Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

Master's Degree programme in Language Sciences

Final Thesis

Belarusian Language in Belarus: What the State Education System Does to Safeguard it

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Academic Year
2014 / 2015

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Introduction

The Belarusian language is one of the two official languages of the Republic of Belarus (together with Russian). Although Belarusian is a highly developed written language, the status of Belarusian in the "*Atlas of the World Languages in Danger, 2010*" issued by UNESCO is marked as *vulnerable*.

This research is aimed at detecting to what extent Belarusian is protected by the system of state education. In education language is central, and the choice of language as the medium of instruction in schools in many ways decides the vitality of the language and its future in society. The study is focused on the methods which educational establishments use in language management and in the promotion of language use.

The current thesis is an attempt to gather systematic usable data on the peculiarities of language education in Belarus and offer the possible ways of encouraging Belarusian-Russian bilingualism in education and social life. The research tools used are the analysis of important legal documents on the language policy of the Republic of Belarus and the relevant sociolinguistic data collected by both Belarusian and international scholars.

The study is organized in the following way: Chapter 1 gives a characteristic of the language situation in contemporary Belarus from a sociolinguistic perspective. First, Chapter 1 discusses the current status of the Belarusian language in the globalizing environment and studies official bilingualism in such domains as family, business, science, mass media and art. Second, the first chapter outlines the theoretical framework for assessing language vitality. With the help of UNESCO's guidelines for language vitality analysis, a multifaceted evaluation of the vitality of the Belarusian language has been performed.

We conducted 280 informal interviews with the representatives of three generations of Belarusians living in Minsk and Vitebsk in order to provide more data on the percentage of people who actually speak Belarusian on a daily basis and analyse the domains in which Belarusian is used. An important part of the survey is focused on how Belarusians perceive the Belarusian language and whether they consider Belarusian to be endangered. Chapter 1 motivates the search for the possible ways of raising the vitality status of Belarusian.

In order to support the evaluation of the vitality of Belarusian, Chapters 2 and 3 provide an in-depth analysis of the evolution of Belarusian as a symbol defining national identity and as a medium language of education. Chapter 2 describes the main stages in the

development of the Belarusian language and explains the complex political and social events that have influenced the establishment of the Belarusian language as an official language. The main focus in Chapter 3 is on the development of Belarusian-medium education in Belarus.

Chapter 4 discusses the language situation in Belarus from 1980 to 2009. Drawing from mass media analysis, secondary sources and statistical data, Chapter 4 argues that this period in the history of the Republic of Belarus was decisive for both Belarusian statehood and the implementation of Belarusian as the medium of education. In Chapter 4 the peculiarities of language planning are explained, and the connections between language and politics, language and identity, language and nation, language and culture are revealed. Chapter 4 lists the drawbacks of the single-language education in Belarusian and points out the benefits of bilingual education.

Chapter 5 introduces the characteristics of contemporary Belarusian-medium education and analyses the statistical data on the use of Belarusian in all stages of education. Chapter 5 demonstrates that the support of the state education system in the preservation and promotion of Belarusian is not enough: despite the efforts taken by the Ministry of Education, the teaching of Belarusian remains formal and does not encourage the use of the language outside of class. The main argument is the peculiarities of bilingualism in Belarusian education. Chapter 5 aims at pointing out the importance of state education in the promotion of Belarusian and in increasing the vitality status of the language, as identified in Chapter 1. Improving the quality of Belarusian-medium education is fundamental for the existence of the Belarusian language, and the discussion of the integration of Belarusian and Russian as medium languages aims at encouraging reforms of the contemporary bilingual education in Belarus. These reforms may result in the emergence of a unique educational pattern in which two closely related languages complement one another. The main goal of this thesis is to show the existing tendencies in society towards Belarusian and to draw attention to bilingual education as a measure of safeguarding Belarusian in Belarus.

Chapter 1. The Current Status of the Belarusian Language. Evaluation of Language Vitality

In Belarus the Belarusian language, though being the titular language and one of the two official languages, falls into the category 'a minority language' because it is spoken by circa 3 million speakers, according to *Ethnologue*[1] (the overall population is circa 10 million people). Even though 86% of the population is ethnically Belarusian, the group of Belarusian-speaking Belarusians is numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population. Hence, the Belarusian language in Belarus needs protection. Chapter 1 focuses on the current status of the Belarusian language in the globalizing environment and analyses official bilingualism in Belarus. In Chapter 1 the attempt to evaluate the vitality of the language is undertaken. The analysis of the language situation in Belarus was performed with the help of both internal and external evaluation: I interviewed 280 Belarusians. The findings provided by the interviews reflect the attitude of the population towards the Belarusian language and the data collected from newspaper and online articles helps assess the vitality of Belarusian.

1.1. Contemporary Language Situation in Belarus

The demographic factor influencing the loss of the Belarusian language is the aging of the nation. The rural areas are populated mostly by the elderly people, young Belarusians are more interested in learning foreign languages than in developing Belarusian and maintaining it. The immigrants who come to Belarus learn Russian and as the Ministry of Education reports, there are no courses of Belarusian as a second language for immigrants. Moreover, the majority of the population is not aware of the fact that the Belarusian language is endangered and therefore do not see the necessity to safeguard it. The possibilities of language revival have been discussed by the governmental bodies and some measures have already been taken. Institutional support in such domains as education, administration, mass media, law and religion has helped preserve and promote the Belarusian language.

At present the languages involved in communication in Belarus are the official languages Russian and Belarusian, the minority languages Polish, Lithuanian and Yiddish, and the dialectal varieties. From a linguistic perspective, Standard Belarusian and Standard

[1]Ethnologue, 2015. *Belarusan*. [online] Available at: < http://www.ethnologue.com/language/bel /> [Accessed 3 July 2015].

Russian in Belarus have been well researched previously; the increasing interest in the unstandardized variety *trasianka* (a mixed Belarusian-Russian language) has led to vast sociolinguistic research of the language situation in Belarus. Linguists, however, argue that neither Standard Russian nor Standard Belarusian is used correctly, in many cases there are phonetic or lexical interferences from one language to the other. The purity of the standard languages that belong to the same subgroup of Slavic languages is one of the main concerns of the modern linguists. As Giger and Sloboda state, the language situation in Belarus is characterized by *non-parallel bilingualism*[2] (Giger, 2008: 321), the distribution of languages in observable public spaces reveals the sociolinguistic complexity of the Belarusian community. The components of the linguistic landscape (official signs in Russian and Belarusian, advertisements in different languages, graffiti in vernacular linguistic varieties) contain different social meanings that present a real challenge to a foreigner.

According to Koryakov (2002), the main acrolect of Belarus is the Russian language and Belarusian is used in the everyday speech of a small part of the population, the mesolect is the Russian-Belarusian mixed language called '*trasianka*' and the basilect constitute Belarusian dialects. As Belarusian linguists state (Mechkovskaya 2008, Lukashanets 2010), the distinction between a language and a dialect is hardly discernible. The speakers identify themselves with a particular language but this self-identification presents problems for the classification of the languages.

In sociolinguistics the term '*national language*' is used to indicate 'a language of a political, cultural and social unit' (Holmes, 2013: 102). The national language is used as a symbol of national unity, its main function is to identify the nation and unite it on the basis of the common language and culture. The official language is the language used by the government and the primary function of the official language is utilitarian. Belarus is a country with a predominantly Belarusian population. The Belarusian language being both the national and official language is used mostly for symbolic purposes rather than utilitarian ones. Such scholars as Mechkovskaya (2003) and Koryakov (2002) point at the fact that the Belarusian language was preserved as an official language of the Republic of Belarus in order to save it from extinction, not for its promotion.

Belarusian is protected by the European Charter for the Minority Languages as the minority language of Poland and Ukraine. Belarus has not yet signed the European Charter for the Minority Languages. So, the Belarusian language in the Republic of Belarus does not

[2]Most texts are produced only in Russian, the use of Belarusian is limited to symbolic functions.

receive any legislative support from the organizations outside Belarus and language management is conducted only by Belarusian governmental bodies. There are Belarusian legal documents that help preserve its status and vitality but these measures are not enough. Serious defensive measures are to be taken by the governmental bodies in order to safeguard the Belarusian language.

1.2. Main Principles of UNESCO's Methodological Guidelines *Language Vitality and Endangerment*

In 2003 the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Section's Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages issued a document that provides guidelines on the methods of defining the vitality of the languages.[3] Using the methodology described in the document, it is necessary to specify the accurate vitality status of contemporary Belarusian in order to work out the means necessary to encourage language diversity in Belarus and save the Belarusian language from decline and extinction. The role of the native speakers of Belarusian is to maintain their language, and the Russian-speaking Belarusians are to support bilingualism and protect the language of the titular nation.

UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger defines the status of the Belarusian language as '*vulnerable*' (2015), which means '*most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)*'.[4]

A decade earlier, the same Atlas marked the Belarusian language as 'severely endangered' ('*language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves*').[5] As most Belarusian scholars and nationally-oriented political activists state, the use of the Belarusian language in everyday communication in the two past decades has decreased (1999 – 36,7% of speakers, 2009 – 23,4% of speakers). Defining the level of endangerment of the Belarusian language is important because it will help work out the possible ways to promote its study and use.

[3]See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].
[4]United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015. Atlas of languages in danger. [online] Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/access-to-knowledge/linguistic-diversity-and-multilingualism-on-internet/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/> [Accessed 29 July 2015].
[5]Ibid.

As UNESCO's document *Language Vitality and Endangerment* emphasizes, language communities are of a complex structure and in order to assess the vitality of the language one has to take into consideration a number of factors. The main factors needed for the evaluation of the language's state of endangerment are indispensable for characterizing the sociolinguistic situation in which the Belarusian language is functioning. According to the Document[6], the major factors of language vitality include:

1) Intergenerational Language Transmission;

2) Absolute Number of Speakers;

3) Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population;

4) Shifts in Domains of Language Use;

5) Response to New Domains and Media;

6) Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy.

The abovementioned factors are to be studied in detail in connection with one another, and the complexity of the process of assessing language vitality depends on the combination of factors. In order to provide as precise characteristics as possible, one has to study other important factors, such as:

7) Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use;

8) Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language;

9) Type and Quality of Documentation.

In order to access the language situation in the Republic of Belarus, I used the following methods:

- Internal evaluation: we conducted a series of interviews with the representatives of the speech community (280 respondents). The interviews with Belarusians belonging to three generations helped reveal the attitude of the population towards the titular language and characterize the domains in which the Belarusian language is used;

- External evaluation: language maintenance, revitalization, literacy development and documentation was evaluated on the basis of the statistical data provided by official bodies and non-governmental organizations, the results of language vitality evaluation are analysed further in this chapter.

[6]United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

Field Study on the Vitality of Belarusian

The field study took place from March 2015 to July 2015. In Vitebsk and the Vitebsk region we interviewed 140 people. In Minsk and the Minsk region the number of interviewees were 100 and 40 respectively. The hypothesis that we had in the beginning of the field study was the following: "Belarusians develop fluency in Belarusian at school but then 'forget' the language after many years of disuse". Our idea was to interview people who completed their studies to find out how many interviewees speak Belarusian on a daily basis. We were also interested whether the interviewees attended Belarusian- or Russian-medium schools/classes.

One of the main aims of the field study was to figure out if the Belarusian language is effectively transmitted from older generations to younger generations. When performing the field study, our main focus was on Belarusian families, because we wanted to get usable data on the use of Belarusian in everyday communication. For this purpose we interviewed three generations of Belarusians. Roughly the three groups can be called 'grandparents' (born between 1935 and 1945); 'parents' (born between 1965 and 1975); 'children' (born between 1985 and 1995). First, we interviewed the representatives of the 'children' generation. With the help of social networks we sent a short questionnaire to 64 Belarusians born from 1985 to 1995 living in the Vitebsk and Minsk regions. We asked them to answer these questions themselves and ask their siblings, parents and grandparents the same questions. The questions were divided into four sections:

1. *When were you born? Where were you born? Where do you live?*
2. *What language do you speak at home?*
3. *What is your highest level of education? What language was used as the medium of instruction on different stages of your education?*
4. *Where did you last hear the Belarusian language?*

The first stage of the field study provided us with 118 questionnaires of the group 'children', 132 of the group 'parents' and 92 of the group 'grandparents'. On the second stage of the field study we chose only the questionnaires filled in by the interviewees born in the Vitebsk and Minsk regions. The most complicated question for the interviewees appeared to be '*Where did you last hear the Belarusian language?*' because it required more consideration, since it is an open question and there are a lot of possible answers. The analysis of the interviews made it possible to come to the following conclusions:

1. Most people born and raised in rural areas attended Belarusian-medium schools. (53 out of 56 in the Vitebsk region and 96 out of 105 in the Minsk region).

2. Belarusians living in the countryside who speak *trasianka* indicate Belarusian as mother tongue in the questionnaire (7 out of 13 in the Vitebsk region and 21 out of 25 in the Minsk region).

3. The role of intergenerational transmission of Belarusian in the Vitebsk region is insignificant: none of the respondents gave an answer '*from my parents/grandparents'* to the question '*Where did you last hear the Belarusian language*?'. 23% of the respondents from the Minsk region claimed that their parents/grandparents speak Belarusian and therefore they speak Belarusian with them.

4. Belarusians living in the Vitebsk region are not used to hearing Belarusian in the streets, in the shops, whereas 45% of the respondents who live in Minsk said they hear Belarusian often in the streets.

5. Most often Belarusians hear Belarusian on TV (40% of the respondents from the Vitebsk region and 18% from the Minsk region) and on the radio (12% and 14% of the respondents from the Vitebsk and Minsk regions respectively).

6. University graduates who were born and raised in the Vitebsk and Minsk regions and attended Belarusian-medium schools in the questionnaires indicated Russian as mother tongue.

These and other findings will be discussed further in Chapter 1.

1.3. Assessing the Vitality of Belarusian. Proportion of Belarusian Language Speakers. Intergenerational Transmission of the Belarusian Language

The analysis of the vitality of Belarusian depends to a large extent on such factors as *Intergenerational Language Transmission*, *Domains of Use of Modern Belarusian* and *Attitudes towards the Use of Belarusian*, which require the data collected with the help of the interviews. Furthermore, the results of the field study give a better idea of how many people

actually speak Belarusian[7] and can be used to support the statistical data provided by the National Statistical Committee of Belarus and the Ministry of Education.

Factor 1: Intergenerational Language Transmission

Taking into account Fishman's (1991) opinion on the intergenerational continuum that helps stabilize the language and protect it from extinction, it is possible to say that Belarusian is a severely endangered language (*Severely endangered. Level of vitality: 2. The language is spoken only by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may still understand the language, they typically do not speak it to their children*).[8] The analysis of the data collected with the help of the interviews conducted in the Vitebsk and Minsk regions allowed us understand the general tendency of language transmission.

Vitebsk and the Vitebsk region

Vitebsk is situated in the north-east of Belarus and the population of the city is predominantly Russian-speaking. The Vitebsk region borders on Russia, Latvia and Lithuania and it is interesting to see how Belarusian and Russian are used in this region.

Table 1. Data from the survey conducted in Vitebsk and the Vitebsk region.

	Total	**Born and/or raised in Vitebsk**	**Born and/or raised in the Vitebsk region, moved to Vitebsk**	**Born and/or raised in the Vitebsk region, stay in the Vitebsk region**
'grandparents'	40	12	19	9
'parents'	50	40	8	2
'children'	50	23	15	2

'Grandparents' who went to schools in Vitebsk (12) received secondary education in Russian and speak Russian. Those who went to rural schools attended mostly Belarusian-medium schools (27 out of 28 respondents). If after school people belonging to this generation moved

[7] Cf. Factor 2: Absolute Number of Speakers and Factor 3: Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

[8] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

to Vitebsk to continue their studies or to work, they were exposed to the Russian-speaking population and started using Russian. Those who decided to stay in the countryside do not speak proper Belarusian either, the language these people use is the mixed language (*trasianka*), and the main trait of this language variety is a discernible Belarusian accent with the extensive use of Russian vocabulary. 22,5% of the focus group 'grandparents' (9 out of 40) kept at least a trace of the Belarusian language, be it pronunciation of certain words, violations of syntactic rules or the use of lexemes in Belarusian. Notwithstanding the fact that 9 people use the mixed Belarusian-Russian language for communication, only 5 of them indicated Belarusian as mother tongue.

The representatives of the focus group called 'parents' were born in 1965-1975. The major part of the 'parents' generation was already raised in Russian-speaking families in Vitebsk and attended Russian-medium schools. The children of the focus group 'grandparents' who remained in the countryside moved to Vitebsk and other big cities to receive professional or higher education and the medium language of instruction was Russian. Therefore, the group called 'parents' used Russian both at work and at home and raised their children in Russian and gave them secondary education in Russian-medium schools.

For the interviews the respondents were asked to fill in a questionnaire that included questions on the level of education (*What is your highest level of education? What language was used as the medium of instruction on different stages of education?*). From the group 'grandparents' 23 people received tertiary education, 12 attended professional/vocational schools, and 5 finished 8 classes of secondary schools and did not continue their education.

42 representatives of the focus group 'parents' received university education, and only 8 attended professional/vocational schools. Two people were born and raised in the countryside. Among the representatives of the focus group 'children', 46 possess university degrees and 4 finished professional/vocational schools, 2 were raised in the rural environment and live there.

The interviews revealed that nobody named Belarusian as the language one uses on a daily basis. Moreover, all the respondents shared the opinion that only teachers of Belarusian speak Belarusian at home. The representatives of the generation that is roughly marked as 'children' all claim to be Russian-speaking, although some of them (7 people) attended Belarusian-medium classes and/or took their final exams in Belarusian and have good command of the language.

The responses to the question '*Where did you last hear the Belarusian language*?' are as follows: TV (40%), radio (12%), public transport (8%). Interestingly, none of the respondents gave an answer '*from my parents*'. The analysis of the interviews revealed another interesting fact: the respondents emphasized that the language their parents or grandparents speak/spoke was not Belarusian but *trasianka* that was characterized by the use of the Russian words pronounced with Belarusian accent.

Taking into account the information from the interviews with the 140 citizens of Vitebsk and the Vitebsk region, one can infer that the use of Belarusian in this city is indeed very scarce and the language situation may be described as critical (*Critically endangered (1): The youngest speakers are in the great-grandparental generation, and the language is not used for everyday interactions. These older people often remember only part of the language but do not use it, since there may not be anyone to speak with*).[9]

Minsk and the Minsk region

Minsk is the capital of Belarus and the field study conducted in Minsk can help figure out the general tendencies of the use of Belarusian in Belarus.

Table 2. Data from the survey conducted in Minsk and the Minsk region.

	Total	**Born and/or raised in Minsk**	**Born and/or raised in the Minsk region, moved to Minsk**	**Born and/or raised in the Minsk region, stay in the Minsk region**
'grandparents'	40	2	29	9
'parents'	50	14	25	11
'children'	50	19	26	5

Most of the representatives of this group of 'grandparents' were born and raised either in the countryside or in other cities of Belarus and moved to the capital of the country for study or work. The mother tongue of 31 respondents was claimed to be Belarusian, however it is hard to say whether it was standard Belarusian. The language that 28 respondents used for the interviews was *trasianka*, 1 Minsk-born interviewee spoke standard Belarusian, the other 8 respondents named Russian as their mother tongue.

[9] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

The level of education of the interviewed from Minsk is presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Level of Education (the survey conducted in Minsk and Minsk region).

	Tertiary education	**Professional training**	**Secondary school**
'grandparents'	18	14	8
'parents'	28	20	2
'children'	44	5	1

The group 'parents' showed the highest percentage of the speakers of Belarusian (54%). 27 respondents out of 50 use Belarusian for everyday communication, 23 interviewees are Russian-speaking. The respondents from Minsk seem to be used to hearing Belarusian in the streets and shops of the city. The answers to the question '*When did you last hear the Belarusian language*?' differed significantly from the answers that Vitebsk citizens provided. 45% of the respondents from Minsk said they hear Belarusian on public transport and in the streets, 23% answered that their parents/grandparents speak it, 18% hear Belarusian on TV and 14% of the respondents hear it on the radio.

The representatives of the 'children' generation who were born and raised in Minsk favor the promoting of the Belarusian language and often attend exhibitions of traditional Belarusian art and modern theatrical performances in Belarusian, go to concerts of popular Belarusian music and rock festivals of Belarusian groups. 6 people speak Belarusian on a daily basis, although their parents are Russian-speaking. The reasons for the choice of the Belarusian language are the interest in the Belarusian language and the sense of belongingness to the Belarusian culture.

The comparison of the data on the transmission of the Belarusian language in Vitebsk and Minsk shows that the interviewees from Minsk tend to use the Belarusian at home (at least the representatives of the 'parent' generation), therefore the level of endangerment can be defined as '*definitely endangered*' (3), but not '*critical*' (1).

Since the interviews were conducted only in two cities and the number of respondents is 280 in total, it is not enough to provide the exhaustive account of the peculiarities of the Intergenerational Language Transmission of the Belarusian language. However, the tendency is clear: the Belarusian language is either used by the older generations that are dying out or the so-called parental generations. The peculiarity of the language situation in Minsk is that the major part of the citizens moved to the capital city from rural areas during the Soviet epoch and after the Chernobyl catastrophe in the end of the 1980s. A significant part of the

population of Minsk consists of people who have A rural background and attended Belarusian-medium schools and after moving to the cities preserved the connections with the Belarusian-speaking population. These people underwent linguistic assimilation to a lesser extent than the population of the Vitebsk region that through history proved to be the most russified region of the country.

The intergenerational transmission of the Belarusian language is characterized mostly by the transmission of *trasianka*. Kittel et al (2010: 52) note that the mixed language does not disappear and is not replaced completely by the Russian language: 'the fact that Trasianka is most obviously already spoken in the third generation and has not been replaced (along with Belarusian) by the speakers of Russian in all communicative spheres can be considered as external, social evidence for the possibility of the development of a new mixed system'. Taking into account the spread of *trasianka* and the identification of *trasianka* with the Belarusian language by its speakers, the vitality status of the standard Belarusian language should be defined as 'severely endangered language' (*Severely endangered. Level of vitality: 2. The language is spoken only by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may still understand the language, they typically do not speak it to their children*).[10]

Factor 2: Absolute Number of Speakers and Factor 3: Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population

It is problematic to define what it means 'to speak the language'. Belarusians can be called 'receptive bilinguals', they understand Belarusian well but they cannot interact with each other using Belarusian. In order to evaluate the exact number of the speakers of Belarusian a complex sociolinguistic research should be done. In this thesis we can only analyse the statistical data from the Censuses conducted in 1999 and 2009 in order evaluate the number of speakers of Belarusian.

The 1999 Census

Table 4 below presents data from the 1999 Census on languages and nationalities of the Republic of Belarus:

[10]United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

Table 4. Nationality and mother tongue, 1999. [11]

	Population, thousand people	% of the total number	Mother tongue		
		Nationality's titular language as mother tongue	Belarusian	Russian	Other
Overall population	10045	81,9	73,7	24,1	2,2
Belarusians	8159,1	85,6	85,6	14,3	0,1
Russians	1141,7	90,7	9,1	90,7	0,2
Poles	395,7	16,5	67,1	16,2	16,7
Ukrainians	237	42,9	14,3	42,8	42,9
Jews	27,8	5,4	17,1	77	5,9

In 1999, 14,3% of Belarusians considered Russian to be their mother tongue. 20 years before more Belarusians named Russian as their mother tongue (33,2%).[12] The turn towards the Belarusian language can be explained by the fact that in the 1990s more Belarusians began to identify themselves as Belarusians. Another explanation is the formulation of the question in the census. The 1989 census asked people to only indicate the mother tongue, whereas in 1999 census there was a clear distinction between 'the mother tongue' and 'the language of everyday use'. And in fact the 1999 census revealed that the majority of the population used Russian in their everyday communication (58,6% of Belarusians used Russian[13]) but indicated Belarusian as their mother tongue.

The development of Belarusian in the 1990s did not slow down the process of russification. The Russian language remained the most widely used language on the territory of Belarus. The high level of urbanization and the use of Russian in all public domains intensified the russification of the Belarusians.

[11]National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2015. *Population Census 1999* [online] Available at: <http://www.belstat.gov.by/en/perepis-naseleniya/perepis-naseleniya-1999-goda/html> [Accessed 29 July 2015].
[12]Ibid.
[13]Ibid.

Table 5. Nationality and the Languages Spoken at Home, 1999[14]

	Population, thousand people	Language Spoken at Home,%		
		Belarusian	Russian	Other
Overall population	10045	36,7	62,8	0,5
Belarusians	8159,1	41,3	58,6	0,1
Russians	1141,7	4,3	95,7	-
Poles	395,7	57,6	37,7	4,7
Ukrainians	237	10,2	83,6	6,2
Jews	27,8	3,8	95,7	0,5

As the statistics on the nationalities and languages spoken at home shows, among the people who indicated the Belarusian language as the main language spoken at home, 3373 thousand were Belarusians (92%).[15] However, among the total number of Belarusians, the Belarusian-speaking Belarusians constituted only 41,3%. Interestingly, more than a half of the Polish population (57,6%) used Belarusian on a daily basis. The Russian language was spoken at home by 6308 thousand people (62,8% of the population). 4783 thousands of speakers of Russian were Belarusians.

When analyzing the data of the 1999 Census it is important to remember that the early 1990s were marked with the process of belarusization, which influenced the choice of Belarusian as mother tongue in the 1999 Census' questionnaires[16].

The 2009 Census

The data from the 2009 Census illustrates further russification of Belarus. The following table presents the data on the number of speakers of Belarusian (according to the 2009 Census):

[14]National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2015. *Population Census 1999* [online] Available at: <http://www.belstat.gov.by/en/perepis-naseleniya/perepis-naseleniya-1999-goda/html> [Accessed 29 July 2015].
[15]Ibid.
[16]Cf. Chapter 4 for the peculiarities of language planning in 1991-1994.

Table 6. Population of the Republic of Belarus and the Languages Spoken[17]

	thousand people			% of the overall population		
	Overall population	**Urban population**	**Rural population**	**Overall population**	**Urban population**	**Rural population**
Overall population	9503,8	7064,5	2439,3	100	100	100
The language considered to be the mother tongue						
Belarusian	5058,4	3113,2	1945,2	53,2	44,1	79,7
Russian	3948,1	3517,3	430,7	41,5	49,8	17,7
The language spoken at home						
Belarusian	2227,2	796,2	1431,0	23,4	11,3	58,7
Russian	6673,0	5789,0	884,0	70,2	81,9	36,2

According to the data from the 2009 Census, only 23,4% of Belarusians speak Belarusian every day. The vitality of the language can be characterized as "*2.Severely endangered. A minority speak the language*".[18] However, it is important to emphasize that 53,2% of the population name the Belarusian language as their mother tongue.

The 2009 Census proved once again that the language situation in Belarus is a paradox: 53,2% of the population consider Belarusian to be their mother tongue, but only 23,4% of the total population speak Belarusian at home. Russian is spoken by 70,2% of the population, whereas 41,5% claim Russian to be their mother tongue. Belarusian is declared mother tongue by the majority of the population. This can be explained by the identification of the population with their nationality, because 86% declared their nationality as 'Belarusian' in the official census of 2009.

The term 'mother tongue' is in fact ambiguous:

a) it can refer to the language the child learnt first, the language his family speaks;

b) it can indicate the language one speaks better;

c) it can be a marker of a national identity.

[17]National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2015. *Population Census 2009* [online] Available at: <http://www.belstat.gov.by/en/perepis-naseleniya/perepis-naseleniya-2009-goda/html> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

[18]United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

One can notice that Belarusian is not used as a tool of communication but the attribute of national identity and cultural heritage. Such scholars as Mechkovskaya, Lukashanets, Kittel, Woolhiser, Koryakov noted an important symbolic role the Belarusian language plays as a medium to demonstrate one's nationality, belongingness to a particular culture. However, the Russian language is also viewed as a mother tongue and part of Belarusian culture.

The main drawback of the population censuses conducted in the Republic of Belarus is the absence of the option '*trasianka*'.[19] As the surveys revealed the self-reported languages used by the population, it is difficult to find out the actual number of the speakers of Russian, Belarusian and the mixed language *trasianka*. The research conducted by Kittel (2010) revealed that the use of *trasianka* is vast and it can even be considered a language of its own. The research conducted by Kittel (2010) revealed that a significant number of Belarusians interviewed pointed to the fact that *trasianka* is distinct from both Russian and Belarusian. Moreover, since Russian and Belarusian are very closely related languages (they belong to the same subgroup of the same family) and share at least two centuries of common history on the major part of the territory of the modern-day Belarus, it is hard to say whether *trasianka* is closer to Standard Belarusian or to Standard Russian.

The majority of Belarusian speech communities are characterized by a habitual pattern of choosing *trasianka* for everyday communication and Standard Russian or Standard Belarusian for formal communication. Linguists, however, argue that neither Standard Russian nor Standard Belarusian are used correctly, there always are phonetic or lexical interferences from one language to the other. The purity of the standard languages that belong to the same subgroup of Slavic languages is one of the main concerns of the modern linguists. Some of them even foresee the possibility of development a Belarusian Russian.

Belarusian linguist Norman claims that the number of speakers who use Standard Russian or Standard Belarusian in Belarus is low: 'in our country there are very few people who clearly differentiate between these two language. Even if a person speaks Russian well, in his speech sooner or later Belarusian words like '*bul'ba*' [potatoes], '*hrošy*' [money], '*žonka*' [wife], '*šyl'da*' [sign] [cf. standard Russian "*kartoška*", "*den'gi*", "*žena*", "*vyveska*"] will slip out…' (cit. in Woolhiser, 2012: 39). Woolhiser (2012: 40) following the Belarusian scholar stated: 'very few Belarusians, regardless of what they themselves might believe, can be regarded as authentic Russian speakers at all'. In fact, in a number of situations the population of Belarus speaks *trasianka*. The language beliefs of the population of Belarus

[19]As stated by Kittel et al. (2010), Woolhiser (2012).

consist in assigning the status of the mother tongue to the Belarusian language, whereas the majority of the population speaks Russian or *trasianka* at home and may even have difficulty in speaking Belarusian fluently.

1.4. Domains of Use of Modern Belarusian

The main processes connected with the domain dynamics among the languages spoken in Belarus took place in the 20th century. According to Fishman, different languages are used for different purposes and therefore there has to be a clear division of domains. Fishman (1972) distinguished five main domains of language use: family, friendship, religion, education, employment. The analysis of these main sociolinguistic contexts explains the roles of Russian and Belarusian in the modern-day language situation in Belarus.

Standard Russian is spoken in the main cities of the Republic of Belarus (Brest, Vitebsk, Grodno, Gomel, Mogilev) and in the capital, Minsk. The use of Standard Belarusian in Minsk is the highest in Belarus and the interest for the Belarusian language is growing thanks to its promotion by the non-governmental organizations. The use of Standard Belarusian in the cities and in rural areas is limited to school instruction, and the major part of the population uses *trasianka* in communication with friends and family. In social situations when people want to express solidarity with friends they would speak *trasianka*, and in more official contexts the use of Standard Russian or Standard Belarusian is more appropriate, because these two languages are of higher prestige. The switching from Standard Belarusian or Standard Russian can be stylistically motivated. For example, when people mock the older generation or those who have a rural background they would switch to *trasianka*. If at home and among friends Belarusian, Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Yiddish and their varieties can be spoken, there exists a clear division between the languages of education, employment and religion.

Factor 4: Shifts in Domains of Language Use

In order to provide the description of the domains in which the Russian and Belarusian languages function in contemporary Belarus, one has to turn to the data collected by the 2009 National Census and the reports of the Ministry of Education and statistical committees of the Republic of Belarus. THE data collected by the non-governmental organizations can be of

help as well. Taking into consideration the data from the official reports and surveys conducted by the Belarusian officials and the results of the sociolinguistic researches, it is possible to describe the main domains of the use of languages and language varieties in Belarus.

The Belarusian language is not the main language of interaction in Belarus, as revealed by the 2009 Census. Notwithstanding the fact that the academic Lukashanets (2008) claims the Belarusian language to be a highly developed language that can be used in all the domains, the use of Belarusian is limited. The scholar explains that there were numerous factors that hindered the development of the Belarusian language as the predominant language of communication in Belarus. First, the specific linguistic situation in Belarus is characterized by the co-functioning of the two official languages, one of which is significantly stronger as far as its communicative potential is concerned. Lukashanets (2009) underlines that there is no region in Belarus in which Belarusian is the dominant language of communication. Second, for a long period of time Belarusian was not the main language of the administration, documents and records management and was most often used in its oral form. Third, the modern standard literary Belarusian language has always developed in a bilingual environment. Moreover, at some stages of its development, there were four languages used for everyday communication, which hindered the development of Belarusian. Fourth, since there was a period in the history of Belarus when written communication in Belarusian was not allowed and when other languages took over Belarusian in most spheres of social life (science, administration, and education), the continuity of the development of the Belarusian language was interrupted. There were serious obstacles for the development of the written language and modern-day standard Belarusian emerged from the oral forms and regional varieties.

Belarusian Language in Science

Modern Belarusian in the 21st century is the language used in philological science and literature (Lukashanets, 2009: 3). The philological tradition dates back to 1920s when, due to the studies of Inbelkult's scientists, first lexicographic works on the norms of the Belarusian language were published, scientific terminology was worked out during the first years of the Belarusization ('Belarusian Scientific Terminology' published in 1922–1924), the first studies on the dialectology and history of the Belarusian language were carried out in 1922-1925. The

scholars conducted researches in various fields, which allowed building a solid foundation for the teaching of Belarusian in schools and introducing Belarusian in various spheres of the social life.

Today the norms of the Belarusian language and its use are regulated by the Belarusian National Academy of Sciences. The main foci of study are as follows:

- historical linguistics of the Belarusian language;
- socio-linguistic, comparative and typological research;
- dialectology and linguistic geography of Belarus;
- lexicology and lexicography;
- textology and the analysis of the main tendencies of the literary process, applying both diachronic and synchronic approaches;
- Slavistics and the study of the Belarusian culture as part of the Slavic tradition;
- the study of the cultural heritage of Belarus and the publication of academic editions of the prominent writers.

Belarusian Language in Theatre

Another traditional domain of the use of the Belarusian language is theatre. Such children's theatres as Belarusian Republican Young People's Theatre (in Minsk) and Belarusian Puppet Theatre '*Lyalka*' (in Vitebsk) stage their plays exclusively in Belarusian. Plays for children in state-financed theatres are in Belarusian and school children at least twice a year attend theatrical performances based on the main literary works of Belarusian literature as an obligatory extracurricular activity. Most Belarusian theatres have in their repertoire up to 50% of the plays in Belarusian. The use of Belarusian in theatrical performances makes it possible for the foreigners all over the world to get acquainted with Belarusian culture and helps promote the Belarusian language.

Belarusian Language in Marketing and Advertising

Belarusian intellectuals suppose that the use of Belarusian in advertising will promote the language and make it more prestigious. Already in 2003 the first successful advertisement was sponsored by Samsung. The choice of the Belarusian language was explained by the view of the standard Belarusian language as the language of the elite, therefore the products that the

advertisements promoted were associated with the exclusiveness of the customer. The use of the Belarusian language in advertising campaigns drew the attention of the customers. Following Samsung, other companies (e.g. Adidas, Bosch, Tefal, Renault, Ceresit and others) have used Belarusian in advertising since the early 2000s.

In 2009 the Belarusian government launched a campaign aimed at promoting Belarusian goods. Advertisements in Belarusian became more wide-spread. Belarusian Telecom company *Velcom* created a series of advertisements in Belarusian in 2013, the company used Belarusian in order to emphasize that the company itself is Belarusian and promotes the Belarusian language and culture. In 2015 the fuel retail brand *A-100* decided to use Belarusian in all the gas stations of their brand.

The experts in advertising and brand management admit the effectiveness of advertising campaigns in Belarusian. Using Belarusian in advertisement makes the product or brand stand out. Belarusian culture is unique and the campaigns emphasizing its distinctive features help create the unique brand managing strategy and catch the audience's attention. Since 2009 in Belarus a contest of Belarusian-medium advertisement campaigns and communication *AD.NAK* has been held.

Most Belarusian intellectuals agree that mass media and advertising should adopt Belarusian as a medium language for both audio and visual means of communication. Gradual introduction of the Belarusian language in the sphere of advertising will help Belarusian become perceived as an indispensable part of the everyday life. Scholars (Mechkovskaya, 2003; Lukashanets, 2009) stress the importance of the effective promotion of the Belarusian language: successful and beautiful people should promote the use of Belarusian in order to fight the stereotype of Belarusian as the language of backward peasants that existed throughout the 19th and the 20th centuries.

Belarusian on the Internet

The report of the Web Technology Survey on the statistics of the use of Belarusian on the web stated the following: "Belarusian is used by less than 0.1% of all the websites", the main sites using it are *Facebook.com; Wikipedia.org; Wordpress.com; Livejournal.com; Yandex.by; Google.by*.[20] In Internet communication in Belarus the use of Belarusian is

[20]Web technology Surveys, 2015. *Usage Statistics of Belarusian for Websites*. [online] Available at: <http://w3techs.com/technologies/details/cl-be-/all/all/html> [Accessed 9 September 2015].

infrequent, too. As the data provided by the most popular Belarusian resource *tut.by* (about 2 million visitors daily), the Belarusian language is chosen by 1.5% of the users.

The study of Lukashanets (1998) on communication in Belarusian on the Internet and via SMS revealed that young people have developed a specific style of writing. The use of Belarusian on the Internet stresses the fact that Belarusian in future will be subject to dynamic changes. The scholar claimed that Belarusian is one of the few world languages used on the Internet. The Belarusian language as part of the Internet discourse is now viewed as a symbol of the culture; it represents part of the national heritage and the basis of defining the national identity. Lukashanets (1998) stressed that creating a Belarusian-speaking environment on the Internet is crucial for promoting the language.

Other Domains of the Use of Belarusian

Both Lukashanets (1999) and Zavalniuk (1999) point out the use of the Belarusian language in the religious sphere. More and more often can Belarusian be heard in religious services, which was different some two or three decades ago. Translations of the Gospel and the Holy texts into Belarusian have become a common practice recently. Traditionally, Belarusian is used in the Uniate churches, most of the Catholic churches and a few Orthodox churches (the liturgies in Orthodox churches are usually conducted in Old Church Slavic).

Another important domain of the Belarusian language is politics. As Goujon (1999) and Gapova (2008) stress, Belarusian is a highly politicized language, and the debates on its functions in the political discourse have been raised since the end of the 1980s.

Belarusian is the language of formal occasions. Such scholars as Mechkovskaya (2003) and Lukashanets (2010) emphasize the symbolic function of the Belarusian language. According to UNESCO's framework for evaluating language vitality, it is possible to characterize Belarusian as a language of '*limited or formal domains*'[21] (2nd degree of endangerment), because it is used in formal speeches, for ritual and administrative purposes.

It is important to mention that the number of domains in which Belarusian is used today is decreasing. The Belarusian language is not the dominant language for social and economic opportunity and it is not spread in the institutions of the tertiary education. The use of the Belarusian language in the following years may decrease significantly, because the new

[21]United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

generations tend to use the Internet for communication, education and entertainment. Lukashanets (2009) stresses the importance of broadening the sphere of the Belarusian language usage and admits the unequal status of the language bilingualism. According to the scholar, the Belarusian language can be promoted by encouraging its use in everyday communication and mass media.

Factor 5: Response to New Domains and Media

The emergence of the new domains of the use of the Belarusian language in the 1990s led to the enrichment of its vocabulary. The academician Lukashanets in his interviews often stated that two main tendencies exist in the modern development of the Belarusian language: internationalizing and nationalizing tendencies. The tendency to internationalization is common for most modern Slavic languages. Belarusian language adapts to new domains, which results in the adoption of new lexemes. Such loan words as *дылер* (dealer), *кілер* (killer), *хакер* (hacker), *дэмпінг* (dumping), *холдынг* (holding), *шоу* (show), *шоп* (shop), *маркет* (market) have already become widely used. Besides, lexemes formed from these new loan stems with the help of morphological patterns of the Belarusian language *кілерскі* (killer + suffix -sk-), *дылерства* (dealer + suffix -stv-), *андэграўндны* (underground + suffix -n-) prove that loan words are integrated into the language.

The '*Dictionary of Neologisms*' by Ulasevich and Daugulevich published in 2009 ("*Слоўнік новых слоў беларускай мовы*") contains the vocabulary that represents a nationalizing tendency in the development of modern Belarusian vocabulary. According to Lukashanets (2009), such lexemes as *імпрэза* ('performance'), *амбасада* ('embassy'), *міліцыянт* ('militiaman'), *наклад* ('circulation'), *улётка* ('leaflet') are the examples of this tendency. Certain lexemes or derivational patterns that were borrowed from Russian are replaced by the forms existing before the period of russification: *адсотак* ('percent') instead of *працэнт* (the replacement of the loan lexeme by the native lexeme), *мысленнік*, *мысліўца*, *мысляр* ('thinker') instead of *мысліцель* (the preference of proper Belarusian productive suffixes to the loaned ones). These tendencies prove that Belarusian adapts to new domains of language use that contribute the development of the language.

The level of vitality of the Belarusian language as far as Factor 5 is concerned (*Response to New Domains and Media*) can be characterized as 2 '*coping*'[22], which means that the language is used in some new domains (Internet, religious services, advertising) and its use in old domains is decreasing (education[23], mass media).

1.5. State Support of Belarusian. Attitudes towards the Use of Belarusian

The language policy of the Republic of Belarus was adopted in 1990 in favor of the Belarusian language that was proclaimed the official language. The amendments made in 1996 raised the status of the Russian language. The equality of the two official languages is recorded in the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus. The relationship of Belarusian and Russian as equal in education is regulated by the law 'On Education'. *De jure* the current language policy of the Republic of Belarus is certain and clear. In practice, however, the discrepancy between the two languages equal on paper is striking. In order to evaluate the vitality of Belarusian one has to take into account the availability of language education materials and evaluate the effectiveness of state language policies together with the attitudes of the government and population towards Belarusian.

Factor 6: Availability of Materials for Language Education and Literacy

The Belarusian Academy of Sciences regulates the development of norms of the standard Belarusian language. The norms of the modern standard Belarusian language are based on the following lexicographic sources:

- 'Thesaurus Dictionary of the Belarusian Language' (consists of 5 volumes, published in Minsk in 1977-1984);
- 'Thesaurus Dictionary of the Belarusian Literary Language' (the third edition was published in Minsk in 2002);
- 'The Grammar of the Belarusian Language' (consists of 2 volumes, published in Minsk in 1962-1964);
- 'Belarusian Grammar' (published in 1985-1986);

[22]United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].
[23]The use of Belarusian in education is analysed in Chapter 5.

- The Law of the Republic of Belarus on the Norms of Orthography and Punctuation (adopted in 2008) (Lukashanets, 2009).

The publishing houses 'Narodnaya Asveta' and 'Aversev' manage the production of teaching aids and textbooks for secondary schools and higher education establishments.

Since the Belarusian language has a well-established orthography and its literacy tradition includes dictionaries, grammars and lexicographic sources, the level of accessibility of written materials can be graded 5/6.

Factor 7: Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use

The basis of the Belarusian language legislation is stated in Article 17 and Article 50 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus:

> '**Article 17**. The Belarusian and Russian languages shall be the state languages of the Republic of Belarus.
> **Article 50**. [...] Everyone shall have the right to use his native language and to choose the language of communication. In accordance with the law, the State shall guarantee the freedom to choose the language of upbringing and instruction'.[24]

The equal support of the country's languages is guaranteed by the Law on Languages adopted in 1990 and amended in 1998. In accordance with the law the acts of higher organs of State administration are adopted and published in Belarusian and (or) Russian (Article 7), the records management and official documentation of the state organs, state organizations and institutions is Belarusian and (or) Russian (Article 8); Belarusian and (or) Russian are established as the main languages of court system (Articles 14-18) and education (Articles 22-24). In fact, the Law on Languages does not establish equal bilingualism in Belarus, because of the use of two conjunctions. '***and***' and '***or***', therefore the use of Belarusian is not obligatory, and most often the official documents are issued only in Russian.

[24]National Legal Internet Portal of the Republic of Belarus, 2015. *Constitution of the Republic of Belarus of 1994 (with changes and additions adopted at the republican referenda of November 24, 1996 and of October 17, 2004)*. [online] Available at: <http://law.by/main.aspx?guid=3871&p0=V19402875e>. [Accessed 29 July 2015].

Taking into consideration the existing legislation one can assume that Belarusian and Russian are equally supported by the government, according to the UNESCO scale, the level of support is very high, 5/5 (*Equal support (5): All of a country's languages are valued as assets. All languages are protected by law, and the government encourages the maintenance of all languages by implementing explicit policies*).[25] In fact, the language situation in Belarus is complicated. Formally, the Belarusian language is protected by the government. In practice, however, the Belarusian Language Society (BLS) has revealed the recurrent violation of the language policies. BLS argues that the government does not provide equal support for the Russian and Belarusian languages. The numerous letters that the leaders of BLS send annually to the governmental organizations, to schools and ministries express the high degree of discontent towards the officials' indifference about the future of the Belarusian language. The absolute majority of the Ministries of the Republic of Belarus issue legal acts in Russian, the Internet sites of the Ministries are run in Russian and most of the Ministries do not have versions of their sites in Belarusian.

The 2014 monitoring performed by BLS revealed the use of Belarusian and Russian in the Ministries of the Republic of Belarus. In 2014 the Council of Ministers adopted 1297 resolutions, 170 of which were written in the Belarusian language (13%). 382 Regulations of the Prime Minister were adopted, and 246 were in Belarusian (64%).[26] The most russificated Ministry appeared to be the Ministry of Health: no legal acts have been issued in Belarusian in the past ten years. The Ministries of Information, Labour, Forestry and Agriculture provide a minimum support for the Belarusian language. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Information, the leading Belarusian TV channels prepare programs in Russian and Belarusian in accordance with the law 'On the Mass Media in the Republic of Belarus' (Article 9).

By January, 1, 2015 there were 1577 printed mass media registered: 684 in Russian, 33 in Belarusian and 649 in Russian and Belarusian.[27] The Ministry of Forestry publishes a Belarusian-language newspaper 'Belaruskaya Lesnaya Gazeta'. The Ministry of Labour in 2011 organized the course of the Belarusian language "Belarusian orthography and punctuation". Hence, the data collected by the Belarusian Language Society helps to assert

[25]United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].
[26]Belarusian Language Society, 2015. *Monitoring Conducted by 'Таварыства беларускай мовы імя Ф.Скарыны'*. [online] Available at: <http://tbm-mova.by/monitoring.html> [Accessed 1 September 2015].
[27]Ibid.

that the degree of support of the Belarusian language by the governmental institutions is 3/5: "3. *Passive assimilation*". The *de facto* official language of the government is Russian. And the amount of legal acts written in Belarusian is low.

Factor 8: Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language

To understand the modern state of the Belarusian language one has to take into account the background it has emerged from. Until the 1970s and 1980s Belarusian was the predominant language of the rural areas. In the cities it was mostly the intelligentsia who used Belarusian both at work and at home. Schools that used Belarusian as the medium language of education were located in the rural environment.

The dichotomy rural / urban for Belarusian and Russian was the main feature of the language situation already in the 19th century[28] and as one can see, even nowadays the rural population is predominantly Belarusian-speaking:

Table 7. Urban and Rural Population, Nationality and Language Use (%), 1999[29]

Nationalities	Urban Population		Rural population	
	Belarusian	Russian	Belarusian	Russian
Overall population	19,8	79,8	74,7	24,5
Belarusians	23	77	79,2	20,7
Russians	2,5	97,5	14,3	85,6
Poles	34,6	61,5	84,9	9,2
Ukrainians	5,5	91,5	26,9	55,5
Jews	3,4	96,1	23,1	76,6

The 1999 Census clearly showed that Russian in 1999 was the main spoken language for all the nationalities in the urban areas. This can be explained by the fact that cities tend to be populated by people of different nationalities, therefore, intermarriages are more widely

[28]The development of Belarusian-medium education is described in Chapter 3.
[29]National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2015. *Population Census 1999* [online] Available at: <http://www.belstat.gov.by/en/perepis-naseleniya/perepis-naseleniya-1999-goda/html> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

spread, and the level of education among the city dwellers is higher. These factors influence the reinforcement of the position of Russian as the main language of communication both in the professional sphere and in everyday communication. Russian can also be considered as a language of intercultural communication among the urban population of different nationalities.

The field study that included the analysis of the interviews with 280 Belarusians revealed that only 7 out of 110 Belarusians born and raised in urban areas (1 born in Minsk in 1967, 1 born in Vitebsk in 1971 and 6 born in Minsk in 1985-1995) use Belarusian for everyday communication. Interestingly, only 1 Belarusian (born in Minsk in 1967) was raised in a Belarusian-speaking family, the others switched from Russian to Belarusian during school years. It is important to note that the Belarusian these people use is the standard literary variety, whereas the Belarusian spoken by those Belarusians who were born and raised in the Vitebsk and Minsk regions is mostly *trasyanka.*

The stereotypical view of the Belarusian language as the language of uneducated peasantry is deeply rooted in the minds of the people. However, nowadays it would be wrong to say that the majority of the population resents the Belarusian language for being of low prestige. Usually it is *trasianka* that is criticized and laughed at. The mixed Belarusian-Russian language acquired a pejorative designation in the late 1980s, as Tsyhun stated (2000: 46). The initiators of this discrimination of the mixed language were the Belarusian nationalists who called *trasianka* "the disgusting chimera of the Soviet assimilation". Bekus (2014: 47) called *trasianka* "a code of rural migrants". And according to Gapova (2008: 10), as soon as the rural migrants arrived in the cities they tried hard to switch to Russian that was the language of education and "upward social mobility". As Lukashanets (2009) argued, the low status of Belarusian was one of the most important factors that influenced the reluctance of Belarusians to accept the Belarusian language as the only language of the country in the 1990s. The existing at that time subdivision of Belarusian as the language of the countryside did not encourage the urban population of the country to 'lower' their status by choosing Belarusian as the only official language of the country.

Woolhiser (2014: 42) wrote, 'for educated monolingual Russophones, trasjanka is a mark of peasant origins, limited intelligence and a general lack of culture'. As a social phenomenon, *trasianka* is well-known far across the borders of Belarus and for a lot of Russian-speaking foreigners it has become a stereotype of the Belarusian language. Woolhiser

admits that in the past decade *trasianka* has become part of the Belarusian popular culture, serving for humorous effect. Belarusians themselves have a lot of jokes about *trasianka*.

The use of standard Belarusian is viewed differently by the population: the majority of people differentiate the Belarusian language and *trasianka*. In 2009, 2011 and 2014 the non-governmental organization "Budzma" conducted a series of polls that provided the information on what opinion Belarusians have about those people who speak Belarusian on a daily basis and consider the Belarusian language to be their mother tongue. The responses are presented in the following table:

Table 8. Attitudes towards Belarusian[30]

Those who speak the Belarusian language…			
	2009	**2011**	**2014**
… are true Belarusians, true patriots	40,4	46,7	***48,2***
… I don't know, I never thought about that	***30,1***	28,9	24,7
… do it on purpose to attract attention, to 'show off"	***8,4***	7,5	6,9
… are weird	***6,4***	4,4	3
… represent the elite of the nation	5,6	***10,4***	5,1
… come from remote villages	4,5	***6,1***	5,4
… belong to the opposition	3,7	***8,9***	4
… are nationalists	2,3	***5,2***	3,6
No reply	2	3,3	4,1

As the results of the polls show, the major part of the respondents favors the use of the standard Belarusian language. However, one third of the respondents are indifferent towards the use of Belarusian. Interestingly, in 2011 the use of Belarusian was often associated with the opposition. Belarusian scholar Lukashanets has often repeated in his interviews that he is concerned with the problem of politicization of the Belarusian language. He claims that the stereotype of a Belarusian speaker as a member of the opposition to be a dangerous one. This stereotype does not raise the prestige of the language among the population. Some people refuse to talk in Belarusian because of this negative stereotype and fear being associated with

[30]Generation.by, 2015. *Sacyjolagi raspavjali, jak u Belarusi zmjanjaecca staulenne da belaruskamounyh* [Attitudes towards Belarusian]. [online] Available at: <http://generation.by/news6822.html> [Accessed 18 July 2015].

the opposition. Lukashanets (2009) underlined the importance of raising the linguistic awareness of the population in order to promote the use of Belarusian. If people understand the role the national language plays in the process of the building of the nation and framing national identity, they will turn to the use of Belarusian more eagerly. And indeed, in 2014, 48,2% of the respondents pointed out the association of the Belarusian language with patriotism. This shift from low-class to high-class status of the language is the result of the gradual process that started in the 90s. For Belarusian nationalists the Belarusian language is indispensable in defining the ethnic identity of the population and the loss of the native language is often associated with the loss of national identity and even independence.

A lot of scholars notice that in the contemporary language situation people who use Belarusian want to stress their divergence from mainstream culture and emphasize their adherence to the elite. As Lukashanets (2009) claims, the Belarusian language is no longer associated with the rural environment but has become the language of the intellectual elite of the country. Today, more and more people who belong to the urban intelligentsia are using Belarusian as their main language. Thus the language is increasing in its prestige and getting a more appealing public image.

As often happens, the desire to demonstrate one's exclusiveness can lead to the emergence of the new mainstream. The current trends in Belarusian culture hint that the Belarusian language is becoming more and more mainstream. Non-governmental societies have launched Belarusian-language courses and the statistics indicate that the courses are mostly attended by young people (20% of the students are between 19 and 24 years old). If the current trend remains part of the language situation of the country, it will be possible to say that the Belarusian language is becoming more prestigious. To date, the number of students attending Belarusian-language courses, using Belarusian on the Internet and promoting the Belarusian culture is not high enough. Therefore, the grade of the Belarusian language according to the prestige factor is "*2.Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss*". [31]

Factor 9: Type and Quality of Documentation

As it was written above, the Belarusian Academy of Sciences provides all the necessary materials for learning Belarusian language. The scientific study of the language

[31]United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003. *Language Vitality and Endangerment*. [pdf] UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001836/183699E.pdf> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

started in the end of the 18th century, and the main institution that regulated the study of the language was established already in the 1920s. The grammars were developed during the Soviet period and the new norms on orthography were adopted in 2008.

Belarusian institutions of tertiary education publish teaching aids and textbooks in Belarusian. The table below illustrates the data on the amount of textbooks, teaching aids and mass media in Belarusian in 2014/2015 academic year (collected by the monitoring conducted by Belarusian Language Society in 2014[32]):

Table 9. Books and Teaching Materials Published in Belarusian in 2014/2015 academic year

Tertiary Education Institution		**% of the textbooks published in Belarusian**
Brest State University		15-20%
Belarusian State Academy of Arts		20%, 10% in Russian and Belarusian
Belarusian State Music Academy		20%
Belarusian National Technical University		1,65%
Mogilev State University		17,3%
Minsk State Linguistic University		25%
Belarusian State University		6%

Such universities as Belarusian State Pedagogical University, Vitebsk State University, Baranovichy State University, Polessie State University publish textbooks in Belarusian only for the departments of Belarusian philology. Research projects in Belarusian are conducted not only by the students of the departments of philology but also by the students of the technical specializations (in Belarusian National Technical University and in Gomel State Technical University).

Extensive documentation in Belarusian in universities allows grading the language documentation as *5. Superlative*. Unfortunately, there are few modern audio- and video materials in Belarusian. The flow of language materials cannot be called constant, because at different stages of the development of the Belarusian language it was uneven. For example, in the 1990s the Belarusian-language mass media was rapidly developing and therefore publications in Belarusian were popular. With the raise of the Internet the spread of

[32]Belarusian Language Society, 2015. *Monitoring Conducted by 'Таварыства беларускай мовы імя Ф.Скарыны'*. [online] Available at: <http://tbm-mova.by/monitoring.html> [Accessed 1 September 2015].

Belarusian-medium publications became much slower because people got access to online educational materials are in Russian and in foreign languages as well, and the demand for the Belarusian-language content is not very high. Hence, the grade for the language documentation is *3. Fair*. The government policy for the use of Belarusian is rather lenient, since the Law on Languages declares the optional use of Belarusian, the ministries and the educational establishments do not put much effort in promoting the use of the language.

The field study conducted in two Belarusian regions provided the data for the analysis of the vitality of the Belarusian language. The application of the framework on language vitality helped evaluate the degree of endangerment of Belarusian. The current status of the language is between 4 '*unsafe/vulnerable'* and 3 '*definitely endangered*'. The modern-day language situation is to a greater extent the result of the Soviet attitudes towards Belarusian (for further information consult Chapter 2) and the implementation and development of Belarusian-medium education is the consequence of the successful belarusization of the early 1990s.[33]

As the field study revealed, Belarusians develop proficiency in Belarusian at school but fail to preserve the level of fluency in Belarusian because it is not used widely in everyday communication. Chapter 1 analysed the domains of the use of Belarusian and the attitudes of the population towards the language and we understood that the future of Belarusian depends mostly on the system of education. Main features of the contemporary state of Belarusian in education is presented in Chapter 4. It is important to emphasize the role of the state in promoting language education:

1) Belarusian as a medium language in education ensures preservation of the language in society and its transmission to new generations;

2) Increasing the level of Belarusian-language proficiency will result in the increase in the absolute number of speakers,

3) Creation of new materials for language education and literacy and the smart organization of the Belarusian-medium curriculum will expand the use of Belarusian in various domains;

4) Promotion of Belarusian in education will raise the prestige of the language and attract more language learners.

Therefore, efficient management of education will help raise the vitality status of Belarusian.

[33]The process of establishing Belarusian-medium education is explained in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2. Politicization of the Belarusian Language and its Impact on Education

The problem of implementation of the Belarusian language as the symbol of nationhood plays an important role in political discourse, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Most papers on the status and role of Belarusian are focused on political issues concerning the language. Non-governmental organizations often position Belarusian as mother tongue and criticize the unwillingness of the government to safeguard the language.

The British linguist and specialist in Belarusian Dingley[34] states that the language situation in Belarus is unique and criticizes Belarusian nationalists for language politicization. Belarusian nationalists refer to three main periods in Belarusian history when Belarusian was the official language and Belarusian culture prospered:

1) the 'Golden Age' of Belarusian statehood, the period of the existence of Grand Duchy of Lithuania (14^{th} – 16^{th} centuries);

2) the Belarusian People's Republic, or BNR (1918-1919) and Belarusization of the 1920s;

3) the period from 1991 till 1995 in the history of Independent Belarus.

These ideals of statehood promoted by Belarusian nationalists are said to have been beneficial for the promotion of the Belarusian language as the official language. In order to understand the contexts in which Belarusian appears in political discourse in connection with these periods in the history of Belarus, it is important to give a brief historical overview.

2.1. Belarusian-Polish-Russian Language Contacts and the Problem of Defining Belarusian National Identity

The geographical position of the Belarusian lands made the Belarusian language an object of Polish and Russian influences. The territory of Belarus has always been characterized by diglossia or even polyglossia. In the 13^{th} – 14^{th} century when, according to Karsky (1903), the process of forming the Belarusian nationality began, Baltic and Slavic dialects were spoken by the population. The written language was being formed with some loan words from the Baltic languages, the two main languages in writing were Old Church

[34] Dingley, J., 2015. *Kol'ki uzho mozhna adradzhjennjau*? [How many revivals do you need?], [online] Available at: <http://journalby.com/news/dzhym-dyngli-kolki-uzho-mozhna-adradzhennyau-219> [Accessed 3 July 2015].

Slavic and Old Ruthenian (with a number of regional varieties). Uspensky (1987) argues that the two languages traditionally formed a stable diglossal language situation. Modern scholars have not yet decided to what extent the Baltic dialects were spread on the Belarusian lands in the Middle Ages, therefore it is possible to speak about a multilingual language situation: Old Church Slavic was used for religious services, Old Ruthenian was the language of formal communications, Slavic and Baltic dialects were used in informal communication.

The emergence of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 14th century demanded establishing a national language. Since the Baltic dialects were unwritten, the official language of the newly formed state was called "Ruthenian", the term indicated the existing Slavic dialects of the territory. Such scholars as Karsky and Dounar-Zapolsky named this language "Old Belarusian". According to Karsky (1903), by the beginning of the 16th century the local north-western dialect of Old Ruthenian had deviated significantly from its ancestor and the dialects existing on the territory of Muscovite Rus, Novgorod and Pskov republics that it is possible to define that language as Old Belarusian.

This proto-Belarusian language became the state language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania that was the biggest country in Medieval Europe. The 16th century marked the growth of feudal culture and is often referred to as the Golden Age of Belarusian statehood. The premises for the gradual decline of the Ruthenian language existed already in the beginning and the second half of the 16th century. The political and economic power of the neighboring Poland resulted in the formation of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569. The emerging of city culture and the economic growth were supposed to help promoting both the culture and the language. However, the political situation in which Polish and Belarusian nobility coexisted cannot be called equal bilingualism: the Polish nobility had more power and they did not favour the non-Polish speaking nobility. Hence, there emerged a tendency of lowering the status of the Ruthenian language and calling it '*muzhytskaya mova*' ("men's language"). This term was derogatory.

The Ruthenian language remained the main language of communication in Belarusian families; it was used by Uniate and Orthodox congregations. Although Polish was dominant both in politics and in Catholic churches, and even the 1529 Law Code of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania contained a number of loans from Polish, the Ruthenian language managed to survive due to the protection from the government. The Law code of 1588 specifically indicated in Chapter IV Article I that the Ruthenian language is the official language of the state: '*А писар земский маеть по-руску литерами и словы рускими вси листы, выписы и*

позвы писати, а не иншим езыком и словы' ("A bailiff should write all the documents using Ruthenian letters and words, not in any other languages and dialects") (The Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, 1588).[35]

Despite this measure on the protection of the language taken by the Ruthenian-speaking nobility, the process of the polonization accelerated in the 17th century when the political power of the Belarusian-speaking nobility declined. The Polish language became dominant not only in law and politics but in private correspondence, too. As numerous documents prove, the preamble and the conclusion were often written in Ruthenian but the body of the documents was written in Polish with some terms written in Latin (to emphasize the author's education). The second half of the 17th century marked even more intensive polonization. There was no legal document regulating the use of the two languages.

Until the end of the 17th century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a bilingual state with the two official languages, Polish and Ruthenian. The very end of the 17th century, namely 1696, marked the turning point in the language policy of the Commonwealth. The Parliament of the Commonwealth had to sign the so-called '*coequation*' of rights and thus the question of the language was also to be discussed. On August, 29, 1696 the legislature of the confederation signed the "*Coequatio unium*" of the nobility, the language also had to be one, and the Parliament chose Polish. The Russian historians claim that this law consequentially banned the Ruthenian language. This is not quite true. The Polish language from that moment on became the main language in the municipal courts, but all the laws written before the reform were still in use. The only change was that the Ruthenian language lost its official status. The judges of the Commonwealth were still obliged to speak both languages to process the legal issues. Furthermore, the Ruthenian language was still taught in schools, even in Catholic schools. Most of the upper- and middle-class nobility and city petty-bourgeois were educated in Polish. Ruthenian was the language of peasantry and lower-class gentry.

The vast polonization of the Belarusian lands in the 17th century resulted in the extrusion of Old Belarusian from almost all the domains of its use. By the end of the 17th century Old Belarusian was superseded by the Polish language in law, politics, accountancy, and literature. It was preserved in speaking domain, but even in everyday speech a mixed

[35]Virtual Guide to Belarus, 2015. *Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*. [online] Available at: <http://www.belarusguide.com/culture1/texts/Statut.html> [Accessed 18 July 2015].

Ruthenian-Polish language was used. Polish dominance continued till the fall of the ~~the~~ Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the end of the 18th century.

As one can notice the language situation in the 17th – 18th centuries is similar to the modern-day language situation in Belarus: both Old Belarusian and Modern Belarusian are considered to be low-prestige, and the domains of use of these languages are limited.

From 1772 to 1795 the whole territory of modern-day Belarus was annexed and became part of the Russian Empire. By that time the Poles represented a unified ethnic and linguistic community, the most part of the city dwellers spoke Polish, and 90% of the rural population spoke Ruthenian. The 17th and 18th centuries of the Enlightenment represent the period of scholastic breakthrough in Russia and Poland. In Russia the Imperial Academy of Sciences (1724) and the Imperial Russian Academy (1783) were founded and in the course of the 18th century the first grammar of the Russian language and the etymological dictionary were published. The philological and literature advancement accelerated the development of literature in the Russian language. In this very period the administrative and judicial powers increased their influence on public life and thought. It was the period when the literary language was rapidly developing. The Polish language also became the basis of the national literature in Poland. The Ruthenian literary language in its turn didn't develop because it was not used as a medium language either in science or in the official documents. Ruthenian was used in the spoken form only, which hindered its development.

The annexing of the Belarusian territory to the Russian Empire in 1795 led to the gradual russification of the population. For political reasons, Russian and Polish scholars initiated the process of building a national identity. The Russian side proclaimed that Belarusian is a dialect of the Russian language, whereas the Polish scholarship appealed to the fact that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was based not only on political grounds but also on the ethnic unity of the two nations. However hard both sides tried, the Belarusian people found it hard to even give a name to their nation, and did not even know how the language they used was called, and they said they speak '*na-npocmy*' ('simply').

In the early 19th century the territory of modern-day Belarus didn't have a precise name. The lands were called either Belarusian or Lithuanian (in analogy with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania). Rudling (2014) included a vivid example of how Minsk was often referred to as Minsk Litewski (Minsk-in-Lithuania) by the Poles and how the Russians called the city of Brest Brest-Litovsk, i.e. Brest-in-Lithuania. In Yiddish in its turn, the word *Litvak* meant a Jew from Lithuania and the word *Litovets* signified 'a gentile Pole, Belarusian or

Lithuanian from that region' (cited in Rudling, 2014: 74). The population of these territories sometimes called the Catholic population Poles referring to their religious, instead of ethnic, background. The ethnonym '*Belarusians*' was not used in literature until late 19th century.

The political situation in the territory of Belarus was complicated, and in order to raise a wave of riots among the population, Polish and Russian political activists had to appeal to the question of the national identity. The interest in Belarusian culture during the 19th century was incredibly high. Both Polish and Russian scholars speculated on the question of the origin of Belarusian identity. Russian scholars regarded Belarusian to be a dialect of the Russian language that underwent the influence of Polish. Polish scholars in their turn defended the originality of the Belarusian language. They did it mostly not out of love to Belarusian culture but out of utilitarian reasons. The Polish supported political unrest so that the former land would get its independence from the Russian Empire. Since the population itself didn't have a precise understanding of their roots and their national identity, there was a necessity of defining who these people were.

Study of the origins of the Belarusian language was conducted out of political reasons. The question of the ethnic genesis was first discussed by the Belarusian historian Karsky. During the 1880s and 1890s he researched the history of the Belarusian language and culture and prepared the theoretical basis for further study. Karsky's first scientific study on the national identity "*Belarusians*" was published in 1904. The question of the genesis of the Belarusian ethnos was studied by the archeologists (Dounar-Zapolsky, Golubovsky, Danilevich).

Explaining the origins of the Belarusian language was supposed to help the population adhere either to Polish or Russian culture. In the 19th century Russian scholars made a series of attempts to study and classify the Belarusian language. One of the first scholars interested in the language of the newly occupied territory was the Russian philologist Kalajdovich, who considered Belarusian to be one of the dialects, or regional varieties, of the Russian language. He admitted though that studying Belarusian and most importantly, Old Belarusian, will shed light on the peculiarities of the Old Church Slavic and thus be of great help in deciphering ancient literary sources. The fact that the scholar underlined the importance of Old Belarusian in the study of Old Church Slavic proves that both Belarusian and Russian belong to the same language group of Eastern Slavic languages.

The Imperial historians such as Karamzin and Kliuchevskii did not recognize Belarusian as a language separate from Russian. They considered linguistic differences

between “Great Russian”, “Little Russian” and “White Russian” insignificant and claimed these languages to be only varieties of the same language (Rudling, 2014: 177). The relations between Belarusian and other Slavic languages was studied by Shafarick, a Czech scholar who in 1837 and 1852 published two researches that explain the origins of Eastern Slavic languages and claimed that the Belarusian language together with the Russian language and the dialectal speech of the Novgorod and Muscovite regions constitute the Eastern Slavic language group. Sopikov, Vostokov asserted the existence of a common proto-language for Belarusian and Russian. Another Russian scholar Ustryalov explained the unity of the Russian and Belarusian languages on the basis of the common religion. ‘If most part of the Belarusian lands was Orthodox, and the Eastern part of the Russian Empire was also Orthodox there had to be the same language’, hypothesized Ustryalov (cit. in Bahdankevich et al, 2000: 84). The growth of interest in Belarusian culture and its profound study revealed that the Belarusian language differed significantly from Russian. Certain phonetic norms and morphological peculiarities signify that 19th-century Belarusian was not simply a dialect or a regional variety of Russian, but a separate language.

2.2. Belarusian Language as a Symbol of Cultural Existence in the Beginning of the 20th Century

The main problem existing on the Belarusian lands in the beginning of the 20th century was the lack of continuous literary tradition in the native language. This ethnic and linguistic area is characterized by a mix of cultures and languages. The territory from Vil’nia to Smolensk in the Russian Empire was called “The Northwest Provinces”. The people inhabiting this territory found it hard to say where they belonged and what their language was. Interestingly, according to the data provided by the First Imperial National Census in 1897, 43.3% of the nobility (circa 65.000 out of 153.000) considered Belarusian to be their mother tongue, and 70 to 90 percent of the peasants spoke Belarusian. But the language these people spoke was often called *tuteishaya mova* or “the language from here.” (Gapova, 2008: 6). The peasantry didn’t know what name to give to the language they spoke but they admitted its significant difference from the Russian language and didn’t consider their vernacular speech to be Russian. Moreover, there also existed problem of defining their national identity, thus people who lived on the territory of Belarus would often call themselves *tuteishyja*, or “people from here”, which was mostly an expression of social, not national, belonging (Rudling,

2014: 43). There were also instances when people named themselves “Poles” because they were Catholic and not on the basis of their origin. The urban population in the beginning of the 20th century was mostly Russian-, or Polish-, or Yiddish-speaking.

The revolutionary movements that by the beginning of the 20th century became rather powerful focused on the definition of the national identity. Intellectuals and socialist leaders sought to awaken people and give recognition to their culture and language and specific historical conditions of their development. These movements also aimed at promoting education and fighting backwardness and illiteracy in order to join the progressive European movements.

The beginning of the 20th century saw the rise of the Belarusian nationalist activity and between the years of 1905 and 1922 the revolutionary movements and the First World War led to significant changes to the existing order. Eastern and Western parts of Belarus spoke different languages, in the West there were families using three languages in their everyday speech, Polish, Russian and Belarusian or Yiddish. Rudling (2014) in the Introduction to his book “The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism 1905-1931” describes the situation on the territory of Belarus in the following way: “This form of “cultural polyvalence” characterized the Belarusian nationalist intelligentsia at the turn of the century. Some leaned toward regarding Belarusians as a branch of the Russian people; others identified with the local, multinational land, or krai” (Rudling 2014: 4). The process of differentiating Belarusians from other ethnic groups was parallel to the process of establishing an independent state. The establishment of the Belarusian-speaking state became possible only on the grounds of its existence as a semi-independent republic within the USSR after the long 21 years of negotiations and fighting, after the German and Polish occupations and two revolutions.

The German occupation of the Western part of Belarus in 1915 promoted the use of the Belarusian language and 1915 saw the rise of printing and publishing and there emerged first Belarusian-speaking societies. In 1916 the editorial board of the newspaper “Nasha Niva” started publishing another newspaper, “Gomon”. The German government didn’t interfere with the language education and were focused mostly on military affairs. Koryakov (2002: 30) provides the data on the number of Belarusian-medium schools. In Vil’nia region there were approximately 100 Belarusian-medium schools open for children and the professional school for teachers in Svisloch received financial support from the government during the whole period of the occupation. The Germans continued their invasion of the Belarusian lands till the end of 1917.

The period from 1917 to 1920 was famous for the division of the Belarusian intelligentsia into two opposing camps, one part supported the BNR and aspired to create a state on the basis of democracy and autonomy, the other favored the BSSR and supported the communist regime. The establishment of the Soviet ideology played the decisive role in the future of the Belarusian language. The BNR aimed at establishing Belarusian as the only official language of the country whereas the BSSR adopted poliglossia and as a result, there were 4 languages chosen as official in the BSSR: Belarusian, Russian, Yiddish and Polish.

Rudling (2014) argues that the 1921 partition was 'a serious blow to Belarusian nationalist aspirations' (Rudling, 2014: 6). The partition caused difficulties for the intellectuals of both sides that were to work in very different political conditions. However, on both sides of the border the intellectuals strived to significantly improve the political, cultural and intellectual situation. Western Belarusians unfortunately failed to create an autonomous Belarusian-speaking state within Poland. As Rudling states, "the Belarusians became a marginalized and increasingly alienated national minority in a political entity that the postwar Polish political establishment had intended as a Polish nation-state" (Ibid.). Belarusian nationalists in Western Belarus were deprived of any political power and were hostile towards the Polish government, most of the population was stateless and thus deprived of the right to vote.

The Polish government supported the discrimination politics, and often Polish leaders denied the very existence of Belarusians as an ethnic minority. Rudling (2014) quotes one of the Polish publicists, Studnicki: 'We cannot even talk about the existence of a Belarusian people, as Belarusians have no traditions of their own. Given that, it is impossible to talk about a Belarusian culture, as there is no cultural unity among the Belarusians' (Ibid. 221). Some politicians were radicals and considered ethnic minorities to be alien to the Polish.

On the territories of Eastern and Central Belarus the 1920s are known as the period of Belarusization. Despite its name, the goal of the Soviet authorities was not the promotion of Belarusian culture. Belarusization was part of the process of granting voice to all the nations of the fallen Imperialist Russia. Therefore, the process of Belarusization was only a means to unite Belarus with other Socialist countries: "The national program of Belarusian patriots coincided with the program of the Communists. For the Communists, however, Belarusization was not a goal in itself, but a way to the Socialist society" (Koryakov, 2002: 38). Thus, the promotion of the Belarusian culture and language was strongly linked with the notion of Belarusians as 'pauperized peasants' (Rudling, 2014: 41). Peasants and workers were

supposed to be the main power of the young revolutionary movement. One of the leaders of Belarusization Ihnatouski observed: 'class and the national composition of the Belarusians almost coincide with each other' (Ibid. 45). Rudling (2014) states that one of the significant reasons why nationalist ideas were weak in the territory of Belarus is that urbanization and social mobilization occurred later than in other European countries: 'In 1913, 86 percent of Belarusians lived in the countryside, and only in 1980 did a BSSR census show a majority of urban population' (Rudling, 2014: 62). The process of urbanization was triggered by the vast industrialization of the territory, which brought changes into the social structure.

2.3. Political and Social Reasons for Russification in the Soviet Belarus

From the beginning of 1930s the process of Belarusization was ended by the Soviet authorities. Already at the end of the 20s there was much critique of the rapid development of the Belarusian culture. The prerequisites towards the changes of the language policy were noticeable already at the end of the 1920s when the Communist Party decided to control the process of Belarusization. At the governmental level, a new decree was issued under the title "On the Changes and Simplification of Belarusian Orthography" (1933). Before 1933 two alphabets for the Belarusian language, Latin and Cyrillic, were still in use. After the 1933 law on the orthography there was only one alphabet, Cyrillic, left and the norms of the language underwent the influence of Russian. Grenoble (2003) notes that the reasons for the change of the Belarusian alphabet were strictly economic and socio-political. First, printing in two different alphabets was more costly and second, the switch to Cyrillic 'facilitated the acquisition of Russian' (Grenoble 2003: 54). The conversion to Cyrillic was complete by the mid-40s. Undoubtedly, the establishment of a unified alphabet helped fight illiteracy. It also built the basis for creating a standardized literary form of the language. This was especially important for the situation in Belarus, because the Western and the Eastern part had significant differences as far as language use was concerned. After the purges of Belarusian intellectuals in the 30s, the use of the Belarusian language was limited, it lost its predominant role in literature and science.

Wexler (1992) believes that the language policy of the 1930s was highly influenced by linguistic purism:

> "the flow of puristic recommendations was forcibly arrested in the Soviet Union. Since then, with puristic barriers eliminated to varying degrees,

> regulators threaten to deprive Ukrainian and Belorussian of their unique defining features by flooding them with Russian loans, and by declaring the preference for native variants most resembling Russian" (Wexler, 1992: 35).

This characteristic is a very accurate one. The movement towards purism defined the language policy of the USSR for other three decades. According to the data provided by Grenoble (2003: 60), in 1934-1940 on the territory of the USSR there were 65 languages of instruction. By 1981-1985 there remained only 32 languages.

Shortly after World War II the Russian language in the USSR became more widely used than national languages. Mass urbanization and immigration after World War II increased the percentage of those who claimed Russian to be their native language.[36] Major changes were caused by the fact that the Soviet government had a plan to revive the economy in the shortest possible time, therefore a great number of specialists (mostly Russian-speaking) had to move to different parts of the big country. As a result of this mass immigration, the Russian language became the main means of communication not only between the Russian-speaking specialists and the population of the Soviet republics they were sent to, but also among different workers within one enterprise. Thus Russian started to spread all over the USSR as the medium language of communication in the professional sphere. The prestige of the Russian language grew rapidly on the world arena. In 1946 Russian was adopted as one of the 6 official languages of the United Nations. Besides, Russian became the second language in the countries that followed the Communist path.

The reaction of Belarusian intellectuals to the process of russification of the 1950s was radical. The first critique was published in January, 1957. The article was written by Sachanka, a young writer, under the title "To Respect the Mother Tongue" (*Шанаваць родную мову*). The article is focused on the description of the situation that was common at that time. School leavers entered professional schools and universities were instruction was in Russian and forgot Belarusian. Besides, in order to enter higher educational establishments, the youth had to learn Russian by themselves using Russian textbooks, otherwise they wouldn't be able to understand the material well. The position of the author was not radical: he admitted the importance of Russian but paid his attention to the fact that Belarusian was endangered.

[36]As Brown (2003: 314) reports, already by 1970 54,5% of the population of Minsk considered Russian to be their mother tongue.

A prominent Belarusian historian Lych characterizes the post-war situation in Belarus in the following way:

> "The vast spread of the Russian language on the territory of Belarus in the first post-war decades happened out of economic reasons. The decisive factor for choosing Russian-promoting language policy was the extremely unfavorable economic conditions in the country destroyed by WWII. This factor was well understood by the population. However, the turn towards russification wasn't considered to be final, and after German occupation it was possible to establish the borders of the two closely related languages" (Lych, 1988: 23).

One can disagree with the statement that the choice of the government to promote the Russian language was understood by the people. But if one imagines the number of problems Belarusians had to solve after the war it is not difficult to see that the problem of the national language was not the main one. A famous Belarusian poet Hilevich looks at the problem of russification in the 1950s from a different perspective. He considers the end of the 1950s the decisive factor that influenced the intensive replacement of Belarusian by Russian. According to Hilevich, the russification was driven primarily not by economic but ideological reasons:

> 'The main goal of the government was the merging of all the nations and all the cultures in order to create a Communist state. That was the very moment when Belarusian as a medium language of instruction was replaced with Russian. The result of this change is as follows: millions of Belarusians lost their mother tongue or can barely speak it' (Hilevich, 1988: 7).

The combination of both economic and ideological reasons strengthened the position of the Russian language in the Belarusian society. And the 60s and 70s were marked with a quicker process of russification which resulted in a series of changes both in morphology and syntax which accelerated assimilation of the Belarusian language with the Russian language. The two closely related languages started to share more features in common, which led to the appearance of the mixed Belarusian-Russian speak called '*trasianka'*. The spread of *trasianka*

took place predominantly in the 1970s when the Belarusian-speaking rural population started moving to the Russian-speaking cities.

2.4. Belarusian Language in the Political Discourse of the 1980s

The period from the 1980s to 1991 in the history of the USSR was decisive for both the Belarusian statehood and the Belarusian language. As Baker (2008) states, the political processes in the post-communist countries played the principal role in defining the configuration of the national development of the nation.

From the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s the language issues were integrated within the political discourse and the political struggle of the two opposing camps:

1) the opposition who appealed to Western values, and were focused on 'loosening the ties' with Russia and rewriting history in order to satisfy their political needs;

2) the parties with pro-Russian orientation, based on the preservation of the Soviet past and the promotion of the Russian language.

The scholar Gapova confirms that the question of the importance of the Belarusian language was politicized: 'The language issue in the post-Soviet region cannot be discussed outside of the context of the immense social change, during which "languages" became an integral part of the names of peoples and territories of the "Soviet Union" and of the public struggle' (Gapova, 2008: 3). The scholar also blamed the Belarusian nationalists for using the Belarusian language and the Belarusian symbols as the unique traits of the culture that can be sold well abroad: 'References to human rights, democracy and European values have their locus of power in the "international community", "European Union," or "human rights organizations," which become the force behind the internationally recognized political language that the opposition resorts to, especially as they are the ones who support the opposition financially' (Ibid.). According to Gapova (2008), the nationalists at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s used the Belarusian language as a tool for creating a sort of a class difference, using not economic privileges but culture as a form of social capital.

Apart from those who used the Belarusian language as a tool in promoting their political views, there were also people who were interested in the revival of the Belarusian language and saving the ancient Belarusian culture. The Belarusian language underwent harsh russification in the course of the 20th century and required support from the government,

therefore the adoption of Belarusian as the only state language protected the language from extinction. This point of view was supported by Koryakov (2002), Mechkovskaya (2003).

The end of the 1980s was notable for the rapid process of the democratization of the Soviet society. *Perestroika*, initiated by Gorbachov in 1985 affected all spheres of social life. Belarusian political activists used the period of *perestroika* for the adoption of the new strategies that would lead to the further economic and cultural development of the country. The origination of *glasnost'* provided the possibility of the spread of the democratic ideas in the Soviet society and the rise of discussions on the problematic issues. This period in the history of the USSR was imbued with a 'wind of change': new cultural movements and new approaches towards the history and the place that Soviet republics occupy in the new political and social conditions.

The end of the 1980s was the period when the nationalist movement in Belarus saw its revival. The Belarusian intelligentsia finally had their say in political discourse and Belarusian society got a chance to learn about the real problems that took place at that time, not the problems of the Soviet Union but the problems concerning the situation in the BSSR. As explained in Chapter 1, the officials of the Soviet Union did not pay much attention to the language situation in Belarus and the co-existence of Russian as the language of the cities and Belarusian as the language of backward peasantry was considered natural. The urbanization and the gradual substitution of the Belarusian language by the Russian language led to the association of the Belarusians with the Russian-language culture.

The nationalist movements entered the political arena of the BSSR in the end of the 1980s. The main goal of the nationally oriented political activists was the promotion of the Belarusian language as the key factor defining the nation's independence. As Bekus (2014: 28) reports, 'Nationalism had the appearance of a liberation struggle, triggered by dependence on the Soviet state which was dominated by Russian culture and language. The political context of national liberation provided ideological justification for the introduction of forced nationalizing policies after the declaration of independence'. The turn towards the national culture as opposed to the Russian culture was common for most of the republics of the USSR.

Gapova hypothesizes that the end of the 1980s in the Soviet Union was marked by the awakening of 'multiple social anxieties' (Gapova, 2008: 3). The countries in East and Central Europe raised a number of issues concerning socialist injustice. In Belarus, the main concerns of the political activists who adhered to nationalism was the association of Belarus with Russia that manifested itself in the use of common language, sharing the same history with

Russia and therefore the Soviet system was blamed for the loss of the Belarusian culture. During this period for the first time the term 'linguocide' was used (Gapova, 2008). After the Chernobyl catastrophe in 1986 the political situation aggravated, some politicians started to blame the Soviet government for the aftermath of the catastrophe that affected mostly the Belarusian territory. There were also other issues that were considered important, but in this part the language controversy will be discussed.

The emergence of independent private mass media and printing houses at the end of the 1980s changed the face of Belarusian political and social journalism. Due to the openness of the press, in the end of the 1980s a new 'genre' of public discourse emerged, the intellectuals' letters that appeared quite often both in the state-financed and independent newspapers. According to Goujon these letters were 'the first steps toward collective action in favor of cultural and political requests' (Goujon, 1999: 664). Kalita (2010) notes that the liberal publishing practice was divided into two opposing camps, the mass media using Belarusian expanded its use in the political discourse and therefore the Belarusian language entered into a new domain.

Glasnost' introduced a new problem that regarded the development of the idea of 'nation', this problem was frequently discussed by the Belarusian intellectuals who sought to give shape to the concept of the Belarusian national identity on the basis of the cultural heritage of the Belarusian nation and its unique history. Such scholars as Mechkovskaya (1994) and Lukashanets (1999) call the period from the end of the 1980s till the mid-1990s 'the second wave of the Belarusization'. The nationalists called this process of looking for new ideals the process of '*вяртанне народу гістарычнай памяці*' ('restoration of the nation's historical memory'). The main focus was on restoring the historical symbols of the nation, reinventing the traditions.

The question of the symbols of the nation was one of the most discussed, the nationalist political activists suggested the setting of the white-red-white flag and the coat of arms '*Pahonia*'. These symbols were used as the symbols of the nationalist movement, as the symbols of independence. As far as the revival of Belarusian traditions is concerned, by the end of the 1980s in Minsk a series of celebrations of traditional Belarusian holidays was organized. The role of the Belarusian language in the building of the 'national' idea was viewed as crucial. The language was supposed to be the main characteristic feature of the nation, the primary marker of identity. In the nationalist discourse much attention was paid to the function of the Belarusian language. The principal function of the national language was

considered to be the cultural revival of the nation resulting in the independence of the state. The rising interest towards traditional Belarusian culture in the 1980s resulted in the origination of the creative unions: "*Майстроўня*" ('Majstrounia'), 1980; "*Нашчадкі*" ('Nashchadki'), 1983-1991; "*Талака*" ('Talaka'). The Academic choir chapel (creative manager Shyrma), the Belarusian National Choir (creative manager Tsitovich), the music band "*Пясняры*" ('Pesnyary'), (creative manager Muliavin) and the folk dance group "*Хорошкі*" ('Horoshki') (creative manager Gayavaia) provided the promotion of the Belarusian culture not only on the territory of the BSSR but also abroad.[37]

The revaluation of the history by the nationalist activists portrayed the Soviet period as the period of de-nationalization. The democratic parties in the 1980s aimed at reviving the national Belarusian idea. The process of reviving (or reinventing) the national idea was decelerated by the fact that the majority of the population spoke Russian (according to the 1989 census was the first language for more than 3,2 million of Belarusians, i.e. for 32,3% of the Belarusians). Hence, limiting the use of the Russian language in the public life was of primary importance. Creating a mono-linguistic community, from the nationalists' point of view, would help Belarusians develop independently from the influence of the Russian-language culture.

The 1989 census proved that the situation in the BSSR was strikingly different from the situations in other Soviet republics. As Pavlenko noted, 'both language shift and derussification would have been fairly unproblematic if the populations of all 14 countries were homogeneous and consisted mainly of titulars who favored the titular language' (Pavlenko, 2008: 283). In the BSSR the situation was indeed problematic, because 32,3% of the titulars considered Russian to be their first language (the highest percent among all the Soviet republics). The 1989 census revealed the fact that the assimilation of Belarusians was the highest among the other Soviet republics.

Moreover, on the territory of Belarus lived ethnic Russians who spoke Russian, thus the L1 speakers of Russian constituted up to 47% of the population of the BSSR (see Giger & Sloboda, 2008). The titulars who in the census marked their first language as Belarusian might not have actually spoken standard Belarusian, but the mix of Russian and Belarusian, *trasianka*. Therefore it is possible to admit that the majority of the population in 1989 was Russian-speaking.

[37]Belarusian Language Society, 2015. *Rusifikacyja belaruskaj movy na Belarusi u XX st.* [Russification in Belarus in the 20th century]. [online] Available at: <http://tbm-mova.by/news_1203.html> [Accessed 2 July 2015].

Chapter 3. History of Belarusian-medium Education

Belarusian is the language of the autochthonous population of the Belarusian lands. Nevertheless, Belarusian-medium education in the Belarusian territory was officially established only in the 1920s. The history of the development of Belarusian-medium education is worth mentioning because it helps understand why in the early 1990s the attempt of adopting Belarusian-medium education failed. Moreover, this brief overview explains the reasons why Belarusian has been perceived as a language of low social prestige and why the intergenerational transmission of Belarusian nowadays is questionable.

3.1. Medium Languages in Education on the Belarusian Lands before the 20th Century

Education in the Belarusian language was a tradition that dates back to the 16th century when the Uniate brotherhoods established Belarusian-medium schools and collegiums. The secularization of education allowed the development of private and state-governed schools. As a rule, the state-governed schools on the territory of Belarus were located in the cities and therefore were either Polish-, Yiddish- or Russian-medium. Parochial schools in the rural areas preserved Belarusian as the medium language of instruction.

Until the second half of the 18th century school education on the territory of Belarus was concentrated mainly around the numerous monastic orders. The majority of schools belonged to the Jesuits, some educational institutions were also founded by the Basilians and Dominicans. Protestant schools that had Polish or Belarusian as medium languages were prosecuted, but the Latin-teaching Jesuit collegiums and middle schools in Polotsk, Nesvizh, Orsha, Bobrujsk, Brests, Minsk, Pinsk and Vitebsk introduced such subjects as Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectics, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy in their curricula. Basilian schools were similar to those of the Jesuits but as the medium language Belarusian was traditionally used. One of the most famous schools was Slutsk Gymnasium that accepted students irrespective of their religious denomination.

The 18th century was marked by the process of secularization. In 1773 the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth established the Commission on National Education. From that moment on, education was supposed to become secular. The school reform launched in 1802 by the Russian Empire resulted in further changes in the education system. Three main types of educational establishments were created: the first level is represented by one-year

religious parochial schools. Primary education was available to the peasantry and lower middle classes of the society. Secondary education consisted of vocational schools and gymnasia.

The class division of the society dictated the division of education, too. Tertiary education was not available to lower social classes, and certain secondary schools accepted children from high-class families only. Therefore, Belarusian was only used by the lower classes and was taught only on the early stages of schooling. In the first two decades of the 19th century Catholic and Basilian monasteries opened parochial schools that used Belarusian as a language of instruction. The government's initiative to organize schools for peasants and poor middle class children gained financial support of the nobility. One of the first schools that used the method of mutual instruction (the Monitorial System) was to open in Schorsy in 1821.

The Jewish population that resided on the territory of Belarus had their own schools in the cities. The character of the education was mostly religious, the rabbis and the melameds organized the process of instruction. Financial support was provided by the Jewish communities. In 1844 a state reform of these schools was performed and the first secular subject that was introduced was the Russian language. Private education on the territory of modern-day Belarus consisted mainly of private vocational schools that provided education for women.

Discussing the medium languages of education on the territory of modern-day Belarus in the 19th century it is important to take the geographical position into account. The Western part of the country underwent a process of strong polonization and therefore Polish was the main medium language of education, studying the Polish language, history and literature was obligatory. The leader of Polish patriots Chartarijsky greatly influenced the spread of the ideals of Polish national movement. Since he was the curator of the Vil'nia University he managed to popularize Polish by means of education.

After the revolt in 1830-1831 the Russian Tsar Nicholas I had to discontinue the university courses in Vil'nia University because of the spread of the anti-government protests among the students. Other higher educational establishments such as Vil'nia Medical Academy and the Roman Catholic Academy were open till the 1840s but the medium language was changed from Polish into Russian. Schooling in Polish was banned in the eastern districts of the country and in most of the schools in the western districts as well. Russian was proclaimed the medium language and the teachers who couldn't speak Russian

were not allowed to teach. One of the first higher educational establishments opened by the Russian government was the University of Agriculture in Gory-Horki and the Cadet Corps in Brest.

After the revolt of 1864 the Russian Empire took a series of measures to limit the use of Belarusian, too, and as a result in 1867 printing in the Belarusian language was banned and the few books published where published outside the Russian Empire. The 19th century marked a dramatic change in the development of the Belarusian language. On the one hand, this was the time of linguistic interference both from Russian and from Polish. Although for the first half of the 19th century the main language used for formal and informal written communication was Polish, in the second half of the 19th century the Russian literary language managed to outbound Polish in administrative use, in education and Belarusian was only present in day-to-day communication and folklore.

The spread of the Russian language in the 1850s was centered on elementary schools for peasants. These schools were partly financed by the state, partly by the Orthodox clergy. Children from poor families were taught in Russian, because one of the main goals that these schools pursued was the russification of the population and the popularization of the Orthodox Church. From 1859 till 1862 there were 223 schools founded on the territory of Belarus. The level of education these schools provided was rather low. All in all there were approximately 700 elementary schools for peasants' children in 1860s. The occupancy rate of these schools was extremely low, less than 1%. Since the Belarusian language was banned from 1863 to 1905, schooling was conducted in Russian.

The development of the Russian-medium system of education contributed greatly to the development of the Belarusian-medium education, too. The patterns used by the Russian officials were applied in the process of establishment of Belarusian schools. The spread of academic writing and the growing importance of tertiary education promoted the use of the Belarusian language. Belarusian national movements in the late 1870s and early 1880s made a significant contribution in the researches of the Belarusian history and culture and the revival of the Belarusian literary tradition in the secular environment.

The second half of the 19th century were influenced by the Reform Act of 1861 that liberated the peasantry and marked the development of capitalism in the Russian Empire. The vast industrial advancement of Belarusian lands and the economic growth of the region made possible the enrichment of Belarusian bourgeoisie and the emergence of original Belarusian literature. The main works by Bahyshevich were published during these two last decades of

the 19th century. In 1891 in the *Preamble* to his book of poetry '*Dudka belaruskaya'* ("Belarusian Fiddle") he was the first to raise awareness about the status of the Belarusian language: *'аб нашай долі-нядолі, аб нашай бацькавай спрадвечнай мове, каторую мы самі, да і не адны мы, а ўсе людзі цёмныя «мужыцкай» завуць, а завецца яна «беларускай»...'* ("about our fate and miseries, about the ancient language of our fathers that we ourselves, and all uneducated people call 'men's language' but which in fact is called 'belarusian'…") (Bahushevich, 1891[38]). This poetic appeal of Bahushevich to Belarusians has become the motto of the 20th-century nationalist movements: '*Не пакідайце ж мовы нашай беларускай, каб не ўмёрлі*!' ("Do not forsake our Belarusian language, lest you pass away"). The enrichment of the Belarusian-speaking bourgeoisie made possible the emergence of private Belarusian-medium schools and guaranteed the intergenerational transmission of Belarusian not only among the poor but also among the representatives of the middle class.

3.2. Belarusian as a Medium Language of Education in the 1920s

Belarusian language as a medium language of instruction was used both in Western and Eastern Belarus. Western Belarus appeared to be in extremely unfavourable political conditions in which Belarusian language in education was prosecuted. A Polish politician Grabski made a rather aggressive proclamation: "*Polish land for the Poles*" in 1919. He was the one who reformed the Polish education system, having banned Belarusian and Ukrainian languages as medium languages of instruction, and all the core subjects were taught in Polish. Belarusian was allowed only in classes where Belarusians constituted at least half of the pupils. There were 346 Belarusian-medium schools in 1919 and all of them were closed by the Polish government by 1925.

Belarusian-speaking teachers couldn't put up with the discrimination of their language. And in order to support Belarusian on July, 1, 1921 *Tavarystva Belaryskae Shkoly* ('The Belarusian School Association') was founded in Western Belarus. It was a union of the Central School Rada in Vil'nia and the School Association in Radashkovichy, established by the initiative of Tarashkevich. The aim of the TBS was the promotion of the Belarusian language and culture in schools. This was the first association dealing with culture and

[38]Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2015. *Belarusian language*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belarusian_language> [Accessed 18 April 2015].

language, and by mid-1930s there had already been more than 500 groups, with 15 to 30 thousands of members in Western Belarus.

The statute of the Association proclaimed the main goal: "*пашыраць і памагаць асьвеце ў беларускім нацыянальным, людскім і хрысціянскім духу*" ('to spread and support education according to the Belarusian national, social and Christian spirit') (The Statute of Belarusian School Association, 1921). The founder of the TBS was Tarashkevich, a renowned leader of Belarusian nationalist movement in Western Belarus, the director of Vil'nia gymnasium (1924-1936) and the author of the famous book "Belarusian Grammar for Schools" (1918). The orthographic norm, established by him was called '*tarashkevitsa'*, and modern scholars give this name to the modern variety of Belarusian that use Tarashkevich's orthography norm. The Statute of the TBS allowed the association to open and maintain public schools and courses, coordinate teaching seminars and libraries, manage professional and higher educational establishments, publish textbooks and books of literature, organize concerts and exhibitions.

The politics of the Polish government didn't approve of schooling in Belarusian and in the course of three years, from 1920 to 1923 the number of elementary schools that used Belarusian as a medium language was reduced from 514 to 32. The active support of the TBS made it possible to open more than 400 new Belarusian schools in Vil'nia, Radashkovichy, Navagrudak and Kletsk regions.

The confrontation with the Polish government that the TBS underwent was harsh. The Polish leader Pilsudski didn't recognize the existence of Belarusians as a separate nation and often criticized the actions of the TBS. He considered the Belarusian language to be too difficult and lacking structure and norms. Pilsudski considered the Belarusian intelligentsia to be of low moral and intellectual value and therefore the Belarusian language was viewed as inappropriate for schooling.

The conditions in Western Belarus were unfavorable for the Belarusian language. Belarusian schools were under pressure of Polish laws, some educational establishments were closed and some had to introduce the Polish language as a second language of instruction and later these schools became Polish-medium schools. Belarusian schools were forced to hire Polish-speaking teachers, which resulted in the strong Polish domination in education and public life.

December, 2, 1936 was the decisive date when the Polish government banned the TBS and thus put an end to the weak attempts to revive Western Belarusian culture within the

Polish state. The assimilation process initiated by the officials banned every attempt of Belarusians to save their national identity. Western Belarusian intellectuals had either to accept the Polonization or turn to the Soviet ideology that was predominant in the Eastern part of Belarus, where the authorities tried to consolidate their power using the ideas of national revival.

In Eastern Belarus the process of Belarusization in education officially started on November, 20, 1920 when the head of Belarusian department in Moscow, Luchenok, sent the order to Minsk demanding the establishment of schools in all four state languages. These four languages were proclaimed earlier (in August, 1920) in the declaration of state's independence. The reasons for promoting national languages and cultures were clearly verbalized by Stalin in 1923 on the Twelfth Congress:

> '…we are concerned with establishing correct mutual relations between the proletariat of the former dominant nation, which is the most cultured section of the proletariat in our entire federation, and the peasantry, mainly of the formerly oppressed nationalities…And in order that Soviet power may become dear also to the peasants of these nationalities, it must be understood by these peasants, it must function in their native languages, the schools and governmental bodies must be staffed with local people who know the language, habits, customs and manner of life of the non-Russian nationalities.' [39]

In response to this initiative by 1929 in the BSSR there was established not only a well-organized system of governance, but also a system of Belarusian-medium education. Besides Belarusian-medium schools, there were schools with Russian, Polish, Lithuanian and Yiddish as medium languages of instruction. The school system was organized in such a way as to provide education in these four languages and the languages of the minorities, Lithuanian and Latvian. As Fishman (2008) describes this period, the pedagogical doctrine of that period claimed that "education was most effective in the mother tongue, so Belarusian native speakers attended Belarusian-language schools" (Fishman, 2008: 388).

[39]Marxists Internet Archive, 2015. *The Twelfth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)*. [online] Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1923/04/17.htm> [Accessed 18 April 2015].

The beginning of the 20th century and the spread of socialist ideas on the self-identification of the nations was a fruitful period for the Belarusian culture. First textbooks in Belarusian appeared in the first two decades of the 20th century, Belarusian-medium schools were opened both in the Western part of the country and in the East. Most of the population (86%) at the beginning of the 20th century was rural and illiterate. The success of the revolutionary movements was in the promotion of popular education, by 1928 three types of schools were established: 8-year public schools (277), 4-year public schools (4585) and elementary or grammar schools in rural and urban areas. The process of Belarusization in the 1920s influenced the development of the Belarusian language as the main language of school instruction and allowed the Belarusian language to enter the establishments of professional and tertiary education. Although the period of the Belarusization did not last long, it is viewed by the Belarusian nationalist activists as the period of successful promotion of the Belarusian culture.

The leader of the Belarusization Ihnatouski was motivated to establish institutions of higher education. Thanks to his initiative, the university in Gory-Horki was reopened. But most importantly, Ihnatouski got the support of the Moscow government and Lenin in particular, and in 1921 Belarusian State University was established. Ihnatouski contributed to the creating of Inbelkult (The Institute of Belarusian Culture), the institution that later became the Belarusian Academy of Sciences.

As asserted by Rudling (2014), Inbelkult appeared to be the first scientific research institute on the territory of Belarus. The institute was state-sponsored and had 19 departments of social and natural sciences. Ihnatouski managed to invite Belarusian intellectuals who were in exile, and in 1928 Inbelkult was transformed into the BSSR Academy of Sciences. The role of the Academy cannot be overestimated: it was the BSSR Academy of Sciences that published dictionaries in the four official languages of the country. The exhaustive work on the compilation of the first standard dictionary of the Belarusian language was considered most important by Nekrashevich who in 1925 declared the following: “at this point, no scientific project is more important and urgent in Belarus than the work on compiling the dictionary of our language” (cited in Rudling, 2014: 130).

In the mid-20s on the territory of Belarus there were 4 higher educational establishments: Belarusian State University, Belarusian Agrarian Academy, the Communist University named after Lenin and Vitebsk Veterinary Institute. All in all, there were 4342 students and 436 university teachers. The highest academic establishment was Inbelkult,

which conducted research in Belarusian language and culture, ethnography, sciences and economics. The Education Commission was established in 1925 and was aimed at working out educational norms that would provide university graduates with necessary qualifications to proceed their career as researchers.

In Eastern Belarus much effort was put into establishing Belarusian-medium schools, Overall education was the main goal of the government, and in 1923 on the XII Party Congress Stalin approved of the establishment of schooling in the national languages of Soviet countries. The leader underlined that schools only are not enough for the prosperity of the countries:

> 'Schools will not carry you very far. These schools are developing, so are the languages, but actual inequality remains the basis of all the discontent and friction. Schools and language will not settle the matter; what is needed is real, systematic, sincere and genuine proletarian assistance on our part to the labouring masses of the culturally and economically backward nationalities. In addition to schools and language, the Russian proletariat must take all measures to create in the border regions, in the culturally backward republics—and they are not backward because of any fault of their own, but because they were formerly regarded as sources of raw materials—must take all measures to ensure the building of centres of industry in these republic'.[40]

By creating a strong working class the process of urbanization brought the speakers of Belarusian into the cities, which expanded the use of the Belarusian language that traditionally was more widely spread in the countryside.

The results of Belarusization are impressive. In ten years (from 1920 to 1929) Belarusian became the main language of the press. As the table in Rudling (2014: 189) shows, earlier in 1927 the situation was different: Belarusian newspapers and journals prevailed but there existed Russian and Yiddish mass media, too. Rudling (2014) gives the following data: in 1924/1925 academic year 28,4% of schools used Belarusian as a medium language, whereas by 1929/1930 academic year there had already been 93,8% of Belarusian schools.

[40]Marxists Internet Archive, 2015. *The Twelfth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)*. [online] Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1923/04/17.htm> [Accessed 18 April 2015].

However, the changes in the language policy were not welcome by the population. Forced switching from Belarusian to Russian some decades earlier and again, forced switching from Russian to Belarusian would often create resentment and opposition. Rudling asserts that the process of nationalization wasn't carried out in response to popular demand. Rudling emphasizes the problematic nature of the process of Belarusization: "By the stroke of a pen, millions of people were assigned a new ethnicity and a new nationality. Thereafter, the government intended to assign them a new language in accordance with this new identity" (Rudling 2014: 191). Orthodox and russophone Belarusians from the East of the country resisted the Belarusization policies as limiting their social mobility and even threatening. A rather significant problem for the Eastern Belarusians was '*tarashkevitsa'*, the alphabet that is very much influenced by the Polish language and therefore differed to a great extent from the Eastern dialect that was closer to Russian that to Polish.

This viewpoint was supported by the Belarusian sociolinguist Mechkovskaya who characterized the process of Belarusization of the 1920s as a consistent governmental policy. The government supported Belarusization both economically and legally (the Belarusian language was proclaimed one of the state languages). Mechkovskaya (2003) asserts that the population of the country at that time did not always welcome the Belarusization of schools. Already in 1920s the dichotomy 'Russian-speaking city – Belarusian-speaking countryside' was an important factor for the parents towards the choice of Russian-medium schools rather than schools with Belarusian as the main language of instruction.

3.3. Decline of Belarusian-medium Education in the 1930s-1980s

The process of gradual replacement of Belarusian by Russian in education started already in 1933. The Decree issued on March 13, 1938 made the study of Russian compulsory. Belarusian was no longer used as the main language of communication in the government and was being replaced by Russian. Records management in all government bodies was to be performed in Russian starting from 1936-1937. In the BSSR at that time four state languages, Belarusian, Polish, Yiddish and Russian coexisted. Schools with Belarusian language of instruction introduced Russian in the third grade as a second language. In Polish and Yiddish schools Russian was introduced from the fifth grade as Russian was considered to be the third language, whereas classes of Belarusian as a second language began in the third

grade. Grenoble (2003) reports that all the language programs suffered from the lack of textbooks and trained teachers.

The movement towards russification led to a series of educational reforms in 1958-1959 (Grenoble, 2003: 57). According to new legislation, education in the mother tongue became no longer compulsory. More and more schools established Russian only as the medium language and the number of secondary Belarusian-medium schools reduced. Elementary schools, however, were mostly Belarusian-medium, especially rural schools. One of the major changes was the introduction of Russian in elementary schools in Belarusian cities. Before the reform most elementary schools were monolingual and the classes of Russian started in the secondary school. After the reforms of 1958-1959 bilingual education appeared in the system of elementary schools for the first time. By 1961 all the city schools established Russian as the medium language. Smaller cities and towns continued using Belarusian but of course it depended on the teachers themselves. In some schools, as Stankevich (1994) claims, teachers were using Russian even if the textbooks were written in Belarusian.

Belarusian-medium schools in the Soviet period remained only in the rural areas. And the instruction in these schools was also affected by the use of *trasianka*. It was difficult to register the exact number of Belarusian-medium schools in the Soviet Belarus. 1987 statistics revealed that 76,8% of the pupils in 1986/1987 attended Russian-medium schools, and 0,2% attended bilingual schools. Formally, there were Belarusian-medium schools, too, but often in the rural schools *trasianka* was used, since there was a lack of Belarusian-speaking teachers and the textbooks and teaching aids were in Russian (80% of all the textbooks were printed in Russian).

In the 70s Belarusian national activists were deprived of the right to publish in the Soviet Union. Most of them criticized the government's negligence towards the national language. One of the *samizdat* publications of that period is called "Letter to a Russian Friend", written by Kauka. It was published in London in 1979 and was translated into English. "Letter to a Russian Friend" raises awareness of the problem of russification. The author claims that the results of the assimilation of Belarusian present a disturbing problem. He calls the process of assimilation 'a spiritual castration of the nation' (Kauka, 1979: 2) and supposes that a nation deprived of its cultural heritage has no future. Kauka implies that the main trait of Belarusian intellectuals is their indifference to their own culture. The journalist criticizes Belarusian leaders who lost their language and therefore were not able to have a

viewpoint of their own, a viewpoint that would protect the Belarusian culture in the USSR. The policy that was in applied in the 1970s was perceived by Kauka as anti-Constitutional.

In "Letter to a Russian Friend' the conflict that the educational reforms provoked is described. On the one hand, the introduction of Russian into the school system was optional, and the parents were able to choose the language of instruction. On the other hand, the necessary conditions for the equal use of Russian and Belarusian were not created: there were no higher educational establishments that offered courses in Belarusian, Belarusian-medium schools were undermanned and lacked textbooks and teaching aids. And therefore the reform violated the Constitution that aimed to guarantee the equal status of the two languages. Kauka provides a quote from the book 'International Upbringing' written by Kuzminin in1977: 'In providing every opportunity for the study of both Belarusian and Russian, we consider impermissible any steps which create superior conditions for either of them and thereby give priority to one or the other' (Kauka, 1979: 50). As far as the situation in Belarusian schools was concerned, the Russian language was undoubtedly given priority in education. The Russian language was the main language for professional use, vocational schools and professional colleges were Russian-medium, and the Belarusian language had a low social status because it was not used in professional sphere. Kauka noticed that Belarusians were ashamed of their language, having '*a linguistic inferiority complex*' (Ibid. 54). This happened as a result of the stereotype of Belarusian as a language of illiterate peasants and farmers.

Although the initiatives of the government authorities in the 1930s – 1980s resulted in the decline of the Belarusian language as a medium language of education, the impact of the Soviet system of education on modern-day Belarus can hardly be overestimated. Its main achievement was the development of the previously existing Imperial system of education and the organization of the state-financed schooling on the territory of Belarus. The percent of literate population rose from 53% in 1926 to 79% in 1939. The percentage of illiterate population registered by the 1989 Census was only 0,2%. Undoubtedly, the politics of the USSR is characterized by significant de-nationalization and russification, but the choice of these measures was dictated by the political, economic and cultural strategies that the USSR followed.

Chapter 4. Peculiarities of Belarusian-medium and Bilingual Education in the Early 1990s

This chapter gives an overview of the existing researches and provides the extensive data from the mass media on the problem of the implementation of the Belarusian language in the process of education and other spheres of social life and presents a critical evaluation of the political and sociolinguistic factors influencing the development of contemporary Belarusian-medium education, Belarusian-Russian bilingualism in education and the role of the Belarusian language as part of the contemporary political discourse.

4.1. The Belarusian Language Society and Language Planning in 1991-1995

One of the associations connected with the democratic party Belarusian Popular Front was the Belarusian Language Society. It was created in 1989 as the follower of the first association of the teachers of the Belarusian language. The founders of this Society were the Writers' Union, the Ministry of Culture and Education, and other official organizations. The aims of the Society were:

- 'the use of Belarusian language in all spheres of social life in the BSSR;
- the all-round development of the [Belarusian] language;
- the preservation of the language's purity and originality, retention and development of national culture and folk traditions;
- the formation of national consciousness;
- the elimination of national nihilism' (Goujon, 1999: 26).

By the end of the 1980s the ideas about making the Belarusian language the only official language of the country were already in the air. The necessary steps taken by the Belarusian intelligentsia in the late 1980s due to *perestroika* and g*lasnost* led to the passage of the law '*On the Languages of the BSSR*' in January, 1990. In fact, language laws were issued all over the Soviet Union in 1988-1990 and Belarus was one of the last countries to pass the law on languages. The success of the nationalist movements did not consist in the fact that the law was passed, but in the fact that it was passed in favour of the requests of the Belarusian intelligentsia, i.e. the law declared Belarusian the sole language of the country.

As Zaprudski maintains, at the end of the 1980s there were no official government body that would take the responsibility of working on the language policy, regulating the use of the national language.[41] Therefore, the leaders of the Belarusian Language Society together with the BSSR government officials had to cooperate in order to decide the main priorities of the language policy. At the beginning of 1990 the Belarusian Language Society and the Ministry of National Education of the BSSR started discussing the issues connected with the implementation of the law. In May, 1990 the conference dedicated to the problems of establishing Belarusian as the only state language took place in Minsk. At the conference the participants set legal issues of the further perspectives of the language policy. In September, 1990 '*The State Program of the Belarusian Language Development in the BSSR*' was signed, and the government officials devised the methods for a 10-year development of the bill.

According to Mechkovskaya, the law 'On Languages of the BSSR' was of secondary importance and was adopted only in response to the language laws issued by other Soviet republics. Comparing the Language Law of Belarus with those of the Baltic countries, one can notice that there were no principal differences introduced in the role of the Belarusian language. Mechkovskaya claims the Language Law to be verbose and abstract (Mechkovskaya, 2003: 35). The Law did not provide guidance for solving the possible problems of bilingualism and did not give the definition of the term 'language of instruction' and did not explain the connection of language and identity. Mechkovskaya gives an example from Drozd (1992): a Belarusian Russian-speaking family appealed to the school officials to establish Russian as the language of school instruction for their children. The court dismissed the action explaining that the language of instruction was to be defined by the nationality of the family. As the nationality was marked as 'Belarusian' the language attested was automatically defined as Belarusian.

The Language Law of 1990 declared Belarusian the state language in Article 2, and the Russian language was declared the main language of international relations within the USSR. Article 2 of the 1990 Language Law also stated that the government, the state institutions and social structure were to create the necessary conditions for the successful study of both Russian and Belarusian and guarantee proficiency in both languages. The same Article 2 stated though that the Law did not regulate language use in informal communication, in communication among colleagues in the working environment, in the Armed Forces of the

[41] Zaprudski, S., 2002. Mounaja palityka u Belarusi u 1990-ja gady [Language Policy in Belarus in the 1990s]. *ARCHE* [online] 1(21). Available at: <http://arche.bymedia.net/2002-1/zapr102.html> [Accessed 18 July 2015].

USSR and in the Border Forces of the USSR on the territory of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic.

According to the plan on the implementation of the Belarusian language, the changes in the society were to take place in the following 3-10 years. And the desired result of the language policy was the 100% belarusification of the country. At the moment of the Law's introduction the Belarusian-speaking population was in the minority, so the Law aimed in the first place to protect the Belarusian language from extinction and the law made provision for popularizing it, creating a Belarusian-speaking majority. Moreover, the 1990 law 'On Languages' looked upon the Belarusian language as a symbol of the Belarusian nation and as a guarantor of a country's political and cultural independence.

As Koryakov (2002) claims, the law was mainly adopted as a means of protecting the national language and revive it at least as a language of official documents, thus saving it from further replacement by the Russian language. Mechkovskaya (2003) asserts that proclaiming Belarusian as the only state language was not an effective way to promote the language. She considered this attempt to save the language to be weak, because it only expanded the use of the language in official documents. The use of Russian was not limited by the Language Law but even a small step towards the change in the language policy was not welcome by the population. Voting for the bilingualism meant keeping to the existing tendencies and agreeing on the exclusion of the Belarusian language.

The law 'On Languages of the BSSR' did not provoke public debate in 1990. After the break-up of the USSR, when the Republic of Belarus gained full independence, the Belarusian authorities began to take steps to expand the use of the Belarusian language. The prominent Belarusian sociolinguist Mechkovskaya called this process 'the new wave of Belarusization' (Mechkovskaya, 1994: 32). In 1992 the Deputy of Education proclaimed Belarusian the main language of education, in 1993/1994 academic year 55% of the first formers entered Belarusian-language schools and classes. Belarusian became the main language of the government and mass media. Ioffe theorized that the main forces of the nationalist movement were the Belarusian National Front and the Belarusian Language Society who 'kept the issue of the dismal situation of Belarusian in public focus' (Ioffe, 2003: 1031).

The political situation in 1990 and 1991 was instable and the rumors on the breakup of the USSR were heard more and more often. In 1991 the Accords on the dissolution of the Soviet Union were finally signed. As the unofficial public polls state, Belarusians were reluctant to get independence from the Soviet Union. The role of nationalist movements in the

separation of Belarus from the Soviet Union was not significant. The Union would have collapsed anyway, and the reasons for that were external, not internally Belarusian.

In 1991 the President of the USSR Gorbachev conducted a referendum in the Soviet republics. The main question was "Would you like to live in the reformed USSR?" The major part of the population of the BSSR answered in the affirmative. The population of Belarus by that time had undergone several decades of dominance of the Russian language and the Soviet culture. First of all the success of the russification resulted from the intensive urbanization (one of the highest rates in the world). Second, the development of mass media in the Russian language led to changes of national identity. Most Belarusians by 1991 didn't consider themselves separate from the Russian culture and, most importantly, the Russian language. The 1989 census revealed that the assimilation of Belarusians was on highest among the other Soviet republics. According to the data of the census (Census 1989), 28,5% of the population considered Russian to be the main language. The adoption of the law '*On Languages of the BSSR*' in 1990 and the resulting process of Belarusization revealed that there were significant measures to be taken to make the Belarusian language the most widely spoken language of the Republic of Belarus.

The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 resulted in a series of changes in the government structure and politics. As Pavlenko (2008) observed, the main factor hampering the process of derussification in the post-Soviet countries was the fact that the titular nations did not always favor their titular languages. Pavlenko counted four factors that complicated the language shift in the post-Soviet countries: '(a) large populations of monolingual Russian speakers; (b) russification of members of the titular population; (c) multiethnic populations accustomed to relying on Russian as a lingua franca of interethnic communication; and (d) functional limitations of some of the titular languages' (Pavlenko, 2008: 283). Taking these four factors into account it is possible to explain in detail the situation in Belarus on the implementation of the Belarusian language in the public life.

The population of the BSSR consisted mostly of Belarusians. The use of Russian as a lingua franca among the peoples living in the country was not the decisive factor in the refusal of the use of Belarusian. The reason why the majority of the population was reluctant to turn to the Belarusian language was primarily the vast russification that Belarus was undergoing in the 19th and 20th centuries. Statehood was obtained only in the 1991, before that time the stable governmental system had not been present on the territory of Belarus, the Belarusian

National Republic did not last long enough to establish a stable language policy and have weight on the European political arena.

The 1989 Census proves that Belarus was influenced most significantly by the Russian language and culture among other Soviet countries. Pavlenko (2008) noted also that the language situation in Belarus differs from that in Ukraine and Moldova because of the Russian-favouring political orientation of Belarus and the long history of incorporation between the two countries, which defined the outcomes of the language shift in Belarus. Belarusian was used predominantly by the rural population as 98% of the ethnic Belarusian were peasants (Marples 1999; Zaprudsky 2007) and the greater part of the language and cultural revival took place in urban areas, where Belarusian was not widely used.

As far as another important factor is concerned, namely 'functional limitations of some of the titular languages' (Pavlenko, 2008: 283), this can also be applied to the situation in Belarus. The Belarusian language did not have a continuous written tradition and consequently, most of the scientific vocabulary was developed during the 1920s, the first wave of Belarusization. This short period in the history of Belarus gave impulse to the development of standard Belarusian but since the process of Belarusization was forcedly terminated in the 1930s, the Belarusian language was for many decades oppressed. The dominance of the Russian language in education and science did not make it possible for the Belarusian language to become spread in academic writing. In official documents, the Belarusian language was not frequently used, neither was it used in political rhetoric.

The scholar Gapova described the attempts of the nationalists to revive the Belarusian language in the following way:

> 'The revival of the language and the creation of a new society on the language foundations necessarily implied a future based on the values of the past. Patriotic intellectuals declared the focus of the Belarusian project to be in "language, village, Vil'nia." In that triad, the language symbolized the awakening of the nation, the "village" being the place where the language supposedly flourished and where the folk were just waiting to be awakened and led by the national prophets, while Vilnia (contemporary Vilnius) stood for the golden past. The first "Nasha niva" was published there in the early 1900. … But real people in the Belarusian (or any other) territories never spoke the imagined canonical language.' (Gapova, 2008: 8).

The sociolinguist Mechkovskaya (2012) shared this point of view and claimed that the question of the importance of the Belarusian language was raised only by a small percentage of the population. Writers, journalists, linguists and national activists were anxious about the future of the Belarusian language but most professionals were satisfied with the fact that they can use the Russian language at work. As far as the plain men are concerned, they were often ashamed of their rural origin and their 'uncultured tongue' and tried to get rid of the accent and integrate with the urban population.

After the proclamation of the independence of Belarus, the Belarusian language was pushed into social life. Due to the efforts of the non-numerous national democrats, in 1993 the law on culture and the law "On Education" followed the 1990 law "On Languages". The implementation of the Belarusian language in all spheres of social life was resented by a number of government officials and by the majority of the population. The adoption of the only state language was considered to be forced and artificial. As Woolhiser (2003) suggested, the policy of the new wave of Belarusization had quite a few significant obstacles on its way:

1) the Belarusian language at that time lacked standardized terminology;

2) the implementation of the Belarusian language in the system of education also had a number of problems, for example, the lack of Belarusian-speaking teaching staff and the lack of textbooks and new methodologies;

3) the indifference of the population and sometimes even hostility towards the changes.

The development of a multi-party system triggered the emergence of numerous democratic parties and the democratic activists had different views on the place of the Belarusian language in the democratic society. Zaprudski (2002) argues that Belarusian democrats entered into intense competition. The chief problem was to decide which democratic party was the most democratic among the others, and which party promoted the 'true' democratic ideals.

The first party created in Belarus was the United Democratic Party of Belarus, it appeared in November, 1990. One year later the Movement for Democratic Reforms presented its reformed program that had a different view of the culture of Belarus. The new legislation after the 1990 Language Law was sharply criticized by the Movement, it was labeled as anti-democratic, russophobic and isolationist. The confrontation of the Belarusian

Popular Front and the Movement for Democratic Reforms was rather aggressive, and the Movement in 1992 started to eagerly promote the changes in the Language Law, because the representatives of the party considered choosing the language of the minority as the only state language to be undemocratic. In 1993, together with the leaders of the publishing house "*Eridan*" the activists of the Movement for Democratic Reforms prepared a bill aimed at establishing two official languages, Russian and Belarusian. From 1992 to 1995 the democratic parties of Belarus (apart from the Belarusian Popular Front) often advocated the reintroduction of the Russian language in education. Zaprudski (2002) claimed that the choice of the Russian language as the language of instruction would have endangered the Belarusian language as a weaker and less spread language, and therefore the Belarusian language would become the 'victim' of the democratization process.

As far as the left-wing parties are concerned, they had to accept the 1990 language law since it was the all-USSR movement toward the democratization of the society, but in the beginning of the 1990s the newspapers that belonged to the left-wing parties initiated a propaganda of bilingualism. The left-wing parties of Belarus together with the pro-Russian organizations organized a congress in September, 1993 during which the language policy of Independent Belarus was discussed. The resolution of the congress stated the following: 'to change the violent and discriminating language policy, adopt an official bilingualism (Belarusian and Russian), legitimate the possibility of choice of the medium language of instruction'.[42] However, after the congress the legislation was not changed. The Belarusian language remained the only official language of the independent Republic of Belarus.

4.2. Establishment of Belarusian-medium Education (1990-1994)

The 1990 Law on Languages was in 1991 followed by the Law on Education. The Law on Education, adopted in October, 1991 established the Belarusian language as the main language of education. The Belarusization policy of the 1991-1994 aimed at broadening the use of the Belarusian language. The system of secondary education in 1990-1994 developed a new approach that expanded the use of the Belarusian language and adopted a series of measures on its development. The teachers of the Belarusian language and literature received

[42]Zaprudski, S., 2002. Mounaja palityka u Belarusi u 1990-ja gady [Language Policy in Belarus in the 1990s]. *ARCHE* [online] 1(21). Available at: <http://arche.bymedia.net/2002-1/zapr102.html> [Accessed 18 July 2015].

a 10 percent allowance. Higher educational establishments introduced new courses in Belarusian and started developing new fields of study.

The main goal of the Belarusian government in 1991-1994 was to establish Belarusian-teaching schools or at least make Belarusian the medium language in the majority of classes. Formally, the government managed to succeed. Since Belarusian was proclaimed the only official language of Independent Belarus, all the kindergartens, all the schools and universities introduced Belarusian as the main language of instruction. In 1992, 42 schools in Minsk started the new academic year as the Belarusian-medium schools. In the 1993/1994 academic year already half of the first formers entered schools with Belarusian as the main language of instruction. The changes in the school curriculum were also significant. Belarusian language and literature were obligatory subjects; new subjects on the history and culture of Belarus were introduced. In the Soviet schools the subject 'The History of Belarus' was part of the World History curriculum and was studied only one year. In the 1990s the History of Belarus became a well-developed subject with the new program of instruction and the new textbooks in Belarusian.

The spread of the Belarusian language in kindergartens and elementary schools was one of the main achievements of the 1991-1994 education system: songs and legends in Belarusian, traditional Belarusian crafts and dances became part of the curriculum. The implementation of the Belarusian language in the system of secondary schools was a more complicated process, but the plan on the total belarusification of the universities was announced in 1993.

According to the new regulations, PhD students in Belarus were obliged to take a pass-fail test in Belarusian in order to obtain their degree. Thousands of teachers and office workers took free evening courses of the Belarusian language in order to be able to apply it on the daily basis in their working sphere. Mechkovskaya stated (2003) that the use of Belarusian in mass media, advertisement, records management, accounting and business correspondence increased dramatically in 1991-1994. The circulation of new Belarusian newspapers and magazines, the appearance of new books published in Belarusian was changing the Belarusian society.

The official precise statistics on the number of first-formers attending Belarusian-medium classes and schools in 1991-1995 does not exist. The Belarusian Language Society claimed that in 1994/1995 academic year the percentage of urban first-formers was 75%. In order to understand the scale of the reforms in the education, one can compare the data

presented by the BLS with the official data from the 1980s analyzed by Kuntsevich (1999). In 1987, 69,8% of schools in the BSSR were Belarusian-medium schools, 29,9% were Russian-medium and 0,3% were bilingual. At the same time, though the absolute majority of schools used Belarusian as the main language of instruction, the number of pupils studying in Belarusian was much lower: only 23% of pupils attended Belarusian-medium schools. These schools were located in the countryside and there were classes that consisted of only two or three pupils. Belarusian rural schools did not always teach the standard Belarusian, most often it was the mixed language, *trasianka*. According to the 1987 statistics, 76,8% of the pupils in 1986/1987 attended Russian-medium schools, and 0,2% attended bilingual schools. Therefore, the fact that in 1992-1995 75% of urban first-formers attended Belarusian-medium schools signifies that the 1990s belarusification was a rather successful and promising initiative.

4.3. Reaction of the Population towards the Language Law. The 1995 Referendum

The plan of Belarusification seemed promising indeed but as the sociolinguist Mechkovskaya noted (2003), the implementation of the Belarusian language was performed hastily. In the course of 3 or 4 years it was impossible to make the children speak fluently the language that was not used by the majority of people. The lack of Belarusian-speaking teachers and the lack of textbooks in Belarusian led to unfavourable consequences. More and more parents were dissatisfied with the school system. Most pupils grew up in Russian-speaking families and therefore had to study in the new language, different from the one they used at home. Polls from 1993 indicate: 'less than 25% of Belarusians knew their native tongue well and less than 50% were willing to promote the knowledge of it' (Gapanovich, 1993: 14). School administration appeared to be in a difficult situation, sometimes in the middle of an academic year some schools under the pressure of the city authorities were forced to change the medium language of instruction into Belarusian.

The scholars, teachers and school administration agree on the fact that the implementation of the Belarusian language in the school system was formal. Kunstevich (1999) commented on the Belarusian-medium education in the following way:

> 'Outside the class both pupils and teachers would speak Russian or use the mixed language, a lot of subjects were taught in Russian, but the records

> management was conducted in Belarusian. The instructional wall sheets, showcases in the classrooms were also designed in Russian both in rural and urban schools. The teachers of chemistry, physics, mathematics and biology received the teaching materials in Russian even in Belarusian-medium schools and had to translate the necessary information into Belarusian before presenting it in class' (Kuntsevich, 1999: 141).

The complex situation in the sphere of education during the first years of the country's independence and the difficulties caused by the introduction of the Belarusian language in the system of education were criticized by the population. In 1992, 17 parents from Rogachev, a town in the Gomel region, signed a petition on the unlawfulness of the language policy. In their petition they labelled the Law on Languages as anti-national, because the government adopted it without asking if the population really wanted the law. The authors of the petition claimed that even if they spoke Russian and were brought up in Russian-speaking families and got their education in Russian, this did not mean that they are not Belarusian. They still respected the Belarusian culture and the traditions. The mothers from Rogachev who signed that petition emphasized that learning Belarusian in schools was too difficult for their children, who were used to speaking Russian in their families. In the letter the mothers from Rogachev also pointed out the fact that the Gomel region was affected most gravely by the Chernobyl catastrophe and therefore the workload increment in Belarusian-teaching schools was not desirable (Bukchin, 1992).

The letter from the parents of Rogachev drew a wide response in the society. Some intellectuals labelled it as pro-Russian and pointed at the fact that the loss of the language would result in the later loss of the country's independence. Others were sad that their fellow-citizens were reluctant to revive the culture and therefore were unable to develop any patriotic feelings towards their Motherland. The supporters of the Belarusian-based education often heated the polemics in the mass media. The nationalist parties and associations blamed the parents for being indifferent to the Belarusian language as the main language of instruction, or even hostile towards it. The scholar Gapova commented on the situation in the following way:

> 'As newspapers began publishing letters of support for the "return of the native language," letter after letter flowed in, now signed by a "teacher", now by an "ethnographer," now by a "linguist," each citing examples of

> how Belarusian citizens faced difficulties in sending their kids to Belarusian schools, mostly, according to the letters, because other parents, also Belarusian citizens, objected to switching their children's schooling to Belarusian… Parents in general, however, were neither linguists nor ethnographers and thus lacked an interest in the "rural language." To them the language that mattered was the language of the upward social mobility, and that was Russian.' (Gapova, 2008: 10).

Another popular concern regarding the use of Belarusian in education was expressed by the people, who grew up in the Soviet Union and kept strong ties with the Russian culture. The mother tongue of the majority of the population was Russian and the people who were raised in the Russian-language culture considered themselves to be part of this culture. In 1993 a Belarusian intellectual Potupa wrote the following letter to the editors of the sate newspaper "Sovietskaya Byelorussia": "The Law on Languages and the resulting process of Belarusization means not only the protection of the language but also the exclusion of the Russian language and the Russian culture. Such great writers as Lermontov, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, and Brodsky will become simply 'foreign literature', part of the school curriculum, such as Shakespeare, Balzac, Hemingway."[43] In addition, the author of the article mentioned the importance of the sense of belongingness to the Soviet culture that was also based on the Russian language. Several prominent scientists were Belarusian, and therefore these facts are to be taken into account. Rejecting the Russian language would lead to the rejection of the products of the culture and science created in Russian. If the Belarusian culture rejected the Russian language this would have resulted in the limiting of the culture, since the Belarusian culture is not a rich culture. And the author of the article supposed that choosing Russian meant choosing the volume of activity for himself, for his children and for his grandchildren.

Most Belarusian students supported this viewpoint and there was widespread opinion that school-leavers would be more motivated to leave the country to study in Russia in the Russian language, because the system of education, limited by the study of one culture only will be inefficient and will not develop creatively and intellectually gifted personalities.

The nationalists, from their side, criticized the slow pace of the belarusification of the system of education. Most defenders of the Belarusian-only language policy blamed[44] the

[43]Potupa, A., 1993. Letters to the Editor. *Sovetskaya Belorussia*, 06 June. 18.
[44]Zaloska, Y., 1992. *Sovetskaya Belorussia*, 24 July. 9.

population for Belarus for being consumerist, thinking only about consumption of the products of the culture instead of creating the new Belarusian culture. He claimed that being a Belarusian in the 1990s was a mission, and it required decisiveness and courage and even heroism. Some adherents to the Belarusization expressed radical and undemocratic views. For example, some professors[45] demanded an immediate adoption of a three- or a five-year plan for a rapid belarusization of the country in order to save the Belarusian language. The initiative was that all the TV and radio broadcasts were in Belarusian only, all the educational establishments and all the governmental institutions adopt Belarusian and thus the society would be transformed into a Belarusian-speaking one. Moreover, the scholar suggested that legal measures should be taken and disciplinary actions should be applied if the Belarusian language was not used in formal communication in all the domains. He also offered to create special inspections that would control the implementation of the Law on Languages.

The mass media saw the rise of discussions and heated arguments about the roles of the languages in the public sphere. The debates on the language of education and the ideas about the return of the Russian language led to the politicization of the language issues and already in 1993 when the program of the development of the Belarusian language was still in progress, some of the government officials started promoting the idea of the bilingualism. Unofficial public polls conducted by the mass media revealed the fact that the majority of the population did not favor belarusization. 60,2% respondents supported Belarusian-Russian bilingualism, and only 22,7% defended the use of Belarusian as the sole official language of the Republic of Belarus.[46]

In 1993 the sociolinguist Mechkovskaya looked at the future of the Belarusian language with hope that the language would keep developing. The scholar named the following conditions necessary for the Belarusian language to fortify its position as the national language:

1) in the independent Belarus the Belarusian language is deprived of foreign influences;

2) in order to develop, the Belarusian language should remain the only state language;

3) the support from the government is indispensable (if the taxpayers agree);

4) Belarusian as a language for professional use should be used in all spheres of social life;

[45] Shiryaev, E., 1992. *Litaratura i mastatstva*, 7 August. 21.
[46] According to the public pall published in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Belorussia*, 7 July 1992. 21.

5) the works of literature in Belarusian should have both a spiritual and a cultural value. The information presented in Belarusian should be more appealing to the public in order to become more popular than the Russian informational content.

Proclaiming the titular language of the nation as the only official language was considered by the Belarusian intellectuals to be the manifestation of the unique Belarusian culture. The adoption of Belarusian as a state language guaranteed the independence of the Republic of Belarus. The language was viewed as the symbol of the country's sovereignty by the national democrats in the 1990s.

The creator of the Law on Languages, Hilevich, did not see any obstacles in the process of Belarusian-language implementation. He eagerly defended the Law and demanded more effort from the population of the Republic of Belarus in learning the titular language: 'We do not have any objective reasons for aggravation of the language question and creating hostile atmosphere around it, we do not aim at coercing people or provoking the split of the population. Firstly, the two languages, Russian and Belarusian are similar and one does not need an interpreter to communicate. Secondly, our laws (on languages, on education, on culture) are well-developed and all the decisions are weighed therefore one should not complain about the situation'.[47] Hilevich claimed that the law stabilized the situation in the country and warned the population that their discontent would lead to the political unrest.

The scholar Tsyhun (1994) defended the Belarusian language but admits that the preservation of the sole Belarusian language as the official language of the country would be problematic and the Russian-speaking population would be hostile towards the process of the belarusification. The article of the prominent Belarusian linguist Tsyhun on language ecology and bilingualism in Belarus was published in 1994.[48] In the article the scholar argues that declaring a Belarusian-Russian bilingualism officially would help in the consolidation of the country. The scholar states that in sociolinguistics the process of bilingualism is characterized by a gradual substitution of the weaker language by the language that is stronger. And this process is a natural one. Consequently, the introduction of two state languages would result in the disappearance of the Belarusian language. According to Tsyhun, the victory of the Russian language would result in the loss of the country's independence and its merging with Russia. The scholar described the 1990-1994 language situation in Belarus as complex, and the choice of the language depended on the choice of the political orientation.

[47]Hilevich, N., 1993. *Narodnaya Gazeta*, 29 June. 18.
[48]Tsyhun, A., 1994. Belorusskij jazyk i ecologia. *Polymya*, №11.

The discussion of the Belarusian and Russian languages as parts of the respective cultures was an important part of the discourse in the 1990s. The nationalists were often blamed for the forced attempts to replace the Russian-language culture. The nationalist movement in Belarus was dangerous because of the discrimination of the Russian culture that they initiated. The process of re-creating or reviving the Belarusian culture was accompanied by the destruction of the Russian culture that is deeply rooted in the Belarusian cultural heritage. If the majority of the population considers their mother tongue to be the language they literally learnt from their mothers, then the propagation of any other language would be a big mistake, because it would not mean the development of a traditional culture but the implanting of the surrogate culture. The process of the discrimination of the Russian-language culture could have resulted in the discrimination of the Russian-speaking population, too. The rejection of the Belarusian language by the population was mostly caused by the rejection of the nationalist ideas.

The criticism of the national democrats was based mostly on the fact that population of the Republic of Belarus was predominantly Russian-speaking and the people associated themselves with the Russian-language culture. The Belarusian national movement of the 90s is characterized by Mechkovskaya as '*romanticized*' (Mechkovskaya, 2003: 89). Mechkovskaya claimed that the movement was too far from the real conditions and the leaders of the national movement did not take into account the actual sentiments of the population. One of the main traits of the nationalist movement was the overestimation of the role of the language in forming the Belarusian nation. The language, according to Mechkovskaya, is not the main factor preserving the ethnic diversity of the nation. Most political activists of that time supposed that Belarus could not survive without the Belarusian language (Lych, Krauchanka, Trusau).

The main mistakes of the nationalists' programs were explained by Mechkovskaya (2003: 96):

1) The political activists identified the decline of the Belarusian language with the decline of the whole nation. Therefore, the disappearance of the language would have resulted in the disappearance of the nation. In fact, it is incorrect to equal the language and the nation. The population of Belarus grew, and it was never replaced by the members of other nationalities, ethnic Belarusians always prevailed quantitatively on the territory of Belarus. One cannot speak of the death of the nation if one of the two languages the nation uses becomes less popular.

2) Often in creative work the sacralization of the language takes place, the Belarusian language becomes a sort of a fetish. The Belarusian culture in poetry is often portrayed as blessed by God as opposed to the Sovietized Russian culture that is mainstream and deprived of a 'soul'. The scholar Gapova claimed that this approach of the national intellectuals who saw their mission in the 'sacred teaching' of the Belarusian language was adopted on purpose because with the help of the national language the new 1990s elite 'would accumulate more social capital' (Gapova, 2008: 10). In Belarusian cities the use of the Belarusian language is marked as elitist. The Belarusian language is used to demonstrate one's otherness from the society and emphasize the speaker's political views.

Some people saw the promotion of the Belarusian language as a threat to their freedom. The language policy was implanted without the desire of the people and the dictatorial proclamations of the national democrats were criticized. The changes in the political situation in 1994 that happened after the election of the first president of the Republic of Belarus led to the implementation of bilingualism in 1995.

The victory of the populist politician Aliaksandr Lukashenka brought significant changes to the political situation of the country. After his election by the absolute majority of the population, the President sponsored a four-question referendum in 1995. The first question was "Do you agree with assigning the Russian language a status equal to that of the Belarusian language?" 86.8% of the voters chose the answer 'For'.[49]

The other question concerned the change of the flag and the coat of arms of the Republic of Belarus, the legitimacy of the changes in the Constitution that would allow the President to dismiss the Parliament and the future economic integration with Russia. After the 1995 referendum the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus was amended and the language policy of the country changed. Bilingualism was introduced: Belarusian was no longer the single official language, as Russian was granted equal status. Belarusization that took place in 1991-1994 was stopped and the state turned back to Russian as the dominant language. Woolhiser called the Belarusian case 'a "post-imperial" sociolinguistic scenario, where the language of the former imperial center retains a significant, if not dominant position in its erstwhile territories' (Woolhiser, 2003: 15). Bekus commented on the re-introduction of the Russian language in the following way: 'This "return" of Russian was not in fact a return, but rather an act of symbolic legitimization of existing linguistic practices in Belarusian society'

[49]Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, 2015. *Belarusian referendum, 1995*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belarusian_referendum,_1995> [Accessed 18 July 2015].

(Bekus, 2014: 31). Since the Belarusification that officially started in 1990 hadn't achieved significant results by 1995 and the changes that took place in the society did not much affect the existing linguistic situation, Belarusian society didn't become mono-linguistic after only three years of the Belarusification (that in fact affected official communication only and did not regulate the use of informal communication).

4.4. Reasons for Belarusian-Russian Bilingualism

The future of the Belarusian language in the 1990s was determined by the political orientation of the government. In 1995 the Referendum proved that the major part of the population voted for the establishment of two state languages. The analysis of the political and social background is crucial for the understanding the contemporary language situation in the Republic of Belarus and the current language policy.

Whereas Moldova and Ukraine were imbued with the pro-Western orientation, Belarus decided to deepen the ties with Russia, after the 1994 presidential elections. Of all the other Soviet countries, Belarus was most interested in preserving the Union, and the population of Belarus used Russian to a larger extent than the peoples of other Soviet republics. In the first years after obtaining its independence, Belarus remained historically, politically and economically tied with Russia and the majority of the population was hostile to the nationalist ideas that were popular in the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s.

The population of Belarus appeared to be reluctant to develop a 'European identity' mostly because this required a turn to the Belarusian language that was not considered to be the mother tongue of the majority of the population and moreover, was thought of as 'non-prestigious'. The rejection of the Russian language was perceived by a part of the population as the rejection of the Russian culture. Since the Belarusian culture is not as rich as the Russian culture, the Belarusian language was viewed as backward (Giger & Sloboda, 2008) and the Russian language was considered not only the language of the world literature, but also the language of progress, science and technology.

For the major part of the Belarusian population the Russian language is indeed the mother tongue, it is not viewed as the language of the occupants (as it is in Baltic countries, for example). However, the use the Russian language does not involve the political adherence to Russia but the love of the language that has been used predominantly on the territory of Belarus in the 20th century. The people raised in the 1990s associated the Belarusian language

with the language their grandparents living in the countryside used. The Belarusian language viewed from the perspective of the people born in the 1990s is not associated anymore with the language of the rural areas, it is the language they study at school and rarely use outside the class.

Pavlenko (2008) noticed the similarity of the campaign on nativisation that took place in the 1920s and the process of Belarusification that was influential in 1980s and mid-1990s. The difference was in the public political sentiments. If in the 1920s both Russian and Belarusian had yet to be implemented in the system of education, in the 1990s the population of Belarus was reluctant to make changes in favor of the language they did not use at work, at school and in everyday interactions. Unlike Ukraine that 'engaged in an aggressive ukrainization campaign eliciting resistance from Russians and russified titulars' (Pavlenko, 2008: 302), Belarus chose to preserve the Russian language as one of the two official languages and stick to Russian in most of the spheres of public life, leaving the Belarusian language predominantly a symbolic function.

To sum up, the attempts to make the Belarusian language the sole official language of the Republic of Belarus appeared to be unsuccessful due to a number of reasons:

1. By 1989, the majority of the Belarusian population was Russian-speaking. The 1989 Census proved that 19,7% of Belarusians considered Russian to be their mother tongue, it means that every fifth Belarusian was Russian-speaking. Compare: in 1959 only 6,8% of Belarusians named Russian their mother tongue, in 1979 the percentage of the Russian-speaking population was 16%.

2. The radical declarations of the nationalists in the beginning of the 1990s and the quick establishment of the Belarusian language in all spheres of the public life were not welcome by the population. According to the unofficial polls, the population of Belarus favoured the union with Russia and wanted to keep strong ties with the Russian culture.

3. The process of Belarusization in the 1990s did not have a well-developed plan and a clear strategy. Besides, the schools were undermanned with teachers, schools in the countryside lacked textbooks and some classes consisted of less than 10 pupils.

4. The standard Belarusian language is often replaced by the mixed Belarusian-Russian language, *trasianka*. This mixed speech is of lower prestige and is predominantly spoken in rural areas. The two languages, Russian and Belarusian, are closely related and it is difficult to avoid phonetic and syntactic interference, therefore the switch to Belarusian was often associated with the switch to the low-prestige *trasianka.*

5. Belarusization required much time and effort, not only did the government officials have to develop new methodologies and approaches, but also the population of Belarus had to be involved in the transformation of society. The population of Belarus however did not consider the Belarusian language to be useful for scientific purposes, as there were no professional schools and higher educational institutions with Belarusian as the medium language of instruction.

4.5. Belarusian-medium Education in 1995-1999

Official bilingualism was established in Belarus in 1995. After the implementation of bilingualism, the Ministry of Education managed to adopt a strategy on the development of the school system. The Belarusian language became an indispensable part of the school curriculum; new subjects on the history and geography of Belarus were introduced.

The first reform of the secondary school system took place already in 1993. Before 1992 the most part of the textbooks (80%) were published in Russia and only 20% of the textbooks were published in Belarus. The textbooks on such subjects as 'History of Belarus (V-XI form)', 'Geography of Belarus (IX form)', 'Belarusian Language', and 'Belarusian Literature' were written in Belarusian. Starting from 1993 the secondary school system started a gradual shift towards the implementation of the new programs of education and the new textbooks. From 1993 to 1999 there were published more than 700 textbooks on various subjects for secondary schools and more than 400 training aids for teachers.

However, after the 1995 referendum more are more schools re-introduced the Russian language as the main language of instruction. If in 1994/1995 in Minsk out of 219 schools there were still 181 schools with the Belarusian language as the medium language of instruction, in 1995/1996 academic year 108 Belarusian-medium schools changed the language of instruction into Russian.[50]

The parents were opened up to the possibility of being able to choose schools for their children and the language of instruction. Most parents were reluctant to send their children to Belarusian-medium schools and classes for practical reasons. Since there were no professional schools and universities with Belarusian as the main language of instruction it was much simpler to send children to Russian-medium schools because these schools would prepare the

[50]Partal gramadskih ab'jadnannjaŭ Rjespubliki Belarus'. BRGA «Ab'jadnany shljah», 2005. *Zakonu "O jazykah v Respublike Belarus" ispolnilos' 15 let* [15th Anniversary of the Law 'On Languages…']. [online] Available at: <http://www.ngo.by/news/ac3369dd6dbf0aa7.html>. [Accessed 18 July 2015].

pupils better for the entrance exams. The number of first-graders who chose Belarusian-medium schools and classes reduced to 37% in the 1996/1997 academic year and to 4,7% in 1999/2000. Besides the decline of the Belarusian-medium schools in urban areas the end of the 1990s was characterized by the transformation of the Belarusian-medium schools in rural areas into the schools with Russian as a medium language of instruction. This turn in fact was a new trend in Belarusian schooling system, even in the Soviet period the rural schools were predominantly Belarusian-medium. As Aksak (2000) noted, in 1997/1998 academic year in 55 rural schools Russian was implemented as the main language of instruction, the wave of russification of the rural schools continued in the 1998/1999 academic year, when other 32 schools adopted the Russian language.

There were not many quantitative changes in the system of school education in 1990 and 1999. The number of secondary schools grew insignificantly from 2,645 secondary schools in 1990 to 2,784 in 1999, which constituted 50,7 % and 60,3 % respectively out of the total amount of schools. The number of elementary and middle schools in the rural areas reduced, but the occupancy rate of all types of schools raised from 279,9 pupils in 1990 to 334,9 in 1999. The overall amount of the pupils increased by 100 thousand people.

Table 9. Belarusian Secondary Schools (1990-1999)[51]

	1990	**1999**
Number of secondary schools	2 645	2 784
Occupancy rate (both rural and urban schools)	279,9	334,9
Elementary education coverage (children from 6 to 10 y.o.)	96,2	97,2
Secondary education coverage	93,2	94,8

In 1999 the languages of instruction in the school system were: Russian, Belarusian, Lithuanian and Polish. The overall amount of schools was 4629. The number of schools with Belarusian as the medium language of instruction was 2847 (61,7%), with the Russian language - 1 158 (24,8%), 624 (13,5%) schools were bilingual (Belarusian and Russian), 1 school with Polish and 1 school with Lithuanian as the main languages of instruction provided secondary education for the ethnic minorities of Western Belarus.

Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of the secondary schools of the Republic of Belarus were Belarusian-medium, most part of the pupils studied in Russian. According to the

[51] National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, 2015. *Population Census 1999* [online] Available at: <http://www.belstat.gov.by/en/perepis-naseleniya/perepis-naseleniya-1999-goda/html> [Accessed 29 July 2015].

statistics of the Ministry of Education, in 1999 only 29,9% of the pupils studied in Belarusian (463 371 pupils), and 1 085 340 pupils (or 70 %) attended Russian-medium schools. Less than 0,1% (874 pupils) went to the Polish school and 76 attended the Lithuanian school.

Table 10. Bilingualism in Education (1987-1999)[52]

	1987	**1999**
Belarusian-medium schools	69,8%	61,7%
Schoolers attending Belarusian-medium schools	23%	29,9%
Russian-medium schools	29,9%	24,8%
Schoolers attending Russian-medium schools	76,8%	68,9%
Bilingual schools	0,3%	13,5%
Schoolers attending bilingual schools	0,2%	0,9%

The Ministry of Education was satisfied with the results achieved by the system of school education by 1999. During the first ten years of the country's independence a stable and successful model of education had developed. The system of secondary education in 1999 became more scientific in content; the process of schooling was characterized by a higher level of differentiation: more than 50% of the high school pupils attended specialized classes. The problem that was still left to be resolved is the low occupancy rate of rural schools.

The focus of the Ministry of Education in 1995-1999 was not on the promotion of the Belarusian-medium education but on the development of the specialized schools and various kinds of elective programmes. From the middle of the 1990s the specialized classes in elementary and secondary schools appeared. The tradition of the school specialization already existed in the Soviet school system, and in the Independent Belarus the tradition continued. The typical specializations were: a) physics, mathematics and informatics; b) biology and chemistry; c) sports. Specialized schools with the advanced study of foreign languages were the most prestigious schools. The study of foreign languages began in the 1st form and since the 5th or 6th grade some subjects were delivered in the foreign language. Most of the language schools introduced the second foreign language since the 5th or 6th form. In Belarus some specialized schools that offered a variety of specialized classes were called liceums.

The implementation of two official languages in education in 1995 resulted in the preservation of the high status of Russian. The official statistics of the 1999/2000 academic year revealed that 61,7% of the schools remained Belarusian-medium and 24,8% were

[52] Ibid.

Russian-medium. The percentage of bilingual schools rose to 13,5% (in 1995 the amount of bilingual schools constituted only 4%). The situation with the Belarusian-medium schools in the rural areas was the same as it was ten years before: most of the schools were undermanned with pupils and the overall amount of the pupils who received education in Belarusian did not exceed 30%. In 2000, in Minsk there was not a single Belarusian school. With the help of the Belarusian Language Society one school in 2000/2001 one Belarusian-medium school was open.

Chapter 5. Belarusian Language in the Modern System of Education

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus issues annual reports on the achievements in the sphere of pre-school, secondary and tertiary education. The main objective of the government of the Republic of Belarus is to make available high quality education.

The state education policy of the Republic of Belarus is regulated by:

- the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus;
- the Code on Education (of January, 13, 2011);
- the decrees and regulations issued by the President of the Republic of Belarus;
- the decrees and regulations issued by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus.

The literacy level in the Republic of Belarus is among the highest in the world: 99,7%. The education coverage (secondary and professional schools) is 98%. According to the statistics of 2014/2015 academic year, every third citizen of the Republic of Belarus is studying.

School is the most important domain for language policy. In language education policy schooling plays the crucial role in developing the language competence of the new generations. The main controversy in the Belarusian school system is defining which language should be chosen for mother-tongue education. It is believed that the initial teaching should be conducted in the language that children speak at home. If in Belarus Russian is the first language for the majority of the population, then when should the teaching of Belarusian begin? In British, French, Portuguese colonial education systems there exists local languages and the goal of education was to move to the standard official languages. In Belarus the language situation is completely different: Russian-speaking children are taught Belarusian as the official language but the goal of the education system is not to move from Russian to Belarusian but to introduce the Belarusian language and hence preserve it at least in the school curriculum in order to save it from extinction. The Belarusian language selected as a second language has strong ties with the traditional Belarusian culture and is part of the heritage of the Belarusian nation.

5.1. Belarusian Language in Contemporary Pre-school Education

Pre-school education in the Republic of Belarus is not obligatory, children aged from 3 to 6 years attend state-owned and private pre-school educational establishments. Private kindergartens are rare in Belarus; however, there are a lot of private educational centers. State-owned kindergartens already in the Soviet period provided quality schooling. The Soviet system also sponsored nursery services in urban areas for the children aged from 1 to 3. Preschool institutions train basic social skills, contribute to the development of creativity and physical abilities. The main aim of pre-school education is to prepare children for entering secondary schools.

In 2014/2015 academic year 410 thousand children attended 3872 kindergartens and other preschool educational institutions.[53] 43 thousand children (10%) attended Belarusian-medium kindergartens, and around 368 thousand children were educated in Russian (90%). In Grodno region there were two study groups with Lithuanian (14 children) and Polish (18 children) languages of instruction. Approximately 4% (15 thousand children) in the Republic of Belarus in 2014/2015 academic year attended preschool institutions with both Russian nad Belarusian as medium languages.

Table 11. Medium Languages of Instruction in Pre-School Institutions[54]

	Languages of Instruction					
	Belarusian			**Russian**		
	2010	**2013**	**2014**	**2010**	**2013**	**2014**
Republic of Belarus	12,8	11,1	10,5	87,2	88,9	89,5
Regions:						
Brest (region)	16,8	15,4	14,7	83,2	84,8	85,3
Gomel (region)	9,7	8,7	7,9	90,3	91,4	92,1
Grodno (region)	19,0	18,3	18,2	81,0	81,7	81,8
Minsk (city)	3,8	3,3	3,2	96,2	96,7	96,8
Minsk (region)	24,2	19,8	18,2	75,8	80,2	81,8
Mogilev (region)	10,4	8,7	8,2	89,6	91,3	91,8
Vitebsk (region)	10,0	8,9	7,8	90,0	91,1	92,2

[53]Ministry of Education, 2015. *Statistics on Education*. [online] Available at: <http://edu.gov.by/be/main.aspx?guid=18021&detail=1316713> [Accessed 18 July 2015].
[54]Ibid.

The number of children attending Belarusian-medium kindergartens decreased in the 2014/2015 academic year. In 2013/2014 there were 45 thousand children studying in Belarusian, and 362 thousand studied in Russian.

The major part of the Belarusian-medium pre-school institutions is in rural areas. The figure below represents the distribution of the pre-school educational establishments according to the areas they belong to:

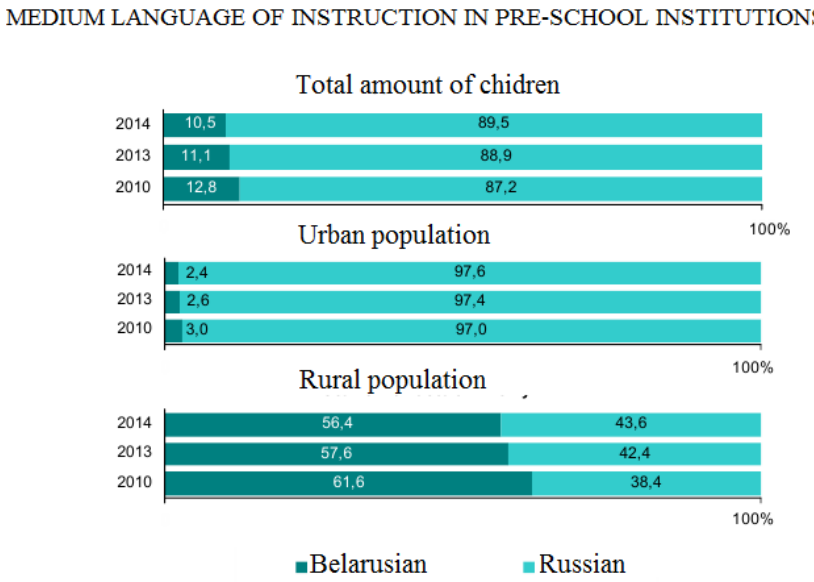

Figure 1: Medium Languages of Instruction in Pre-School Institutions in Rural and Urban areas [55]

The data received with the help of the field study (see Chapter 1 for more detail) proves that the majority of people who are raised in rural areas traditionally attend Belarusian-medium schools (the oldest Belarusian interviewed was born in 1935). According to the data collected in the Vitebsk region, 53 out of 56 respondents born and raised in the Vitebsk region attended Belarusian medium schools/classes (95%). The data collected in the Minsk region also shows that Belarusians raised in the countryside studied through Belarusian: 96 out of 105 respondents from the Minsk region attended Belarusian-medium schools.

5.2. Belarusian Language Secondary Education

[55]Ministry of Education, 2015. *Statistics on Education*. [online] Available at: <http://edu.gov.by/be/main.aspx?guid=18021&detail=1316713> [Accessed 18 July 2015].

General secondary education in the Republic of Belarus consists of three stages. The first includes grades 1-4 (primary school), the second (middle school) comprises grades 5-9 and senior school consists of grades 10 and 11 (in the evening schools the final years comprise X-XII forms). In accordance with Article 155 of the Code on Education, the general basic education in the Republic of Belarus consists of 9 years of schooling, and the general secondary education comprises 11 grades.

The 'basic' nine-year schooling program allows the students to choose either to complete the secondary education at normal school or to transfer to specialized professional training schools that provide students with a working skill qualification. In Belarus all the schools of vocational training are Russian-medium. Only such subject as 'Belarusian for Professional Use' is in Belarusian.

Table 12. Medium Languages of Instruction in Secondary Schools[56]

	2010/2011	**2011/2012**	**2012/2013**	**2013/2014**	**2014/2015**
Thousand people					
The number of students	940,4	916,5	909,1	915,2	931,3
medium language					
Belarusian	178,4	163,4	150,7	142,0	135,1
Russian	761,4	752,3	757,7	772,4	795,3
Belarusian and Russian	0,6	0,8	0,7	0,8	0,9[57]
Percent of the total					
The number of students	100	100	100	100	100
medium language					
Belarusian	19,0	17,8	16,6	15,5	14,5
Russian	80,9	82,1	83,3	84,4	85,4
Belarusian and Russian	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1

The medium languages of education in secondary schools are the two official languages: Russian and Belarusian, and two minority languages (Polish and Lithuanian). In 2014/2015 academic year 135,100 pupils (14,5%) attended Belarusian-medium schools and classes, and 795,300 pupils studied in Russian. Minority languages in the Republic of Belarus are part of the school education. In Brest and Grodno regions 817 pupils had Polish as the medium language of education. All in all, there were three Polish-medium schools. 59 pupils studied

[56]Ministry of Education, 2015. *Statistics on Education*. [online] Available at: <http://edu.gov.by/be/main.aspx?guid=18021&detail=1316713> [Accessed 18 July 2015].
[57]817 pupils study in Polish, 59 study in Lithuanian

in Lithuanian (there is only one Lithuanian-medium school in Belarus).[58] As part of the school curriculum such subjects as Polish, Lithuanian and Yiddish are studied at school, too. 3,200 pupils in 2014/2015 had extra lessons of Polish, circa 200 pupils learnt Lithuanian and around 300 had classes of Yiddish.

The comparison of the 2013 and 2014 data (Table 12) shows that the number of preschoolers studying Belarusian reduced from 11,4% to 11%; the number of schoolchildren who receive secondary education in Belarusian reduced from 15,5% to 14,5%. The tendency of the language use in the school system is clear: in 4 years, from 2010/2011 to 2014/2015 the use of the Belarusian language in secondary schools dropped from 19% to 14,5%.

The reduction of the number of pupils who study in Belarusian drew the attention of the non-governmental organizations that promote the use of the Belarusian language. In the end of 2014 the non-governmental organization the Belarusian Language Society initiated monitoring on the use of the Belarusian language in the institutions of the Republic of Belarus:

Table 13. Medium Languages of Instruction (statistics on the regions of Belarus)[59]

	Languages of Instruction								
	Belarusian			**Russian**			**Other Languages**		
	2010	**2013**	**2014**	**2010**	**2013**	**2014**	**2010**	**2013**	**2014**
Republic of Belarus	19,0	15,5	14,5	80,9	84,4	85,4	0,1	0,1	0,1
Regions:									
Brest (region)	24,5	21,7	20,6	75,5	78,3	79,4	-	0,0	0,0
Gomel (region)	18,0	12,8	12,8	82,0	87,2	87,2	-	-	-
Grodno (region)	21,8	18,3	16,9	77,7	81,0	82,3	0,5	0,7	0,8
Minsk (city)	2,3	2,1	2,1	97,7	97,9	97,7	-	-	-
Minsk (region)	31,9	27,1	27,1	68,1	72,9	74,3	-	-	-
Mogilev (region)	16,9	14,8	14,8	83,1	85,2	87,3	-	-	-
Vitebsk (region)	18,6	13,6	13,6	81,4	86,4	87,9	-	-	-

[58]Volkovysk.BY, 2015. *U VNU Belarusi na belaruskaj move vuchacca 0,1% studentau* [Only 0,1% of Belarusian Students Study in Belarusian]. [online] Available at: <http://volkovysk.by/lenta-novostej/u-vnu-belarusi-na-belaruskaj-move-vuchacca-01-studenta%D1%9E.html> [Accessed 18 July 2015].
[59]Ministry of Education, 2015. *Statistics on Education*. [online] Available at: <http://edu.gov.by/be/main.aspx?guid=18021&detail=1316713> [Accessed 18 July 2015].

The boards of education in all the regions of the Republic of Belarus were asked to present the data on the Belarusian-medium schools and the number of pupils attending them. Not all the education boards provided the data on the use of the Belarusian language in education, however, the data below is the most precise that was collected.

The data provided by the Vitebsk department of the Ministry of Education shows that in the region in general Belarusian-medium education is well-organized:

Table 14. Preschool and Secondary Education in Belarusian in the Vitebsk region[60]

Region	Preschool Education in Belarusian	Secondary Education in Belarusian
The Lepel' province	16% of the preschoolers study in Belarusian	12 Belarusian-medium schools; 21% of the schoolchildren study in Belarusian-medium schools and classes
The Dokshitsy province	No data	14 schools with Belarusian as a medium language of instruction and 4 with Russian (77,7% of the schools are Belarusian).
The Miory province	In 2014/2015 academic year there were less preschoolers attending Belarusian-medium kindergartens: 33,3% (in 2013/2-14 academic year it was 37,8%).	The data shows that the number of Belarusian-medium schools reduced since 2013/2014 academic year. 2 undermanned schools were shut down. The percentage of schoolchildren studying in Belarusian is 40,4% (in 2013/2014 it was 42,5%).
The Rasony province	4% preschoolers attend Belarusian-medium kindergartens	38% of the schoolchildren study in Belarusian; 88% of the secondary schools are Belarusian-medium
The Sharkauschyna province	57% of the kindergartens are Belarusian-medium	43% of the schoolchildren attend schools with Belarusian as the main language of instruction
The Shumilina province	64.2% of the kindergartens are Belarusian-medium	11 Belarusian-medium schools attended by 28,4% of the schoolchildren

[60]Belarusian Language Society, 2015. *Monitoring Conducted by 'Таварыства беларускай мовы імя Ф.Скарыны'*. [online] Available at: <http://tbm-mova.by/monitoring.html> [Accessed 1 September 2015].

The Vitebsk region is considered to be the most russified region of Belarus, and in such cities as Vitebsk, Polatsk, Navapolatsk, Orsha there are no schools with Belarusian as the medium language of instruction. There are, however, classes where Belarusian is chosen as a medium language. Such classes have more hours dedicated to Belarusian and extra classes of creative writing in Belarusian. Usually such classes are created in schools with the advanced study of languages and literatures.

The Mogilev department of the Ministry of Education did not provide statistical data on the amount of Belarusian-medium schools and classes. The educational boards of the Mogilev region asserted that the number of Belarusian-medium schools in the region is extremely low: there are only 9 secondary schools with Belarusian as the medium language of instruction. In the town of Asipovichy there is a Belarusian-medium gymnasium.

In Gomel there exist only three classes where instruction is exclusively in Belarusian (in the educational establishment "Gymnasium No 36"). The data from the provinces is presented in the table below:

Table 15. Preschool and Secondary Education in Belarusian in the Gomel region[61]

Region	Preschool Education in Belarusian	Secondary Education in Belarusian
The Zhitkavichy province	11,2% of the kindergarteners study in Belarusian	38,9% of the schoolchildren attend Belarusian-medium schools
The Ragachou province	26% of the kindergartens are run in Belarusian	36,4% of the secondary schools are Belarusian-medium
The Narauliany province	13,2% of the preschoolers have Belarusian as the medium language of instruction	15,9% of the schoolchildren study in Belarusian

The administration of the Narauliany province tries to make the Belarusian language more popular in schooling, and therefore the officials established the Day of the Belarusian language: one day a week 86,8% of the kindergarteners are asked to speak only in Belarusian.

[61]Belarusian Language Society, 2015. *Monitoring Conducted by 'Таварыства беларускай мовы імя Ф.Скарыны'*. [online] Available at: <http://tbm-mova.by/monitoring.html> [Accessed 1 September 2015].

The data provided by the administration of the Brest region is not precise. In Brest and Pinsk there are no Belarusian-medium schools. The data on the provinces of the Brest region is in the table below:

Table 16. Preschool and Secondary Education in Belarusian in the Gomel region[62]

Region	Preschool Education in Belarusian	Secondary Education in Belarusian
The Ivanausky province	59% of the preschoolers study in Belarusian	62% of the schoolchildren attend Belarusian-medium schools
The Kobrin province	No data	90% of the schools are Belarusian-medium
The Pruzhany province	No data	26% of the schoolchildren study in Belarusian
The Lyahavichy province	No data	39,5% of the schoolchildren study in Belarusian

The capital of Belarus, Minsk, is gradually becoming the center of Belarusian-medium education: in 11 schools of Minsk there are classes with Belarusian as the medium language. 5 gymnasia and 1 secondary school established Belarusian as the main language of instruction. The departments of the Ministry of Education and regional educational boards of other regions of Belarus did not provide enough data on the use of Belarusian in pre-school and secondary education.

5.3. Belarusian Language and Literature as Subjects of the School Curriculum

In order to understand how Belarusian-Russian bilingualism is managed in secondary schools we need to analyse the workload in Belarusian- and Russian-medium schools and classes. The subject 'Belarusian Language' is introduced in grades 1-11 in all the schools of the Republic of Belarus. In the few existing schools with Belarusian as a medium language the workload in the subject Belarusian Language is 3 hours a week, 3 hours a week are

[62] Belarusian Language Society, 2015. *Monitoring Conducted by 'Таварыства беларускай мовы імя Ф.Скарыны'*. [online] Available at: <http://tbm-mova.by/monitoring.html> [Accessed 1 September 2015].

dedicated to the development of reading skills and acquiring the basic knowledge of the Belarusian literature. For Russian Language only one hour a week is compulsory.

Table 17. Workload in Belarusian-Medium Elementary Schools[63]

Subjects	Workload, hours per week			
	I	II	III	IV
Belarusian Language	3	3	3	3
Belarusian Literature	3	3	3	3
Russian Language	1	2	2	2
Russian Literature	0	1	1	1

Table 16. Workload in Russian-Medium Elementary Schools[64]

Subjects	Workload, hours per week			
	I	II	III	IV
Belarusian Language	1	2	2	2
Belarusian Literature	0	1	1	1
Russian Language	3	3	3	3
Russian Literature	3	3	3	3

Schools with Russian as the medium language of education introduce Belarusian from the first year. The study program of the Belarusian language is focused mainly on the development of speaking in Belarusian and the course of study presupposes only 3 hours for reading activities and 3 hours for writing.

The Ministry of Education for 2016/2017 plans to improve the process of bilingual education in the Republic of Belarus and establish the equal workload of the subjects Belarusian Language and Literature and Russian Language and Literature in all Belarusian- and Russian-medium schools of the country.

According to the study plans worked out by the Ministry of Education for 2015/2016 academic year, the workload on the subjects 'Russian Language and Literature' and 'Belarusian Language and Literature' in forms X-XI depends on the type of school. In the last two years of schooling the amount of classes of Belarusian and Russian is different: in Russian-medium schools the number of classes of Belarusian is reduced to 1. Pupils of Russian-medium schools already in Form X have less hours for Belarusian than for foreign languages.

[63]Ministry of Education, 2015. *Statistics on Education*. [online] Available at: <http://edu.gov.by/be/main.aspx?guid=18021&detail=1316713> [Accessed 18 July 2015].
[64]Ibid.

The tables below help compare the amount of classes dedicated to Russian and Belarusian languages and literatures:

Table 18. Workload in Russian-medium Schools[65] and Classes with the Advanced Study of Russian

Subjects	**Workload in general secondary schools, hours per week**							**Workload in advanced learning schools, hours per week**	
	V	**VI**	**VII**	**VIII**	**IX**	**X**	**XI**	**X**	**XI**
Belarusian Language	3	3	2	2	2	**1**	2/1	**1**	**1**
Belarusian Literature	2	2	2/1	1/2	2/1	2/1	1/2	1/2	2/1
Russian Language	3	3	2	2	2	**3**	1/2	**3**	**3**
Russian Literature	2	2	1/2	2/1	1/2	1/2	2/1	2/3	1/2
Foreign Language	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3-5**	**3**	**3-5**	**4-5**

Table 19. Workload in Belarusian-medium Schools[66] and Classes with the Advanced Study of Belarusian

Subjects	**Workload in general secondary schools, hours per week**							**Workload in advanced learning schools, hours per week**	
	V	**VI**	**VII**	**VIII**	**IX**	**X**	**XI**	**X**	**XI**
Belarusian Language	3	3	2	2	2	**3**	2/1	**3**	**3**
Belarusian Literature	2	2	2/1	1/2	2/1	2/1	1/2	1/2	2/1
Russian Language	3	3	2	2	2	**1**	1/2	**1**	**1**
Russian Literature	2	2	1/2	2/1	1/2	1/2	2/1	2/1	1/2
Foreign Language	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**3-5**	**3**	**3-5**	**4-5**

As the statistics on the regions of Belarus presented in Chapter 5.3 above shows, most of the schools are Russian-medium. However, as Table 18 above shows, basic general education provides pupils in forms V-IX with the equal amount of classes in Belarusian and Russian.

According to the study plans worked out by the Ministry of Education for 2015/2016 academic year, the workload on the subjects 'Russian Language and Literature' and 'Belarusian Language and Literature' is equal. The Ministry of Education controls the level of language proficiency in Belarusian and Russian with the help of the obligatory state

[65]Ministry of Education, 2015. *Statistics on Education*. [online] Available at: <http://edu.gov.by/be/main.aspx?guid=18021&detail=1316713> [Accessed 18 July 2015].
[66]Ibid.

examinations after the 9th grade. The state examination in one of the two state languages is obligatory upon completion of the 11-year secondary education.

Foreign languages are introduced in form III (3 hours per week) in general secondary schools and in grade 1 in advanced learning schools specializing in foreign languages (from 1 to 3 hours per week). In grades 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 the amount of hours for Russian and Belarusian is equal (3 hours per week).

Aliaksandr Lukashenka, the President of the Republic of Belarus, in one of his speeches in 2014 focused his attention on the use of Belarusian in education and stated that Belarusian is less used than the English language[67]. The comparative tables above prove that in forms X and XI there is only one hour per week for Belarusian in Russian-medium schools, whereas the workload in foreign languages is three to five hours per week (depending on the type of secondary school).

In Belarusian schools English, German, French, Spanish and Chinese can be chosen as foreign languages for the obligatory study. Most schools choose English. The importance of the English language in education has been increasing since the 1980s and today the English language, for obvious economic reasons has become the main foreign language studied in Belarusian schools. Ethnic Belarusians do not see any reasons for taking active steps to maintain the Belarusian language as it does not offer any advantages in education and in the professional spheres. The demand for the foreign languages is increasing every year, and since 2013 the obligatory exam for school-leavers in a foreign language was introduced.

5.4. Subjects in Belarusian

In the beginning of the 1990s the new subjects in Belarusian were introduced in the school curriculum: 'My Motherland Belarus' for elementary schools and 'History of Belarus' (grades 6-11) for the pupils of secondary schools. The subject 'Geography of Belarus' in grade 9 in the 1990s was in Belarusian. The subject 'History of Belarus' is in fact one of the most important subjects in the school curriculum. After form IX the 4 obligatory exams until 2015 included the exam in the history of Belarus. The subject 'History of Belarus' from the end of the 1990s till 2014/2015 academic year included an obligatory exam for all the pupils

[67]TUT.BY, 2015. *V gorodah na "move" uchatsja tol'ko 2% shkol'nikov* [Only 2% of Schoolchildren in Big Cities Study in Belarusian]. [online] Available at: <http://news.tut.by/society/433183.html> [Accessed 18 May 2015].

of grade 9 all over the Republic of Belarus. From 2015 on, the exam is taken upon completing 11 grades.[68]

The textbooks on 'History of Belarus' were first in Belarusian and the history teachers were obliged to use Belarusian in class and hold examinations in Belarusian. During the 1990s and 2000s most teaching aids were published in Belarusian. Some of the teachers used Russian in class, but the exam in the subject was in Belarusian. In 2006 the Minister of Education Radzkou established the Russian language as the medium language of the subject 'History of Belarus'. There were new textbooks published in the Russian language. The heated arguments about the language of instruction continued and in 2012 the Ministry of Education officially stated that the subject 'History of Belarus' will be taught in Russian only, because of the lack of the textbooks in Belarusian. The old textbooks were said to be outdated.

The new minister of education Zhuraukou in 2015 raised a question of turning back to the Belarusian language in the instruction of the subject 'History of Belarus'. In January, 2015 Zhuraukou in one of his first official speeches declared that studying the history of Belarus in Russian is wrong, Belarusian will be introduced as the medium language for the course 'History of Belarus'. In Belarusian mass media this initiative was assessed as favorable for the promotion of the Belarusian language. Unfortunately, the sessions of the education boards didn't accept it, and already 21 days after the minister's speech his deputy made public the decision: the subject 'History of Belarus' will be taught in Russian. It was emphasized that the change of the language of instruction cannot be conducted 'from above' using coercive methods and the changes of the language of instruction should depend from school to school. In addition, the deputy of the Ministry of Education pointed out the fact that schools lack history teachers who have a good command of Belarusian. The Ministry of Education can provide textbooks both in Russian and Belarusian, so the teachers themselves can decide which textbook to use.

The negligence of the Ministry of Education in relation to the medium language of instruction of the subject 'History of Belarus' resulted in the dramatic decrease of the number of pupils studying 'History of Belarus' in Belarusian. In 2014/2015 academic year, there were only 1132 pupils who took classes in Belarusian in Russian-medium schools (the total amount of pupils was 932 thousand). In 1994-2008 the absolute majority of the pupils studied this

[68]Ministry of Education, 2015. *Statistics on Education*. [online] Available at: <http://edu.gov.by/be/main.aspx?guid=18021&detail=1316713> [Accessed 18 July 2015]..

subject in Belarusian. The Ministry of Education had to take a series of measures promoting the use of the Belarusian language, and in 2015/2016 academic year the anticipated number of pupils who will be studying 'History of Belarus' in Belarusian will be 7943. The subject 'Geography of Belarus' in 2014/2015 was taught in Belarusian for 253 pupils only, and in 2015/2016 academic year 1015 pupils plan to study 'Geography of Belarus' in Belarusian.[69]

5.5. Belarusian Language in Professional Education

In professional and vocational schools Belarusian is not widely spread. The percentage of the students studying in Belarusian has decreased dramatically from 1,9% in 2010/2011 to 0,2% in 2014/2015. The reasons for this can be the underdevelopment of the professional vocabulary and the lack of Belarusian-speaking instructors. Other important factors influencing the decrease of the use of Belarusian is a significant amount of the teaching aids and textbooks in Russian. The percent of the students receiving professional education both in Belarusian and Russian increased from 14,5% in 2010/2011 to 16,9% in 2014/2015.

Table 20. Medium Language of Instruction in Professional Education[70]

	2010/2011	**2011/2012**	**2012/2013**	**2013/2014**	**2014/2015**
Thousand people					
The number of students	167,6	162,9	152,2	138,4	129,0
medium language					
Belarusian	3,2	1,6	1,4	1,1	0,3
Russian	140,1	138,1	128,5	115,8	106,9
Belarusian and Russian	24,3	23,0	22,2	21,5	21,8
Percent of the total					
The number of students	100	100	100	100	100
medium language					
Belarusian	1,9	1,0	0,9	0,8	0,2
Russian	83,6	84,9	84,5	83,7	82,9
Belarusian and Russian	14,5	14,1	14,4	15,5	16,9

[69]Ministry of Education, 2015. *Statistics on Education*. [online] Available at: <http://edu.gov.by/be/main.aspx?guid=18021&detail=1316713> [Accessed 18 July 2015].
[70]Ibid.

The promotion of bilingual education among professionals appears to be successful. The population of Belarus doesn't perceive the Belarusian language as the language that would guarantee promotion in professional sphere but it is becoming more widely spread in marketing and advertisement and therefore the students see new perspectives of using it in trade and commerce.

5.6. Belarusian Language in Tertiary Education

There are no entrance exams in Belarusian universities. Enrollees are supposed to take three exams that are called State Centralized Testing and on the basis of their results they send the certificates of these three exams together with the school-leaving certificate. In 2004, when the system of Centralized testing was first implemented, the amount of examinees who chose Belarusian was higher than the amount o those who chose Russian (73 thousand in Belarusian and 72 in Russian). The statistics from 2007 maintain the approximately equal amount of the examinees that chose Belarusian (42% for Belarusian to 58% for Russian).

In 2015 the situation is different, only 24% of the examinees decided to take the Centralized Testing in Belarusian, and 76% tested their knowledge of Russian. If the tendency towards russification takes place in the future as well, in ten years the number of school leavers who chooses Belarusian for the Centralized Testing will have dropped critically. In is possible that the last Testing in Belarusian will be conducted in 2025 if this tendency remains.

Table 21. Belarusian and Russian Languages in Centralized Testing[71]

Subject	**Number of people**			
	2004	**2007**	**2011**	**2015**
Belarusian Language	73 thousand (50.34%)	87 thousand (42%)	53 thousand (36%)	24 thousand (24%)
Russian Language	72 thousand (49.66%)	120 thousand (58%)	96 thousand (64%)	76 thousand (76%)

From the table above one can infer that a lot of school leavers take this important exam in Belarusian it seems that they are confident in their knowledge of the language. Unfortunately,

[71]Ministry of Education, 2015. *Statistics on Education*. [online] Available at: <http://edu.gov.by/be/main.aspx?guid=18021&detail=1316713> [Accessed 18 July 2015].

most Belarusians will not use Belarusian in the institutions of tertiary education. The teaching of the Belarusian language is limited to one obligatory course 'Belarusian for Professional Use' taught in all the departments for all the specializations (the workload is 54 academic hours). Departments of Belarusian Philology conduct the majority of the courses in Belarusian, but the percentage of the students who study in Belarusian is insignificant: in 2014/2015 academic year there were only 300 students (0,2%). The Ministry of Education stated that more than 148 thousand of students (41%) in Belarus receive higher education in two languages, Belarusian and Russian and circa 212 thousand (58%) study in Russian.[72]

Table 22. Medium Languages of Instruction in Tertiary Education[73]

	2010/2011	**2011/2012**	**2012/2013**	**2013/2014**	**2014/2015**
Thousand people					
The number of students	442,9	445,6	428,4	395,3	362,9
medium language					
Belarusian	1,7	4,4	0,4	0,4	0,4
Russian	278,3	277,0	267,4	242,6	213,3
Belarusian and Russian	162,9	164,2	160,3	152,1	149,3
Percent of the total					
The number of students	100	100	100	100	100
medium language					
Belarusian	0,4	1,0	0,2	0,1	0,1
Russian	62,8	62,1	62,4	61,4	58,8
Belarusian and Russian	36,8	36,9	37,4	38,5	41,1

The data on the use of the Belarusian language in Belarus collected by the BLS is not exhaustive, since not all the tertiary education institutions provided enough information on the linguistic issues. The use of the Belarusian language depends on the type of the institution and on its educational profile. Medical and Technical universities tend to include more subjects in English that in Belarusian, because they host a lot of international students.

[72]Volkovysk.BY, 2015. *U VNU Belarusi na belaruskaj move vuchacca 0,1% studentau* [Only 0,1% of Belarusian Students Study in Belarusian]. [online] Available at: <http://volkovysk.by/lenta-novostej/u-vnu-belarusi-na-belaruskaj-move-vuchacca-01-studenta%D1%9E.html> [Accessed 18 July 2015].
[73]Ministry of Education, 2015. *Statistics on Education*. [online] Available at: <http://edu.gov.by/be/main.aspx?guid=18021&detail=1316713> [Accessed 18 July 2015].

In some institutions of tertiary education there is more than one subject in Belarusian. Such state educational institutions as Belarusian State Medical University, Gomel State Medical University, Gomel State Technical University, Vitebsk Academy of Veterinary Medicine, Belarusian-Russian University, Belarusian State Academy of Agriculture, Vitebsk State Medical University, Gomel Engineer Institute have a number of courses in Belarusian: 'Belarusian for Professional Use', 'History of Belarus', 'The Great Patriotic War'.

Such universities as Brest State University, Hrodna State University, Mogilev State University, Minsk State Linguistic University, Baranovichy State University, Belarusian State Pedagogical University have a number of specialized courses in Belarusian in the departments of philology and linguistics.[74] Brest State University conducts 50% of the subjects for the specialization 'Journalism' in Belarusian. 35% of the subjects in the History Department are taught in Belarusian. The university offers also 72-hour preparatory courses for school-leavers who plan to take the Centralized Testing in Belarusian. Postgraduate students of all departments have obligatory 60-hour courses of Belarusian in their curriculum. In Mogilev State University such areas of expertise as 'Journalism', 'Preschool Education', 'Primary Education' and 'Speech Therapy' have 49% of the subject in Belarusian. Minsk State Linguistic University is the only university in the world that has the specialization 'Belarusian as a Foreign Language'. Belarusian State Pedagogical University uses Belarusian in a number of areas of expertise: 'Primary Education', 'History', 'History and Geography', 'History and Social Sciences', 'History and Political Sciences', 'Belarusian Language and Foreign Languages', 'Belarusian Language and Journalism', 'World Culture. Belarusian Culture. Folklore'.

Subjects in Belarusian National Technical University, Belarusian State Music Academy and Belarusian State Academy of Arts do not have the departments of linguistics and philology but offer a wide range of courses in Belarusian. The administration of Belarusian State Academy of Arts reported that the amount of courses in Belarusian constitute 25% in the departments of humanities. The choice of the language of instruction depends on the professors therefore there is no precise data. The language of instruction in the areas of expertise 'Art History (visual arts)', 'Graphic Arts' and 'Decorative and Applied Arts (textile)' is Belarusian.

[74]Belarusian Language Society, 2015. *Belaruskaja mova u VNU* [Belarusian in Tertiary Education]. [online] Available at: <http://tbm-mova.by/monitoring33.html> [Accessed 18 July 2015].

The study of the use of Belarusian in tertiary education reveals that the overall percentage of the subjects in Belarusian is low and allows to notice a tendency unfavourable for the future of the Belarusian language: the number of students who choose to study in Belarusian in higher educational establishments decreases every year. The number of students who study in Belarusian reduced from 700 in 2013/2014 to 300 in 2014/2015 academic year. So, the number of students who received education in Belarusian constituted only 0,2% of all the students. As the analysis of the data provided by Belarusian universities shows, despite the fact that all the students have the course of the Belarusian language for professional use only 41% of the students have other subjects in Belarusian. 212 thousand students (58%) have Russian as the only medium language of instruction. Every year the Ministry of Education promises to promote the Belarusian language in the institutions of tertiary education but the situation with Belarusian-medium courses remains the same. The implementation of new courses in Belarusian for 2016/2017 is not planned by the Ministry of Education but one of the objectives for 2016/2017 is to promote research in Belarusian and organize extracurricular activities popularizing Belarusian culture. These initiatives will not result in an increase of the number of courses in Belarusian and tertiary education in Belarus will remain Russian-medium.

5.7. Future of Belarusian in the System of Education

One of the possibilities to promote Belarusian in education is the creation of new Belarusian-medium courses. Since the early 2000s the use of Belarusian as a medium language in the teaching of the history and culture of Belarus has been declining. Instead of turning to Russian as the medium language of such subjects as History of Belarus and Geography of Belarus, the Ministry of Education is to establish Belarusian as the only medium language of instruction of these subjects as it was from 1991 to 2008.

Since all the schoolchildren have lessons of the Belarusian language and literature, it will be beneficial to launch new courses in Belarusian. The major problem is the training of the teachers who would use Belarusian as the medium language of instruction. The main objective of the Ministry of Education should be the improvement of the university curriculum for the teachers of Belarusian-medium subjects and the implementation of the obligatory exams in the Belarusian language to ensure the high level of proficiency. Another option is to transform the instruction of a series of subjects into integrative courses. There can

be an integrative course on the history and culture of Belarus. Moreover, courses on history and culture can be united with the course of Belarusian literature in the two last years of secondary education.

The main methods of promoting the Belarusian language in the Russian-medium preschool institutions comprise the organization of additional classes in the Belarusian language and the introduction of Belarusian songs and literary texts. Some kindergartens establish special days of the Belarusian language, for example, in the Gomel region once a week both the children and the instructors are encouraged to speak Belarusian only. There have not been any researches on the effectiveness of this method in preschool institutions. In secondary schools additional classes of Belarusian are organized on request of the parents. In tertiary education the Belarusian language is often used in official ceremonies. Furthermore, Belarusian is present in university press (75% of the educational establishments confirmed the publishing of Belarusian-language materials in the newspapers and scientific journals). These initiatives are not effective enough because the majority of the population of the Republic of Belarus is reluctant to use the Belarusian language on a daily basis. However, this tendency has been changing in recent years.

The Belarusian Language Society (BLS) has done a lot in the promotion of the Belarusian language in education. From the 1980s the BLS has been drawing the attention of the government to the problem of the decline of the Belarusian language. At the beginning of the 1990s there were free language courses organized for the public but after several years of teaching it the BLS agreed on the fact that the knowledge people get in schools was enough for the people to continue learning the Belarusian language on their own. Nowadays the BLS is mostly focused on monitoring the use of Belarusian by the country's governmental organizations, ministries and educational establishments. These activities definitely help indicate the problems existing in the system of bilingual education, but the criticism of the language policy aggravates the question of the politicization of the Belarusian language and adds to the bias of the Belarusian language being the language of the opposition.

In Belarus and abroad there exist courses in Belarusian that emphasize the non-political nature of the people's interest towards the Belarusian language. The main promoters of the Belarusian language and culture in 2014 were the courses organized by *Mova Nanova* (Language Anew). The courses are free of charge and take place in a non-academic environment: the meetings are held either in galleries or cafes where people feel at ease and besides learning and practicing the language are able to get acquainted with modern

Belarusian culture. The main focus is not on the linguistic aspects and grammar but on the promotion of the use of the Belarusian language. Moreover, *Mova Nanova* organizes cultural events in Belarusian and offers online lessons for advanced learners. The goal of the course's founders is to re-introduce Belarusian in the main domains of use (family, friendship). The main difficulty that school-leavers face is lack of conversational formulas, because school education provides pupils with the in-depth knowledge of formal constructions and complicated terminology, and school-leavers are able to use the Belarusian language for academic purposes but find it hard to use Belarusian for informal communication. The courses that are held in informal learning setting help students feel at ease and create a positive image of the Belarusian language.

Academic courses of the Belarusian language are offered by Belarusian State University and Minsk State Linguistic University. Language courses organized by the Association of European Business aim at teaching Belarusian businessmen to use the Belarusian language in a variety of business discourses: from email communication to public relations, because the use of Belarusian in advertising campaigns catches the attention and therefore makes the advertised product more popular with the customers. In academic year 2015/2016 the course on the Belarusian language for tourism has been recently launched in Mogilev.

The importance of creating the positive image of the Belarusian language has been pronounced by several scholars (cf. Lukashanets, Mechkovskaya), nevertheless, raising the prestige of the Belarusian language in tertiary education has never been verbalized by the officials. This problem is one of the central ones in the fast developing interculturalism. As the Preamble to the European Charter for the Minority Languages states, 'stressing the value of interculturalism and multilingualism and considering that the protection and encouragement of regional or minority languages should not be to the detriment of the official languages and the need to learn them'[75] The Belarusian language is not taught to the numerous international students that study in Belarus. The obligatory course of Russian is offered to all international students.

Promotion of Belarusian and raising its prestige in the society is conducted mostly by the Ministry of Culture and non-governmental organizations. The success of Belarusian sportsmen in winter sports, tennis and gymnastics raised interest of the foreigners towards

[75]Wikisource, the free online library, 2015. *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. [online] Available at: <https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/European_Charter_for_Regional_or_Minority_Languages> [Accessed 30 July 2015].

Belarus itself and the Belarusian culture. In order to win new audiences on the Internet, the initiative *Litara-A* launched a YouTube channel with the poems in Belarusian read by native speakers. The project invites prominent figures of Belarusian society, e.g. one of the recent videos featuring a world-famous gymnast Melita Stanyuta. Belarusian in the 2010s has become the main language of the TV programs dedicated to Belarusian culture: it is used in Belarusian-produced TV programs on tourism and history. In 2014 the newspaper '*Zvyazda*' sponsored a TV quiz in Belarusian: the quiz consists of questions both on linguistics and literature.

Conclusion

The thesis gave a detailed characteristic of the historical processes that influenced the development of the Belarusian language as an official language and analysed the history of Belarusian-medium education. The study of the vitality of the modern-day Belarusian and the discussion of the main features of the existing bilingual Belarusian-Russian education contribute to the researches of the sociolinguistic situation in Belarus, encourage the promotion of bilingualism in Belarus and the protection of Belarusian language.

Is it appropriate to speak about the language death and the language loss in Belarus? Nationally oriented political activists claim that the Belarusian language is widely spoken in the rural areas but the government officials do not support these people's native language. But how many 'native speakers' of Belarusian are there in Belarus? According to the research conducted by Kittel in 2008, the majority of Belarusian speech communities are characterized by a habitual pattern of choosing *trasianka* for everyday communication and Russian/Belarusian for formal communication. The language beliefs of the population of Belarus consist in assigning the status of the mother tongue to the Belarusian language, whereas the majority of the population speaks Russian at home and may even have difficulty in speaking Belarusian fluently.

The analysis of the history of bilingualism in Belarus helps foresee the future of the Belarusian language. In language planning the prestige of the language is to be taken into consideration in order to 'encourage people to develop pride in the language, or loyalty towards it' (Holmes, 2008: 107). The main peculiar feature of the language situation in Belarus is the fact that Russian is perceived by the population as a national language. At least two generations by 1990 had been educated in Russian and were exposed to this language since early childhood. Supposing that the term 'national language' can not only be applied to the language that representatives of a particular nation speak but also to the heritage language, the Russian language can be called a national language of Belarus.

Economic and political imperatives tend to reduce the use of Belarusian, Belarusian in tertiary education is almost non-existent and due to the recent joining the Bologna Process there will be a rise in the use of English as a medium of instruction in Belarusian universities. However, the Belarusian language can be maintained and even revived if the population of Belarus realizes the role of the language in defining the national identity.

The most effective method of language planning is the acquisition planning. In Belarus, this method proved to be most successful in encouraging the acquisition of Belarusian. Through the system of education the Belarusian language is introduced in all stages, the most successful being secondary education, where Belarusian is part of the curriculum from first to last year of schooling. The Ministry of Education plays the main role in promoting the Belarusian-medium education: it chooses the effective language teaching methods, provides teaching materials and organizes the schooling process by establishing evaluation programmes on all stages.

The statistics provided in 2015 by the Ministry of Education stated that in the 2014/2015 academic year only 10% of the kindergarteners were educated in Belarusian and 4% attended bilingual preschool institutions. Approximately 14% of the school-age children attend Belarusian-medium schools. The Belarusian language in vocational schools and in tertiary education establishments is neglected: less than 1% of university students are educated through the medium of Belarusian. Irrespective of the main language of school instruction, Belarusian is introduced from the very first year of elementary school. In the majority of schools with Russian as the medium language schoolchildren of V-XI forms are provided with the equal amount of workload dedicated to Russian and Belarusian languages and literatures.

Students are not motivated to learn and use Belarusian because chances are that they will never have to use it after they leave school. The education system in Belarus has not changed much since Soviet times. The development of international cooperation and the spread of such programs as TEMPUS and Erasmus Mundus have undoubtedly helped some of the universities obtain a certain degree of flexibility of instruction and implement new approaches to modernize the university system although until May, 2015 Belarus remained the only European state outside of the Bologna process. With all the remarkable changes that are to come in the next years, Belarus will definitely face a number of significant difficulties. One of which is the future of Belarusian language.

The preservation of the language as the symbol of a nation is the responsibility of every nation. The Belarusian language is strongly connected with the culture of the Belarusian ethnos and is used as a distinct marker of identity. However, the Russian language is nowadays perceived as a part of Belarusian identity as well. If the Belarusian system of state education manages to protect the Belarusian language and reform a system of education in such a way that Belarusian and Russian complement each other in the process of education,

the system of education in Republic of Belarus will become an exceptional example of effective educational bilingualism. In order to achieve this goal, both the Ministry of Education and the government are to take important measures that would promote bilingual education and raise its prestige in the society.

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