Research Article

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Failing or Prevailing? Russian Educational Discourse in the Israeli Academic Classroom

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Abstract: This article seeks to explore the ways in which Russian–Soviet educational discourse survives in Israeli universities by bringing its underlying cultural messages to Israeli students. It focuses on the interpretation of educational discursive perceptions and practices of Russian-speaking professors who teach at Israeli universities. The study suggests considering the manifestation of the Russian–Soviet educational scenario through its enforcement in the Russian linguistic repertoire of meta-class talk, in which the professors report on the educational modes of in-class interaction. The analysis reveals that immigrant university teachers adopt communicative strategies imbued with key Russian–Soviet educational messages making them a cultural resource in the Israeli academic context. Concomitantly, however, the professors' voices seem to be opposed to local Israeli cultural perception and practice. The study therefore seeks to uncover how enacted patterns of educational style reflect the cross-cultural condition of the academic context. It adopts the communicative–pragmatic perspective and focuses on key cultural educational scripts, rhetorical argumentation strategies, and the realization of speech acts in the university interaction.

Keywords: cross-cultural academic teaching, professor, student interaction, professors' discursive practices, Russian, Soviet educational communication, educational postulates as a cultural resource

This article examines educational discursive perceptions and practices used by Russian-speaking professors who teach in Israeli academia. It is guided by a fascination with the ways in which Russian–Soviet educational discourse survives in Israeli universities by bringing its underlying cultural messages to Israeli students. Bearing in mind that Russian-speaking university teachers who emigrated to Israel in the 1990s represent the last generation in whom the Russian–Soviet cultural heritage is still ingrained, their style of communication in the professional, public, and interpersonal university domains provides a challenging field for research. It seems an especially inspiring endeavor in that there remains only a handful of such cultural representatives in Israeli universities. It thus provides a unique perspective for concomitantly examining an encounter that is both cross-cultural and cross-generational.

Educational communication as a vital dimension of immigrant professors' teaching is reflected in their after-class discussions with Russian-speaking colleagues and through personal accounts in which they negotiate their professional expertise. The Russian language has thus become an important means of preserving the Soviet academic legacy in cross-cultural university settings. Extending further Norman Fairclough's insight (Fairclough; Fairclough and Wodak) that the use of language is a form of social practice, I suggest considering the manifestation of the Russian–Soviet educational scenario not only through the educational modes of local Israeli in-class interaction, but also mainly through its reinforcement in the Russian linguistic repertoire of meta-class talk. Russian professors adopt communicative strategies that are Israeli discourse-appropriate yet imbued with key Russian–Soviet educational messages, making them a cultural resource in

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the Israeli academic context. Their modes of communication, while performed in local Hebrew or English, nevertheless convey the educational rhetoric of duty-oriented interaction, thereby negotiating students' perception of the importance of discipline and self-discipline. These include obligations and responsibilities as critical considerations in the educational context and emphasize the validity of an attitude of acceptance of authority and of clear discursive hierarchies, thus explicitly teaching students to show respect to their professors.

This is noteworthy, for although educational discourse has shaped the meanings of university teaching in the Russian and Soviet culture of academic knowledge, the Israeli university interaction has been developing in the context of the global shift toward the emotionalization of academic culture. Nevertheless, to some extent, Russian academic discourse currently appears to be offering an alternative to the emotionalization processes that are reshaping professor–student relations. Furthermore, the Russian–Soviet and Israeli university contexts refer to different systems of cultural hierarchies and are characterized by different degrees of formality in teacher–student relations. The difference of experience that underlies this type of interaction is thus cross-cultural rather than cross-generational, and the Russian–Soviet educational discourse becomes even more pronounced in the professors' voices since it is opposed to the local Israeli perception and practice. This study therefore also hopes to reveal the way in which enacted patterns of educational style reflect the cross-cultural condition of the academic classroom.

In my work, I suggest examining this cross-generational, multilingual, and cross-cultural condition of the Russian–Israeli university communication. In this respect, the article is guided by the following questions:

- How do Russian–Soviet and Israeli educational discourses manifest themselves in university communication and construct student–professor interaction?
- How are these different discourses reflected in linguistic forms and communicative modes?

To answer these questions, the study adopts the communicative–pragmatic perspective and focuses on key cultural linguistic educational scripts, rhetorical argumentation strategies, and the realization of speech acts.

Russian-Speaking Educated Stratum (*intelligentsia*) in Israel

The Russian-speaking, Israeli immigrant university teachers who constitute the focus of the research belong to a community of more than one million immigrants from formerly Soviet states, who came to Israel during the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although the Russian-speaking immigrants represent an extremely heterogeneous collectivity in terms of their cities of origin and specific sociocultural characteristics, they exhibit common perceptions and patterns of life that are rooted in their cultural and educational Russian–Soviet background.

Among these common patterns, scholars point to a particular "superior" attitude on the part of Russian immigrants towards local Israeli culture, as well as a desire to preserve their own imported cultural patterns (Fialkova and Yelenevskaya, *Ex-Soviets in Israel…*; Zbenovich, "The Russian-Jewish babushka…"). Many Russian parents, for example, express their discontent with the education their children are receiving at Israeli educational institutions and are quite vocal in their criticism of these as being insufficient in terms of both the education and the knowledge that they impart, as compared to the education they recall from the Soviet Union (Epstein and Kheimets; Zbenovich and Lerner).

Indeed, Russian-speaking immigrants in Israel bring with them abundant educational capital: more than half of the Russian-speaking immigrants have academic degrees; about 70% were employed in white-collar occupations prior to immigration. In Israel, Russian immigrants continue to define themselves as belonging to the educated strata (the *intelligentsia*) (Rapoport and Lomsky-Feder; Remennick). *Intelligentsia* had become a key cultural scenario for Jewish identity in Russia and, consequently, for Russian immigrant Jews as an anchor of collective identity, and this has been transmitted to their children via the educational process. In this respect, studies show that the meaning of *intelligentsia* represents mainly a set of educational skills, behavioral

patterns, and a way of life. Recent research has revealed that in Israel, Russian-speaking immigrants from the Soviet Union enlist the category of *intelligentsia* as cultural capital when they settle into the host society; they utilize it to elevate their immigrant status in relation to other ethnic and class groups that comprise Israel's social and cultural hierarchies (Lomsky-Feder and Leibovitz; Remennick). In this context, Russian-speaking immigrants' unequivocal aspiration to retain and transmit their cultural heritage expresses their cultural competition with the accepted cultural styles of behavior and communication that they found in Israel. It should be noted that the unqualified majority of Russian Israelis, belonging to different socio-economic strata, tend to view Russian culture and language as a major factor in their identity, and are determined to preserve this part of their lives (Remennick and Prashizky; Yelenevskaya; Fialkova and Yelenevskaya, *In Search of the Self…*). Moreover, most immigrants perceive Russian culture and language as being superior to Israeli culture and language (Niznik).

While the Russian-speaking immigrants preserve cultural continuity and maintain the Russian cultural model of discourse, they are exposed to different cultural models and adopt Israeli manners and customs. Simultaneously with their evident success in preserving and maintaining their cultural baggage, Russian Israelis practice different cultural styles of communication. This ostensibly contradictory context of cultural continuity, coupled with change within the Russian-speaking community in Israel, results in a weave of cross-generational, cross-cultural, and multilingual inter-personal communication. The cultural continuity of *intelligentsia* apparently constitutes a cross-cultural encounter in the public sphere and the workplace. Thus, within their occupation in institutions of higher education, for instance, Russian immigrant teachers use the power of different communicative styles to create a dialogue with their students and to interpret their interlocutor's discourses in and about university interaction.

This work will focus on the cultural communicative style that Russian immigrant professors recruit for their teaching practice. I will reflect on the Russian conceptual model of academic teaching as it is enacted under cultural conditions of immigration, and I will observe it on the background of changing Israeli academic culture in the neoliberal therapeutic age.

It should be noted first that with the ascendance of global neoliberal discourse, the traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry has been replaced with an institutional emphasis on performativity and measured outputs (Brunila; Urciuoli). Furthermore, teaching has recently come to be perceived as a therapeutic interaction, and the transmission of knowledge is expected to be at once comforting and emotionally engaging (Lerner et al.). Finally, the emotional therapeutic discourse in Israel follows the locally prevalent style of communication, being characterized by its directness and emotional expressiveness (Katriel, *Talking Straight…*; Katriel, *Communal Webs…*).

This analysis argues for the need to incorporate cultural and pragmatic analyses of linguistic form, which revolves around the examination of the communicative modes and styles of immigrant professors, as well as of key cultural concepts. More specifically, I will inquire into the strategic use of educational communication in advancing Russian educational discourse. My aim is to understand not only immigrants' attitudes toward the maintenance of key Russian cultural concepts, but also the way in which the Russian language they use functions as a means of sharing, support, and comfort.

Data and Methodology

This study seeks to understand the nature of educational discursive practices used by Russian immigrant professors in their interaction with Israeli students. It reveals some of the initial insights from the larger, ongoing study that explores various dimensions of the new academic emotional culture from a cross-cultural perspective, based on materials collected through surveys, interviews, and participant observations in Israeli and Russian institutions of higher education. The study also relies on auto-ethnography as I kept comparing my own observations with the collected fieldwork material. Such a triangulation in the use of methods allowed me to reflect and evaluate the ideas being investigated with a greater extent of accuracy.

The interest in the new relationships between students and professors was sparked by my personal and professional awareness of the fact that something has changed in the way of teaching and interactions with students. I perceive the differences in relation to my own experience as a student in the former Soviet Union and later in Israel, as well as my early experience as a university teacher. Most notably, professor–student relations have become different from my perception of "how they should be" according to the normative imaginative and pragmatic outlook. In the course of the last half a decade, I began gathering the material for the study.

Research data were obtained from a semi-structured questionnaire for the Russian immigrant university teachers' and their interviews between 2018 and 2022. The survey and the interviews were conducted in four Israeli universities and colleges (Hadassah Academic College in Jerusalem, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, and Haifa and Tel Aviv Universities). The group of participants, chosen in a snowball fashion, comprises 20 university teachers who immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet states in the early 1990s. Research subjects are mostly female professors in their mid-fifties to early seventies, teaching in the social sciences and humanities, who immigrated to Israel during their early thirties or forties. The majority of these teachers graduated from the universities in their home country and have earned professor status later in Israel.

The questionnaire included 10 questions, and 200 answers were collected on the whole. The professors were asked questions about their experience as teachers in Israeli academia and their ways of interaction with the students. To compare current modes of communication with their previous experience of university interaction, teachers were also requested to recall their past student or teacher experience, which had taken place in the former Soviet Union in the 1970s–1980s.

In the next stage, the research database comprised 20 h of tape-recorded conversations identified as educational communication talks, conducted in Russian. The teachers had been informed that the research focus was on mechanisms for maintaining Russian cultural capital in Israeli academia; they were not, however, told specifically of the research interest in culturally and linguistically bound manners of maintaining educational communication. The fact that the interviews were conducted in Russian in a situation where all the participants were bi- or trilingual Hebrew and/or English speakers was very meaningful for understanding the interviewees' cultural identity. In the process of gathering material, I searched for the key cultural perceptions and concepts of educational discourse negotiating the notions of obligation, responsibility, and respect as educational messages in the class setting. I also examined the linguistic patterns explicating the pragmatic meaning of central concepts at the interactional level.

The broader theoretical approach for the current study is guided by and takes inspiration from the principles of critical discourse analysis for accounts of social practices developed by Fairclough and Wodak. In examining the cross-cultural condition of Russian–Israeli university communication, I draw on intercultural pragmatics (Scollon et al.) and investigate patterns of discourse with an emphasis on the social use of language, similar to conversational pragmatics (Grice) and speech act theory (Austin; Searle). I explore concrete Russian and Israeli cultural linguistic scripts, including expressions, concepts, and keywords (Katriel, *Talking Straight…*; Wierzbicka), as markers that contextually generate Russian–Soviet educational culture within Israeli university discourse.

Russian–Soviet and Israeli Educational Discourses: Contrapositioning of the Essentials

In this section, I provide empirical evidence for the presence of general perceptions and central ideas of Russian–Soviet educational style in the communication of Russian–Israeli university teachers. I show how the discursive postulates pertaining to Russian–Soviet educational discourse contrast vividly against the background style of Israeli relaxedness and emotionality: the communicative culture that Russian speakers view as an attribute of Israeliness. Soviet–Russian educational culture, which has traditionally embodied the communicative act of education (*vospitanie*) (Zbenovich and Lerner; Lerner et al.; Zbenovich, "Linguistic

Performance…") in institutional as well as family settings, endorses the fulfillment of moral and social responsibilities, cultivates self-discipline, and instills the importance of "work" (*trud*).[i] These educational discursive constants shaped the meanings of university teaching in the Soviet culture of academic knowledge and as my observations and interviews show, to a certain extent continue to exist, although acquiring a new meaning under cultural conditions of immigration. In speaking of their experience as university teachers in Israel, Russian immigrants constantly refer to specific cultural differences in the educational style familiar to them from the Soviet Union, and the very different university style of communication they are exposed to in Israel:

(1) **Karina** (studied at Irkutsk Institute of Foreign Languages in 1970–1975, now teaches English as a Foreign Language)[ii]:

> The time I was studying … we never interrupted teachers. When we were not happy with the grade, we were to blame ourselves and started working harder. Neither did we ever complain about the size of the homework assignment. And we never left the classroom during the lesson without being allowed to. Entirely the opposite we see in this country. The students are less patient. They easily interrupt a teacher in the middle of a phrase, with no understanding that they have to listen to the end first. At the beginning of the course, I have to say that they can't eat in class, or unexpectedly leave the class! I think Israeli students always behaved this way: 30 years ago, and now!

Karina experiences a deep gap between her own understanding of the academic encounter and its perception by Israeli students. This mismatch is expressed in a lack of adherence to classroom regulations as well as blurred boundaries between students and their teachers. She emphasizes the absurdity of the violation of university norms (*"we never"*) and views today's student conduct as not matching academic reality. In stressing her disapproval, Karina takes an implied critical stance toward the Israeli communicative style as a general cultural difference (*"opposite we see in this country"*), and further accentuates the stability and invariability of its attitudes (*"Israeli students always behaved this way"*). In this sense, teaching at a higher educational institution in the context of an immigrant community acquires an additional meaning of displeasure with the host culture's codes of behavior and implies that Russian–Soviet educational discourse which landed in Israel is culturally more apposite and valid.

The teaching in Karina's talk manifests the system of norms and obligations that should underlie professor–student relationships. Within this system, an additional marker of educational discipline is the fundamental postulate of "working hard for a grade" (*we … started working harder*). The concept of earning a deserved grade should be associated with students' understanding of the requirement to demonstrate their hard work worthy of the reward; however, according to the teacher, this does not appear to play a role in Israeli discourse.

The interviewees also brought up the idea of teachers' authority and hierarchy, which lacks meaning in informal Israeli communication and in the context of which a university teacher is probably not authorized to criticize students.

(2) **Daniel** (studied at Samara University in 1974–1979, now teaches Social Work):

> I remember I was afraid to go to the teacher's room or to the dean's office to ask about something. The university teacher was perceived as the highest authority. We never doubted his/her right to criticize us. And of course, we never ever critically assessed our teachers. It's the opposite to todays' formats: a lot of criticism from the students and almost no effort to learn. But I think it is cultural, not only time difference. Though there are more occasions for criticism now – as students talk too much, play with their phones – there is less opportunity to give critical comments in Israel. In general, I don't think it's customary for students to be criticized.

In the voice of this immigrant professor, one can clearly recognize that the gap is also expressed in an indistinct hierarchical distance and the challenged professor authority in the Israeli academic setting coupled with the sense of a one-sided responsibility for the academic encounter (*"lot of criticism from the students and*

i The principles of Soviet–Russian educational discourse are identified with the pedagogical approach of A. Makarenko, developed during the 1920s–1930s. This approach viewed school and family education as a continuous work aimed at building up a self-disciplined individual and a conscientious citizen.

ii The excerpts from the interviews were translated into English. The original participants' names were changed and anonymized.

almost no effort to learn"). Similarly to Karina, Daniel also believes that the gap shows itself both cross-generationally and cross-culturally.

Within the framework of Russian–Soviet standards of educational discourse where criticism is the default mode, any violation of conduct norms by students could be critically commented upon. In the Israeli university tradition, however, teachers interact with students in the context of a lower hierarchical distance, which can be attributed to the common cultural framework of solidarity, and to Israeli conventions of non-formality in communication (Katriel, *Talking Straight…*) which are extrapolated to the academic discourse as well.

The conventional university modes of verbal behavior do not presuppose the professor's ultimate authority in the Israeli academic context, therefore the teaching encounter could be friendly and civilized but sometimes may involve brutal negotiation. The characteristic style of Israeli university communicative culture is underlined by students' manifestation of assertiveness that entails the explicit expression of their intentions. Assertiveness is encoded in the cultural style of talking and has the function of voicing students their self-position and stating and defending their points of view. As a cultural trait, assertiveness allows students to perform verbal acts that in terms of Russian immigrant professors might convey disregard to the interlocutor and even threaten his/her face. Moreover, university interaction is also based upon solidarity that involves a state of expectation of we-feeling where the borders of hierarchy tend to be washed out.

As the teacher–student communicative style is built on symmetry and closeness as well as on a power struggle (Lerner et al.), a critical remark given to a student is often registered on the higher threshold of challenge (Zbenovich et al.). This explains a cultural reality in which immigrant university teachers may not accept different aspects of the informal style of Israeli communication; however, they perpetually seek to develop appropriate channels of interaction that attempt to shape their comments regarding student performance cautiously, while simultaneously attempting to calculate the possible emotional impact of such criticism on the interlocutor.

Soviet–Russian educational discourse also differs dramatically from the current emotional and therapeutic manner of university communication which students use to speak in terms of their emotional needs, and contemporary Israeli professors usually accept these as legitimate. In the voice of the following interviewee, one can clearly recognize that the emotionality of students has become fundamental to the current state of academic teaching in Israel.

(3) **Olga** (studied at Leningrad Pedagogical Institute in 1972–1977, now teaches Comparative Literature):

> We expressed feelings in a very restrained manner! No one allowed oneself to be indignant, I can't even imagine it. In case one was dissatisfied, all displeasure remained 'behind the scenes' (*'neudovol'stvie ostavalos' za kadrom'*). Here, students in general behave more relaxed and emotionally uninhibited, often crying or even shouting. They are very emotional in expressing their dissatisfaction trying to take the conversation from a professional level to a personal one. It seems to them that human sympathy for their difficulties should be expressed in the grade, regardless of the level of work performed. At the same time, that they can be very positive, but actually too personal, saying for example, 'I like your new hair style'. Or 'What wonderful nail color you have'. It was unthinkable (*nemyslimo*) before! Never heard in Russia!

Within the frame of the Russian–Soviet educational discourse, and in the Soviet system in general, emotions were not publicly debated and were hardly shown. Students lacked adequate language for articulating their position in the presence of their lecturers since this was unacceptable. Within the new cultural system of academic teaching, the immigrant professor's impression is that in the university setting a personal and emotional attitude toward academic knowledge, academic relations and the outcomes of the academic encounter have become an arguable factor in the academic process. Olga views it as a new cultural state of affairs in which emotional complaints have become the prevailing mode of communication between students and teachers, and where dissatisfaction with a grade may be expressed in terms of emotional discomfort. In a similar vein, however, Olga admits that positive students' experience of contentment is likewise formulated in emotional terms, such as those of excitement, attraction, or compliment. According to the teacher, however, even when the emotional attitude is positive, it is nevertheless felt as one of imposition and intrusion into her privacy (*"but actually too personal"*), as Russian–Israeli university teachers have yet to adopt the new emotional therapeutic language of interaction with students. Their reaction to such language is based on the logic that it "was unthinkable before."

Overall, the lack of boundaries, the constant potential of breaking the rules and the emerging emotionalization of higher education is less understandable to Russian immigrant teachers. Their predominant opinion reflects opposition between what they perceive as proper, educational and normative on the one hand, and what they see as typical Israeli conduct on the other. Although immigrant professors are expected to adopt the Israeli style of communication, which brings with it a lesser level authority from the educational stance, and to translate their perception of *vospitanie* into the emerging emotional culture of new sensitivity and emotionality, they attempt to retain the familiar educational discursive model either explicitly or symbolically. Interpreting the implicit and explicit dichotomy embodied in the expressions of immigrant teachers, I was able to uncover some additional key components of Russian–Soviet ideas and practices in educational discourse. These components include expectations that students will be aware of their duties in the process of studying, together with a strong appeal for recognition of professors' authority. Maintaining control over one's studies is inherent to the practice of bearing one's responsibilities (*otvetstvennost'*), whereas the acknowledgement of professors' authority is communicated by the idea of respect (*uvazhenie)*. Both components of the educational discourse and their specific linguo-pragmatic implementation within educational communication in the Israeli university will constitute the focus of analysis further in the article.

Students' Responsibilities: Between Obligations and Self Needs

While the students articulate themselves, actively using the intense emotional and psychologized language by means of which they demand their right to their satisfaction and emotional comfort (Lerner et al.), the Russian–Israeli immigrant professors, in turn, develop various strategies of response in advancing the educational postulates. In the following example, the teacher accentuates the educational concept of "responsibilities" that refers to the students' duties in the university learning process.

(4) **Galia** (studied at Odessa Pedagogical Institute from 1984 to 1989, now teaches English for Computer Science) describes the situation where she was carried away by emotion and took a direction of interaction with a student that was built on emotional argumentation. Galia says that a student scheduled an appointment with her to explain how much workload he had and to get permission not to attend her classes that are considered to be compulsory in the college curriculum.

> He explained to me that he and a number of other students in the Department of Computer Science are having a very hard time attending the class because of a crazy load of studies (lectures, endless exercises and Lab [practice]) that has accompanied them since the start of the school year. I drew his attention to the fact that the attendance is a must. As he has chosen to register for the course and undeniably knows what the course regulations are he cannot undermine them. At some point I couldn't really hold myself anymore and told him: Let me teach you what a load is (which was really unexpected and maybe not appropriate, but I was emotionally relieved of my role to persuade him to do things that are clearly his own responsibility). The real load occurs when you get up at six in the morning and prepare lessons and assignments for a number of courses, conduct an international project, participate in a number of academic conferences and workshops and just do your load since you know that your load is your responsibility.

First, the conversation with the Israeli student was conducted in Hebrew, and the teacher's indignation is mostly reflected in the assertive argumentative style she uses in her talk. Galia's mode of communication, grounded in rational and simultaneously emotional substantiation of her argument, is both instrumental and symbolic. The teacher translates the intrinsic cultural concept of the *responsibility* by means of the conversational mode of her talk, and being strengthened in the righteousness of her opinion, she even attacks the student. Along with this, reporting about that experience in the interview, Galia said she was thankful for the opportunity to reproduce the short talk and express her feelings in Russian since in using her mother tongue (though just for the interview) she finds more support and validation for her argument.

In this example of the reported talk, the teacher's authority is challenged by the use of the discourse of the student's self-needs which the latter recruits into the service of negotiation of authority. Instead of answering the student's appeal regarding his needs, the teacher defends her principles and presents her opinion about

personal and professional adherence to her duties. She takes the word *load* that was used by the student in the meaning of "pressure" and reconstructs the pragmatic meaning of *load* in the talk to conform with the Russian educational concept of "responsibility." This cross-interpretation illustrates that although the interpretations of the concept by both communicants intersect within the same semantic field of "too much work to be done," they are obviously different. Galia uses a student's statement to introduce the personal experience and professional principles, advancing educational strategies of responsibility and implicitly presenting appropriate norms to be adhered to. For the teacher, the word *load* means "duty" and as a result, an altered use of the word emerges and operates in conversation as a part of a teacher's cultural background that challenges and even attacks the student's perception and assertion of his position.

Lack of Respect: In Search of Acknowledgement in the Cultural Framework of Solidarity

One of the important issues of the teacher–student interaction that were mentioned in the interviews was the negotiation of respect. Russian immigrant university teachers associate the gap in the concept of teaching in Israel as a form of the loss of the discursive component of personal respect and acknowledgment of their status as professors – "*uvazhenie*."

Respect has been associated for the most part in pragmatics and studies of social deixis with certain linguistic forms, in particular, honorifics, terms of address, and special deference or respect vocabulary (Brown and Levinson, "Universals in Language Usage…"; Brown and Levinson, *Politeness…*; Haugh; Larina; Levinson), where respect and politeness refer to the establishment and recognition of a set of prescriptive rules that have been agreed upon based on cultural-specific norms. The lack of respect experienced in public interactions in various social and cultural domains has become a common type of discourse (Billante and Saunders; Lakoff).

Very often, the interviewees view the new Israeli context of university teaching as a form of service with the loss of the discursive component of personal respect and acknowledgment of their status as professors – "*uvazhenie*." The lack of respect for a professor they associate with not mentioning professors' names when greeting them, or impersonalizing the address form in correspondence with teachers, thus turning a professor into a service person or a resource. The Russian professors find it difficult to get used to the disregard of hierarchies on the part of their Israeli students which they attribute to the typical Israeli communicative style. The importance of showing respect on the discursive level was cultivated in the Russian–Soviet system of education; however, in the Israeli context, teachers might have won students' respect for their expertise though discursive formulas of expression respect have never been fostered as a core value of the interaction. Thus, while the polite forms of address and the use of other linguistic markers of deference have a symbolic meaning for Russian immigrant teachers for successful communication, a lack of a proper language or the pronounced students' informality may overshadow the flow of the interaction.

In contrast with Hebrew absence of linguistic markers for respect, Russian society has long used the formal versus informal forms of "you," as well as the name and patronymic name, in workplaces and all interpersonal relations between generations in formal settings (5). **Marianna** (studied at Moscow State Institute of Culture in 1972–1977, now is a professor of media studies) shared that students often exclaim "*Hi* (the short colloquial form of a habitual greeting)" when seeing her in the university corridor. Though for Israelis it has become a characteristic of native communicative culture that signals informal solidarity and may entail the preference for simplicity in message design, in the immigrant teacher's view such a speech style underlies the lack of respect. Not adding a teacher's name (in the case of Marianna a long and unusual one) means that the students do not bother to learn the professor's name which turns the position of a university professor into that of an impersonal service provider and resource. As Marianna put it: "Well, I wouldn't ask for the use of honorifics, but today they don't even know my name, just because it's difficult to pronounce" – meaning, that her students no longer make an effort to learn her name in order to communicate respect,

comparing that tendency to the more habitual and respectful personal mode of address used in the past in a different linguistic and cultural context. The university teachers associate a short and impersonalized address "on the run" with a disrespectful and impersonal attitude toward them that turns teachers into mere service providers, in that the detached and superficial student manner of interaction is associated with service.

On the related subject of email correspondence with students, (6) **Noam** (studied at Chelyabinsk Pedagogical Institute from 1982 to 1987, now is a senior lecturer in sociology) further accentuated the attitude of a lack of respect: "Sometimes students just attach their assignments, with no accompanying letter at all. I received a few letters from the students when just the subject line in the email communicates the whole content of the message, like 'I have not received the materials yet, waiting for them from you', without the expected main note that should follow! Or even in a more detached manner students can prioritize their email's importance by writing 'Urgently' in the subject line!" Noam notes that he perceived students' emails threatened his face, and he thus decided to share the experience with some Russian–Israeli colleagues to understand whether his perceptions about the lack of respect were legitimate. "Lucky you! Were those the only cases?" – he heard in response. He reported being utterly shocked when learning of the situations in which his peers had experienced a lack of respect. They had transpired at the level of lexis when students provided an emotional assessment of a class, an article, or an assignment that had provoked their irritation which was articulated. "Boring" or "annoying" were among the complaints they expressed directly to the teacher's face. "Providing emotions as an evaluative resource has become a legitimate strategy and an accepted discursive register, and such a lack of deference and respect towards a teacher directs the other party to consider the student's needs – that was unheard of (*neslyhanno*) in the Russian university!," exclaimed Noam in conclusion. As illustrated above, the very idea of respect is challenged in the university interaction, not only through the omission of discursive markers denoting respect and deference but also through the recruitment of various discursive forms of resistance based on emotional argumentation.

Conclusion: Continuity and Challenges of Russian Educational Culture

This study was guided by an interest in the ways in which the imported Russian-Soviet educational discourse endures, changes, and quite possibly fails in the context of Israeli academia. The focus on the group of Russian-speaking university teachers who represent the last Soviet generation to have emigrated to Israel in the early 1990s has enabled access to empirical evidence and has afforded further insight into this cross-generational, cross-lingual, and cross-cultural university encounter.

Analysis of the teachers' surveys and oral interviews clearly reveals significant constants of Russian–Soviet educational culture, as it was shaped in the home country. Educational messages regarding the importance of duties and obligations, the recognition of hard work for a deserved achievement and the acceptance of authority, are currently still recruited and referred to in the Israeli university classroom, through emphasis upon concepts and practices of *otvetstvennost'* (responsibility) and *uvazhenie* (respect). Moreover, the Russian–Soviet educational model is also negotiated in meta-class talk among colleagues in Russian, which provides a common cultural language, mirrors a common educational stance, and establishes a comfort zone for sharing experience.

Furthermore, educational discourse as a cultural resource has grown even more pronounced in the teachers' voices due to its being opposed to the local Israeli perception and practice that immigrant university teachers face. It is enforced in the context of the university cultural encounter by means of professors' self-positioning in relation to Israeli models of interaction, and their presentation and defense of the familiar educational scenario within the discursive rhetoric as they use local Hebrew to communicate the Russian educational cultural model.

My analysis has also revealed that Russian–Soviet educational postulates are challenged by the host university culture and its assumptions and practices regarding interaction. A new communication style has become deeply rooted in Israeli culture and currently prevails in the public sphere and in educational

institutions, as the normative, conventional communication, marked by informality and solidarity. It is no less significant that the imported Russian educational discourse has been modifying its meaning at the crossroads of change in the university culture in Israel in general, due to the interplay between the incoming global culture of therapeutic emotionalization and neoliberal education policies. This emerging reality to a certain extent affects the experience of Russian-speaking professors in the process of teaching and relationships with students. In light of the culture of new sensitivity, the educational principles of *vospitanie* may not only challenge the student's face needs but also interfere with the student's state of emotional comfort. The professors thus concomitantly withstand behaviors that challenge their authority and absorb this different communicative style that presupposes their role as service providers, assuming less authority to criticize students and developing greater attentiveness to students' self-needs.

With this in mind, it becomes ever more essential to hypothesize what type of dialogue will continue to develop in the Israeli university, and which modes of communication will evolve. An understanding of how the Soviet–Russian educational culture will modify itself within the Israeli cultural ethos, how it will coexist with the emerging emotional therapeutic formats, and whether it will be cultivated and prevail or, conversely, be neglected and fail, is closely tied to the cultural and social context of a specific communicative act. The meaning of the Russian educational communicative style will be contingent not only on the Russian language by means of which it is articulated, but also by its relationship with other communicative styles that might challenge its relevance and legitimacy or, conversely, bring its underlying cultural messages to the forefront.

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