experience in a modern society provides insight into the rich diversity of human experience. And language is considered to be a depository and a chronicle of the ethnoses. Likewise, the viability and continuity of the language is almost a necessary condition for the continuity of the ethnic group as such. In Chapter III, we have tried to put facts on file as far as the present language-distribution in the Russian Federation is concerned, with due reference to the ethnolinguistic factor affecting the same. It is a well established phenomenon in sociolinguistics that language disparities and unequal statuses are not solely the result of politics and elitist efforts; they are also the results of the total number of speakers and of language communication dispositions at the regional and national levels. The Russian language, hence, will always be a more privileged reference component in a multilingual milieu, such as the Russian Federation and all its administrative units. Amidst this preponderance of the Russian language, we have studied the situation of smaller languages in the republics of the Federation. This indeed presents a most observing case of study of bilingualism/multilingualism.

In Chapter IV, we have tried to catalogue all the languages of the Russian Federation in an alphabetical order, with relevant linguistic and sociolinguistic details pertaining to each one of them. There are 119 languages enlisted in this register, which may very well serve as an easy reference for all. Our attention has solely been to treat each one of them merely as a linguistic entity and not as based on their social or functional status. Great discrepancy in availability of sources, however, has been the only deviator.

Any phase of transition is very critical and is often ridden with difficulties. The transformation of cultural-linguistic aspects of ethnic relations in Russia has also
triggered off many sociolinguistic issues. This has created new linguistic problems in the country. In Chapter V, we have tried to provide a perspective on these problem-areas. We have also looked into some prospective solutions. Given the multiplicity of sociolinguistic problems in Russia, a scientific and truly pluralist approach is required in order to find some widely acceptable solutions. Perhaps the rest can be taken care of by the peoples' long experience of multilingualism, diglossia, oral transmission, and above all, linguistic tolerance.

To conclude, we have also discussed the prospects of more coherent ethnolinguistic relations in the new democratic Russia, in the years to come. The multi-ethnic population may well adapt to the transformation in the sociolinguistic environment in the republics, but this is certain to require many years, even decades, depending on the process of stability in New Russia. But what is not going to change, perhaps forever, is the fact that language continues to be a very important ethnic criterion, and possibly surpasses any other single cultural trait as a unifying force.

This study is based on published sources in both English and Russian. The wide canvas of the published sources can be seen in the bibliographic information included in our study. Figures on language and ethnic distribution are, as of 1 January 2001, given in the Demographic Yearbook of Russia, 2001 and Russia in Figures, 2001, both published by State Committee of the Russian Federation on Statistics (Goskomstat of Russia), Moscow. Some figures on ethnic demography are, as of 1 January 1996, calculated on the basis of the returns of 1989 Soviet Census and the micro-census, 1994, as given in the 1996 edition of the above publications. I have also used the results of a Sample Survey, “Linguistic Awareness: Language Attitude and Maintenance”, which I,
have myself conducted in Moscow from 14th to 28th of September 2001 among a wide stratum of the local population, in studying attitudinal aspects of language-use and language-choice.

As reading of pulse is important for a doctor to assess the health of a patient, equally important for a linguist is to experience the linguistic environment first hand for a better assessment of any linguistic task ahead. This I was able to do by attending the International Scientific Conference on Language and Culture, 14-17 September 2001, in Moscow. Besides, my long discussions with Emma Volodarskaya, Chancellor of the Moscow Institute of Foreign Languages and Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Philology, and Vida Mikhalchenko, Rector, Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, helped a great deal in creating our sociolinguistic framework, and this eventually became indispensable for our study.

Finally, the magnanimous support and assistance provided by Professor Zafar Imam enabled me to complete the work and meet some very stringent deadlines. His suggestions and remarks have been very helpful in giving this study a broader perspective.

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"I love the language of those lullabies
And tales that I heard in childhood
For it told of boundless distances and all.
A fellow citizen gave to me in friendship
Another language.
I went across the mountain with him
To perceive the grandeur of the Motherland.
Then was the language, in which
Il'ich wrote and spoke.
With all my heart, son of a mountaineer, I came
To consider that great language as my own."

Rasul Gamzatov
(An Avar Poet)