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## **Voices on the Move: Narratives of Mobility and (Trans)Linguistic Performance of Post-Soviet Migrants in Russia's Urban Environments**

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Intensive migration flows within the post-Soviet space have maintained a relatively homogenous image of Russian as a persistent 'lingua franca' of the region; the Russian language of these mobile groups, however, has long diversified into a variety of localized vernaculars, sociolects of migrant lifestyles, and become a key medium for expressing their transnational experiences. Once these mobile migrant groups from all over the post-Soviet space arrive in Russia, they usually face strong influence from the dominant language culture which unavoidably labels them as 'non-native' speakers of the language – oftentimes despite their real language competences. What this means to migrants themselves is that language competence becomes a focal point for their experiences in the process of integration to the present-day Russian society.

One of the consequences of the vast (yet hidden) presence of migrants with various linguistic backgrounds in Russia's urban environments is the ways dominant language ideology deals with this ambiguous presence both through its explanatory and prescriptive efforts. Immigration regimes with their linguistic requirements, language expectations towards job applicants or school entrants with migrant backgrounds, or mainstream representations of migrant presence through mass media provide a rigid framework of social expectations which shape migrants' experience in the receiving environment and change their language identity. New practice-based communities of support and solidarity among migrant residents present one of the ways to deal effectively with the incongruencies of immigration regimes and integration options, another one being maintaining strong networks of communication and exchange across borders, with communities in their respective home countries or other migration donors in the post-Soviet space.

Based on the results of an ethnographic research project carried out in Russian cities in April-October 2017, the paper explores the intersection of two different layers of sociolinguistic effects which current migration faces in Russian urban environments. Firstly, it looks into how migrants' understanding of space, belonging and movement through borders corresponds with their perception of own linguistic performance and use of different linguistic resources available in a new migratory context. Secondly, it highlights the key elements of Russia's policies and practices towards migrants in terms of their language integration and explores their influence on how migrants narrate their life in large cities. Its overarching aim is to conceptualise the connection between narratives migrants share on their feeling of 'being on the move' and their language performances and metalinguistic thinking which undergo critical changes in a new sociolinguistic environment.