CHAPTER 6

Young Russian-German adults 20 years after their repatriation to Germany

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This study investigates the interrelations between bilingual development (German/Russian), immigration and integration in the host society. Participants are Russian-Germans, that is, ethnic Germans who have repatriated to Germany from the former Soviet Union. They were part of a longitudinal study dedicated to the integration of multi-generation Russian-German families in Germany. The paper focuses on eight Russian-Germans who moved to Germany between the ages of five and eight and are now young adults. The analysis is based on interviews conducted in the twentieth year of their life in Germany in German and Russian. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to elicit information on the main stages of integration, the use of the languages, the attitudes towards German and Russian, and an assessment of the current situation. The obtained data were used to make an initial assessment of the oral language competencies of the participants and as sources of information about the objective facts and subjective attitudes that determined linguistic and social integration.

Keywords: Russian-Germans, repatriation, linguistic integration, social integration, bilingualism, heritage language, longitudinal study, oral and written skills

In this contribution we present the results of a study concerning the linguistic and social integration of eight young Russian-Germans after about twenty years of residence in Germany. Russian-Germans are officially called (*Spät-*)*Aussiedler*, that is, *repatriates* (cf. Introduction). A widely used term for them is *Russland-deutsche*. In this paper, we call them *Russian-Germans* and in this way refer to the terms which the group itself has adopted after repatriation: *русский немец* and *Russe-Deutscher* (sometimes *российский* or, rarely, *советский немец*). *Русский*

немец is a self-designation that is widely used among repatriates from the former Soviet Union in Germany.¹

1. Research background

This study investigates the relationship between the long-term language development of young immigrants and their living conditions in Germany. Therefore, our research background includes important results on the following research topics: (a) The development of bilingualism and multilingualism in children and their educational contexts, (b) Russian as heritage language² and the way it changes during processes of social integration, (c) features of the social integration of immigrant groups into the host society.

1.1 Bilingualism and multilingualism in children and their educational contexts

The focus of our study is on the relationship between bilingual development and its social context, in particular in the educational institutions of family, school and vocational training. The study of childhood bilingualism and multilingualism started at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1928–1929 Vygotsky (1935; see also 1997) elaborated a research report on the subject, where he derived methodological conclusions that are still relevant and that also apply to our study.³ In Meng & Rehbein (2007) they are summarized as follows: Vygotsky criticizes the limitation of the early studies on multilingualism as they deal only with the negative influence of a second language on a first language and do not consider the complex interrelation between multilingual language acquisition and other psychological domains of child development. Also, he complains that the studies disregard the various concrete social conditions on which the development of multilingualism depends; in particular, the interaction between social structures and

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1. We have studied Russian-German cultural self-conceptions and group designations in a number of articles. See Meng & Protassova, 2002, 2009, 2013. It is striking that we did not observe self-designations that refer to the use of the Russian language (e.g. 'Russian-speaking people'), unless many Russian-Germans accept the idea of being *русские* (*rusaki*).

2. For the term *heritage language* see Introduction in this volume.

3. The English version, published in 1997, includes only about one third of the original. The volume Meng & Rehbein (2007) contains the complete original Russian version and its translation into German (Vygotsky, 2007) and explanatory comments (Meng, Protassova, & Goldfuß-Siedl, 2007).

the development of multilingualism. On these grounds he proposes strategies for future research on children's multilingualism in educational contexts, which stem from his general psychological approach of integrating natural-scientific and socio-cultural explanations of human development (Meng & Rehbein, 2007, p. viii).

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) and Cummins (1979) referred explicitly to Vygotsky and made fundamental contributions to the implementation of the research strategy he elaborated. They have contributed to our understanding of the specific situation of language acquisition in minority communities. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) emphasized the importance of the family language for the emotional and mental development of children and their self-consciousness. She also elaborated on the substantial difference between immersion and submersion as methods of transmission of bilingualism and showed the adverse consequences of submersion for the development of minority children and the self-understanding of their families. Moreover, to Cummins we owe the essential terms "basic interpersonal communicative skills" and "cognitive/academic language proficiency" which make it possible to analyze the children's bilingualism in more detail (e.g., see Cummins, 2000). In this study we use the above two terms to develop hypotheses for the consolidation of our analysis.

The importance of school for the development of minority children is a major topic of research on multilingualism. This is also true for our study, which was inspired in this direction by Clyne's investigations of indigenous and immigrant community languages and the support they received in Australian schools (Clyne, 1991), and his concept of a "pluralistic language policy" (Clyne, 2007). In Germany the situation of immigrant communities and the likely consequences for language education and language policy were first addressed by Rehbein (1987) and Fthenakis, Sonner, Thrul & Walbinger (1985). Rehbein (1987) demonstrated that immigrant children in Germany were at risk of losing their languages if not included in bilingual education. Together with the National Federation of Immigrant Associations in Germany (*Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Immigrantenverbände in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Berlin West*, BAGIV), he elaborated arguments for bilingual education (BAGIV, 1985). In addition, Fthenakis et al. (1985) developed a model for the bilingual-bicultural education of children in pre-primary daycare and in school in order to prevent problems among immigrant children in Germany (e.g., school absences, disruptive behavior).

Our study is also informed by the debates regarding education and language policy which have taken place in Germany in recent years. This includes, for example, implementation of the EU Language Policy⁴ and the modernization of

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4. See <www.bpb.de/apuz/59771/europaeische-sprachenpolitik?p=all> (accessed on January 29, 2015).

the German educational system, aimed at providing equal opportunities for all children (Allmendinger, 2012), as well as overcoming the structural and interactional discrimination of socially deprived and/or immigrant children (Hormel & Scherr, 2005; 2010). Federal institutions initiated and promoted research projects dedicated to fostering language development in children with and without an immigration background (see, among others, Gogolin & Roth, 2007;⁵ Ehlich, Bredel, Garne, Komor, Krumm, McNamara, Reich, Schnieders, ten Thije, van den Bergh, 2005; Redder & Weinert, 2013).

There was, however, also controversy regarding the consequences of such measures. For example, Ehlich (2005), Gogolin (1988), Rehbein (1985), Reich (1976; 2005) and others considered it a fact that “attention to and the fostering of both languages, the heritage language and the target language German, reveal evidently better results for language acquisition in children than the unbalanced fostering of the target language alone” (Ehlich, 2005, p. 30, translated from German). Thus, they represent the concept of education for bilingualism that is now understood no longer as a privilege or a stigma of one particular group, but as the general goal of upbringing and education (Gogolin, 1988). This concept includes multilingualism and brings the heritage languages into the school programs (see Reich, 2005, p. 150).

This argument was, however, brought into question by Esser (2006a; 2006b), who stated that the systematic differences that emerge between ethnic groups in their educational careers and in the labor market could essentially be traced back to the language deficits in the development of the target language in children (the dominant language of the host society). This means that the acquisition of the target language, not the development of bilingualism, is the key to social integration (Esser, 2006b, pp. 543–544). Gogolin and Roth agreed that acquiring the target language as thoroughly as possible is important for social integration, but they argued that target language acquisition would be more likely and more effective if it was achieved through the fostering of bilingualism (Gogolin & Roth, 2007, p. 34). This controversy forms part of the background for the interpretation of the developmental paths which we discuss in our study.

1.2 Russian as heritage language

What is the heritage language (HL) in Russian-German families? This question should be answered differently for different generations and for different periods in the linguistic development of the group. For most ethnic Germans from Russia,

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5. See <www.foermig.uni-hamburg.de/web/de/all/home/index.html> (accessed on January 21, 2015).

German was the HL for all generations before their repatriation, even if the respective skills in German differed widely from generation to generation (Berend, 1998). After repatriation Russian became the HL for all Russian-Germans. However, the importance of Russian was different for different generations. It had least importance for those Russian-Germans who were born before WWII or immediately thereafter. It had the most importance for those Russian-Germans who were born in the 1960s and later, because Russian was their first and family language (cf. Meng & Protassova, 2016). In this paper, we only deal with Russian as the HL for the younger Russian-Germans who have become participants in our longitudinal study. They experience the same problems in their efforts to maintain the Russian language as Russian-speakers elsewhere in a non-Russian-speaking environment. The contact-induced changes of Russian in contact with different majority languages have already been studied in a number of publications. These provide a comparative basis for the interpretation of our data (Andrews, 2000; Isurin, 2008; Protassova, 2007; Rethage, 2012).

1.3 Social integration

In Germany, with a growing number of immigrants in recent decades, a tradition of interdisciplinary integration research has developed. This research is based on an understanding of social integration, which has been developed in long, often controversial social and scientific discussions.⁶

In our study, we investigate the relationship between social and linguistic integration. For this purpose, we will characterize the state of the language development of our participants after twenty years of residence in Germany, trace important places and stages of their social integration and discuss in what ways and to what extent their social integration has been successful and promoted or has narrowed their linguistic integration. For the assessment of the social integration of our participants, we use the study of Woellert, Kröhnert, Sippel & Klingholz (2009). The authors have developed an “Index for the Measurement of Integration” and applied it to the data of the German Micro-Census (Mikrozensus, 2005) comparing different groups of immigrants in Germany. The Index uses 15 indicators which refer to four central integration areas: Cultural approximation between immigrants and locals; the educational situation of immigrants; their participation in labor activity; and their financial security (see Woellert et al., 2009: 28–33). We also use Worbs, Bund, Kohls & Babka von Gostomski (2013) who have provided an overview of current data and research results concerning repatriates in Germany.

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6. For the discussion of the integration concept see Remennick’s chapter.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research questions and framework

In this contribution, we describe the German-Russian bilingual development of eight young Russian-Germans in the context of their social integration. The focus is on the results after 20 years spent in Germany. Additionally, we outline the important phases of their development. Our research questions are sociolinguistic in origin. We look at the interactions between language competencies, language use and language attitudes, on the one hand; and factors, as well as results, of social and linguistic integration and language decline and maintenance, on the other. Since the developmental paths, results of integration and their interpretation and evaluation by the participants themselves are relevant aspects of this analysis the study falls into the realm of qualitative sociolinguistic research.

Our main research questions are as follows: First, we wanted to find out how our participants describe their German and Russian skills and their use of both languages twenty years after repatriation and how these language skills can be characterized linguistically. The linguistic analysis of Russian skills in our participants is carried out by comparing our findings with those on Russian as a HL in other language contact situations. The presentation of the results on competencies in Russian will be more detailed than the presentation of the results on the proficiency in German, which is in line with the aim of this paper.

Second, we wanted to know what factors and contexts of integration in Germany affect the language development of our participants. Based on studies on language development of minority children, we discuss the expectations of the host society with regard to language acquisition and use, and its influence on language attitudes and language practices of the repatriated families, the consequences of linguistic submersion in the institutions of education and training, and the reactions of the participants to experiences of interactional discrimination.

Finally, we ask how the linguistic and social integration of the participants can be assessed after 20 years of living in Germany and how our findings can be correlated with the broad scholarship concerning language and education policy in immigration based societies.

2.2 Participants

The participants in this study were eight young Russian-Germans. We got to know our participants as children soon after their arrival in Germany and monitored them for six years (1992–1998) in participant observation. Contact with them is continued to this day in a loose form, mainly through occasional phone calls and birthday cards.

The participants first took part in our study as children in a combined cross-sectional and longitudinal study, which we carried out at the Institute for German Language (*Institut für Deutsche Sprache*, IDS) in Mannheim (henceforth, the Mannheim Project). The object of the investigation was the linguistic integration of Russian-German families in Germany. In the project, 147 individuals from 42 families, representing four generations, were involved. Our entire Russian-German corpus, collected from 1992 to 2014, consists of 470 audio and video recordings with an estimated total duration of 500 hours. A large part of the Mannheim data have been analyzed; the results were made available in various publications (among others, see Meng, 2001; Meng & Protassova, 2012; Protassova, 2007).

The participants of the present study came with their families from Kazakhstan, where they were born in the late 1980s. Before immigrating to Germany only one of them (Nikolaj)⁷ had been attending school, but only the first grade. Our participants moved to Germany in the early 1990s. This means that they belong to the first generation of immigrants.⁸ Currently they live in big or small towns in the western part of Germany which are located partly in industrial urban areas, partly in a rural environment.

There were three young men and five young women among our participants. Our eight participants form four pairs of siblings. Moreover, two pairs of siblings Kirillov and Butz are cousins. For more details see Table 1.

Table 1. The participants of this study

Pseudonym	Age at time of repatriation	Age at start of long-term observation	Age at the time of the anniversary interview
Nikolaj Olbrich	8;4	9;6	28
Lisa Olbrich	6;2	6;9	26
Xenia Kirillov	5;9	6;3	26
Georgij Kirillov	4;11	5;7	24
Vladimir Butz	6;6	7;1	25
Jana Butz	5;3	5;10	26
Svetlana Krumm	7;9	8;2	25
Elena Krumm	5;1	5;4	22

7. First names and surnames are pseudonyms. We prefer to use full pseudonyms instead of initials because the full name makes it easier to differentiate between individual persons and to follow the discussion. The surnames give some information about the ethnic composition of the family and kinship relations.

8. Our young participants differ from those in Dietz & Roll (1998) and Roll (2003) in their age at the time of repatriation and the length of residence in Germany at the time of the interviews. Therefore, a direct comparison of the results is not possible.

The families in which our participants have grown up are diverse in terms of ethnicity and the occupations of the parents in the country of origin (Table 2).

Table 2. Ethnicity and occupations of the parents in the country of origin

The participants of this study	Their parents (born in the 1960s)
Nikolaj and Lisa Olbrich	<i>Mother:</i> Ukrainian & German Seller <i>Father:</i> Russian-German Tractor driver
Xenia and Georgij Kirillov	<i>Mother:</i> Russian-German Seamstress <i>Father:</i> Russian Tractor driver
Vladimir and Jana Butz	<i>Mother:</i> Russian-German Seamstress <i>Father:</i> Russian-German Driver
Svetlana and Elena Krumm	<i>Mother:</i> Russian-German Teacher (university degree) <i>Father:</i> Russian-Korean Photographer (university degree)

Of the four parent couples one is mono-ethnic Russian-German, the other three are multi-ethnic. The characteristic feature of the occupational situation in the country of origin for most of the families in our study, as well as the situation with ethnic Germans from Russia, in general, was that the parents were blue collar workers. Only one couple had higher education. This reflects the typical proportions of other families in our Mannheim corpus and the professional qualifications of the Russian-German repatriates, in general (see Meng, 2001, p. 45; Dietz & Hilkes, 1993, pp. 63–65).

2.3 Data collection and analysis

The core data for this study consist of eight interviews, which we conducted in 2010–2014 with the eight participants about twenty years after their arrival in Germany (anniversary interviews). The interviews took place in the homes of the families in a separate room in which only interviewer and interviewee were present. The semi-structured interviews contained open questions. The participants were asked to look back on their years of life in Germany, to describe the most important stages of their development, to outline difficulties, successes and failures, and to assess their current situation in Germany. Additionally, the attitude to the Russian language and culture and the language use were addressed. The

interviews were conducted in German by the first author. Finally, a letter in Russian from the second author was handed to the interviewee. It contained questions in Russian, which should be answered as far as possible in Russian. We call this part of the interview a letter-communication. After the interview, the interviewer was invited to dinner, as is tradition in these families. In the conversation at table, the family members also looked back on the twenty years of integration. At this point, however, the social interactions were not audio-recorded. However, a memo about the comments made was written by the interviewer on the same day. We use these memos in addition to the interviews to interpret the data.

The anniversary interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes with an average duration of 30 minutes (i.e., total of about four hours). The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.⁹

We use the interviews for two purposes: (a) As a database for the evaluation of the German and Russian competencies of the participants in the twentieth year of residence in Germany, and (b) as a database for a content analysis in the light of our research questions. As far as German language competencies of our participants are concerned, we start with the participants' self-evaluations. Evaluations of the participants' own linguistic abilities are revealing and in many investigations, especially those involving questionnaires, these constitute the only data basis. However, they are also unreliable. In this paper we complement different types of data: For example, with respect to the German skills, self-reports are combined with a general informal evaluation of linguistic skills by the first author of this paper and, with respect to the Russian skills, self-reports are complemented by analyzing the participants' Russian-language statements in a letter task.

3. Language competencies assessed on the basis of the anniversary interviews

3.1 German proficiency – general characteristics and self-evaluations

Upon arrival in Germany, our participants could neither understand nor speak the German language. At best, they knew some kinship names (*Oma* – 'grandma'), animal names (*Katze* – 'cat') or routines (e.g., *Gute Nacht* – 'good night'; *danke* – 'thank you'; *bitte* – 'please') and perhaps a short German prayer or a nursery rhyme.¹⁰

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9. Our study also contains a larger database with interviews that had not been analyzed yet and therefore are not included in this article.

10. For Xenia's and Georgij's German in the first year of residence see Meng, 2001, Section 3.2., for Vladimir's German in the first year see Meng & Protassova, 2012.

Some twenty years later, German is the dominant language of our young participants. Apart from Vladimir, they all speak fluent standard German with a few regional characteristics. They had no problems in understanding the interview questions and gave more or less detailed responses. However, we should mention that – because of the conversational interview situation – the syntax of their responses bears features of oral communication. To illustrate, we observed a number of corrections and syntactic disfluencies (for general characteristics of spoken utterances, see Hoffmann, 1997). It is possible that these characteristics are more common with some of our participants (Nikolaj and Georgij) than with others (Xenia, Svetlana, and Elena) and with monolingual German-speakers.

The anniversary interviews showed that our young participants were confident regarding their proficiency in German (see example 1).

- (1) Meng: Did you ever feel that you do not really have a command of the language of the locals?

Vladimir: No. I have no problem with that. I also speak, for example, with a local dialect. I only had problems in Bavaria. But nobody can understand people from Bavaria anyway. Otherwise, I have no problems with the language.

As the above excerpt also indicates, Vladimir automatically understood the question as referring to the spoken language.

Our participants reported that unlike their parents and grandparents they were hardly ever recognized by their way of speaking as immigrants, in general, or as immigrants from Russia, in particular (see example 2).

- (2) Meng: Has anyone ever asked: “Where are you from?”

Xenia: No. You can’t tell from my speech or accent that I’m from Russia. Only my surname. Not even my colleagues noticed that I’m Russian-German when I started working there. It was only because of my surname that they then started to ask.

How did our young participants describe their learning of German? Often they had no memories of their own difficulties in learning German, but relied on the parents’ and grandparents’ memories (see example 3).

- (3) Meng: Was it hard for you to settle in Germany?

Svetlana: I don’t have many memories of it. But my mother often told me that it was very difficult for me, especially because I couldn’t speak German and was enrolled immediately into the first grade, but I cannot really remember that time. I don’t know whether I displaced it, because it was so bad maybe. But I have no specific memories of the time.

Some participants emphasized that they had learned German very quickly. When asked who taught them German and where, most said they had learned German from other children and in school (see examples 4, 5).

(4) Vladimir: I learned German automatically in school, through television, friends, lots of outdoor fun, it came automatically.

(5) Meng: From whom have you learned German?

Svetlana: I think from other children. I simply had no choice. If I hadn't learned German, I would have perished. I think I learned German just from other children.

Only one participant said she had already learned German in the family (see example 6).

(6) Meng: I suppose you could not speak German to start with?

Jana: Oh no, I could. In Russia my great-grandmother always spoke German to us. And then it went really quickly. In half a year I could speak German. I was always good at German. In school and in training I always got good grades in German.

It should be noted that the great-grandmother mentioned in the above excerpt (6) was already 80 years old and ill when Jana was born.¹¹ However, since German had always been her dominant language, we can assume that she could have communicated to her great-granddaughter an elementary idea of this language and a positive relationship to it, but beyond that we can expect little more than a few words and phrases passed on.

In the interviews the literacy competencies in German were not systematically addressed, and the participants did not mention them spontaneously. However, if we asked about them, we were told that the interviewee was able to read and write in German without any difficulties (see example 7).

(7) Meng: Do you have to write at your work? (as a nurse)

Xenia: Yes, of course.

Meng: Do you have any problems in writing?

Xenia: Absolutely not.

Meng: Do you have to read a lot there?

Xenia: Yes, what the doctors write. Even other things. I like to read. I just read a thriller.

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11. Cf. Meng, 2001, Section 3.6 for the language biography of this great-grandmother.

3.2 Russian proficiency – linguistic analysis and self-evaluations

The competencies in Russian are analyzed on the basis of self-evaluations as well as a small sample of communication in RL with Meng in the situation where the young adults read a letter from the second author in Russian. We are aware of the fact that Meng, as a native-speaker of German, although fluent in Russian, may have influenced the results because the participants felt that they could speak German to her as well (cf. Grosjean, 2013).

3.2.1 *The letter-communication*

The letter from Protassova to the participants was worded as follows (the original is omitted when citing the interview data):

L-O: Дорогая / Дорогой ...! Узнав о том, что Katharina Meng собирается к вам в гости, я решила написать вам письмо. Как вы все проживаете? Кто чем занимается? Какая у вас сейчас квартира? Кто чем увлекается? Я работаю в университете, преподаю русский язык. А вы говорите дома по-русски? Можете ли вы читать и писать по-русски? Желаю вам и вашей семье всего самого доброго, здоровья, больших успехов, благополучия!

L-T: Dear –! Having learned that Katharina Meng was going to visit you, I decided to write you a letter. How are all of you? What is everybody doing? What is your apartment like now? What are your hobbies? I work at the university, teaching Russian. Do you speak Russian at home? Can you read and write Russian? I wish you and your family all the best, good health, big success, prosperity.

The participants were asked to read the letter and to answer the questions in Russian. If they could not read Russian, the letter was read aloud to them. When answering the questions in the letter, all participants spoke in Russian. Most of them could read the letter (at differing degrees) and understood most of what they read, yet they mixed languages in their answers. Half of the respondents could give coherent answers in Russian without the help of the interviewer (those who are from mixed families). All said that they spoke Russian in the family; most said that they spoke Russian with friends, and half of them did so at work (two are still university students). Two participants stated that they could write Russian, but with some difficulties.

In the following we describe some peculiarities of the participants' Russian which we observed in the short Russian letter-communication. Apart from the two words *увлекается* ('have a hobby', 'take a great interest in something') and *благополучия* ('well-being', 'prosperity', 'happiness'), the letter contained basic vocabulary and simple structures. The questions were oriented toward everyday

life, which is a familiar topic of discussion in the Russian family circle, and contained the Russian way of wishing different things to the addressee as a bit of Russian cultural interaction. We will illustrate the specific use of Russian by the participants with some examples, cited in the original Russian (marked as original utterances by "O"). Some utterances contain German constituents. In the translations (marked by "T"), the German constituents are in bold letters. Most of the participants experienced difficulties in reading; they stumbled and made pauses when working their way through the written text and often needed help. When they recognized words, they felt pleased.

Most participants have a natural Russian-sounding pronunciation with the exception of some words. For example, Lisa says *универзитет* 'university', *преподаю* 'I teach' (the first word is pronounced according to the German convention; [s] sounds like [z] as in *Universität*; the second word is stressed incorrectly).

Elena pronounces some words with a German accent, and sometimes she makes mistakes in reading: *преподаваю* (wrong conjugation paradigm), *в коком* (hypercorrection when an unstressed vowel is pronounced like [o] instead of [a]). Such cases may suggest that she knows a regular grammatical paradigm and obligatory phonological rules, which may result in overgeneralization errors. The participants' problems with Russian might be the result of limited input and literacy skills. There are incorrect word forms (found in Lisa's conversation), such as *дитями* (should be *детьми*) 'children' (instrumental case), *немецкам* (should be *немецким*) 'German' (instrumental case). Though speaking fluently, speakers often miss idiomatic expressions and logical congruency (see example 8).

- (8) Georgij-O: И живем, еще пока не болеем все, тяжело... Писать я не могу, а ну читать я только по письму, как сейчас написано, могу писать, а руками сам писать не могу.

Georgij-T: And we live, nobody is ill so far, not seriously... I can't write, I can only read letters, as it's written now, but I can't write with my hands yet.

The description of everyday life is a familiar topic and therefore no specific deviations from the spoken language can be found here (see example 9).

- (9) Nikolaj-O: Я хожу на работу, жена тоже работает, ну, а дети – одна в садик ходит, а другая смотря где, у бабушки остается. Мы дом себе купили, мы вот живем так. Ну, я иногда рыбачить хожу, а жена с детками играет, занимается, и так всё.

Nikolaj-T: I go to work, the wife works too, and the kids, yeah, one goes to the daycare, and the other stays with her grandmother, it depends. We bought a house, so that's how we live. Yeah, sometimes I go fishing, and the wife, she plays with the kids, busy with stuff, that's how things are.

Nikolaj uses quite a lot of Russian at work. However, his sentences are abrupt; forms like *смотря где, играет* are elements of a substandard variety of Russian (should be *бывает по-разному* and *играет*). He employs the word *рыбачить* 'to fish', it seems that this incorporated form, analogous to the German verb 'fischen', is preferred to the more frequent analytic construction *ходить на рыбалку* 'to go fishing'. Another participant says *оплачивать дом*, literally 'to pay the house', in the sense of 'to pay the rent', whereas the correct version would be *платят за дом* 'to pay for the house' or *выплачивают за дом* 'pay the mortgage for the house'; these are subtle nuances in meaning that can sometimes be confused by native speakers as well. Lisa uses substandard Russian *красивей* 'more beautiful' instead of standard Russian *красивей* (wrongly placed stress).

The influence of German gives rise to different contact phenomena. One of them are calques (see example 10).

(10) Vladimir-O: Чем я увлекаюсь? С друзьями уходить.

Vladimir-T: What am I interested in? To go off with friends.

The right idiomatic expression would have been *гуляю с друзьями* 'I go out with friends'; in this case Vladimir copies a German infinitive construction. In Lisa's case, we have *Мы увлекаемся только зе/за/с детьми от Коли*. We're only interested with/for/in the children of Kolja'. She replaces a regular preposition-less instrumental case by an analytic form with a preposition which doesn't come to her at once; this is not a surprise, because in German the preposition *mit* 'with' could be employed in such instances. Georgij uses calques as well: *шпорт все делают* 'all do sport' from the German *alle machen Sport*, which should be *спортом все занимаются* (*спорт* pronounced with *s*, not *sh* as in German); *желаю назад* 'wish back' instead of *и вам также* 'the same to you'. A more specific case is the use of *маленькая сестрёнка* 'small sister' instead of *младшая сестрёнка* 'younger sister', since German uses the same adjective *klein* 'little' in both situations.

Other influences of German are cases of code-switching and blends (see example 11). According to our observations, these occur also in situations where Russian-speaking monolinguals were present.

(11) Vladimir-O: В клуб, в музеи, в кино, *das ist zum größten Teil*, ну это все было. Музеи меня интересируют – *technische*.

Vladimir-T: To the club, to the museums, to the cinema, it is for the most part, well it was all there. I find museums interesting – technical.

The direct quotations from German are pronounced with a German accent. The verb *интересируют* 'they interest' is a blend; it should be *интересуют*, but this internationalism is confounded by the German verb *interessieren*, so the stem extends by one syllable.

The non-dominance of Russian can be seen when participants cannot find common words like *Kauffrau* 'saleswoman' in Russian. It seems that a different structure (*Kauffrau* is a composite: *kauf*- 'buy' + *Frau* 'woman') that cannot be directly translated into Russian inhibits the retrieval of the appropriate word (Russian *продащица* is formed from prefix *про*- + stem *-дав*- + suffix *-щиц*- + ending *-а*). Another case of a missing profession's name is found in Lisa's utterance: *Я учусь в больнице als Krankenschwester* 'I study at the hospital as a nurse'; immediately afterwards, she repeats it easily after Meng: *медсестра* 'nurse'.

She does not retrieve other words either: *Möbel eingerichtet... was war das... но/новые was war das...* 'We installed the furniture... what was it... ne/new what was it'. It is interesting that in the process of searching Lisa tries to refer to furniture in the plural, which is regular in German, but after the hint given by Meng she recognizes the word as singular, which is correct in Russian. When the special term is unavailable, the whole expression might go wrong: *Мы живем в доме на Miete* 'We live in a house on rent'. The Russian construction should be different: *Мы снимаем дом* 'We rent a house'. In the next example she does not even try to say it in Russian (see example 12):

(12) Lisa-O: Писать нет, читать очень-очень плохо. И только большими буквами. *Den Schreibrchrift gar nicht.*

Lisa-T: Writing no, reading very, very badly. And only in big letters. Handwriting not at all.

Sometimes we had difficulties in distinguishing between spontaneous influences of the German language and the forms of the so-called *Aussiedlerisch*, which is a slang of the Russian-Germans (Meng & Protassova, 2005). For example, in Georgij's speech, the hybrid formation *митаваю* 'I rent' from the German *mieten*, the insertions *schwer* 'difficult', *also* 'well' could be remnants of such way of speaking because they are pronounced in a Russian way (otherwise he speaks German without an accent).

There were only two girls who hardly needed any support from the interviewer. Svetlana had Russian language lessons in high school from 9th grade on. During her studies she spent one semester in Moscow. Her sister Elena had some Russian classes at the university. When answering, Svetlana code-switched twice (see example 13), Elena only needed help once, her speech runs smoothly (see example 14).

(13) Svetlana-O: Я учусь в университете в С., я изучаю политику и журналистику, не знаю, ну, у меня все хорошо, не знаю, *was sonst*, у нас новая квартира, четыре комнаты, тоже ну в Т., там, где мы жили, ја, да, я могу читать и писать по-русски и была сейчас шесть месяцев в Москве.

- Svetlana-T: I study at the university in S., I study politics and journalism, don't know, well, everything is OK with me, don't know, what else, we have a new apartment, four rooms, well, also in T., where we used to live, yes, yes, I can read and write Russian and I just spent six months in Moscow.
- (14) Elena-O: Мама и папа работают, мы живем в Т., моя сестра – она учит/учится в университете, и я тоже, я сейчас живу в Г. и там учусь, мы говорим дома по-русски, ну я всегда отвечаю по-немецки, я в университете was heißt lernen?
- Meng-O: изучаю
- Elena-O: А, изучаю русский язык, и теперь я могу читать и писать по-русски, спасибо за письмо.
- Elena-T: Mom and dad work, we live in T., my sister – she stu/studies at the university, and I too, I live in G. now and study there, we speak Russian at home, well, I always answer in German, at the university how do you say – study?
- Meng-T: I study.
- Elena-T: Ah, I study Russian, and now I can read and write Russian, thank you for the letter.

The two answers show that in principle, after having learned Russian in language classes, one can use it more easily.

None of the participants showed high proficiency, all had certain difficulties with Russian, but they all have a potential to transform their passive knowledge into an active one, if required.

The characteristics of heritage Russian (influences from German, absence of elaborated standard expressions in Russian, inability to find a word etc.) are applicable to all of the participants and are a result of the interruption or incomplete acquisition scenarios (Benmamoun, Montrul & Polinsky, 2013; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007; Anstatt, this volume). The language of input, that is their parents and other Russian-speaking immigrants, may already differ from the baseline Russian of the parents' generation because it (a) was regionally colored; (b) was mixed with, or influenced by, German; (c) had undergone attrition through the years of limited use in Germany. The relevant cases of heritage Russian in the US are described in prior studies (e.g., by Laleko, 2013; Isurin & Ivanova-Sullivan, 2008). The attitudes and self-identifications are also dependent on the level of language proficiency (cf. Andrews, 2012). The main difference in our study is in self-identification of the newcomers: The Russian-German repatriates knew that they were designated as Germans and had to live up to this designation first of all by speaking German perfectly. Apart from this, we see variation between families, rather than between individuals,

as children within particular families develop similar attitudes towards language maintenance and shift and adopt similar preferences for one or another language.

3.2.2 *Use of Russian and Russian proficiency – self-reports in German*

When the participants spoke German, they could give more extensive and nuanced responses about their Russian language competencies. What Nikolaj and Vladimir said about themselves is also true for the other participants (see examples 15–16).

(15) Nikolaj: So I speak German more often.

(16) Vladimir: It's easier for me to speak German.

Russian is spoken with parents and friends and, as in the case of two of the participants, with colleagues. Russian spoken with parents, friends and colleagues is described by Nikolaj as follows (see example 17):

(17) Nikolaj: A mixed Russian. I speak nowhere near pure Russian. That would be hard for me too.

Unfortunately we do not have any recordings of intra-group communication in the circles of Russian-German families, friends or colleagues. Here, similar patterns of hybrid German-Russian communication could be identified, as observed in other immigrant circles.¹²

Svetlana, having learned Russian at school and having studied one semester in Moscow, characterizes her Russian differently (see 18).

(18) Svetlana: I understand without any problems and can also speak without problems. I don't find it difficult. But in German it's just faster, in Russian I have to think about one or the other word.

Although Svetlana now speaks Russian well, she does not use the language with her parents, only with her grandmother. Elena ceased speaking Russian at home one day because she did not feel any attachment to this language and lost the skill of speaking it (she understood a lot because the language continued to be spoken at home but she did not understand special terms), but she later relearned it at the university. Xenia says she speaks Russian with her parents and sometimes with her friend at home, but never in the public domain.

Regarding the understanding of Russian communication, all participants said they could broadly follow everyday conversation. It is much harder for them to

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12. See, for example, Hinnenkamp & Meng (2005) as well as Meng & Protassova (2005), where, hybrid forms of communication of Russian-German, Turkish and Italian immigrants in Germany are documented and analyzed.

understand television programs because the speech rate is too fast. This is one of the reasons why they do not watch Russian TV often (although Michael¹³ says that he could learn from the TV during his visit to Russia); many, however, listen to Russian music. If they have reading skills, the participants reported that it was easier to read printed words than cursive. Some said that maybe they would not be able to read handwriting in cursive. Writing skills are generally weaker than reading skills. Svetlana writes Russian better in script than in cursive, she refuses to type on the computer in Russian because she has no special arrangements on her PC allowing for Russian fonts. However, this obstacle could have been removed instantly, so it is rather her wish not to type in Russian that has created a deadlock. Although the participants are aware of the limits of their Russian competencies, they rarely set goals to improve or expand them. Hence the acquisition of writing skills in Russian is not usually one of the objectives of the participants (see example 19).

(19) Xenia: *It is enough for me that I can understand and speak Russian.*

Michael, however, does not want to be limited to Russian oral skills. He is currently taking a course at an evening school for adults because he wants to learn to read and write Russian.

We have also observed that the substitution of Russian by German was often not noticed by the participants and also was not intentional (see example 20).

(20) Elena: *Now I hardly speak any Russian.*

Meng: *You refuse to speak Russian?*

Elena: *No. Somehow it has stopped. And I think I never had such a strong connection to it, because I was still very young.*

But the displacement process was not always linear. Sometimes things happen, which shed a new light on Russian. Thus, Lisa reports that she gladly speaks more Russian since her aunt repatriated to Germany, and her cousin enthusiastically talks about how nice it is to go on vacation to the Crimea. Another example comes from Michael (see example 21).

(21) *When I was 14, I didn't speak Russian any more. It was just gone. But then we visited my grandfather in Russia. There I began to take an interest in the language again. I started to talk more and had fun doing it. Of course, they all stood there and laughed, because I suddenly started speaking Russian and with an accent. But it was fun. I also learned to read there.*

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13. Michael, Lisa's friend, does not belong to the group of participants of our longitudinal study. We know him from the anniversary interviews with Lisa and Nikolaj.

Regular trips to the country of origin in which the first language is spoken are an attested means of maintaining the language. Unfortunately, such trips are costly and beyond the financial capabilities of some of our participants and their parents. Two of our participants reported that they had only once visited their country of birth. One participant (Vladimir) has no interest in such trips; all the others would like to make such a trip but cannot afford it. Svetlana has, indeed, expanded and consolidated her knowledge of Russian through her six-month stay in Moscow, but was glad when it ended. She sums up her stay as follows (see example 22):

- (22) Moscow is noise, hustle and bustle, unkindness, pushing and shoving. I would never live there. Half a year that was tolerable. The university was an elite university. There were very rich students. They could buy everything, even their academic titles.

In general, the relationship of our participants to Russian is positive. When asked whether it is disturbing for them to speak Russian, they denied, although sometimes it was difficult for them to find the right words. Svetlana claims that it was always an advantage for her to speak Russian. Elena expects that knowing Russian will bring benefits in her future work in the domain of management and finances in contacts with Russia and Kazakhstan. The positive attitude can also be recognized from the fact that participants later want to teach their children some Russian. Xenia says that she will do this without any doubt. Svetlana and Elena want their children to grow up bilingually and hope that their parents will help her. Georgij argues that German will come first and Russian from time to time; if his wife speaks Russian, he could communicate with her in this language.

In Table 3 we summarize (a) what the participants said in response to the questions about Russian and (b) how they used Russian in the letter-communication.

Twenty years after arriving in Germany, our participants have basic competencies in speaking and understanding Russian. They use the language in everyday conversations about family matters, especially with parents. Most of them are not used to reading and writing in Russian, which they mentioned. Their spoken Russian is colloquial and partially influenced by German. Evidently, the degree of language competencies is dependent on the amount of language use. The level of achievement can vary in different situations depending on motivation, experience and interlocutors.

Table 3. Russian competencies in the interview and in the letter-communication

Pseudonym	Says he/ she speaks Russian with parents	Says he/ she speaks Russian with friends	Says he/she speaks Russian at work	Can read the letter	Says he/she can write	Can understand everything in the letter	Mixes languages when answering the questions in the letter	Can answer the questions in the letter
Nikolaj Olbrich	+	+	+	+	–	+	–	–
Lisa Olbrich	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	–
Xenia Kirillov	+	+	+	+	–	+	+	+
Georgij Kirillov	+	+	–	+	–	+	+	+
Vladimir Butz	+	–	+	–	–	–	+	–
Jana Butz	+	+	–	–	–	–	+	–
Svetlana Krumm	+	–		+	+	+	–	+
Elena Krumm	+	–		+	+	+	+	+
Total (+)	8	5	4	6	2	6	6	4

4. German society and Russian-Germans

The official view on integration in the Integration Portal of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF)) of the German Federal Government reads as follows:

Integration is a long-term process. Its aim is to include everyone in society who lives in Germany on a permanent and legal basis. Immigrants should have the opportunity to participate fully in all areas of society on an equal standing. Their responsibility is to learn German and to respect and abide by the constitution and its laws.¹⁴

As we can see from this quote, linguistic integration is understood as the acquisition of German. The heritage languages, their functions and fate are not mentioned in this definition.

The expectations for so-called ethnic Germans regarding their linguistic competency are even stricter. Ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe receive German citizenship and can move to Germany after they successfully have completed a special application process. The application must be submitted in the country of origin and applicants usually belong to the grandparent or parent generation. They submit the application for themselves and their family members. In their application, applicants have to prove that they have at least one ethnically German parent, have acquired the German language and culture as a child in their family, and continue to maintain both up to the present.¹⁵

The admission procedure is based on a language ideology that postulates an indissoluble bond between nation, language, culture and individual or group-based self-identification, and that does not take into account the practices and dynamics of multi-ethnic and multi-lingual societies.¹⁶ The language ideology underlying the admission process was and is common among the German population (see Eichinger, Gärtig, Plewnia, Roessel, Rothe, Rudert, Schoel, Stahlberg & Stickel, 2009). According to this ideology, kindergartens and primary schools with Russian-speaking children practice almost exclusively the model of submersion, which leads, at best, to a temporary bilingualism. Russian is taught as a foreign language

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14. www.bamf.de/EN/Service/Left/Glossary/function/glossar.html?nn=1449076&lv2=5832434&lv3=1504366 (last accessed on June 10, 2016).

15. For details of the admission procedure for repatriates and its amendments until 2013 see Worbs et al. (2013), Sections 1 and 4.7.

16. A substantial criticism of this language ideology can be found in Stölting (2003).

in selected secondary schools, mostly as a third foreign language.¹⁷ Mother tongue instruction in Russian has not been available for a long time.

For years, the Russian-German repatriates accepted this language ideology. They often understood it as a suggestion to choose between Russian and German, and their belonging to the Russian-speaking or the German-speaking group. It took them considerable mental and emotional effort to recognize that the ideology was wrong and that they do not want to be forced to decide between these two alternatives, but that they wish to preserve their bi- or multilingualism and their bi- or polycultural affiliations.¹⁸ Parents and educators who spoke Russian actively, recognized and shared the growing self-confidence of the Russian-speaking immigrants. As a consequence, they explored the legal possibilities in Germany and founded German-Russian bilingual or Russian monolingual kindergartens, schools and Saturday schools, mostly on a private basis (see Meng, 2006). Today, those who look for Russian-language services for children on the Internet can find them in almost every major German city. However, this is a recent development, and German-Russian bilingual or Russian-speaking educational institutions were not available at the time when our participants attended school. Living away from the big cities, they would not have benefited from this opportunity anyway (except for the sisters Svetlana and Elena).

5. Places and processes of integration

5.1 Family as a place of early integration

In the biographical interviews that we conducted in the framework of the Mannheim project with all adult participants, we also asked which language was used with the young children in the family before leaving for Germany. All parents, with one exception, referred to having spoken only Russian with their children. Also, most grandparents and great-grandparents (54%) indicated that they spoke Russian with their children and grandchildren. The remaining grandparents and great-grandparents used German with their children and grandchildren, at least occasionally (Meng, 2001, pp. 34–36). Against this background, it is

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17. See Mehlhorn & Heyer (2011), Bergmann & Behr (2014), and the Report of the Ministers of Education = kmk <www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2014/2014_03_07-Situation_Russischunterricht.pdf> (last accessed on March 31, 2015).

18. An impressive document of this reflection process is Diener (2003), the review of a Russian-German repatriate on the linguistic integration of her family.

understandable that none of our young participants could have learned German from their parents and grandparents. Only one great-grandmother was referred to as the German-speaking family member (see (6) above).

These statements are in line with the general course of linguistic development of Russian-Germans in the Soviet Union in the last three generations. This trend has been shown in numerous publications (Berend, 1998; Dietz & Hilkes, 1993; Dietz & Roll, this volume; Hilkes, 1988; Rosenberg & Weydt, 1992). The grandparents of our participants, born in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and their parents, born in the 1960s, shifted from German as family and group language to Russian (see Meng & Protassova, 2016). This general tendency, however, did not apply to every family in the same way. As children and young adults, the grandparents had experienced how the German dialects spoken in the families were losing practical and symbolic value in Soviet society. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Russian-Germans were deported from German villages in the European regions of the Soviet Union to Asian regions and were kept there under police surveillance until December 1955. When the policy of forced settlement was abolished, Russian-Germans moved from the places where they had been deported to as quickly as possible and settled in multiethnic communities where Russian was used as the *lingua franca*, mostly in Kazakhstan (see Riehl, this volume). Together with their children (i.e., members of our parents' generation) they soon shifted to Russian in the new environment, even though they had acquired German as their first language. The efforts of the great-grandparents to prevent the loss of German and the transition to Russian did not show lasting success. After moving to Germany, the grandparents and parents remembered the arguments with their great-grandparents on language use in the family.¹⁹ They regretted that they had previously neglected German and felt obliged to do anything for their children (our young participants) to foster their acquisition of German. When we asked the parents and grandparents in the biographical interviews shortly after their arrival in Germany, what they wished for the language development of the children, they answered that their children should learn German perfectly, not forget their Russian, and acquire further languages, if possible. This statement shows that the parents and grandparents appreciated languages, in general, but evaluated them differently, with German being given the highest value. This can be interpreted as follows: The children should achieve a high level of proficiency in German, whereas Russian should not be forgotten. The parents and grandparents assessed the children's existing knowledge of Russian as sufficient, although this knowledge was still incomplete; they also assumed that the children's existing knowledge of

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19. In Meng & Protassova (2016) we presented and analyzed a discourse section showing a dispute over the use of languages in the family.

Russian was not at risk and would remain stable. The parents and grandparents could have easily recognized that their assumption about the stability of the children's knowledge of Russian was wrong if they had compared their own language development with the ongoing language development of their children. In past, their own early, still incomplete, competency in German had been replaced by the lingua franca Russian. But these parallels were only drawn much later. For the parents, at the beginning of the linguistic and social integration in Germany, the acquisition of German by the children had the highest priority. This can be explained by the following:

- a. The families understood that the command of German was crucial for the children's progress through life in Germany,
- b. They felt guilty about the loss of German (their *Muttersprache* – 'mother tongue') in their families,
- c. They were officially and unofficially forced by the German host society to speak only German and to renounce the use of Russian.

However, although they were now living in Germany, the parents and grandparents were not able to support their children's acquisition of German through a rich and conducive German input. They continued to speak Russian with them, but integrated German elements that they had reactivated or just learned into their Russian-language discourse.²⁰ In doing so, they stressed the importance of German. However, at the same time they have made it difficult for the children to maintain their knowledge of Russian, by offering them a problematic Russian input: Russian with German constituents and German-Russian hybrid forms. The fact that the family members observed and praised the children's progress in German was appropriate and important for their acquisition of German as a second language. The children soon outperformed their parents and grandparents in learning German and had now become their teachers. The parents were relieved because, in their opinion, the acquisition of German by their children was secured. However, now they felt entitled to introduce their own strategies in the family communication. They spoke more Russian again and arranged to receive Russian TV. As a whole, Russian culture (e.g., festivals, food traditions, music, films, television series, books, etc.) remained part of their lives.

At the same time the parents learned German, usually exclusively in everyday life through their interaction with their children and at work.²¹ Over the years

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20. Many examples of this practice are analyzed in Meng (2001).

21. Several examples of this acquisition type are demonstrated in Meng, 2001; Meng & Protssova, 2016.

they have become bilingual to such a degree that they could refrain entirely from Russian-language passages in conversations with local Germans. This was demonstrated by the observational data gathered through table talks which followed the anniversary interviews: German was spoken consistently, although the families knew that the interviewer understood and spoke Russian. All family members wanted to demonstrate that they were able to manage to communicate in German without difficulty. Only Xenia's and Georgij's Russian father was more reticent in German than in Russian-language conversations. However, it was evident that he could follow the discussion in German. On the other hand – as we found out in our previous studies (cf. Meng & Protassova, 2005) – participants were not able to avoid German elements in conversations with monolingual Russians.

5.2 School as integration medium

Our participants justifiably view school as the most important place to learn German. In the classroom they were exposed to the German standard language in its oral and written forms. In communication with their classmates they learned further variants of German. In retrospect, our participants are of the opinion that they successfully have mastered the acquisition of German under these circumstances (see example 23).

(23) Meng: Do you remember having any difficulties in learning German?

Xenia: No, not at all. I think it's much easier for a child than for an adult, especially if the child didn't go to school there (in Kazakhstan) and immediately learns to read and write German.

However, this self-assessment of our participants needs to be reviewed and supplemented by further analysis. The language-mediated transfer of knowledge is subject to the condition that communication between teachers and students succeeds. This is not self-evident and even less so for communication between teachers who teach in the majority language of the host society and immigrant children. In curricular and extra-curricular communication they have to acquire the basics of the majority language that the local children have already acquired before school – in Cummins' terms, "basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS)" (Cummins, 1979). At the same time they are already confronted with linguistic tasks that require at least elements of "cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP)".²²

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22. In Germany Cummins' distinction between "basic interpersonal communicative skills" and "cognitive/academic language proficiency" has stimulated research on the acquisition of German as *Bildungssprache*. See, inter alia, Gogolin & Lange, 2011; Redder & Weinert, 2013.

The students deal with these tasks under the conditions of submersion.²³ Without specific professional help they will not cope with this task, or will only cope with it inadequately. Although this aspect is considered increasingly both in research and educational practice, the formation of German “cognitive/academic language proficiency” in immigrant children is still insufficient. This may be one of the reasons why immigrant children often leave school without a degree or with the lower secondary school certificate.²⁴

In part, this is also true for our participants. All our participants received their schooling in regular German schools. Table 4 illustrates which primary education degrees have been achieved at the time of the anniversary interviews. We consider primary degrees only, because some participants reached a further, higher degree later in their life.

Table 4. The primary education degrees of our participants

Education degrees at the time of the anniversary interviews	Number of our participants (8)
Without an education degree	0
Lower secondary school certificate (<i>Hauptschulabschluss</i>)	3 (Nikolaj, Georgij, Vladimir)
Secondary school certificate (<i>Realschulabschluss</i>)	3 (Lisa, Xenia, Jana)
University entrance (<i>Abitur, Fachabitur</i>)	2 (Svetlana, Elena)
Total	8

As Table 4 demonstrates, none of our participants remained without an education degree, which is not self-evident for immigrants, in general. However, according to the surveys by Woellert et al. (2009), repatriates, as a special group, score highly on this indicator. Only 3% of them do not gain an education degree – compared to 1% of the locals (Woellert et al., 2009, p. 49). We also find better education qualifications in our female participants – a finding which is also consistent with the results reported in Worbs et al. (2013, p. 46). To illustrate, two female participants (the sisters Svetlana and Elena) received a recommendation for the gymnasium (high school which prepares for university entrance) after leaving primary school. They had attended a reputable primary school with an all-day program (which was exceptional at that time in Germany). It is noteworthy that both parents had

23. See Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) for the important difference between submersion and immersion.

24. For current figures see: <www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Pressemitteilungen/BPA/2014/10/2014-10-29-integration-bericht.html> (last accessed on November 4, 2014).

university degrees from Kazakhstan and knew the importance of higher education. Two other girls (Xenia, Lisa) did not take a second chance later to take university entrance exams (*Fachabitur*), since their parents did not encourage them. This also correlates with the parents' educational level (cf. Table 2). According to the results of Woellert et al. (2009), 28% of children from repatriated families enter university. Their proportion is lower than that of local children, 38% percent of whom enter university. Nevertheless, the proportion of the repatriates is well above the level of immigrant children from other countries, such as the former Yugoslavia or Turkey (see Woellert et al., 2009, p. 49; similar figures are also found in Worbs et al., 2013, pp. 46–47).

After leaving primary school, five of our participants were recommended for lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*). However, after completion of the *Hauptschule*, Xenia and Jana took the opportunity to achieve the secondary school certificate (*Realschulabschluss*); as a result, at the time of the anniversary interviews there were only three participants left who had only completed the *Hauptschule* (Nikolaj, Georgij, Vladimir; note, all three were male participants). The explanation they gave was that they had lost interest in school during puberty.

To illustrate it further, in German educational system, transition to lower secondary school is based on two factors: the recommendations of the teachers and the choices of the parents. According to our participants, the primary school teachers were mostly of the opinion that lower secondary school would be better for them and their acquisition of German, because this type of school is less challenging and gives them more time for their development. They held this view even when the test results for the school transition permitted the students to start secondary school (as in the case of Xenia and Jana). The recommendations of the teachers were not necessarily based on personal discrimination – rather, they acted as agents of the institution, “school”, and allocated the students to the different school types according to decision processes specific to the institution. This method has been termed as “institutional discrimination” (Hormel & Scherr, 2005).

The behavior of our participants' teachers and parents was also corroborated by other studies on the school careers of children from immigrant families (see Allmendinger, 2012, pp. 78–84). A few years after repatriation, the parents of our participants were too busy to integrate into the German labor market and housing market, that they had neither time and energy, nor the reading skills in German, to inform themselves about the German education system. Furthermore, it is especially true for Russian-Germans that they did not recognize the value of a higher education degree in a developed industrial society.²⁵ In Kazakhstan social

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25. This was also a result of the Russian-German colonists' tradition and of the educational disadvantages in the Stalin and post-Stalin period.

recognition and prosperity was mainly achieved through high work motivation and particular practical, technical and organizational skills (see Meng, 2001, Section 5.3; Dietz & Hilkes, 1993, pp. 63–67). Unfortunately, the problematic decisions of teachers and parents created unnecessary detours in the children's school careers. It was often the case that they only found a satisfying profession much later, or continued to remain in precarious financial circumstances (see next section).

5.3 Vocational education as a process of integration

In modern societies, vocational training courses are based on literacy. This means that written language abilities in the language of education – in our case German – are required and normally are expected of graduates of the *Hauptschule* and of the *Realschule*. At the same time, vocational training courses enable the students not only to acquire a professional degree but also to develop a range of competencies that are important for all areas of life (Ohm, 2014). In this sense, a vocational training contributes to social integration. However, we have to take in consideration that young immigrants who learned German as a second language, do not always reach the required level of literacy in the German language. This is one of the reasons why many young immigrants including repatriates are discouraged to start vocational training or why they do not complete it successfully. There are other reasons why some young adults refuse to receive vocational training (e.g., the student stipend is very low for some professions). At any rate, the renunciation of vocational training means the renunciation of educational opportunities and later often means missing out on better-paid occupations (see example 27 below).

The degrees achieved by our participants in professional qualifications are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. The professional qualifications of the participants

Professional qualifications at the time of the anniversary interviews	Number of our participants
Without professional qualifications	2 (Georgij, Vladimir)
One or two completed vocational training courses	4 (Nikolaj, Lisa, Xenia, Jana)
University studies (not yet completed)	2 (Svetlana, Elena)
Total	8

Four of our participants completed one or even two vocational training courses. Again, the young women achieved better results than the young men, which was also corroborated by other studies (see Worbs et al., 2013, p. 56). All of these participants were proud of the level of their professional qualifications and have

not experienced unemployment. At the time of this study they were all working in their acquired profession and admitted that their jobs provided for their living, even if the actual job or profession did not always meet their expectations. However, we must also consider the following experience: It sometimes took a long time to receive an apprenticeship contract. For example, Jana received hers after five years as an unskilled worker in the company. In addition, the successful completion of a vocational training course did not mean they could immediately get a professional job. Nikolaj had to work over six years as an unskilled worker before he found a job in his field.

The two university students studied media, rhetoric and politics (Svetlana) and economics (Elena). Svetlana was concerned that she probably would not find an appropriate occupation in her future profession. Elena was hoping to get a job in the investment banking sector after finishing her studies. Both were convinced that Russian competencies could be useful in their professional activity. Therefore, Svetlana decided to spend a semester abroad in Moscow and Elena chose Russian as a required foreign language course at the university.

5.4 Interactional discrimination as an integration problem

Interactional discrimination is understood as utterances and actions by which the interacting persons ascribe negative characteristics to certain individuals and groups (see Hormel & Scherr, 2005). The experience of interactional discrimination hurts the self-esteem of the individuals and the group and hinders the process of immigrants' integration into the host society.

At the beginning of our longitudinal study in the 1990s many of our participants mentioned the derogatory and negative reactions of the locals toward them. In part, we had witnessed it ourselves when we spoke Russian in public places with Russian-German families. That is why we asked our young participants in the present study whether they had experienced discrimination themselves. Three of them (Nikolaj, Xenia, Elena) denied this outright, while other three reported experiences of discrimination. Lisa remembered something that had happened long time ago: They were bullied at school, but without major consequences, so that Lisa could not remember the details. Michael also reported name-calling in kindergarten. As a consequence, he did not respond to his Russian name anymore and insisted on adopting the German name *Michael*. From lower secondary school he had vivid memories that students with an immigration background were considered "hopeless cases" by the teachers, in terms of their acquisition of German, and rarely received recognition and incentive in their learning efforts. Jana reported that she, her family and her friends were often referred to as *Scheißrussen* ('Russian scum').

She does not feel the term *Russe* ('Russian') as discriminatory, even though she does not identify herself as Russian. To her *Russe* ('Russian') is a neutral expression such as *Deutscher* ('German'), and she and her family are Russians in the sense that they come from Russia (indeed from Kazakhstan). What she cannot accept is the claim that Russian-Germans would get everything paid for by the state. She knows that she is unable to change this widespread opinion, but she is sure that she herself has fought for her position in Germany and has earned it due to her own efforts. Thus, it is rather satisfying for her that there are young native Germans in her hometown who feel comfortable in Jana's circle of young Russian-Germans, who want to be accepted in it and even learn some Russian (see example 24).

(24) Meng: Now the locals no longer speak ill of you?

Jana: No. Germans now have a tendency to join the Russians. They want to belong to our group and also try to learn Russian.

Meng: Is that true? What is so attractive to them?

Jana: I don't know. Maybe our cohesion, and we always have fun.²⁶

The experiences of discrimination which our participants reported are mostly from past years and do not relate to their present situation. This is due to the fact that young Russian-Germans no longer differ linguistically from indigenous Germans if they do not want it.

However, participants are sometimes uncertain about the use of Russian outside of the family. Many, especially older Russian-Germans, adopted the following unspoken rule: 'Don't use your minority language in public; speakers of the majority language may feel excluded from communication and react aggressively'. In addition, in Germany immigrants often are confronted with the statement that 'In Germany we speak German'. Our participants had to weigh both beliefs. It became evident from the anniversary interviews that they distinguish between different instances of the usage of Russian in public and react differently to it, namely:

- a. Use of Russian by a speaker who rejects the acquisition and use of German; Russian speech as a provocation to the majority society. This use of Russian is refused by our participants.
- b. Use of Russian by a speaker who, despite ongoing efforts, still has insufficient competencies in German. In this situation, our participants try to use Russian.
- c. Avoiding the use of Russian with Russian-speaking addressees in an official context as a consequence of one's own limited competencies in Russian.

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26. Jana added that in her small town there were very few opportunities for young people to meet. This explains why young native Germans like to join the group of Russian-Germans.

Thus, after twenty years of residence in Germany discrimination is no longer a significant issue for our participants.²⁷ However, they find that their particular efforts in the acquisition of German and in coping with everyday life are not adequately perceived or sufficiently supported and appreciated by the locals. On the other hand, as long as they are sure of their success, they do have self-confidence and are able to tolerate the derogatory attitudes of the natives.

5.5 Family, friends and life partners as the personal context of integration

For all of our participants the family – both the nuclear and extended family – is of great emotional and practical importance. Some of the respondents still live with their parents or have returned to live with them after having had a temporary home of their own. The choice where to live depends on where they study or go through training, but often is driven by financial constraints.

The partners and closest friends of our participants are mostly of Russian-German origin and all participants like to socialize in Russian contexts (e.g., going to a Russian disco).²⁸ However, the preferred or only language of the young people among themselves is German, while they occasionally use some Russian as a linguistic marker of their common origins. The two university students have a more multicultural, but also predominantly German-speaking environment. All participants stated that they have many friends, including native Germans. Only Vladimir emphasized that the Russian-Germans for him are acquaintances rather than friends and that he feels more closely connected with the locals than with the repatriates.

Lisa explained the reason as to why the young Russian-Germans feel more closely connected to other Russian-Germans as follows: a friendship or relationship with a Russian-German is not problematic because the participants find similarities in the two families. This includes, among others, similar home furnishings, similar meals, the same rituals at family celebrations, and similar preferences for music. She always found it difficult to explain to native Germans why her parents often speak Russian or why they make mistakes in German. This makes it more difficult to establish a relationship (see example 25).

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27. Worbs et al. (2013) summarize studies on the experience of discrimination of Russian-Germans in Germany. They note that the perceived discrimination is low in comparison with other immigrant groups (see Section 4.6.5).

28. See Worbs et al. (2013) on the structure of social networks of Russian-Germans (Section 4.6.1). The results reported there are consistent with our observations.

- (25) Lisa: So I don't have a single friend who is really a German only. My best friend is also from Kazakhstan. I think that connects us... I guess when you're at her house, it's like in our house. There's nothing embarrassing. And all these customs and culture and everything. If I go to a German friend's, that's kind of a different world. Maybe not so much now, but it used to be, anyhow.

Thus, the participants' persistence in the Russian-German milieu can be explained in different ways: as sense of belonging, as a lack of self-confidence, as a reaction to non-acceptance, or as a partial resistance to integration because certain behaviors of the majority are rejected.²⁹

On the other hand, language use and social realities of the young Russian-Germans differ greatly from those of their parents. This becomes evident by the preferred or exclusive use of German, cohabitation with a partner, long training periods, and late parenthood. All this was uncommon and not tolerated in traditional Russian-German families (see Kiel, 2009). Our participants, however, have adopted these habits not without doubts or even conflicts. This shows that integration proceeds at different speeds in the various domains of integration.

6. Discussion and concluding remarks

We can summarize the linguistic integration of our participants as follows: Our participants have learned German to such an extent that they can participate in both everyday oral communication and vocational oral communication without any problems. They are satisfied with their competencies in German.³⁰

Russian was the first language our participants acquired in the home. Upon arrival in Germany they understood and spoke Russian according to their age (as measured in terms of proficiency, see Meng, 2001; Meng & Protassova, 2012). Twenty years later they have a positive or at least neutral attitude towards Russian. However, they spoke Russian less and less during the twenty years of life in Germany, while being exposed passively to Russian. However, with the exception of Svetlana, none had any Russian language lessons at school. Their knowledge of Russian can be described as fragmentary and unstable, but it is still available for

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29. In Meng & Protassova, 2016 we analyzed a discourse in which a young Russian-German explains why she felt uncomfortable in a German family; she particularly appreciates the warmth and helpfulness of Russian-German families.

30. The detailed analysis of German proficiency of our participants is forthcoming in future publications.

the purposes of everyday communication. It could be stabilized and enhanced through appropriate language maintenance measures. Without such measures, their German-Russian bilingualism could prove to be a transition to a new monolingualism in the majority language German (transitory bilingualism).

In recent years the Russian-speaking community in Germany has become increasingly aware of that risk and uses whatever opportunities available in the country to stabilize the Russian-German bilingualism of their children, in particular in the Russian-German bilingual schools. In addition, the community developed its own services, e.g. bilingual German-Russian (-Jewish) kindergartens, schools and Saturday schools, mostly in large cities. There is a strong demand for these services, but financial resources are scarce. This has consequences for the recruitment and retention of qualified teaching staff. Thus, the promotion of German-Russian bilingualism among children in Germany is fluctuating and still inadequate. German society allows the Russian competencies that the families brought with them to Germany to wither away, even though they are important not only for the Russian-speaking immigrants, but also for Germany's international relations and economy.

The social integration of immigrant children and adolescents depends first and foremost on the successful participation in education and training processes, which characterized the integration trajectories of our participants. Our participants obtained those qualifications that are characteristic of repatriates in general: "The focus is on lower and secondary school and vocational qualifications" (Worbs et al., 2013, p. 7; transl. from German). Their professional activities generate incomes that can be described as follows: "The income situation of repatriates is marked by a 'middle' position, corresponding to their educational and professional qualifications" (Worbs et al., 2013, p. 8; transl. from German). Overall, our findings confirm the outcomes of Woellert et al. (2009) on the integration of repatriates and other immigrant groups in Germany: Repatriates "have good integration scores ... They have quite a good position on the German labor market, and many factors indicate that they are actively seeking integration in society" (Woellert et al., 2009, p. 7; transl. from German). The authors, however, observe "unused potentials" among repatriates in the field of education. In particular, they note deficits in the area of higher education. These could be reduced, according to the authors, by the provision of more information about the German education system and dual training programs in which practical instruction and learning go hand in hand (Woellert et al., 2009, p. 83). We may add that the repatriates' deficits in the field of higher education are caused by procedures in the German education system that only can be characterized as forms of structural discrimination: For example, the almost automatic assignment of immigrant children to lower secondary school

(*Hauptschule*), long periods of unskilled employment before and after vocational education, and the neglect of the first language.

When we compare the situation of immigrant children and adolescents in Germany with the situation in other modern countries of immigration, we observe a number of commonalities, in particular in the field of language and education policy. Language policy has the task of identifying the different linguistic needs of the society and its individual members and groups and of coordinating and meeting these needs as far as possible. It must take account of both the value of language for individual learning and social communication and its importance for national, regional and multiple identities. In the case of Australia, Clyne (2007) demonstrated that a comprehensive, explicit and coherent language policy is best suited to solve this complex task. Australia's language policy is based on its self-image as a multilingual society and the Australian society pursues the overall objectives of "social justice, the development of external relations, cultural enrichment and economic benefits" (Clyne, 2007, p. 5). From these objectives principles of language and education policy can be derived, which are implemented by the government, schools, universities, ethnic communities, families and companies in each specific manner. As Clyne has illustrated in a detailed and stimulating way, this goal can be achieved by exploiting the potential of all members of society, including their linguistic potential. A clear and well formulated language policy developed along these lines makes it possible to coordinate the contributions of the various actors in a "pluralistic language policy" (Clyne, 2007, p. 16). In addition, different approaches of teaching can be better incorporated, for example, in pedagogy of diversity (Hormel & Scherr, 2005).

In practice, no language and education policy is consistently explicit and coherent. But an attempt to explicate the relationship and to make it as consistent as possible in terms of its functioning in a society without discrimination is likely to become a useful contribution to a modern immigration society.

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