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Alena L. Vasilyeva
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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Alena L. Vasilyeva

Department of Communication

University of Massachusetts Amherst

N368 Integrative Learning Center

650 North Pleasant Street

Amherst MA 01003

USA

vasilyeva@umass.edu

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Abstract

The study explores educational meetings that have a goal of promoting the Belarusian language and providing a platform for people who want to interact in this language. These meetings are not like any traditional language courses but rather a public space for a community of people who speak Belarusian, try to speak this language, or are interested in it, to engage in discussions. Findings demonstrate how an identity of a Belarusian-speaking Belarusian is interactionally constructed and speaking Belarusian is framed in relation to identity formation and language ideology.

Keywords: culture, discourse analysis, identity, institutional talk, language ideology

Language Ideology and Identity Construction in Public Educational Meetings

The interrelations of culture, language, and communication has been of interest to researchers in a variety of traditions, including: intercultural sociolinguistics (e.g., Gumperz, 1992), ethnography of communication (e.g., Hymes, 2005), cultural discourse analysis (Carbaugh, 2007). Special attention within this research area is given to language ideologies and identity matters, and is the focus of this study.

While in Belarus the majority of people speak Russian, there are two official languages: Russian and Belarusian. In recent years attempts to revive have been made Belarusian, especially among young people. Belarusian language courses have been organized by non-governmental agencies or volunteers, beginning in the capital of Belarus, and then expanded to other cities of Belarus. This study explores eleven meetings of this kind. These meetings aim to promote Belarusian and provide a platform for people who want to interact in this language. Meetings are unlike traditional language courses, as they create a public space for people to speak Belarusian, and engage in discussion.

The study explores how an identity of a Belarusian-speaking Belarusian is interactionally constructed and how speaking Belarusian is framed in relation to identity formation and language ideology. It takes a constitutive approach to communication and culture that understands interaction as a process of meaning creation and social construction of social entities (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009) and shares the view of identity as an interactional achievement (e.g., Tracy & Robles, 2013). According to Garfinkel (1967), "common culture" refers to the socially sanctioned grounds of inference and action that people use in their everyday affairs and which they assume that others use in the same way" (p. 76). Culture, in this respect, is broadly defined

to include national, professional, political, and gendered grounds. Furthermore, this study suggests that Belarusian language courses play an active role in shaping language ideology and identity formation, and there is interrelation between the two. The identity of a Belarusian-speaking Belarusian is interactionally constructed by means of various interactional and linguistic resources and is a multi-layered phenomenon.

In the following, I will briefly discuss research on identity and interaction, and language ideology. This is followed by a description of the data and methodological aspects of the study, an analysis of examples, and discussion of findings.

Identity Matters and Language

Research on identity and language shows the interconnection between ethnic/national identities, language, and language ideologies. Language is an important aspect of one's identity. However, its use depends on whether it is viewed as prestigious or whether it is formally and informally supported by governmental, educational, media, and business institutions (see Shulman, Collins, & Clément, 2011). Next, I will discuss identity as interactional construction and the interconnection between identities and language ideology.

Identity as Interactional Construction

Identity has been theorized from different perspectives (e.g., Giddens, 1991; Eisenberg, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory takes a psychological approach that views social identity as a self-concept developed from how individuals perceive their membership in a group. Giddens's (1991) idea of identity involves reflexivity: "a person's identity is not to be found in behavior, nor – important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*" (p. 54). According to Eisenberg (2001), the process of identity formation is a complicated phenomenon

and determined by three sub-processes, namely biological, the editing of one's personal narrative, and communicative. These approaches treat identity as individual reflections of social structures.

Recent research on identity shifts to a communication-centered view of identity and explores the interconnection between identity and interaction. For example, Tracy and Robles (2013) differentiate between master, interactional, and personal identities. Master identities (e.g., ethnicity) are more or less stable. Interactional identities are related to specific roles people have in interaction and visible in discursive actions. Finally, personal identities are those that include personal characteristics, relationships with others, their attitudes, and are relatively stable, although they vary across situations. Tracy and Robles claim personal identities are connected to master and interactional ones in terms of expectations of what personal characteristics are associated with some identity, and communicative actions used to express these personal features. While some identities shape talk, others are built up during interaction. In this respect, identity is viewed as a discursive construction and interactional accomplishment. Identity is not static, but negotiated in interaction (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Hansen & Milburn, 2015; Vasilyeva, 2015). Interactants' communicative actions not only shape their identity but their interlocutor's identity as well, although interactants do not have to accept a projected identity. Hence, interactants use discursive practices to maintain, support, or challenge an interlocutor's identity (Tracy & Robles, 2013).

An important contribution to research on identity is Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) sociocultural linguistic approach. They offer a framework for studying identity in connection with interaction and in relation to others, thus, undergirding the complexity of identity construction by exploring it from different angles, and linking different levels of identity and its

formation. Five principles for the analysis of identity in interaction are proposed. First, identities are a product of interaction, which suggests a shift from an individual aspect of identity to a social and cultural one (the emergence principle). For example, interactants can emphasize some identity categories and deemphasize others to tailor narratives for specific audiences (DiDomenico, 2015). Second, identities are multilayered and include macro-level constructs (e.g., demographic categories), local cultural constructs, and temporary situated identities (the positionality principle). For example, studying how interactants negotiate understating in Russian-American families, Bolden (2014) demonstrates how social identities of Russian versus American, old versus young people become interconnected. Third, identities emerge through indexicality at different linguistic levels such as overt labeling, implicature and presuppositions, stance, linguistic structures and systems (the indexicality principle). Fourth, identities are constructed in relation to others through different dimensions (e.g., similarity/difference) (the relationality principle), which is, for example, evident in ways members of South Asian Club position themselves in comparison with others on a macro, local and interactionally specific levels (Shrikant, 2015). Finally, identity construction is an outcome of deliberate and habitual aspects; interactional negotiation; other people's perceptions; and "larger ideological processes and material structures that may become relevant in interaction" (p. 606) (the partialness principle).

The importance of studying the interconnection between identity construction, language socialization, communities of practice, and ideologies is supported by research in this line of work (e.g., Boromisza-Habashi & Reinig, 2018; DiDomenico, 2015; Jones, 2014). For example, Boromisza-Habashi and Reinig (2018) state that the public speaking course should be considered a site of language socialization where students learn how to speak in a culturally appropriate way

and of identity formation. Students' narratives also discursively enact an institution of the University.

The above-mentioned research indicates the importance of investigating interactants' communicative practices (e.g., labeling, using specialist vocabulary, or a specific language) to create identities (see e.g., Bailey, 2007; Bolden, 2014). For example, in cultures where monolingual language ideology is dominant, the use of another language can be stigmatized and place people as outsiders to the mainstream culture (Karrebæck, 2013; Koven, 2013). To avoid stigma, interactants use the majority language as an interactional strategy to distance themselves from their original national or ethnic identity (Karrebæck, 2013). At the same time, identities can serve as a resource to shape interaction (Hansen & Milburn, 2015; Vasilyeva, 2015). For example, Hansen and Milburn (2015) illustrate how the avowal of cultural identities contribute to creating a context of meetings.

All these studies contribute to our understanding of interconnection between identities (whether it is master, interactional, or personal) and interaction. On the one hand, identities are constructed through interaction; on the other one, they are used as resources to shape interaction. In line with this scholarly work, the current study is interested in how identity of a Belarusian-speaking Belarusian is interactionally constructed in the course of educational meetings. As it was mentioned earlier, the language a person speaks serves as a resource to project one's identity. What is the link between language and ethnic/national identities? How are language ideologies formed at a macro and a micro levels? What is the interrelation between language ideologies and communication practices? The next section will address these questions.

Ethnic/National Identities and Language Ideologies

Language ideologies are "shared ideas and associated values about language, encompassing explicitly verbalized messages as well as implicit understandings and unspoken assumptions embedded in institutions and everyday practices" (Sperry, Sperry, & Miller, 2015, p. 8). At a macro level, they are reflected in the policies states create in regard to the languages spoken on the territory of some country (e.g., building a monolingual or multilingual society) or across countries (e.g., establishing the hierarchy of languages such as international versus local ones). An example of the latter is attempts to maintain the language dominance of French as an international language (Kasya, 2001).

Language ideologies indicate the intersection between nation-building processes and language (e.g., Karimzad & Catedral, 2017; Morgan, 2017), which is seen in cases of reviving the use of a language and transforming it into a symbol of identity (e.g., Euskara as a symbol of a Basque identity (Echeverria, 2003); Hebrew as a tool for creating an Israeli nation (Safran, 1992).

Language can serve as means of establishing new ethnic identities, which is evident in attempts of countries that were part of the Soviet Union to create identities that are distinct from soviet ones (e.g., Karimzad & Catedral, 2017). Building the Soviet Union involved promoting Russian, making it the language of education and official institutions across all the Soviet republics, and creating a socialist identity. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, derussification and the promotion of "one nation-one language" ideology was used as a way to build a new state and establish a new identity (e.g., Baločkaitė, 2014; Karimzad & Catedral, 2017). This ideology, however, can be problematic, as these new states are not necessarily monoethnic, and the promotion of a monolingual ideology thus can have negative consequences for minority groups.

Language ideologies are also observed at a more local level such as school, family, individual beliefs about the values of languages (Bae, 2015; Echeverria, 2003). For example, varieties of the same language may not be treated equally (e.g., hierarchical relationship between Maghrebi and Mashreqi varieties of Arabic (Hachimi, 2013); standard and vernacular varieties of Basque (Echeverria, 2003). The value individuals attach to languages and varieties of the same language has an impact on the choice of what language variety to learn (Bae, 2015).

While there is a connection between macro and local levels, an important point here is that individuals' language ideologies are not a mere reflection of some ideology. Research shows that these ideas are not predetermined but constantly negotiated and modified through discursive work, which can be seen, for example, in how Korean families make sense of and reinterpret their conflicting orientations of multilingualism and monolingualism (e.g., Bae, 2015). Interactants use various discursive practices that indicate their language ideology such as aligning or disaligning from their interlocutors with help of pronouns, language choice, nonverbal means, metacommentary, stance-taking (Hachimi, 2013; Karimzad & Catedral, 2017; Morgan, 2017). For example, speaking a non-standard variety of language itself is a sign of stance-taking that favor a non-standardizing language ideology (Morgan, 2017). Mocking another language variety is a practice that positions the speaker as a user of a normative variety (Hachimi, 2013).

The discussed studies show the importance of language in building one's national and ethnic identities and how language ideologies are embedded at micro and macro levels. Next, I will focus on the language situation in Belarus.

Language Situation in Belarus

Historically, the status of Belarusian varied. Belarus went through the periods of Russification, when the territory of Belarus was part of the Russian Empire and then when Belarus was part of the Soviet Union. Some factors that contributed to this process was the affinity of Belarusian and Russian, so the former one was treated as a dialect of the latter, and the situation in the sphere of education (Mechkovskaja, 1994). For example, before 1961 Russian became the language of instruction in all the schools of cities and regional centers where the education was previously in Belarusian, as well as at higher educational establishments (Trusau, 2015).

At the end of the twentieth century, there were attempts to revive the Belarusian language and culture. In 1990, the Law on Languages was adopted, according to which Belarusian got the status of the state language (Trusau, 2015). At the same time, according to this law, the state would care about the development and free use of other national languages, and Russian would be the language of international communication. In 1991, when Belarus became independent, the process of Belarusization continued and affected state agencies, education and culture, and armed forces. In Minsk, the capital of Belarus, 42 schools got the status of Belarusian-speaking (Trusau, 2015). In 1994, Belarusian received the status of the only state language. Interestingly, according to the census of 1989 and 1999, about 80% of the population of Belarus named Belarusian their mother tongue, while the majority of the population uses Russian as the language of communication. According to Mechkovskaja (1994), this situation is paradoxical and means that "the ethnic function of Belarusian (to be a national symbol, to unite people, and to distinguish them from other ethnoses) prevails the main function of language (a communicative one)" (p. 308).

However, bilingualism in Belarus had its specificity. Mechkovskaja (1994) distinguishes five characteristics of this phenomenon. Firstly, it exists due to socio-cultural factors rather than ethnic ones. Secondly, it is unbalanced in terms of communicative functions and language use. Thirdly, individual bilingualism is of massive character (i.e., the majority of people understand both languages). Fourth, the competence of Belarusian is mostly developed with help of special education, rather than in the family. Fifth, there exist different interferential phenomena in the Belarusian speech and the Russian speech (e.g., pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar). In this respect, it was underlined that for making the position of Belarusian stronger and integrating it further in different spheres of professional life, Belarusian should stay the only state language (Mechkovskaja, 1994).

In 1995, however, the question of languages was issued for a national referendum. As the result of this referendum, Russian and Belarusian got the status of official languages. This led to curtailing the process of Belarusization. For example, by 2014 the number of schools with Belarusian as a language of instruction in Minsk had reduced to 11 (Trusau, 2015). Russian keeps being dominant in different spheres of life. According to the most recent population census 2009, about 53% of the population consider Belarusian their mother tongue and about 24% speak it at home (National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus, n. d.).

Attempts to revive Belarusian, however, have not stopped. Belarusian courses under study is one way to achieve that.

Data and Method

The study uses the method of discourse analysis that focuses on the use of language in context (Tracy, 2001). The audio-recordings of eleven meetings of Belarusian courses in a Belarusian city and their transcripts serve as interactional data. Some of these meetings were live

streaming. The audio-recordings were collected by the author. The excerpts for the analysis

include talk in Belarusian, Russian and its translation into English. In the excerpts, participants

are referred to in accordance with their role to ensure the participants' anonymity: Host (H),

Guest (G), Attendee (A), Unidentified participants (O). The meetings under study were held

during January - May 2014. That was a third season of the courses, which had 20 meetings on a

whole. Two previous seasons took place in 2013. The courses had a few meetings during the

summer 2014. While season 4 was scheduled to begin in October 2014, the courses ceased to

exist due to internal reasons. Each meeting lasted approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes and

focused on a new topic related to Belarusian culture and addressed various aspects of life in

Belarus (e.g., how to start speaking Belarusian, bilingualism, fashion, religion, drinks, business

in a Belarusian way).

The courses were public and were held at an art space. They were organized thanks to the

initiative of one person who wanted to create a space for people interested in Belarusian, where

they could get together and study it in an untraditional way. The meetings were conducted by

volunteers. These courses were informal, and there was no enrollment to them or taking records

of who was present. In this respect, participation was anonymous. Participants were free to come

and leave whenever they wanted during the meetings. They could also get coffee at a bar stand.

The number of attendees varied from one meeting to another, from fifty to seventy. Some

participants sat, while others stood. There was also a variation in terms of age groups with young

people prevailing. The courses were open to people of various levels of the Belarusian language

proficiency, ranging from fluent Belarusian speakers to those who did not speak it at all. Each

meeting was led by two hosts. Another category of participants were guests who acted in their

capacity of experts or performers. There was no charge for attending the courses. The courses

also had a public facebook page where some educational material and videos from the previous meetings were posted.

The meetings consisted of stages such as an opening stage where the hosts announced a theme of the meeting; some activities devoted to learning Belarusian; discussion with guests; a musical performance; a closing stage where the hosts announced the next meeting.

The author attended the meetings as an ordinary participant and also studied a public facebook page of the courses. While the author has ethnographic knowledge of the encounters, the analysis focuses primarily on the discursive features of interaction. The analysis of the audio recordings and the transcripts is guided by two questions. How is speaking Belarusian is framed in relation to identity formation and language ideology? How is the participants' use of linguistic and interactional resources contributes to identity construction?

As people have different cultural identities (e.g., ethnicity or gender), it is not always evident what identity becomes relevant in interaction (Bolden, 2014). In this respect, the analysis focuses on meta-communication in regard to language use and interactional moments where cultural identities become manifest.

Analysis

The study suggests that the courses aim to promote the Belarusian language and culture and to build a national identity. The analysis demonstrates how these goals are addressed at a micro level of interaction.

Courses and Language Ideology

The meetings serve as a site for constructing language ideology, which excerpts 1 and 2 illustrate. The interaction during the meetings reflects the situation with Belarusian being a minority language and ways to change it.

Excerpt 1 illustrates how the courses are framed in regard to the mission of promoting the Belarusian language and culture. Prior to this episode, there was a discussion with G1, an expert in PR, on a possibility of creating a national PR campaign to popularize Belarusian without state involvement in that process and ways to do that. According to G1, it would be possible but the fact that there was a need to promote their own language would be shameful for Belarusians. H2, however, persisted with his inquiry and asked G1 whether Belarusian, nevertheless, requires PR. G1 expressed his agreement and stated that PR was already happening, even though it might be invisible, which is, according to G1, a feature of professional PR.

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Excerpt 1

1H1: НАЗВА гэта піяр,

     NAME is it PR,

2    (0.2)

3G1: Бе- безумоўна. (.) Тое што вы робіце, гэта вельмі: (.)

     Su- sure. (.) What you do, it is a very: ()

4    якасны пі[яр]

     quality PR

5H1:      [Але нас- нас бачна] нас (           )

          [But we- we are visible] we are (           )

6H2:      [(                    )]

7H2: Гэта наша праблема

     This is our problem

8H1: Але ніхто не думае што гэта піяр. …

     But nobody thinks it's PR. …

2 turns omitted
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10G1: …што гэта становіцца можа модным (.) сярод

      …the fact that it becomes maybe fashionable (.) among

11    моладзі, гэта: (.) верны такі (.) м (.) прызнак (0.2) такая

      the young, this i:s (.) such a good (.) m- sign (0.2) such

12    прыкмета. (0.2) так (мне) кажучы. (.) піяр- добрагу піяру

      a sign. (0.2) it seems to me. (.) PR- of a good PR

13    (.) бо піяр як раз-такі займаецца такімі э (.) прадметамі

      (.) as PR in fact deals with such uh (.) subjects

14    як (         ), (.) ідэялогія. (.) светапогляд.

      as (         ), (.) ideology. (.) worldview.
```

H1 asked G1's opinion whether the courses are PR of Belarusian (line 1). G1 gives a confirmative answer and makes a positive evaluation of the organizers' work (e.g., "PR of a good quality" (lines 3-4) and "a good PR" (line 12). G1 also makes an argument to support his position, that is, it is popular among young people (lines 10-11). H1 raises an issue that the courses are visible (line 5). While H2 frames it as a problem of the courses in relation to G1's point about invisibility of good PR (line 7), H1 makes a counterargument to his previous statement that nobody views these courses as a PR campaign. In the omitted turns, G1 treats this fact as positive and brings up again invisibility of PR as a sign of good PR. G1 identifies the scope of PR activity as dealing with ideology and worldview (lines 13-14). Thus, the courses are framed as a good PR campaign to promote the Belarusian language and culture from bottom-up, that is, at a non-governmental level. In this respect, their role in shaping language ideology becomes evident. These courses can be seen as an agency in promoting language ideology that aims to increase the role of a minority language.

Excerpt 2 is an example of how the goal of promoting Belarusian is referred to in a more indirect way. During the meeting the discussion focused on how to be Belarusian in a Russian-speaking Belarus. One issue that was raised is how to handle situations when one interlocutor speaks Russian and the other speaks Belarusian, and the latter is forced to speak Russian. Prior to this episode, the conversation focused on how to respond in situations when a Russian-speaking interactant inquires why their interlocutor speaks Belarusian. An example of response that a guest gave was face-threatening (see excerpt 5).

Excerpt 2

```
1H2:   … а часам чалавека сапраўды вось- ну ён вагаецца

       … but sometimes a person indeed here- well he hesitates

2      ці яму пачаць, ці не пачаць размаўляць. (.) і

       whether to start, or not to start speaking. (.) and

3      як яму адказаць так можа дэлікатна, каб усё ж такі

       how to respond to him so maybe nicely, so that still

4      натхніць

       to inspire
```

While prior to this episode H2 agreed that sometimes a more aggressive response may be justified, in excerpt 2, H2 asks the guest to provide advice how to respond in a mitigated way (line 3), so that to inspire a Russian-speaking person to start speaking Belarusian. While it may be natural to react aggressively when challenged, H2's question highlights different aspects of this situation, that is, firstly, there are people in Belarus who are interested in speaking Belarusian but hesitant, and, secondly, how to frame an answer to encourage an interlocutor to speak Belarusian. Thus, H2 shows orientation towards the mission of promoting this language.

According to the official language ideology, Belarusian and Russian have the same status. Both examples, however, construct Belarusian as a minority language that needs promotion, thus, indicating that this ideology is not carried out in practice. The interactants frame the courses as an agent in changing attitude towards Belarusian and shaping language ideology.

Identity Construction

The study also indicates the connection between the use of language and identity construction. The findings show that a Belarusian-speaking person's identity is emergent in interaction and discursively constructed with help of different interactional resources in relation to others. It is dynamic and is influenced by interactional and ideological constraints (e.g., others' perceptions and language ideologies). The identity is also constructed at different levels (national and local categories, interactional position).

National identity construction and language ideology

The analysis shows that identity of a Belarusian-speaking Belarusian is framed and constructed in various ways and interconnected with language ideology. The examples here illustrate Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) indexicality, partialness, relationality, and partialness principles at play.

First of all, speaking Belarusian is seen as an integral part of a national identity, which is illustrated by excerpts 3 and 4, where interactants provide their accounts for speaking this language. Prior to these episodes the hosts asked volunteers from the audience to work in teams to come up with reasons for learning Belarusian. The following excerpts are from the teams' presentations.

Excerpt 3

1A1: Я вывучаю беларускую мову, каб наша нацыя не памерла

    I learn the Belarusian language, lest our nation die

Excerpt 4

1A2: Таму што я беларус.

   Because I am a Belarusian.

2H2: Ну цудоўны адказ.

   Well a beautiful answer.

In these two excepts the participants' accounts directly connect Belarusian with being a Belarusian. Both of them use labeling ("a Belarusian" and "our nation") to indicate a national membership category. Also, in excerpt 3, there is a presupposition that a nation does not exist without its language. These communicative practices demonstrate the indexicality principle in relation to a national identity.

At the same time, participants frame a Belarusian-speaking Belarusian as a member of a minority group in the country where speaking Russian is considered to be a norm. This can be seen, firstly, in the meeting agenda that focuses on what it means to be a Belarusian in a Russian-speaking Belarus. Secondly, it is reflected in participants' moves, which is evident in excerpts 5-9.

Excerpt 5 illustrates how the way the hosts frame their questions for the audience constructs being a Belarusian speaker as deviation from the norm. Prior to this episode, H1 introduced a guest who is a linguist and who was his teacher at lyceum.

Excerpt 5

1H1: …што трэба адказваць калі (.) людзі задаюць

      what one should say when people asks

2   дурацкія пытанні, чаму мы гаворым па-беларуску.

      silly questions, why we speak Belarusian

3   (ілі) што вы нам распавядалі. спадар (   )

```
      (or) what did you say to us, mister (     )
4G2: Э:: (.) ну напэўна так э (.) калі быў бы туркам,
      Uh:: (.) well probably that uh (.) if I were a Turk,
5   гаварыў бы па-турэцку
      I would speak Turkish
6О: хххх ха
       Hhhh ha
7G2: так,
       right,
8   (0.2)
9H1: (      ) пра галандцаў. Гаварыў бы па-галандску.
       (      ) about the Dutch. {I} would speak Dutch.
```

In lines 1-2, H1 makes a general inquiry about what Belarusian-speaking interactants should do, when asked to explain why they speak Belarusian, and then asks G2 what he advised to answer in this situation. Bucholtz and Hall's indexicality and partialness principles are particularly relevant here. G2 and H1 index a Belarusian identity. G2's response implies that people should speak the language of their ethnic culture (lines 4-5). While the hosts focus here on appropriate responses, the presupposition in this question is that people ask this kind of questions. Although these questions appear "silly" to those who speak Belarusian, which signals that they treat speaking Belarusian as something usual, the fact that they are being asked this question in their own country indicates that other people (i.e., Russian-speaking interactants) see it as a deviation from the norm (i.e., speaking Russian). In this respect, the identity is constructed in reference to other people's perceptions (the partialness principle).

The theme of 'minority language' is also reflected in people's accounts for not speaking Belarusian, which was a topic discussed at the courses. Before having a discussion, the hosts shared with attendees reasons they compiled themselves. Excerpts 6 and 7 are examples of these accounts.

Excerpt 6

H1: Школа, университет, семья – всё на русском

    `School, university, the family – everything is in Russian`

Here, the point is that people are exposed to Russian in various spheres and at different stages of their lives, as it is the language of institutions, starting from a basic social unit of a family and moving to macro educational agencies.

Excerpt 7

H1: *Меня не поймут, если я вдруг начну говорить*

    `I won't be understood if I suddenly start speaking`

2   *по-белорусски, (я) всю жизнь на русском*

    `Belarusian, (I) {speak} Russian all my life`

Here, an account is related to an issue of understanding. An interlocutor expresses a concern that it will be viewed as something unusual by others, if they start speaking Belarusian. Both accounts position Russian as a dominating language and implicitly indicate the lack of Belarusian in the life of the society, which reflects the language ideology and is related to the partialness principle.

These accounts are also echoed by attendees' stories (excerpts 8 and 9). Prior to these episodes, the hosts asked attendees to share what excuses they or their friends had for not speaking Belarusian as a follow-up on the reasons they presented. The hosts invite the attendees to share their personal experiences of speaking Belarusian.

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Excerpt 8

1H1: А калі вас [(пытаюць)(чаму)] (.) гаворыце

     And when you [(are asked) (why)] (.) ((you)) speak

2A3:             [(           )]

3H1: па-беларуску, то што вы кажыце

     Belarusian, then what do you say

4    (1.0)

5A3: Э: (.) (              ) А (.) быў такі выпадак (.) адна

     Uh: (.) (          ) Ah (.) there was such a case (.) one

6    жанчына: (.) вось (.) э: вы так (прекрасно) говорите на

     woman: (.) well ).) uh: you speak so (beautifully) in

7    белорусском языке, .хх мне- (.) половину

     in the Belarusian language, .hh to me- (.) half of the

8    слов не (поняла), но так приятно. так што

     words {I} didn't (understand), but it is so nice. So that

9    (.) раю ўсім хлопцам (.) рабіце сваім дзяўчатам прыемнае

     (.) {I} advise all the guys (.) indulge your girl-friends

10H1:Брава, брава

     Bravo, bravo

11O:((applauding))
```

   H1 asked A3 to share with the audience what he responds when someone inquires why he

speaks Belarusian (lines 1-3). A3's reply is delayed with help of pauses and the disfluency "uh",

which may signal that A3 has some difficulty in producing a conditionally relevant reply. While

he finally produces a type-conforming response, its content does not directly address H1's

question. Instead, he provides an example of his positive personal experience with a Russian-speaking interlocutor. He assumes a role of animator (Goffman, 1981) when he voices a woman's remark. The female's comment positions speaking Belarusian as not a norm, thus putting its speaker into a minority group. It is accomplished in two ways, namely, by stating that she was not able to understand half of what A3 said and by assessing his speech. Even though she makes a positive evaluation of the fact, it indicates a deviation from the norm. As a rule, people do not compliment on something that is viewed as usual.

Excerpt 9 is an example that an attendee gave to illustrate a reaction of Russian-speaking interactants to a request made in Belarusian. This episode immediately follows example 8. In contrast to the previous episode, the personal experience was negative.

Excerpt 9

```
1H2:  прыклады (.) с прыватнай практыкі,
      examples (.) from personal experience

2     (0.2)

3A4:  ну с прыватнай практыкі вось (.) два прыклада ў меня такі
      Well from personal experience here (.) two such examples

4     ёсць (.) а: па-першае калі едешь у маршрутцы так,
      I have (.) ah: first of all when you ride a minibus like,

5     калі пачынаешь (.) прасіць прыпыніце калі ласка там на
      when you start (.) asking stop please there at

6     наступ[най (        )]
      nex[t (         )   ]

7H2:        [калі цырульні] ці дзе-та там [(        )]
          [at a hairdresser's] or somewhere there [(      )]
```

8 A4:   [да (так)]

                                                            [yes (so)]

9   адказываюць цебе там *што, што,* (.) *што ты хочешь,*

      {they} answer you like what, what, (.) what do you want,

10   *где тебя остановить, а ты можешь по-русски, ну скажи*

      where to stop you, but can you in Russian, well say

11   *по-русски, а то не остановлю.*

      in Russian, or {I} won't stop.

H2 asks for more examples of attendees' personal experiences of speaking Belarusian (line 1). A4 shares a story of riding a minibus when she asked the driver to stop at some location. Similar to excerpt 9, A4 performs as an animator when she enacts a Russian-speaking interlocutor. The driver shows difficulty in understanding where A4 asked him to stop and forces her to speak Russian (lines 9-11). A4's use of vocalics that indicate an annoyance adds to framing the driver's comment as an expression of negative attitude. The driver's negativity can be explained in terms of communication failure rather than a negative attitude towards the Belarusian language: he needs to make a quick decision where to stop and not being able to understand the request makes him react aggressively. However, what is of importance here is that the driver treats speaking Belarusian as a deviation from what he encounters on everyday basis. Although the driver is a service provider, he does not understand one of the state languages, which signals that Russian is considered to be a norm in comparison with Belarusian.

In both cases Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) principles can be applied. First of all, Russian-speaking interlocutors' language use (e.g., evaluation, implicatures) position speaking Belarusian as breaking the norm and its speakers as deviants (principle of indexicality). Secondly, the relationality and the partialness principles are at work. The shift in footing (e.g., assuming the

role of animator) allows the narrator to show how Belarusian-speaking people are perceived by others and to distance from their position. The interlocutors' comments also reflect and enact a macro structure of ideologies, that is, the value attached in the society to Russian as a dominating language, and Belarusian as a language of minority.

In contrast, Belarusian-speaking interactants' accounts construct speaking Belarusian as a norm and speaking Russian as a deviation from it, which excerpts 10-12 illustrate. These excerpts are short dialogues that the hosts created for attendees as examples of responses they can give, when forced to speak Russian. In excerpt 10, H2 performs two different roles, a Russian-speaking person and a Belarusian-speaking one.

```
Excerpt 10

1H2: Говорите по-русски. Я не понимаю.

     Speak Russian. I don't understand.

2H2: А вы что: (.) беженец. да,

     But wha:t are you (.) a refugee. right,

3O:  xx xe

     Hh he
```

The response to a non-Belarusian-speaking interlocutor's remark that they do not understand Belarusian questions that interlocutor's national identity by evoking a citizenship status as a reason not to be able to understand one of the state languages (line 2). By juxtaposing not understanding Belarusian with being a refugee, the interactant introduces the presupposition, that if you are not a refugee, you should understand that language, thus highlighting a norm and ideology that Belarusians should speak Belarusian. The audience's laughter indicates their alignment with the stance.

In excerpts 11 and 12, dialogues are performed by attendees.

```
Excerpt 11

1A5: Говорите по-русски.

     Speak Russian

2    (0.2)

3A6: Па-рускі в Тамбове

     In Russian in Tambov

4    (.)

5H2: И хорошая интонация была

    And it was a good intonation.

6O: ((applauding)) hh ha
```

Here, A6's response makes a reference to a Russian city as a location where Russian should be spoken (line 3). Thus, the response indicates inappropriateness of the request. By associating Russian with a place in Russia, A6 implies that speaking Russian in Belarus would not be a norm in contrast to speaking Belarusian. H2 and the audience express alignment with the response. H2 provides a positive evaluation of the intonation contour A6 used to make the response sound firm (line 5), and unidentified attendees applaud and laugh.

```
Excerpt 12

1A5: Разгаварвайце на нармальнам языке

     Speak in a normal language.

2    (.)

3A6: Вой. Як цікава вы размаўляеце. Вы так заўседы,

     Wow. How interesting you are speaking. Are you always like

     that,

4O: xx xe
```

```
Hh he
```

Here, an interlocutor is asked to speak in a normal language, which implies that the way they speak is not a norm. In its turn, A6's response evaluates the other's speech as something unusual, thus implying that their own way of speaking is a norm. Similar to excerpt 11, unidentified attendees use laughter to express their alignment with the response.

Interestingly enough, bilingualism can be seen as a deviation from the norm as well, which excerpt 13 illustrates. Prior to this episode, attendees shared stories about how they started speaking Belarusian.

```
Excerpt 13
1H2: (і так) (у нас) гісторыя пра тое як вы перайшлі- (.)
     (and so) (we have) a story about how you switched- (.)
2    пераходзіце (.) .x на беларускую мову.
     are switching (.) .h to the Belarusian language.
3    (0.2)
4A7: ну калі сябры:  (.) размаўляюць па-беларускі, я заўсёды
     Well when friends: (.) speak Belarusian, I always
5    размаўляю па-беларускі. но так а: (.) як а- (.) так я
     speak Belarusian. but usually ah: (.) like a- (.) usually I
6    размаўляю (.) па-расейску
     speak (.) Russian
7H2: Вы (.) бімоўная пакуль шта. так,
     You are bilingual for now. right,
8A7: Ну эта (.) білінгв
     Well it (.) bilingual
```

```
9:     (.)

10O: xx ха ха ха ха

     Hh ha ha ha ha

11H2: Бімоўная білінгва. (.) ёсць такія людзі. у нас

      Bilingual bilingual. (.) there are such people. we have

12    разнастайныя людзі. і с цягам часам яны перойдуць

      diverse people, and with time they will switch

13    па-бела- на беларускую.

      Bela- to Belarusian.
```

In line 1, H2 reminds the audience that the focus of interaction is how they transition from speaking Russian to Belarusian. H2 cuts off the verb "switch" in the past tense and changes it to the present. This repair shows her orientation towards the fact that part of attendees does not speak Belarusian but is trying to do that. Otherwise, these attendees might be positioned as out-group members. A7 shares her experience, stating that the language choice depends on the context. That is, she usually speaks Russian but she speaks Belarusian, if others converse in this language. H2 asks whether A7 is bilingual (line 7), which she confirms (line 8). While H2 and A7 refer to the same phenomenon (that is, a person who speaks two languages), H2 uses a lay Belarusian word, and A7 uses a term which is a borrowing from English. In line 11, H2 combines two words and points out the existence of this category. What is of interest here is that, although A7 brought up a context as a factor determining her language choice with Russian being used more often, H2 shifts focus on temporality of her bilingual status ("bilingual for now" in line 7) and makes a general claim about bilinguals, stating that they will switch to Belarusian with time (turn 8). Thus, she positions speaking Belarusian as a norm, and bilingualism as a transitional state.

Thus, these examples show how the identity of Belarusian-speaking Belarusians is interactionally constructed in relation to Russian-speaking Belarusians, illustrating the emergence and the relationality principles. They index identities with help of different interactional resources (e.g., presuppositions, nonverbal means such as intonation, laughter, applause) (the indexicality principle). Moreover, they reveal the link between language ideologies and identity (the partialness principle). The official language policy of bilingualism with Russian as a dominating language in reality that places Belarusian-speaking Belarusians into a minority group is contrasted with a monolingual ideology, where being Belarusian is associated with speaking Belarusian.

Examples 14-16 illustrate the national identity formation in regard to other nations, which is related to the relationality principle. Belarusian can be used as a tool to differentiate from other nations with emphasis on being unique. In this respect, the identity is constructed not in terms of who Belarusians are but who they are not. Excerpts 14-16 illustrate this point.

```
Excerpt 14
1A12: …не хачу паходзіць на: расейца, (.) ці
      …{I} don't want to be like a Russian, (.) or
2     паляка. (0.2) не хачу- хачу адрознівацца (0.2)…
      a Pole. (0.2) {I} don't want- {I} want to differ (0.2)…
3H2: Mx,
     Mh,
4    (0.2)
5O: ((applauding))
Excerpt 15
1H2: яшчэ ёсць варыянты,
```

```
    Do you have more variants,

2 turns omitted

4A13: каб за мяжой нас на лічылі расейцамі.

     lest abroad we be considered Russians

Excerpt 16

1A14: …каб маскалі не разумелі

     …lest Moscovites understand

2O: хахаха

    hahaha
```

In excerpt 14, A12 states a desire to be different from Russians and Poles as a reason for speaking Belarusian. In excerpt 15, A13's response brings in a function of Belarusian as an identifying marker lest Belarusians be taken as Russians while being abroad. In excerpt 16, A14's response treats Belarusian as means that would make it difficult for another group of people to understand what the speaker says. In a way, this use of language is similar to the idea of language ideology that "words and speech have magical and symbolic power" and the aim of the community "is not to increase efficiency of communication by making oneself more intelligible to others, but rather to diminish it through changes to conceal words and meaning from others" (Sandel, 2015, p. 7).

In regard to the indexicality principle, excerpt 16 is interesting in terms of labeling. While in excerpts 14-15, neutral terms are applied to refer to other nationalities, in excerpt 16 the participant uses a word with negative connotation ("Moscovites"). Thus, it constructs a Belarusian identity as more positive in comparison with a Russian one.

Thus, these examples demonstrate that Belarusian-speaking Belarusians' identity is constructed in interaction (the emergence principle) by means of various interactional resources

(the indexicality principle) and is dependent on other people's perceptions and language ideology (the partialness principle). Participants construct this identity in relation to others such as Russian-speaking Belarusians and other nationalities (the relationality principle).

Situated identities

While Belarusian in examples above was associated with a national identity, the study shows that it can be also a sign of a situated identity. Thus, in accordance with the positionality principle, Belarusian-speaking people's identity is a multi-layered construct. The situated identity is connected, for example, with a dimension of being outsiders or insiders. This dimension is constructed at different levels of membership (e.g., a circle of friends or a political party), which excerpt 17 illustrates. Prior to excerpt 17, G3 shared his experiences about how he responds to a negative reaction towards him when he speaks Belarusian in public places. He shared a story about how he pretended to be an American who learnt to speak Belarusian and how the attitude toward him changed in a positive way.

```
Excerpt 17
1H1: …чаму калі ты гаворыш па-беларуску, кажуць бенеэфавец,
     …why when you speak Belarusian, {they} say beneefavets,
2    так, калі [ты]
     right, when [you]
3G3:           [не] мала
               [no] few
4H1: а калі ты кажаш што ты вось (.) амэрыканец
     but when you say that you well (.) are an American
5    прыехаў [(вывучаць)] беларускую мову, то ты
     {who} came [[(to learn)]] the Belarusian language, then you
```

```
6G3:          [то гэта]

              [that is]

7H1: ўжо- (.)  то ты ўжо такім паважаным чалавекам

     are already- (.) then you already such a respected person

8    [становішься]

     [become     ]

9O:  [хахахахаха]хаха

     [hahahahaha]haha
```

Here, H1 follows up on G3' story with a question about reasons for different treatment depending on an interlocutor's perception of a Belarusian-speaking person's identity (lines 1, 2, 4, and 5). While making comparison between a foreigner, in this case, an American, and a Belarusian-speaking Belarusian, H1 does not directly say that the latter is treated with disrespect. However, the use of "respected", an adjective with a positive connotation, to evaluate an American speaking Belarusian and of the verb "become" to indicate a shift in perception, implies a negative attitude towards a Belarusian-speaking Belarusian. Also, framing non-Belarusian speakers' perceptions, H1 links Belarusian-speaking Belarusians with one particular political party (Belarusian People Front). It appears then that foreigners are treated at the level of their macro (national) identity while citizens of Belarus are treated at the level of a more local identity (e.g., a political one).

This example demonstrates that Belarusian is not necessarily associated with ethnicity as such. It is juxtaposed with a political identity, a villager, an age group (e.g., elderly people), or a situated identity of a person who follows some trend. Belarusian-speaking interactants may be perceived as members of political parties who are in opposition to the current government, even though it is not a case, as it was illustrated in excerpt 17.

Another in-group/out-group membership is related to the division between city dwellers and countrymen, which is also related to a social status. City dwellers have been viewed as more educated and having a higher status in comparison with those living in the countryside. Speaking Belarusian is associated with being a collective farmer, which has a negative connotation.

Also, associating speaking Belarusian with fashion shifts it from being a feature of a macro identity (i.e., national) to a micro one (i.e., a situated identity of a person who follows some trend), which can have negative (e.g., underlying its temporal character) or positive connotations (e.g., being more progressive). For example, in excerpt 18, where attendees present a reason for speaking Belarusian, which they developed as a team, A9 brings in speaking Belarusian as a trend for young people.

```
Excerpt 18
1A8: …а чаму вы размаўляеце па-беларуску.
     …but why do you speak Belarusian.
2A9: Ну па-першае, гэта (        ) (0.2) э (.) на гэты
     Well first of all, this is (     ) (0.2) uh (.) to this
3    адказ- то есць на гэта пытанне (           ) цяпер (.) э
     answer- that is to this question (          ) now (.) uh
4    для моладзі э (.) беларускамоўнай  (каторая сейчас)
     for young people uh (.) Belarusian-speaking (who is now)
5    (  ) (.) у трэндзе (яна заўсёды) буде гаварыць па-беларускі
     (  ) (.) in the trend (they always) will speak Belarusian
```

Excerpts 19 and 20 are other examples how speaking Belarusian is associated with a situated identity. Both examples are responses to the question why one speaks Belarusian. In excerpt 19, the response makes a connection between the language and the state of being healthy,

which underlines normativity. In excerpt 20, the response is framed as a feature that attracts other people. While these responses are humorous, they illustrate how an identity of a Belarusian speaker is positively constructed at a micro layer (the indexicality principle).

```
Excerpt 19

1A10: $Я не такі хворы$

      $I am not that ill$

2O: хаха

    Haha

Excerpt 20

1A11: Потому что это сексуально

      Because it is sexy

2H2: A::::

      Ah::::

3O: ((applauding))
```

All these examples show how the identity of Belarusian-speaking people is formed in situ (the emergence principle) and go in line with the positionality principle, as they illustrate the emergence of different levels of identity in the course of interaction in addition to a national one.

To sum up, the Belarusian language courses play an active role in shaping language ideology and identity formation. There is a close connection between the use of language and identity construction. The participants use a variety of resources to construct interactionally the identity of a Belarusian-speaking Belarusian at different levels in relation to others and in view of others' perceptions and language ideology.

In the following section, I will discuss the findings in terms of language ideology and identity construction.

Discussion

The emergence of the Belarusian language courses under study was rooted in the current situation with Belarusian as a minority language, and it aimed to address this matter. As it was earlier mentioned (Mechkovskaja, 1994) in regard to the language socialization process of Belarusian, often this language competence is developed outside of a family circle. The issue is, however, that recently the number of educational institutions where Belarusian is the language of instruction have decreased. The courses under study aim to deal with this issue and provide the platform for language socialization and spreading Belarusian.

Safran (1992) states that one of possible polices in multilingual societies that can help to revive a minority language is "total equality between majority and ethnic minority languages in terms of both legitimacy and concrete action" (p. 411). Among conditions that would make multilingual policies successful there are "a strong commitment by minority elite personalities steeped in their culture" and "the existence or revival of minority community institutions" (p. 412). While both Russian and Belarusian enjoy the same status of a state language, the component of concrete action is lacking. The courses, in this respect, fill in this void. Although the hosts appear to orient toward a monolingual language ideology (one nation-one language), these courses can contribute at an informal level to making multilingual policies more effective. The participation of well-known people and experts who speak Belarusian in a way addresses the first condition, where these guests show their commitment to the Belarusian language and culture to participants. Also, these courses can be seen as an informal educational institution that builds a community.

Kasya (2001) states that language shifts involve the change of "speakers' attitude toward their own language and the language of the Other." (p. 244). While Kasya makes this point in

regard to linguistic imperialism, that is, the spread of dominant languages at the international arena, the findings show that a similar process is happening in the opposite direction. In case of the Belarusian courses, there is an attempt to modify the attitude toward a minority language and to make it a dominant one.

The study contributes to the current research on identity matters that views identity as an interactional achievement and a multi-layered phenomenon. In contrast to Jones's (2014) research where the notion of community was fundamental to understanding a collective construction of identity, as the focus was on a group with shared identity practices, the current study explores how identity is formed in a more eclectic group of people who are in a process of becoming a community and developing shared practices. Rather than being influenced by the norms of broader abstract ideological community (i.e., Belarusians in general), the participants at a micro level construct these norms (i.e., a Belarusian should speak the Belarusian language).

In this respect, an interplay of interactional identities (hosts versus attendees) and master identities (national or ethnic) is of interest. The findings indicate the asymmetry of hosts and attendees in regard to interactional power (e.g., the former frame topics for discussion and activities, ask questions, provide examples of possible ways to deal with situations). Thus, the hosts play a more active role in shaping language ideology (i.e., monolingualism) and master identity (i.e., a Belarusian) and connecting these two matters (i.e., a language as a feature of one's identity). This goes along with the idea that identities shape interaction (e.g., Vasilyeva, 2015; Tracy & Robles, 2013).

While ethnicity and nationality are considered to be master identities that are more or less stable (Tracy & Robles, 2013), the study shows that it is as dynamic as interactional identities and are built up in the interaction, which is in line with Bucholtz and Hall's emergence principle

(2005). The participants use different interactional resources to construct their identity of a Belarusian, which is connected with Bucholtz and Hall's indexicality principle. Firstly, they associate being Belarusian with speaking Belarusian, and by speaking this language in a particular context, interactants indicate their membership in this cultural category. In contrast to research that suggests that interactants use a majority language to avoid stigma (Karrebæck, 2013), the current study indicates that participants use a minority language to show their identity, even when they are challenged, and to promote this language. Also, using a hybrid speech (i.e., a combination of Russian and Belarusian called "trasianka") is not viewed as an abandonment of one's national identity (see e.g., Koven, 2013) but a natural process of learning Belarusian and becoming Belarusian. While it is not possible to establish how participants act in everyday situations, the data demonstrate evidence for the normative preference for speaking Belarusian. According to Koven (2007), although metacommunication is not "a transparent reflection" of practice, it provides "insight into the ways in which they understand the relationships among personhood, language, and context more generally" (p. 61). At the same time, connecting the identity of Belarusian with the Belarusian language problematizes the membership of Russian-speaking Belarusians and to some extent bilinguals in this category, which indicates that a master identity itself is multi-layered and achieved in interaction. Also, how participants construct their identity (e.g., distancing from Russians) might be influenced by language ideology enacted at the courses, similar to DiDomenico's (2015) finding that participants of coming-out panel emphasize some identities and deemphasize others to meet institutional expectations. Secondly, participants use accounts, narratives, presuppositions, descriptions, labeling, discursive practices of showing alignment (e.g., nonverbal means such as laughter and applause and verbal means such as positive evaluations) to construct a cultural identity in the course of the meetings.

The previous research highlighted the importance of congruency between self-ascriptions and other-ascriptions for the identity to be successfully achieved (Bailey, 2007). The accounts for not speaking Belarusian that the hosts share with attendees to sparkle a conversation on being a Belarusian-speaking person in predominantly Russian-speaking Belarus and attendees' stories about their personal experiences show a discrepancy between their own perception and other people's perceptions. For example, while Russian-speaking interlocutors treat speaking Belarusian as a deviation from the norm, Belarusian-speaking ones consider it as a norm, which can lead to interactional problems such as misunderstanding or conflict. This finding reflects Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) partialness principle of connection between identity construction and others' perceptions.

The study also contributes to the idea of interrelation between different types of identities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Tracy & Robles, 2013) (e.g., ethnicity as a master identity and a member of a political organization as an interactional one). It shows that speaking Belarusian is not necessarily associated with ethnic identity but other membership categories, for example, in terms of political affiliation (i.e., being in opposition) and location (i.e., being a villager). Although these stereotypes are not true, they have impact on how Belarusian-speaking people are perceived and also on the decision whether to start speaking Belarusian or not. In contrast to Belarusian natives, Belarusian speakers who are perceived to be foreigners are treated with respect. The complexity of identity of a Belarusian-speaking person is also reflected in the fact that it is constructed not only at macro (nationality) and mezzo (local membership categories) levels but also at the micro level of situated identities (e.g., being in trend, being healthy). Thus, the findings support Bucholtz and Hall's positionality principle.

Another interesting feature of identity construction is building it in terms who Belarusians are not rather than who they are. That is, the point of speaking Belarusian is to be different from Russians and Poles. This finding goes along with the relationality principle underlying that identities are constructed in relation to others through different dimensions (e.g., similarity/difference). This position can be viewed in terms of Belarusian history, that is, the periods of Polonization and Russification.

To conclude, the study contributes to deepening our understanding of language ideology and identities as interactional achievements. It also illustrates the complexity of identity and the interrelation between language and identity formation. In this respect, it highlights the value of integrative approach to studying identity such as Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework. Future research will explore the courses as culturally shaped interaction and cultural values of Belarusians, as they are reflected in communicative behavior of participants, as well as communicative practices.

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Appendix: Transcription Conventions

[ ]	overlapping talk
(word)	talk that the transcriber is not sure about
( )	indecipherable talk
$word$	smiling
word-	a word was cut off abruptly
(.)	pause
((applause))	nonverbal action
.	falling intonation
,	rising intonation
…	omitted part
word	marked stress
.hhh	inhalations
word	the Russian language
word	the Belarusian language
{word}	a word added in translation