

**Religious Language as Everyday Life:
A Linguistic Portrait of the Russian Heritage Speaker from Oregon**
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According to the data published by the Russian Oregon Social Services, Oregon is currently number two in the nation for Russian-speaking newcomers¹. Among those newcomers the most numerous is the community of Russian Baptists and Pentecostals who came in the 1970s and 1990s. Little is known about the linguistic profile and proficiency of the Russian heritage students of this background because most previous research has focused on speakers in California or on the east coast of the United States (Polinsky 2000; Kagan and Dillon 2001, 2003; Andrews 1993, 1998, 2000), who are for the most part secular. The anonymous survey I conducted in 2005–2007 reveals that 42 percent of the students enrolled in the Russian Heritage program at Portland State University in 2005–2007 use Russian in church more frequently than at home or at the university. What is the effect of the regular exposure of these students to church sermons in Russian? The study presents a linguistic portrait of a Pentecostal student, and aims to determine whether religious and domestic issues are discussed by the student with the same degree of proficiency. I analyze two recorded oral texts: (a) the student's narrative about an alcoholic woman who achieved sobriety through religious observance and (b) the student's cooking instructions, explaining how to bake her favorite pie. Results show that the student decreased the number of case errors, pauses and incomplete sentences when she narrated a story about the alcoholic woman and also used abstract vocabulary, such as "faith," "salvation," or "testimony." In contrast, she increased the number of case errors, pauses and incomplete sentences when she talked about baking.

The study illustrates the special status of the Oregon Russian Heritage speakers. The Russian Heritage speakers from California possess an "extensive *everyday* vocabulary" (Kagan and Friedman 2003) and may be expected to discuss everyday topics with greater ease than abstract topics. The Oregon example illustrates the opposite case, where an abstract topic is discussed with greater ease than matters of everyday life, since for this group of Heritage speakers, sermons and prayers *are* "everyday life."