

Conference Paper

Multilingual and Multicultural Educational Space: Creative Writing of Russian-speaking Children in the UK

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Abstract

This article presents the qualitative study of bilingual children from Russian-speaking families living in the UK. Our findings offer novel insights and contribute to existing theoretical, methodological, and empirical research on multilingual and multicultural educational space through a new lens of study process of bilingual children imagination. It brings a new focus to existing work in this area through its consideration of creating writing as a reflection of complex educational space in post-literacy era. We collected the creative stories which were written by children who participated in concurs "Once it dreams for me". The narrative and content analysis show popular topics based on specific cultural tradition and habitus of migrant families. We argued that these children stories have both cultural elements British and Russian, which were formed in the British mainstream and the Russian Saturday schools. One of the main points of children's stories is the "Internet in their everyday life". It shows how children learn and go through the process of acquisition of cultural knowledge in post-literacy era using new technologies. Also, the findings contribute to the discussion of the epistemology of children behaviour and motivation at a time when visual and creative reflection have begun more important that direct answer to explicit researchers questions. Expanding on the existing literature in this area, the article investigates creative story writing as a two-way process influencing both the transnational cultural and the transnational education space.

Keywords: bilingual children, multicultural educational space, Russian-speaking families

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1. Introduction

Academic studies of Russian-speaking migration to the UK have been fewer in number than investigations of the experiences of other Central and East-European migrants [1]. The share of Russian-speaking people in the UK's general migration flow is relatively smaller than many other diasporic groups. In 2013, a UK ONS team responded to a

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request from Pechurina "that the estimated number of the Soviet-born migrants was small and unreliable; they had too low a number of contacts to include them in the output" [2, 30]. She suggested the use of different criteria for measurement, such as 1) the number of people who consider Russian as their main language (67,366 in England and Wales in 2011); 2) the number of Russian-born migrants (40,000 in 2011); 3) the number of Russian nationals (27,000 in 2011); 4) the number of people who state that the USSR was the country of their birth (1873); 5) those who considered themselves USSR nationals (1150). According to Scotland's Census of 2011, the Russian language was used at home by 6,001 people; 2,180 recorded Russia and 90 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as their country of birth.

Russian Languages are used and combined in a variety of ways among the families linked to this study: in some families both parents are native Russian speakers, while in others, one parent may be a native Russian speaker, while the other has learned Russian as a second language as a resident of one of the former Soviet Republics. In the third group of families, one partner is a native English speaker, with either very limited or no knowledge of Russian. Families where both parents know Russian well generally prefer to speak Russian at home more often than families where one parent has a limited knowledge of Russian because it is easier for all family members who knew the language before migrating to the UK.

The concept of language switching [3] explains how members of families in which multiple languages are spoken communicate with each other, creating new types of everyday linguistic practices as they do so. In the UK, communication in Russian between family members can help children to receive some sense of accepting Russian as their native language. As the next section explores, the involvement of children in this communication is vital due to the role of heritage language preservation in establishing and maintaining family relationships [4, 22-43].

Thereafter, in many migrant families, pupils have been sent to the Russian Saturday schools to study Russian languages. The Russian Saturday schools provide both preservations of the Russian language and support of Russian traditions, which helps to unite the different generations of Russian-speakers living abroad.

The majority of studies about bilingual children focused on the balance between preserving the native language and mastering the socialization language of the host country [3]. Our research following this idea offers some new multimodal lens for understanding the process of creative writing among bilingual children.

2. Methodology

Our findings are based on interdisciplinary analysis of creative stories written by participants of a contest titled "Once I dreamed ..." run by English-Russian Cherry Orchard School 113 bilingual children participated in the contest across the UK. Employing the narrative analysis, we investigated these writings and created a unique research methodology. This methodology gives the opportunities to describe the features of the formation of children's imagination of a modern schoolchild in a multicultural educational space in the era of post-literacy.

The bilingual children can be in focus of investigation from different science such as linguistics, socio-psychology, sociology, socio-anthropology and migration studies. Linguistics investigations focus preliminary on features in the development of cognitive abilities and complex effects of language interference. It was confirmed that bilingual children have a slightly different reaction to tolerate other cultural differences; they have a more flexible identity [5]. The use of the Russian language at home is a trigger for children in early heritage language development [6]. However, the future use of this knowledge also depends on the image and reputation of the heritage language in society. The more value a heritage language has in the host country, the better the chance that it will be transmitted to the next generation of migrants [7]. Heritage language use outside the family circle depends on the language and varies between countries [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]. Socio-anthropological approach to bilingual children development pays attention to different aspects of their socialisation, such as preservation of ethnic roots and cultural transmissions [13].

Our findings show that modern parents around the globe pay more and more attention towards the aspect of the development of cognitive abilities in a favourable situation of bilingualism in the family. Era post-literacy requires a deep understanding of the children development processes including education. Therefore, the study of additional languages is becoming more and more popular among the general population. In this case, the children from migrant families who are native speakers of at least two languages, receive additional advantages. The psychological and pedagogical aspects of the manifestations of the creative abilities of modern schoolchildren in terms of the hypothetical situation of "sleep", daydreaming and imagination is interesting in themselves. However, the task of a comparative study is to analyse the features of bilingual speech utterances of children in creative writing. Our task was to identify the most striking and typical manifestations - themes, relevant contexts in which events

develop, language proficiency, and since the story was proposed to be written in the first person - especially the positioning and actual motives of the main characters.

The contest of creative writing for bilingual children is interesting as the object for interdisciplinary analysis in a way which provides an opportunity to see and understand not only linguistic subtleties/difficulties of language acquisition but also to decipher possible barriers and difficulties in learning and communication of a multicultural child.

In purpose to analyse children's creative writing, we create following types of migrant families:

- 1) both parents are native Russian speakers and the language of communication in the family is Russian
- 2) one of the parents is native Russian speakers and families use different language including Russian for communications at home
- 3) the home language is not-Russian

Writing a creative story in a second language differs significantly from the typical school tasks of writing an essay or presentation on a given topic. An important point is the lack of restrictions in terms of reflection and cultural ceilings and a positive appeal -- participation is only at will, and only if it is interesting. A special condition is the use of the language in which the child, in the conditions of socialization in a non-native country of residence, is not used to "thinking", learning lessons, answering the given material, communicating with friends.

The main research methods: Qualitative narrative analysis, comparison of texts with the proposed drawings. Accordingly, the material was obtained on the assessment of the following parameters: linguistic, psychological and general social characteristics.

Literacy -- observance of style, spelling, punctuation and grammar rules.

Calligraphy -- observance of calligraphic norms, it is important according to the terms of the competition.

The main theme of the story is where the action takes place, how is it connected with the real world.

Originality -- the child demonstrates a creative, non-standard approach to the disclosure of the topic. The story notes interesting thoughts, or unexpected and at the same time convincing arguments, the brightness of the style, the connection between the past and the present, an unusual scene and so on.

Relevance -- the story touches on global issues, involves scientific facts, and involves news.

The composition-story is distinguished by compositional integrity, logical presentation of thoughts, within the semantic parts there are no violations of sequence and unreasonable repetitions.

The quality of style -- the child accurately expresses thoughts using a variety of vocabulary and various grammatical constructions, means of artistic expression.

Genre is the correspondence to the genre structure of the story: the brevity and intensity of the narrative, the absence of side digressions, the rapid development of the plot, the completion of a spectacular ending.

Images of heroes -- heroes are widely represented. The appearance, hobbies, feelings of the hero are described, facts from life are given. The name given to the hero corresponds to the style of the work.

The motives for the action of heroes and antiheroes -- a description of the presence of motives for achievement and risky behaviour, avoiding failure, creative or destructive motivation, unusual motivation.

The described emotional states -- fears, anxiety, fears, aggressiveness, joy, the joy of success, delight, feelings of happiness, satisfaction.

The presence of a drawing (almost half of the stories were accompanied by drawings).

Bright elements, matching the verbal text, special accents.

To evaluate the results, criteria were developed by the jury to determine the winners of the competition, which were people of professions related to the Russian language -- writers, journalists, philologists, teachers, campaign managers, marketing and public relations specialists.

3. Results

113 stories and 47 drawings on the topic "Once I dreamed..." written by schoolchildren from 7 to 15 years old, living in different parts of the UK and attending Russian Saturday schools were collected. These stories were divided into three groups according to the age of participants and three categories, according to the home language:

The virtual world or a computer theme and the theme of sweets were the most popular topics. These are two "number one" topics that concern every adult today and two areas in which parental prohibitions are most consistent.

"Computer theme" (63) we call the transfer of plots, elements, heroes of computer games or images similar to them in texts or descriptions of a kind of virtual reality. The heroes of this topic are robots, aliens, kings, knights, magicians, sometimes dragons

TABLE 1: Number of participants in age groups and type of language use at home.

Languages at home	Age interval		
	7 -9	10 -- 12	13 - 15
Only Russian	35	22	16
Russian and others	5	17	4
Other non-Russian	6	4	4

and others behind the screen or in other worlds or other planets, often in a virtual war, sometimes like the Second World War.

“Sweet theme” (46) we call plots and their elements in which children describe sweets, sweet drinks, cakes, ice cream, etc., and sometimes fast food / Junk food in other words, food that is considered not healthy today and is very limited in children's nutrition.

A vivid group of stories with the participation of “pets” (28), favourite animals, or pets should be highlighted, they may be fish or plants. As a rule, pets in stories say they have magical abilities and special wisdom.

Not infrequently, topics intersect in one story. Here are some passages and some of the stories:

(Story, group age 7-9, from Russian speaking at home families “Only Russian” Language group (I / I), text features preserved, drawing of a battle with robots)

«Однажды мне приснилось, что я пошел к себе в комнату. Вдруг с искрами появился портал. Через двое суток, а для меня прошло только пять минут, я попал в какой-то параллельный мир. Когда я попал в страну, я увидел красного дракона. И он меня попросил добыть череп иссушителя И по дороге я увидел мага. И он мне говорит: 'Не слушай этого Дракона!. Он обманщик. И пожалуйста принеси мне перчатку титана. Через полчаса, я нашел деревянную хижину. И в ней, когда я зашел, я услышал шаги. Со скоростью света, я помчался под стол. Я выглянул одним глазочком и увидел титана. Я быстренько побежал мимо него. Я заметил в подвале доспехи титана. И очень быстро их надел. Я надел все и сказал: “Я тебя уничтожу”. Через 20 минут, я вызвал Свою армию. Магов и воинов. А он назвал свое войско драконов. Когда наступило двенадцать часов, началась битва. И в конце я победил титана. Я стал королем страны. И в конце я ПРОСНУЛСЯ.»

(Excerpts from the story of group age 13-15, from Non-Russian Language group (3/III), text features preserved)

«Однажды мне приснилось будущее... Я в спешке вскочила на ближайший транспортный узел и ментально велела ему отправить меня куда-то в город. Я не знала, куда я поехала, я только знала, что кое-что меня ожидало в центре... там стояла женщина с белыми волосами, одетая в черном. Она держала портфель. Я немедленно активизировала свою лазерную палку и стала в позиции боевой готовности...»).

(A story from group age 10-12 "Only Russian" Language group (2/I) text features preserved)

«Однажды мне приснилось, что я ужинал с мамой. Мы ели суп, который мне очень не нравился, Я еле впихнул в себя ложку. Мне стало плохо, в глазах потемнело. Когда открыл глаза, то очутился в стране сладких булочек и пирожных. Пол был устлан леденцами и шоколадом. Я упал на колени и принялся его слизывать. Объевшись вдоволь, я решил придремнуть. Но вдруг откуда ни возьмись на меня налетел ураган. Он поднял меня высоко над сахарными облаками и опустил перед самой обычной африканской саванны.

Я оглянулся вокруг и увидел, что на меня мчится обезумевший жираф на задних лапах. Немедля ни секунды я побежал, спасая свою жизнь. Но как бы быстро я не бежал, жираф меня все равно догнал и проглотил. Так я оказался в желудке жирафа, плавая в том самом супе, который я так не хотел есть!»

(Excerpts from group age 10-12, from "Only Russian" Language group (2/I), text features preserved)

«...В большом-большом городе, название которого знали все, жила Девочка. Она любила мечтать, и ей всегда снились волшебные сны. Вечером на необитаемом острове было тепло и ветрено. Засыпая, Цветок попросил ветер: «Перенеси меня, пожалуйста, на другой конец света, где я смог бы найти друзей...» Ничего не ответил ветер, только нежно приласкал лепестки Цветка.....».

(Excerpts from group age 7-9, from Only Russian Language group (1/I), text features preserved)

«...оттуда вышли зеленые лысые человечки. Я не помню, как они меня забрали, внутри летающей тарелки они мне давали торты и подарки. Я нечаяно нажал какуюто кнопку пол открылся, и я начал падать и кричать Я проснулся и увидел маму Я понял что это мне все приснилось.»

(Excerpts from group age 10-12, from "Russian and others" Language group (2/II), text features preserved)

«...наверное все что пишут про экологию и загрязнение нашей планеты это и есть начало той самой тьмы, которая может прийти к нам. Я видела даже во сне как это ужасно и катастрофу надо остановить!».

(Excerpts from group age 13-15, from Non-Russian Language group (3/III), text features preserved)

«Однажды мне приснилось, что я стал компьютерным человеком в игре «Машина Времени» и мой брат собирается отправить меня в далекое будущее.

- Нет! Не надо! -- закричал я ему с экрана компьютера, но он вряд ли мог слышать мой голос, который звучал, словно писк муравья в тайге...».

From the psychological analysis perspectives, the received texts clearly show the affectively coloured themes of relationships between children and the adult world; attempts to escape; hide from it, move to "other dimensions". In addition, communication needs, finding friends, trusting relationships seems to be highly required. Positive emotions are accomplished by some fears, anxieties and sensations of danger. Schools, parents, grandparents, medical articles in popular magazines -- almost the entire "adult world" forbid or softer: "do not recommend" neither a passion for sweets, nor a passion for computer games. Especially parents are on guard for these recommendations. In contrast to them, the entrepreneurial adult community and advertising companies, as well as many children's TV shows and children's advertisements during the breaks of children's programs, enthusiastically seduce children of all ages to play the computer games and buy the sweet.

In every second and third story, children penetrate the computer screen, find themselves in the virtual world, fight in computer battles. They invent new weapons, defeat insidious aliens, dismantle robots or fall into the fairyland from lollipops and ice cream. The imagine to ride from the mountains and snowdrifts from ice cream, jump on a marmalade swing, eat cactus puddings, destroy caramel walls, swim on chocolate boats, etc., or even end up in prison for their passion for sweets.

In the majority of creative writing, there are inconsistency in the plot and images of the heroes, for example the dragon-titan-magicians-warriors-king are piled up in one plot and are united through a "change of picture", conditionally "click", and a beautiful picture for this story depicts the battle of robots and the dragon is drawn somewhere on the side. The painted robots are not mentioned in the story, a mixture is often clearly seen. A mix of the popular elements of battle, victory, war and the story is cut off by waking up.

Another psychological feature is the pronounced caution of children. Incredible cunning and dexterity in the stories are aimed at avoiding punishment and is practically

characteristic of all age groups of children. 44 stories end negatively, 48 positively and 21 with an ambiguous conclusion (in such stories in the plot, the negative line ends with a happy awakening or unexpected salvation). In 32 stories one way or another presents the theme of saving the planet.

In three texts in a group of 13-15 years old, children turn to the famous names of Russian writers and poets and compose meetings with them; four texts are from different groups about First and Second World Wars; six is about relatives.

An attempt to analyse the motives of the characters showed an unusual lack of reason for their actions. This observation, however, requires more thorough and special investigation: specially designed instructions for the story as a projective product, or the use of traditional psychological techniques that are accordingly adapted for the purpose of the study.

A pronounced group of stories about their pets, or animals with which they manage to make friends in a dream, is characterized by the following features: in their dreams, they speak the human language, have incredible wisdom, or magical abilities, help or save, or simply begin to "truly" make friends with authors of stories. An analysis of this group of stories especially sharply shows that we are talking about a feeling of loneliness, difficulties in friendships, the need for communication with a peer, and, possibly, inability to communicate easily and constructively.

Stories of creative writings chosen by children are based on individual experience, but it is the frequency of occurrence of topics of danger, aggressiveness of the surrounding world and the magical way to avoid the threat and change it that speaks of a high degree of social need to transform it and require a special explanation.

4. Discussion

We assume that changes in educational processes affect the development of the imagination of schoolchildren and creative stories show us these features. It should be noted that before our eyes the formats of educational processes are changing and the development of children naturally changes under the influence of these transformations. In most secondary schools, the subjects and methods of obtaining knowledge management remain traditional, but the computerisation of the school inevitably takes place: from technical -- the appearance of a smartboard, to the expansion of information channels of the educational process, work with search engines, and, ultimately, a new level of computer literacy whole rising generation.

Many educators note the need for changes in schools, but in an evolutionary rather than revolutionary way - which, in approaches not worked out by the teacher, leads to a loss of students' cognitive activity, a decrease in the motivation for solving educational problems, the creation of the student's illusion of knowledge, without the ability to apply it, to structure it in the system already acquired knowledge and skills.

There are new problems in the lesson -- the desire to increase the visibility of the material and facilitate its perception leads to the fact that the student learns false information or distorted picture of reality and not working out the details leads to blurred perceptions, misinterpretation of the details, and fuzzy test control leaves the student in a subjective confidence of his success.

On the other hand, new forms of the student's project activities appear, considering his independent work, there is a variability of individual and inclusive approaches to the student's work, as well as multitasking, as a typical situation in the educational process. These changes pose new challenges to the development of cognitive processes: perception, memory, attention, imagination.

In our study, we consider the imagination, not only as a process included in the general educational activity, but as a creative competition dedicated to the task of "imagine what I once dreamed".

We emphasise, highlight the fact that this mental process is based on is based on the whole experience of the child. Imagination recreates objective reality, completes a holistic picture of the world, receiving, synthesises new impressions. Imagination allows the child to know the world around him, performing a gnostic function. It fills the gaps in his knowledge, serves to combine disparate impressions, creating his holistic picture of the world [14].

Almost all human material and spiritual culture is a product of imagination. It takes man beyond his momentary existence, reminds him of the past, opens the future [15].

Imagination is included in perception, influences the creation of images of perceived objects and at the same time depends on it. By engaging in perception, imagination enriches the images created, makes them more productive. [16, 366-387].

An important function of imagination is to make a plan and program of upcoming actions, to compile a story, with its key moments and completion -- waking up as "points" in the written story. Only a few (11) stories showed us the full range of characteristics of the processes of imagination. We understand that the conditions of the competition did not allow formulating the task for the demonstration of "their unique imagination" for the participants. But this hidden and not detailed instruction that allowed the cut to get the result as really are.

In our study, we are attracted to the material of creative storytelling, also because it allows us to judge how the visual-like thinking of a modern schoolboy is presented. In addition, when we offered to draw their sleep, it was planned to involve more children, including those who have difficulty writing the text.

In our opinion, the creative story and drawing revealing the features of the multicultural environment, features of multilingual (bilingual) development, much more demonstrates the influence of the 'digital world' in which all are included Today. Describing themselves, and their relationships in a projected imaginary world, children convey their anxiety, which they feel acutely, and do not "have the ability" to correct. One can assume a certain fear for the future or future of the planet, which some children "read" from the adult world around. Only part of the stories end positively. The main array of disturbing stories ends in awakening, often because of being awakened by their mother, and it is a symbol of a return to a comfortable reality. But at the same time, we have identified a low level of motivation to achieve and the dominance of the motivation to avoid failure, which may indicate the specific features of the adaptive processes of bilingual children from migrant families.

Linguistic analysis of the above parameters makes it possible to verify the relevance for the participants of the task of mastering the Russian language. The main result is a good grammar of texts: careful use of commas, grammatical accuracy, and rarely - the creation of new words such as "dogichka" meaning little dog.

We find the images of the heroes and situations in which they fall stuck together from different elements and contexts of the "computer theme" and "sweet theme". This indicates a strong influence of images of computer heroes, popular films or TV shows. Interestingly, in the texts, children of all age groups do not use words from the Runglish [17], which is so popular among high school students, at all. The competition of the Russian language stimulates the writing of accurate grammatical phrases and the accurate construction of the figure of speech. The ability to transform and reformat the world with the click of a button is widely used in stories, we see simplified ideas about the necessary efforts to overcome an obstacle, another space or correct a mistake. The creative composition shows that there is a lot of reflection, anxiety, language simplifications on the one hand and language courage on the other, a reflection of high computer literacy.

The features we have identified should be attributed to difficulties in the communicative processes. Since in 92 (out of 113) the topic of communication, interaction, or loneliness is relevant.

One of the main points of children's stories is the Internet in their daily lives. The constant presence of a "computer theme" in most of the stories reflects the familiarity and routine of the "button" as an instrument of everyday life. And although a smart controlled home from a mobile phone is still very rare and in practice only a mobile phone with wide communication capabilities is used, it is a common element of their stories in children's stories. Children demonstrating the boundaries of their imagination, fiction and originality in the competition create texts reflecting reality, which resembles a virtual world.

5. Conclusion

Interdisciplinary analysis from the point of view of social anthropology taking into account the features of complementary schools and the study of the Russian language in them, from the point of view of linguistic analysis -- the success of creation of creative texts in the language of cultural heritage, and the psychological-educational point about the peculiarities of solving problems on the imagination shows us:

- In the children's stories presented there are cultural elements of British and Russian, which were formed both in Ordinary British schools and Russian complementary schools, which are attended by most participants in our study.
- The names of Russian writers, heroes of Russian cartoons and fairy tales, mention of world wars or relatives who remained in another country, we see how certain ideas about the culture of our parents and the contexts of studying the Russian language are manifested only in a small part of creative stories.
- The written texts and their linguistic, literary analysis showed a high level and desire of participants to master and preserved their native language.
- Children's stories reflect their anxious feelings about the planet, the preservation of the natural world, and the enormous desire to resist the prohibitions of parents to plunge into the desired world of unlimited computer possibilities and consumption of sweets.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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