

Emerging “third space” and students’ identities in a heritage language classroom

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Abstract

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>The main goal of the research was to examine the emerging third space in the heritage language classroom of bilingual students who are proficient in Russian and Finnish languages. The study was implemented as an action research within the context of supplementary evening classes for students of the ages 12 to 16. In order to carry out the research one 45 minutes lesson was video recorded, transcribed and peculiar pieces of the lesson interaction were translated from Russian into English. Before going into the field, the questionnaires were filled in by the students. Questionnaires provided an overview on the whole classroom as well as it included the information concerning students’ language use. The methodology of the research is framed by qualitative method, such as mediated discourse analysis.</p> <p>The findings of the research indicated that third space can facilitate learning in heritage language classroom. Five types of discourses which formed the third space appeared in the research results. Among those are: discourse of hobbies, discourse of the foreigner abroad, discourse of childhood, discourse plans vs. expectations and discourse of culture. Additionally, the research showed that third space can be successfully created in the heritage language classroom with the help of a graphic novel, however it has a potential to be developed further in order to make stronger connections between every day and academic funds of knowledge.</p>	
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1. Introduction

Heritage language has been the focus of researchers working in the field for many decades. Globalization and mass migration led to the necessity to preserve heritage languages. (Hébert, Guo, Pellerin, 2008). This issue has been addressed in many countries including Finland. Russian language speakers in Finland is the most numerous community among nonindigenous language groups (Protassova, 2008). Due to this fact teaching Russian as a heritage language in Finland has been an important issue.

Based on the newly introduced theory of “third space” (Moje et. al., 2004) I discover how heritage language learners of Russian participate in creation of a “third space” in the classroom. Within the context of the current research I consider “third space” as a place where academic and everyday discourses are coming together (Moje et. al., 2004). The guidelines from the National Core Curriculum are used to support the lesson planning process. Furthermore, an extract from a graphic novel is chosen as a basis for the lesson plan, which is supposed to encourage students to introduce their everyday funds of knowledge in the academic context.

Investigation of the “third space” has been done mostly focusing on foreign language classroom, thus current research contributes to the field because it concerns a different context, such as heritage language learning and teaching. Moreover, previous research has shown ambiguous results. While Moje et. al (2004) states that teachers should be prepared and determined to facilitate emergence of “third space”, Flessner (2009) claims that the more he plans it the less productive it appears to be. So, I look at the phenomenon of “third space” in order to contribute into the field of applied linguistics and to see how the concept can be developed in the context of heritage language learning and teaching.

2. Supporting bilingual language learners’ identities

In order to explain the research, it is first important to define and describe the main concepts of it, among which is identity and its formation, bilingualism, heritage language learning and teaching and the “third space” as a central focus of the current thesis. In the present chapter I will first explain the connections between bilingualism, heritage language learning and identity. In Chapter 3 I will move forward and explain how sociocultural theory, especially “third space” as its aspect can facilitate students’ learning and identity development in the classroom.

In the beginning of the 21st century the question of learners’ identities has become the central interest of researchers. One of the approaches on identity implies that it is formed by social and language practices (McKinney & Norton, 2008). Poststructuralist approach to identity denies the binaries of oppositions and takes into account the dynamic flow and complexity of identity. This view on identity is taken as a basis in the current thesis and is overviewed in the following chapter.

2.1. Bilingualism and heritage language learning

The ongoing globalization led to people moving to different places to live, work and study. One of the most important issues within the context of globalization is educational issue (Hébert, Guo, and Pellerin, 2008, p.58). Language education becomes especially significant as people from different backgrounds and language repertoires move around the world, thus the language learning and teaching turns into especially important process, which helps people support and develop their language identities and strengthen connections with cultural values.

Traditionally teaching a language is connected with studying all the aspects of a language such as grammar, vocabulary, and developing such skills as speaking, listening and writing. However, language involves much more than only its’ aspects. Nowadays, teaching and learning a language normally requires having a good understanding of culture of the target language and awareness of the language that is being used (Andrews, 2007).

Speaking about bilingual education, a teacher should be prepared to teach in such a classroom. One of the major issues in the bilingual classroom, distinguished nowadays is that “only the language used in the classroom is different from that used in educating language majority children” (Fishman & García, 1991, p.273). “The bilingual classroom often becomes a reflexion of practices in a monolingual environment” (Fishman &García, 1991, p.273). Taking into account this point of view, I assume that teachers should be more attentive towards teaching in a bilingual classroom. They should take into account students’ identities being dynamic and in the process of construction.

The main focus in this thesis, however, is specifically on heritage language learning and teaching, as the students in the classroom which is examined here, take part in heritage language classes. The classes are organized by the municipality. They are not obligatory, so it is the students’ or their parents’ decision to participate in such classes or not. As the classes are complementary, they take place outside compulsory school and are normally taught in the evening time.

There has been a lot of ongoing debate on the definition of heritage language education (HLE) and heritage language learner (HLL) (Kondo–Brown, 2005; Cho, 2000; Valdés, 2000, Fishman, 2001). The definition always depends on the field within which the concept of HLE is examined. Fishman (2001) made an overview of the history of heritage language education in the United States. He defines heritage languages in two ways, first as those languages, that are other than English (LOTEs) and second as the languages relevant to

the learner due to family or relatives (Peyton, Ranard, McGinnis, 2001, p.81). Speaking about heritage languages in the USA, Fishman highlights several groups: indigenous heritage languages, colonial heritage languages and immigrant heritage languages. Among indigenous heritage languages he especially emphasizes the role of Amerindian schools, which first were established as schools of life, but later on were transformed into formal institutions, where students could study in Indian language as well as in English. Colonial heritage languages in the USA are those that existed long before the States were founded, and they are not considered as indigenous languages, among such languages are Dutch, Swedish, Finnish and Welsh. However, as Fishman states, even these languages are nowadays preserved mostly due to immigration process. Immigrant heritage languages have been recognized as important resources. Fishman comes to the conclusion that heritage languages are of great importance, as they help society achieve language competency (Peyton, Ranard, McGinnis, 2001, p.95).

Many studies on immigrant heritage languages have been done in the United States, such as studies by Valdés (2001; 2005) on the role of Spanish, Bateman’s (2016) longitudinal study on bilingualism in Romanian and English, Kondo-Brown’s (2005) research on Japanese as a heritage language in the USA. Valdés (2005) as well as Fishman (2001) has argued different approaches to the definition of heritage language and its learners. She especially stresses that “the foreign language teaching profession currently uses the term *heritage student* in a restricted sense” (Valdés, 2005, p.412). The restricted definition, according to Valdés implies that a heritage language learner is “a student of language who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken” (Valdés, 2005, p.412). Such a vague definition of heritage language learners leads to ambiguity, as bilinguals, multilinguals and other groups of language learners and speakers can refer to this definition as well. Therefore, Valdés states that there might be some crucial differences among language

speakers who are labeled as heritage language learners (Valdés, 2005, p.416), which makes defining even more problematic.

Van Deusen-Scholl (2003) has also participated in the discussion on the definition of heritage language speakers. She claims that despite gaining its significance, the terms heritage language learner and heritage language speaker remain ill-defined (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003, p.212). Based on the work of Brecht & Ingold, Nunberg, Peyton & Ranard, Van Deusen-Scholl (2003) claims that “the answer to the nation’s linguistic needs lies not only in improving foreign language education programs...but also in recognizing the nation’s linguistic diversity and building on linguistic resources of the heritage communities” (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003, p.215). In addition to it, the transition from melting pot analogy, which makes assimilation a desirable result towards the acknowledgment of diversity leads to heritage languages being recognized in many countries. Likewise, such acknowledgement produces the need for the heritage language education. Heritage language is not the only term which is used for the identification. Giving an overview of the previous research Van Deusen-Scholl mentions that Wahry (1993) used such term as *ancestral language* and also added that some heritage language speakers referred to their heritage language as to the *native language*, even though they could not communicate or understand the language. Besides, such terms as *allochthonous language*, *home language*, *language of origin*, *community language*, *immigrant minority language* are used in different contexts for various reasons (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003, p.218). There is still no agreement on who can be considered a heritage language learner, as some researchers state that heritage learners should demonstrate at least some proficiency in heritage language, while others claim that definition of identity is more important than language proficiency (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2003, p.221). Additionally, Van Deusen-Scholl (2003) in her research claims that the term *heritage* “is

socially determined and constructed” and thus it becomes problematic to define, as the given labels might affect the status of the language.

Cho has claimed that heritage language is intertwined with person’s identity and it strengthens one’s cultural knowledge and overall helps to “contribute positively to the betterment of the society” (Cho, 2000, p.369). Cho has done the research in America in the minority group of Korean speakers. Research results confirmed that those learners who had “strong HL competence” (Cho, 2000) were connected to the Korean community and had stronger connection to Korean culture. Moreover, the knowledge of Korean as a heritage language allowed the individuals to participate in cultural events and activities. Furthermore, those respondents who knew Korean had no difficulties in communication with Korean native speakers and experienced more positive feelings when visiting Korea. What seems especially interesting in this research is that some respondents referred to the better career opportunities in case they learn their heritage language.

Cho’s attitude towards heritage language learners’ identity is supported by Bateman (2016). Bateman conducted a longitudinal research of a heritage language learner who was growing up in an English-Romanian bilingual home. The main goal of the research was to see how the child’s linguistic identity is negotiated through communicating in two languages English and Romanian. The child was observed from 1 to 8.6 years old (Bateman, 2016, p.258). The research results revealed that a child used Romanian as a secret language, moreover, sometimes a child used a secret language to empower herself, and show belonging to the Romanian linguistic community. Overall, a child went through 3 stages of identity negotiation. First of all, she positioned herself outside of the Romanian community. Secondly, she positioned herself outside the Romanian community while her mother inside it and thirdly, the child located herself in-between Romanian and English communities (Bateman, 2016, p.263). Bateman came to the conclusion that bilingualism or

multilingualism often starts at home and public education should make steps towards encouraging students to keep their heritage languages and such work should start from changing the attitudes towards languages other than English in the United States, because such languages are often related to poverty and political issues (Bateman, 2016, p.271).

Lee (2002) doing the research on Korean as a heritage language in America also concluded that heritage language and its maintenance is strongly connected with persons’ identity. Lee’s research focused on second generation Korean immigrants and the challenges of heritage language maintenance and development. Research results showed that respondents often referred to the problem of teaching Korean language, they suggested to implement Korean language teaching within legitimate language instruction in school and also stated that it might be helpful to develop materials, which would refer not only to American or Korean culture but would rather consider American-Korean culture as one entity (Lee, 2002, p.131).

These results confirm the findings of previous research done by Cho, Cho & Tse (1997), which dealt with the students motives behind learning Korean as a heritage language. Results showed that many respondents could not define themselves as successful Korean language learners, thus Cho, Cho & Tse conclude that “HL programs that help dispel these notions and stress the success of these students will have a better chance of succeeding and improving students’ confidence in their own ability” (Cho, Cho & Tse, 1997, p.111).

McQuillan (1998) suggests that self-selected and free-voluntary reading introduced in heritage language classroom can be a good way to motivate students to achieve a higher proficiency in heritage language. He supports this argument by giving the overview of previous research done in the field. Based on the research by Tse, McQuillan suggests that HL programs could be more sufficient if students want to associate themselves with the heritage culture or at least have neutral feelings or attitudes toward it. He adds that HL

programs could be more effective when the students are in late adolescence or early childhood and if they stress the importance of membership (Krashen, Tse, McQuillan, 1998, 84). In conclusion McQuillan notices the main problem to implement reading programs in heritage languages is to provide educators with materials that are both “interesting and comprehensible” (Krashen, Tse, McQuillan, 1998, p.84).

All of the above-mentioned studies have specifically stressed that heritage language learning needs to go through some changes and it needs some reconsideration. However, more importantly research have shown that personal identity and belonging or willingness to belong to the heritage community plays a crucial role in students’ motivation to learn the heritage language. Within the context of the current thesis, I would like to focus on Russian heritage learners, who were either born in Finland or moved here and received formal education in Finnish language, however, students themselves or their parents have decided to attend complementary evening lessons in Russian, in order to keep their mother tongue or their parents’ native language.

2.2. Bilingual students’ identities and figured worlds

The question of language and linguistic identity has been the main researchers’ concern for many years. According to the poststructuralist approach, identity is not a fixed condition, but rather a dynamic and context dependent aspect, that can be changed under different circumstances (Regan, Diskin & Martyn, 2016, p.3). McKinlay and McVittie support this idea, claiming that “... identity involves a certain type of ambiguity...” (McKinlay & McVittie, 2011, p.3), as identity is often connected with person’s permanent state but at the same time it involves “fragmentary and temporary social positions and roles, which people take up and discard, as they interact with people” (McKinlay & McVittie, 2011, p.3).

McNamara suggests that identity is defined by how people perceive the world and how they construct the relationship within the world. West has a different point of view on the concept of identity and claims that person’s identity depends on the material resources a person possesses. Bourdieu had a similar understanding of identity. He emphasized the relationship between power and identity (Norton, 1997, p.410-411).

Identity is a broad concept, which absorbs many nuances. Moreover, identity can be viewed from different angles and within the context of present research it is crucial to discover and focus on student’s identity, as it has an enormous impact on the way students define themselves, which is important for heritage language learners.

Wartham (2004) did the research on student’s identity in the classroom. The research focused on individual identity of a student named Tyisha. Wortham discovered how student’s identity can change across time, specifically during one academic year (Wortham, 2004). In the research Wartham (2004) showed that the construction process of student’s identity emerges when students and teachers address to various resources within the context, such as “habitual classroom roles, the curriculum, and other resources to position students in recognizable ways” (Wortham, 2004, p.165). One of the most significant features that was taken into account by the researcher is thickening. Thickening is defined as “the increasing presupposability of an individual’s identity over ontogenetic time, as the individual and others come increasingly to think of and position him or her as a recognizable kind of person” (Wortham, 2004, p.166). The research showed that Tyisha started the school year in September as a “typical girl” but in a couple of months she was identified as “a disruptive outcast”. Later on, in February, her identity of a disruptive outcast thickened. As a result, Wortham came to conclusion, that the emergence of identity as “an intermediate timescale phenomenon” should be examined not only within the sociohistorical framework, but in practice with the context, which exists in particular time and place (Wortham, 2004).

Heritage language learning has proved to have considerable impact on the process of identity construction (Wright & Taylor, 1995; Leeman, Rabin & Román-Mendoza, 2011). Wright & Taylor (1995) made a research on students’ personal and collective self-esteem in heritage language classroom. Wright & Taylor state that if a language is associated with cultural differences then it might create distance between students and activities they do in majority language classrooms (Wright & Taylor, 1995, p.242). This in turn leads to lower self-esteem, which have a negative impact on academic success. Moreover, the status of minority language in society is crucial to support collective self-esteem. Wright & Taylor suggest that the use of heritage language “as a medium of instruction...is a clear affirmation of the value and status of the heritage language and of those who speak it” (Wright & Taylor, 1995, p.243). The fact that Russian as a heritage language has a significant role in Finland is obvious because National Core Curriculum for basic education (2016) has clear guidelines for teaching pupils who study in their mother tongue. Moreover, NCC (2016) does not solely focus on the language but specifies that one of the goals of heritage language education is to deepen “pupils relationship with the literature, narrative and cultural tradition in their mother tongue”. I think it shows that not only language itself matters, but the development and support of pupils’ bilingual identity development is important for the Finnish educational system.

The research by Wright & Taylor focused on defining the correlation between language programs (majority language and heritage language) and self-esteem. The research took place in Canada and the participants were from a community where the numerical majority was Inuit, while education was mostly held in the majority language. The study concerned preschool children and showed that minority groups had little contact with majority group. In conclusion Wright & Taylor state that “early heritage language education can have a positive impact on the personal and collective self-esteem of minority language

students” (Wright & Taylor, 1995, 251), while second language instruction cannot be that beneficial.

Rubin also made a considerable impact into student’s identity research. She conducted the survey on learner’s identity amid figured world. The research was a part of a broader study and it showed how the figured world is built up in the Oakcity High school with the help of various discourses and learners’ identities (Rubin, 2007). The researcher focused on how student’s identities are created within a context of a particular school. The research was done from the situated perspective, which means that “the nature of learning is profoundly shaped by the activity systems within which students learn” (Rubin, 2007, p.220). Rubin highlights that the particular practices in the classroom shape the learning environment. In the Oakcity High the atmosphere during the classes was rather tense. Students were considered as those who lack the basic academic knowledge and as those who do not want to proceed their education in college. The teacher organized classes according to the plan which rarely was changed and the topics which were interesting and valuable to be developed into discussion were “used in an arbitrary and hostile way, without any attempt to further students’ understanding: (Rubin, 2007, p.233). After all Rubin came to the conclusion that the figured world that has been created in the classroom of Oakcity High School led to overwhelming consequences and in many cases destroyed student’s intentions for future learning. The research shows in detail how the figured world can be shaped by students’ and teachers’ identities and influence on students’ perception of themselves. Moreover, it highlights that the figured worlds can impact students’ opinions towards themselves.

Another research on students’ identity in the figured world was done by Ma and Singer-Gabella (2011). The research took place in the elementary mathematics teacher education class. The main goal of the classes was to understand how to use routines in order to reform mathematics pedagogy. During the classes students had to be either learners or

teachers in the figured world, which has been created within the classroom. All the participants (11 female students) were undergraduates or juniors who were going to teach in elementary school. The results of the research were ambiguous, as some students were eager to participate in the world presented by the instructor, while others denied and preferred to be identified as university students of mathematics pedagogy (Y. Ma & Singer-Gabella, 2011). The figured world created in the classroom gives an opportunity “to expand the range of potential models of identity for teachers of mathematics” (Y. Ma & Singer-Gabella, 2011, 20). It shows that encouraging students to participate in such worlds and enhancing students’ imagination can positively contribute to identity construction process.

Identity is very much about how people “come to figure who they are through the “worlds” that they participate” (Urrieta, 2007, p.107). Holland and Skinner introduced the concept of “figured world” in 1998. According to their idea, “figured worlds take shape within and grant shape to the coproduction of activities, discourses, performances, and artefacts” (Holland, Skinner et. al., 1998, p.51). Figured worlds are often defined as socially or culturally constructed spaces where different interpretations can be done. Holland and Skinner use Vygotsky’s ideas as a starting point to justify the importance of “figured worlds”. Vygotsky described how children can manipulate imaginary world by using various symbols. He underlined children’s ability to give familiar objects new meanings, for example a couch can become a hideout (Holland, Skinner et. al., 1998, p.50).

This idea is supported in the longitudinal study by Susan Jurow (2005). The research took place in middle school where students were studying mathematics. The aim of the research was to examine how contextualized learning can facilitate studying process and assist students to make connection between school and students’ personal experiences. Students had to participate in Antarctica project, they had to work as architects who are responsible for designing “a cost-efficient research station in Antarctica that scientists can

live and work in for 20 years” (Jurow, 2005, 37). The research results showed that students participated in the classroom figured world and in the figured world of Antarctica project. Jurow concludes that students’ participation in different figured worlds can help us understand “how they experience and reconfigure the learning environment of the classroom” (Jurow, 2005, p.63).

As I can conclude from the above-mentioned researches, many of them were based on Vygotsky’s idea of sociocultural theory, according to which the new meanings of the objects can be collectively created and culturally formed. Out of this statement I assume that new meanings can be formed not only of the objects but also of the concepts or abstract ideas. I suppose that everything should be questionable and reshaped and “third space” could become such a place.

2.3 Sociocultural views on language education

One of the major ideas of the thesis is the concept of a “third space”. However, the theoretical framework is much broader. In the current thesis, I would like to focus on such issues as bilingualism, sociocultural theory, zone of proximal development and third space within educational context. In the literature review I elaborate the idea of a third space, I also explain the concepts introduced by Vygotsky, explain the features of identity development of HL learners and significance of figured world in the classroom.

To justify the concept of a “third space”, which is defined as a place where two discourses are coming together, I would like to consider Vygotskian sociocultural educational theory. According to the sociocultural theory, culture is one of the essential parts of the teaching and learning process. “In a monocultural environment culture remains mostly invisible, and educators start paying attention to it only when two or more cultural patterns are empirically present in the same classroom at the same time” (Kozulin, 2003, 15). Present

research is based on teaching bilingual pupils who are proficient in both Finnish and Russian. I assume that Vygotskian ideas would serve as a profound theoretical basis for this study, as creating a “third space” is a process that requires mutual efforts from students and a teacher, so it is inappropriate to deny the social aspect of Vygotsky’s theory. According to his ideas, sometimes “a child proved to be much more than a passive recipient of information; however, independent exploration often led to the acquisition of immature concepts and neglect of important school skills” (Kozulin, 2003, 15). As a result, researchers started investigating various teaching models, which later led to such concepts as scaffolding and mediation (Kozulin, 2003).

If we take a look at what has been done within the educational field with the help of a “third space” theory, then we would come up with several interesting works. First of all, I would like to focus on the research implemented by Elizabeth Moje in 2004. Moje and her colleagues did the research about the literacy skills in secondary school. The focus in the paper was “on the content area of science” in a classroom. (Moje et. al, 2004, p. 41). The “third space” by Moje is considered as “integration of knowledges and Discourses drawn from different spaces... where first space is represented by people’s home, community, and peer networks and the “second space” by Discourses they encounter in more formalized institutions such as work, school, or church”. (Moje et. al, 2004, p.41). Moje’s research focuses on a group of students of the age 12-15, who live in different neighborhoods, have different background but all of them are members of the Latino community. (Moje et. al, 2004, p.47). During the research, the authors came up with several categories of discourses that appeared to exist in the science classes. The main aim in the research was to show the reader how the “third space” can be created in the science classroom and how many various discourses of knowledge are involved in this process. Of course, it is inappropriate to say that the “third space” is an ultimate tool for students’ motivation. According to the results of

Moje’s work “few of the students were willing to offer their everyday funds of knowledge explicitly, teachers (and curriculum developers) also need to plan for the active construction of third space”. (Moje et. al., 2004, p.65). So, it means that the creation of a “third space” might be more productive if the teacher would be prepared beforehand and would think about the tools which can be used for that.

Elizabeth Moje’s research proves the findings discovered earlier by Gutiérrez (Gutiérrez et. al., 1999). However, the view of Gutiérrez and her colleagues on the concept of a “third space” is slightly different. Gutiérrez distinguishes a “third space” as “a particular discursive space, in which alternative and competing discourses and positioning transform conflict and difference into rich zones of collaboration and learning” (Gutiérrez et. al., 1999, p.286-287). According to the research “hybridity and diversity serve as the building blocks of Third Spaces”. (Gutiérrez et. al., 1999, p.287). The research took place in the Bell Elementary school, where neighborhood was primarily Latino. Pupils are proficient in English and Spanish (Gutiérrez et. al., 1999, p.290). What is particularly interesting in this study is that in this classroom “conflict became the catalyst for expanding learning in the Third Space” (Gutiérrez et. al., 1999, p.292). The issue in this case was pupils’ interest in the reproductive function of human beings. So, the discourse segment illustrates how “literacy learning can be imbued with meaning when one’s personal life experiences are referenced”. (Gutiérrez et. al., 1999, p.298). Gutiérrez and colleagues came to the conclusion that the “third space” served as a developmental goal, where pupils managed to develop their proficiency. (Gutiérrez et. al., 1999, p.301). In my opinion, the findings made by Gutierrez, Moje and their colleagues prove that a “third space” can create a profitable environment for students’ motivation and their proficiency development.

One more important fact introduced by Gutierrez is a suggestion that “third space” in a classroom can be considered as a zone of proximal development. The author claims that

“third space can be viewed as a particular zone of proximal development” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p.148). She elaborates this idea stating that third space is a development of social environment, where “students begin to reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p.148). In other words, if we take into account this definition of a “third space”, then it is possible to use the space not just in order to put various discourses together but also as a tool for reconstructing students’ identities within the “space”. In my opinion, this approach is represented in my research using the medium of comic book that focuses on travelling and characters’ experience abroad. So that it can be used as a starting point for students to think about how they feel being bilinguals and how they can define themselves, while being equally proficient in at least two languages.

While I was looking at the “third space” concept in the educational settings, I came to the conclusion, that in many cases it is closely connected with Vygotsky’s idea of zone of proximal development. Vygotsky argues that ZPD is “determined by comparing what a student can do alone and what she or he can do during problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Kozulin, 2003, p.292). According to Gutiérrez a “third space” is a designed social environment of development that can also be defined as a “collective third space” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p.148), which in this sense is related to Vygotsky’s notion of ZPD. Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development is often described in conjunction with scaffolding (de Guerrero, Villamil, 2000, p.51). Scaffolding is defined as a process of mutual support when a more experienced learner or a teacher can help a novice to get through a task or exercise that seems to be difficult (de Guerrero, Villamil, 2000, p.52).

As Vygotsky states, ZPD and scaffolding are essential parts of the socio-cultural theory, I assume that these concepts are also an important part of this research, as the

activities that are given to students are done together in small groups or with the help of a teacher.

3. Third space theory as a supportive approach in language development

As teaching and learning has been one of the main focuses of language researchers, there have been a lot of argument on how to create a facilitating and fruitful learning environment for students. The “third space” theory approach is one of the approaches that takes into account students’ knowledge acquired outside the classroom, thus making “non-academic” knowledge valid, accepted and welcomed in the educational settings. Furthermore, validation of students’ knowledge allows students “to explore and represent the relationships between their own lived experiences and disciplinary academic knowledge” (McKinney & Norton, 2008). This is why I decided to choose this approach in order to examine identity construction in the heritage language classroom. In the following chapter I take a closer look on the theory of “third space” and its previous implementations in different educational settings.

3.1 Definitions of third space

A “third space” can be described as an interdisciplinary concept as it can be noticed in a variety of fields such as sociology, philosophy, geography, applied linguistics and education. Among the scientists who researched this phenomenon are Michael Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja and Homi Bhabha (Bhabha, 2004).

Soja (1996) in his book stated that “everything comes together in Third space: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history” (Soja, 1996). Otherwise in Soja’s opinion “third space” is a place, where opposite but related aspects can come together and form a profitable

environment. Moreover, Soja claims that “thirdspace...is a flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances and meanings” (Soja, 1996, p.2). According to his view thirdspace is a response to binarism and it can serve as a place “of critical exchange” (Soja, 1996, p.5) and he especially stresses that thinking trialectically is important in order to understand the thirdspace, as it is “a limitless composition of life worlds that are radically open and openly radicalized” (Soja, 1996, p.70).

Within the educational field the work of Bhabha (2004) is often taken as a starting point for the definition of the concept. Though Bhabha is highly criticized by his colleagues, I think that he introduced an important point of view on a “third space” as a cultural phenomenon within the postcolonial discourse. According to Homi Bhabha a “third space” or a hybrid space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no “primordial unity or fixity” (Bhabha, 2004). He described a “third space” as a concept closely connected to one’s cultural background. Bhabha argues that negotiations produce a hybrid space, where all the negative aspects between the knowledge and its objectives are destroyed (Bhabha, 2004, p.37).

This idea underlines the importance for students to study in a favorable environment where they can freely bring in all the funds of knowledge they have experienced in the everyday life. A crucial aspect of a “third space” is that it gives freedom and some “space” to students in order to express their thoughts and ideas. Students are welcome to state their points of view on topics and are encouraged to feel free to bring their own everyday life experiences into the classroom.

A significant research has been done about the third space in educational field. Faizah Idrus examined how the “third space” can contribute to developing students’ shared identity in the classroom (Idrus, 2015). The research took place in Malaysia and included discussions

and interviews with teachers and students. The researcher offered a list of literature which was intended to serve as a tool for creating a shared identity in a “third space” within a classroom. All the selected stories concerned Malaysian culture (Idrus, 2015, p.31). Idrus took the theory of third space and hybridity introduced by Moje and her colleagues as the essential one. Moje et. al stated that the links between different funds of knowledge in the classroom can be productive, however, a teacher should be prepared in order to contribute into creating a “third space”, where the discourses of various funds of knowledge meet (Moje et. al, 2004). Idrus in her research came to the conclusion, that both, “third space” and shared identity contribute to students’ involvement in the learning process (Idrus, 2015, 31).

Kostogriz also made a research on space in literacy practices. His research is mostly based on the ideas introduced by Bakhtin, Lefebvre and Vygoysky. Based on the ideas of the above-mentioned academics, Kostogriz states, that space is rather an abstract than a concrete entity, which can be invented by social, material and semiotic aspects of interaction (Kostogriz, 2006, p.177). Kostogriz mostly focuses on opposition between “us” and the “Other”. This idea was first introduced by Lefebvre, as he highlighted, that space comes into life only due to the differences of participants. Kostogriz developed this idea and even broadened it, as he added the aspect of time to space, which was originally introduced by Bakhtin. The time-space dimension is important in their works as it allows to reveal similarities or differences at a particular time, which makes them more concrete (Kostogriz, 2006, p.186).

Another research on the “third space” theory was done by Susi Bostock (2012). Her research is mostly focused on teacher’s professional development, however, the inspiration for the research was taken from the classroom. Bostock was teaching first graders. One day she realized that many of her students were interested in video games. The students had good digital literacy skills, so they were familiar with all the software that was available in the

classroom, but still wanted to introduce something new from their everyday life into the learning (academic) process. Bostock noticed that students easily took the role of teachers to show Susi how the game works. What seems to me particularly interesting in this research is that the students did not direct the teacher in step-by-step fashion (Bostock, 2012, p.225). First of all, they asked a teacher a couple of questions about her interests and then supported her with advice while she was going through the game (Bostock, 2012, p.225). Video game was not the only experimental part of Bostock’s classes. Later one, after attending one of the CLIP (critical literacy in practice) seminars, she decided to introduce podcasts as a tool which can help students “learn about and challenge the social and political issues in their communities and the larger world” (Bostock, 2012, p.226). However, the teacher was not familiar with the software, which should be used for creating podcasts, so two students from the fourth grade took the responsibility to show the teacher how the software functions. This whole process was observed by the first graders, who later on were seen by a teacher making podcasts secretly during the lesson. Later on, this type of activity as creating podcasts in the classroom was implemented with the first graders (Bostock, 2012, p.226 - 227). Bostock notices that in the “third space” created in the classroom “the students not only imagined a new type of curriculum and a new way of communicating to a larger audience, they also assumed a leadership role that tapped into their out-of-school literacies” (Bostock, 2012, p.227). This research shows that the “third space” can be productive during the teaching and learning process and proves that students can easily take an opportunity to change the roles with the teacher and implement their everyday discourses (podcasts, video games) into the learning process. However, I think it is important to keep in mind that every classroom is different, which means that not all of the students would be eager to actively participate in such activities.

“Third space” has been successfully implemented not only by the teachers of humanities, but also by math’s teachers. For example, Rayan Flessner (2009) investigated the “third space” in teaching mathematics in elementary school. The focus of his research was not on the actual emergence of the “space”, but rather on creating a favorable environment for implementing the “third space” within the educational context (Flessner, 2009, p.1). Flessner held the research as a teacher-researcher, which is related to the present study, where I also teach a lesson, collect the data and then analyze it. Flessner’s research took place in the summer school, where the researcher was teaching mathematics to the fifth graders. Overall 18 students participated in the research (Flessner, 2009, p.3-4). One of the aspects which is absolutely different from the Moje’s et. al’s results is that Flessner noticed that the more he planned the emergence of a “third space” the less successful it was (Flessner, 2009, p.8). The researcher worked on creating a “third space” in the classroom. He started from getting in touch with the students and their parents before the school has started. However, he faced the language barrier, as many of the families’ members were bilingual, where parents were not good at speaking English, so the researcher could not talk directly to them (Flessner, 2009, p.8-9). Despite all the activities that were created by the teacher in order to contribute into “third space” emergence, the space appeared unexpectedly, when the students introduced “disparejo” — the game which was used instead of “rock, paper, scissors” when there were more than two participants (Flessner, 2009, p.15-16). The implementation of “rock, paper, scissors” into the teaching process was meant for experimenting with mathematical concepts. Once Flessner noticed that students were using a different kind of game (disparejo). This example showed that “children possessed the confidence to solve problems by utilizing resources with which they were familiar with” (Flessner, 2009, p.16). Flessner states that “the children, through the game Disparejo, taught me that a classroom community built to focus on learning – rather than teaching – provides the opportunity for third spaces to develop”

(Flessner, 2009, p.18). The results of his research contrast with the ones shown up from Moje’s et. al. research, because Moje and her colleagues came to the conclusion, that in order to develop a “third space”, a teacher should be prepared for that and plan all the details while Flessner states, that the more he planned the possible emergence of a “third space”, the more he failed. Therefore, the present study can contribute into exploration of a “third space” within educational settings and especially in the settings of heritage language classroom, as the results of the above-mentioned researches are controversial.

One research on the concept of “space” within heritage language classroom has been done by Hornberger (2005). Even though, research was implemented on ideological spaces in heritage language education, I am convinced that it is related to the present study to a great extent. Hornberger claims that opening up and filling in ideological or implementational spaces can facilitate heritage language education. She adds that the notion of ideological space is bordering with the “third space” and refers to the hybrid classroom practices. According to Hornberger, implementational or ideological space does not focus only on classroom context, but also takes into consideration the out-of-school context, which goes in parallel with the notion of the “third space”, which implies that students are encouraged to bring academic related discourses and everyday discourses to the discussion in school (Moje et. al, 2004; Gutiérrez et. al., 1999). Even though the current research does not focus on ideological spaces, it is still important to notice that the students in this research are encouraged to bring in their out-of-school knowledge into the classroom. This idea is the central one in the present work.

3.2. Language awareness as a facilitating aspect to form a “third space”

Within the context of the current thesis, the idea of language awareness is a critical one, as with the proper chosen words, phrases and intonations a teacher can encourage

students to create a “third space” in order to develop the links between formal and informal funds of knowledge or on the other hand, restrain students from making connection between academic and everyday funds of knowledge. In addition, linguistic awareness is also important for students, as it lets them improve their proficiency in the language as well as it enhances their cultural and language specific knowledge. This in turn can have a considerable impact on students’ identity development, as in this context, heritage language learning is connected to both, language and culture.

Tomlinson (2003) defines language awareness as “a mental attribute which develops through paying motivated attention to language in use, and which enables language learners to gradually gain insights into how languages work”, he also adds that it is “internal, gradual realization of the realities of language use” (Bolitho et. al, 2003, p.252). Besides Tomlinson (2003) distinguishes teachers’ language awareness, which implies giving clear and explicit knowledge to the learners and another Language Awareness approach which is supposed to be developed by the learner by paying attention to the patterns of the language. Bolitho (2003) mentions that Language Awareness approach in the classroom provides students with the possibility to discuss language issues in a simple and understandable way and what is especially important within the context of the current thesis such discussions allow students “to draw their existing experience of language, and of the world...to make sense of a new language” (Bolitho et. al, 2003, p.257). This idea abuts with the “third space” theory, which encourages students to bring in everyday related discourses to the formal educational settings.

Carter (1994) points out such important aspects of the Language Awareness as awareness of language properties in order to use a language in a creative way, awareness about cultural aspects of the language, such as metaphors or idioms which help to understand the culture better. These two aspects are especially related to heritage language learners, as

they are aimed not only at learning the language in order to communicate, but rather to make or strengthen the connection with the heritage culture.

Hales (1997) had a different view on Language Awareness, he mostly focused on language awareness as a relatively narrow approach, saying that it is more about the grammatical, phonological or lexical features of a language and these aspects of language influence in meaning construction. In this research I mainly consider language awareness as awareness of cultural aspects and I use the comic book which is full of idiomatic expressions, metaphors and other properties which help to understand the Russian culture better.

3.3. Creating “third space” with the help of the comics book

As the main mediational tool in my research is an extract from a comic book, I will describe different definitions of comics in the following chapter and then I will focus on comics being used in educational settings and will explain in what way comics have been used in educational settings.

3.3.1 Definition of comics. Although modern teachers try to be more inventive and they introduce different practices in the classroom, comics and graphic novels are normally considered as unreliable sources for teaching. I assume that in many contexts they are even marginalized and are not taken into account as tentative materials for teaching. However, some countries have already tried to use comics and graphic novels to teach different subjects. Moreover, students’ interest to read comics still exist. The research done by Worthy, Moorman and Turner proved that students like reading comics (Wright & Sherman, 2006, p.168).

In the beginning of the 21st century there was a decline in the number of students who read comics. According to the data it was mostly connected with the decline of newspaper

circulation. So, comics had to move to the digital world. However, its’ aims, among which is to entertain, inform and promote literacy are still unchanged (Wright & Sherman, 2006, p.168).

Before going deep into comics in education, I would like to introduce its’ definitions and justify why they can be used in education. Will Eisner (1985) claimed that comics are not taken into consideration by scholars. He was certain that comics can facilitate to a “better climate...for production content” in educational settings (Eisner, 1985, p.5). Eisner defined comics as a sequential art or as a mixture of “two major communicating devices: words and images” (Eisner, 1985, p.13). Another theorist, Scott McCloud, uses Eisner’s ideas as a starting point to define comics. McCloud states that “comics is a juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (McCloud, 1994, p.9). Cohn develops this idea, stating that “comics are social objects created by incorporating the results of two human behaviors: writing and drawing” (Cohn, 2013, p.1). Cohn’s ideas about comics are determined by a linguistic point of view. He argues that “comics are written in visual languages in the same way that novels or magazines are written in English” (Cohn, 2013, p.2). Taking into consideration his definition of comics, I assume that if literature is so often used in language learning, then comics and graphic novels should not be marginalized in the classroom. As Cohn assumes that comics are a part of visual language, it means that a reader needs to have the ability to read it.

Although, the above-mentioned definitions are supported by each other, Miodrag used a more critical approach in defining comics and gave many points of view on the debates around the definition. However, she still comes to the conclusion that comics are an entity that combines visual and written word (Miodrag, 2013, p.5-11).

3.3.2 Comics in education. Comics became widely used in the American educational system in the middle of the 20th century. Yang, who implemented comics while teaching Algebra several years ago, assures that “comics can be a powerful educational tool” (Yang, 2008, p.187). Yang stresses that comics are visual, that is why students enjoy reading them and learning through them. He distinguishes comics from animation, stating that comics are “permanent”, it means that the reader can read in his or her own pace and control the progress through narration (Yang, 2008, 188). According to Yang’s findings, comics proved to be a helpful tool for students to revise the topics they had in the classroom or to learn the topics on their own. When a teacher had to be absent, he normally made a syllabus of the lecture in a comics strip and handed it to students. Later he got positive feedback from students about using comic strips in the educational process (Yang, 2008).

Yang formulated several advantages of comics in education. First of all, comics are motivating as students are attracted by pictures in comics. Secondly, comics are visual. So, it facilitates the process of making connections with the character from a comic book. Thirdly, they are permanent, as it has been mentioned above. Another aspect, distinguished by Yang is intermediation. The author assumes that comics can be a scaffolding tool in difficult disciplines and can be helpful for the reluctant students providing non-threatening practices (Yang, 2003).

Dale Jacobs supports Yang’s attitude towards comics. Jacobs states that, although comics has been considered as a simplified reading texts nowadays the situation is slightly different. Many popular web-sites and newspapers write reviews on comic books and an education publisher Scholastic even started its imprint Graphix, which has already published a well-known comic book “Bone” by Jeff Smith (Jacobs, 2007, p.19).

In 2001 Versaci included comics in his literature classes to see whether this medium would be an effective tool for learning. The teaching goal was “to investigate and analyze

popular culture representations of life experiences, ethnic and cultural groups and historical events” (Versaci, 2001, p.62). According to the author, the students were surprised and disoriented in a positive way. So, the author came to the conclusion that students became more engaged in the learning process when a comic book was involved (Versaci, 2001). He explains this engagement by the fact that “reading comic books requires an active, though largely subconscious participation on the part of the reader” (Versaci, 2001, p.63). Versaci underlines that comics help to develop analytical and critical thinking skills. So, these outcomes led me to an idea, that a comic book can be used to create a “third space”, where critical thinking evolves.

The author also claims that “comic books invite students to participate meaningfully in a classroom discussion” (Versaci, 2001, p.66). I suggest that it is a very important point, as in the present research a comic book is used as a basis for the discussion and development of students’ thinking.

Drolet made a research on how comics can be used in order to develop reading and writing skills in the EFL classroom (Drolet, 2010). Drolet introduced many ways of using comics in the EFL classroom where students from the 6th grade had to learn how to present reported speech, change the tense in the sentences and follow the tense harmony (Drolet, 2010, p.127-128). Additionally, according to Drolet, comic strips such as Garfield or Calvin and Hobbs can serve as an effective tool to learn and practice adjectives in a foreign language. Drolet states that students can not only “increase their repertoire of descriptive adjectives by reading some character descriptions” (Drolet, 2010, p.129) but they can also have an opportunity to write their own descriptions for the characters, based on what they have already read. In his research, Drolet noted that comics can be used for older learners as well. For example, a teacher can include some political comics, or those which are focused on public figures (Drolet, 2010, p.130), which would be more interesting for older learners.

As a result, Drolet concluded that “the comic strip format provides a powerful combination of discursive skills, artistic creativity and expression; its use can scaffold to more difficult disciplines outside of the language classroom”, which proves that comics can serve in a various range of fields in order to broaden students’ views on different aspects.

The research by Morrison et. al. was focused on investigating how comics generated by students can contribute into the learning process (Morrison et. al., 2002). The research team suggests that creating comics can be used as a culminating activity to sum up or presents students’ learning outcome (Morrison et. al., 2002, p.759). Dale Jacobs (2007) shares this positive attitude towards comics in education and states that comics can help students develop critical thinking. Moreover, Jacobs states, that comics are not simplified texts with illustrations, but multimodal units, which “help students engage critically with ways of making meaning which exist all around them” (Jacobs, 2007, p.21). The researcher claims that while using comics in education, teacher can show students effective ways of meaning making, which gives students an opportunity to transform from passive readers to active meaning-makers (Jacobs, 2007, p.24).

Bonny Norton (2003) based her research on discovering the motivational power of comic books. She used Archie comics to see whether students felt motivated in their studies. Archie comics were not chosen by chance. Many children enjoy reading this comic book series as it mainly concerns the life of Archie and his friends, who study in Riverdale High school. Moreover, the researcher stated that many teachers used to read and enjoy Archie in a younger age, but now they think that comics cannot be used as a reading material especially within the academic context (Norton, 2003, p.141). Norton’s research was based on interviews and questionnaires, where students had to explain how they felt about comics used in school. One of the comments, which is highlighted in the research is that students were excited to see an adult interested in the same things. Additionally, one of the participants

stated, that she differentiated reading for fun and reading for studies, adding that if she had to read Archie comics for studies, she would have checked unfamiliar words in the dictionary (Norton, 2003, p.142-143). In my opinion it accentuates, that the everyday sources of knowledge can be successfully implemented within the educational context.

Tatalovic (2009) did the research concerning scientific comics and argued that “comics can indeed be efficiently used for promoting scientific literacy via education and communication” (Tatalovic, 2009, p.1). In the research Tatalovic gave a comprehensive review of existing scientific comics. He concluded that “science is great and worthy of being promoted via comics”. However, in the present research I would like to focus specifically on the comic book, which does not have any explicit academic value, but conceal the knowledge, which can be rediscovered and interpreted by the students during the class, when students make connections between their own attitudes towards an aspect and its representation in a comic book.

4. The present study

4.1 Research questions

The lesson is based on a comic book, where the story is connected with travelling experience of the main character. This kind of story provides opportunities to create a “third space” and let students introduce their own experiences of travelling or experiences from everyday life. The research questions of the present study are:

1. Is it possible to create a “third space” with the help of a graphic novel in a heritage language classroom?
2. Did students manage to recreate their identities within the “third space”?
3. What discourses did students introduce during the discussion?

The hypothesis of the research is based on the assumption introduced by Elizabeth Moje et. al.. As it has been mentioned above the author states that teachers may need to “actively develop third space by engaging students in experiments, discussions, and reading and writing activities that focus on, or at least include, the texts and experiences of many different communities, with local space being only one of many that students examine” (Moje et. al., 2004, p.64). So, within this context I think that a graphic novel can be used as a tool that helps a teacher to actively develop the discussion where various funds of knowledge are introduced. From the academic discourse, there is a graphic novel that is chosen by the teacher as a resource of knowledge, while from the informal or everyday discourse there are students' experiences of travelling or going somewhere with the family or on their own. As a researcher, I believe that these two discourses would meet and create a “third space” in the classroom. Additionally, based on the assumption of McQuillan (1998), that heritage language education could be facilitating by implementing reading activities, I assume that the developed lesson plan with the chosen reading material can benefit to the learning process. Last but not least, an extract from the comic book that is chosen for teaching corresponds the

requirements of NCC (2016), where one of the learning outcomes concerns deepening students’ relationships with literature, and cultural tradition in their mother tongue.

4.2 Methodology

The data collection consists of two parts: questionnaires and video-recorded lesson. It is based on theories of a “third space” (Moje, 2004, Gutierrez, 1999, 2008), sociocultural theory and zone of proximal development by Vygotsky (Kozulin, 2003).

Before going into the field and teaching a lesson I had one visit to observe the classroom, then I asked students to fill in the questionnaires and after that I made a detailed lesson plan that included activities for students, learning goals and timing.

In the current research I use qualitative analysis of the collected data. To be more specific I use mediated discourse analyses that would help me distinguish the discourses that are introduced by the students and the teacher.

The mediated discourse analysis focuses on such questions as what is the role of the discourse introduced by a person, by whom it is produced why it is used and what motives are behind it? (Scollon, Saint-George, 2002, p.66). As MDA focuses on the circulation of the discourses and interaction order, it would be an appropriate tool to look at the discourses that are involved in a “third space”. According to Scollon and Saint-George “the researcher in MDA is considered an integral part of the nexus she studies. She uses scientific inquiry to engage with the nexus — sometimes even to transform it” (Scollon, Saint-George, 2002, p.73).

According to Wohlwend MDA includes the following variables:

- 1) mediational means,
- 2) social actor (a person who performs an action)
- 3) rules (routines used for participation)

- 4) community of practice discourse (people who belong to the community)
- 5) roles (those who get an access to the material and those who produce them)
- 6) object (material that is being used)

All the above-mentioned variables are arranged around mediated action and social practice (Wohlwend, 2014), which form the central focus of the analysis.

Ron Scollon (1998) distinguishes 3 ways, in which mediated discourse analysis can be understood. First of all, MDA means the discourse of “the media”, which implies newspapers, magazines, periodicals, or even films and television. Secondly, MDA can be used to spot “computer-mediated discourse”, where computer (it can also be internet or another related source) serves as a mediator. Thirdly, MDA can focus on any kind of mediation involved into social interaction (Scollon, 1998, p.6). The last approach is the broadest one and exactly this way of using MDA is in focus in the current research.

Scollon (1998) assumes that MDA “prefers instead to pay attention to texts as they are used to mediate the real-time concrete actions of agents in actual social interactions and to examine their relevance to these actions”. So, within the context of the research I suppose, that MDA would be an appropriate “lens” to look at the discourses, how they are introduced, by whom and how they facilitate the emergence and development of a “third space” where the interaction takes place.

4.3 Action research

Being a teacher-researcher might be considered as a limitation of the study. However, I take into account all the aspects concerning the peculiarities of being a teacher-researcher. Lankshear & Knobel (2004) discussed this issue in detail in the “Handbook for teacher research”. The authors claim that holding a research as a teacher has many advantages, among which is “understanding the forces shaping education”, which sometimes are not seen

by a teacher when he or she never looked at the classroom from a different angle (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.6). Moreover, a teacher research provides an opportunity to test some of the techniques or methods within the classroom and then check whether the approach is useful and meaningful for further implementation or not (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.5). Additionally, a teacher researcher is familiar with the context. In other words such a researcher can be thoroughly prepared for the study by formulating the interview questions or the whole classroom session in a way which will lead to more evident results. As Lankshear & Knobel state “data are always already interpreted to a significant extent by the researcher, at and before the point of collection: (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.172).

Teacher research aspects are also often related to action research. The main focus of the action research is to focus on specific situation and discover in what ways different community organizations (including schools) can contribute to its further development and how they can facilitate its work (Stinger, 2001, p.1).

Originally, the idea of action research was introduced by Kurt Lewin in the late 1930’s (Adelman, 1993). Even though initially Lewin used action research in order to explore power relations and help minorities achieve independence and equity, it has later on been implemented within educational settings with the main purpose “to enable the school to act as the agency of democratic change within its community” (Adelman, 1993, p.11).

Action research does not focus on generalized solutions for everyone, but rather helps “to find an appropriate solution for the particular dynamics at work in a local situation” (Stinger, 2001, p.5). This idea especially well fits into the context of heritage language teaching, as it is definitely an environment with specific peculiarities, where students are proficient in at least two languages. Moreover, according to Stinger (2001), it is important in action research that “all the participants engage into communication, which can facilitate the development of harmonious relationships and the effective attainment of group or

organizational objectives” (Stinger, 2001, p.30). Furthermore, one of the main focus areas of action research is communication, which is based on four fundamental principles: understanding, truth, sincerity and appropriateness. All of the mentioned principals are for sure important within the educational context, and they are supposed to be achieved while constructing a “third space” during the interaction among students and a teacher.

Another important feature of the action research is its inclusion. It means that all of the participants are equally engaged in the research process, thus creating a win-win environment for everyone. Eileen Ferrance (2000) claims that action research in educational settings is not about problem-solving, but about looking for possible ways to improve educational process in the future. According to Ferrence (200), the main concept of action research is to look in the future and find ways to make the learning process more engaging. Action research for teacher-researcher is especially meaningful, as it embraces theory and practice and allows a teacher to see what should be done better or differently and implement it straight away.

Alice McIntyre (2014) explained all the participatory action research components in detail. She specifically highlighted that action research engages “participants in the construction of knowledge” (McIntyre, 2014, p.49). This fully corresponds the idea of a “third space”, where the new knowledge is created due to the merging of two types of discourses: academic and every day (Moje et. al, 2004). Moreover, the process of action research consists of three steps: cyclical process of exploration, knowledge construction and action, which might happen at different moments during the research process (McIntyre, 2014, p.1). The current research is to a large extent data driven, but at the same time it requires an accurate preparation for teaching the lesson and making up the questionnaire.

Lankshear & Knobel (2004) point out the importance of data collection process. The researchers claim that data collection can be divided into several stages, among which are

relativity, reliability, validity and credibility (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.180-184). None of these principles is less important than another one. However, one cannot implement the successful data collection without justifying it with some profound theoretical sources (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p.187). In the current research, I follow all the above-mentioned principles of leading a research while being a teacher in the classroom.

4.4 Data collection

Data collection process is divided into two main stages. First of all, the questionnaires were developed to receive a general overview of the participants and see what languages they use in their everyday life, not only within school. Additionally, I had one observation visit to the classroom, to see what kind of activities the students normally do and also get an overview of their proficiency. Secondly, based on the questionnaire results and observation visit, the reading material was chosen, and an abstract from a comic book was taken as a reading material. The next step of the data collection process was to create a lesson plan with clearly defined goals and tasks. All of the stages are explained in detail in the sections below.

When the data was collected, I first transcribed it and then translated the most interesting and meaningful extracts from Russian into English. I paid special attention to the moments where “third space” was emerging as well as to the moments where it was not fully developed. Additionally, I analyzed those moments where students’ identities were recreated in the classroom.

4.4.1 Questionnaires. Questionnaire is used as a pre-study method, in order to get the idea of a whole classroom. All of the questionnaires were filled in anonymously and mostly focus on questions concerning learners’ language use and attitudes toward the languages. The questionnaire is attached as an Appendix 1 at the end of the thesis. I decided to use questionnaires as a method, because it gives a generalized data (Burton, Bartlett, 2005, p.100). I believe that it is a suitable and fast method for me to get an overview of language use of every student in the classroom as well as to see the general picture of students’ language use.

4.4.2 Lesson design and planning. A comic book, which has been chosen for the research is entitled “Ruts & Gullies” (“Овраги”). Particularly this book has been chosen for the research because the plot concerns the foreigners going to Saint-Petersburg and this whole story is about them getting to know the culture, people and to some extent the language. The original version of the book is written in French, but the book, which has been used in the classroom is the official translation from French into Russian, which was published by “Bumkniga” (“Бумкнига”) in 2016.

In my opinion, such a story is a good basis for students to reflect on how they feel being in Finland and in Russia and how their feelings are different or evolve during time. Moreover, the book is full of idiomatic expressions in Russian, which can contribute to the students’ heritage language development and may lead them to reflect on some special expression, which are closely connected to the Russian language and culture, which in turn may contribute to their language awareness (see f. ex. Bolitho et. al, 2003; Carter, 1994; Hales, 1995). Moreover, the National Core Curriculum for basic education (2016) has clear and specific recommendations for heritage language lessons. NCC states, that pupils should

“familiarize themselves with diverse spoken and written texts and learn how to interpret and analyze... them” (NCC, 2016, p.504). This idea is a core in the lesson plan, as students are given the task to read the abstract from the book by roles, then look for special expressions and idioms, reflect on them and explain them. Moreover, students are encouraged to introduce their own experiences during the discussion. Additionally, NCC (2016) recommends using the contents that help to “diversely expand his or her knowledge and skills related to language, literature and other forms of culture” (NCC, 2016, p.505). So, the book, which is chosen for the lesson fits into the requirements of the NCC, as it is related to the target culture and has vast language registers. Besides, the original book was written by people, who were unfamiliar with the target (Russian) culture, which gives students an opportunity to look at their heritage language and culture from the point of view of a foreigner. So, in my opinion, it contributes not only to students’ language development, but also to students’ critical thinking skills and ability to analyze the given information.

One of the most essential steps in data collection was the process of lesson planning. National Core Curriculum (2016) is used here as the main guiding source, as it has the whole chapter where the requirements, outcomes and recommendations for heritage language classroom are thoroughly explained. Moreover, before going into the field I made a visit to the classroom to see how the lesson is usually held by the teacher and to understand the level of proficiency of the students.

A graphic novel is chosen as the main source of knowledge, which can encourage students to introduce their own experiences or points of view. The main goal of the lesson is to help students activate their memories or experiences and then cooperate together with them toward creating a “space”, where they could freely refer to their personal experience, which in turn could facilitate the learning process, make it more personalized and memorable. Additionally, the text of the comic book gives a point of view of a foreigner, of a person who

never experienced or belonged to Russian culture. Such a view can significantly broaden students’ attitudes and vision of the heritage culture, by showing how an “outsider” might feel when he faces with an unknown culture or environment. Furthermore, students could make connection between their own experiences and what is experienced by the characters of the book.

The lesson lasted for 45 minutes and included the following activities. First of all, short introduction was used as an ice-breaking exercise. It helped the teacher create a reliable and favorable environment and establish a contact with the students. Secondly, the extract from a comic book was read by roles and the students were encouraged to choose the roles by themselves. As comics are vivid sources with many graphic images, it becomes easier for the students to make connections and create associations between themselves or their desired representations and the characters. The next step is to ask the questions about some peculiarities of the text, for example, why does the author use Latin alphabet at a particular moment, what do the various proverbs, sayings or idioms mean, as the text is full of special expressions and words, which are rarely used in the everyday Russian language. The last but not least activity is to have a group discussion. The main goal here is to find all the stereotypes, which were fallen apart as the characters were getting to know Russian people and culture. This activity is meant to encourage students to make connections between their own experiences and views on stereotypes and characters’ experiences.

5. Findings

In this chapter I will provide a detailed analysis of the interaction happened during the lesson. I will focus on the forms in which “third space” was created in the classroom as well as I will describe the moments of students’ identities recreation. “Third space” here is understood as a space where every day and academic discourses intertwine (Moje et. al., 2004). It was explained in detail in Chapter 3.1. Overall, I analyze 10 extracts, where “third space” and students’ identities were visible and whether successful and productive or not.

In the following chapter I focus on specifically important moments of the lesson, which show the moments of created “third space” in the classroom or those moments, which could serve as the possible basis for development of the “third space”

In the current chapter I start from defining the mediation tool, which was used in the lesson. In this particular case, it is appropriate to state, that the comic book is a primary tool for discourse mediation, as the main activity in the classroom was reading a story and based on that the discussion took place. According to Scollon (2001), Mediated Discourse shall necessarily have a mediation means, which is usually performed by a physical object. Of course, it is impossible to deny, that within the given context there are more mediational means, such as e-board, which was used to make the reading process easier and to help the teacher refer to specific pages, or classroom and the whole school, which can also serve as mediational means of the academic discourse. However, I would like to focus on a narrower mediational means, such as a comic book.

5.1 Everyday discourse – school discourse

As it was the very first lesson for me as a teacher in the classroom we started from getting to know each other. I introduced myself, and then asked all of the students to introduce themselves. It was interesting to see how ice breaking this activity was, even

though it was not the actual lesson, but only the get-to-know each other part. For example, one of the students became excited, when we spoke about hobbies:

Extract 1

Саша: Меня зовут Саша и в свободное время я занимаюсь бадминтоном и (неразборчиво), фрисби. А так я люблю карточные фокусы.

T: Что?

Саша: карточные фокусы.

T: Вау!

T1: Ты нам покажешь какой-нибудь когда-нибудь фокус? Ну давай на рождество принеси карты.

Саша: У меня щас есть.

T1: (неразборчиво) это если время останется. Давай учителю не будем фокусы показывать (смех).

Sasha: My name is Sasha and in the spare time I play badminton (unclear). But overall, I like card tricks.

T: What?

Sasha: Card tricks.

T: Wow!

T2: Are you going to show us a card trick? Bring the cards on Christmas.

Sasha: I've got them right now.

T2: ...if we have time. Let's not show the tricks to the teacher (laugh).

This extract shows, that a student became open towards the discussion about himself and his hobbies, however, his intention to show what he likes doing was interrupted by the main teacher who was present in the classroom. In this example, I think, we can see how the discourse of hobbies is initially introduced by the teacher and then mediated by students. Additionally, the transcript shows that Sasha was eager to show what kind of tricks he does in the classroom, but he was suddenly interrupted by the teacher. I think such willingness to involve someone from the academic context into everyday life of the student already shows that he would like to bring the out-of-school knowledge to the academic context.

When the reading activity was done, students were given the task to split into two groups and look for the stereotypes in the text of a comic book. However, whether the teacher’s explanations were not clear, or the students had their idea concerning stereotypes, they kept on naming the idioms, which in many cases were related to the stereotypes as well.

Extract 2

У: Как вы понимаете “русские горки”? что это такое?

Дима: Ну я это понимаю... как будто это такая... просто такая детская горка

T: How do you understand “Russian mountains” (Rollercoasters)? What is it?

Dima: Well, I understand it... as if it is a kind of... just a sliding for kids.

In this short example, the student made his guess, concerning one of the idioms from the book. He has even introduced a discourse, which in his mind is relevant to the topic and connected the idiom to an everyday, familiar object, such as a sliding for children. Even though his guessing wasn’t correct, it is still crucial for students to refer to their everyday experiences as it helps to develop connections between school and home (Moje et. al, 2004). In this abstract the discourse of childhood is suggested by the student and it shows that he referred to the everyday funds of knowledge, which is connected to his childhood experience in order to explain the meaning of a lexical item.

The next example illustrates, how a student managed to make a connection between an abstract idiom and everyday experience.

Extract 3

Дима: (поднимает руку) на странице 84 гладко было на бумаге, да забыли про овраги.

T: кто как понимает?

Дима: ну наверное, что когда ты что-то обдумываешь, то все нормально, а когда ты что-то делаешь, то может быть (неразборчиво)

T: то есть что-то делаешь, а получается не так, как планировал?

Дима: планировал, да

Dima: (raises his hand) on page 84 The best-laid plans of mice and men often go astray (literal translation: it was smooth on paper, but they forgot about ravines).

T: How do you understand it?

Dima: Well, I guess, when you think over something, then it's ok, but when you do something, then may be (unreadable)

T: So, you do something, and the result is different from what you have planned?

Dima: Planned, yes.

Even though the student doesn't use specific example, he still tries to explain in his own words, what the idiom means. In the example given above a student needed some assistance from the teacher in order to finish his thought, as he couldn't find a proper word to complete the sentence. However, with minor help of a teacher, the student managed to make a very strong connection. The discourse introduced here is difficult to define, however, in my opinion it is possible to define it as “plans vs expectations”, as it is clear that the student compares the planning process or expected result with what happens in practice.

5.2 Identity re-creation

When a teacher started to give out the roles to the students, it was intriguing to see that some of the students, after having had a look at the illustrations, had their own preferences about the character they want to choose. For example, when a teacher went through all the characters and asked who wants to be Philippe, everyone kept silent, then the teacher asked one of the students. You can see it from the dialogue below:

Extract 4

T: В общем надо разобрать роли. Джимми это вот, так, подождите. Филиппе это вот этот парень, у которого прическа на кепку похожа. И Джимми это

вот этот парень. Давайте, кто будет Филиппом? Кто-нибудь? Нет? Дима будешь Филиппом?

Дима: (неразборчиво) я хотел вот этим.

T: Вот этим? Джимми? Окей, давай ты Джимми. Кто Филиппом будет?

T: ...So, we should pick the roles. Jimmy is, wait. Philippe is this guy; his haircut looks like a cap. Jimmy is this guy. Ok, who wants to be Philippe? Someone? No? Dima do you want to be Philippe?

Dima: (unclear), I wanted to be this one.

T: This one? Jimmy? Ok, you are Jimmy then. Who wants to be Philippe?

One more example of students being determined to choose particular characters proves that comics as a medium can facilitate the process of creation connections between the students and book characters:

Extract 5

T: Да, окей, Филиппе есть. Дальше у нас бортпроводник.

Женя: (поднимает руку)

T: Окей, Женя, да. Эм... Дальше. На странице двадцать четыре откройте. У нас здесь (смотрит на проектор), оупс. Значит, ну пара реплик вот у этого мужчины и у девушки. Кто кем будет?

Алиса: (поднимает руку) (неразборчиво говорит)

T: Девушкой?

Алиса: (кивает)

T: Yes, okay, We've got Philippe. Flight attendant is the next one.

Zhenya: (raises his hand)

T: Okay, yes. Hm..Next... Open [the book] on page 24. We've got [looking at the whiteboard], oops. This man and woman have a couple of phrases. Who chooses them?

Alisa: [raises her hand] (unclear)

T: the woman?

Alisa: [nods]

These short dialogues show, that comics facilitate creating connections between the reader and the character, as even from the first glance a student decided whom he wants to be in the reading activity. Student did not hesitate, he clearly knew that he chooses to be this specific character, but not anyone else. Such a strong connection between the character and a reader is highlighted in the next abstract.

Sasha chose a character Philippe and was reading his speech. The authors of the book wrote the speech of the character with Latin alphabet in order to create the feelings of a foreigner.

Extract 6

Sasha: Spasibo. Minya zavut Filip, kak titya zavut? Dazvidania. Pazhalusta (Thank you. My name is Philipp, what is your name? Good-bye. Here you are).



Figure 1. An example of how the text is represented in the comic book.

What is especially fascinating here, is that the student immediately read the phrase with an accent. He did not need any clarification about how to read this phrase or why it is written this way. This short example underlines once again, that comics have great potential to be used in the classroom, as such cultural aspects can be explicitly present there, and the students can get to the answers without teacher’s assistance. The discourse of the “foreigner abroad” is mediated by the book, and then perceived and acted out by the student. This moment also shows how students’ identity (Norton, 1997; Wortham, 2004; Rubin, 2007;

Urrieta, 2007; Regan, Diskin & Martyn, 2016; McKinlay and McVittie, 2011) is reconstructed at a given moment.

One more example, taken from the same class and the same student is when the phrase is pronounced with pauses, as it is written in the speech bubble of the character.

Extract 7

Sasha: Phil, re-lax (Фил рас-слабь-ся)



Figure 2. An illustration of how the text is represented in the comic book

The students were not given any direction by a teacher about how to read the phrases. They made the decisions based on what they see. Within the given context, I assume, that the student showed involvement into the process, as well as he made the connection between himself and the character, which goes in hand with the theory of re-creating of identity in the classroom (Urrieta, 2007). Additionally, when the students were reading the comics, they made pauses, while going through the wordless panels, which points at their considerable visual literacy skills.

5.3 Cultural contraposition and stepping out from own position

The following abstract shows, that a student makes connection between an abstract statement, used in the text and her interpretation of it, which is very concrete. In this case a discourse of cultural contraposition appears, however the student does not make any connections with her own experience, which means that a third space wasn't fully developed here.

Extract 8

T: Как вы понимаете «последний оплот свободного мира»?

Alina: В России совсем другая культура. Ну как бы не совсем такая... откуда они прилетели и кажется, что там совсем все по-другому.

T: How do you understand “the last stronghold of the free world”?

Alina: There is different culture in Russia. Well, not really like...where they came from and it seems that everything is different there.

Anyhow the fact that Alina made the connection between the stronghold of the free world, mentioned in the abstract with the differences between Russian and the rest of the world illustrates that she connects it to the characters' feelings and perceptions of the world.

The next example shows how the students try to imagine themselves being in the same situation as the comic book characters. It shows that they can actually step out from their own identities and think about the issues from someone else's point of view.

Extract 9

У: Как бы вы себя чувствовали если бы были а месте Филиппе и Джимми?

Дима: Наверно я бы немного испугался.

У: Почему испугался?

Дима: Ну потому что некоторые считают что в России очень плохо

У: Ну это ведь стереотип все равно.

Никита: ... познакомиться с новой страной интересно было бы

T: How would you feel if you were Philippe or Jimmy?

Dima: I would be afraid.

T: Why?

Dima: Because some people think that it's really bad in Russia.

T: But it's a stereotype.

Nikita: ...discovering new country is interesting.

I think that the above described data extracts show that the comic book made them think over the issues from the point of view of another person. In this case it was from a foreigner's point of view in Extract 8 and from the point of view of the character as it is shown in Extract 9. In my opinion such a transition can also be considered as a “third space”, as the students introduce such discourses as “cultural contraposition” and “stepping out from own position” were introduced by the students.

5.4 Missed opportunities for “third space” creation

Despite all the successful examples of “third space” emerged in the classroom, there were moments where the third space was not developed at all or was developed in a very limited way due to some reasons.

First of all, the moment when the students were divided into two groups was supposed to encourage them to discuss the stereotypes which they can find in the comic book extract, however the data shows that only one group was vividly discussing the issue, while another one was keeping silent most of the time.

Second example of a missed “third space” emergence was the moment following *Extract 2*, which looks as following:

T: How do you understand “Russian mountains”?(Roller coasters) What is it?

Dima: Well, I understand it... as if it is a kind of... just a sliding for kids.

T: Are there any other explanations?

T: Well, there is an opinion that in Russian we don't say... [teacher explains the issue]

I think that in this example “third space” could have been developed further if the teacher did not provide the students with an explicit explanation straight away but rather encouraged them to give their own guesses or points of view on the topic. If this condition was fulfilled, then it could have led to a “third space” emergence, where many students instead of one could participate.

Another example of a missed opportunity was at the very end of the class when a teacher asked about students’ associations concerning one of the proverbs:

Extract 10

У: Последняя здесь “по луковице в день здоровье на всю жизнь”. Как вы вообще воспринимаете это?

Дима: Ну наверно что лук он очень полезный.

У: Здесь наверно такая культура речи что У вас есть какие-то ассоциации что можно есть чтобы быть здоровым?

[ученик поднял руку, но учитель не заметил]

T: The last one here: “an onion a day, good health for the whole life”. How do you understand it?

Dima: Well, I guess onion is good for health.

T: I guess it’s peculiar here that... Do you have any association of what you should eat to stay healthy?

[a student raised the hand, but the teacher didn’t notice it]

The teacher was aiming at awakening students’ associations about what is considered good for health in their opinion or in their culture, which cannot be decisively defined because the students are bilinguals and belong to more than one culture. I also wanted to see what kind of associations they might have, because for example in English one would say “An apple a day keeps the doctor away”. The extract shows that the teacher ignored one of the students and there was no one else willing to answer.

Despite the missed opportunities of “third space” creation, I think, that “third space” itself has a great potential to be emerged and developed, however, it is more or less unpredictable when and how it is formed. It depends to a great extent, whether the students are familiar with the teacher and whether they have mutual understanding and willingness for cooperation to construct a space of shared discourses. Nevertheless, I come to the conclusion, that in the present lesson, students introduced their own experiences, related to their everyday life. Even though, it was limited I still think, that the rudiments which were formed in the classroom, could have been developed into wider spaces, shared between students and a teacher.

6. Discussion

The main focus of the current study is to examine the concept of “third space” in a heritage language classroom. The first research question concerns the possibilities of a “third space” to be constructed in a HL classroom with the help of a graphic novel, the second question is related to the opportunities of the students to reconstruct their identities in the classroom and the third research question deals with the discourses introduced by the students. The findings from the data help to answer all of the questions formulated in the beginning of the research.

First of all, the data abstracts show that graphic novel can serve as a helpful tool to create a “third space” (Moje et. al., 2004; Gutierrez, 1999, 2008) in the classroom. Going back to the definition of the “third space”, it implies “integration of knowledges and Discourses drawn from different spaces... where first space is represented by people’s home, community, and peer networks and the “second space” by Discourses they encounter in more formalized institutions such as work, school, or church”. (Moje et. al, 2004, p.41). Extract 1, when Sasha introduces his willingness to show the tricks, which he has learned in the out-of-school context serves as an example of necessity for the student to be able to bring the everyday life discourses to school. It illustrates that such spaces are needed for the students and in some cases, students are willing to create the space where they would show what they have learnt in the out-of-school context. Moje et. al stated that “third space” can be facilitated by the teacher who is determined and prepared to develop the space in the classroom (Moje et. al., 2004, p.65), while Flessner (2009) claimed that the more he planned the “third space” the less successful it was. Current research can be situated in the middle of these two conclusions. From the one hand there are evidences of the “third space” where the students are willing to participate but from the other hand it is not developed to its’ full potential. Additionally, not all of the students were active during the class, which supports the idea of

Moje and her colleagues that students might not be willing to introduce everyday funds of knowledge in the classroom explicitly, thus teachers need to plan how to construct the “third space” inclusive for all or at least the majority of the students. I suggest that well-planned lesson which is determined to develop a “third space” can have a considerable impact into its emergence and positive development, however there are context dependent issues which could constrain “third space” enhancement.

Answering the first question of the current research: is it possible to create a “third space” with the help of a graphic novel in a heritage language classroom? I conclude that it is possible, and some students were willing to create such a space, however in some cases the “third space” was not fully developed, thus it was restricted and the reasons for that are explained in the limitations part. Overall, the “third space” was created by such discourses as *hobbies, foreigner abroad, childhood, plans vs expectations* and *cultural difference* and it is the answer to the third questions of the research: what discourses did students introduce during the discussion?

The second question: did students manage to recreate their identities within the “third space”? doesn’t have a decisive answer. Abstracts 4 and 6, when Dima is insisting to read for specific character and Sasha is acting with his voice as if he is an actual character from the book supports the idea of identity as reconstructed at a moment and the idea of a figured world. Moreover, the results from abstracts 6, 7 and 9 justifies the idea introduced by Gutiérrez (2008) about the “third space” being the place where students can renegotiate their identities. The way how the students adopted the roles of the character proves that they made an effort to fall into place of a person who sees Russian culture as an outsider and I believe that it broadens students’ views on their own identity and how others might perceive them. However, emergence of the “third space” (Moje et. al, 2004; Gutiérrez et. al., 1999, 2008) is questionable here, as the students do not introduce everyday discourses, thus the “third

space” is not developed. Nevertheless, the statement by McKinlay & McVittie (2011) about identity as a “fragmentary and temporary roles...which people take up and discard, as they interact with people’ is related to the results from the Extract 6, 7 and 9, with some adjustment, as students are more involved in the interaction with mediated means (a comic book extract) rather than in interaction with other people, but anyhow they take a temporary role and reproduce the characters from the book. Moreover, the idea of figured world (Holland, Skinner et. al, 1998) is supported by Extracts 6 and 7 from the present research. Even though this idea is not developed to its’ full potential, it shows that heritage language classroom can be the place where students come to figure who they are (Holland, Skinner et. al, 1998, Urrieta, 2007).

As current research was focused on HL education, the findings show that students are aimed at making connection between themselves and characters, who are clearly defined as outsiders of the Russian culture. The feedback received after the class showed that despite the easy tasks that students had to do in the classroom, they enjoyed the new experience and some of them have acquired new knowledge. As the above discussed research on HLE lessons stated that it needs some reconsideration and changes, I assume that teacher’s determination towards developing a “third space” in HL classroom can serve not only as an education facilitating tool, but also as a reason to create novel practices and tools in order to develop the “space”, enrich the learning process and diversify it.

6.1 Limitations

The current research is a small-scale study done within quite a restrained context of a Russian as a heritage language classroom, thus the results might differ depending on the context. As I had only one lesson there and I was not familiar with the students it could have had an impact on the results and on the fact that not all of the students were eager to bring

their experiences into the classroom. However, I am convinced that the results are fully reliable and show the possibilities for the “third space” to be developed in a heritage language classroom.

Another limitation of the present study is the quality of audio, as the whole classroom had to be in the lens of the video camera the camera had to be set in the corner of the classroom. As a result, some short pieces of the data were missed, as it was impossible to hear what the learner of the teacher says.

7. Conclusion

Present research focused on heritage language classroom and the emergence of the “third space” within the classroom, it also considered students’ identities as constructed in the classroom. The research results show that the moments of “third space” emerging in the classroom were not numerous, however there were four clear examples in Extracts 1, 2,3 and 8 when students were open towards introducing their everyday funds of knowledge into the classroom. Even though the “third space” was not fully developed at those moment, the research results show that students are ready to make the connections between two funds of knowledge thus they refer to the everyday discourses in order to explain academic issues.

The research contributes into the field of applied linguistics as it focuses on heritage language classroom interaction and shows possible ways to motivate students and facilitate their language learning using such source as a comic book which is often marginalized in the classroom.

As a result, I come to the conclusion that “third space” should be considered as an entity or as a whole that can be created not just by two separate types of discourses, but rather by a variety of discourses that are intertwined, and which form a space, favorable for students. Furthermore, I believe that the discourses introduced by the students should be developed by the teacher and connected to academic discourses, otherwise like it happened in Extract 1, students might become reluctant and cautious, thus they would not rely on their own experiences which are important to them and their peers. I assume that relationship between students and a teacher also impact the possibility of the “third space” emergence.

The research shows that students often refer to the everyday discourse, or those discourses which are not directly connected to school. Learners often rely on their personal experiences in order to explain the unknown idiom or concept.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

For each question below circle the response that best characterizes how you feel about the statement, where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I can identify myself as a Finn.	1	2	3	4	5
I can identify myself as a Russian.	1	2	3	4	5
I speak mostly Finnish.	1	2	3	4	5
I speak mostly Russian.	1	2	3	4	5
Russian is my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	5
Finnish is my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	5

Open ended questions:

- 1) In what situations do you use Russian?
- 2) In what situation do you use Finnish?
- 3) Have you ever faced with stereotypes about Russia while living in Finland?
- 4) Why have you decided to learn Russian?