

NATIONAL RESEARCH
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Russian Mixed North: Language and cultural contacts on the Kola Peninsula

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- Research focus
- Methodology
- Results

Introduction

The Murmansk Oblast:

- located on the territory of the Kola Peninsula;
- a relatively young region of the Russian Federation;
- inhabited by Saami, Komi and Pomor peoples long before the Soviet migration;
- immediate proximity to Scandinavian countries (borders Finland and Norway in the west).



Lots of sociocultural and language contacts on many levels

Historical Background

- 1930s - increase of population by persuasion, resettlement and by force;
- 1944 - local Saami migration to Finland;
- 1950s - slow down of migration (virgin territories of Kazakhstan have higher priority);
- 1960s - new wave of migration (oil and gas fields development);
- 1970-1980s - growth of population is supported by investment and job referrals.

International agreements

- Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 - establishment of modern borders;
- Treaty between the Kingdom of Norway and the Russian Federation concerning Maritime Delimitation and Cooperation in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean (2010)

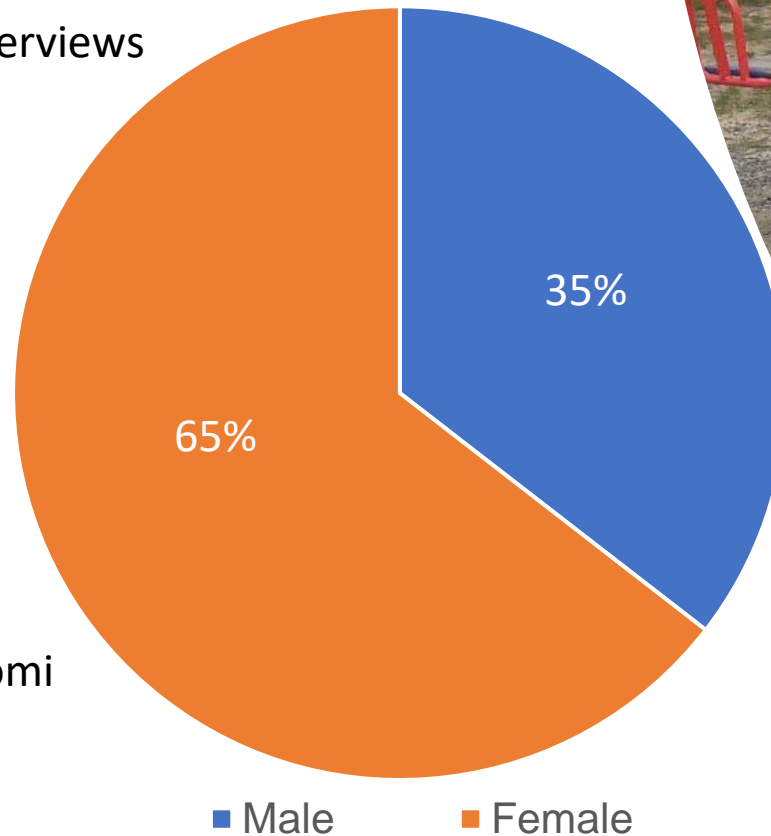


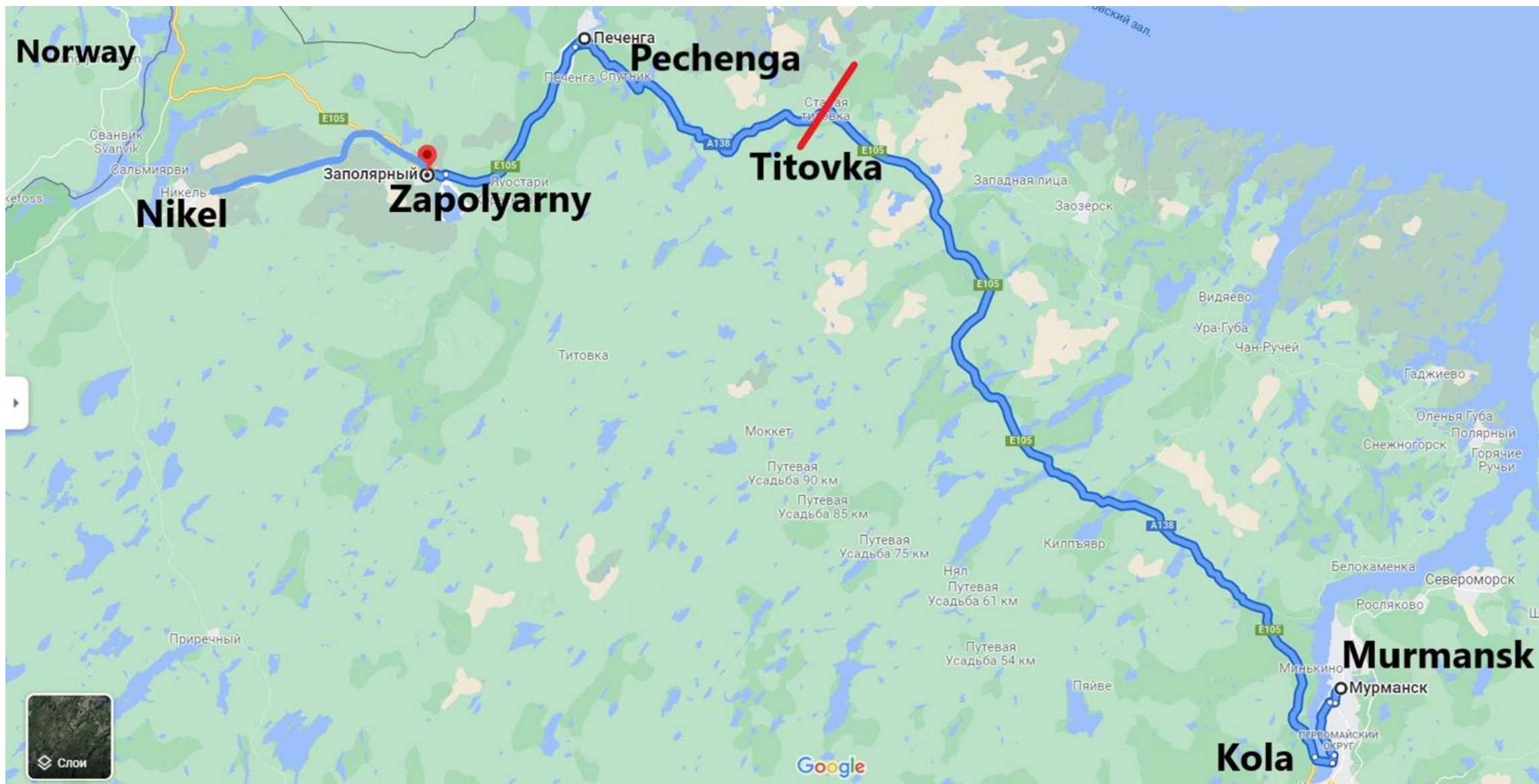
Research Questions

- What is the character of sociocultural exchange between Russians of Murmansk oblast, minority peoples and citizens of Scandinavia?
- What languages do they use in the contact?

Methodology

- 64 unstructured interviews
- Narrative analysis
- 5 cities: Murmansk, Kola, Pechenga, Nikel, Zapolyarny
- Age 14-72
- Nationality: Mostly Russian and mixed Russian, Komi





Results

- Contact between Russians and Norwegians is, not surprisingly, most frequent in the border regions – in towns like Zapolyarny and Nikel.
- According to respondents, Norwegians tend to visit Russia even more often due to prices of oil, alcohol, sweets and beauty services. The most frequent language in such cases is gestures.
- The two communities also use English, albeit less frequently, and Norwegian citizens sometimes learn Russian or have Russian relatives.

Results

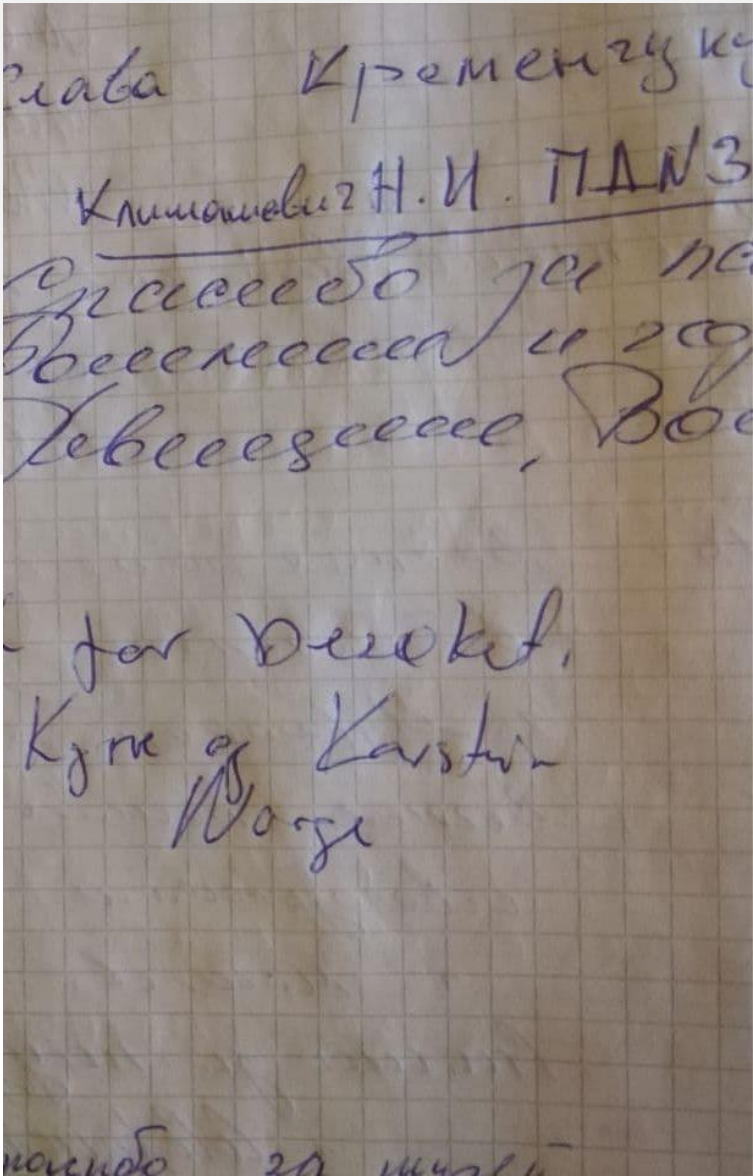
- Citizens of Zapolyarny and Nikel also visit Norway more often than other citizens of the region. However, they also prefer come to Norway as tourists to “enjoy European culture”.
- People from Murmansk, Kola and Pechenga meet tourists from neighboring countries quite rarely:
 - the visa-free territory spanning the border is only 30 km wide;
 - shopping in Nikel and Zapolyarny seems to be enough;
 - Pechenga is a closed military city, where we found only one reason to visit it



The main (and probably the only) reason to visit Pechenga is its cemetery of war prisoners. People from Finland come here to honor their ancestors.



The other landmark of Petsamo operation is checkpoint Titovka (end of borderline territory), where many comments in Norwegian and Finnish were found.





- The contacts between countries are pushed by initiatives of international organizations, municipalities and activists:
 - «Лыжня дружбы» [Ski track of friendship];
 - «Баренц-спектакль» [Barents-Spektakel];
 - bilateral festivals aimed at cultural exchange.

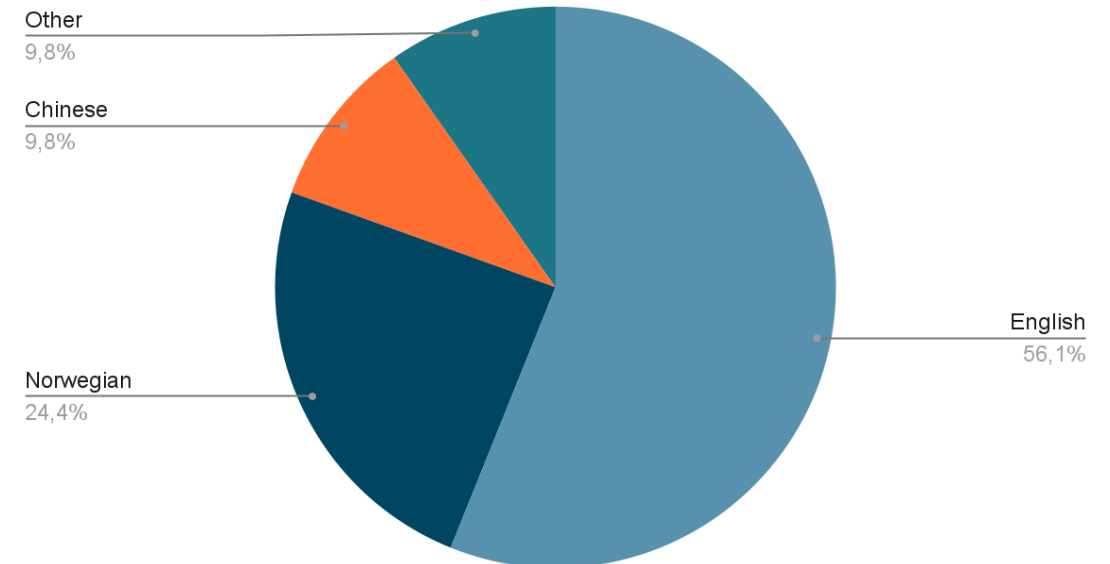
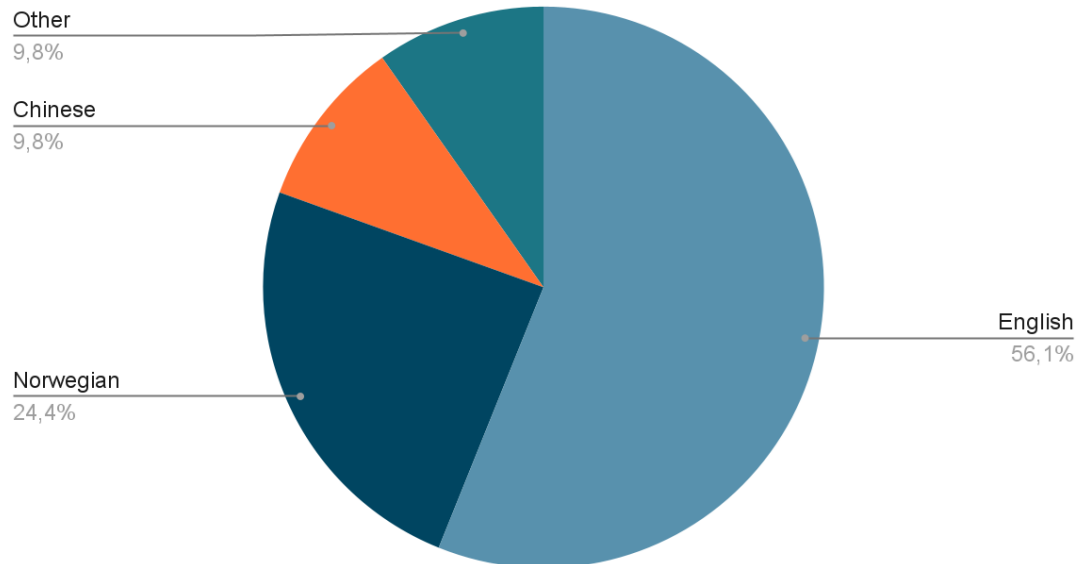
The languages of these events are Russian and English.

Contact with minorities

- Though there are several festivals aimed at the popularization of Pomor and Saami culture, the respondents often have poor knowledge of them;
- Tendency: the higher the level of education, or the closer the education sphere to Humanities, the more respondents know about Saami and Pomors;
- Activists and librarians conduct thematic events to spread the information about minority peoples;
- According to respondents, Saami people use Russian more frequently than the Saami language when participating in festivals.

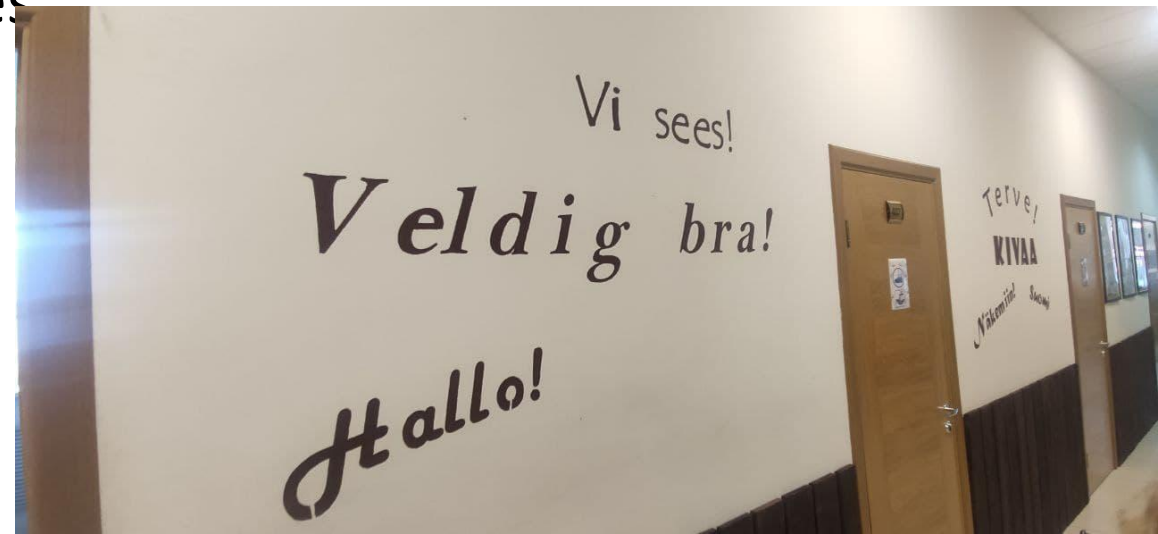
Attitudes towards languages

- The most prestigious foreign language is English;
- Norwegian language seldom was called useful to learn in the borderline territory, since tourists tend to use English more often;
- Only 3 of 64 respondents decided to learn Norwegian.



Attitudes towards languages

- Residents of border regions tend to consider Norwegian as a useful and prestigious language more often than residents of Murmansk;
- The most common reasons to learn a foreign language (based on the interviews):
 - to show respect (characteristically for borderland area),
 - to be able to communicate;
 - for study;
 - for business (characteristically for English and Chinese);
 - to strengthen one's brain's natural abilities



Regional “dialect”

- Though most respondents speak the Central Russian dialect, as the region is relatively young, we found some regional words, such as:
 - «норги» [norgi] – Norwegians;
 - «сопка» [sopka] – landfill, hill (in Russian this means bald mountain, usually volcano in Kamchatka);
 - «шаньга» [shan'ga] – finno-ugric pastry.

Conclusions

- The language landscape is shaped by the mix of cultural and language exchange;
- The territory is dominated by Russian language;
- However, English is considered to be prestigious, despite a relatively poor level of competence among the local population;
- The minority peoples culture is preserved to a greater extent than their language.

Perspective and further research

- In perspective we would like to rerun the statistics as soon as all the materials are decoded;
- We also would like to conduct interviews with citizens of Scandinavia, who learn Russian or contacted with Russian citizens;
- If you know such potential respondents, please contact us on emitolmeo@gmail.com

Спасибо за внимание!
Thank you!

