

Global Russians: Transnational Russophone Networks in the UK

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Phase 2 Report (1 January 2018 – 31 December 2019)

The project aims to capture the transnational Russian-speaking identity and community construction, discursively produced and organised around Russophone cultural entrepreneurship. It is based on discursive data gathered during an extensive ethnographic fieldwork in which the PI and the RA (Dr Yulia Lukyanova) interviewed the leaders of Russophone cultural activities and enterprises across the UK.

Phase 2 Objectives:

(1): To expand the fieldwork collection of discursive data and complete the compilation of the database which will form:

- (a) the material for the project's publications, and
- (b) a publicly available online repository of Russian-speaking community organisations and enterprises.

(2) To progress with the planned academic outputs.

(3) To progress with the academic dissemination of the project's findings in the form of conference papers and other forms of communication targeting academic audiences.

(4) To facilitate knowledge exchange (KE) and outreach by organising major events under the overarching topic 'Transforming Russophone communities in the UK', at the University of Edinburgh.

(5) To establish contacts and networks to build a pathway to impact around the KE events and ideas discussed in the publications.

1. Fieldwork

(a) Overall, we have established links and engaged with 64 Russophone organisations and associate networks in the UK. 118 narratives have been collected through the audio-recorded semi-structured interviews, from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours in length each. In addition, participant observation was conducted and audio recorded for several important Russophone community events – for example, the Russian Book clubs meetings in London's Waterstones Piccadilly and Cambridge, the Victory Day celebrations in London and Edinburgh, and the conference of the Russian heritage in the UK group held by Rossotrudnichestvo, London. Audio recordings of the academic and KE workshops with the leaders of UK Russophone cultural organisations held in March and August 2019 were also made. Work on transcription of the majority of the fieldwork material has been completed.

b) The online repository of the Russiophone and Russia-related cultural organisations in the UK has been completed and mounted on the site <https://www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/dashkova/research-resources/related-cultural-organisations>.

2. Outputs

Five chapters (contributions to five different collected volumes), have been written; four of these have been published in 2019, while the fifth is contracted, has passed through the first round of editing and is currently being revised.

- Ryazanova-Clarke, Lara (2019), 'The globe-trotting Russian in Scotland: Discourses of Russian tourism in Scotland', in Kevin Platt (ed.), *Global Russian Cultures*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 250-272.
- Ryazanova-Clarke, Lara (2019), 'Londongrad as a linguistic imaginary: Russophone migrants in the UK in the work of Michael Idov and Andrei Ostalsky', in Mikhail Suslov and Per-Arne Bodin (eds), *The Post-Soviet Politics of Utopia: Language, Fiction and Fantasy in Modern Russia*, London: Tauris, 235-257.
- Ryazanova-Clarke, Lara (2019), 'Russian linguistic culture in the era of globalization: A turn to linguistic violence', in Sarah Hudspith and Vlad Strukov (eds), *Russian Culture in the Era of Globalisation*, London and NY: Routledge, 264-290.
- Ryazanova-Clarke, Lara (2019), 'Narrating the transnational Russophone Self and community in the UK', in A. Byford, C. Doak and S. Hutchins (eds), *Transnational Russian Studies*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 318-338.

Ryazanova-Clarke, Lara and Ivana Bozděchová, 'The integration of English and other loanwords since 1989', contracted for the *Oxford Guide to Slavonic Languages* (in progress).

A monograph is underway, provisionally titled 'Global Russians: Transnational Russophone Networks in the UK'. About half of the monograph (3 chapters) has been drafted. In Phase 3, the completion of three more chapters is planned. Palgrave Macmillan or Routledge are target publishers. It is envisaged that the manuscript will be completed and submitted to the publisher by the end of 2020.

3. Dissemination

During Phase 2 of the project, the following papers were delivered as presentations at major international conferences or as invited lectures:

- 'Gatekeeping Russianness: Narratives of Russophone cultural activists in London', BASEES Conference, Cambridge, 13-15 April 2018.
- 'Linguistic imaginaries of "Londongrad"', guest lecture at the School of Literatures and Cultures, University of Sheffield, 30 May 2018.
- 'Discourses of Russophone cultural activists in London', 2nd International Conference on Sociolinguistics, Budapest, 6-8 September 2018.
- 'Linguistic imaginaries of "Londongrad": Speaking Russian on the London streets in fiction and film', ASEES Convention, Boston, December 2018.

- ‘Commodifying Russian language and culture while touring London: The narratives of a superguide’, Russia and Europe: Linguistic and Cultural Encounters conference, Edinburgh, 30 May 2019.
- ‘Gatekeeping Russianness: Cultural entrepreneurship and identity negotiation in the UK’s Russophone communities’, AHRC and RFBR international workshop, London, 21-22 October 2019.

In addition, the following academic events were organised as part of the project:

- Panel at the BASEES annual conference ‘Russians in the city: Transnational linguistic encounters’, Cambridge, 15 April 2018.
- International symposium ‘Multilingualism and language attitudes in the post-Soviet area’, Princess Dashkova Russian Centre, The University of Edinburgh, 15 June 2018.
- International seminar ‘Urban Multilingualism in Moscow in Dushanbe’, The University of Edinburgh, 28 February 2019.

4. Knowledge Exchange (KE), Knowledge Transfer (KT), Outreach

This work has been extensive and has yielded many positive results. Below is a diary of events:

20 February 2018: The PI was invited to speak at **a dinner and conversation with a visiting group of cultural leaders** from the Russian Federation and Russophone cultural leaders from around the UK (King’s Russia Institute, King’s College London).

15 May 2018: The PI was invited to participate at **the dinner and conversation with Misha Glenny**, the author of *McMafia* and an executive producer of the eponymous BBC series screened in 2018 (Charlotte Street Partners, Edinburgh).

18 January 2018: The PI co-organised in collaboration with the Russian Consulate **a film screening and moderated a panel discussion on ‘Attraction’** (dir. Fedor Bondarchuk) at IMAX Cineworld Edinburgh. The film is an allegory for the attitudes towards migration and dealing with the Other, which became the focus of the discussion led by the PI. Four discussants participated: Professor Dina Iordanova, (Professor of Film Studies and Director of the Centre for Film Studies, St Andrews University), Dr Alexandra Smith (Russian, the University of Edinburgh), and Anne Liebig (PhD student at the University of Edinburgh).

25 March 2018: The PI co-organised and served as a judge at **the Scottish Russian Children’s Poetry Reading Competition**, Dundee. This was the second event of this kind, the first Scottish Russian Children’s Poetry Reading Competition having taken place in March 2017 at the University of Edinburgh (an event also co-organised by the PI, where she again acted as one of the judges).

October-November 2018: The project partnered up with the UK’s **Kniguru Russophone Children’s Book Festival**, an extension of the Festival to Scotland. The events of this festival sought to involve Russian-speaking schools, families and communities in reading children’s books in Russian. The PI organised the children’s Russian book club in order to promote Russophone reading to children in Scotland. The readers’ competition part of the Festival was enhanced by devising a readers’ questionnaire and producing teaching materials for children’s book clubs and

Russian schools across the UK. The questionnaire provided guidance for children in relation to forming and expressing their views and opinions about the books read, and to developing children's reflective, analytical and emotional engagement with contemporary literature in the Russian language. 58 Russophone children overall took part in the Kniguru readers' competition in 2018. 36% of the participants of the Festival competition (19 children) opted to use the questionnaire devised by the PI over other methods of participation.

28-29 March 2019: One of highlights of the project's academic and KE/KT events was a two-day international academic and KE/KT workshop entitled '**Transnational and Diasporic Media in the UK and Beyond**', hosted at the University Edinburgh.

The objective of the workshop was to bring together academics and media professionals working for leading transnational and diasporic Russian-speaking media outlets in the UK and beyond. The workshop elaborated on the key theme of the project – the cultural production and consumption of the Russophone diasporic community in the UK and new discourse in Russian, while also looking at the UK in the comparative perspective. The workshop addressed but was not limited to the following questions:

- What media are available and required for the transnational Russophone community in the UK and elsewhere?
- What are the similarities and differences between the diasporic, the transnational, and the mainland media?
- How do political pressures, partnerships and social media influence the way transnational Russian-speaking media operate?
- What are the thematic, linguistic and stylistic specifics of the diasporic and transnational media writing, speaking and presenting in Russian?
- To what extent and how do the Russophone diasporic media facilitate (or not) the construction of the Russian-speaking community and identity? To what extent and how do they help create or maintain the coherence of British society (or fail to do so)?

The workshop was opened by the keynote lecture 'The Russian-Speaking International Media Today: Challenges and Dilemmas' by the News Editor at the BBC Russian Service Famil Ismailov, which attracted 70 attendees. Ismailov talked about the complexity of operating in the Russophone international space and emphasized the challenges that the BBC Russian Service faces, such as political pressures, legal pitfalls, financial constraints and the ever-evolving new technology.

This session was followed by two panels of academic papers. In the first panel, Professor Anna Kachkaeva (Higher School of Economics, Moscow) presented a broad typology of the post-Soviet Russophone media space and their functioning in the context of the 'hybrid wars' and 'emotional regimes'. This paper was complemented by Floriana Fossato, who, as both scholar and journalist, discussed the interplay between the transnational media environment and its independence. Hannah Connell (King's College London) offered a historical perspective on the Russian émigré publishing as she examined the history of interwar Russian-language periodical publishing in London through the British Library's Slavonic collections, comparing it with the situation with Russian-speaking periodical publishing in France. Hanna concluded that the British Russophone

publications were decidedly different from the French ones in that they actively collaborated with the UK print media and shifted attention from the homeland themes to influencing the opinion and reflecting émigré life abroad.

In the second academic panel, Professor Stephen Hutchings (Manchester University) examined, on an example of the narratives on Salisbury poisoning, what happens to news stories when the classic state media mutate into a transnational process and the emerging digital actors lack unambiguous origins. From there, discussion turned to the Russophone media in the Baltic states. Vlad Strukov (Leeds University) engaged with the concept of transnational media using a case study of the Russian-speaking Latvia based resource Meduza, while Professor Triin Vihalemm (Tartu University, Estonia) presented an in-depth examination of Russian-speakers' audience media choices in Estonia and Latvia.

Two roundtables featuring stakeholders – the practitioners of the Russophone media outlets in the UK and Latvia – were the next segment of the workshop. Speakers of the first roundtable, moderated by Professor Lara Ryazanova-Clarke (University of Edinburgh), featured representatives of prominent transnational Russophone media and included Famil Ismailov (BBC Russian Service), Aleksander Polivanov (former Meduza deputy-in-chief), Andrei Ostalski (Radio Svoboda and former editor of the BBC Russian Service). The second roundtable, moderated by Professor Andy Byford (Durham University), dealt with the issues of the UK diasporic media outlets and included Elena Lesley and Ksenia Dyakova Tinoco (Angliya), Ilya Gonciarov (Zima) and Carina Cockrell-Fehre (The Business Courier). The academics and stakeholders engaged in a productive discussion of the key questions of the workshop.

23-24 August 2019: Yet another focal point of the project was a two-day international academic and KE/outreach workshop entitled '**Showcasing Russian-speaking culture in the UK: Changing communities**' which involved high calibre influential stakeholders. The aim of this workshop was to bring together the project's partners and stakeholders – successful leaders of Russian-speaking cultural entrepreneurship in the UK in order to share experiences and ideas for the current state and future of the Russophone culture in this country and to discuss the impact of such activities on Russian-speaking connectivities and community building. The event was held during and in partnership with the Edinburgh International Festival. This gave us an opportunity to develop a productive engagement and to build an exceptional potential for future collaboration between the Festival and the Russian cultural entrepreneurship.

The event began with a Festival experience offered to eight Russophone cultural leaders as they were invited to attend the experimental audio-video immersion 'Night Walk for Edinburgh' show by Janet Cardiff and George Miller. After the show, the cultural leaders were asked to reflect on the show and use it as a trigger for discussion. In their 'Night Walk for Edinburgh', Cardiff and Miller propose an understanding of culture as a means to transform and redefine places and communities. They highlight an elusive instability of place to which art and narrative ascribe new layers of meanings. The cultural leaders were invited to apply this interpretation of the relation between culture and space to the situation of Russian migrant culture that settles in the host community and transforms it, changing the lens and an angle of vision and creating new meanings, values and connectivities.

The participants represented such organisations as ARCC (Anglo-Russian Culture Club), Arbuzz, Zima Group, Stage RC, Bird and Carrot, and the BBC Russian Service. They gave individual presentations and took part in roundtable discussions addressing a set of questions relating to, for example, their cultural activity and its effect on the Russophone and British communities, their interpretation of Russophone and Russian culture, Russian cultural politics in the transnational context and others. The event featured two outstanding keynote lectures – Roy Luxford, the Programme Director of Edinburgh International Festival spoke on ‘Edinburgh International Festival and transnational communities’, while Dr Patricia Erskine, Head of Stakeholder Relations, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, of the University of Edinburgh gave an overview of Edinburgh University’s partnership with Edinburgh Festivals. The event was open to the public and was reported on in the Russian-speaking magazine Zima, 27 August 2019.

The event certainly had an impact. One of the cultural entrepreneurs who took part in the event acknowledged that the event established in him a ‘Bigger awareness of the issues the community faces and the ways they can be resolved.’ As a result of the event, he ‘will be even more closely involved in the variety and diversity of Russian-related activities in London: both through [his] personal participation in projects of Pushkin House, ZIMA, Bird & Carrot and others, as well as covering their activities on the BBC Russian Service website.’

25 September 2019: The PI gave the **inaugural lecture ‘Liquid Russian: A story of amazing transformations of the Russian language, its speakers and their communities outside Russia in the post-Soviet period’**. This was an opportunity to promote and disseminate the project’s findings to a mixed academic and non-academic audience of around 200 people.

16 October 2019: The PI gave a **lecture ‘The Russian Diaspora’ at the ‘Russia, Royalty and the Romanovs’ Exhibition, The Queen’s Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh.**

5. Impact

Work is currently ongoing on gathering evidence for three possible impacts of this research:

(1) impact on Russophone communities as part of the Kniguru Russophone Children’s Book Festival: adding value to Russophone community networks through bilingual and bicultural Russophone children’s engagement with contemporary Russian children’s literature and the process of reading in Russian.

(2) impact of the PI’s lecture ‘The Russian Diaspora’ on the success of the ‘Russia, Royalty and the Romanovs’ exhibition at the Queen’s Gallery, The Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh (16 October 2019): generating increased interest in the subject, higher levels of attendance to the exhibition, and positive feedback from visitors.

(3) impact of the event ‘Showcasing Russian-speaking culture in the UK: Changing communities’: testimonials received so far from the Russian cultural entrepreneurs who participated in the event suggest that it has increased enthusiasm for and especially the self-reflection of those engaged in Russian language cultural entrepreneurship in the UK, leading to changes in the work practices.