Institutional and Social Dimensions of the Presence of the Russian Language in Cyprus

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'*Language is deeply entwined in the intellectual development of humanity itself, it accompanies the latter upon every step of its localized progression or regression; moreover, the pertinent cultural level in each case is recognizable in it*'. — Wilhelm von Humboldt [2]

Abstract

The Russian community is one of the largest communities in Cyprus, since the island has been historically regarded as a preferred relocation destination. The current research on the presence of the Russian language on the island is conducted from the viewpoint of georusistics, a semi-new branch of Russian philology, which considers the Russian language as a variable, worldwide language. A retrospective of the Russia-Cyprus relationship is provided and the current state of play, public and private Cyprus institutions supporting the Russian language, is also described. The expanding Russian community in Cyprus is adjusting through various similar features between the two cultures, through a wide use of the Russian language, establishment of Russian schools, churches, organisations and media.

Keywords: Russian language, georusistics, Russian language in Cyprus, philology

Introduction: Language as a Part of Noosphere

The concept of 'noosphere' was proposed by the French scientist Édouard Le Roy[3] and further developed by his two contemporaries and colleagues, Pierre Teilhard

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[2] W. von Humboldt, *'On Language': On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[3] E. Le Roy, *Les origines humaines et l'évolution de l'intelligence* (Paris: Bolvin & Cie, 1928).

de Chardin and V. Vernadsky.[4] Their views on the noosphere are usually assessed as opposing each other, although the sufficiency of grounds for this is rather controversial.

P. Teilhard de Chardin considers the noosphere, in the context of a unified philosophical doctrine, as a stage in the development cycle of matter – the universe – from the starting point of singulation (*alpha*) to the final point (*omega*).[5] However, Teilhard de Chardin was not only a theosophist but also a great biologist and paleontologist, whose views were imbued with evolutionism. He considered evolution as the basic condition and rule that all systems must obey. Such an approach became a reality in the 1970s and 1980s, when ideas about the origin of matter as a result of the Big Bang became a scientific theory.

According to Teilhard de Chardin, the emergence of the human mind is a natural result of the development of matter, prepared by the whole course of the development of the world. These representations are close to the framework of the 'anthropic principle'. The emergence of the human mind is qualitatively a new stage in the evolution of living matter, the transition of evolution from the biological phase to the social and spiritual, and the prevalence of the spiritual principle over the material in the organisation and functioning of the biosphere.[6]

Human, as the carrier of the mind, does not adapt to the environment, like other animals, but changes and subordinates it to her/himself, eliminating and conquering every form of life that is not human. Social evolution is objectively aimed at the unity of humankind, the social and spiritual convergence of cultures, nations, different strata of society, and at the formation of a 'like-minded' person in the world outlook. Thus, the noosphere is the result of the activity of all humankind, starting from the moment of the appearance of the human being; at the present stage, like the biosphere, includes 'former noospheres'.[7]

Almost all of the abovementioned provisions were supported and further developed by Vladimir Vernadsky, who undoubtedly was familiar with them due to his personal contact with Le Roy and Teilhard de Chardin. Vernadsky's views on the noosphere were quite outstanding, as he attached decisive importance to the scientific knowledge of the laws of the biosphere's organisation, its transformation

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[4]   V. Vernadsky, (1945) 'The Biosphere and Noosphere', *American Scientist*, Vol. 33.

[5]   P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Phénomène humain* (Paris: Seuil, 1955).

[6]   P. Teilhard de Chardin, *L'Apparition de l'Homme* (Paris: Seuil, 1956).

[7]   P. Teilhard de Chardin, *Le Phénomène humain* (Paris: Seuil, 1955).

under the influence of human activity, as well as conscious activity to accelerate the formation of the noosphere in the present time.[8] His ideas are a rather general concept of the pattern of development of the biosphere in a state controlled by the human mind. Vernadsky's approach to the noosphere is in many respects close to the ideas developed by Teilhard de Chardin.[9]

The works of Vernadsky, as well as of Teilhard de Chardin, were not recognised during his lifetime. The doctrine of the noosphere was claimed only later, when the official communist doctrine on the building of communism was compromised and there was a need for a different natural science substantiation. This was facilitated by Vernadsky's belief in the unlimited possibilities of scientific and technological progress, the reality of achieving the full independence of humankind from nature, its transition to autotrophy. From the objective nature of the transformation of the biosphere into the noosphere, a conclusion was made on the possibility of the harmonious coexistence of man and nature and, as a consequence, the coevolution of nature and society. However, the idea of coevolution was subjected to critical analysis in the work of V.I. Danilov-Danilyan,[10] who considered it completely inconsistent from the scientific point of view.

Thus, Le Roy, Teilhard de Chardin, and Vernadsky all saw the formation of the noosphere as a natural process, a form of evolution, independent of the human will, even though it can be accelerated by human activity.

In 1928, in *The Origins of Humanity and the Evolution of Mind*, Le Roy wrote that human evolution is carried out by new, purely mental means: through industry, society, language, intellect, etc., and thus the biosphere goes into the noosphere.[11] A global world of human languages, as one of the most important parts of our planet's noosphere, is not just a variety of separated standard languages sheltering behind a bastion of its rules and confronting every external impact as a source of harm and distortion. Language is meant for social interaction. Language is a tool of regulation that is expressed in communication; thus, the better the language serves social interaction of its speakers, the better it actually is. The point at issue is that

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[8]   V. Vernadsky, *Scientific Thought as a Planetary Phenomenon* [*Nauchnaya myisl kak planetnoe yavlenie*] (Moscow: Science, 1991) [in Russian].

[9]   G. Krasnoschekov and G. Rosenberg, *Ekologiya "v zakone" (teoreticheskie konstrukcii sovremennoj ekologii v citatah i aforizmah)* (Tolyatti: IEVB RAN, 2002) [in Russian].

[10]   V. Danilov-Danilyan, (1998) 'Vozmozhna li koevolyuciya prirody i obshchestva?', *Problems of Philosophy*, Vol. 8 [in Russian].

[11]   E. Le Roy, *Les origines humaines et l'évolution de l'intelligence* (Paris: Bolvin & Cie, 1928).

the language gives its speakers a possibility to reach their goals within the widest range of regulation situations. The speed of social interaction is getting faster, and languages cannot avoid this trend either. Consideration of this issue from a broad standpoint will help us to describe the genuine functional nature of language units.

Georusistics: The Russian Language Beyond Russia

From where we stand, it is the functional concept of natural language that assists in obtaining adequate scientific knowledge in the language universe, of which one of the most important parts is Russian language.

The Russian language belongs to the group of Slavic languages, which is part of the Indo-European language family. It is the State language adopted in the territory of the Russian Federation and it is the most widely spoken in terms of geographical coverage and the number of speakers in Europe. Modern lexical and grammatical norms of the Russian language appeared as a result of the long-term interaction of various East Slavic dialects that existed in Russian territory and the Church Slavonic language, which arose from the adaptation of the first Christian books. East Slavic, also known as Old Russian, in the 14th and 15th centuries, was the basis for the formation of the Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian languages; however, the dialectical features by which they differ so much appeared a little earlier.[12] In the 15th century in the European territory of Russia, the southern and northern dialects were established, which have a number of distinctive features. In addition, a number of Central Russian dialects appeared, which were essentially in between the north and south dialects, partially absorbing their distinctive features.[13] A prominent representative of Central Russian dialect –Moscow– was the basis for the emergence of the literary Russian language, which currently is the classic Russian language and used in literature and media. Other dialects are rarely used in formal written works.

A large stratum of Russian vocabulary is represented by words of Greek origin. For example, the Russian words for 'crocodile', 'bench' and 'beets' come from Greek; moreover, it is no secret that most of the names that are given at baptism also have come to Russia from Greece, and these names are not only Greek, such as 'Catherine' or 'Fyodor', but also of Hebrew origin, such as 'Ilya' or 'Maria'. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the main source of new lexical units in the Russian lan-

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[12]   A. Rudyakov, *Georusistika: russkij yazyk v global'nom mire* (Moscow: LEKRUS, 2016) [in Russian].

[13]   V. Kostomarov, *Russkij yazyk sredi drugih yazykov* (Moscow: Education, 1975) [in Russian].

guage was Polish, thanks to which, words of Latin or Germanic, such as 'algebra' or 'dance', and directly Polish words, such as 'table' and 'duel' were adopted into our speech.[14]

In Belarus, Russian is the State language, along with the Belarusian language. In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldavia, the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the Russian language is recognised as official, that is, it has a privileged status, despite the presence of the State language. In the State of New York, US, Russian is one of the eight languages in which all official electoral documents are printed, and in California one can take a driving license examination in Russian. Until 1991, Russian was used for communication throughout the USSR. In fact, it was the State language. For this reason, many residents of the republics that left the USSR still use Russian as their native language. Literary Russian is called either Russian or Great Russian; however, it is used mainly by linguistic scholars and is not preferred for modern colloquial speech.

The Russian alphabet consists of 33 letters and has existed since 1918, but was officially approved only in 1942. Until that time, the alphabet officially had 31 letters. Church Slavonic is the language Orthodox Church services have used from the moment of its appearance to the present day. For a long time, Church Slavonic was used as an official written language and even prevailed in colloquial speech. The oldest book written in Russian is the *Novgorod Codex*, and it dates back to the beginning of the 11th century. Historians also cite the *Ostrom Gospel* as being one of the oldest books in Russian, which was written in Church Slavonic between 1056 and 1057.[15] Modern Russian, which is currently used and is also known as the literary language, appeared in the 17th and 18th centuries, after which some serious amendments were made in 1918. Many changes were introduced; for instance, the use of a hard sign at the ends of words was abolished. The official changes did not affect the use of *izhitsa* (v), as this letter was hardly ever used before the reform; with time, it naturally disappeared from the alphabet.

Differences in dialects have never been a hindrance to communication between people, but compulsory education, the emergence of the press and the media, and large-scale migration during Soviet times almost completely drove dialects out of use, because they were replaced by standardised Russian speech. Currently, traces

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[14]   E.g., 'Tanz' introduced 'танец' [tanets]; 'Tablica' introduced 'таблица' [tablitsa]

[15]   A. Zaliznyak and B. Yanin, (2001) 'Novgorodskiy kodeks pervoy chetverti XI v. — drevneyshaya kniga Rusi', *Herald of the Russian Academy of Science*, Vol. 71, No. 3 [in Russian].

of dialects are heard in the speech of the older generation living mainly in rural areas, but due to the spread of television broadcasting, their speech has also gradually levelled, acquiring the outlines of the literary Russian language.

Many words were introduced in modern Russian from Church Slavonic. In addition, the languages with which it had been in contact for a long time significantly influenced its vocabulary. The oldest layer of borrowing has East German roots, evidenced by words such as 'cross' or 'church'[16]. A few but frequently used words were borrowed from the ancient Iranian languages, the so-called Scythian vocabulary, for example 'paradise' or 'dog'. Some Russian names, such as 'Olga' or 'Igor', have German and, most often, Scandinavian origin.

Since the 18th century, the main stream of words has been coming to us from Dutch ('orange', 'yacht'), German ('tie', 'cement') and French ('beach', 'conductor').[17] Today, the English language is the main influence of the Russian language, and some of the words began to appear in the early 19th century. The flow of English borrowed words increased in the first half of the 20th century and gave the Russian language words such as 'station', 'cocktail' and 'container'. Some English words even reappeared in Russian while displacing each other, an example of such a word is 'lunch'. In addition, modern English words are gradually replacing words that were earlier borrowed from other languages, for example, the English word 'bowling' replaced the old German word 'kegelbahn', and the old French 'omar' became the modern English 'lobster'.

It is necessary to note the influence of other languages, although to a much lesser extent than English, on the modern sound of the Russian language. Military terms ('hussar', 'saber') came to us from Hungarian, while musical, financial, and culinary terms ('opera', 'balance' and 'pasta') – from Italian. Despite the abundant influx of borrowed vocabulary, the Russian language developed on its own, managing to give the world several of its own words, like 'balalaika', 'pirogi' and 'ushanka'. However, Russian studies throughout the 20th century were introverted, preferring to abstract from the processes of understanding the essence of what is happening in the world around it.[18] Today, in the public linguistic consciousness, at a time when the Russian language seems to be complete and formed, there still remains an excessive, in

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[16]   E.g., 'Kirika' introduced 'церковь' [tserkov']
[17]   E.g., 'Appelsien' introduced 'апельсин' [apelsin]; 'Halstuch' introduced 'галстук' [galstuk], etc.
[18]   E.g., see V. Vinogradov, *Velikij russkij yazyk* (Moscow: OGIZ, 1945) [in Russian].

our opinion, desire to continue to protect it from the influence of other languages.[19] However, it is our conviction that the Russian language will not lose its identity, its unique system, or its value for civilisation.[20]

Undoubtedly, all languages are, to varying degrees, endangered. Of course, the competition between languages for the right to serve humanity's need for social interaction in the distant future is extremely acute, but the Russian language might cope successfully with the challenges, especially if internal and foreign language policies become even more professional, more conscious, more pragmatic and more relevant to the current time.

In the course of open discussion at the conference '*Russian language in a multicultural world*' in 2007, A.N. Rudyakov stated that the object of Russian philology is a global Russian-speaking domain, called 'Russophony'.[21] Russophony is an objectively existing supranational, supracultural, non-denominational language community. It is a complicated system that represents, from a substantive point of view, the community that uses the Russian language for social interaction.

Today, many linguistic groups that use the Russian language introduce their own features in it, due to objective factors. It is important to emphasise that in this and similar cases we are elaborating on the concept of codified Russian. For instance, Russophones living in Cyprus prefer using 'kinitó' instead of 'mobile phone' even when speaking Russian. In the foreseeable future, the norm will, out of necessity, become planetary, reflecting the whole diversity of linguistic states; in the future, a description of the Russian language will be based on the understanding that Russian of the Russian Federation is *one* of the possible Russian languages. It is certainly the linguistically original, evidently the most important, and, cogently, the main language of the Russophony, but not the only possible one.

Development of a science such as Russian philology is visible in terms of the perception that the Russian language world is a single piece, actively interacting with languages in its family. Recently a new sphere of Russian philology has been created, which is called 'georusistics'. Georusistics is based on the assumption that in our modern world no units are separated from the influence of global economic and information processes; global climate change, worldwide flow of information

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[19]   E.g., see A. Streltsov, (2012) 'Svoi chuzhoi yazyk', *Translation and Comparative Linguistics*, No. 8 [in Russian].

[20]   Rudyakov, *Georusistika*.

[21]   *Ibid.*

and commodities, series of labour strikes, ideas, brands, the Internet and media sources go beyond all artificial and natural barriers, borders and stereotypes.

Today the Russian language exists as a variety of 'Russian languages', more usually as a variety of functional models of Russian languages, which in different ways serve people's needs for social interaction in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belorussia, the US, Germany, Israel, Lithuania, and in Cyprus, regions forming the Russian-speaking world. Thus, it is necessary to perceive language *œcumene* from another perspective. Russian philology has to become a geographically based science orientated towards studying the interaction between the Russian language world and other language worlds.[22]

Geographical borders of Russophony are defined by one factor only, namely the usage of the Russian language as a tool of social interaction. Obviously, in different subsystems of Russophony, the intensity of the Russian language's usage fluctuates. In some places, it is the only communication tool, which is true at the centre of the system, whereas in other places, it is the main but not the only communication tool, which is true for the core of the system, and finally, on the periphery of the system, the language is neither the main nor the only communication tool.[23]

The Russian language that is used in another country must provide its speakers with the tools for naming day-to-day realities of that country, which is the consequence of the principle, according to which the world of words corresponds more to the world of terms. A language is perfect not for someone who exists out of time and space, it is perfect in the here and now, in the country where the speaker lives. This, obviously with millions of Russian language speakers living, due to certain historical or personal reasons, far from the metropolitan linguistic area, makes them use Russian differently from the one used in the Russian Federation. Another form of Russian can emerge and successfully function, regardless of its official status in a non-Russian reality, because –in this case– legal status is just a record of entitative fact.

You become a georusist when you understand that the traditional classification of language situations helps to understand only what is happening inside a particular country and does not say anything about what the global language situation is,

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[22]   A. Rudyakov, (2009) 'Georusistika i natsionalnyie variantyi russkogo yazyika'], *Culture of Black Sea nations*, Vol. 1, No. 168 [in Russian].

[23]   P. Artemova and A. Degtyarev, (2017) 'Georusistika i "myagkaya sila" Rossii (Otzyv na knigu A. Rudyakova *Georusistika: russkij yazyk v global'nom mire*)', *Power*, Vol. 8 [in Russian].

beyond one's national borders. You become a geolinguist when you realise that it is naïve to reduce the world of a language to a simple set of its speakers. This is a common mistake associated with not discriminating between a system's 'element' and 'component'. Russophony, or the Russian language world (as well as any other), is not reducible to a multitude of Russophones, just as a person is much more complex than a simple set of cells, and society is more than a set of individuals; the whole is much more than just the sum of its parts.[24]

Russian Language Presence in Cyprus: Retrospective Approach

As it has already been mentioned, one of functional models of the Russian language serves the needs of social interaction of the Russian-speaking population in Cyprus, the third largest island of the Mediterranean Sea. As of today, the Cyprus Russian-speaking diaspora is one of the biggest, but before considering this element of Russophony, it is necessary to describe centuries-long relationships between Russia and Cyprus in order to understand how this element has been formed and how it managed to put its roots down there.

Strong relationships between Russia and Cyprus are mainly determined by the spreading of Christianity – and Orthodoxy later.[25] Cyprus was a kind of rest stop for many Russian pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land.[26] This was the case of Russian pilgrim Hegumen Daniil, who in the early 12th century wrote *Life and pilgrimage of Daniil, Russian hegumen,* in which he included three chapters describing holy places of Cyprus. The pilgrim Abbot paid special attention to the Stavrovouni Monastery, established on the top of a mountain, reaching up to 700 metres above sea level, by Saint Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. After this important event, there was an almost three-century break in relationships between Russia and Cyprus, when the crusaders seized the island in 1191 and the Mongols and Tartars invaded Russia. A monk of the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius Zosim, who visited the island in the early 15th century, gave a more precise description of towns, villages, and the monasteries of Cyprus.

The second part of the 16th century, marked by the Ottomans gaining control of Cyprus, became the beginning of a new break in relationships with Russia, since

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[24]   A. Rudyakov, *Linguisticheskyi functionalism i functional'naya semantika* (Simferopol: Tavria-plus, 1998) [in Russian].

[25]   N. Zykova, (2010) 'Russkyi sled na Kipre', *Education and Orthodoxy*, available at http://www.orthedu.ru/news/2449-10.html [in Russian].

[26]   G. Hill, *A History of Cyprus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Reissue edition, 2010).

Russian monks ceased making pilgrimages. Only in 1708, Russian monk Hyppoly-tus Vischinskyi visited Cyprus and witnessed the failing state of the Cyprus Church under Ottoman oppression. In the 18th century, several Russian pilgrims visited the island, namely the famous Russian monk and science communicator Vasilyi Grigorievich Barskyi, who visited Cyprus four times in total, the chapman Matvey Nechaev, as well as the hieromonks Silvestre, Nikodim, and Miletyi.

Later on, the life in the island was described in travel memories of pilgrims, who visited Cyprus in the 19th century. Nevertheless, Russian nun Varvara (Katae-va) made the biggest contribution to the development of the relationships between Russia and Cyprus.[27] In 1840, she visited the St. Varvara Monastery, which is located on the north-west shoulder of Stavrovuni Mountain. Upon returning to Russia, she collected sufficient donations for this monastery.

In 1964, the USSR-Cyprus Friendship Society was established. Members of this society were famous scientists, people of culture and art, and churchmen. Many Cyprus citizens were educated at Soviet universities within the scope of the society's activities. The USSR-Cyprus Friendship Society arranged Days of USSR cultural performances, Soviet film festivals, and expeditions on the territory of Cyprus. Official delegations from the Soviet Union visited Cyprus in order to learn more about its history and culture. This society lasted until 1992, when the Soviet Union collapsed, and Russia-Cyprus Friendship Society became its legal successor.[28]

Modern Dimensions of Russian Language in Cyprus

Considering the long-lasting history of relationships between Russia and Cyprus, it is no wonder that such a big and powerful language community emerged on the island. As of today, the Russian-speaking community of Cyprus amounts to about 40,000 people, a number far from negligible in an island with a total population slightly above one million.[29]

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[27] Zykova 'Russkyi sled na Kipre'.

[28] International Community of Public Associations - Friendship Societies with Peoples of Foreign Countries, available at http://www.msod.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=379%3A--q-q-&catid=55%3A2009-04-06-11-45-13&Itemid=82&lang=ru

[29] A. Kades, 'While Russians Elsewhere in the EU Are Flooding Home, in Cyprus They Are Staying Put', *Cyprus Mail.com* (19 March 2017), available at http://cyprus-mail.com/2017/03/19/russians-elsewhere-eu-flooding-home-cyprus-staying-put/.

Nowadays, there are multiple Russian kindergartens and five Russian schools in Cyprus.[30] Those who graduate from these schools are awarded diplomas by both the Russian Federation and the Republic of Cyprus. The Russian Embassy operates a State school, and the Russian Ministry of Education and Science run three private elementary schools, while the Russian art school 'Angara' has also a branch in Cyprus. These schools constitute a genuine stronghold of Russian culture on the island. Their role is very important for one more reason; children from mixed families also study there. When it comes to adult education, the majority of students (businesspersons, banks' and travel companies' employees, doctors, educators and public servants) study Russian in classes provided by the Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Nicosia and in other main cities of the island. Moreover, after a short break, Russian is now being taught in the Police Academy, too.

There are also many educational centres established in the Republic, including Russian-speaking Orthodox Churches, Russian print media, a broadcasting station (Russkaya Volna), and Russian magazines delivered *in situ* on a regular basis. Russian has even penetrated TV broadcasts in Cyprus. First, it was just a 45-minute news programme, but now there is a 24/7 Russian TV channel. In general, there are a number of public organisations supporting the development and dissemination of the Russian language in Cyprus. Among others, there is a Russian Orthodox Educational Centre in Larnaca, the Association of Russian Businessmen on Cyprus in Limassol, the Association of Russian-speaking residents 'Gorizont', the Cyprus Women Association CLC and the Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Nicosia (Representative Office of Rossotrudnichestvo in the Republic of Cyprus).[31] The main tasks of the Representative Office are to develop cultural, humanitarian, scientific, and technical cooperation with the Republic of Cyprus, as well as to promote the Russian culture and popularise the Russian language.

The vast majority of the Russian-speaking population lives in Nicosia, Larnaca, Paphos, and Limassol. The latter is deemed to be the main Russian-speaking city of the island. There are about 15,000 Russians living in Limassol there permanently.[32] The biggest Russian-language media holding, Vestnik Kipra, is headquartered in

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[30]   Cyprus Developers Alliance, Education in Cyprus, available at https://cyprus-alliance.ru/cyprus/education.

[31]   Information about the Russian Center for Science and Culture in Nicosia, available at http://kyp.rs.gov.ru/ru/about.

[32]   Kades, 'While Russians Elsewhere in the EU Are Flooding Home'.

Limassol and issues the same-named newspaper and magazines *Uspeshnyi Business* and *Doma i Ludi*. Nevertheless, the activity of this company goes far beyond printed media. Established in 1995, Vestnik Kipra actively supports events, which help strengthening the Russian language in Cyprus. To name a few: Annual Cyprus-Russian Festival in Limassol, Children's Crafts Day, and Russian Poetry Contest KIPRUSS.[33]

However, the activity of the Russian-speaking community in Limassol extends beyond festivals. The community shows the highest commitment when it comes to politics and social issues. Thus, in June 2018, a meeting was held in Limassol, where representatives of the Russian-speaking community met the mayor and the police chief. One of the main topics of discussion was the Russian language. The mayor remarked that the Russian diaspora is the biggest expat group in Limassol, which has to be taken into account by the local authorities and police. For example, at that time 60 police officers who spoke Russian were assigned there. Police officers also have an opportunity to study in Russia at the Police Academy, which might act as an indicator of the level of acknowledgment and status of the Russian-speaking community in Cyprus.

From our point of view, georusistics constitutes a scientific basis for development of the global language of politics, which will be able to satisfy today's needs. We would like to emphasise that we are not speaking about an internal language policy of a country, but rather about an external language policy of the global Russian-speaking world.

The Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Nicosia is active in implementing State policy orientated towards supporting Russian citizens abroad and consolidating Russian-speaking diaspora. The centre preserves close contacts and aspires fruitful cooperation between State and public agencies, scientific organisations, and cultural institutions. There are Russian language classes under the auspices of the representative office, as well as an educational centre named Pioneer. Pioneer is a project of the Russian Centre that was implemented within the framework of 'Russian School Abroad', in accordance with the goals of Rossotrudnichestvo to popularise the Russian language and to promote Russian education abroad.

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[33]   Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, *Russkyi yazyk v mire* (21 August 2002), available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cy/-/asset_publisher/wslw4pBwxwex/content/id/549378 [in Russian].

This project is an aggregator of Russian best educational practices, programmes, and methods, encompassing the teaching of both Russian and foreign languages, supplementary education for children and adults in arts and culture, and tutorials for teachers. Pioneer provides services for people of all ages. All programmes meet the modern educational requirements and are oriented towards the development of skills, which will be in great demand in the economy both today and in the near future. Pioneer gives information on educational projects related to e-learning, using tutorial materials, developing interactive practices, and introducing them in Russian schools abroad through the Internet.

Furthermore, the Russian language gains support within the administrative apparatus of the host state. For example, three of the Cypriot metropoles (Nicosia, Limassol, and Paphos) annually hold Russian spelling quizzes. One of the main activities of the Concept of Russian Compatriots organisation, which was introduced on 20 October 2017 during the annual Cyprus conference of Russian compatriots, is aimed at 'the promotion of the Russian language and culture'.[34]

As previously mentioned, Orthodoxy is a very important link between Russia and Cyprus. This trend continues even today. In 2017, in a joint effort of Metropolitan of Tamasos and Orini Isaiah and the Russian art patron Vyacheslav Zarenkov, an Orthodox cathedral was built outside Nicosia in honour of Apostle Andreas and all Russian Saints. According to the Russian ecclesiastical tradition, all services are held in the Old Church Slavonic.

The concept of so-called 'Russian Cyprus', referring to the Russian-speaking community living in Cyprus, is already quite firmly established among the citizens of the island. However, will it be relevant in ten or 15 years? Several factors bluntly answer this question. First, due to Cyprus entering the European Union the taxes are slowly but steadily catching up to the average European level, and, the number of wealthy Russians residing in Cyprus is likely to be declining.[35]

The changes might also affect the less well-off Russian-speaking population, especially, the younger generation. Due to the situation in the labour market, many plan to search of work in other EU countries. Given the high cost of living, it is

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[34] Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots in the Republic of Cyprus, Kontseptsiya deyatelnosti organizatsiy rossiyskih sootechestvennikov na Kipre (2017) http://kyp.rs.gov.ru/uploads/document/file/3796/Conc.pdf [in Russian].

[35] T. Khruleva, 'Sohranitsya li «russkiy Kipr»?', *Rosbalt.ru* (2 February 2014), available at https://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2014/02/15/1233278.html [in Russian].

often less costly for parents to send their offspring to study in the Czech Republic, Belgium, Italy or even back in Russia. Some of them will return home, but most are unlikely to. This concerns native Cypriots who speak Russian and children from mixed marriages. Of course, the number of Russian speakers on the island is not going to plunge drastically, but one should not expect a significant increase in their number either.

Conclusion

Such a big and comprehensive system of Russian-speaking organisations in Cyprus is definitely able to provide dignity to the Russian diaspora in Cyprus, thus strengthening the Russian language there.

Russian is anthropocentric as any other language. As a result, it has to reflect the heterogeneity, variability, and multiplicity of its speakers who live in different counties but maintain their language. Russian is the basis of their day-to-day life, and is spoken in many institutions, which helps supporting and promoting its social and linguistic presence.

Paradoxically, the variability of expression of the Russian language, depending on where it is spoken, is a factor that makes the language even more perfect. One might think that, according to Russian philology, perfection of the Russian language is centred on its codification, however, we are sure that variability of a language facilitates its perfection. The Russian language is vital for those who live in the worldwide Russian language world, which is why georusistics encompasses everyone who uses the Russian language for social cooperation, including those who speak a 'non-Russian' Russian language, while living outside the Russian linguistic environment.

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