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Socio-cultural transnational practices in Saturday Russian schools in Scotland

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How can socio-cultural transnational activities be related to the study of one's heritage language? Why do Saturday schools promote socio-cultural transnational practices inside and outside of the learning process? Why would migrant families like to support socio-cultural transnational activities organised by the schools? This article offers answers to the questions posed above based on an investigation of four Russian schools in Scotland. Heritage language preservation is a negotiable process which flexibly responds to the interests of the parents, teachers and pupils who participate in the activities of the Russian schools and contribute to shaping their aims. These interests can be considered as the main driving forces for a wide range of aspects of the Russian schools' everyday life, such as educational programmes, styles of teaching, the social relationship between members of the Russian school community and additional cultural events organised by these schools. In Scotland, Russian-speaking communities bring together individuals with a range of characteristics (including different paths to migration, skills and educational levels, national identities, and countries of origin). The present study has shown the importance of this diverse composition of Russian-speaking communities to the everyday operations of the Russian schools. This contributes to the discussion of socio-cultural transnational elements activities in everyday life of the Saturday schools and their role in the development of the migrant community. Expanding on the existing literature in this area, the research investigates socio-cultural transnational practices which unite the Russian-speaking community in Scotland itself, and create a bridge between this community and the Russian-speaking world.

Keywords: socio-cultural transnational practices; migrant Saturday schools, heritage language.

This research project discusses the diversity of the transnational cultural values and symbols which were created during the educational process. Observations of socio-cultural transnational practices emerging through the communication between teachers, parents and children demonstrated how participants in the heritage language preservation process renegotiate their mutual understanding of Russian cultural elements in the Scottish environment. The Russian schools can be investigated as 'an arena for conscious choice, justification and representation' of a transnational culture [1, p. 18]. As organisations and providers of multicultural education [2], the Russian schools produce transnational cultural elements which are fluid and 'radically context-dependent' [3, p 77]. A substantial proportion of the lessons in the Russian schools in Scotland focuses on recreating knowledge about Russia and allowing children to merge these with their experiences of their life in Scotland. Teaching and learning in Russian are explored from the angle of the socio-cultural transnational practices emerging in the Russian schools in Scotland.

Socio-cultural transnational practices and the heritage language learning

We, Russian-speaking parents, organised this complementary school for our children and for us. Why we did that? The Russian language is our heritage and our bridge between all Russian-speakers in the world. Our children were born here in Scotland, but they should know the Russian language and Russian culture. How can they speak with us in the future and with our relatives living abroad? (Alina¹, parent, Glasgow)

Alina was a parent whose second child has attended the Russian school in Glasgow since 2008. After arriving in Scotland, her family focused all their attention on overcoming language barriers and achieving a language competence in English. However, during this time her first child nearly lost his ability to speak in the mother tongue. After that Alina decided to send her second child (who was born in Scotland) to the Saturday Russian school. On the one hand, her story showed the challenges of improving existing language skills and supporting the heritage language for migrant families. On the other hand, it shows the importance for migrants to support some connections with Russian-speakers living in Scotland and abroad. Nobody from my interviews used the term of transnational but her description of understanding the role of heritage language as a cultural bridge resonate transnational approach, especially, socio-cultural transnational practices.

At present, the transnational approach represents a wide range of concepts based on the idea that transnational migrants could be identified as people engaged in creating and maintaining a connection between host countries and their country of origin [4–6]. The range of interpretations and descriptions of links which could be assumed as transnational is growing. I would like to focus on socio-cultural transnational activities which emerge in everyday life of the migrant community.

Socio-cultural transnational activities can be classified as a wide array of social and cultural transactions through which ideas and meanings are exchanged across borders. This process can include activities connecting with the migrants' country of origin, such as maintaining contacts with family and friends, joining international organisations, par-

¹ All the respondents' names were anonymised, and information which might compromise the respondents' anonymity was excluded from the quotations.

ticipating in international cultural events, and watching television from the country of origin [7, p. 769; 8, p. 293]. To narrow my focus, I looked at socio-cultural transnational activities through the lens of Saturday schools. Maintaining relationships with relatives and friends living abroad was a significant factor in motivating families to transmit their Russian language knowledge to the next generation. Watching Russian TV and using Russian internet assists the parents in encouraging their children to learn Russian.

A study by Itzigsohn and Saucedo have highlighted the importance of socio-cultural transnational practices in relation to the creation of a sense of community [7, p. 768]. The transnational approach has some nuances of implementation into studies of the Russian-speaking communities abroad. As has been noted by wider studies of the Russian identities of people living abroad [9; 10], in everyday practices, references to Russia and Russians can have different meanings. One is linked to Russia as a state, and another, using the word “Russia”, actually refers to the Russian cultural/linguistic space which cannot be confined within particular borders. The complexities of Russian culture mean that care must be taken when developing an understanding of ‘transnational culture’ within the Russian-speaking community in Scotland. In my study, I do not seek to define precisely what kind of cultural belonging is represented by the cultural norms, traditions and rituals which were observed in the Russian schools in Scotland. My focus was on understanding how teachers, parents, and children from the Russian schools in Scotland reconstruct the image of Russia and produce some Russianness in the Scottish cultural environment. I investigated how this specific culture helped the community to encourage their children to learn Russian and preserve their attachment to Russian-speaking groups. As such, I used the term ‘transnational practices’ to refer to cross-border and cross-cultural activities which did not have a clear connection to the Russian Federation as a state, but which did have links with a broader cultural/linguistic space [10].

The Russian Schools’ work can be regarded as transnational due to their global connections as well as the nature of their regular activities [11, p. 464]. The process of heritage language preservation is closely linked to supporting and creating transnational culture, which was defined by Willis [3, p. 73] as ‘a shared pattern of learned, transmitted socialisation (symbols, values, and experiences) generated from a setting characterised by multiple participants, languages, and ethnic backgrounds’. It is widely recognised that language and culture are closely intertwined, but the main questions addressed by the present research were: what kind of socio-cultural transnational practices have emerged in Saturday Russian schools, and how have they related to the Russian-speaking communities in Scotland? In this research, I use the term ‘culture’ to refer to the culture constructed by the Russian-speaking parents, Russian teachers and children in accordance with a transnational approach.

Operation of the Russian schools in Scotland

Each large Russian community tried to open the Russian school in their Scottish city. It is pretty normal, if not us who will help our children (Inna, teacher, Aberdeen)

In Scotland, there are Saturday Russian schools in four cities: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Dundee. Four Russian schools were included in the research sample: “Russian Edinburgh”; a Russian school based in the Russian Centre in Scotland Haven located in Glasgow, Russian school Slovo in Aberdeen, and the Dundee Russian school. In Glas-

gow, a second Russian school operates, based in the Orthodox Church, but this was not part of my study sample because its religious focus meant that it was less directly comparable with four other secular Russian schools. In Aberdeen, the Slovo Russian school was included in the research because the Lomonosov Russian school had been established later than Slovo, and had not been registered as a charity through a transparent process of regulation. Several groups providing Russian language classes can be found in other places in Scotland, but their number of pupils and teachers, and organisation of educational processes means that they cannot be identified as formally established schools, which were the focus of this research.

The most mature Russian School in Scotland is “Russian Edinburgh”, which opened in 2004. “Russian Edinburgh” is registered as an educational charity, with its principal objectives wholly focused on education. However, “Russian Edinburgh” is also involved in Russian-speaking community life, and its charter also aims “to encourage the integration of all Russian-speaking persons living in Scotland”². The Russian school in Glasgow, which was opened in the basement of the Russian Centre in Scotland Haven (RCS Haven) in 2004. RCS Haven obtained registration as an SQA educational registered centre in 2012³ and EDEXCEL in 2016, and at the time of the research, was the only school with this status in Scotland. The Russian school in Aberdeen was organised as an informal group without registration as an official charity in 2006. In 2010 the original team was split into two groups. One group created the registered charity Slovo (Russian Educational and Support Centre)⁴. The other group operates as a Lomonosov Russian school without formal registration. The Russian School in Dundee is the youngest Russian school in Scotland, having started as a branch of “Russian Edinburgh” in 2011. All four Russian schools operate only on Saturday base following mainstream schools’ calendar and involved together approximately three hundred families.

The Saturday Russian schools in Scotland do not have a formal equivalent to the Curriculum for Excellence⁵, nor is there any formal control over the educational process by governmental bodies (either Scottish or Russian). The Russian schools in Scotland are flexible and dynamic communities created through interactions between their members. In Saturday Russian schools, heritage language learning is part of the negotiated process between stakeholders [10]: this includes parents, who have particular expectations of how these schools should teach their children; Russian teachers, who have a wide range of qualifications, but not all of them have teacher diplomas; and children, who study for the majority of their time during the week in Scottish mainstream schools.

The groups of parents connected to each of the four Russian schools also each have their own specific features, which reflect the particular characteristics of the Russian-speaking communities living in each city, and influence the parents’ expectations of the educational programme in their Saturday Russian school. Significant differences were observed from city to city in the parents’ professional backgrounds, current forms of em-

² Russian Edinburgh. Available at: <http://www.russianedinburgh.org.uk/about-us> (accessed: 12.12.2019).

³ Russian Centre in Scotland Haven. Available at: <http://www.rcshaven.org.uk/?page=news&article=159&l=en> (accessed: 12.12.2019).

⁴ The Scottish Charity Regulator. Available at: <http://www.oscr.org.uk/charities/search-scottish-charity-register/charity-details?number=SC041702> (accessed: 12.12.2019).

⁵ The Curriculum for Excellence is the Scottish curricular framework for learning and teaching in state schools.

ployment, and experiences of migration. The Russian-speaking community in Edinburgh has a much higher proportion of people educated to high levels and with academic degrees — some of them hold visas for highly skilled specialists. Others are now British citizens after long periods working in jobs which are perceived by the Russian-speaking community as prestigious, such as jobs at universities, or in multinational companies. According to the parents and teachers in the Edinburgh school, the majority of the parents there have University-level education.

Glasgow Russian-speaking community unites people from many countries of the former USSR, such as the Baltic States, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. An additional distinctive characteristic of the Russian school in Glasgow is that a smaller share of parents there are working in professional occupations than in the Russian school in Edinburgh. During participant observation and interviews with parents, the problems of integration into local society and job hunting were discussed more frequently in Glasgow than in Edinburgh. In 2012–2019 this school has a higher proportion of children born in Scotland, who have attended the Saturday Russian school from an early age.

The main feature of the Aberdeen Russian-speaking community is a high number of specialists connected with oil companies. These families usually do not plan to settle in Scotland for the long term, due to the types of employment contract offered in this sector, and often move on to other countries to work. In 2013 this school contains a higher percentage of pupils who were educated in mainstream Russian schools before moving to Scotland than can be found in other Russian schools in Scotland

People from the Baltic States formed the majority of the Russian-speaking community in Dundee. From the interviews, it emerged that they usually worked in the different factories located around Dundee. At the time of my fieldwork, the Russian School in Dundee, Russian classes were most often attended by children who had been educated in the Russian language as part of the Baltic state school educational programmes, where Russian was the second language in mainstream schools.

The children who attend the Saturday Russian schools are diverse, as some studied the Russian language in mainstream schools in former Soviet republics before migration to Scotland, while others were born in Scotland and just use the Russian language at home to speak to their Russian-speaking relatives. The parents whose children attend the schools are also very diverse in terms of their nationality, country of origin, age, professional occupation, and so on. This diversity shapes the socio-cultural transnational practices in very different ways.

Methodology

I do know how I could describe our parents and teachers, we are so diverse and have such different demands to the Russian schools (teacher, Edinburgh)

To address the diversity of the Russian schools' communities and the complexity of the investigated processes mentioned above, I chose a mixed qualitative method approach. Follow to Francis [12], I explored the opinion of parents, teachers, and the children who are the main stakeholders of the Russian schools. Each of these groups was involved in, and contributed to, heritage language preservation and transnational activities to different degrees. I incorporated the following methods into the research design: different types of interviews with parents and teachers, to form the main body of analysis; participant

observation in the Russian schools' corridors and classrooms; analysis of a selection of pictures drawn by pupils attending the Russian schools; analysis of the Russian schools' teaching materials and programs.

The fieldwork was conducted from November 2013 to April 2015 and 2018–2019⁶. I had collected the following data: 13 face-to-face and two skype ethnographic interviews with parents; 12 face-to-face and 2 skype in-depth interviews with teachers providing services in Russian schools, and five in-depth interviews with directors and founders of the Russian schools. I carried out participant observation on different occasions including 12 in school corridors, 8 in classrooms, and 4 at community events organised by Russian schools. I also attended New Year celebrations in the Russian schools in Glasgow and Edinburgh, the international language day in Aberdeen, and a music festival organised by the Russian school in Dundee. The utilisation of a mixed methodological approach based on qualitative methods facilitates a deeper understanding of language preservation, social networking, and transnational activities as 'socially constructed through the interaction between discursive practices and individual agency' [11, p. 47].

Russian folk and fairy tales: why and how can they be taught?

Our children are, of course, different. They don't know any of the fantastic elementary characters which are known to the children who live in the former Soviet Union. I have considered this component. They cannot know elementary things, because they live in another environment. (Lada, teacher, Dundee)

The decision about implementation of fairy tales into teaching practices in Saturday Russian schools met with a wide range of difficulties due to the children's level of Russian knowledge. As part of a historical tradition, folklore is written in 'old fashioned' grammatical forms, and incorporates the names of old things which are no longer in use. The majority of Russian teaching programmes which are design to teach Russian as a foreigner language avoid the implementation of folklore elements in the study.

However, Russian fairy tales are included to different extent in the teaching process in all Saturday Russian schools⁷. It was observed in the Russian schools in Glasgow and in Aberdeen that those children who knew some Russian fairy tales were surprised that some of their classmates did not. They also received some notions from their parents that all Russian children know these stories. The knowledge of Russian fairy tales creates a certain degree of identification with Russian-speaking societies, along with a sense of belonging to the Russian-speaking community [14, p. 35]. During interviews with the teachers and parents, characters from Russian fairy tales were described using words like 'elementary', 'basic', 'popular', and 'well-known'. This can be interpreted as a demonstration that knowledge of these characters is defined as a marker of belonging to that culture.

⁶ This research was carried out to form part of my thesis at the University of Glasgow with generous financial support received from GRAMNET, Research Centre EON, and the Research Centre for Social Systems between 2012 and 2017.

⁷ Bearing in mind the study of folklore, it is a particular task to argue what kinds of fairy tales can be strongly recognised as distinctively Russian. However, in this study, it is more important that the Russian-speaking people who live in Scotland share these stories as a part of their Russian cultural traditions. Kolobok, Chicken Ryaba and Morozko were mentioned as Russian fairy tales which have been told children by their parents.

According to my findings, Russian fairy tales are widely read by Russian-speaking families. The belief in the importance of reading Russian fairy tales to children is quite strong among Russian-speaking parents in Scotland. This implementation of Russian folklore in the heritage language preservation process emerges as a natural way of introducing Russian culture to children. However, this introduction of Russian folklore occurs in the Russian schools operating in Scotland and cannot be 'content-independent' from the Scottish cultural environment [3, p. 72]. Using Russian folklore as part of teaching the Russian language within a Scottish educational context creates the necessary preconditions for establishing transnational socio-cultural practices.

The parents and teachers from the Russian schools shared the prevailing opinion that fairy tales are better acquired at an early age. Children who did not read fairy tales in their childhoods did not seem to understand them in later years. The parents' and teachers' beliefs about the cultural importance of Russian fairy tales for children's learning seem to be the key reason for including these materials in the content of the Russian lessons. This is due in part to the Russian heritage of the learning process itself.

The Russian fairy tales included in the Russian lessons tended to be adapted by the teachers at the schools according to modern grammatical rules and vocabulary. The most common adaptation was to exclude some of the old-fashioned Russian grammatical forms from the main body of the text and replace them with new versions of verbs and nouns, or to use explanations and pictures of the historical objects concerned. Vasilisa acknowledges this and adapts her use of fairy tales as a tool for language teaching accordingly:

In my lessons, I treat the implementation of folklore with care. I practically never use original folklore stories; only their recent modifications, because the children don't know 'old' fairy tales and there are some 'stiffened' grammatical forms in them which are not understood by them. They don't know that these forms aren't used in the language now. I tried to very carefully select the Russian fairy tales, and adapted the language according to the children's knowledge and modern Russian usage. (Vasilisa, teacher, Edinburgh)

In using the Russian fairy tales in the educational process, the Russian schools focused more on the transmission of specific values and Russian symbols than on the language competences of the children. As Antonina, the Russian teacher of the senior class at the Russian school in Glasgow, said:

Yes, I also agree that the Russian fairy tales can be difficult to understand for our children. We often watch Russian cartoons together to improve their understanding of a particular story. I asked several questions that helped to relate the content to a modern situation. However, there were basic questions of good and evil. (Antonina, teacher, Glasgow)

Developing her explanation about fairy tales generally, not only in the Russian context, Antonina noted that "nowadays, original ancient fairy tales look quite violent and sad". She mentioned the Russian story about *Kolobok*, which ends with *Kolobok* being eaten by the fox. Antonina also told me about some funny situations in her early days in the Russian schools. She gave children the Russian fairy tales about the marten for home reading, but this prompted some parents to complain about her choice of the story, in which a marten ate other animals. Antonina understood and explained the parents' desire:

I understand parents' concerns; they did not like the fact that the Russian fairy tales were looked at by their children as aggressive and brutal stories. We, adults, would like to

introduce to our children to the best selection of the Russian stories. In addition, in Scottish mainstream schools, teachers also avoid including the brutal stories in educational materials. We, the Russian schools, should not be very different from them. (Antonina, teacher, Glasgow)

It seems that the selection of folklore included in heritage language preservation has to be sensible of the cultural environment in host countries. The Scottish cultural environment increased teachers' awareness in introducing an ideal selection of Russian fairy tales representing the best parts of Russian culture to the children.

In keeping with the teaching practices used by parents at home, Russian fairy tales were included in the Russian learning programmes for the youngest classes, where children enjoyed listening to or reading stories and played together. During a classroom visit, I observed how Veronika, a teacher from Edinburgh, used Russian fairy tales and games during the lesson. The children had fun when they listened, read, and performed the Russian fairy tales together.

Selected and adapted Russian folklore for children mainly educated in a Scottish environment have taken on an important role as a marker of belonging to Russian culture, as it was perceived by the Russian-speaking parents and Russian teachers. Russian fairy tales are also seen as fun activities which can unite Russian-speaking children in the Russian-speaking community in Scotland. The children remember the Russian characters as symbols of being Russian, and treat them as markers of Russian culture introduced to them at home and at the Russian schools.

Russian classical literature in Saturday schools in Scotland

Pushkin is a worldwide brand. If you say that you read Pushkin, this is your business card (Lada, teacher, Dundee).

This fragment from my interview with Lada, a Russian teacher from Dundee describes a general attitude towards Russian classical literature among my respondents. The name of one of the popular Russian classical authors, Pushkin, came up in most interviews on this topic with both parents and teachers. Bearing in mind that Saturday Russian schools do not have a formal Curriculum of Excellence or equivalent, they have freedom to choose which Russian classic authors should be introduced to pupils, and what kind of books should be read if children do not have sufficient knowledge of Russian history. At the same time, teaching is limited to 32–36 Saturdays per year.

Russian classical literature can be considered as another example of how transnational cultural elements are negotiated through the preservation of Russian as a heritage language. During my observations in Russian classes and interviews with teachers and parents, I analysed how reference to Russian classical literature helps to create transnational socio-cultural practices in the Russian-speaking community in Scotland. These can be recognised as transnational practices because the choice of the corpus of literature is based on parents' and teachers' assumptions that this knowledge is important in supporting the identity of the migrant community, and that it also has a connection with their cultural heritage worldwide [15]. Following Willis' concept of transnational culture as a shared pattern of learned, transmitted symbols, values, and experiences which are context-dependent [3, p. 73–77], in this research, I unpicked the processes of negotiation,

reconstruction and representation of the corpus of Russian classical literature in the Russian schools in Scotland.

Predictably, as was found with the Russian fairy tales, children studying at the Russian schools in Scotland were introduced to, and knew, fewer books written by Russian classical authors than do pupils living in Russian-speaking countries. During interviews and observations in the classrooms, I found that Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov were the most popular Russian classical authors among the Russian school community in Scotland. Their names have worldwide popularity, and symbolic meaning as markers of Russian cultural identity [16, p.214].

The symbolic practices and cultural mythologies of reading Russian classical literature were formed in late Soviet and post-Soviet discourse [15]. According to Orlova [17], this reading continues to play the role of a marker defining self-identification, the sense of belonging to a social group, and cultural identity in the wider context of world culture. Russian classical literature remains significant for Russian-speaking people living in the UK [10, p.87].

However, much of the corpus of classical Russian literature, which is well known across the world, was written a long time ago, in the 19th century. This fact unavoidably creates a need for a more comprehensive historical knowledge among readers and an acquaintance with Russian history. As was noted by several teachers and parents, similarly to reading Russian fairy tales, Russian classical literature does not offer the most useful texts in terms of learning vocabulary. Nevertheless, it serves different purposes, such as giving the children a sense of Russian culture, and establishing some roots with the Russian-speaking community. As one of the parents from the Russian school in Glasgow observed:

The time for reading and understanding isn't enough, it is necessary not merely to read in Russian, but to read something Russian. (Alexandra, parent, Glasgow)

During literature lessons in the Russian schools, the children gain some knowledge of Russian history and geography mentioned in various books, which are necessary in understanding the books' contents:

Sometimes we have texts which concern the fine arts, some historical things, poets; not even the texts or poems written by them but, rather, the stories of where Pushkin studied at the Lyceum. They learn about St. Petersburg. (Veronika, teacher, Edinburgh)

The historical and cultural knowledge given to children in the Russian lessons represents a reconstruction of historical images of Russia, and provides them with some idea of the people living there. Classical Russian literature plays the role of a rich linguistic source and a tool for the representation of Russia in the worldwide context [16, p.214]. A similar approach to the representation of Russian literature for students was found in the explanations which the Russian teachers gave to children for why they should study Russian classical literature in Scotland, even if the pupils have a poor general knowledge of the socio-cultural contexts. Referring to the popularity of Russian literature across the world, the teachers encouraged the pupils to be involved in the reading community of lovers of classical Russian literature without borders. As Anastasiya commented, "The Russian classics are known throughout the world" (Anastasiya, teacher, Glasgow).

In comparison with teaching Russian as a foreign language which is more oriented on worldwide recognition, the Russian schools in Scotland made a symbolic choice of

key Russian authors in teaching the children. This choice mostly referred to parents' and teachers' assumptions about classical Russian literature. According to Lovell [15, p. 157], the reading of classical Russian literature can help to cover the 'lack of shared symbols that could successfully create a common identity'. The images of Russia drawn only from classical Russian literature are less helpful in maintaining socio-cultural connections with modern-day Russia. The Russian schools in Scotland also give children a knowledge of Russia which is developed during the special lessons described in the next subsection.

Reconstruction of images of Russia in the classroom:

Today pupils learned about rivers in Siberia, and what their names are. These aspects of the language learning are different, and parents appreciate that. (Valentina, teacher, Edinburgh)

The use of information about the modern Russian world for the preservation of Russian cultural heritage is more controversial than the use of Russian fairy tales and classical Russian literature, which are easily recognisable and established worldwide as cultural tools [18]. As I mentioned before, the Russian schools in Scotland do not have a common regulatory body; neither do they have any national curricular framework for teaching children. The materials about Russia which are included in their respective teaching plans therefore depend completely on the choices of a particular Russian school community.

The image of modern Russia in Scotland is quite complicated, and was changeable during the time of the study. According to the latest research, it was mostly negative after the Ukrainian crises [19]. However, the Saturday Russian schools found ways to deal with that. The Russian schools in Scotland avoid referring to Russia as a state, and instead employ cultural symbols which have a wider global context and a transnational nature.

Most of the Russian schools in Scotland provide children with contextual information about Russian geography, flora and fauna. During the interview, Valentina describe how during lessons in the Russian schools, the children receive knowledge which introduces Russia to them as a large country with many resources and interesting places. This knowledge about Russia are useful for children's study in Scottish mainstream schools.

Information about geographical phenomena in Russia can be provided to children in Russian lessons which focus mainly on language learning, or in separate lessons where world geographical phenomena are discussed in the Russian language, with additional examples from Russia:

I think these lessons with examples from other subjects are more interesting for children because then they have opportunities to learn about, and discuss, various topics. For example, in one of my classes we spoke about volcanoes. I mentioned Kamchatka as a good example of a part of the world where volcanoes are very active. It is interesting for the students as it is not just 'drilling' grammar structure [into them] but improving their knowledge in general, and in the context of Russia. This kind of knowledge is applicable always and anywhere. (Zoya, teacher, Aberdeen)

In implementing this approach, based on merging the knowledge received by the children from different sources, the teachers try to increase the children's interest in learning Russian and also to help them to build cultural awareness. These lessons also create the value of learning through using the Russian language in an immersive context, thus gaining the cognitive benefits that the context confers [20].

Other topics about Russia which were often identified during my classroom observations, were related to the historical and contemporary periods of achievement in the fields of space exploration, scientific research, and sport. Describing her lessons, Vasilisa said:

I always try to bring in some of the well-known achievements in Russia. And there are a lot of such achievements: in science, in space, and in the sport. (Vasilisa, teacher, Edinburgh)

As was noted by several teachers from different Russian schools, this information is perceived by children as easier to understand than, for example, some of the historical content of classical Russian literature. Some of this material is familiar to children from their mainstream Scottish schools, and from the Internet. This image of Russia as a country renowned for its historical achievements is reproduced by Russian schools, and is similar to representations of the Russian Federation and the Soviet Union found abroad [21; 22].

A socio-cultural component which was initially used for educational purposes also helps to create an image of Russia which can be beneficial in uniting the Russian-speaking community in Scotland. According to Anastasiya, a teacher at the Glasgow school, “positive information about Russian achievements helps children to feel proud of their family roots and wear their Russian identity with pride” (Anastasiya, teacher, Glasgow). However, it is not an easy task in contemporary Scottish society due to the high level of stigmatisation of Russian and Russian-speaking migrants living in Scotland [19].

Using information about modern Russia as a linguistic resource, the Russian schools create an image of the country as a large multicultural territory with many natural resources, fabulous flora and fauna, and interesting places. Children from the Russian schools can use these symbols to construct their own image of Russia. However, during lessons, the Russian schools attempt not only to provide information about the country, but also to create emotional responses of belonging to a Russian-speaking community in some ways, which helps to engage children to learn Russian and to support a connection to their roots. The social space which emerges as a result of the Russian schools’ practices reaches beyond Scottish and Russian boundaries and consists of an ongoing exchange of educational ideas and cultural symbols employed during the study of the Russian language. Teaching children in the Russian schools was also accomplished via additional activities, such as cultural events uniting children and parents. These are explored below.

Children’s participation in cultural events:

We would like our children to know some Russian traditions. Yes, most of them do not know what Russian winter means, but I hope we are able to explain it to them, and get closer to each other. (Extract from the field notes from an observation of the celebration of the Russian New Year organised by the Russian school in Glasgow)

As one of the parents said, Russian-speaking children in Scotland need to be introduced to Russian traditions and the idea of being Russian, but this knowledge should be adapted in a flexible way to the Scottish reality. One of the ways which was chosen by the Russian schools in Scotland was organising Russian cultural events in Scotland but adapting them to the children’s wishes and pitched at their level of understanding of the Russian culture.

The observation of cultural events in the Russian schools allowed me to gain insight into cultural symbols and representations used to create a shared space which could be attractive to families living in Scotland and interested in participating in Russian cultural

events. As part of an in-depth ethnographic approach, I sought to recognise the cultural nuances present. However, I also understood how difficult it is in the modern world to identify cultural elements as belonging to a particular country [23]. Therefore, I found Risager's [24] perspective useful, as he suggested paying less attention to the historical origins of cultural phenomena, and more to their employment in a particular migrant community, in this case in the representation of mutual cultural understanding with reference to the larger community associated with the Russian cultural/linguistic space. While the previous subsections have shown how transnational socio-cultural practices emerge through the teaching process in Russian lessons, this subsection discusses specific activities such as the Russian schools' cultural events, which also facilitate the process of reconstructing a Russian cultural space and negotiating what it means to the Russian-speaking people living in Scotland.

My findings show that all the Russian schools in Scotland in the study sample pay relatively high levels of attention to cultural elements of Russian learning, which are produced in different forms of expressive arts such as drama, music lessons, or children's performances. The use of these socio-cultural practices aims to motivate children to study the Russian language and to boost the number of Russian-speaking people who would like to be involved in Russian cultural activities.

The Russian schools do not only teach the Russian language; they also create cultural spaces where children can use this language in special contexts and feel part of a group of people united by common interests and unspoken social norms. The children's involvement in Russian cultural events depends on their ages and their proficiency in the Russian language. Those in the youngest groups, who may have difficulty in speaking Russian well in public, participated in performances with their teachers and put on short pantomimes or dances. References to transnational culture can be made by using visual elements and music introduced to the children as part of Russian cultural traditions:

We would like all children to participate in our celebration together. I think it is important for them to feel that together, we make a small contribution to the common celebration. (Extract from observation field notes from the Russian school in Glasgow)

The classes with an average age of seven performed some short fairy tales, such as *The Turnip*, which they had read in their Russian lessons. To perform this fairy tale, the children said brief lines in Russian and acted out the main characters. In order to be involved in the event which was introduced as a Russian fairy tale, children and teachers created their own visions of how to make the main characters of this story (such as Grandfather, Grandmother, Granddaughter, a Small Dog, a Cat and a Mouse, who together pull the turnip) look more Russian. To represent the Grandfather, they chose a cap with ear-flaps, and for the Grandmother a headscarf with flowers because *Dedushka* (Grandfather) and *Babushka* (Grandmother) are associated with these Russian clothes⁸.

The oldest group of children who are involved in drama classes were able to perform long passages of dialogue and produce a more 'professional' performance in Russian. In the spring celebration, the oldest group from the Russian school in Glasgow performed

⁸ In fact, it is extremely difficult to argue what kinds of decoration or costumes can be strongly recognised as distinctively Russian. From my point of view, it is more important that the Russian-speaking people who live in Scotland use these symbols to highlight their belonging to the Russian cultural traditions.

fragments from “Bad Advice” by Grigory Oster⁹. This popular modern Russian book is based on the idea that some children prefer to behave in the directly opposite way to their parents’ advice. Russian native readers can follow the amusing situations and understand the jokes. The children who study Russian abroad need a certain level of Russian knowledge, as otherwise they may have some difficulties in following the author’s ideas. However, the gap in language proficiency can be covered by a visual support such as vivid actions and bright decorations.

The children not only learned their lines in the performance but also decided how some satirical characters, such as the Russian Cleaner, should look. The children decided that the Russian Cleaner should wear big Wellington boots, an apron, and hold a large mop. When I asked one of the participants in this performance why they had decided that, the girl who played this role answered that “it’s funny, and other people watching this scene would understand that it is not Scottish” (Extract from observation field notes from the Russian school in Glasgow). This girl was born in Glasgow and usually visits Russia for her annual summer holidays to stay with her grandmother and uncle in a small Russian village. She did not have detailed knowledge about everyday life in Russia. However, in her opinion, the Russian context can be displayed differently from the Scottish one, so she and her friends decided to highlight these differences by choosing funny clothes and a mop instead of a modern vacuum cleaner, for example. The analysis of this representation of the Russian context in the performance demonstrates that children do not just carefully reproduce the scene, but they also create their own vision of how to make these ideas clearer to the other children and parents who are watching the show.

The Russian schools located in the different Scottish cities have various different celebrations throughout the year. All the schools celebrate the Russian New Year as the leading party to finish the year, and it is perceived as the main non-religious event. The content of the Russian New Year performance has a hybrid nature, as it merges elements of Russian and Scottish cultures. All the Russian New Year celebrations organised by different Russian schools were narrated in Russian. However, some schools provided a list of the items of the programme and brief descriptions of what was happening on stage in English, because some of the parents and relatives invited to these events did not know Russian. The use of both languages helped the Russian schools in Scotland to unite the Russian-speaking community with non-Russian speaking parents and their relatives, who also wished to be involved in cross-cultural events.

For the Russian New Year parties, the halls were decorated with snowflakes and sparkling tinsel which, in the participants’ opinions, symbolised a Russian winter but also referred to some Scottish traditions. The necessary elements of all the celebrations were a Christmas tree, *Ded Moroz*, *Snegurochka*, and New Year presents. The Christmas tree is usually put up in the centre of the hall to allow room for dancing around it. The performance usually contains several elements, such as a concert prepared by the pupils and teachers, a brief New Year show based on a fairy tale plot, cheerful competitions between participants, traditional tea with Russian dishes, and New Year presents for all the children. Despite the language differences, all the participants were able to understand all of these elements.

⁹ Bad advice — selected poems translated from the Russian by Svetlana Payne. Available at: <http://www.elkost.com/authors/oster/translations/1522-bad-advice-selected-poems-translated-from-the-russian-by-svetlana-payne> (accessed: 15.01.2018).

In my observation of these events, it became clear that all the parts of the celebration, such as the songs and symbols involved, were not simply a random representation of Russian culture. Instead, these highly stylized forms of visual culture had the function of transmitting a coherent message to children that Russian culture is unified around specific symbols, folklore, songs and dances.

For example, according to the lifelong tradition, New Year presents for children usually contain different sweets. Initially, the Russian schools tried to order special sets of Russian sweets, such as Russian chocolate. However, as the number of children who have arrived from abroad to the Russian schools in Scotland has declined, the schools changed the content of the gifts from original Russian sweets to Scottish sweets, which the children are more used to. The host country and the traditions of the heritage country thus came together to create a new cultural space.

The cultural events organised by the Russian schools help to unite families who willingly participate in these activities:

The Russian school organises many events; when there is a party, we always go all together as a family. (Diana, parent, Aberdeen)

The parents from the Russian schools sometimes play the role of actors or observers during the cultural events organised by the Russian schools. However, the parents who were not performing themselves helped their children at home to study their part of speech or prepare their costumes. According to Antonina, one of the teachers at the Glasgow school, “these parties were organised not for outside viewers, but for the people who were actively involved in helping the pupils to learn their roles for the scenes” (Antonina, teacher, Glasgow). In referring to Russian cultural symbols as forming part of cultural events organised by the Russian schools, families have begun to create a new type of socio-cultural practice, helping their children to learn the Russian language, and to use symbols associated with the Russian cultural space.

On the one hand, the cultural events organised by the Russian schools were deeply embedded in the educational process; on the other hand, they served the dual purpose of uniting the Russian-speaking community living in Scotland and of transmitting social values of belonging to this social group to the children. These important features show that the Russian schools in Scotland are involved in the process of reproducing a transnational cultural space and transnational socio-cultural practices [4; 9; 10]. Through actively participating in cultural events, children receive knowledge about how they can use the symbols of the Russian cultural space, behave as Russians, and share the same spoken and unspoken social norms.

Conclusion

The Saturday Russian schools create a wide range of socio-cultural transnational practices through teaching and outside activities. These practices not only encourage children to study Russian, but also establish community-wide cultural bonds [7; 25]. These bonds inspire pupils' feelings of belonging to worldwide Russian cultural heritage, and help Russian-speaking families in Scotland to feel that they share certain socio-cultural values.

Despite inevitable tensions between the aim of advancing language abilities and socio-cultural elements, both Russian folklore (for younger children) and classical Rus-

sian literature (for older children) were still implemented. This way of teaching seems to ensure their membership of a worldwide socio-cultural community of Russian-speakers, and transmits specific kinds of knowledge of that community relating to its status, historical roots, and values.

Furthermore, the introduction of Russian cultural aspects into the operations of the Saturday Russian schools has been influenced by the Scottish cultural environment [3]. The selection of fairy tales and Russian literature classics which are taught in the Saturday Russian schools is made in consideration of the popularity of these texts in Scotland, and opportunity to use knowledge regarding them in Scottish mainstream schools. Russian fairy tales also can be transformed into games which can involve children with different language knowledge. In addition, some of the Russian fairy tales can be introduced to children with some redactions to produce happy endings which did not feature in the original stories.

The specific information which is selected and introduced to children in Russian schools about modern Russia creates an image of the country which is both subjective and flexible. The Saturday Russian schools, working under pressures of public opinion, avoid information about Russia as a state and provide more neutral information which builds an image of Russia as a large country containing multiple nationalities. This information is complemented with the geographical knowledge about Russia which is provided by Scottish mainstream schools. However, by using neutral topics for discussion about modern Russia, the Saturday Russian schools try to create an emotional connection and feeling of belonging to Russia through the use of some worldwide achievements of Russia and the USSR. This image of Russia in the Scottish context has both elements of Russian achievements and some recognition and approval from local public opinion.

As a result, the socio-culture practices which are formed with the support of the Russian schools in Scotland have a transnational nature due to their references to elements of both Russian and Scottish cultures [3; 7]. The Russian schools producing transnational materials, symbols and meanings helped to bring socio-cultural transnational practices into the everyday lives of migrant families in Scotland.

The importance which the Russian-speaking community attaches to a sense of belonging to Russian culture inspired the Russian schools to organise a range of cultural events. These transnational elements emerged due to the influence of various factors, such as involving Scottish relatives and friends of Russian-speakers, adapting the performance for the language abilities of children and transnational experiences, and the varying the tastes and identities of the children themselves. The pupils from the Russian schools were capable of producing their own original vision of how it was possible to connect their Scottish life experience to the Russian knowledge they had received both at the Russian schools and from their family.

To conclude, I suggest that my theoretical approach can be applicable and could be employed in further empirical research in other complementary schools which are operating by migrants for the preservation of their heritage languages. It seems that Saturday migrant schools have begun to play a significant role in support to socio-cultural transnational practices and so in the creation of transactional space. The careful and nuanced investigation of their operation can provide the qualitative insight about future face of transnational socio-cultural space which will be more independent from state

borders and will have a mechanism for their reproduction with complementary schools in the core.

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Социокультурные транснациональные практики в субботних русских школах в Шотландии

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Анализируются социально-культурные транснациональные элементы в повседневной жизни субботних школ и их роль в развитии сообщества мигрантов. Дополняя имеющуюся литературу в этой области, автор рассматривает социокультурные транснациональные практики, которые объединяют русскоязычное сообщество в самой Шотландии и создают мост между этим сообществом и русскоязычным миром. Как социокультурная транснациональная деятельность может быть связана с изучением языка наследия? Почему субботние школы продвигают социокультурные транснациональные практики внутри и вне процесса обучения? Почему семьи мигрантов хотели бы поддержать социально-культурные транснациональные мероприятия, организованные школами? Автор предлагает ответы, основанные на исследовании четырех русских школ в Шотландии. Сохранение языка наследия — процесс достижения договоренностей, гибко настроенный и отвечающий интересам родителей, учителей и учеников, которые участвуют в деятельности русских школ и вносят свой вклад в формирование их целей. Эти интересы можно рассматривать как основные движущие силы для широкого спектра аспектов повседневной жизни русских школ за рубежом, таких как образовательные программы, стили преподавания, социальные отношения между членами школьного сообщества и дополнительные культурные мероприятия, организуемые такими школами. Русскоязычные сообщества в Шотландии объединяют людей с различными характеристиками (включая разные пути миграции, профессиональные навыки и уровни образования, национальную идентичность, страны прибытия). Исследование показало важность разнообразного состава русскоязычных сообществ для повседневной деятельности русских школ.

Ключевые слова: социокультурные транснациональные практики, субботние школы мигрантов, язык наследия.

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