



# The Ethno-Lingual Composition of the Russian Federation and Canada: A Comparative Analysis

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## Abstract

Russia and Canada are among the most attractive countries for migration and can serve as models for a multicultural and multilingual society. Language policy in these countries is based around the principle of multiculturalism. Russia and Canada's examples are significant in the context of globalization. At the present time, there are more than 200 different languages in use in Russia and in Canada according the 2010 National Census of Russia and Statistics Canada (2011). The purpose of this article is to compare the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the Russian Federation and Canada, to define and compare the basic principles of the language policy of these states. The sociolinguistic situation arising from the ethnic and linguistic composition of the Russian Federation and Canada, and "the language loyalty" found among their various ethnic groups, are the result of the language policy and language planning of these multi-ethnic states. This study describes certain quantitative and qualitative features which caricaturize the similarities and differences in the language situation in the Russian Federation and Canada.

**Keywords:** Multicultural and multilingual society; Demographics; Ethnic groups; Migration; Native language; Home language

## Introduction

Globalization implies a considerable migration process involving all countries in the world. Different countries take different approaches to preparing for all aspects of this: the legal, social, educational, cultural, linguistic, etc. Nowadays "migrants" civil self-definition and ethnic self-definition are more often considered. The principles which shape the language situation in multi-ethnic states are analyzed in the academic works of Ferguson, Kloss, Fishman, Stewart and others [1-5]. Some academic emphasize that these two

notions - civil and ethnic self-definition - differ greatly. Drozbiheva [6] states that ethnic self-definition concerns the migrant's language and, culture, the parents' nationality, the past, the origin. Meanwhile civil self-definition concerns the role of the destination country in the world, the geopolitical space, the aspiration to become an enlightened citizen, and an awareness of the country's natural resources, achievements in culture, and role of the historical entity.

The complicated heterogeneous linguistic situation in the Russian Federation urges analysis of how the country's ethnic composition and patterns of language loyalty came about in comparison to the experience of other countries' development and promotion of language diversity. The authors point out that in Russia, as well as in Canada, any language indicates cultural identity and it is a complex phenomenon which is an intermediary between personal, social, cultural and language inclinations [7].

A number of studies emphasize, that language is the basis of the ethnic identity, reflecting the historical experience, it is a tool for socialization, expression, and the transmission of ethnic and cultural traditions. Education in the mother tongue is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation and a number of international instruments ratified in Russia. Provisions should be made for the preservation and development of languages of the peoples of Russia and the study of the native language [8].

Results of studying Canadian model are formulated in the form of recommendations to increase the efficiency of minority languages' language processes in Russia, particularly in the national republics with co-official languages.

## Methodology

In order to carry out fact-based research on the linguistic situation in the countries under analysis, this paper uses the 1987 and 2010 Russian National Censuses and Statistics Canada (2001, 2006, 2011), as they are considered to be significant and reliable sources. Statistics from these sources have been processed and presented in various forms to illustrate the situation regarding language use in the two

countries. In Russia, data outlining the number of ethnic groups living in the country, the language members of such groups consider to be their primary one, and how this "language loyalty" has shifted in the period between the 1987 and 2010 censuses, is considered. In the case of Canada, the number of people speaking French, English, and other languages in various combinations are considered, identifying shifts in these patterns over a period from 2001 to 2011.

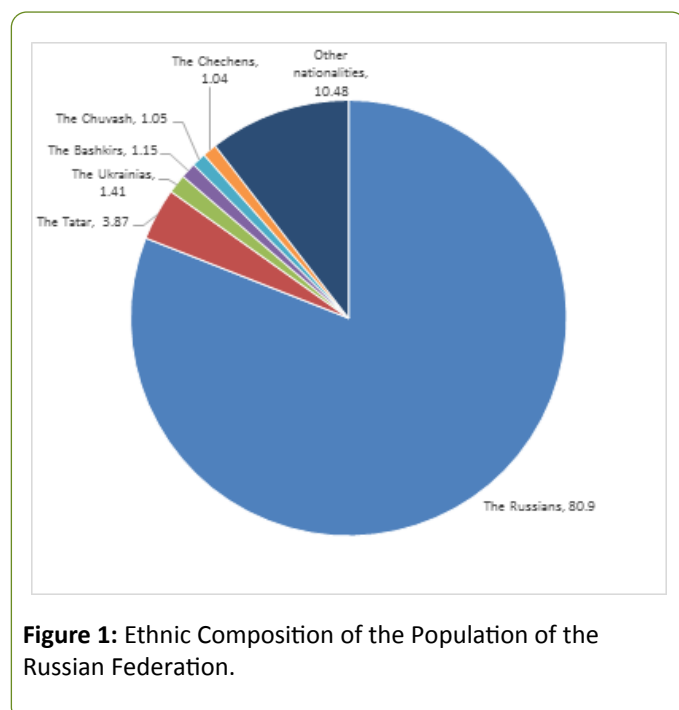
These quantitative results are analyzed in the context of Russian and Canadian state ideology regarding multiculturalism and multilingualism, in order to understand the impact government educational policies can have on both retention of the native language and adoption of the official national language(s).

## Results and Discussion

Certain social and culture-specific concepts and conditions of the Russian Federation's current migration policy suggest that it is similar to Canada's in this respect. This paper presents a comparative analysis of the demographic situation and language loyalty in these two countries.

In 2011, the population of Canada was 35 million, having increased by 5.9% since 2006. 50% of immigrants to Canada in 2011 were Asians, 20% were from Africa and Central Asia, 12% from South America and the United States, and 18% were from the United Kingdom and Europe. 18% of the population was foreign-born (i.e. born outside Canada) (Languages of Canada, 11).

Canada has become a multicultural country where more than 200 languages are used for communicating. South Asian and Chinese ethnic minorities form the largest language groups, consisting of over a million people (Chinese, Punjabi, Tagalog and Vietnamese).



The demographic situation in Russia is as follows: the population of the Russian Federation is currently around 143 million people. In comparison with the data of 2005, this represents a population decrease of around 1% [9].

In Russia there are more than 180 ethnic groups, including indigenous groups and minorities. Consequently there are about 270 languages and dialects spoken. As shown Figure 1, Russians are the most numerous ethnic group, representing 80,9% of the population, with other groups making up the remaining 19,1% of the total population. The second largest group is the Tatars-3.87%. Ukrainians, Bashkirs, Chuvash and Chechens represent little more than 1% each. Other indigenous peoples and minorities form 10.48% of the population. If we compare population change within various ethnic groups between the 1987 and 2010 censuses, as shown in, we observe the largest decrease among Ukrainians (-44%) Belarussians (-42%), Mordovians (-31%) and Udmurts (-33%). The Armenians (122%), Ingush (100%), Lezgians (80%), and Kumyks (78%) saw the highest rate of population growth. The Chechens, Avars, Azerbaijani, Kumyks, Kabardians, Ossetians, and Yakuts all saw population increases of more than 25%.

One important way of describing the linguistic situation in the Russian Federation is proficiency in the national language and mother tongue. According to sociologic data, almost all the population, including those in minority ethnic groups have a good command of the official language of Russia.

Russian (99%) and Chechens (98%) tend to show the highest level of proficiency in the national language among the representatives of ethnic groups representing more than 1% of the population of the Russian Federation.

Among ethnic groups comprising less than 1% of the population of the Russian Federation, the Avars, Dargins, Kabardians, Ossetians, Kumyks, Lezgins, and Ingush demonstrate the highest proficiency in their native language (over 93%), with levels of proficiency having tended to increase in the period from 1986 to 2010. The lowest proficiency in their native language (less than 70%) is found in among Armenians, Belarussians, Mordovians, Udmurts, and Kazakhs. The 'language loyalty' i.e., the number of people describing a particular language as their native one according to ethnic group is given in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Ethnic groups' language loyalty for 1000persons.

|            | The language of the respective nationality |      | Russian language |      |
|------------|--|------|------------------|------|
|            | 1989                                       | 2010 | 1989             | 2010 |
| Russians   | 1000                                       | 999  | 1000             | 999  |
| Tatars     | 856  | 792  | 142              | 205  |
| Ukrainians | 428  | 242  | 570              | 756  |
| Bashkirs   | 728  | 716  | 101              | 137  |
| Chuvash    | 775  | 709  | 223              | 290  |
| Chechens   | 988  | 988  | 11               | 11   |
| Armenians  | 678  | 690  | 318              | 307  |

|                |     |     |     |     |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Avars          | 977 | 982 | 16  | 13  |
| Mordovians     | 690 | 647 | 308 | 352 |
| Kazakhs        | 879 | 722 | 115 | 273 |
| Azerbaijanis   | 842 | 836 | 146 | 153 |
| Dargins        | 979 | 980 | 15  | 16  |
| Udmurts        | 708 | 622 | 289 | 377 |
| Marians        | 819 | 747 | 178 | 250 |
| Ossetians      | 932 | 926 | 64  | 71  |
| Belarusians    | 362 | 173 | 635 | 825 |
| Kabardians     | 976 | 979 | 22  | 20  |
| Kumyks         | 977 | 981 | 18  | 15  |
| Yakuts (Sakha) | 940 | 933 | 59  | 67  |
| Lezgians       | 940 | 949 | 45  | 43  |
| Buryats        | 866 | 785 | 133 | 214 |
| Ingush         | 982 | 983 | 16  | 15  |

Russian Federation's 2002 Census of contained no question on the native language, but the long period that passed since the 1989 Census clearly saw significant changes how the population described their native language. As can be seen from Table 1, among 14 of the ethnic groups analysed here (not including Russians) the percentage of people who identified their mother tongue as Russian increased. The highest growth rates were observed among Kazakhs, whose loyalty to Russian increased by 2.4 times, followed by Buryats (an increase of 61%), Tatars (54%), Mari (40%), Bashkirs(37%) and Ukrainians(33%).

Russian is considered the native tongue among the majority of Belarussians (83%) and Ukrainians (76%), by about a third of Udmurts, Mordovians and Armenians, and by 21-29% of Chuvash, Kazakhs, Mari, Buryats, and Tatars.

The highest proportion of people describing their ethnic language as native in 2010 was found among Russians (99.9%), Chechens (98.8%), Ingush, Avars, Kumyks, Dargin, and Kabardins (~98%), Lezgins (94.9%), Yakuts and Ossetians (~93%).

### Analysis of demographic power of languages

Analysis of the demographic power of the native languages of ethnic groups living in the Russian Federation allows us to draw the following conclusions. A higher rate of language loyalty is found among groups that are more densely settled, and in regions where the language of the titular ethnic group has co-official status. Populations, whose linguistic identity does not correspond so closely to their ethnic origins are mainly represented by minorities living outside regions or states of the titular language. Representatives of these ethnic groups – specifically first generation immigrants (internal or external)-had to use the state language (Russian) to communicate; subsequent generations were subject to greater

linguistic and cultural assimilation and lost more common features with their original ethnic group.

The authors of this paper agree with Dyachkov [10] that "regardless of the political and economic situation in the country, the minority ethnic groups of Russia are not doomed to extinction". Furthermore, linguistic linguistic assimilation in the case of Russia need not be associated with mastery of the Russian language and the adoption of Russian culture Losing their language and ethno-cultural roots, the individual does not acquire new ones. Linguistic and ethno-cultural assimilation of minority populations only leads to the cultural impoverishment of all of Russia's multi-ethnic society [11].

The Presidential Decree of December 19, 2012 "On the Strategy of the state national policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2025" tackles the issue of a society where there are still unresolved problems regarding support for Russian as the state language of the Russian Federation and the languages of the peoples of Russia [12]. The Decree aims at:

providing optimal conditions for the preservation and development of languages of the peoples of Russia, the use of the Russian language as the state language of the Russian Federation, the language of international communication and one of the official languages of the international organizations;

Adopting the State program of measures to support the languages of the peoples of Russia and the protection of linguistic diversity;

Providing an enabling environment for the study and use of the state language of the Russian Federation by its citizens;

The inadmissibility of violation of the rights of citizens to choose the language of communication, education, training and work;

The exchange of television and radio programs, audio and video materials, printed materials in local languages between the constituent entities of the Russian Federation;

Reviving and supporting the practice of translating Russian literature into the languages of the peoples of Russia;

Assisting compatriots and their children living abroad in the preservation and development of Russian and other languages of the peoples of Russia.

Canada, as one of the world's most attractive countries for migration, can serve as a model for a multicultural and multilingual society. Canadian identity politics uses multiculturalism to describe population demographics in terms of language and language practices.

The Table 2 shows that proportion of people who speak French or English at home in combination with another language grew by more between 2006 and 2011 than in the previous five-year period.

The language proficiency of the Canadian population in terms of the state language and the language of the respective ethnic groups is outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Language usage in Canada.

| Home language               | 2001       |      | 2006       |      | 2011       |      |
|-----------------------------|------------|------|------------|------|------------|------|
|                             |            | %    |            | %    |            | %    |
| French only                 | 5,861,135  | 19.8 | 5,953,155  | 19.1 | 6,043,305  | 18.2 |
| English only                | 18,267,825 | 61.6 | 18,853,915 | 60.3 | 19,224,945 | 58.0 |
| Neither English, nor French | 1,693,120  | 5.7  | 2,045,080  | 6.5  | 2,145,250  | 6.5  |
| French + other language     | 220,290    | 0.7  | 298,245    | 1.0  | 417,990    | 1.3  |
| English + other language    | 2,447,675  | 8.3  | 2,857,455  | 9.1  | 3,816,980  | 11.5 |
| Both English and French     | 1,015,920  | 3.4  | 1,090,325  | 3.5  | 1,222,530  | 3.7  |
| Other combinations          | 133,080    | 0.4  | 142,840    | 0.5  | 250,175    | 0.8  |
| Total                       | 29,639,045 |      | 31,241,015 |      | 33,121,175 |      |

From 2001 to 2011, the percentage of the population using French as a home language decreased. The number of people speaking only English at home steadily declined by 2% in each period between censuses.

Currently, Canada is home to 5,068,100 representatives of the "visible minorities" - a visually recognizable racial group, excluding aboriginal peoples, whose members constitute less than half of a population; an individual member of such a group (Definitions.net, 2015)-16.2% of the country's total population. This is 5% more than in the second half of the 1990s. The overall increase in the proportion of visible minorities in Canada was 27%, which is 5 times higher than the growth rate of the population as a whole. So we can note two parallel emerging trends in ethnic identity: on the one hand, because of the growing ethnic diversity of the country, 41.6% of the population describe themselves as being of multi-ethnic origin. The most common variants of origin are English, French, Scottish, Irish, German, Italian, Chinese, Indian, and Ukrainian. However, 32.2% of the population described their origin as "Canadian". This indicates that the country's multicultural policy based on the concept of an "ethno-cultural mosaic", at the same time creates and distributes a Canadian culture and a Canadian identity with its own system of values. In the twenty-first century, an increasing percentage of people describing themselves as "Canadians" is expected.

These statistics show that although the demographic situation in the country has changed dramatically, both of Canada's official languages possess a high functional capacity. In other words, neither linguistic nor ethnic diversity are a

threat to the functional power of the official languages, English and French.

Pluralist tendencies concerning language were first felt in Canada in the mid-1960s when the federal government moved to recognize anglophone-francophone biculturalism and bilingualism as fundamental to the national agenda. In the following decades, the federal government announced multiculturalism as integral to government policy, establishing the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism in 1973; bringing multiculturalists' policy into the Constitution Act in 1982; launching the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988; and implementing multiculturalist policy within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1988 [13].

Ruiz identified three basic relations of language - language as a problem, language as a right, and language as a resource. Language as a problem refers to the fact that if the resident doesn't speak the official languages he will face unequal opportunities. The likelihood is that such immigrants will not be able to fully access information and knowledge. From this position, the right to information is infringed (language as a right). Language as a resource refers to the economic idea of making multilingualism a type of human capital. Ruiz' tripartite theory is based on multilingual educational ideas' [14].

Ronan le Coadik, in his work "Multiculturalism", cites Michel Wieviorka, accurately noting the valued character of the term "multiculturalism": it can be used to describe one of the aspects of contemporary sociological reality - cultural multiplicity; it can also be a philosophical conception of the world. Finally, it is indicated and set that political practices are aimed at managing cultural diversity. The term "multilingual" is applied to a particular social group as a whole, for example, a multilingual city or a multilingual country [15].

Canadian authorities try to eliminate the cultural and linguistic barriers that immigrants face and provide opportunities for taking part in Canadian economic and political life, as well as the possibility of studying at least one official language in the context of the right to education. Canadian multiculturalism is not simply about protecting cultural differences, but part of an active process of forming the immigrant's identity as a citizen of Canada. This is achieved through various means, but mainly by the provision of access to one of the two official languages, French or English; preservation of the home language and culture of every citizen; and taking human rights as the basis for common values, ethics and laws [16].

But it should be emphasized that biculturalism and bilingual federal legislation, are grounded in preserving the francophone minority's language rights: initiatives that encourage multiculturalism and multilingualism do not protect immigrants' language heritage [17] or language retention programs [18,19].

## Conclusions

Considering all the information mentioned above, we may conclude that both the Russian Federation and Canadian

governments support ethnic as well as civilian self-identification.

Neither Canadian or Russian multiculturalism are aimed simply at the protection of cultural differences: multiculturalism is seen as an active process in the formation of ethnic and civil identity [20]. In Canada, this is achieved by access to one of the two official languages, preservation of the home language, and protection of human rights. Russia has a number of principles regarding the preservation of the languages of its peoples: 1) the languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation are the national common property of the Russian Federation; 2) the languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation are protected by the state; 3) the state throughout the territory of the Russian Federation contributes to the development of national languages, bilingualism and multilingualism.

Despite these comparable states 'language loyalty policies, both the Canadian and the Russian language situations "are characterized by risks of reduction in the functional capacity of languages. The intensity of these processes has varying degrees in different regions. The main reason [for this] is the reduction of the presence of national languages in education, the practical exclusion of them from the administrative and business spheres, and insufficient promotion of the prestige of languages through their functioning in the mass media" [17-22].

The self-identification of the younger generations as multicultural and multilingual citizens is the priority target of the systems of education in both countries.

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