L2 IDENTITY, DISCOURSE, AND SOCIAL NETWORKING IN RUSSIAN

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As the integration of Internet-based social networking tools becomes increasingly popular in foreign language classrooms, the use of modern communication technologies is particularly critical in the context of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs), where student exposure to the target language and its speakers is usually minimal. This paper describes communicative exchanges between native speakers and non-native speakers (NS-NNS) in a telecollaborative project that spanned two semesters and brought a rich and authentic social networking community, *VKontakte*, into college-level Russian classes in the United States. The analysis of the students' online activities, phenomenological interviews, and interactions with Russian keypals grounded in the principles of identity construction through interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) and Discourse Analysis Framework (Gee, 2005) shed light on the students' emerging online second language (L2) identities along the continuum from L2 learners to L2 users. Along with global and local categories of L2 identity enactment in virtual social spaces, we bring into focus the notions of *digital wisdom* (Prensky, 2009) and *investment* (Norton, 2000), while exploring the ways in which learners of LCTLs, such as Russian, draw on Internet mediation in order to compensate for the lack of contact with the L2 and to extend social connections beyond the confines of a language classroom.

Keywords: L2 Identity, Social Networking, Computer-Mediated Communication, Virtual Environments, Discourse Analysis

INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of Web 2.0, networking in online environments has become an increasingly popular form of social interaction that allows participants to express themselves, build profiles, form online communities of common interests, and interact socially with others (McBride, 2009). This phenomenon of social networking, made possible by the invention of new communicative technologies, reflects a changing attitude towards the Internet as a social platform and a greater trust in its possibilities as a social medium. Participants of online social networks engage in relationships, form friendships, collaborate with others, and, while doing all that, enact and fashion distinct identities (Lomicka & Lord, 2009).

Social interactivity, as well as an increased popularity among students, has made social networking sites an attractive environment for language learning and a potential platform for Internet-based cultural tasks in second language (L2) classes. This instructional use of modern communication technologies has been brought into a narrow focus with the birth of a new generation of students, often labeled as *the Net Generation* (Tapscott, 2009) or *digital natives* (Prensky, 2001). This generation has grown up depending on technology, and because of that, Prensky argues, their mental functions are mediated by technology, at least to the extent that they process information in a fundamentally different fashion than previous generations of learners did.

Prensky's (2001) term *digital natives* seems to rely mainly on age differences, and does not distinguish among the wide variety of levels of technological preparedness (Winke & Goertler, 2008) or socioeconomic and cognitive variation within this population (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008). Regardless of the limitations of the term, a growing proportion of today's learners are indeed "digitally wise" (Prensky, 2009) in the sense that they appear to aptly use new technological innovations in order to complement their learning strategies and compensate for certain cognitive limitations (e.g., relying on large bodies of knowledge stored in digital form). *Digital wisdom* is about a conscious choice to take

advantage of technological enhancements, that is, "wisdom arising *from* the use of digital technology to access cognitive power beyond our innate capacity," and "wisdom *in* the prudent use of technology to enhance our capabilities" (Prensky, 2009, ¶ 2, emphasis in original).

While Prensky (2009) refers mainly to mental enhancements that technology provides, digital natives also typically draw on social enhancements, which have become available with the expansion of the Internet and communication technologies. Digital natives make virtual friends, maintain friendships, and participate in online social groups of common interests and causes. In other words, they take advantage of computer mediation in order to compensate for the lack of social contact in real life, often preferring online interactions to traditional face-to-face encounters. This generation of students is more comfortable using social technologies than previous generations. Internet mediation and social networking are indispensable components of their social lives and are venues for exercising and enacting individual or group identities.

To extend this concept to the reality of L2 learning, we propose that digital wisdom also encompasses a social dimension. This social dimension manifests itself in students' conscious choice and purposeful intent to use Internet mediation with the goal of extending social connections and gaining access to the target language in the digital realms of the Internet and social networking environments. A digitally wise L2 learner is one who takes advantage of social affordances that Internet mediation provides for L2 learning in order to legitimize his or her social power as an L2 speaker beyond the socially limited setting of the L2 classroom. The learner can practice the role of L2 user in various genres of online social interactions, synchronous and asynchronous, "investing [himself or herself] in an L2 identity—an identity in the second/foreign language—that is unfamiliar, uncomfortable and indeed unimaginable" (Hanna & de Nooy, 2009, p. 119). By this notion of investment, we mean one's commitment to building his or her other self and recreating oneself as a successful speaker of another language. This level of commitment is closely tied to the learner's perception of his or her relationship to the context in which language use takes place (Norton, 2000). Taking up a new or changed identity under the pressure of a communicative context is not an easy task, as "it requires not only sensitivity to genre, but in many cases a significant shift in the way one sees oneself interacting in a second language" (Hanna & de Nooy, 2009, p. 119). As challenging as this task may seem, it potentially enables L2 speakers to free themselves from the role of language learner and assume another role of language user, projecting new selves through their language and discourse in virtual social spaces. In Prensky's terms, by turning to Internet-mediated social interaction and constructing their L2 identities online, language learners act as digitally wise users of the Internet.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how L2 learners of Russian discursively establish their online L2 identities as they engage with native speakers of Russian in a series of telecollaborative tasks in the popular Russian social networking space, *VKontakte*. Our analysis focuses on learners' discourse, to examine the patterns in which learners reveal their evolving L2 identities in online interactions and in one-on-one interviews. We begin by outlining the theoretical conceptualization of identity and its application to L2 identity enactment in NS-NNS interactions via a social networking site. We then describe the epistemological and methodological foundations of the study, and the context and participants of the study, followed by data analyses, conclusions, and study limitations.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF L2 IDENTITY RESEARCH

Broadly speaking, the issue of identity has been brought into focus with the development of social approaches in SLA theory, in which learning to speak a foreign language is considered to be a more social rather than cognitive phenomenon, motivated by "the desire and the possibility of expanding the range of current identities and reaching for wider worlds" (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 242). In this theoretical framework, L2 identity is understood through the L2 learner's relationship to the world, to the culture of the language he or she is studying, and to his or her assumed affiliation with that culture and its natives (Norton, 2000).

In contrast to the traditional structuralist view of identity as a static entity or a collection of social roles one is assigned to perform, poststructuralists conceptualize identity as a dynamic process of self-identification on a moment-to-moment basis in social interactions with other members of a particular community (see Block, 2007, for further discussion). In sociolinguistic research, identity is often associated with language affiliation, language expertise, language inheritance, and the ability of learners to invest themselves in a new L2 identity that projects a close connection to the target language and culture (Norton, 2000).

In the L2 identity literature, virtual spaces and computer-mediated communicative contexts are found to be welcoming venues where language learners express themselves more freely in a second language (e.g., Lam, 2004; Spiliotopoulos & Carey, 2005). Recent research on L2 learners in Internet-mediated communicative environments has concerned itself with the distinction between L2 learner and L2 user identities in open Internet environments such as public discussion forums (Hanna & de Nooy, 2003, 2009), transnational gaming sites (Thorne, 2008), social networking sites, and personal interactions (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011). These studies examine the informal use of L2 in various target language online domains. Self-identifying as foreigners, non-natives, or L2 learners was found to be different identity-establishing strategies in these environments. However, researchers do not find these strategies beneficial in all online social contexts. Hanna & de Nooy's (2003) work with French online public forums, for example, shows that L2 user identity enactment leads to social acceptance or eventual authentication by other native-speaking members of the virtual community. Conversely, the participants who self-identified as L2 learners failed to accomplish the same goal, and therefore they were denied the opportunity to participate in the forum activities on par with native speaking members. Pasfield-Neofitou's study, in contrast, showed how, by constructing their identities as L2 learners in online social spaces, Japanese (L2) students "mitigated any potential loss of face due to their language competency, and by construing themselves as experts in English or as foreigners, they may have made themselves more attractive to Japanese members who were actively looking for a foreign or English-speaking contact" (p. 105). These learners benefited from native speakers' corrections and other forms of feedback, particularly, in the social networking domains populated by native Japanese speakers. These newer series of studies show the necessity of continuing to explore L2 learners' communication and identity building strategies in interactions with native speakers in Internet-based social spaces.

While the popularity of social technologies grows among foreign language professionals, the learning opportunities that naturalistic online settings provide for language learning still need to be adequately researched (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011). One of the methodological challenges these kinds of studies exhibit is the need to provide a more comprehensive and systematic approach to the identity work data. In the present study, we propose a new framework for the investigation of L2 identity in online NS-NNS interactions. The epistemology of this framework is rooted in the socio-linguistic approach to identity discursively constructed through and in interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), while the analytical toolkit is derived from Gee's discourse analysis and his building tasks of language-in-use (Gee, 2005). What follows is the description of this framework as it is applied to the investigation of L2 identity enactment in the Russia-based social networking site, *VKontakte,* the Russian counterpart to Facebook.

THE STUDY

Epistemological and Methodological Frameworks

Our approach to the investigation of L2 identity work in online NS-NNS interactions is based on the principles of identity enactment outlined by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) (see Appendix A). We propose that L2 learners simultaneously construct in multiple analytical layers their intersubjective L2 identities: global identities (age, ethnicity, language affiliation, etc.), local community-assigned identities, and, finally, temporary identities, which can arise from a particular exchange or instructional L2 task. In this study, we examine students' interactions in the social networking environment, *VKontakte*, as instances of

L2 identity enactment. For our research questions, we adopted Gee's (2005, 2011) analytical tools of discourse analysis. In order to categorize the types of activities in which L2 learners of Russian engaged by means of language and interaction, we selected five of Gee's seven building tasks of language, which act simultaneously in every piece of language-in-use (Gee, 2005). We applied each task to our examination of L2 use in online NS-NNS speaker interaction and formulated specific questions that guided us in our approach to L2 identity enactment in interaction. These tasks served as the foci for our research questions and as the five analytical blocks in our subsequent analyses of student online interactions, interview data, and L2 identity-building strategies (Appendix B).

Research Questions

Task 1. Significance.

> In the context of telecollaborative interactions on an authentic social networking site, how is language—L1 (English) or L2 (Russian)—used to make certain L2 identity aspects of interactants significant or insignificant, and in what ways?

For this analytical block, we examined values and qualities that our students attributed to things as they described one event or fact as important and another as trivial. For example, when one acknowledges that he or she is not a native speaker of the language his or her interlocutor speaks, thus making this fact significant for both parties, he or she gives this fact a new value or meaning. Conversely, not mentioning this fact to a native-speaking interactant leads to an entirely different context in which language affiliation loses its value, and hence, personalized significance.

Task 2. Activities.

> What activities are enacted by L2 learners' online discourse, and in what ways do such activities contribute to an unfolding L2 identity or L2 identities?

For this analytical task, we examined how students engaging in telecollaborative exchanges in *VKontakte* use their second language (Russian) to make clear to others what it is that they take themselves to be doing.

Task 3. Relationships.

> What sort of relationships (including relations of power) is Russian learners' online discourse seeking to enact?

For this analytical block, we investigated how language is used to build and sustain relationships (Gee, 2011). In the case of L2 speakers, signaling relationships also interferes with language proficiency (see Appendix A, The Partialness Principle). Also, building relationships in a second language may entail assigning certain roles and construing one's and others' identities in a unique fashion.

Task 4. Sign systems and knowledge.

> How does the language of students' interactions privilege (or de-privilege) certain sign systems and forms of knowledge, and in what ways do such acts of privileging (or de-privileging) contribute to enacting L2 identities online?

Social-networking environments enable users to take advantage of multiple sign systems—linguistic and non-linguistic (language of pictures, language of emoticons, etc.)—in claiming real and fake identities. For this analytical block, we examined how sign systems and ways of knowing were made relevant or irrelevant in social-networking among speakers and learners of Russian.

Task 5. Identities.

> What L2 identities are enacted through the language of telecollaborative interactions in *VKontakte*, and what opportunities and constraints does the context of a social-networking

site create for constructing an L2 speaker's identity?

Following the principles of L2 identity enactment in interaction, we proposed that L2 identities are enacted in social interaction with other speakers of L2, and are mutually and dynamically co-constructed by telecollaborative partners in the course of communicative exchange. In social-networking environments, L2 speakers fashion themselves and their L2 identities in a number of ways, including unique I-statements they make at various stages of interaction with their native speaking partners. Their non-native-speakerness is factored in the sort of things they say or imply about themselves.

These five analytical tasks guided our analysis of online interactions between American learners of Russian and native Russian speakers. While the methods of discourse analysis enabled us to keep track of every instance of L2-identity-in-the-making, we could still not fully understand the meaning of individual L2 learners' experiences with authentic social networking environments from the discourse data alone (see also Norton, 2000). In this study, we also utilized line-by-line interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the students' experiential accounts elicited via phenomenological interviews and weekly reflections. This data gave us access to students' feelings and emotions at various points of the *VKontakte* project. IPA encourages "a reflective engagement with the participant's account" and focuses on the lived experience of the participant and the meaning that the participant makes of that lived experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Our students' individual stories enriched our interpretations of their interactions with Russian peers via *VKontakte* and led to a better understanding of participants' perspective on the L2 online identity building process.

Context and Participants

This study was conceived in the course of our search for effective and exciting ways to bring the culture of the Russian speaking world into the language classroom and to amplify every student's language use experience. With this goal mind, we designed a telecollaborative task-based exchange connecting our American learners to Russian native speakers, who live in the United States and abroad in Russia and Ukraine. As the exchange venue, we selected *VKontakte*, a Russia-based counterpart to Facebook (www.vk.com or www.vkontakte.ru). Similar to Facebook and other social networking sites (McBride,

Table 1. *Number of Project Participants, Number of Posted Messages, and Average Number of Words per Message*

	Project 1		Project 2		Total	
American participants (heritage speakers)	28	(7)	33	(8)	61	(15)
Russian speaking participants	8		33		41	
Pairs of participants	28		33		61	
Total messages posted (%)	225	(100%)	884	(100%)	1109	(100%)
by American participants (%)	100	(44%)	413	(47%)	513	(46%)
by Russian speaking participants (%)	125	(56%)	471	(53%)	596	(54%)
Average words per message	26		57		51	
by American participants	25		52		47	
by Russian speaking participants	27		61		54	

Note. In the current dataset, a message consisted of anywhere between 1 word and 421 words.

2009), *VKontakte* requires its users to create a personal profile page containing a user picture and personal information (birth place and date, marital and relationship status, education, interests, etc.) and provides comparable features, such as photo albums, status updates, public comments, private messages, chat, and other features.

Altogether, the participants of this study included 61 American college students of Russian and 41 native speakers of Russian (Table 1). Fifteen students from the American participant group described themselves as being of Russian heritage. All project participants registered in *VKontakte* and were assigned a project partner.

The *VKontakte* project was implemented over two semesters. In Project 1, the participants included 8 native speakers of Russian and 28 American students of Russian (22 second-semester and 6 fourth-semester students, 18–23 years old). The native speakers were a heterogeneous group: 3 college professors (27–45 years old) and 3 college students (18–22 years old) residing in the United States at the time of the project, and 2 young adults (24 and 28 years old) from Russia. Each American student was paired with one of the Russian speaking participants and the pairs were asked to exchange written messages on the wall of their personal profile pages in the *VKontakte* social space. The American students were instructed to communicate only in Russian. They received an open-ended task (Figure 1) and submitted a written reflection following the exchange.
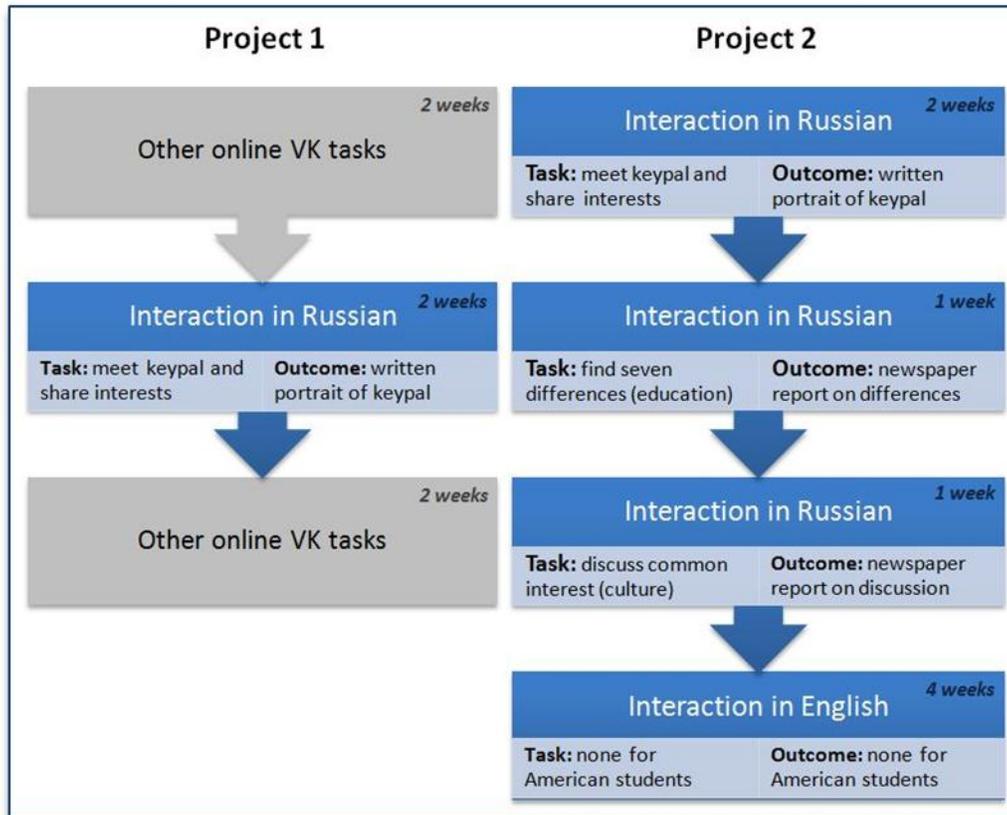

Figure 1. Design and duration of online interaction tasks assigned to American participants in Project 1 and Project 2. VK = *VKontakte*. In Project 1, other online VK tasks focused on various features available in *VKontakte*: classified ads, audio, video, games, applications, and discussion groups.

In view of the participants' expressed requests, Project 2 was designed to be more extended and was implemented a year later. The new cohort of students consisted of 33 American students (21 second-

semester and 12 continuing fourth-semester students, 18–22 years old). The composition of the Russian native speaking group was more homogeneous this time: 8 college students from a large Russian university and 25 college students from a large Ukrainian university located in the predominantly Russian speaking area of Ukraine (18–22 years old). As in Project 1, the participant pairs were asked to exchange messages on the walls of their *VKontakte* pages. After a month of message exchange in Russian, the participants were asked to switch to the English language and continue communication for another month. During this time, the American students were not assigned any tasks; the Russian native speaking students received interaction tasks from their English course instructors in Russia and Ukraine. The English part of the exchange is not the focus of the present study and is not included in the analysis. However, it provides an insight into the Russian speaking partners' motivation for participating in the project. All Russian participants were studying English as a foreign language at their respective universities in Russia and Ukraine, and wished to interact with their American peers in English. During the Russian part of the exchange of Project 2, the American students received three weekly communicative tasks (Figure 1) and submitted open-ended weekly reflections on their experience.

During Project 1 and Project 2, the participants on both sides did not receive any explicit instructions as to error correction or message length. The American participants were required to post at least three messages of unspecified length per week. Both groups were instructed to communicate only in Russian over the course of 2 weeks (Project 1) and 4 weeks (Project 2).

Data Analysis Procedures

All student interactions and reflections were collected in one database and coded using the qualitative data analysis package NVivo. The coding book consisted of seven major coding categories—conceptual nodes adopted from Gee's analytical tools of discourse analysis—and multiple layers of subcategories; five of these analytical blocks were selected for inclusion in the present paper. In our interpretation of students' interactions, we were also guided by the principles of discursive L2 identity formation in online interactions (Appendix A). Our analytical task was two-fold: first, to examine empirically the discursive dimensions of L2 identity enactment in the context of telecollaborative exchanges; and second, to describe students' motivations and write comprehensive descriptions of individual student experiences with this form of language learning. To address the second task, phenomenological one-on-one interviews were conducted in the form of dialogues with 10 randomly selected participants during the third and last week of the project activities. Thus, each focal student was interviewed twice. During the interviews the researcher asked open-ended questions and encouraged emotionally loaded accounts of students' experience. Each one-hour interview was then transcribed and analyzed for meaning clusters following the guidelines proposed by Hycner (1985).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Significance

In the course of the analysis, we searched the data for instances of significance, that is, language that strengthens or lessens what is foregrounded. Regardless of the evolving identities, relationships, and activities, certain L2 identity aspects came to be given significance in the majority of interactions, particularly such aspects as language learner role and affiliation with L2 culture. For example, when prompted to react to statements with regard to learning the Russian language, Daniel[1] chose to appear as an attentive interactant and accept the Russian partner's invitation to elaborate on the language learner aspect of his identity (see Episode 1, Turn 4), even though his original intent was to portray himself as a multilingual American student with diverse interests (Turn 2) (also see Appendix C for a sample of the original Russian-language text).

By providing an excuse for likely linguistic inaccuracies and asking his Russian partner to correct his mistakes in Turn 4, Daniel acknowledges the learner aspect of his L2 identity and makes it significant for

Episode 1. Excerpt from Online Interaction between Marina (NS – Native Speaker of Russian) and Daniel (NNS – Non-Native Speaker, Russian L2 Learner)[2]

1	**Marina (NS):** Hi, Daniel! My name is Marina. I major in two languages: English and German. What other languages (except English and Russian) do you know? Tell me something about yourself. *If you have any translation problems, don't hesitate to tell me!** 24 March 2011
2	**Daniel (NNS):** Hi Marina! My name is Daniel! I am 21. I am a student. I study history. I love sports! I play baseball. I also love languages! I speak Spanish! I am happy to talk to you. 24 March 2011
3	**Marina (NS):** Hi, Daniel! Thank you for the letter. *You know Russian very well.* Since you play baseball, you must be tall. In addition to sports, I also do choreography. I think we will have many things to discuss. You can use "ty" [*informal you form*] with me. 24 March 2011
4	**Daniel (NNS):** sorry marina! You are correctly**, I am tall. *I study Russian and I like it, but I am not well, but thank you.* (I hope I dont make too many mistakes!)*** What sport do you like? Do you speak English? 25 March 2011
5	**Marina (NS):** I speak English very well, but I was told to speak Russian with you for 3 weeks. It will be easier later. I jog and I'm also learning ballroom dance. I understand what you are saying, your letter does contain mistakes. It's better to say: you are right, and not you are correctly. Do you understand me? Is this a good way for us to work on your mistakes? Don't worry! Russian language is quite difficult. If u want to improve your Russian, I recommend u to watch Russian films. What year are you in college? 27 March 2011
6	**Daniel (NNS):** I understand you. I will work more. I like to teach Russian. You English is very well. Do you like skiing? *I hope to learn a lot from you. If you teach me Russian, I will teach you history!* 27 March 2011
7	**Marina (NS):** Dear Daniel! *Let's begin correcting mistakes.* Instead of I like to teach Russian, it's more correct to write I like Russian. You English is very well, correctly – your English is very good. I will help you learn Russian. *What is your motivation to learn Russian? Do you have Russian heritage? Or do you have many Russian friends?* Tell me about your family. 29 March 2011
8	**Daniel (NNS):** I like Russian because the Russian-American history. My family is large. I have a father, mother, two sisters, a dog. 30 March 2011
9	**Marina (NS):** Hi, Daniel! Let's continue correcting mistakes. It's incorrect to say because the history but because of the history. Do you live in the same city as your family? 31 March 2011
10	[*2 days later*] **Marina (NS):** Hi, Daniel! Is it difficult to understand my message? 3 April 2011
11	**Daniel (NNS):** No. I understand you. Sorry Marina! I was away (FOR?) baseball. 4 April 2011
12	[*10 messages further*] **Daniel (NNS):** Hi Marina! Sorry for the delay (OR: the wait), I was out of town. *I have questions for you. For my Russian class I need to ask you about sports.* What sports do Russian children play? Do Russian kids work out a lot? [*5 more questions follow*] (Please help me with adjectives before words, like Russian Athletes, Russian children...I'm a little confused on how to form those...THANKS!) 11 April 2011
13	**Marina (NS):** Hi, Daniel! Adjectives in Russian answer the following questions: which? what? (singular-singular number) and which? what? (plural-plural number) pretty (what feminine?) girl, smart (what masculine?) boy, bright (what neuter?) sun, Russian (what plural?) children. [*Marina continues answering Daniel's questions from Line 11*] 12 April 2011

Note. *Italics in this and all other episodes were added by the authors and indicate key phrases referenced and discussed in the analysis. **A number of typographical features and key linguistic inaccuracies are intentionally introduced in the English translations to give the reader a better sense of the participants' discourse. ***The phrases that were posted in English in the original exchange between the two partners are rendered in underlined letters. The rest of the text was written in Russian.

the rest of the conversation. In response, the sympathetic native speaker offers reassurance from her position of power that Daniel's Russian was not poor, and offers help in correcting mistakes. In Turn 6, Daniel asks Marina to teach him Russian, which further foregrounds his perceived learner role, and

triggers a lengthy error-correction lecture on the part of the Russian partner. Thus, by showing acceptance of his non-native speaker identity, Daniel opens the door for the native speaker to make his language learner role central in this interaction. From that point on, the Russian partner did not hesitate to resort to English if she was unsure of Daniel's comprehension of her messages. Daniel's initial intention however, was only to ensure mutual understanding in order to keep the conversation going (Episode 2). His approach evidenced the challenges of assuming (i.e., investing in) a new intimidating L2 identity when uncertainties are prevalent, misunderstandings are likely, and the power to portray oneself as an intelligent speaker is hampered by low L2 proficiency.

Episode 2. Excerpt from Interview with Daniel (Russian L2 Learner)

> Interviewer: It's interesting that you switched to English here [Turn 4 in Episode 1]. Why?

> Daniel: That I did because it was still my second post, and I was hoping my Russian was good enough for her to understand, but I wanted to have that English tag right there so she realizes, "Oh, his Russian isn't the greatest. If I don't understand what he is saying I can respond in English. He understands it that it's not too great."

Michael, on the contrary, chooses to downplay the theme of his non-native-speakerness, and instead focuses on the task of information exchange from the start of the conversation. When Katerina offers him help with his Russian, Michael ignores the suggested L2 learner identity prompt (Episode 3, Turns 1 and 2). Instead of following up on Katerina's offer and elaborating on the kind of help he might need from her, he answers with a perfunctory remark (Turn 6) that he does speak some Russian, but then focuses on the rest of the message where he talks about traveling.

Episode 3. Excerpt from Online Interaction between Katerina (NS – Native Speaker of Russian) and Michael (NNS – Non-native Speaker, Russian L2 Learner)

1	**Katerina (NS):** Hi, my name is Katya. *I will help you with your Russian.* I hope our exchange will be interesting and fruitful. Tell me a little about yourself. What are you interested in? 23 March 2011
2	**Michael (NNS):** Hi Katya! my name is Michael. I am Italian. I am interested in politics. I like to visit downtown San Francisco. I am a history major. where do you study? 24 March 2011
3	**Katerina (NS):** I major in foreign languages. I like foreign languages very much. I study English, German, and recently started learning Spanish, but I don't have enough time. 25 March 2011
4	**Michael (NNS):** I also like languages very much. I know Italian, French, Greek, and a little Latin (and a little in Russian). I like to travel abroad very much. Do you like to travel? where did you go in Russia or in other parts of the world? 7 April 2011
5	**Katerina (NS):** *how long have you been studying Russian?* I visited several European countries: Poland, Austria, Germany, and worked in America. This summer I am going again to America) what are you plans for the summer? 7 April 2011
6	**Michael (NNS):** *I know a little Russian.* I've been to Italy, France, Brazil, China, Mexico, and Canada. This summer I will stay in San-Francisco, but I am going to Italy in August. If you come to America, you must visit San-Francisco. I will show you the city. 7 April 2011

Significance was also given to reasons for studying Russian, which seemed to attribute legitimacy to the American partners' learning of Russian and their participation in the exchange. Interestingly, it was the Russian keypals who frequently brought up or insisted on discussing the theme of connection with the Russian language and culture, identifying Russian affiliation questions as significant enough to break the flow of an interaction. In Episode 3, Turn 5, the native speaker Katerina perceives Russian affiliation as a significant topic for discussion and singles out her question in a separate line. This can be contrasted with

her partner's response in which he briefly answers Katerina's question, and immediately, without a line break, shifts to the topic of travelling which he perceives as more important. It is noteworthy that he also changes the focus of her Russian affiliation question from "learning Russian" to "knowing/speaking Russian," thus avoiding learner-related discourse.

Error correction appeared to be one of the most visibly distinct activities because, in addition to interrupting the flow of information exchange, it was usually presented in a format with different typographical characteristics than typical message exchanges (e.g., multiple parentheses, quotation marks, frequent commas, choppy syntax, as in Episode 1, Turn 13). It seemed to clearly evoke the unbalanced power relationship between partners, in which one acts as an expert correcting a novice learner's errors. Yet even more symbolic significance was conveyed through sentence-level code-switching, which signaled the learner's perceived inability to express or comprehend a certain message, and indicated a total abandonment of the speaker's L2 user identity (Episode 1, Turns 4 and 12).

The two interaction episodes discussed in this section (Episodes 1 and 3) demonstrate the process of mutual and dynamic co-construction of temporary discourses unique to each pair of keypals by means of code-switching and error correction in addition to affiliation and identity negotiation.

Activities

Interactants were typically involved in either form-focused or meaning-focused activities. The form-focused activities included (a) error correction, either solicited or volunteered, and (b) consulting a language expert about a language form. The meaning-focused activities included (a) getting to know each other, (b) establishing a close relationship, (c) exchanging information, (d) completing project assignments, and (e) re-claiming one's cultural identity. Each activity seemed to evoke a distinct part of the writer's identity. For example, the form-focused interaction brought to the fore the language learner role of the American partner, while the meaning-focused interaction suggested the language user identity.

The American keypals preferred to emphasize their global student identity, such as a student at an American university, in order to place it on an equal footing with the Russian partners' status of students at Russian and Ukrainian universities. The few instances when the American keypals evoked their status of Russian course participants were related to the classroom tasks they were asked to complete by the course instructor.

Overall, there were three project tasks the students were asked to complete (see Figure 1). The first task in Projects 1 and 2 (meet keypal and share interests) was nearly invisible because it fit so naturally within an expected interaction between two strangers in the given context that the American students did not have to reveal the assignment. The other two tasks in Project 2, however, were given to the students in the middle of the ongoing interactions, when the norms of interaction unique to each pair were already gradually taking form. The topics of these communicative tasks did not always fit naturally in the flow of the exchange. Students often felt the need to apologize for breaking the established interactional routine within the pair and to give an excuse for a sudden introduction of what appeared as a massive attack of questions. Some explicitly stated that they had an assignment to complete, as did Daniel in Episode 1, Turn 12.

As a representative example of reactions by many heritage learners, Claire demonstrated little enthusiasm for the project assignments (see Episode 4). Instructor-guided communicative tasks presented more of a challenge because Claire seems to have perceived the entire project as an opportunity to build a close friendship with someone who shared the same cultural heritage. During her interview, Claire talks about the project tasks as an uncomfortable nuisance that interfered with the naturalness of interactions, and prevented her from developing a desired intimate friendship with her *VKontakte* friend. Her dissatisfaction with the tasks shows a conflict of expectations: Claire's desire to "re-fuel" her Russian heritage by bonding with a Russian native speaker and her instructor's intention to get her involved in a

focused, topic-specific conversation.

Episode 4. Excerpt from Interview with Claire (Russian Heritage Learner)

> Claire: I'm enjoying [the project], the only thing that is a little difficult was that we had to talk about a certain topic, especially when we had to talk about universities because I had to talk about it and throw it in the middle of the conversation. It was just a little forced, because I had to make the conversation go in that direction, and it was a little difficult.

Claire does not perceive this interaction as a learning activity and makes an effort to carefully weave the assigned questions into the conversation flow without acknowledging it was a teacher-controlled activity (Episode 5, Turn 3). Doing so allows her to avoid being perceived as a student in the eyes of her Russian partner.

Episode 5. Excerpt from Online Interaction between Oksana (NS – Native Speaker of Russian) and Claire (HS – Russian Heritage Speaker)

> 1 | Claire (HS): I haven't been to many cities in the States, but I like Boston and Lansing, in the state of Michigan. Do you have time to travel?
> 30 March 2011
>
> 2 | Oksana (NS): [...] as for US cities I like Washington, but for some reason I did not like New York! too noisy and dirty:)
> 3 April 2011
>
> 3 | Claire (HS): I have never been to Washington or New York. I never wanted to see New York :). *If you don't mind, I would also like to know about your university.* Here, we don't go often to clubs because most of us do not have jobs so no money. but we like to hang out in the library or go to coffee shops. And you?
> 3 April 2011
>
> 4 | Oksana (NS): I spend a lot of time at the university since we have classes 5 days a week! but it's fun there! I like to spend time with friends after classes! we often spend time outdoors!
> 3 April 2011

It appears that activities performed by the interactants contribute to the unfolding L2 identity work by foregrounding either the language learner role (form-focused and classroom-related activities) or the language user role (meaning-focused activities). However, unlike non-heritage American learners of Russian, our heritage learners followed distinct goals of building a personal relationship with peers of similar cultural heritage and sought to avoid any learner-associated activities that could undermine their power as speakers of Russian.

Relationships

Building relationships in a second language may entail assigning certain roles, negotiating the relations of power and construing one's own and others' identities in a unique fashion. For example, both sides started Project 2 with certain assumptions and knew that they would take on both the roles of expert native speakers and novice language learners at different times during the exchange, depending on the assigned language. During the Russian-only part of the interaction American partners entered the project with the pre-established role of language learners. It was the American students who took responsibility for supporting, contesting, re-designing, or expanding their L2 identities if they deemed it desirable, while the Russian partners had the power to authenticate (confirm the realness or genuineness) or denaturalize (emphasize the false nature of) their partners' L2 identities.

For example, no authentication was given to a heritage speaker, Anna. The identity she claimed in her online discourse violated her Russian partner's ideological expectation regarding Anna's language affiliation. While Anna was striving to legitimize her Russian speaker self, her Russian keypal continued

to perceive her as an outsider/foreigner and a language learner, despite the fact that Anna's Russian was immaculate in all of her postings. For Anna, striving for perfect grammar became a form of social action to win her partner's approval and rise in her partner's eyes to the level of sameness. Her Russian keypal's messages were permeated with colloquialisms and informal expressions. Yet, when Anna used a rather informal variant of the Russian negative particle *netu* instead of the standard *net*, her Russian friend corrected her in a rather blunt way. Notably, the Russian keypal pointed out that the form is only in use between "old ladies," and hence should not be attempted by someone who, due to her non-native language affiliation, cannot relate to its dialectal connotation. This incident clearly shows the workings of power relations in NS-NNS exchanges. Even though everything about Anna is clearly Russian—her name, her profile picture, her idiomatic expression—her keypal continued to perceive Anna largely as a Russian language learner as their interaction unfolded. During her interview, Anna shared how her perception of her Russian speaker identity was challenged by this incident:

Episode 6. First Excerpt from Interview with Anna (Russian Heritage Learner)

> Anna: It was like a slap. She probably just meant it to be sarcastic, but I think it was kind of rude. This [*netu*] is what I always said. I catch myself and I say "*net*," now that she called me out on it. I thought it was a little harsh.

Anna's motivations to have perfect grammar derive from her desire to pass as a native speaker in order to claim her Russian speaker identity. She resisted a teacher–student relationship with her keypal from the start of the *VKontakte* project.

Episode 7. Second Excerpt from Interview with Anna (Russian Heritage Learner)

> Anna: My biggest desire was to be someone on her level, not in a competitive sense at all, but so that we could correspond not as teacher-student, but just friend-friend. That was a huge part of it. And in this assignment it's just normal to have this person as your teacher and you learn off your corresponding friends.

Both sides in student interactions appeared to be in continuous search for indices of adequation (positioning as sufficiently alike), such as similar opinions, similar interests, and similar lifestyles. Any sign of Russian affiliation was welcomed by Russian partners as a uniting factor (e.g., the American partner's interest in the Russian politics, literature, culture, friendship with Russian speaking people, Russian or Slavic heritage). An American student could display a number of such tokens of Russianness, all contributing to his or her identity, some more durable in nature and having more weight (Russian heritage) than others (Russian speaking friends or interest in Russian history). Achieved adequation, however, did not always lead to the authentication of Russian language user identity, as described in Anna's example above.

Sign Systems and Knowledge

Besides the most obvious significance of English and Russian with visually distinct graphic representations (see Appendix C), additional signs systems were given value: other foreign languages that both interactants had in common (e.g., French or Spanish), smileys, emoticons, and punctuation conventions associated with either Russian or English. In the medium of social-networking between NS-NNS pairs, the language of emoticons and punctuation signs is particularly privileged as an important source of social information. Repeated use of smileys and exclamation marks may be used to establish a friendly relationship between keypals. For example, Aaron, a second-year Russian student, noticed how differently his Russian keypal used exclamation marks and parentheses, and how, throughout their interactions, he learned to rely on this information in order to decode the emotional tone of his keypal's messages. Along with learning how Russians communicate on the Internet, he saw his keypal as a speaker

of Russian Internet language: "goofy Internet culture of Russians, with parentheses all over the place, and the stuff like eight hundred exclamation marks" (from Aaron's interview).

Social networking sites reveal another dimension of identity enactment—through a conscious and strategic selection of digital artifacts, such as photos, video postings, layout designs, and music selections. In text-based intercultural exchanges, participants can only rely on what they read in their partners' messages, and interpret the information according to what they know about the communicative culture of the language they are learning. When intercultural exchanges take place in target language social-networking sites, students obtain an opportunity to observe how native speakers fashion their cultural identity in Internet social spaces, and how they present themselves in the photos they post in their profiles, and in their online activities (e.g., SNS applications).

Episode 8. First Excerpt From Interview With Aaron (Russian L2 Learner)

> Aaron: I noticed that a lot of [their] pictures are almost professionally taken, like posed, very posed pictures, and a lot of ours are like "Oh, whatever. Just … [imitates the sound of a camera shooting pictures] Just take, who cares? You are not ready for some of them. You aren't in the best of shape in some of them. I asked in class, "Why is it that they are all like professionally taken, definitely set up?" And one of the Russian [heritage] girls goes, "That's because the Russian culture and the Russian sense—we are very proud of who we are. We are a more beautiful people, so we take our pictures to portray that." Okay, I guess it makes sense. It's almost like the difference in cultures. Do we have more of a free sense to us in public in a kind of egotistical sense, like "I don't care what you think of me, I am who I am," while Russians put up a façade and say, "I'm going to make you think I am a certain way."

Aaron's understanding of Russian culture changed as he started noticing semiotic information in his keypal's profile and analyzing it as a cultural artifact. He was able to see beyond the photo images by tracing down the signs of Russian national identity in the ways young Russians portray themselves in the *VKontakte* site. His own use of the *VKontakte* profile features was not random either. By posting carefully selected images of himself, Aaron enacts an identity of his own choice (a typical American, an athlete, a cadet in a college military program); but his identity is also presented through the information that he chose not to show in his *VKontakte* profile.

Episode 9. Second Excerpt from Interview with Aaron (Russian L2 Learner)

> Aaron: I think they [my photos] represented me as who I am. They are not my pictures. They are from what I do. I think they represented me as a jock American boy, a military kid. So, I am definitely shown there as I am *not* playing video games or any of them and stuff like that. I think she definitely saw what an active American boy is like compared to… the [pausing] more athletic, sporty boy instead of an artsy type. That's who I am [pausing] … I portrayed myself that way.

Aaron learns to compensate for the limitations of self-expression in Russian by supplying the missing information in his profile photos. By doing so, he constructs his Russian speaker identity in parallel with his American self—his idiosyncratic attributes, which have an impact on the way he is perceived by his Russian partner. The multimodal functionalities of social networking sites enabled Aaron to take advantage a variety of means, or affordances, to mediate self-positioning and self-expression in *VKontakte.* As mentioned in many students' written reflections and interviews, these affordances presented themselves in various forms of discursive practices (e.g., status updates, profile wall postings, private messaging tools) and in various semiotic modes of self-expression, such as photos, avatars, choice

of language input, and use of punctuation marks to express emotions.

Identities

As shown previously, the interactants entered the telecollaborative exchange with a number of assumptions about their partner based on the information they could gather from the partner's online profile as well as from the instructor's description of project participants. However, as the conversation continued, both partners had the power to redefine their identities by either contesting certain implicatures and presuppositions or by further developing identity attributes evoked by the project partner. As both parties negotiated and co-constructed their identities, their perception of the other evolved in an infinitely dynamic process.

By bringing to light different tokens of L2 affiliation, or social goods, students emphasized points of intersection with the Russian culture. The accounts of the heritage learners revealed their unique positioning in *VKontakte* interactions. For the heritage speakers, being able to connect with native Russians was a test of their heritage speaker privileges. All students of Russian heritage chose to seek the points of reference by explicitly announcing their Russian connections to their *VKontakte* partners during the first week of interactions. Instead of downplaying their heritage identities, these students brought them to the fore by explicitly identifying themselves as legitimate speakers of Russian as opposed to L2 learners or foreigners. While non-heritage learners of Russian established the relation of adequation with the Russian keypals by claiming their genuine interest in the study of Russian language, for our heritage participants, the verification and affirmation of their already-existing Russian identities made more sense because they could rely on these similarities in order to legitimize equal relations with their Russian interactants. The interactions with Russian peers made the heritage component of their contested identities more salient and significant. They took this project as an opportunity to rework their identities as American students and intersubjectively reconstruct their Russian speaker identities by trying to establish intimate connections within the culture of their heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

The present research attempted to delve into the complexities of local identity categories as they manifested themselves in a moment-to-moment development of an instructionally arranged NS-NNS exchange. In this study the social networking space, *VKontakte*, is not only a venue where American learners of Russian may practice using the target language in communication with NS peers, but it is also a multimodal cultural space in which they learn to claim and withdraw their first and second language identities when responding to the demands of interactional momentum and/or the requirements of a class assignment. By carefully choosing various means of online self-presentation, our students were able to move in and out of the L2 learner identity frames and accomplish social tasks beyond the scope of the classroom assignment (e.g., establishing friendships or declaring the relations of sameness and otherness). Turkle (1995) maintained that in virtual spaces "we are encouraged to think of ourselves as fluid, emergent, decentralized, multiplicitous, flexible, and ever in process" (p. 263). That seems to be the case with our Russian learners. Their L2 speaker identity reveals itself as a dynamic identity-in-the-making as they use their second language to make certain things significant, bring certain activities to the fore, privilege some semiotic systems at the expense of others, form relationships of specific sorts, and build connections among concepts and behaviors—and, by doing all of that, they are experiencing themselves as multilingual users of the Internet (Kramsch, 2009).

As our analysis shows, NS-NNS online interactions often transform into unequal power relations in which a native speaker is empowered, while a language learner's role is delegitimized. Yet, these are collaborative relations of power, as opposed to coercive relations (Cummins, 1996), in the sense that they are not disruptive or detrimental to L2 identity enactment, provided that NS-NNS interactants choose to take turns holding power in online communication. Our data shows the power of native-speakerness as

mutually and discursively co-constructed by both interactants in on-going communication, in addition to this power being assigned by a higher institutional order. Power relations enabled our L2 participants to shift out of the intimidating frames of L2 speakers, and assume the role of L2 learners when a need to negotiate meaning arose. The necessity to contest the power of native-speakerness was particularly important for our heritage speakers who, from the very start of the *VKontakte* project, sought to re-establish their Russian speaker online identities and interact with native Russians on equal terms.

In the introduction to this paper, we addressed two notions that we found to be pertinent to the study of online L2 identity enactment through interaction. One derives from Norton's (2000) juxtaposition of motivation (a desire to learn a foreign language for various instrumental and integrative reasons) and investment: "the relationship of language learners to the changing social world" (p. 17). When students use an L2 in communication with others, "they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world around them" (p.18). The framework of discourse analysis allowed us to examine students' investment in their L2 identity at various moments of online communication with Russian peers. The other notion that we discussed was the social dimension of Prensky's (2009) digital wisdom. We argued that by investing in an online L2 identity our Russian learners demonstrated their digital wisdom in that they learned to accomplish a variety of social tasks beyond the scope of a simple exchange of information with a native speaking peer in a telecollaborative project. They were able to overcome, to a certain extent, the limitations of low proficiency by resorting to multiple affordances of the social networking site in order to construct their dynamic L2 learner-user identities and maintain genuine communication with a keypal across the globe. By doing so, they surpassed the constraints of time and space and took full advantage of the social enhancements which modern Internet technologies provided for them. In Prensky's terms, their digital wisdom manifested both in the use of Internet technologies to access the artifacts of Russian language and culture in the *VKontakte* environment, and from the meaningful use of *VKontakte* in order to expand the social contact with the target language speakers outside the confines of formal classroom practices, which are typically limited to teacher-student and student-student interactions.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study examined one particular context: Russian as an L2 classroom-based project within the confines of a specific social networking site. The observed patterns of online identity enactment were likely to be shaped by the prearranged framework of the project and by the design of weekly communicative tasks students were asked to complete. More research is needed to explore patterns in which online L2 identity plays out in other language classroom-based telecollaborative projects. It is possible that given different assigned tasks and different participant roles implicit in the design of the project (e.g., experts or equal contributors rather than learners), students would avail themselves of different linguistic and nonlinguistic means to reveal other identity facets. They might enact relationships and activities and attribute significance to various identity manifestations in patterns different from those observed in this study.

With the increased popularity of social technologies, the concepts of investment and digital wisdom may require more research attention in both instructional and naturalistic settings. One possibility for future studies is to examine how various social networking practices translate into students' investment in their L2 selves, or, conversely, how such practices lead to resistance in adopting an L2 identity in Internet-mediated social communities.

NOTES

1. All participant names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

2. The text enclosed in brackets in this and all remaining interaction and interview episodes was added by the researchers.

APPENDIX A. The Five Principles of Discursive L2 Identity Enactment in Online Interactions (adapted from Bucholtz & Hall, 2005)

1. The *emergence principle* enables us to examine L2 identity enactment as a discursive construct emerging in interactions with native speaking participants in online exchanges as well as in interactions with speakers of the individual's native language in which his or her affiliation with the L2 is overtly identified. A particular L2 identity positioning is occasioned by the interactional demands of a communicative situation. In the case of a social networking environment, such demands may require a participant to enact an L2 user identity, an L2 learner identity, or both simultaneously, or even urge participants to try on a fake identity of an native speaker. They do so in order to legitimize their presence in a target language's online domain, with the goal of locating their voices and their right to participate in an online community on equal terms with other members.

2. The *positionality principle* enables us to examine L2 identity in NS-NNS online interactions as an amalgamation of both static ethnographic categories (such as L2 language affiliation through one's heritage or mixed culture affiliation, age, race, etc.) and transitory interactional positions: "what I am and what I am in this particular communicative situation." The local and global categories of L2 identity exist in parallel. However, unlike face-to-face interactions in which age, race, and foreign accent are not easy to conceal, in online communication, global categories of L2 identity can be made less salient. Various categories of L2 identity can be brought to the fore at various moments of online interactions. In this study, we investigate the micro-details of L2 identity—as it is shaped on a turn-to-turn basis in communication with native speakers—merging from temporary roles and positions that students assume in these interactions. We also observe how our participants occupy and abandon various interactional positions as speakers of Russian, and how their positions are associated with global categories of L2 identity and motivated by ideologies about Russian (L2) learning and Russian (L2) use.

3. Following the *indexicality principle*, we examine how NNS interactions indexically position self and other by means of various types of linguistic and non-linguistic resources (an index is understood as a linguistic or non-linguistic form that depends on the interactional context for its meaning, (Ochs, 1992)). Examples of non-linguistic resources in SNS environments may include personal photo collages, use of emoticons, music selections posted in one's profile—these all can be viewed as a representation of L1/ L2 identity work. L2 identity emerges discursively through overt mention of identity categories or self-labeling ("I'm not Russian," "I'm just a learner of Russian," etc.), implicatures (an idea that is suggested in an utterance, even though it is neither expressed nor strictly implied by the utterance), and presuppositions regarding one's identity position.

4. The *relationality principle* enables us to approach L2 identity as enacted only in relation to the other. Hence, in this study L2 identity in social-networking environments is viewed as an intersubjective accomplishment. L2 identities are constructed intersubjectively through the complementary relations of similarity/difference or adequation/distinction (native-speakerness/ non-native-speakerness), genuiness/ artifice, authority/ delegitimacy (as applicable to L2 user/learner versus native speaker/ authority)—the "tactics of intersubjectivity" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

5. Finally, following the *partialness principle*, we contend that L2 identities do not reside within individual learners only, but emerge in intersubjective relations of sameness and difference, realness and fakeness, and power and disempowerment. If all displays of identity, including L2 identity, are reliant on both interactional and ideological constraints for their articulation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), L2 identities are always partial, that is to say, produced through contextually situated and

ideologically informed configurations of self and other: "me and my NS partner." In the case of L2 speakers, there are certain constraints on individual intentionality caused by limitations of self-expression in an L2. In online communication to the same extent as in face-to-face exchanges, the construction of desired L2 identities is restricted by a participant's L2 proficiency. In other words, some things can be consciously presented through discourse the way an L2 participant desires (e.g., "I am in the military," "I don't speak Russian well"), while other identity manifestations, while desired, cannot be easily conveyed by an L2 learner (e.g., speaking in Russian like a member of the military, using informal register while avoiding social faux-pas). Also, the deliberate role of social actions fueled by certain power relations may impose constraints on an individual L2 speaker's intentionality in the process of L2 identity construction—for example, banning a non-native speaking participant on an online public forum (Hanna & de Nooy, 2003), or the forum moderator's decision to delete messages posted by non-native speaking members.

APPENDIX B. Seven Building Tasks of Second Language-In-Use in Online Interactions* (adapted from Gee's Tools of Discourse Analysis, 2011)

Task 1. Significance. For this building task, we examine how L2 words and grammatical devices are used to build up or lessen significance and how values and qualities are attributed to things as speakers describe one event or fact as important and another as trivial in their online interactions.

Task 2. Activities. For this building task, we examine what activities and/or practices are enacted in an online communication, and what activity or activities each communication seeks to get interactants to recognize.

Task 3. Relationships. For this building task, we examine how L2 language is used to build and sustain relationships of various sorts among the L2 speaker, other people, social groups, cultures, and/or institutions.

Task 4. Sign Systems and Knowledge. For this building task, we examine how the L2 language being used privileges or de-privileges specific sign systems (e.g., linguistic or non-linguistic) or different ways of knowing and believing, or claims to knowledge and belief.

Task 5. Identities. For this building task, we examine what socially recognizable identities the L2 speaker is trying to enact or to get other to recognize in online interactions with native speaking interlocutors, and how the speaker's language treats other people's identities, and what sorts of identities the L2 speaker recognizes for others in relationship to his or her own L1 and L2 identity. We also consider how the L2 speaker positions others and what identities he or she invites them to take up.

Task 6. Politics. For this building task, we seek to unfold the works of politics in NS-NNS online interactions and to examine how words and grammatical devices are used to build a viewpoint on what constitutes a social good in a certain interaction and what social goods are recognized as such in online NS-NNS exchanges. Gee (2011) defines politics as "a situation where the distribution of social goods is at stake" (p. 90). By social goods, Gee means anything that a social group takes as a good worth having. In the context of online interactions, participants may share perspectives on what can be construed as a social good, or their perspectives may diverge leading to confrontation and the need for negotiation.

Task 7. Connections. For this building task, we examine the various sorts of connections that underlie L2 learners' discourse in social-networking environments. We also consider intertextuality, or connections to texts and discourses outside the context of Internet social-networking.

*Gee's discourse analysis framework includes seven building tasks of language-in-use presented above. This paper presents analyses for the first five analytical blocks which proved to be most pertinent to the process of dynamic L2 identity enactment.

APPENDIX C. Episode 1, Original Interaction in Russian, Turns 1-6

ВКонтакте   ‹ LinguaExchange   люди   сообщества   игры   музыка

Марина: Привет, Даниель! Моё имя Марина. Я изучаю два языка: английский и немецкий. Какими языками (помимо английского и русского) ты владеешь? Расскажи мне что-нибудь о себе.

24 марта 2011   Комментировать   Мне нравится ♡

Daniel: Привет Марина! Меня зовут Даниэль. Мне 21 год. Я студент. Я учусь на факультете истории. Я люблю спорт! Я играю в бейсбол в моём университе. Я тоже люблю языки! Я говорю по-испански. Я рад говорить с тобой.

24 марта 2011   Комментировать   Мне нравится ♡

Марина: Привет, Даниель! Спасибо за письмо. Ты очень хорошо знаешь русский язык. Судя по тому, что ты занимаешься бейсболом, ты наверно высокого роста. Я помимо спорта занимаюсь еще хореографией. Я думаю нам будет о чем поговорить. Называть меня можешь на "ты".

25 марта 2011   Комментировать   Мне нравится ♡

Daniel: Ты - правильно, Я высокий. Я учусь Русский и Я его люблю но Я нехорошо, но спасибо. (I hope I don't make too many mistakes!) Кто тебя друг? И какой спорт любишь? Гаваришь по-англиский?

27 марта 2011   Комментировать   Мне нравится ♡

Marina: Я очень хорошо говорю по-английски, но мне сказали говорить с тобой по-русски 4 недели. Потом будет проще. Я бегаю и также учусь бальным танцам. Я тебя понимаю, ошибки в твоем письме присутствуют. Лучше сказать: ты права, а не я- правильно. Ты понимаешь меня? Мы сможем таким образом работать над твоими ошибками? Don't worry! Russian language is quite difficult. If u want to improve your Russian, I recommend u to watch Russian films. На каком курсе ты учишься?

27 марта 2011   Комментировать   Мне нравится ♡

Daniel: Я тебя понимаю. Я буду работать больше. Я люблю научить русский. Тебя английский очень хорошо. Ты любишь лыжи? Я надеюсь учиться много от тебя. Если вы научите меня русский, Я научу тебя истории!

27 марта 2011   Комментировать   Мне нравится ♡

Note. To mask students' identities, the participants' photos were replaced with royalty free images.

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