



FROM REJECTION TO RE-EMBRACEMENT

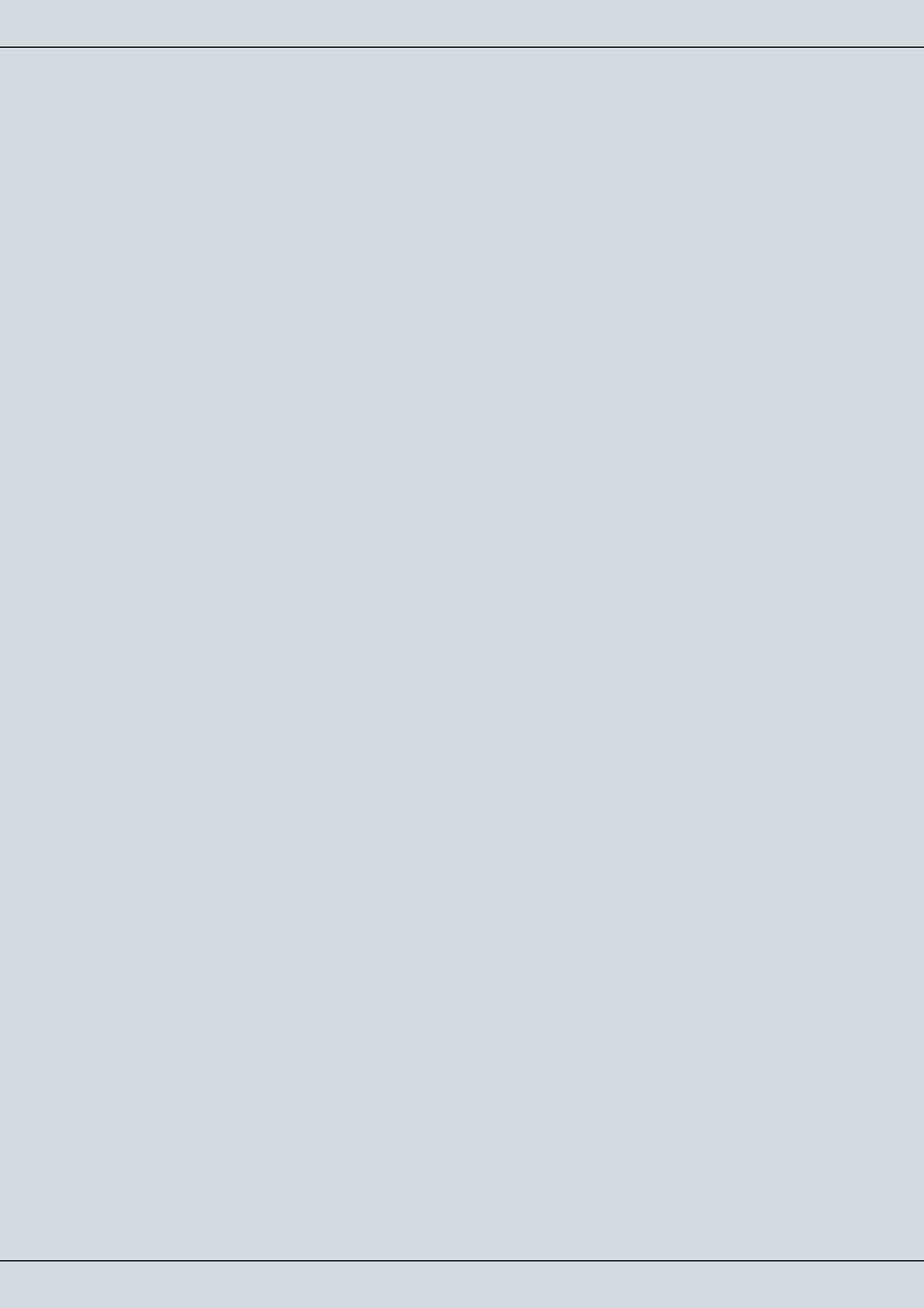
*Language and Identity of the
Russian Speaking Minority
in Kirkenes, Norway*

Anastasia Rogova



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Acknowledgement

My master thesis, completed in February 2007, is the core of this report which I have edited and translated to English for the Barents Institute. Its content is also part of the explorative research of my on-going PhD project "Russian-Norwegian language contacts: Rules of language choice and code-switching." The master thesis was written based on the material collected during field research conducted in Kirkenes in August and September, 2006. I've had occasion to follow up on this with extensive interviews also in 2007.

My field research in Kirkenes has first of all been made possible by travel grants from the Barents Institute that also organised and provided funding for the costs of accommodations in Kirkenes, including access to the office of the institute during my time in northern Norway. For this I am of course most grateful. I'm also indebted to Urban Wråkberg and Svein Helge Orheim for many pieces of advice on my research, not least hints on interview persons and general information on the social context and workings of the village of Kirkenes.

Many thanks are also due to my colleagues at the Department of Ethnology of the European University at St. Petersburg and especially my supervisor Professor Nikolai Vakhtin. I will also extend my thanks to Ms. Suzy Lidstrom, Languenan, France, for the proof-reading of my English manuscript. Any remaining obscurities in the texts that are not somehow caused by the complexities of the uses of languages in multi-lingual borderlands are of course entirely my own responsibility.

Anastasia Rogova
St. Petersburg, January 2008

Foreword

This research report is the first to appear in open-access, on-line publication from the Barents Institute's Master of Art candidate programme. The programme was started in the beginning of the Barents Institute's (BAI) first year of operation, i.e. in the spring of 2006. The author of this report Anastasia Rogova was the first candidate to be accepted as participant in the programme. It is open to MA students internationally, but a majority of the students has come from universities in Norway and Russia.

The criteria for acceptance of projects to the programme is that the student has had his/her project accepted at the university where they are registered and that it applies state-of-the-art methodology and is based on a manageable research plan that deals with a topic relevant to the Barents Region. The Support from the BAI mainly consists in co-advisorship and is adjusted to the needs and interests in each individual case. Some candidates have been invited to reside at the Barents Institute's office in Kirkenes as visiting scholars in order to facilitate field research in the neighbouring part of the Barents Region.

BAI have collaborated with MA candidates from universities all over Norway and it has formal agreements on this kind of projects with several universities in Russia such as the Moscow State University of International Relations, the Pomor State University in Arkhangelsk, Murmansk State Pedagogical University and the Kola Science Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

All MA projects must be approved at the department of the candidates' home university/institute as the formal exam of the thesis is the responsibility of this university. Among other conditions for BAI's involvement is that the work of its co-advisors are acknowledge in the final MA paper and that BAI will want to make an open-access publication of an edited version of the paper as a PDF-document, down-loadable at the BAI web site.

Anastasia Rogova is a PhD candidate at the Department of Ethnology of the European University at St. Petersburg. Rogova did her post-graduate training at that department, in it she specialized in sociolinguistics and cultural anthropology. Rogova's previous graduate studies were

undertaken at the Department of Germanic Philology at Petrozavodsk State University where she specialized in English Language and Literature, but she has Norwegian as her second language since her studies at the Svanvik folkehøgskole, Norway in 2002-2003. Rogova has furthered her familiarity with Norwegian language and culture by participation in an International Summer School on Contemporary Norwegian Society and Literature, at the University of Oslo in 2004, and of course by two extensive research periods in 2006 and 2007 in Kirkenes as guest of the Barents Institute.

Rogova's MA research is presented in an abbreviated edition in this publication which focuses the Russian speaking minority in Kirkenes. It is based on field interviews that were begun in August 2006. The text has been edited and translated by Rogova. Proof reading has been arranged through the Barents Institute. A more extensive Russian version of the thesis was approved at the European University at St. Petersburg, in the spring of 2007.

Urban Wråkberg
Kirkenes, February 2008

Introduction

The object of the present research is the language situation in the Russian-Norwegian border region that started to take on its present form just after the collapse of the Soviet Union. After that occurrence contacts between the Russian and Norwegian populations in the north-western and north-easternmost corners of the respective nations, increased dramatically. In this paper I analyze the social background associated with language choices made by the bilingual part of the local population and the role the Russian language plays in the border region today.

The border between Norway and Russia goes between Finnmark County in Norway and Murmansk oblast in Russia, and the nearest population centres on either sides of the border are respectively Kirkenes and Nikel. Kirkenes was chosen as the place to conduct this research because it's the border town that has largest bilingual (Norwegian-Russian) population, and, since the 1990s, it has been a major meeting point for Russian-Norwegian contacts on all levels.

Kirkenes is situated in the Sør-Varanger municipality, which is part of the most northern county of Norway, Finnmark. There are several other villages that are in close vicinity to Kirkenes (i.e., within 10 km), they are Sandnes, Hesseng, and Bjørnevatn. In the present research I am considering these with Kirkenes, as one group, because they form one meaningful group as far as this research is concerned. The population of Sør-Varanger municipality was 9463 people on 1st January, 2006; 3236 of whom were living in Kirkenes, 2413 in Sandnes and Bjørnevatn, and 1559 in Hesseng. So, the total population of Kirkenes and the surrounding countryside is 7211.

Historical background

The first people who inhabited the territory known today as Sør-Varanger were the Sámi. Little by little, interest in this territory grew, both from the side of the Russian Empire and from that of Norway (which partly meant Denmark and, since 1814, Sweden, with whom Norway had formed a union). For a long time there was no fixed border in the region, and the population paid levy to both states. In 1826 the border was finally

drawn, but at that time the border region was only very scarcely populated, there being some Sámi families and several Norwegian ones living in the area. The population grew gradually, initially because of immigration, with immigration of Finns and Sámi stepping up after the 1820s. At the same time, the Norwegian government, interested in strengthening its authority in the region, initiated a policy of resettlement of people from more densely populated regions of Norway to Sør-Varanger. People came, attracted by the opportunity to get their own land. In the 19th century, some markers of the Norwegian presence at this territory appeared — two protestant churches were erected at the border, and the fortress Vardøhus was built in the costal town Vardø.

Gradually, three groups each with its own language and culture came to be established in Sør-Varanger, they were Norwegians, Sámi, and Finns. Immigration from Finland exceeded significantly immigration from other parts of Norway, with the result that Finns soon became the largest group in near-border Norway (Lunde 1979: 104). Only in 1906 did the situation change when a field of ironstone was discovered in the region, and a company for its development was established to extract the iron. The establishment of the mining company A/S Sydvaranger has become a landmark in the history of Sør-Varanger, and defined the region's development for years to come. Development of the ironstone field also provoked the growth of Kirkenes, which, by that time, consisted of just a church and several houses scattered along the cost. The production of minerals brought considerable income to the region, many jobs appeared and these led to population growth as a result of migration to find work from other parts of Norway. Norwegians became the majority in Sør-Varanger for the first time. Nevertheless, for a long time Finns remained a significant group in the local community. Changes in the relative proportions of the ethnic groups in the population at the beginning of the 20th century are presented in the following chart (Lunde 1979: 132):

By 1930 Norwegians made up about three-quarters of the population in the region. There have not been any censuses since then that took account of ethnicity, but we can assume that the percentage of Norwegians grew, both because of migration and through the assimilation of Sámi and Finns (Lunde 1979: 132).

Year	Sámi	Norwegians	Finns
1900	36%	21%	43%
1910	21%	54%	25%

The relations between these groups were relatively calm as we can infer from the available sources. There were a lot of mixed marriages between Norwegians and Finns, and in the majority of such marriages Norwegian men married Finnish women. Marriages between Finnish men and Norwegian women were uncommon. Finns married Sámi women more often than Norwegians (Lunde 1979: 132). These data suggest that there was a hierarchical system of ethnic group status in the region. This hierarchy was later supported by the official “Norwegianisation” policy that confirmed the status of Norwegians as a privileged ethnic group. Norwegian official institutions formed a context that all other ethnic groups had to adapt to by changing their everyday practices if they wanted to be a part of the larger society, and not become isolated.

The situation was somewhat different at the beginning of the 20th century (although the Norwegians were the most prestigious group in the region then, too). Most Finns and Sámi did not know Norwegian, and the fact that they had lived in Norway for decades, or even that they were in close contact with Norwegians didn’t have any effect on the language they spoke. If they went to a shop, for example, they knew that they would be able to speak Finnish there, because the competition was strong and shop-owners were interested in attending to the needs of their customers by speaking their language. We can find some confirmation of the dominance of the Finnish language in the region at that time. For example, Olav Beddari describes the travellers’ impressions of the region:

“To their surprise, both Kåre and Schonning found out that the Finnish language was the most widespread in Sør-Varanger. They realized that it would be difficult to manage without Finnish if they wanted to live here. Norwegians and Sámi spoke Finnish. Both police servants and shop-

owners spoke Finnish better than Finns spoke Norwegian" (Beddari 2005: 179-180)

There were several factors that contributed to keeping Finnish alive in the region: the compactness of the residential area in which the Finnish population was located, their relative isolation from the Norwegian population, and continual active contact with Finland. Even in mixed Norwegian-Finnish families, the children often mastered Finnish as their main language (Lunde 1979: 238-239).

The role of the Norwegian language became increasingly important as the proportion of Norwegian population grew, however. The development of a school system that gave primary education in the Norwegian language had an even greater influence on the change in the role Norwegian played in the region. While there was an opportunity for Sámi children to get some schooling in the Sámi language in some parts of Norway, this had not been an option for the border municipality of Sør-Varanger since the end of the 19th century. The transition towards Norwegian-language schooling was gradual. First, Sámi children received their schooling in the Sámi language, but learned Norwegian as well, then, in 1870, the government prescribed a changeover to Norwegian as the language of instruction in Finnish and Sámi schools, with the use of other languages when necessary. In 1880 the rules were hardened, and all schooling had to be given in Norwegian (Lunde 1979: 238-239).

This policy was most severely pursued in the border region, because the government was striving to make this territory completely Norwegian, thereby further affirming this land as Norwegian territory. One further step in this direction was the creation of boarding schools that made it possible to include all children in the school system despite their place of living. The effect of "Norwegianisation" in this case was supposed to be even stronger, because children were torn out of their familiar language and cultural environment. Children were not prohibited from speaking other languages in their free time, but it was not encouraged.

The state policy and various interethnic processes resulted in unequivocal stigmatization of Sámi and Finns in the region and almost total assimilation of these ethno-cultural groups in the dominant Norwegian society. Nowadays we can observe a linguistic and cultural revival amongst the Sámi and Finns that coincides with a worldwide tendency for increased interest in and respect towards minority cultures, but this goes

beyond the scope of the present research and we will return to these processes only to provide general background descriptions and to make comparisons while discussing the place of the Russian language in the region.

Russians did not live in this territory until the end of the 20th century. Nevertheless, they played an important role here because the Pomor trade was extremely valuable for the development of the region. The Pomor trade, i.e. the direct exchange of goods between the local population and the Pomors exercised in the summers, had started in the second half of the 18th century and continued until the First World War broke out. The Pomors who sailed to Norwegian harbours exchanged flour for fish. It was profitable for the local population, as there was plenty of fish in the summer, and the need for bread was always present. In 1906 the newspaper «*Finnmarken*» published an article which stated that “all homes would be needy” if there were not for “our dear Russians” (Lunde 1979: 227). The Pomor trade gave birth to a pidgin language *Russenorsk* based on the Russian and Norwegian languages, which was used during the trade contacts between Russians and Norwegians (Romaine 1994: 124-130).

In the context of relations with Russia, one important period in the history of Sør-Varanger is the Second World War. Norway was occupied by the German army, and Northern Norway was strategically important as there was a border with the Soviet Union, and the port of Murmansk was nearby. There were severe battles on the Kola Peninsula and in the border regions of Norway. Northern Norway was liberated by the Soviet Army in 1944. This historical period is still remembered, and the image of the Russians (or Soviets) as those who brought freedom to Finnmark was still alive in the 1990s. For example, a local newspaper published an article in 1994 commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Finnmark liberation that contained some interviews with 5-6 year old children. The children were asked what they knew about the war. Almost all of them mentioned Russian soldiers: “It was Russians that freed us from the Germans. They helped Norway to become free, because they had weapons” and, “King Harald comes to Kirkenes on Monday to celebrate 50 years since the Russians had come and driven the Germans away so that Norway became free again” (*Finnmarken* 1994, 22.10, p. 12)

We can see that the memory of the Second World War is enduring. The reason may be that the County of Finnmark underwent the hardest experiences during the war of all the regions in Norway. The German

army pursued a so called "burned land" policy in the north of Norway, the Germans drove local people from their homes, removed them from Finnmark, burned houses and other buildings. Those people who ran away and hid themselves in the mines or in the forest starved. The Red Army advance was a genuine rescue for a considerable number of people. The positive impression the Soviet soldiers gave was probably even stronger because of the contrast with the image of Soviet soldiers portrayed by the Fascist propaganda of cruel, inhuman people (or even beasts). One still can see these posters, picturing soldiers as devils with horns, in the local history museum.

The end of the war also marked a change in the geopolitical position of Norway with respect to the USSR. The border territory that had belonged to Finland since it gained independence in 1918 was integrated into the USSR, the result of which was the appearance of the border between Norway and the Soviet Union.

The cold war affected the relations between Norwegians and Russians. Cold war propaganda was an important component of the social and political life, and it had made an impact on people's attitudes and opinions. Bomb shelters, instructions on how to behave in the proximity of the Soviet border, spy scandals, - none of these helped to develop good neighbourly relations. Nevertheless, many people have emphasized that the propaganda was much less effective in the borderland than in other parts of Norway. This is usually explained by two factors, the war memories and the territorial proximity of the USSR. For people living in this territory, the Soviet Union was not an abstract amorphous threat, but a real physically visible place. One of the Norwegian informants described how Soviet border guards waved back to them from the opposite bank of the river (the border follows the Pasvik river, or the Paz, as it is called in Russian) when there were no officers nearby. One local travel agency also arranged trips to the Black Sea resorts in the Soviet Union. Norwegians came to Murmansk, took the train to Moscow, and then the plane to their final destination. Such travel gave tourists an opportunity to get a deep look at the USSR. These trips were not very popular, but some people from the region made these voyages in the 1960s and '70s.

It has been commonplace to explain the supposed existence of negative relations between Norway and Russia, associated with the cold war, by state policy and by the authorities» desire to incite people against one

another, while in reality the relations were very good. In one of the interviews, an informant depicts a situation of utter goodwill and a desire to communicate with Russians that took shape at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. She emphasizes that a common spirit was imbued with curiosity, and desire to get acquainted and to communicate with Russian neighbours. Nevertheless, some of her own words contradict to her statements about the existence of absolute goodwill and openness. She recounted how, prior to her first visit to Russia, “one silly woman” in Norway told her that there was nothing to do in Russia, “just ragged curtains in the windows and nothing else.” Some other utterances also demonstrated an ambiguous attitude towards Russia and Russians, but they are mainly associated with the notions of poverty in Russia, of an absence of necessities, such as food, soap, etc.

These comments demonstrate that the Norwegians did not adopt a unanimous negative attitude towards Russians, but instead, there was a range of attitudes represented, with certain Norwegians having a positive attitude towards Russians. As so much water has flowed under the bridge, it is no longer possible to reconstruct exactly what people really thought and felt at that time, but we can try to identify some trends, and these clearly show that there was a mixture of positive and negative. It is impossible to draw any conclusions that could even have pretensions of being true on the basis of the material we have, but I would surmise that the prevailing attitude at the moment the border was opened was friendly, or at least neutral. Some extracts from interviews substantiate this attitude:

1. “First, when the border was opened, everyone was so enthusiastic, there was talk of Russian guests, Russian neighbours, we want schoolchildren from Russia to come and live in our houses, is it possible? We opened our homes, our lives for Russian guests, but now they have been closed again¹” (FR-N1, w., 50)²

Negative attitudes towards Russians, which were typical of the middle and late 1990s, were formed after the border between Norway and Russia was opened in 1991. This year marks a new era in the relations between the two countries and for the population of the border areas.

¹ The original interview was conducted in Russian; the translation is mine

² FR – field recording, N – Norwegian (R - Russian), 1 – number of interview, w. – woman (m. - man), 50 – approximate age

Modern state of relations

After the border had been opened, relations between Russia and Norway started to develop on all levels, including national, official (through various agreements to cooperate and so on), and a private one.

First of all, there was a flow of Russians who came to Norway to earn money: sellers who sold souvenirs and all kinds of stuff in the streets, “smugglers” who sold vodka and cigarettes illegally, and prostitutes (and sometimes the same person might fall into all these categories). Some of them did not only sell what they had, but also stole goods in local shops. It was only after the year 2000 that the notices that had been put up in the shops in Russian announcing that it was illegal to steal, were removed. Russian prostitution has also until recently been a very popular theme of local and national Norwegian press. Year 1997 was the richest in newspaper articles, because some spontaneous rallies against Russian prostitution were organized at that time in several towns in Northern Norway (Stenvoll 2002). In small towns it is especially difficult to count on the anonymity of both prostitutes and those men who buy their services, which made the problem even more urgent. The traditional negative perception of prostitution was aggravated by it being a threat to the continued safe existence of the local community based on traditional moral and family values (Stenvoll 2002).

The problem of prostitution interests us as it has influenced the perception of Russian women in the local Norwegian community. Unlike prostitution in other places, which is often associated with organized crime, the situation in Northern Norway was different (although there was some talk about the Russian mafia there as well). Public opinion has often painted prostitutes as poor women who wanted to escape poverty and the hard social conditions of northern Russia. These women, however, had occupied various social positions, and had different educational histories, in other words, they were not «professional» prostitutes. An important consequence was that public opinion has mixed together those women who sold sex and those who got married to Norwegian men and settled in Norway (Stenvoll 2002). This was encouraged by the fact that some women who had been previously involved in prostitution married Norwegians and moved to Norway as their wives. Prostitution in its straightforward form almost disappeared after 1998 when a new law was

introduced. This problem has not disappeared completely, but has become much less conspicuous and is no longer a topic of great interest. Nevertheless, its consequences have had influence on public life and on the position of Russian immigrants up to now.

Those Norwegians who visited Russia in the early 1990s have seen empty shops, beggars in the streets, and homeless children against a backdrop of military stations and factories of the Kola Peninsula. Economic crisis that struck the Murmansk region, as well as the rest of Russia, provoked the intensification of contradictions and furthered the formation of stereotypes about Russians.

At the same time, cooperation on national and official levels had been developing actively since 1993, when Russian, Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish interior ministers signed the Kirkenes declaration that formalized the creation of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region. One of the main aims was to ensure that suitable conditions were created to encourage cooperation at a practical level, to promote cooperation in the spheres of education, culture, research, trade, industry, health and so on. After decades of the cold war, there was a need to regain confidence across the border on the face-to-face level of interaction, and this was a part of the Barents secretariat's mission.

In 1997, A/S Sydvaranger Ltd., the dominating iron mining company in Kirkenes, was closed down, with great consequences for the Sør-Varanger municipality. In addition to the fact that almost 1500 people were employed by A/S Sydvaranger, a large number of other enterprises in the region, that had been working with industrial maintenance on sub-contracts for the mining company, were affected badly. The closing of the industry led to an economic depression, resulting in migration from the region and a population decrease.

Nowadays the wellbeing of the regional economy depends to a certain extent on the cooperation with Russia. First of all, the port of Kirkenes exists because of the Russian ships that stay there, being refitted, waiting for quotas for fishing, etc. If these ships were to cease to come to the port, it is unlikely to remain profitable. Sailors who spend several months in Kirkenes inevitably go shopping to buy food, clothes, and some presents for their families, contributing to the local economy. There are usually 30-50 ships in the port at any one time, which represents a total of 900-1500 sailors. Thus the sailors represent a significant part of the spending power in

a town with a population of 7000 people of all ages. In addition, there are a large number of Russians from Murmansk region who come to Kirkenes to shop. According to some research, about 10% of the population of the Murmansk region have a higher purchasing capacity than average Finnmakers (to put this in perspective, it should be mentioned that 10% of the population of the Murmansk region amounts to about 70000 people, which is almost the same as the entire population of Finnmark). With this in mind, the shopping centre built in Kirkenes in 2004 has Russian customers as its target group. The name of the centre is written in Russian, all information inside is provided in two languages, and a large number of the shop assistants are Russian.

In recent years the Norwegian government demonstrated an enhanced interest in the northern regions of the country. The new Foreign Ministry's program on the *High North* proposes active development of the economic, R&D and innovative potential of the region. Cooperation with Russia is seen as one of the prerequisites for achieving the set aims. For example, a project involving the creation of a so-called Pomor zone, an industrial and economic zone comprised of the Norwegian and Russian border regions, was initiated by Norwegian experts in 2006. This project is, above all, associated with the development of oil and gas fields in the Barents Sea. The idea of Kirkenes becoming the «centre of the Barents Region» is spreading, and the Barents Region itself is believed to have great potential for further development.

Russian immigration

It was in the early 1990s that the first Russians settled down in Kirkenes. They came as specialists, who had obtained a job there, or, more often, as the wives of Norwegian citizens. Many brought their children with them. Thus, nowadays there are some Russians who have lived in the town for as long as 12–14 years while there are others who may have arrived just a couple of months ago. All of them have their own experiences, their life stories, and consequently, they have different attitudes and make different language choices. That makes it really difficult to draw any general conclusions that are true for everyone.

There are no precise statistics on how many Russians live in Kirkenes today, but according to the sources available, they make up about 10% of the town's population. When I use the word "Russian" in the paper, I mean not only in terms of ethnicity, but, and more importantly, in terms of citizenship, that they are present or former citizens of the Russian Federation or the USSR. Such use of this term corresponds to its usage by the local population of Kirkenes, for most of whom a Russian is any person who comes from Russia or the former Soviet Union. Many Norwegians do not distinguish between Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia, and even sometimes the Baltic states. People who were ascribed to the group by outsiders maintain the boundaries of the group and call themselves Russians, meaning that they immigrated to Norway from Russia or a republic in the former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, this sense of identity only exists as a contrast to being Norwegian («we» Russians vs. «them» Norwegians). In those cases where this contrast between them and us is not involved, there is no group of "Russians" in Kirkenes, as I will demonstrate later.

Before we take a look at the group of Russians, we have to define its place in the local community of Kirkenes. Sør-Varanger municipality has always been a «borderland», as a result of which today's image of the local community as a multicultural society where peoples speaking different languages have always lived in peace has taken hold. This idea is a widespread one, both at the level of official discourse, and on the everyday level of face-to-face interaction. If we take a look at this "multicultural society", we can see that it includes first of all the three cultures that are traditional in the area, Sámi, Finnish and Norwegian cultures. Although other cultures that have appeared in the region recently are also included (they are immigrant cultures, such as Pakistani, Philippine, Bosnian, and Russian), their place is not equal to those mentioned above. The goodwill of the local people towards their «new landmen» is always being emphasized and put to the fore, and this presumed equity is usually explained by a long history of intercultural contacts in the territory. Nevertheless, this ideology of multiculturalism is a recent phenomenon. Even in the 1960s the policy of «Norwegianisation» of other ethnic groups was active (Eidheim 1998). Norway has, until recently, been a mono-cultural society. The ethnic revival of indigenous people commenced fairly recently, and has been the main instigation for changing state policy that has resulted in the ideology of multiculturalism.

If we are to consider the place of Russians in this multicultural discourse, we need to distinguish between two types of Russian cultural presence in the region. First, there are tourists, guests and business partners, comprising a group of those who come for a short period, and who do not form part of the local community. This group's presence is noticed, it is discussed and welcomed. If one opens any issue of the local newspaper, *Sør-Varanger Avis*, one will be likely to find an article or two on cooperation with Russia. These articles are positive, they describe new aspects of mutually beneficial cooperation, they tell about the visits made by Norwegian children to Russia, and so on. Signs pointing out the central shopping area and main thoroughfares are written in Russian, which is made for tourists from Russia.

Those Russians who live permanently in Kirkenes comprise another group, and one whose presence in the community is overlooked. For example, a book on the modern history of Sør-Varanger devotes about 40 pages to the Sámi, whilst Russians are mentioned once in the entire book in the chapter entitled "Multicultural society", which describes the immigration to the municipality. This chapter is about three pages long, and Russians are mentioned only in a list of the nationalities present in Sør-Varanger, along with Polish, Vietnamese and Pakistani people, etc. (all of whom are present in far fewer numbers) (Sør-Varanger 2005). Thus, there is no information in any of the public «printed» discourse that acknowledges that Russians probably comprise the second largest cultural and linguistic group living permanently in Sør-Varanger.

Positioning strategies of Russian immigrants in Kirkenes

I understand positioning strategies as some general tendencies in choosing friends, spheres of work, and everyday practices. Based on interviews and observations, I distinguish several strategies employed by Russian immigrants in Kirkenes today. They are closely connected with inter-ethnic relations between Russians and Norwegians in the region, and bring with them certain types of behaviour where language is concerned.

Positioning strategies are based on the type of acculturation chosen by an individual or a group. Acculturation is defined as a "process of cultural

and psychological change that follows intercultural contact” (Berry et al. 2006: 305). There are two relatively independent processes that define the acculturation process: individuals’ attempt to maintain their cultural heritage, and, on the other hand, their simultaneous desire to be involved in the life of the larger society (Berry et al. 2006: 305). We can ask two questions keeping this in mind: To what degree does a person strive to maintain his/her parents’ culture? And to what degree does he/she participate in the life of society as a whole? All possible combinations of the answers to these questions result in an acculturation space with four sectors: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization (Berry et al. 2006: 306). Assimilation refers to a situation where immigrants have little interest in the maintenance of their cultural heritage, and have a strong preference for the maximum interaction with the larger society. Integration is the term coined for the situation where immigrants have an equal interest in maintaining their cultural heritage and in being included in the larger society. Separation and marginalization are both the result of a refusal to interact with the society as a whole. Separation refers to the maintenance of the heritage culture, and marginalization refers to a refusal of both cultures.

Acculturation is always a two-way process as it includes not only the immigrant group, but the dominant society, namely the Norwegian majority in our case. The strategies that the dominant society can employ to deal with immigrants (or other dependent groups) are defined by J. W. Berry as multiculturalism, the «melting pot», segregation, and exclusion (Berry 2001: 618). The correlation between these strategies identified in society and the attitude of the immigrants is presented in the following chart:

Group	Immigrants	Dominant society
Name of strategy	Assimilation	«Melting pot»
	Integration	Multiculturalism
	Separation	Segregation
	Marginalization	Exclusion

In the 1990s the prevailing attitude amongst the local population in Kirkenes was negative towards Russians. Stereotypes about Russians being prostitutes, thieves, etc. were widespread. Russians who came to Kirkenes

at that time encountered a lack of respect, the only reason for which was often the country of their origin. This led to assimilation becoming the most popular type of acculturation.

Nevertheless, in our case, Norwegian society was not prepared to allow Russian immigrants to become Norwegians. Previous research has investigated what being a Norwegian means to Norwegians. One of the conclusions was that a person's nationality is determined by his/her descendants, "family origin is much more important for a «Norwegian» than citizenship for identifying another person as Norwegian" (Gullestad 2002: 63). This makes assimilation almost impossible, especially for those who live in a rather small community.

The possibility of integration depends also a great deal on the dominant society. Integration is possible only in a society that is open to cultural diversity (Berry 2001: 619). It is not only immigrants who have to accommodate themselves, at the same time, the host society has to acknowledge the immigrants' right to maintain their culture and to be equal members of the society. There are several preconditions for integration, among them are a common acceptance of the value of cultural diversity (i.e. the existence of the ideology of multiculturalism), a low level of prejudice and discrimination, good relations between ethnocultural groups, and a feeling of belonging to the society shared by all individual and groups (Berry 2001: 619). If we apply this theoretical framework to the analysis of the situation of Russian immigrants in Kirkenes, we have to conclude that integration has been the least accessible strategy for them, which is the result not only of their choice, but of the Norwegian society's attitudes as well. The most important problem in this case was the negative attitude of the local population towards Russians and stigmatization of this ethnic group. At the same time, as I wrote above, there is an ideology of multiculturalism in Sør-Varanger that is often presented as a specific feature of the municipality. Nevertheless, these statements do not contradict one other, as this ideology is a recent phenomenon and, moreover, the cultural diversity propagated includes above all the incorporation of all Sámi and Finnish people into the dominant Norwegian society. Russians have been an alien cultural group, who's right to become a part of "multicultural Sør-Varanger" has not been equally obvious for all local residents.

The coincidence of all these factors led to a certain degree of separation of Russians and to Russians building social networks within their ethnic

group. The result was the rise of what can be called a «concealed Diaspora», a diaspora that existed, but was invisible to the rest of the population. Until recently there have been no official Russian associations (there were some attempts that failed), and all interaction took place on an unofficial level. Russians in Kirkenes have known each other, kept contact, celebrated some holidays, but tried not to demonstrate their origins outside their ethnic group.

Interethnic relations are still controversial in Kirkenes. The majority of Russians whom I interviewed emphasized the friendly attitude of Norwegians towards Russians. They could not recall an episode when they felt themselves to be discriminated against.

2. "There is very nice atmosphere here. I know it myself. When I came to Norway, I couldn't say a single word in Norwegian. [...] Everyone helped me and talked to me." (FR/R4, w., 45)

Nevertheless, almost all informants could recall some episodes that demonstrate negative or even humiliating attitudes towards Russians that they had observed or heard about.

3. "There is a carnival at school, in February, when the children make fancy dress outfits. I remember that at one school, a fancy dress of a 'Russian woman' got the first prize. This consisted of provoking make-up, a short skirt, balloons placed as breasts. That was a 'Russian woman'" (FR/R4, w., 45).

Negative attitudes in the local population are often accepted as a kind of common knowledge. Everyone «knows» that Norwegians do not like Russians, even if they have not experienced any negative attitudes themselves, and they perceive reality through this «knowledge».

4. "My colleagues are broad-minded people, well-educated, without prejudice, they welcomed me with open arms. I have seldom felt this scornful attitude myself, but it can happen that they [Norwegians] don't express it aloud, but I can feel that it seems to them that they are somewhere there [points upward], while you are there [points downward]." (FR/R8, w., 30)
5. "They [the Norwegians] have little liking for the Russians because in any society a big group of strangers is accepted without any delight." (FR/R2, w., 50)

6. "Maybe there is a kind of feeling of their own inferiority [...] Some people feel ashamed of being Russian, because there is a bias among some foreigners, including Norwegians, against Russians." (FR/R8, w., 30)
7. "They say to you that Russians are great, that it's so good for our country to have you here, you are so clever, and so on. But amongst themselves they certainly say that it'd be better if we didn't come, that nobody asked us to come here. It has always been like this and it will continue to be the same. But nobody will say this openly to you." (FR/R14-1, m., 20)

The research on stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination tends to be concentrated on the dominant group, and specifically on how the members of this group express their negative attitudes towards the minority group. This approach reduces the status of the dominated group, which experiences stereotyping and stigmatization, to that of an object, a passive victim, while the dominant group is perceived as an active social agent (Oyserman 2001: 1). This traditional approach to the study of the relations between dominant and dominated stigmatized groups (not only on the basis of ethnic origin, which is relevant for this research, but on the basis of any other characteristic, for example, sexual orientation) proposes the view of the group from outside, i.e., from the point of view of the majority. The inside view, i.e. adopting the point of view of the members of the group experiencing the stigmatization, leads to different findings about the group's standing. The members of this group are both the victims of the negative attitudes that form the background of their reality, but they are also actors who actively construct their own reality.

Members of a stigmatized group often face prejudice in their encounters with members of the dominant group. Stereotypes and prejudice can be aimed both at certain individuals, and at the group as a whole. Even if stereotypes are not demonstrated in a certain act of interaction, the possibility of their presence leads to a preparedness for a potential threat, which inevitably influences the behaviour of individuals belonging to a stigmatized group (Oyserman 2001: 4; Steel 1997). Here we face the duality of stereotypes, or what can be called 'second layer stereotypes'. First, there are the stereotypes that Norwegians have about Russians, but then in addition to which there are some stereotypes that Russians have about the attitudes they perceive the local population to have towards them.

These ‘second layer stereotypes» can be very stable and they have a genuine influence on individuals» behaviour. The members of a stigmatized group are likely to be particularly sensitive to possible demonstrations of discrimination which can lead to them feeling discrimination in situations that seem absolutely normal and free of any discrimination from the point of view of outsiders (Oyserman 2001). For example, I once observed a dialog at the local library in Kirkenes. A woman, who was apparently a Norwegian, was walking around the room, obviously looking for something. Another woman came in, and the Norwegian asked her whether she worked at the library. The woman answered that she did not, and started to pick up books from a shelf containing Russian books. The Norwegian said: “Oh, you are Russian, I thought you worked here”. In my opinion, as an outsider, this was said in a rather friendly way, and though this phrase lacked some logic it did not sound insulting. The Russian woman reacted by asking in a rather aggressive tone: “What do you mean by that? Is it my fault or what?” The Norwegian woman preferred not to continue the dialog and went out.

Though the Russians in Kirkenes are still a somewhat stigmatized group, and the stereotypes formed in the 1990s are still alive in the minds of both Norwegians and Russians, we can observe a change of attitudes that is happening at this very moment. Many of the people to whom I talked emphasized that this is a period of transition.

8. “All this negativity has ceased now in a way, now it is normal and natural” (FR/R2, w., 50)
9. “Now things have changed. They [Norwegians] have different thoughts about Russia now, they write about oil and so on. And maybe they just got used to us” (FR/R4, w., 45)
10. “Now the relations have become better, because now people come here to work, there are still some who come to get married, but not so many as before” (PF/R13, w., 20)
11. “Articles in the local newspaper concerning Russians get more and more positive. There was an article not so long time ago where Norwegians say that Kirkenes has become more beautiful thanks to the Russian women who come here, who take care of what they wear, and look very nice. Girls in Kirkenes dress better now because of the Russians who come often to Kirkenes. Before,

let's say five years ago, you»d never hear anything like that in Kirkenes. There was a kind of anti-Russian atmosphere here, I don't know, an anti-Russian «air». Now it's getting better and better." (PF/R13, w., 20)

12. "I feel that this attitude has changed. I think, or maybe it's just my impression, that there was a suspicious attitude towards Russians here before. Some people didn't want to speak Russian. Now everything has changed, everyone speaks Russian, nobody feels embarrassed, at least, this is how I see it." (PF/R2, w., 40)

There are different reasons for these changes. First, the problem of prostitution has almost disappeared, and the economic and political situation in Russia has become much more stable. These trends have changed the role of Russians and of the Russian language in the region, which is increasingly closely connected to Russia in all spheres of official and private life. Second, when Russians speak about relations with the Norwegian majority, one of the key phrases is: "They've got used to us". This probably means that the Norwegian society in Kirkenes is now prepared to accept Russians as a part of their society. Change within the dominant society is one of the inevitable results of an acculturation process, and one that makes its impact not only on the immigrants, but on the society as a whole. In this situation, integration is becoming possible, and is preferable as a strategy for many of the immigrants today.

Main groups of Russian population

We can distinguish between several main groups within the Russian population living in Kirkenes today. Although these groups do not really exist, employing such a classification makes the analysis more feasible.

The first group, which was briefly described above, consists of women and teenagers who strive to be assimilated into Norwegian society. This behavioural strategy was typical in the 1990s, but it still holds out for a certain number of Russian residents. Some women and teenagers still prefer to conceal their Russian origins. Yet, such behaviour is the least typical

for today's Kirkenes. The majority of Russians do not feel ashamed of their Russian origin.

Other groups differ from this first one and from each other by the understanding people have of their place in the system of social relations, and by the attitudes adopted towards their ethnic origin. The *second group* is made up of Russian women who have chosen integration and have more or less been successful in following this strategy. They have been included in the Norwegian society (they have wide social networks and are acquainted with the social system), they have good jobs, and quite a high standard of living. They do not flaunt their Russian origins, but they continue to maintain their native culture and language, incorporating some Norwegian traditions and the Norwegian lifestyle. This strategy has been quite difficult to achieve as I tried to demonstrate above, but it is becoming more and more feasible today.

The third group is comprised of those who chose separation as a way of achieving their positioning in the larger society. They live as if they were still in Russia, watch Russian television, read Russian books, cook Russian food, and communicate mainly with their Russian friends.

13. "A lot retreat into their shell: Russian TV, Russian friends, I think it's a fact. For example, there are not many Russians who live here and who are familiar with the Norwegian mass media". (FR/R5, w., 40.)
14. "They live in Norway, but they live «in a Russian way», they cook Russian food, they are not integrated, they have their own community" (PF/R8, w., 30)

Some of these women are sure that Norwegians have a negative attitude towards them, but they do not care much about it. They do not have many ambitions in life. They want to have a home, healthy children, a stable economy, and they work hard to achieve this. When they left Russia, they had certain dreams and ideas about Norway and about their life in the new country. In practice, their dreams did not often come true. In the 1990s, it was typical that only men who had a really low status in the Norwegian society married Russian women (though there were some exceptions of course). Hopes that were never justified, a lack of respect from other people, difficulties with integration, all of these could be reasons for choosing this positioning strategy.

The fourth group includes teenagers and young people who were born in Russia, but grew up in Norway. They feel themselves to be both Norwegian and Russian at the same time. They went to Norwegian schools, and some of them speak Norwegian better than Russian. They feel themselves to be much more confident in Norway than their mothers. But they are still different from their Norwegian friends, and they feel it.

15. "I've always had a problem to say who I am because my name is Tanya Ivanova [the name is changed], and I want to consider myself Russian. I was born in Russia, but my mentality is Norwegian. I do not understand much when I come to Russia.... But, at the same time, I'm not a Norwegian, because my name is Tanya, my family are Russians, and I am from Russia myself. I don't know, in a way I've become torn between two countries. But it doesn't bother me." (PF/R13, w., 20)

They have also had some negative experiences as a result of their Russian origin:

16. "I remember that there were some problems that arose because they [Norwegians] didn't like Russians. They chose who they would like, and who they wouldn't. I avoided this, thank God, because I was with my family, my father got job here, and so on. But the girls who came here then probably had a hard time. They were not liked, just because they were Russian. It's even more pitiful because they [i.e., the Russians in question] had not done anything wrong". (PF/R13, w., 20)

These young people are well integrated into society, they go to school or to work, but they prefer to spend their free time with their Russian friends. Of course, there are some teenagers and young people who have become completely assimilated into Norwegian society and feel themselves to be Norwegian. The way of assimilation is open to them, they can be accepted as Norwegian by the majority; nevertheless, some teenagers and young people in their 20s reject assimilation and prefer to demonstrate their «Russianness».

The consolidation of this Russian youth group is taking place at present, and has been noticed by Norwegians as well as Russians. They are aware that this tendency is rather new, even just a few years ago Russian youths in Kirkenes preferred to conceal their origins, now they are proud

of it, they do not keep company with Norwegian classmates, they do not join in the out-of-school activities, instead they spend time in Russian company. One of my informants even referred to them as “a gang” by analogy with the Pakistani gangs in Oslo, despite the fact that the Russian youth in Kirkenes is not associated with any criminal activities.

There are several different reasons for the consolidation of this group: common interests, similar upbringing, common memories and language, and also a shared experience of being a ‘stranger». Why does the formation of the group happen now? One of the reasons given by an informant is the growth in the number of Russians in Kirkenes.

17. “The more Russians that come here, the more the situation will evolve with Russians choosing to spend their time with Russians, not with Norwegians. When I lived here, and I was a little girl, we had Norwegian friends, because we were so few. We could not form a gang of four girls. That was unrealistic, but now there are a lot of Russians. Now you can choose who you want to be friends with.” (FR/R13, w., 20)

The increase in the Russian population in Kirkenes has not happened overnight. We can assume that at this time some «critical mass» has been reached as a result of objective growth of the population over the last 15 years, and as a result of Russian teenagers’ change of attitudes towards their ethnicity. Some of those who had striven to become Norwegian before have become proud of their Russian origins under the influence of other factors which have led to their consolidation as a group.

Among these factors are the change in attitude towards Russians and the growth of the prestige of the Russian language. This is connected partly with the growth of the cooperation with Russia. In a Norwegian publication *Arena*, a special issue of which was devoted to the Barents Region, youths of Russian-Norwegian origin were called “the main resource of the centre of the Barents Region” (i.e., Kirkenes) (*Arena*, 2006). And we can assume that their importance will grow over time if cooperation with Russia remains high up among the priorities for the development of the northern regions.

A better attitude towards Russians and the growing importance of the Russian language have helped to consolidate the group of Russian youth in Kirkenes. At the same time, negative attitudes towards Russians are still

found; stereotypes and memories of belonging to a minority held in low esteem are still alive among the youth. Against this background of contradictory attitudes the Russian youths in Kirkenes form their own group, distinguishing themselves both from Norwegian youths and those Russians who live in Russia.

In the first part of the text I have tried to present the idea of the general social background, including the relations between groups within the population, and a description of the groups of Russian immigrants that can be distinguished in today's Kirkenes. The relations between ethnic groups define the choices made concerning the language used that are dependant on how members of different ethnic groups (Russians in this case) identify their place in the social system. Language choice depends greatly on the attitude to the language, which is itself largely dependent on attitudes towards those who speak this language. Thus, attitudes towards languages and language choice are almost always socially conditioned (Vakhtin, Golovko 2004: 87). The description of the social and cultural context in which the attitudes to languages are formed and language choice is made is necessary to consider the language situation in general.

Language situation

*L*anguage situation is a recognized concept within the field of sociolinguistics, and is understood as a "complex of different modes of one or several languages existence in their social and functional interaction within certain territories: regions or administrative political entities" (Vakhtin, Golovko 2004: 47).

In the present research, the region under consideration is Kirkenes and the surrounding countryside. The description of a language situation presumes a synchronic approach, but, as Schweitser notes, «the description of a language situation won't be complete without pointing out some tendencies of development that describe the correlation of languages, their variants, and dialects in the dynamics" (Schweitser 1976: 145). Analyzing the today's language situation in Kirkenes, I have taken into consideration the period from 1991 to 2006, which makes an unbroken period of development in which change can be examined.

The language situation in Kirkenes can be defined as having multiple components as it incorporates four languages: Norwegian, Sámi, Finnish, and Russian. Some other languages are also represented in Kirkenes to a lesser extent, these being: Swedish, German, Swahili, Somali and some others, but they are not so widespread in terms of the numbers of speakers, the domains of use, or the importance attached to them by the local society.

Unfortunately, there are no precise data on the numbers of speakers of all these languages in Kirkenes. The native language of the majority of the population is Norwegian (and, by native language, we mean the language that a person has used from early childhood at home, which is often the person's first language or mother tongue). For others Norwegian is either their second native language, or a foreign language in which they have some proficiency. The level of Norwegian attained can be different, but the percentage of those who cannot speak Norwegian at all, is really low.

The number of Russian speakers for whom Russian is their native language is not clear. According to the official statistics, immigrants comprise 7% of the population of the municipality of Sør-Varanger. The majority of these immigrants are Russians, but it is not known what percentage of this total live in Kirkenes. We can assume that somewhere between 5% and 10% of the population of Kirkenes is Russian-speaking (i.e., have Russian as their native language). It is even more difficult to judge the extent to which the Finnish and Sámi languages are spoken as first languages in Kirkenes. Norwegian is the first native language of many of the Finnish and Sámi people living in Kirkenes.

The main language of the community, which dominates in all communicative domains, is Norwegian, which corresponds to the demographic situation. The main domain of other languages is informal intra-group communication among members of the respective ethnic groups.

The language situation in Kirkenes includes both kindred and non kindred languages. Norwegian belongs to the Germanic group of the Indo-European family of languages. As a result of historical development, there are two official forms of the Norwegian language today, Bokmål and Nynorsk. There are also an impressive number of dialects, some of which are closer to Bokmål, others to Nynorsk. The Russian language belongs to the Slavic group of the Indo-European family of languages. The Sámi and Finnish languages belong to the Baltic-Finnish branch of the Finno-Ugric

family of languages, thus being kindred languages with regard to each other, but not kindred with either Russian or Norwegian.

Norwegian is the only state language. The Sámi language functions as the official language in some parts of Norway. Neither Finnish nor Russian has any official status in Norway.

Thus, the language situation in Kirkenes can be characterized as having multiple components, and containing both kindred and non kindred languages.

The Russian language in Kirkenes

As mentioned above, Russian is the first or the second native language for a certain part of the population in Kirkenes. There is also a small group that learned Russian as a foreign language. The overwhelming majority of those who speak Russian as a native language are people who immigrated to Kirkenes from Russia or other republics formerly in the Soviet Union as grown-ups. For those who are born in Norway to Russian mothers, Russian tends to be a second native language. We can also assign to this group those who were born in Russia, but came to Norway at an early age and mastered Norwegian at the level equivalent to a native language. This group is comprised of young people of not more than 25 years in age.

The Russian language had very little importance in the language situation of the 1990s, as far as can be reconstructed today from the recollection of informants in the Kirkenes area. The prevalent strategy of Russian immigrants at that time was assimilation, which influenced their language choice. The Russian language served in a very limited number of communication areas, a lot of Russian women spoke Norwegian to their children, they declined to have a Russian assistant for their children at kindergarten, and they turned down the right of their children to receive instruction in their mother tongue at school.

18. "When the first Russians came here, there was a significant negative attitude towards us, about prostitution and so on. That's why some mothers were afraid to speak Russian to their children, and their children don't speak Russian. They didn't want people

to know that they are Russian. Mothers wanted to become Norwegian, and they spoke Norwegian to their children." (PF/R4, w., 45)

19. Informant: I remember that when I went to school and there were Russian classes, some of them [the informant's classmates] didn't attend these classes, because their parents were against it.

Interviewer: Why were they against it?

Informant: I think they wanted their children to be accepted as Norwegians, because this was the hope of mothers who came here and wanted to understand all system. I can see that many women speak only Norwegian to their children (PF/R13, w., 20).

Children too were ashamed of their Russian origins; they changed their names and adopted a Norwegian lifestyle, growing up as monolinguals.

There are several explanations for the unpopularity of Russian in the 1990s. First of all, the Russian-speaking population was much smaller than it is today, which naturally limited the possibility of the functioning of the Russian language in Kirkenes. Nevertheless, this does not explain the refusal to use Russian in informal communication between Russian immigrants, as well as in communication with children. The main reason for the failure to speak Russian was low prestige in which the language was held. The Russian language was the most obvious marker of belonging to a minority with low prestige comprised of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, which made it very unattractive in the local society. At that time, speaking Russian meant demonstrating one's low social status, and thereby provoking an exhibition of disrespect by Norwegians. The rejection of Russian can be explained by the desire to conceal one's own origin or that of one's children. One more factor that made Russian very unpopular was the belief that it did not have any practical value in Norwegian society, which was true at that time. This factor is not generally sufficient to cause a person to abandon their native language, but it could have an influence on the further decline in the use of the Russian language.

The result of the interplay of these factors was the very limited use of the Russian language in Kirkenes in the 1990s. The only domain for its use was informal intra-group communication, and little opportunity arose for such usage. Today we can observe how the place occupied by the Russian language in the language situation at the border is changing.

In the analysis of language choice I take a pragmatic approach, i.e., I am interested in the function and meaning of language in communication. This approach was developed by sociolinguists such as J. Gumperz and C. Myers-Scotton, amongst others. The pragmatic approach emphasizes how the speaker plays an active role in the choice of the code and in setting the frame of the communication. The immediate connection between language choice and such factors as the theme or situation of the conversation is often negated in this case, but the choice of language is connected with the setting of the particular relationship between the participants of the communication act. As S. Romaine writes about the choice of the form of conversational contribution, "it symbolizes the set of rights and obligations which you wish to be in force between speaker and addressee for the current exchange" (Romaine 1995: 137).

The choice of language is often explained by the aim to achieve the maximum effectiveness (Hamers 2000: 252). Nevertheless, this is not always valid. In certain circumstances another code can be used, instead of the one that would be most efficient for the particular act of communication. There are different reasons for making such choices, among them being the relations between the communicants or between the groups to which they belong, a threat to ethnic identity of the speaker and other personal or social factors (Hamers 2000: 252).

Carol Myers-Scotton has offered an approach to the interpretation of language choice based on the markedness theory. This theory assumes that there are both marked and unmarked codes that are available to the speakers, and that every code contains information on the distribution of rights and obligations between the participants of the communication, that «any code choice points to a particular interpersonal balance» (Myers-Scotton 2000: 138). Both the speaker and the addressee have ideas about certain social norms of interaction that can be used for the interpretation of any code choice. In those cases, when the roles of the participants in a communication act are defined, there is always some kind of agreement (often subconscious) on what code they are to use. This code is an *unmarked* one. When they use the unmarked code, they take on the status that is associated with it; nevertheless, the speaker can always choose another code, which is a *marked code*. Thereby he/she refuses the given role and expresses his/her attitude to the situation, as well as to the dominant society (Hamers 2000: 254-255). The choice of code is not determined by

any social norms, but these norms determine the markedness of a code in a given act of communication. A speaker can choose any code, but it will be interpreted according to the existing social norms (Myers-Scotton 2000: 141).

As Myers-Scotton points out, where the participants are considered in communication between members of an ethnic group, «the most salient of their social features is the shared ethnicity and the unmarked choice for such an exchange is the shared mother tongue» (Myers-Scotton 2000: 139). The author draws this conclusion on the basis of observations made in Kenya. In the situation of the Russian-Norwegian border region, this pattern does not always work, though its importance is indisputable.

In Norway there are two problems that prevent interlocutors from fully realizing this principle. First, the participants in a communicative act might be unaware of each other's ethnicity. In spite of statements claiming that Russians are easily recognized by Russians and Norwegians alike, there are situations where recognition does not occur. Second, the interlocutors' knowledge of one another's ethnicity ("Russians") doesn't always presuppose that Russian is an unmarked code for them, and this is again connected with the type of acculturation chosen by each of the interlocutors. When considering the ethnicity of interlocutors, defining whether they are "Russians" or "Norwegians" is inadequate. The group of Russians, as I tried to show above, is not a homogeneous one sharing a common identity, though they sustain a strong degree of unanimity in their relation vis-à-vis Norwegians (exemplified by the use of "us" Russians as opposed to "them", the Norwegians). I described four groups of Russian immigrants above. For example, women whom I ascribed to the first group made a deliberate decision to not maintain contact with Russians; consequently, the unmarked code for them would be the Norwegian language, because the use of Russian automatically sets their place in the social system as an immigrant from Russia. People ascribed to the second group are well integrated, and they interact both with Norwegians and Russians. Russian is the unmarked code for them in their communication with the majority of Russians, but there are certain restrictions that result in them choosing Norwegian for communication with Russian speakers in particular situations. These restrictions are, for example, the presence of those who cannot speak Russian, but who might be interested in the conversation.

Two other groups exist, and although these are not well-subscribed, they do, however, recognize the association between them that distinguishes them from other groups, and they are also accepted as groups by outsiders. In contrast to the groups identified previously, which consist of isolated individuals with common characteristics, these groups are social networks with interaction taking place between the individuals (although the boundaries are vague). Russian is the unmarked code for them in communication with Russians regardless of the context. Choosing to speak Norwegian is possible, but there would need to be some strong reasons for so doing, for example, direct participation in the conversation by a non-Russian speaker. The types of attitude encountered towards their "Russian" identity leads to a situation where Russian is an unmarked code for communication for one part of Russian immigrants irrespective of the context, but not for another part.

According to Fishman's theory, language choice is determined by the domain, i.e., by an institutionalized context that includes such features as the place and theme of and the participants included in the communication (Vakhtin, Golovko 2004: 101). In the framework of the markedness theory, therefore, different domains have different unmarked codes. The domains where Russian can be used today are limited only by the need for the presence of Russian speaking persons in a certain domain. In contemporary Kirkenes, the Russian language functions in all spheres along with Norwegian, excluding, probably, the sphere of public administration. Nevertheless, the character of its functioning is different.

20. "There are many Russians here, and it's not necessary to know Norwegian, one can live here without speaking Norwegian. I know plenty of people who have lived here for 8 or 10 years, and who speak very little Norwegian. There are Russian hairdressers here, there are Russian shop assistants in every shop, there are Russians in every office, they even have Russian teachers [teachers who are Russian] at school. In other words, they have their own community. And there is no incentive to learn the language" (PF/R8, w., 30)

In certain cases, the place where a conversation takes place is an important characteristic determining the language choice. The problem is that members of different ethnic groups (i.e., Russians and Norwegians) can have different ideas concerning which code is unmarked in a certain situation.

For the majority of Russians, the Russian language will be an unmarked code for communication between members of their ethnic group. At the same time, some Norwegians would see Norwegian as an unmarked code in some situations, irrespective of the interlocutors' native language. For example, Russian would be the unmarked choice for communication for a Russian teacher and a Russian mother at school, but some Norwegians who observe their communication would accept the Russian language as a marked choice in this situation. Another example is a situation when some Russians working in Kirkenes have experienced a ban on speaking Russian with their Russian colleagues. They describe it as an abnormal situation when they have to speak Norwegian to other Russians, but for Norwegians the use of Russian in a work place is a breach of social norms; in this case Russian is an unmarked code for Russians, but a marked one for Norwegians.

There is obviously a hierarchy of spheres for official interaction from the point of view of the usage of the Russian language. For example, shops and the library are places where Russian is an unmarked code for communication between Russians. Russian-speaking shop assistants and Russian librarians are hired specially to serve Russian customers in their native language. Consequently, speaking Russian to the customers meets with the expectations of their employers. Conversation between a shop assistant and a client does not involve any participation from other customers or employees. However, some other spheres, such as the school, kindergarten and the hospital, are less appropriate places for speaking Russian. The explanation for this is probably that these spheres are, as a rule, closed to outsiders. Shops are open to anyone that happens to visit Kirkenes, including those who are not members of the local community, but the schools and kindergartens are attended solely by members of the community, i.e., by those who are supposed to be "one of us". Speaking another language is perceived as a break of the social norms (although it should be noted this statement will not hold for all people, it depends a great deal on the individual and his/her attitude towards immigrants and their place in Norwegian society).

There are several parameters that influence the choice of Russian as a communication code, these are linguistic competence, positioning strategies adopted by interlocutors, the place in which the communication occurs, and the theme of the conversation, too, probably (we can assume that

discussions between colleagues concerning their private life will more likely be held in Russian than discussions about work).

When I asked Russian residents in Kirkenes what language they would choose to speak to a shop assistant (or a customer) if they knew that he/she were Russian, the majority were sure that only Russian would be used:

21. Interviewer: If you come to a shop, or a library, to some place where Russians work, would you speak Russian or Norwegian to the Russian staff?

Interviewee: Russian. If we are aware that people are Russians, we'll always talk Russian to them. And the women working there will always answer in Russian" (FR/R4, w., 50)

22. "The majority switch to Russian, because it's unnatural not to, in a way. Me and you, we both know that we speak the same language, so we would be putting on a show for, who knows for whom!" (FR/R8, w., 28)

Nevertheless, agreement with this opinion is not unanimous, even for communication in shops or at the library. One Russian woman who works in an environment where Russian is widely accepted told me that she will speak the language her customer prefers:

23. "I have to be absolutely sure that people want to speak Russian, and then they will switch language themselves." (FR/R2, w., 60)

Another Russian woman told how she always speaks Norwegian in the shops, because she feels that it is a demonstration of respect towards Norway and Norwegians. Some other informants described similar cases when other Russians talked Norwegian to them, even if they knew that they were Russians:

24. Interviewer: Have you experienced situations where Russians spoke Norwegian to you even if they knew that you are Russian?

Interviewee: Yes, there have been such situations. And I'm supposed to speak Norwegian with them. (FR/R2, w., 60)

25. "I have met some very strange people myself, in fact, it has only happened once. I worked at a shop as an «*ekstra hjelp*» [*extra help*] when I came here. And I knew for sure that one of the girls was Russian, and she could tell that I was Russian because I had an

accent, but she continued to speak Norwegian to me.” (FR/R8, w., 28)

The observations I made also prove that Russians do not always switch to Russian when talking to strangers whom they know to be Russian. There might be different motivations for behaving like this, but there are three main components, namely, personal positioning strategies, the presence of others, and the situation where the communicative act takes place, in addition to which there might be some uncertainty concerning whether the interlocutor is Russian or not.

In spite of the fact that Russian is used in all spheres of official communication, its use is an accident of circumstance because it depends on the coincidence of both interlocutors being able to speak Russian. It is, therefore, accidental and, often, “illegitimate” (i.e., speaking Russian is almost always a marked choice, conveying information about the speaker’s attitude towards the norms of the dominant society and his/her place in it).

I described above how Russian is used in the sphere of public communication. There are some other spheres, where Russian is actively used, and where it serves, first of all, as an unmarked code. One such sphere is the family, and in this sphere Russian is presented primarily as a code of communication between Russian mothers and their children. There are some families where both parents are Russian, but they are less typical in Kirkenes. One of the tendencies that exist today is a total refusal to speak Russian to a child. There are two sub-situations within this case. First, mother chooses not to speak Russian to her children as a matter of principle, because she does not want her child to differ from Norwegian children. Second, some mothers would prefer their children to speak Russian, but the environment they live in makes it very problematic to speak Russian with them. The first of these sub-situations was typical for the 1990s when the desire to succeed in making the children Norwegians prevailed.

26. “I think, maybe, that there were some feelings of protecting the children against mobbing. Oh, I don’t know! To make it better for them, because they were born here, they have grown up here, so to let them be like all the others.” (FR/R8, w., 28)
27. “There are some Russian women who speak Norwegian to their children because they think that it’ll be easier for them. But some

mothers want their children to become Norwegians as soon as possible. They do it for their children, they think. And later they realize that it was a mistake. But most of the women want their children to speak Russian" (FR/R4, w., 50).

28. "There some women who have a very negative attitude towards Russia, and they have made a conscious decision not to speak Russian, they speak only Norwegian" (FR/R4, w., 50).
29. "When we were allowed to have Russian lessons at school, some mothers were against it, because they said that their children had to learn Norwegian" (FR/R13, w., 20).

There are also other explanations for mothers' behaviour. In particular, the refusal to speak Russian with their children is explained by the fact that mothers think that it is easier for a child to grow up with one language and one culture.

30. "Some people think like this: they (the children) will find it difficult if they don't feel themselves to be either Norwegians, or Russians. They need to stick to one culture." (FR/R2, w., 60)

We can assume that this explanation results from mothers' own experience of adapting to a new culture and language, as well as from the experience of living in a strange country where they experienced a lack of respect and some negative attitudes. In this case we are encountering the mothers' desire to protect their children from the difficulties they themselves have experienced, but these difficulties are more the result of belonging to a minority with low prestige than of being bilingual. Some citations prove it:

31. "Mothers with a strong character, who are not afraid that their children will get lost, teach their children both the mother's and the father's languages." (FR/R2, w., 50)

The second "sub-situation" has a different motivation. Mothers speak Norwegian to their children because it is difficult to speak Russian while living in a Norwegian language milieu. For example, one of the reasons might be that a Norwegian father does not allow his wife to speak in Russian to their children, because he does not understand what is being said. Even if a Norwegian father does not forbid his wife to speak Russian,

some women tend to use Norwegian at home, so that all can understand what is said.

32. "They probably think that their children won't go back to Russia, that they will live here, and also, when there is a Norwegian in the family they all speak one language so that he understands everything, so as not to conceal anything from him. They don't understand that the children will not benefit from this." (FR/R13, w., 20).

Most of the informants judge such language behaviour negatively, emphasizing that children will learn Norwegian anyway, but that their mother tongue will be easily forgotten if they do not make an effort to maintain it. Some people also mention that mothers harm their children by talking Norwegian to them.

33. "I know that some children who have Russian mothers speak broken Norwegian. You can see that their mothers try to speak their poor broken Norwegian to them, and children pick up their manner of speaking very quickly." (FR/R13, w., 20).

Anyway, the most typical pattern today is that mothers speak mainly Russian to their children, while the children answer in Norwegian.

34. "I see often that children speak Russian if they know that this woman, for example, can't speak Norwegian, but they prefer to speak Norwegian with young people, it's easier for them." (FR/R2, w., 50).
35. "She (her 10 year old daughter) understands Russian, sure, but not everything... We normally speak Russian, but she answers in Norwegian sometimes." (FR/R5, w., 35).

The prevailing opinion is that most Russian mothers want their children to speak Russian, but they are not prepared to make the effort.

36. "Most women want their children to speak Russian, but they don't have time, the desire, or the opportunity to do anything about it. It's not so easy." (FR/R4, w., 50)
37. "The majority let things rip. Let it be as it will be. I have long worked at a kindergarten, and I've always worked with Russian

children, but I've seen very few mothers who really did anything to keep the language." (FR/R4, w., 50).

38. "If there had been an opportunity at school, I'd like my son to learn Russian, but we don't have it, and all parents are worried about it" (FR/R8, w., 28).
39. "Russian mothers want their children to know Russian. I want it, and I speak Russian to them [my children]; sometimes Norwegian, but I read bedtime stories to my younger son in Russian, I want them to retain at least the verbal language." (FR/R8, w., 28).

The system of education

School and kindergarten have a very important role to play in the process of forming children's language competence. Kindergartens in Kirkenes employ an assistant who is supposed to speak Norwegian and the child's second (or first) native language (Russian in this case) to ensure that children continue to hear their mother tongue. This assistant doesn't have a full-time position, but spends several hours a week with the children, speaking Russian to them, reading books in Russian, etc. The role of the assistant's presence is not only to develop a child's language skills, but to ensure that the children in question form a positive attitude towards their (second) native language they speak at home.

One of my informants told me that her son started speaking Russian when he got the Russian speaking assistant at kindergarten. She says that the boy became very proud that he was "so important" that had a special teacher who came only to teach him and that nobody could understand what they were talking about.

One woman who works as a Russian speaking assistant also told of the interest shown in the Russian language by some of the Norwegian children:

40. "One Norwegian child told me: «I'll also be Russian, when I grow up». A Norwegian child told me this. He wanted to be with us to listen to a book I was going to read. And there was also a situation in one kindergarten, when a Finnish child came there, and those Norwegian children who went to that kindergarten

told him: «We can't speak Finnish, but we can Russian», although they can't speak any Russian. But they've heard me and Russian children talking, and at least they know that this language exists" (FR/R4, w., 50).

Nevertheless, we can hardly claim that there is any systematic work done to develop the children's second (or first) native language, when this is a language other than Norwegian, at kindergartens.

When children go to school, they don't have an opportunity to learn Russian as their native language. There is a Russian teacher at the schools, but her task is to help children to learn the Norwegian language. They can learn Russian as a foreign language when they are in the 8th grade (corresponding to an age of about 13 years). Several years ago there were Russian classes for those who speak Russian as a native language, but there were only two lessons a week. The formal reason for the cancellation of these lessons was economic problems (the teacher's work couldn't be paid from the municipal budget anymore). But there is also another reason being mentioned: the aspiration for total equality that is also connected with the negation of the Russians' special place in Kirkenes (i.e., if Russians can learn their native language at school, then Vietnamese, Pakistani, Somali and all others should have the same opportunity). The representative of the local municipality, who is responsible for the general guidance of secondary schools, explained that the main task of Norwegian schools is to adapt a child to Norwegian society, not to preserve their native languages, which is the task of the family, not of the Norwegian government. Almost the same thing was said by a woman working at school:

41. "Before there were Russian classes, there was a teacher, a Russian woman who taught children Russian. But now these lessons are used to help Russian children to learn Norwegian, because a Norwegian school's task is to help children to adapt here, they've come here, and they'll live, work and study here. It's important for us that they understand what a teacher tells them, what their classmates say, that they have a good quality of life. And "beholde morsmål" (Norw. «retaining their mother tongue») is the parents' task" (FR/R8, w., 28).

It's interesting that many of the Russians whom I interviewed were sure that the Norwegian authorities do a considerable amount of work to keep the Russian language in use:

42. "Norway's national policy is to not prevent children from speaking the language of their mother or father, it's called their «mother tongue» (Norw. «morsmaal»), not father tongue, because it is almost uniquely mothers who come here." (FR/R2, w., 60)
43. "Norwegian society does everything for a person who wants to keep his/her language, including Russian." (FR/R4, w., 50)

Nevertheless, as can be inferred from the interviews with school and administration representatives, Norwegian official policy (at least in its local interpretation) doesn't aim to support the use of native languages other than Norwegian, although it doesn't prohibit using them.

As a result of the language choices made by mothers, and the influence of the social environment, as well as official policy, some children for whom Russian is their mother tongue don't speak Russian. In the 1990s it was typical that children refused to speak Russian even if they were fluent in it, because they didn't want to differ from their Norwegian friends. Today the situation is somewhat more complicated. It is often said that some children can't speak Russian at all.

44. "There are some children who don't understand anything [in Russian]. I've seen such children, two or three maybe, and I was really sorry for their grandparents, who couldn't learn Norwegian, and had grandchildren who couldn't speak Russian. There was a 4-year old girl, they told her that these are your grandma and granddad, and she couldn't talk to them." (FR/R2, w., 50)
45. "I know that my daughter has two Russian classmates, they have Russian mothers, but they can't speak Russian at all." (FR/R5, w., 35)

There is also an opinion that children can speak Russian, but don't want to do so.

46. "I think that there are some children who are 12-13 years old now, who don't want to speak Russian. They pretend that can't speak Russian." (FR/R13, w., 20)

Children usually speak Norwegian with each other, even if they can speak Russian:

47. "They [children] can speak Russian to their mother, but when they talk to other children they switch to Norwegian, because the language of play is Norwegian, not the language that their mother speaks." (FR/R4, w., 50).
48. "Those children who came here at an early age will speak Norwegian to each other, though it is absurd." (FR/R8, w., 28).
49. "Interviewer: What language do your children speak to each other in?
Interviewee: It depends, sometimes Russian, sometimes Norwegian. My eldest son prefers to speak Norwegian, it's easier for him, because he spends a lot of time with his friends, and all his friends are Norwegians." (FR/R8, w., 28)

It is difficult to judge whether these statements that children don't know Russian at all or don't understand it are true. There is also another opinion concerning the reasons why children choose not to speak Russian. It probably happens because they are ashamed of their Russian, because they don't know some words, or because they have an accent.

The fact that some of the children of "Russians" don't speak Russian or speak it, but make a lot of mistakes is often accepted by middle-aged immigrants as an inevitability. Young people obviously have a different attitude to this:

50. "It so ridiculous to see when those who came here a couple of years ago can't speak Russian correctly, can't write in Russian. Being a boy whose name is Vanya Ivanov, who came to Norway two years ago, and who can't speak Russian – it is ridiculous." (FR/R13, w., 20).

There are also situations described where teenagers didn't speak Russian, but started to speak it when got older.

51. "I know some Russians who are younger than me, and they hardly speak Russian. I hope that they'll be sorry about this later on. There are some who start speaking Russian later in life, but their Russian is broken and littered with errors" (FR/R13, w., 20).

The Russian language has a very high *symbolic value* for Russian youths in Kirkenes. Knowledge of Russian is important to them, being a marker of group identity. Russian is the main language of communication for Russian youths in Kirkenes, despite the fact that they go to a Norwegian school.

In addition to the symbolic value of the Russian language, it also has a *communicative value* that is not disputed by anyone, and it has an *aesthetic value*. Moreover, Russian is usually held in higher esteem than Norwegian by the Russian speaking population because of these characteristics. Statements concerning the richness of the Russian language, its expressive power and its beauty are extremely common, often with a simultaneous statement on the limitations of the communicative value of the Norwegian language.

The *practical value* of the Russian language is also considered to have increased with the passage of time. As recently as just a few years ago, Russian was considered to be a useless language to go to the trouble of learning. Today, however, many people consider Russian to be much more important, as a result of its wide use, primarily in economic spheres. Moreover, the importance of the Russian language is sometimes overestimated.

52. "We can see now that people, including Norwegians, who can speak Russian, get higher positions here." (FR/R2, w., 60).
53. "There is interest in the [Russian] language. People understand – or those who are more forward looking understand – that a great deal now depends on Russia. Speaking Russian may increase their chance to get a job in future, that knowledge of Russian gives them priority." (FR/R8, w., 28).
54. "I'm only 20 years old, and I've got a job, I have a permanent job with a good salary, and this is only because I speak Russian. And those people who intend to live here, for the next few years, at least, understand, that they can't live here without being able to speak the Russian language if they want to have a good job" (FR/R13, w., 20).

The prestige of the Russian language has also been growing recently, as it is connected not with the language itself, but with the ethnic group that speaks this language. The low esteem with which this group was held in

the 1990s led to the language being given low prestige, and the increase in prestige of the group is resulting in the growth of the prestige in which the language is held. As a result of the combination of these characteristics, *language loyalty* is formed, which seems to be really high amongst some groups of Russian immigrants in Kirkenes today.

Conclusion

The language situation in the Russian-Norwegian border region has changed dramatically over the last 15 years. Having analyzed social and ethnic processes that have been taking place in the region, we see that the Russian language has become an important element of the language situation in Kirkenes.

There are several reasons why Russian has gained in importance. First, the size of the Russian population in Kirkenes has grown, which has increased the opportunity for wider use of the Russian language. Second, Russian has exceeded the bounds of limited intra-group communication, and it is now used in other spheres, including those of business and commerce. The local community has changed its attitude towards the Russian language, which was considered to be a language used by a low-prestige minority; nowadays many schoolchildren choose Russian as their second foreign language in spite of widespread belief that it is a complicated language to learn.

This change of attitude is connected not only with an increase in the practical value of the Russian language. Some changes in the sphere of social relations have taken place that resulted in the rise of the status of Russians. In addition to such changes as the decrease of prostitution and the increase in the standard of living in Russia, another important fact is that Russian is the native language of a certain part of the local population (for those young people and teenagers who are growing and have grown up in Norway, but have Russian parents). Being Norwegians, they have chosen to keep their Russian identity and to use the Russian language, changing the status of Russians in Kirkenes. Russian is an important symbol of the group identity of these young people, but they also look upon it as a resource that gives them an advantage in the local labour market. Nevertheless, the attitude towards Russians and the Russian language is still am-

biguous. There is a close connection between language choice and the way of positioning in the dominant society that leads to the refusal of some immigrants who prefer to assimilate and do not want to maintain Russian culture to speak Russian. Nevertheless, the language loyalty of the majority of Russian immigrants is high enough to surmise that the sphere within which the Russian language functions in the border region will continue to expand.

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BARENTS INSTITUTE

The Barents Institute was established on 1st February 2006. It's an international research institute based on Norwegian state funding. English is its working language. It's located in Kirkenes, on the coast of northeastern-most Norway, close to Finland and on the border to Russia. Its research scope includes a circum-sub-arctic context. It is devoted to research and outreach in social science focusing economic conditions, cultural geography and multidisciplinary issues of the Barents Region, especially its border regions and Northwest Russia. The institute is a research organisation of senior scientists and post doctorate fellows. It engage in co-advisorships of PhD candidates, and of about 5 MA candidates annually.