

Title: Identity Transformation and Transgression through Ethnographic Fieldwork, Focused Observation and Reflection in Community-Based Language Learning

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Abstract:

The proposed paper will focus on the multiple dimensions of integrating guided ethnographic fieldwork and cultural observation in a semester-long community-based language internship course and discuss the effects of ethnographic discovery on the learner's understanding and perception of the target language culture and their own L2 speaker identity in it. Community-based language learning is a form of learning that takes place outside the language classroom and draws on student experiences, cultural and linguistic observations and integration with target language speakers and subsequent deep reflection on the observed cultural and communicative practices (Giles, Honnet, and Migliore, 1991). In the presented study, a group of advanced Russian learners was asked to conduct ethnographic fieldwork at their community-based internship site, paying particular attention to the use of physical and communal spaces, physical touch and gesture, and insider-outsider social dichotomies, linguistic landscapes and cultural mediascapes. The presenter will discuss selected excerpts from students' reflective journals and ethnographic narratives as evidence of L2 identity transformation and transgression in the context of linguistic and cultural immersion in the target language social space. The discussion of the data will capitalize on the notion of social pedagogies situated at the intersection of authentic learning and adaptive expertise (Bass & Elmendorf, 2012) as a tool of engaging language learners in a learning experience where their identities undergo transgressional changes as students approach the task of language learning from the position of a cultural ethnographer. By taking a socio-ethnographic approach to authentic language learning, these students obtained a sense of voice and purpose as well as gained empowerment allowing them to take an active role of 'undercover' researchers at the language internship site.