



**NATALIA PAVLUSHINA**

**AUTONOMIA NA APRENDIZAGEM DE DIFERENTES IDIOMAS:  
AUTOBIOGRAFIA EXAMINADA  
ON BECOMING A POLYGLOT: AUTONOMY EXAMINED**

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Dissertação apresentada à Universidade Federal de Lavras, como parte das exigências do Programa de Pós-Graduação do Mestrado Profissional em Educação, área de concentração em Formação de Professores, para a obtenção do título de Mestre.

Orientadora

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## **Initial remarks**

My name is Natalia Pavlushina; I received my bachelor degree of Arts namely English philology from Kazan Federal University (Russia) in 2016. During four years at university I was also giving private classes of English and Russian languages to my school-age students. Right after my graduation I moved to Brazil for personal reasons. Coming to Brazil, I was highly motivated to continue my education and get a master's degree. That's why I started to learn Portuguese in Russia a year before my departure to Brazil. Half a year after my arrival, I entered to master's program at the Federal University of Lavras.

Now I am a student supervised by Tania Regina de Souza Romero and my research area is Applied Linguistics. As the final project we are developing two articles and a workshop. The focus of the research is narrative inquiry, language learning strategies, autonomous learning, intercultural communication, cultural shock and adaptation to foreign culture.

## **The first article**

### **On becoming a polyglot: Autonomy Examined**

Natalia Pavlushina

#### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to investigate a narrative focusing on language learning strategies which were applied by the author during the learning process of four foreign languages namely Tatar, English, Spanish and Portuguese. The strategies were described in the autobiographical narrative inquiry produced in the context of an educational master program in a Brazilian university by a Russian student. Firstly, an overview of the classification of the language learning strategies traces the relation between the language learning strategies and autonomous learning in order to set the basis to analyze the data generated. Secondly, the evidences of autonomy and language learning strategies of the autobiography are analyzed. The results of the research are the following: first, implementing strategies to acquire a language has proven its efficiency; second, autonomy developed by the subject can be applied in her future professional life with her own students; thirdly, data derived from the given narrative inquiry can shed some light on the specific peculiarities of the acquisition of Portuguese language by Russians.

**Key words:** language learning strategies, autonomous learning, narrative inquiry.

#### **RESUMO**

Este artigo tem como objetivo investigar as narrativas sobre as estratégias de aprendizagem aplicados pela autora durante de processo de aprendizagem de quatro línguas estrangeiras: inglês, tártaro, espanhol e português, a luz da linguística aplicada. As estratégias foram descritas nas narrativas autobiográficas produzidos no contexto de programa do mestrado em educação pela aluna com a origem russa. Uma visão geral da classificação das estratégias de aprendizagem de línguas traça a relação entre as estratégias de aprendizagem de línguas e aprendizagem autónoma, a fim de definir as

bases para analisar os dados gerados. Na segunda parte as evidências das estratégias e autonomia presentes na autobiografia foram analisadas. Foram encontrados seguintes resultados: primeiro, implementar estratégias para adquirir uma linguagem provou sua eficiência; segundo, a autonomia desenvolvida pelo sujeito pode ser implicada com sucesso em sua futura vida profissional com seus próprios alunos; em terceiro lugar, os dados derivados da investigação narrativa dada podem esclarecer as peculiaridades específicas da aquisição da língua portuguesa pelos russos.

**Palavras Chave:** Estratégias de Aprendizagem; Narrativas autobiográficas; Autonomia.

## **Introduction**

Nowadays English as Second Language (ESL) is taught all over the world and takes predominance over other languages. There are various reasons for the English domination; among them, the economic power of the USA and Great Britain, worldwide usage of English as a commercial, technical and scientific language according to Ammon (2014) and Muresan, Pérez-Llantada (2014). Due to these factors, English has become critical for survival in a globalized world. Therefore, most studies about foreign or additional language learning in Brazil have mostly focused on English. Fewer researchers have addressed the issue of other languages' learning process. However, integration of developing countries into the world economy and, for instance, the creation of BRICS<sup>1</sup> increase the demand of multilingual speakers who, besides English, are fluent, at least, in one more additional language. This justifies the significance of my research whose relevance is given by the analysis of four foreign languages, since, most investigations of language have only focused on just one foreign language, most commonly on English. (Bastos, Ramos, 2015; Martins, 2015; Oliveira, 2016; Silva, Freitas, 2017).

This study is a part of a project entitled Language Teacher Identity, which is being carried out in the Graduate Program in Education at UFLA, under the perspective of Applied Linguistics. In the present investigation, an autobiographic narrative is focused on my experience as a learner of four foreign languages namely Tatar, English, Spanish and Portuguese. In my history, I recall peculiarities of my learning process of Tatar, English and Spanish which were learnt in the context of school, university and extra courses' classes and compare it with my autonomous way of learning Portuguese which I started to learn alone in Russia and then improved living in Brazil and communicating with natives.

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<sup>1</sup> BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Considering that an autobiography will be the source of my data, it is relevant to point out its contribution to research on teacher education. According to Pavlenko (2007), autobiographic narratives make three important contributions to Applied Linguistics and bilingualism research. Firstly, they bring insider's view of the processes of language learning. Secondly, they give prominence to new connections between various learning processes and phenomena, and, thus, point to new directions for future research. Thirdly, narratives constitute a valuable source for historic and diachronic sociolinguistic research.

Thus, the purpose of this article is to investigate my autobiography with focus on my process of learning of four foreign languages by means of identifying the learning strategies I used in the process. The specific objectives are (1) to analyze my autobiography looking for strategies I used; (2) to analyze my autobiography looking for evidences of autonomy; (3) to reflect on how my experience and knowledge on language learning strategies may be used in my teaching practice. Thus, the following research questions are raised in the study:

- 1) Which evidences of autonomy can be found in the autobiography?
- 2) Which are the most frequent learning strategies identified?
- 3) Which other aspects contributed to learning each language?
- 4) How can I apply my language learning experience to my teaching practice?

This paper is divided into five sections. The first section gives a brief overview of the research topic. The second item brings some information about general characteristics of each of the languages discussed. The third section discusses the theoretical and methodological approach which was used to realize the investigation, encompassing the role of narratives in teacher development, the concepts of autonomy and language learning strategies. In the fourth section excerpts of my autobiography are analyzed in the light of the theory discussed. Some final remarks are drawn in the final section.

## 1. Information about the languages

It should be mentioned that Tatar, English, Spanish, Portuguese and my native language Russian are from different language families. So their grammar systems are rather different as well. Tatar belongs to the Turkic language family, English to the Germanic one, Spanish and Portuguese to the Romance one and Russian to the Slavonic one. (Katzner; Miller, 2002)

### Russian language

Russian has free word order. Russian language has genders. There are three grammatical genders in Russian language: masculine, feminine and neutral. Nouns and adjectives endings depend on the gender. Even Russian verbs in the past tense have feminine and masculine forms. To ask question in Russian you just need to apply a different intonation without changing the word order.

In contrast to English, Spanish and Portuguese there is no verb «to be» in Russian in the present tense. For example, “I am a teacher” in Russian it will be just “Я учитель”, with no verb at all just with pronoun and the name of profession.

However, in future and past tenses, the equivalent of the verb “to be” – “БЫТЬ” is used: “I *was* a teacher” – “Я *был* учителем”, “I *will be* a teacher” – “Я *буду* учителем”.

There are just three tenses in Russian: Present, Past and Future. Additional information is expressed either by prefixes or by perfect or imperfect verb form. That is why studying tenses in English is one of the main difficulties in Russian’s learning process. Many students give up learning English exactly because of difficulties with its tenses, with continuous, perfect and perfect-continuous categories.

Prefixes and suffixes play a very important role in Russian language especially in word building. Зайти [zaiti] - to enter; выйти [vyiti] - to exit; подойти [podoyti] - to come closer; дойти [doyti] - to get to the end; перейти [pereyti] - to cross; прийти - to arrive [priyti]; обойти [oboyti]- to go around; войти [voyti] - to come in; уйти [uiti]- to leave; пройти [proiti]- to pass all the route from the beginning to the end; сойти [soiti] - to come down; взойти [vzoiti]- to come up (more in ceremonial sense).

There are no articles in Russian. So for Russian natives, learning how to use articles in foreign languages is a rather complicated challenge.

### **Tatar language**

The Tatar language is a Turkic language spoken by Tatars mainly located in modern Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and Nizhny Novgorod Oblast, Siberia. The Tatar language is spoken in Russia, Ukraine, China, Finland, Turkey, Uzbekistan, the United States of America, Romania, Azerbaijan, Israel, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Lithuania, Latvia, and other countries in the region. There are more than 7 million speakers of Tatar in the world. (Johanson; Csató, 2015)

I started to learn Tatar at the age of seven at school. The principles of word - building and the expression of grammatical categories in Tatar and Russian are different. In Tatar language there are no genders. Another difference is the word order. Tatar has some word order rules. For instance, the subject in Tatar sentence is always situated at the beginning of a sentence and the verb is at the end. The adjective is always before the subject.

In both languages, nouns have declensions and change their endings depending on their cases in certain phrases. In Tatar, as well as in Russian, there are six cases – nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, and prepositional – in two forms (singular and plural). So, one of the first steps to learn Tatar is to learn cases' endings. It is important to point out that, although both Tatar and Russian have cases, their endings in the Tatar language are totally different, so I had to learn them. Also, Russian learners have difficulties with Tatar pronunciation. Especially with nasal sounds which do not exist in the Russian language.

I learned Tatar longer than other languages: eleven years at school and about two years at my undergraduate course. However, for certain reasons, I do not actually know it well.

### **English language**

I learned English during eight years at school and four years during undergraduate education. Moreover, I attended courses in preparation for the university English entry examinations during two years.

As I mentioned before the biggest difficulty Russian learners have with English is grammar, namely with articles, fixed word order and tenses. Another difficulty occurs with pronunciation. In Russian we read as we write. So Russians feel confused with English language's spelling and pronunciation, with the fact that one letter can be pronounced differently.

### **Spanish Language**

At my undergraduate course, I had a choice between Spanish and German and I decided to take Spanish. I had Spanish classes during all four years within the bachelor program. As I liked the language, I also took an extra course of Spanish during one year. It was intensive, informative and given by native Spanish teachers or Russian ones who had studied abroad. It is worth noting that I have never been to English or Spanish speaking countries. Thus, I studied these languages in Russia with almost no contact with native speakers.

### **Portuguese Language**

In contrast, I learned Portuguese mostly in Brazil communicating with native speakers. In total, I spent three years learning Portuguese: one year in Russia in non-native context and more two years in Brazil. Learning a foreign language in the native speaking country was, without any doubt, more effective and easier than learning English and Spanish just in Russia.

I had never heard about learner autonomy or LLS (Language Learning Strategies) before starting my master's program investigation. Therefore, at school and as an undergraduate student at university, I knew nothing about this theory and developed most of my LLS intuitively by myself. Teachers were not very interested in students' language acquisition progress. They did not try to motivate us to be more autonomous. Moreover, the teachers by themselves often did not show autonomy and kept over-reliant on the textbook, even though, in my view, it was not very effective. So, the majority of my efforts and strategies developed to learn foreign languages were at my initiative and without any hints from my teachers. I believe that if I had known about effective strategies at school or at least at university, my language learning process could have been faster and less tense.

## **2. Theoretical approach**

In this section, the following concepts will be discussed: Autonomy in language learning process, Language Learning Strategies, Teacher education, identity and narrative inquiry.

### **2.1 Autonomy in language learning process**

In the modern world, in the context of globalization, with constant increase in scientific knowledge and development of new technologies, people face the need of self-development and self-education. One of the most important components of successful self-education is learning autonomy. In the given article we are going to look at autonomy in additional<sup>2</sup> language learning (LL) processes.

Nowadays, various studies from many social sciences such as language education, psychology and sociology are still trying to provide the precise definition for autonomy. Nasonova (2009) refers to autonomy as a wish and capacity of a person to act as a responsible participant in his/her learning process, being able to take the lead in his/her own education and self – development.

Taking this perspective further, Dobrodeeva and Zaitseva (2015) state that autonomy appears as the highest level of self-management and personal capacity to the decision-making, to the objective evaluation of the educational environment and to the reflection on one's linguistic and educational experience. They also highlight that an autonomous learner is the one who takes the responsibility for his or her learning process. According to the researchers, in the context of autonomous learning, the students by themselves decide what they want to learn, what they would do in order to achieve their goals, what instruments would be used and how to manage time and achievements.

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<sup>2</sup> In the given research the term “additional languages” will be applied instead of second or foreign languages. According to Schlatter and Garcez (2009) another language is not necessarily foreign to those who use it. Moreover the use of that “another” language gives a possibility of broadening opportunities to participate in a wider range of interactional events. This determines the use of “additional languages”.



Pawlak (2017), in the same path, emphasizes the important role of autonomy in the learning of other language skills and subsystems and defines it as an ability of students to take charge of one's own learning and to go beyond the requirements specified by the teacher. This scholar points out the relevance of encouraging a discovery approach to learning grammar, which entails greater emphasis on different forms of induction. He also highlights the effectiveness of the usage of new technologies for the development of learner autonomy. In this regard, the author proposes the following resources with which students should be engaged: 1) the use of educational software; 2) the use of Internet communicators or virtual worlds 3) the access to generic websites, where authentic written and spoken texts can be found; 4) the usage of the opportunities offered by word processors and presentation software; 5) the usage of electronic dictionaries, whether those are available on DVDs, smartphones or online; 6) the access to large collections of both spoken and written natural texts.

Magno e Silva (2008) states that autonomy is a multidimensional construct because it encompasses many areas, like learning styles, learning strategies, motivation, affective factors, etc.

As we can see, these scholars from different nations represent convergent concepts of autonomy. They all emphasize the crucial role of student's responsibility and motivation in learning process. Thus the autonomous learning process is characterized by independence, absence of teacher's control and by students' ability to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

However, the modern concept of autonomy in LL (Language Learning) may also be considered from the point of view developed by Vygotsky's (1978) socio - constructivism. Vygotsky claims that the learning process and, therefore, knowledge acquisition occurs in social interaction in the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978:86). We can infer from this that, although individual initiative is important on the part of the language learner, autonomy may also be developed with the help of a more experienced learner or teacher. It is especially relevant to consider that, as Aro (2016) points out by drawing from Bakhtin's

elaborations, in order to develop one's own language learning process, one must be in interaction with others and the learning environment. Therefore, the process cannot be seen as resulting solely from the individual learner, since s/he is a social being.

In order to develop language learning autonomy, the learner should develop a number of strategies, to which we turn next.

## **2.2 Language Learning Strategies**

The theory of LLS started to be developed in the second half of the twentieth century. The main objectives of the new theory were improving the quality of education and the search for the most effective ways of additional language learning. One of the main researchers who contributed to the development of LLS theory was Rebecca Oxford (1990). Primarily the author described the origin of the word «strategy» from the Greek term «strategia», which meant military planning, whereas the modern word «strategy» is applied to situations «where it has come to mean a plan, step, or conscious action toward achievement of an objective». Oxford (1990:8)

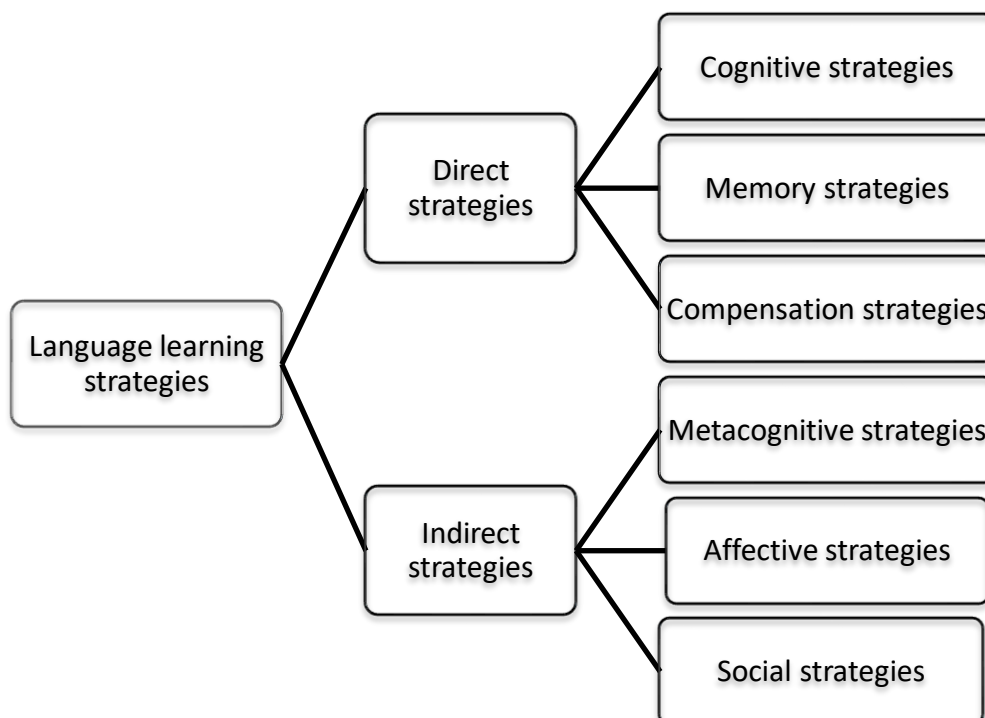
Later, Oxford (2001, p 166) defines learning strategies as

operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information, specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations.

According to her, the advantages of developing language learning strategies are manifold: a) they contribute to the main goal, communicative competence; b) they allow learners to become more self-directed; c) they expand the role of teachers; d) they are problem oriented; e) they are specific actions taken by the learner; f) they involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive; g) they support learning both directly and indirectly; h) they are not always observable; i) they are often conscious; j) they can be taught; k) they are flexible; l) they are influenced by a variety of factors such as stage of learning, age, sex, nationality, task requirements, general learning style, personality, motivation and purpose for learning the language. The researcher was one of the first who developed a LLS taxonomy, which she divided into direct and indirect strategies, which are subdivided into six main groups. (1990).

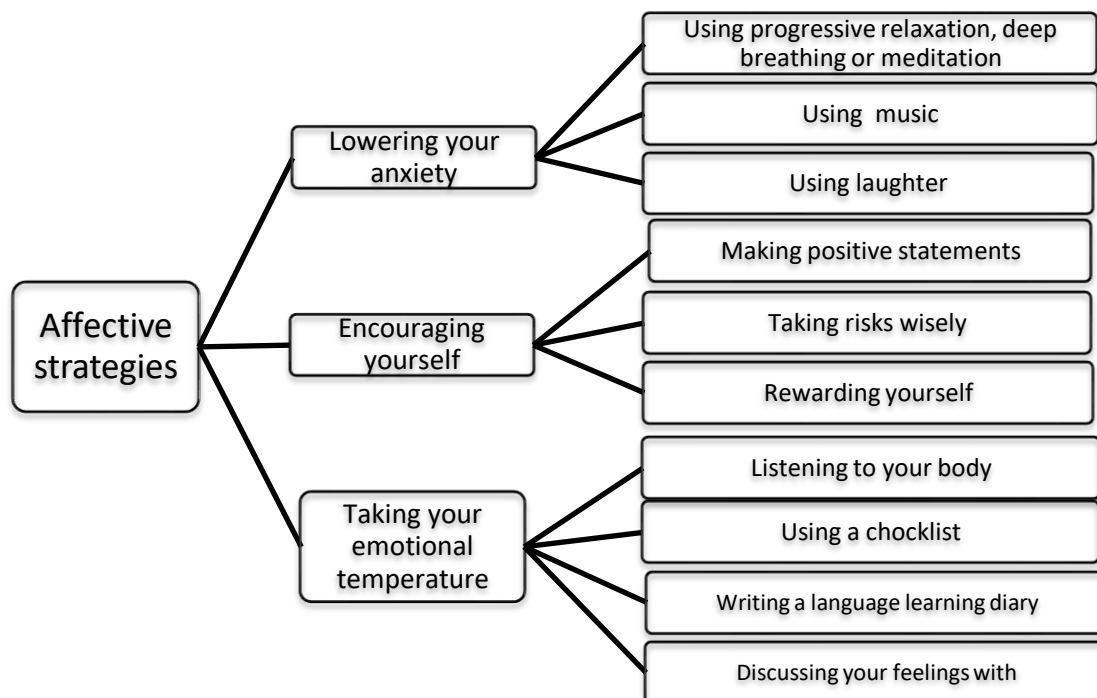
Direct strategies include cognitive, memory and compensation. Indirect strategies are metacognitive, affective and social. Cognitive strategies are responsible for practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, creating a structure for input and output; memory strategies for creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, employing action; compensation refers to guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. Under the category of indirect strategies, metacognitive strategies are concerned with centering, arranging and planning and evaluating one's own learning; affective strategies with lowering one's anxiety, encouraging oneself, taking one's emotional temperature; social strategies with asking questions, co-operating with others, empathizing with others. The figure below, reproduced from "Language learning strategies what every teacher should know" by Oxford (1990) synthesizes the subdivisions.

Figure № 1 Oxford's taxonomy for language learning strategies (1990)



Affective strategies played a significant role in my LL process. My emotions connected to each language determined success or failure of its acquisition. Due to the importance of affective strategies the table below is represented.

Figure № 2 Oxford's taxonomy for affective language learning strategies (1990)



Pawlak (2012), more recently, proposes a division of LLS into four groups: a) metacognitive LS, serve to monitor and evaluate the learning process; b) affective LLS, used to deal with the feelings and emotions involved in the process of language learning; c) social LLS, based on cooperation with others during studying or practicing additional language; d) cognitive LLS, which are applied directly to grammar activities. Cognitive LS, in turn, are divided into the four groups by the author: a) cognitive Grammar Learning Strategies (GLS) used in communicative tasks; b) cognitive GLS for Developing explicit knowledge; c) cognitive GLS for development implicit knowledge; d) cognitive GLS related to error correction.

The initial category of Oxford and more recent Pawlak's are rather similar. However, Oxford being an authority on autonomy and LLS provides more detailed taxonomy than Pawlak. The latter does not divide LLS into direct and indirect groups and his taxonomy lacks such important components as memory and compensation strategies.

What we know about LLS is largely based on Oxford's theory. Hence, in major evidence, the scholar's original taxonomy is still relevant and valued by various researchers. For instance, Magno e Silva (2008) as well as Dobrodeeva and Zaitseva (2015) based their researches «A model for the enhancement of autonomy» and «Language learning strategies at English lesson2: analysis of experience of gymnasium of supplementary education in Alzey in Rhineland-Palatinate (Germany)» (2015), respectively, on the given taxonomy.

Oxford (1990) claims that compensation strategies enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge. Compensation strategies are divided into two large groups: guessing intelligently and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. They help learners to keep on using the language. Compensation occurs not just in understanding the language, but also in producing it.

According to Oxford (1990), memory strategies are subdivided into four sets: creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well and employing actions.

Oxford (1990) highlights that social interaction is essential in LL. Language allows people to communicate, so it is a form of communication. Consequently, social strategies are necessary in language acquisition. There are three sets of social strategies: asking questions, cooperating with others and empathizing with others.

Oxford (1990) argues that social interaction is essential in LL. Language allows people to communicate, so it is a form of communication. Consequently, social strategies are necessary in language acquisition. There are three sets of social strategies: asking questions, cooperating with others and empathizing with others.

“Metacognitive” means beyond the cognitive. According to Oxford (1990) metacognitive strategies are actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices and which are responsible for learner's coordination of their own learning process. Metacognitive strategies are subdivided into three sets: centering one's learning one's learning, arranging and planning one's learning, evaluating one's learning.

### **3. Methodological approach: narrative inquiry and teacher identity in teacher education**

In this particular research I apply autobiographic Narrative Inquiry (NI) method. NI is a qualitative method of research that involves the gathering of narratives focused on people's experience. (Josselson, 2006) The choice of the narrative method in teacher education may be largely determined by the importance of influence of teacher's identity on teaching practices, student – teacher relationships and the quality of education itself. As a consequence, narrative investigations in the educational field can contribute to develop teachers' reflection; which in turn is likely to lead to the improvement of teaching practices.

NI is a relatively new qualitative methodology, which since the 1980's has played an important role in educational investigations (Souza, 2016). Barkhuizen (2016, p. 28), an authority on applied linguistics, states that "Narrative inquiry is a way of doing research that focuses on the stories we tell about our lives." Earlier, Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p. 8), who are one of the founders of NI, empathized the importance of NI and storytelling in social science research and pointed out that "stories function as arguments in which we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life or community as lived."

Barkhuizen (2016) argues that stories become narratives when we tell them to an audience and narratives become part of NI when they are examined for research purposes or generated to report the findings of an inquiry. In the given research NI is a framework to tell my story as a learner regarding my LL experience. Paiva (2008) also highlights the importance of narratives based on language learners' experiences, which occur in different environment not just in classrooms. According to the author, this type of research helps to reveal the importance of various significant aspects, such as fears, anxiety, family influence, in the process of language acquisition. While Telles (1999) empathizes the important role of NI and teachers' experiences on educational research.

This study, based on an autobiographic narrative, focuses on my experience of learning four additional languages, namely Tatar, English, Spanish and Portuguese. The

autobiography generates rich insights on the effective LLS which played a significant role in my acquisition of the languages mentioned above.

The autobiographic narrative was developed as a basis for the master program investigation, as mentioned above. It took me about four months to write it. Due to the fact that my LL process started something like seventeen years ago it took me a while to recall its peculiarities and to complete the task.

Later my NI was categorized by LLS based on Oxford's taxonomy. Then for the given research I collected the fragments with the most effective LLS from each category of the taxonomy and analyzed how they contributed to my LL process.

Although the focus of this research is on LLS, as remembered and identified in my autobiography, by writing the narrative I was able to realize my development as a language teacher, since my values and meanings of learning and teaching underlie the text produced. Therefore, there is an intimate relationship between the process of elaborating an autobiography and becoming aware of my teacher identity. Barkhuizen (2017:4) offers the following definition to language teacher identity:

Language teacher identities (LTIs) are cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical – they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material and technological world. LTIs are being and doing, feeling and imagining, and storing. They are struggle and harmony: they are contested and resisted, by self and others, and they are also accepted, acknowledged and valued, by self and others. They are core and peripheral, personal and professional, they are dynamic, multiple, and hybrid, and they are foregrounded and backgrounded. And LTIs change, short-term and over time – discursively in social interaction with teacher educators, learners, teachers, administrators, and the wider community, and in material interaction with spaces, places and objects in classrooms, institutions, and online.

Thus, a myriad of different issues and social constraints are in interplay, resulting in unique meanings about the profession and their consequent performances.

Also he draws our attention to the importance of social environment and interactions with other people to the identity construction.

Identities are constructed within social relationships between people; people with attitudes, beliefs, expectations and assumptions, in local communities (e.g. through face-to-face interactions such as storytelling), and in global communities (e.g. through stories shared in social media on the internet). (Barkhuizen, 2017:4)

As identity construction is a lifelong process (Reeves, 2017). It is emphasized that it should continue throughout all the period of teaching practice. According to Nóvoa (2000) and (Souza, 2010) one valuable way to foster both identity awareness and reflection would be through professional narratives. That is why it is important to transform teachers' stories and experience into autobiographical narrative inquiry. (Hugh Munby, 2004)

Thus, identity construction and professional development occur in social – cultural context, through interaction with other people and adaptation in the world around us, with its cultural peculiarities and influences of the given historical period. During such adaptation process it is important to be aware of one's professional identity, which may be characterized by the ability to take decisions, to analyze and evaluate one's own teaching practice.

Taking into accounts the theoretical and methodological foundations on which our study relies, the following item examines the corpus generated in the narrative.

#### **4. Autonomy and the use of language learning strategies in my autobiography**

Autonomy and LLS played an important role in my LL process. In this section I analyze evidences of autonomy and LLS which were applied by me to learn English, Tatar, Spanish and Portuguese. The evidences were selected from my autobiographical NI and categorized in accordance with Oxford's (1990) taxonomy. Now, each strategy identified in the autobiography is focused and discussed through the most representative excerpts in each category.

Based on Oxford's taxonomy specified before, the strategies identified in my autobiography were memory, compensation, cognitive, metacognitive, social and affective. The excerpts are analyzed in the light of the theory discussed in section 3.



Memory strategies are powerful contributors to LL process. They are fundamental to remembering the large amounts of vocabulary necessary to achieve fluency in an additional language. Coherently, they were mentioned in my text, as exemplified in the following excerpts:

*[...]Another difficulty was English phrasal verbs. It seemed just impossible to memorize all of them. I memorized them by writing down one and the same phrasal verb many times. Actually I used to copy one phrasal verb on three or four pages [...]*

*[...]The biggest advantage which learning Tatar Language gave me was memory development. During my two last years at school Tatar teacher made us to learn big complicated texts by heart, word by word actually. As I almost did not understand them I had to learn those texts as combinations of sounds without meaning. I used to learn them perfectly memorizing every single word and performed better than native speaker students [...]*

*[...]One of first steps of learning grammar was learning past forms of irregular verbs. We learnt the list by heart and the teacher sometimes asked us to repeat it for her[...]*

*[...]The «Word Skills» textbook and its CD offer flashcards to foster visual links. This memory strategy is very effective for me. Moreover, I always review the units I have already studied to restore new vocabulary [...]*

Reviewing vocabulary was my own initiative, since, as mentioned above, my teachers did not supply any support as to how to go about learning the new language contents presented. Hence, I reviewed the vocabulary I learned at home by myself. Moreover, the book from which I learned new English words was also chosen and bought on my own initiative without any recommendations from my teachers. Thus, two types of memory strategies and the evidence of learner's autonomy are present in the given examples. First, flashcards helped me to learn new words, since I made associations with the images and pronunciation. Second, I could also see that reviewing was important because it served to make new vocabulary stable in memory. As the decision to learn and later review new vocabulary was made by me, we may imply that there was learner autonomy, according to Nasonova (2009), Dobrodeeva and Zaitseva (2015) and Pawlak (2017).

Another mention of memory was also present in my narrative:

*[...]To memorize and analyze sophisticated rules of English grammar I wrote them down in the special copybook, designed tables and underlined the essential information in my own writing [...]*

This strategy of taking notes, as discussed by Oxford (1990), helped me to deal with new information by focusing on main ideas.

The following excerpts of my NI represent compensation strategy:

"During the first months in Brazil I often compensated the lack of Portuguese vocabulary by Spanish words. For instance, instead of "começar" I said "empezar" The given example represents switching to the other language. By borrowing words and phrases from L1 into L2 I tried to compensate the lack of vocabulary.

*[...]Also as I knew that many words in Romance languages have similar stems and differ just in suffixes, when I was trying to speak Portuguese I changed a Spanish suffix for a Portuguese one. Words which finish with "cion" in Spanish I tried to transform to Portuguese by putting "ção" instead of "cion". For Example, "acción" turned into "ação"; "estación" into "estação"; "recepción" into "recepção" and so on. In most cases, this strategy came together [...]*

This is the bright example of the compensation strategy, namely guessing intelligently. By guessing intelligently the logic of Portuguese word building I could fill some gaps in my vocabulary.

*[...]When Brazilians did not understand me I tried to explain my idea in other words using synonyms [...]*

Using another word carrying the same meaning is a compensation which helps to overcome barriers in communication.

From the given excerpts it appears that compensation strategies are the most present while learning Portuguese in Brazil. Thus in my case compensation strategy occurred mostly in communication with natives. This confirms Oxford's (1990) statement of the importance of compensation strategies in language production.

The most significant examples of cognitive strategy are the following:

*[...]Reading and translating original texts of British and American writers was a great way to enlarge vocabulary, to memorize grammar constructions and just to become a more intelligent and cultured person [...]*

Translating is a helpful language learning strategy. However, Oxford (1990) mentions that applying this strategy, learners should be aware of word-by-word translation. I learned to avoid word-by-word translation during my undergraduate course and, therefore, I was able to develop the strategy of translating in an appropriate way.

*[...]Good command of English helped me with Spanish and Portuguese. I constantly compared three languages and drew parallels between their vocabulary and grammar systems looking for similarities and differences. For instance, first I learned the verb to be and how to use it in present continuous in English language. As there are no continuous tenses in Russian this concept was a bit difficult to comprehend. Much later, studying continuous in Spanish and in Portuguese I drew a parallel with English and learned it quickly and easily [...]*

This is the example of the strategy of transferring. Comparative analysis of languages made my process of learning easier and more conscious. Also this example shows how a learner in order to understand new information applies already known rules.

*[...]While learning English vocabulary I often used contextualization strategy placing a new word in a meaningful phrase [...]*

I learnt about this strategy in some video on YouTube. I am used to watching motivational videos with some tips from successful learners. And then I apply these tips to my own learning process.

*[...]To improve my pronunciation in English I use my textbooks with CDs where a native speaker pronounces every text of a book. I listened to an audio record paragraph by paragraph and tried to repeat the correct pronunciation reading it aloud [...]*

My very first English teacher emphasized the importance of listening and repeating the recordings made by natives. That was when I was nine years old. Later when I was fifteen I continued to apply this strategy training pronunciation of words,

intonation and stress. Oxford (1990: 71) also stresses that “in imitating native speakers, learners can improve their pronunciation and their use of structures, vocabulary, idioms, intonation, gestures and style”.

Metacognitive strategies played a very important role in my LL process. I always planned my time so that there always was a space for studying languages. Here are some excerpts representing metacognitive strategies:

*[...]The final English exam was rather hard so besides studying English at school I decided to attend additional course offered by Kazan Federal University.», «Yet there were just 2 classes of Spanish by week. Obviously it was not enough to improve the language. So I decided to take an additional course. The course was very interesting and complete [...]*

*[...]Also I found a nice textbook of Spanish language and bought it to study more at home [...]*

The decision to take additional courses represents planning and organizing own learning process. Buying additional material and studying at home is a way of self-organizing outside the classroom.

*[...]Since I was 16 years old and until now I am used to dedicating few hours by week to improve my English. It can be reading in English, producing my own texts, watching movies or British YouTube bloggers, reviewing grammar or studying with a textbook from my collection [...]*

This example also shows the strategy of organizing and learner’s autonomy.

*[...]To optimize my learning process I was looking for tips from multilingual speakers. For instance I watch a YouTube channel of a girl who speaks seven languages and who shares her hints of effective learning [...]*

Finding out about language learning and looking for effective learning strategies include learner’s autonomy and responsibility for own learning process. The importance of learner’s responsibility is empathized by Oxford (1990) and more recently by Nasonova (2009), Dobrodeeva and Zaitseva (2015) and Pawlak (2017).

Oxford (1990) empathizes the importance of communication in language acquisition. Fortunately, I had never had fear of communicating and making mistakes in foreign language, as I always remembered that we learn just if we practice. So I looked for every opportunity to practice English, Spanish and Portuguese.

*[...]I found pen friends from different countries to practice English chatting by Facebook or Skype. With some of them we turned to be good friends and later met in real life. I used the same strategies to learn Spanish and chatted with people from Spain and Latin America [...]*

This expert represents social strategy taking place on social media. If I had no opportunity to meet native speakers in real life, I tried to make friends with them on the Internet. So I always had somebody to practice the language.

*[...]Immediately after graduating in 2016 I moved to Brazil for personal reasons, I was in a committed relationship with a Brazilian guy. So I always could practice my Portuguese with him. When I arrived I had already spoken some Portuguese [...]*

*[...]In Brazil I continued to do exercises in the textbooks and tried to communicate with natives as much as possible without a fear to make mistakes [...]*

Pushing oneself to take risks in a language learning situation, even though there is a chance of making a mistake or looking foolish. (Oxford 1990: 144)

*[...]I used to ask my Brazilian boyfriend for some clarification of Portuguese language grammatical rules or just for translating some new words for me [...]*

The strategy of asking for clarification or verification is a useful one. It can be especially effective while learning a language in a mother tongue country having constant contact with native speakers. I have to admit that such tips from natives contributed a lot to my acquisition of Portuguese.

Before creating my NI on LL process I had never imagined the importance of affective strategies in LL. These are the most significant excerpts with affective strategies, analyzed in accordance with the taxonomy represented in the table 2.

*[...]Teachers of other disciplines were usually nervous and a bit aggressive, while an English teacher was rather calm and sympathetic and was able to calm down us without*

*yelling and being rude. For me it was one of the main reasons to like English, because good and respectful attitude was always important to me [...]*

*[...]Amazing disciplines like English-speaking countries history, fine arts, poetry, theater and novels helped me to dive into the magic world of rich cultural heritage. Each history, poem, theater play, biography, movie, painting were not just a source of new vocabulary or grammar structures, but a wonderful opportunity to travel through different epochs and cultures [...]*

*[...]Besides studying English at school and university I also practiced a lot at home. I bought various books from native editors to study by myself. Actually I am bookshopaholic. I adore bookshops and stationary stores [...]*

*[...]My relationship with English was never easy. Learning it was and is a long way full of ups and downs. With Spanish it was totally different; it was just love at first sight. There are several reasons for such adoration. Firstly, the team of teachers working at Spanish center of KFU is amazing [...]*

*[...]Secondly, I just like Spanish countries' rich culture and the language itself. I adore its sounds, its intonations; Spanish songs, poems, novels, movies, art [...]*

All these examples confirm Oxford (1990) argument that the positive attitude and emotional temperature influence learner's success or failure. After creating my NI, I realized that positive attitude toward English, Spanish and Portuguese always motivated me to learn more and more.

*[...]I was in a committed relationship with a Brazilian guy, whom I met in Russia. However, we were planning to move to Brazil as soon as I finish my graduation. So I needed to learn Portuguese and started to study it alone in Russia. Actually, I studied it not just because it was necessary to live in Brazil, but because I really liked this language. I watched some videos in Portuguese, listened to music, and did funny exercises in languages learning sites [...]*

In the given excerpts from my autobiography the predominant strategy is affective. Due to sympathy both for the Brazilian boyfriend and Portuguese language, I got interested and motivated to study the language. Watching videos, listening to music and doing exercises are examples of cognitive strategies.

After learning English and Tatar, I formed my LLS which later contributed to the learning process of Spanish and Portuguese and made it much easier.

Table 1 below represents the number of evidences of LLS present in my NI.

**Table № 1 Evidences of language learning strategies present in my autobiographical narrative inquiry**

	<b>Tatar</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>Portuguese</b>
<b>Memory</b>	4	5	4	2
<b>Compensation</b>	1	1	1	3
<b>Cognitive</b>	4	10	11	11
<b>Metacognitive</b>	1	5	4	4
<b>Social</b>	0	2	2	4
<b>Affective</b>	0	2	4	3

The given table represents cases of each strategy presented on my NI. The most frequent strategies which appeared in my narrative autobiography were the cognitive ones. However, the number of some strategies varies from language to language. Affective strategies were remarkable in my learning Spanish and Portuguese. Learning these two languages was accompanied by very positive emotions and joy. So the acquisition of them occurred fast and easily. Moreover, the biggest part of learning Portuguese occurred in Brazil among natives and with the help of my Brazilian boyfriend. In the beginning of our relationships we communicated in English, but later when I improved my Portuguese we started to use it to talk. Thus, I practiced Portuguese every single day at home. Towards English language I was neutral. I perceived it like something practical and necessary in life. That's why, to in view, the predominant strategies for English are memory and cognitive. As I mentioned before I was not so interested in learning Tatar and did not go beyond teacher's requirements and applied just strategies connected with school tasks which are mostly cognitive and memory ones.

## **5. Final remarks**

The success or failure of my additional language acquisition, according to what I could perceive, was determined by the degree of my motivation. Due to willingness to learn English, Spanish and Portuguese, I showed tenacity and learner's autonomy while learning these languages. The evidences of autonomy are connected with metacognitive LLS and planning. As evidence, I managed my time so as to practice a single language at least few times a week, and I did this on my own initiative without any teacher's guideline. Moreover, I was looking for all possible opportunities to study. I took additional courses in all three languages: English, Spanish and Portuguese bought textbooks and used language learning sites and apps.

By contrast, learning Tatar language was a compulsory subject in Tatarstan schools, so I showed little interest and no learner's autonomy. I did no more than a teacher asked us to do, namely homework.

Consequently, acquisition of English, Spanish and Portuguese was much more successful than Tatar. Tatar due to the lack of motivation and learner's autonomy kept at a basic level. This, in turn, highlights how much learner's autonomy and motivation affects the success of language acquisition.

The other important factors which contributed to my LL process were support from my family, namely from my mother, who always motivated me to study and offered good financial conditions to allow me to buy expensive textbooks, materials and to pay for additional courses.

The results of the given research may be applied to a pedagogical practices. LLS are a critical part of a successful language learning process and I could understand the relevance of a teacher to motivate his or her students to apply effectively LLS while learning additional languages. I believe, in the same direction as the authors reviewed for this investigation, that in order to achieve this goal it is necessary to supply the lack of students' knowledge about LLS by explicit explanation of the theory and its practical application in the classroom. I became aware of this just after studying at the Brazilian University and discovering the LLS theory.



When I worked with my own students I always tried to share with them the most effective strategies I knew. I also encouraged them to become autonomous learners and to take responsibility for their own learning process. I tried to motivate them by demonstrating reasons why fine command of the English language is so important or by showing them up that learning an additional language is not a boring routine but an interesting process which consist of many discoveries, communication, new friends, acquaintance with new cultures, listening to music, in other words, broadening their opportunities. To prove this, I passed my students strategies which as I thought could excite them. For example, as they liked to spend time with PC or smart phones I showed them that they also were instruments to practice English. So the process of developing the given article made me more conscious and competent teacher and set in motion for my development as a researcher.

Before writing my autobiography I had never heard about learner autonomy or LLS. That is why alongside writing the autobiography I was also exploring the theoretical basis for it. I certainly became more aware of my own actions as a learner and a teacher. After analyzing my own experience as a learner, I realized that autonomy is one of the most important components of successful additional language acquisition. LLS, in turn, act as an effective instrument for achieving autonomy. Now, having a working knowledge of LLS, I will surely be a more effective language teacher. I am going to share information about LLS with my students and thus help them to develop such LLS which would be effective for them according to their personality and peculiarities of perception. In my classes, I am going to apply LLS exercises developed by Oxford (1990).

Besides learning about autonomy, this research made me a more autonomous learner myself. To carry out the given study, I had to learn how to search for the necessary information by myself going beyond the material given in face-to-face lectures. Moreover, metacognitive strategy of planning time was essential to complete this research. Learners often apply strategies unconsciously so that they are unaware of how often they actually do apply them. Due to this fact, it was not an easy task to recall strategies which were applied by me during the long process of additional languages learning.

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## The second article

### Cross-cultural Adaptation Experience of a Russian student in Brazil

Natalia Pavlushina

#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the barriers and opportunities faced by a Russian origin student experienced while living in Brazil and studying in a Brazilian Federal University's master's program. Using a narrative inquiry approach, I analyze my own story with a view to intercultural communication and adaptation to the Brazilian culture. The analysis identifies the ways by which I dealt with cultural shock. The findings demonstrate how I act in my own cross-cultural adaptation and how this process is facilitated by fluency in Portuguese language. The results of the research may be useful both for international students who go through the process of adaptation in a new culture and for universities' departments which work with international students.

**Key words:** narrative inquiry, intercultural communication, cultural shock, adaptation to foreign culture

#### RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo é explorar as barreiras e as oportunidades enfrentadas por uma estudante de origem russa enquanto morava no Brasil e estudava em um programa de mestrado de uma Universidade Federal Brasileira. Utilizando uma abordagem de investigação narrativa, analiso minha própria história tendo em vista a comunicação intercultural e a adaptação à cultura brasileira. A análise identifica as maneiras pelas quais eu lidei com o choque cultural. Os resultados demonstram como eu ajo na minha própria adaptação transcultural e como esse processo é facilitado pela fluência na língua portuguesa. Os resultados da pesquisa podem ser úteis tanto para estudantes internacionais, os quais passam pelo processo de adaptação em uma nova cultura, quanto para departamentos de universidades que trabalham com estudantes internacionais.

**Palavras Chave:** Narrativas autobiográficas, comunicação intercultural, choque cultural, adaptação à cultura estrangeira

#### 1 Introduction

In recent years, education abroad has become more accessible and universities tend to receive growing numbers of foreign students. This is the natural result of

globalization and internalization. Moreover, successful intercultural interactions, accompanied by respect and tolerance towards foreign cultures and other people's religion are essential not just in the context of higher education but in modern society in general.

Studying abroad, in addition, contributes to the development of communication skills that allow graduates to successfully compete in the modern internalized job market. However, besides benefits, international students may face difficulties in adaptation to a new country or culture. Academic success of international students is also directly related to their adaptation. Adaptation is a complex process which includes adjustment to new socio-cultural environment, new climate, new language and new educational system.

During adaptation expats and international students as well may face the following difficulties: culture shock, language and communication issues, discrimination or misunderstandings about cultural norms, a lack of social networks, limited access to employment, poverty and inadequate income support (Marsh, 2012). Few newcomers know how to deal with these problems and to adapt to the evolving cultural context. This is why research on intercultural communication and international students' adaptation are important and relevant.

In the present investigation, an autobiographic narrative is focused on my experience as a Russian postgraduate at a Federal university in Brazil. In my history, I recall peculiarities of my adaptation process as a Russian student within the Brazilian culture.

It must be noted that there is a large number of Russian expats living in Brazil. According to the Official Chamber of Commerce and Industry Brazil-Russia site (<http://www.brasil-russia.com.br/index.htm>), approximately 800 thousands of ethnic Russians expats and 1.8 millions of Russian descendants live in Brazil nowadays. However, despite the comparatively large number of Russians in Brazil, there are to our knowledge yet no impact studies on the peculiarities of the adaptation process which Russians experience in Brazil. I searched the internet and, inter alia, Google scholar looking for researches focused on adaptation of Russian expats in Brazil, however, I did not find them. For instance, Ruseishvili (2016) in her "Being Russian in São Paulo: Russian immigrants and identity (re)formulation after 1917 Bolchevique Revolution"

and Vorobieff (2006) in his “Identity and memory of the Russian community in the city of São Paulo” examine such concepts as identity, immigration and memory but not adaptation process and cultural shock which Russians face immigrating to Brazil. Winter and Romero (2017) in their article “Self-perceptions of identity in experiences of mobility between Brazil and Russia” analyze some aspects that may have influenced possible identity transformations in some individuals who have gone through movements between Brazil and Russia. Even though, the scholars focus on Russian expats experiences in Brazil, they do not cut across the cultural shock experience. This justifies the significance of my research, although it focuses on my own experience.

The focus, therefore, is to discuss my process of Portuguese acquisition and identity transformation during the period of adaptation in the Brazilian culture.

The specific objectives of the study are 1) to identify in my autobiography evidences of cultural shock and the ways I used to possibly overcome them; 2) to analyze parts of my autobiography which represent the process of cross-cultural adaptation in Brazil in the light of the theory discussed. The guiding questions of the given study are as follows: 1) How does this Russian student perceive her cross-cultural adaptation experience while living and studying in Brazil? 2) How has this Russian student dealt with the cultural shock she went through? 3) What role may the learning of Portuguese have played in the cultural adaptation process according to the narrator?

In order to develop this discussion, I divide this paper into five sections. The first section gives a brief overview of the research topic. The second section discusses the theoretical framework which was used to carry out the investigation, giving a brief overview of Brazil-Russia relationship development, encompassing the role of narratives in teacher development, the concepts of cultural shock and the connection between language and culture. The methodology is described in the third section. In the fourth section the autobiography is analyzed in the light of the theory discussed. Some considerations are drawn in the final section.

## 2 The context: Brazil–Russia relations

Partnership between Brazil and Russia has been developed actively after the creation of BRICS<sup>3</sup>. However, despite the mutual interest in cooperation there is still a gap in the relationship between these two countries (Winter; Romero, 2017). New forms of collaboration inclusively in academic sphere and exchange of students between universities create the need for research about peculiarities of adaptation of Russians in Brazil and Brazilians in Russia. To contextualize this topic here we give the general overview of the dynamics in Brazil – Russia relations.

According to the Russian embassy in Brazil (<https://brazil.mid.ru/istoria-dvustoronnih-otnosenij>), Brazil and Russia started to establish diplomatic relations in the 19th century more specifically on 3d October 1828. However, over the long period full development of partnership did not occur. This was due to October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and later military dictatorship in Brazil. Positive momentum in bilateral relations between Brazil and Russia has been noted since 1994. Therefore, the most significant stage of the stable partnership dates back to the beginning of the 21st century.

This is related to the fact that currently both countries have approximately the same level of economic development. Both of them belong to the group of the developing countries and play significant role on the world stage. Also, Brazil and Russia have high economic, political, resource and military potential. (Zimina, 2016)

As mentioned before, the creation of BRICS is an important step in building partnership between Brazil and Russia. The cooperation has brought major benefits in different spheres such as economic, political, cultural, scientific and academic. Furthermore, Brazil and Russia actively pursue the development of mutual trade, space and military technologies and get new possibilities for export.

However, despite the significant improvements in Brazil – Russia relations there are still some gaps to be bridged especially as far as cultural and educational interactions are concerned.

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<sup>3</sup> BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.



### **3 Theoretical and methodological approach**

Foreign students coming to other countries to pursue degrees at universities go through a new cultural experience that may cause culture shock. The given research is based on Narrative Inquiry (NI) of a Russian student's experience in Brazil. To contextualize this background given a brief overview of Brazil-Russia relations development is given. Then the meaning of language in the context of culture, the stages of cultural shock and NI in educational research is explored. The examination of the theory mentioned serve as the basis for the study.

#### **3.1 Culture, language and the language teacher identity**

Here, the meaning of language in the context of culture is described. We also discuss the influence of cultural differences on symptoms of culture shock and on the adaptation process in general.

Culture is not an easy term to be defined, Hofstede and Minkov (2010, p. 6) define it as "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another." Culture includes such components as history, religion, language, values, common traditions, customs, and more (Baier, 2005). For intercultural communication and understanding be possible it is necessary for representatives of one ethnic group be tolerant and respectful towards culture, traditions and customs of others.

According Baier (2005), different cultures adhere to different rules that are passed on from previous generations. International students are ones who come from different cultures. So, as we may infer from Lee (2003), their historical and cultural backgrounds affect the process of knowledge acquisition and information processing. This would be the reason why students who study abroad face particular difficulties in adapting to a new educational environment and new ways of information presenting. To go through such adapting process successfully they usually should become more flexible and consequently are subjected to identity transformations.

In spite of sharing some common values and customs, cultural groups consist of individuals and their identities. Thus, in order to understand adaptation process of expats we also need to look at their identities and personal features. Several scholars have examined the concept of identity. For Lee, (2003) it refers to the individual's

concept of the self, as well as the individual's interpretation of the social definition of the self, within his/her inner group and the larger society. Romero (2008) focuses on the dynamic and contextual nature of identity, and sees it as the result from experiences and senses constructed by an individual in interaction with others and in accordance with his or her social and historical background.

Another crucial aspect to be taken into account is communication, an essential part of cross-cultural adaptation. Kim (2005) points out that communication acts as a mediator which facilitates a culture-to-culture transition. Moreover, as learned from vygotskian elaborations (2016), the processes of learning and knowledge acquisition occur in interaction with other people by means of communication. This is especially relevant in the context of adaptation to a new country. Through communication with locals expats learn more about the culture and its customs and so discover the best patterns of behavior in a new environment.

Language, therefore, is fundamental, since it is an essential tool of communication in helping a newcomer to be involved and integrated in society. According to the Romero (2008), drawing from vygotskian principles, language is a mediator of transposition of social phenomena to psychological phenomena. Thus, we learn by means of communication and communicate by means of language. Consequently, authors such as Kim (2001), Baier (2005), Storti (2007) and Marsh (2012) highlight target language as a key component in the process of adaptation to a new culture and country. Knowledge of the target language helps a newcomer to cope easily with daily routine and problems in a new place and undoubtedly encourage him or her to interact with locals. Storti (2007, p 97), reinforcing the argument, highlights that «One of the greatest allies the expat has in the quest to become culturally adept is the ability to speak the local language». Thus, one may understand that by being able to communicate in the local language an expat is more likely to avoid cultural incidents and pass through the stage of cultural shock with fewer problems.

However, language is not just a tool; it is also a representation of a culture (Golovko, 2008). Language and culture are closely connected. As Lee (2003) puts it: «Without language, culture cannot be completely acquired nor can it be effectively expressed and transmitted. Without culture, language cannot exist».

Besides being closely connected with culture, language also influences one's identity. Kramsch (2013) highlights the correlation between foreign language acquisition and identity transformation. This is especially true for those who are learning a foreign language abroad in a native-speakers' country. Living abroad, becoming acquainted with a new culture and learning a new language effectively transform our identity. Norton (2013, p. 4) argues that

every time language learners speak, read or write the target language, they are not only exchanging information with members of the target language community, they are also organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. As such, they are engaged in identity construction and negotiation.

The author also states that «language not only defines institutional practices but also serves to construct our sense of ourselves». Thus, the close relation between language and identity is emphasized by Kramsch, and also finds echo in Storti (2007, p. 101), for whom also «Language is not simply how people speak; it is who they are».

Considering the above, it is especially relevant to consider the concept of identity for language teachers, since this group of professionals are bound to build an even closer relationship with culture, language and identity. Barkhuizen (2017:4) offers the following concept:

Language teacher identities (LTIs) are cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical – they are both inside the teacher and outside in the social, material and technological world. LTIs are being and doing, feeling and imagining, and storing. They are struggle and harmony: they are contested and resisted, by self and others, and they are also accepted, acknowledged and valued, by self and others. They are core and peripheral, personal and professional, they are dynamic, multiple, and hybrid, and they are foregrounded and backgrounded. And LTIs change, short-term and over time – discursively in social interaction with teacher educators, learners, teachers, administrators, and the wider community, and in material interaction with spaces, places and objects in classrooms, institutions, and online.

Barcelos (2015) states that «identities are related to individuals' desire for recognition, affiliation, security, and safety, which are all dependent on how material

resources are distributed in society». The scholar also highlights the correlation between identity, emotions and language learning. The author states that

Identities and emotions are closely related either as part of the selves or as aspects of identities. We are shaped by the emotions we feel (fear, desire, joy, love), and these in turn shape the kinds of identities we construct of ourselves. (Barcelos, 2015, p. 312)

Thus, identity construction and professional development occur in social – cultural context, through interaction with other people and adaptation in the world around us, with its cultural peculiarities and influences of the given historical period. Identity and emotions are closely related. An expat while adapting to a new culture passes through very emotional phases of cultural shock and thus reconstructs and transforms his or her identity.

### **3.2 Adaptation to foreign culture, cultural shock**

During the integration into the new culture an expat goes through the process of adaptation. Kim (2001, p. 31) defines cross-cultural adaptation as a

dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments.

The time necessary for adaptation differs for each expat. Marsh (2012) identifies the following factors which influence the timeline of adaptation: gender, language ability, education, ethnicity, and socio-economic and citizenship status. Gender-based discrimination as well as family responsibilities influence women's process of adaptation and language learning not in favor. Household chores may take a lot of time from women's language learning and social interaction. Ethnicity and racial discrimination also influences expats' adaptation. Minority racial groups may suffer from unequal opportunities in access to job market, education, language courses and social interactions with local people. This makes their adaptation process slower and more difficult. Financial capabilities of expats also play a significant role in how fast flow their adaptation and the phase of cultural shock. Immigrants with better financial

capability have access to better housing conditions and higher quality of life. They also have more opportunities to attend target language courses or even pay particular classes with a tutor. Such opportunities obviously facilitate the stage of cultural and country shock. Natural abilities in language learning and adaptation, level of education, whether or not citizenship or residence permit are also important factors in immigrants' adaptation process. Natural abilities in language learning make language acquisition easier and social interactions more accessible. While, legal resistance in a country gives more rights and social benefits to expats and surely makes their lives less stressful.

A frequent component of cross-cultural adaptation expats and international students go through is the cultural shock. The term cultural shock was introduced by the American anthropologist and ethnologist Kalervo Oberg in 1954. The scholar (1954; p. 142) states that «cultural shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse». In other words, the essence of the cultural shock is the conflict between native cultural cues and social rules and new ones. Any person entering a new culture to some degree suffers from cultural shock. It has to do with the fact that an expat entering a new country faces the loss of friends and his or her social status, the feeling of isolation and rejection that may come with cultural incidents and identity transformations. Thus, the essence of cultural shock is the conflict between expat's native culture's values, native language, daily routine and the life he or she has always known with the values, the language and the routine of the new country. The severity of cultural shock depends on how different the new culture from the native one is found to be.

Adding to the theme, Lysgaard (1955) described the process of adaptation to a new culture as a U-shape continuum with three main stages, which starts with an initial honeymoon stage, then the impact of culture shock, located at the bottom of the U-shaped curve is felt; the overcoming of the cultural shock and adjusting to the new culture is when a person reaches the last stage in the top of the U-curve. Going further, Stefanenko (2008) suggests four possible stages of cultural shock:

1. Honeymoon. This phase is marked by enthusiasm, big expectations and very good mood. Changes seem to be positive. A person enjoys new environment, architecture, food etc.

2. Cultural shock. This is the period of crisis. Cultural differences start to bring discomfort and a person can even feel frustrated and depressed. In this phase one may often have difficulties in communication and in day by day life. A person perceives things inadequately with a tendency to negative thinking. Another characteristic of this phase is homesickness. All these cause psychological and health problems such as drowsiness, stress, increased appetite, irritability, incapacity for work, depression and psychosomatic diseases.
3. Reconciliation. This is the stage of the integration to a new society and the way out of the crisis. One begins to comprehend the new culture's social rules and cultural cues. Communication with native becomes more and more comfortable. Depression goes away and a person feels adapted to the new country.
4. Adaptation. This is the final phase of the adaptation process. One is no longer fascinated or devastated but perceives the reality of a new country objectively accepting its positive and negative peculiarities. A person integrates to the new culture as his or her own and may even adopt new habits and social rules. A foreigner achieving this stage makes new friends and easily deals with day by day problems.

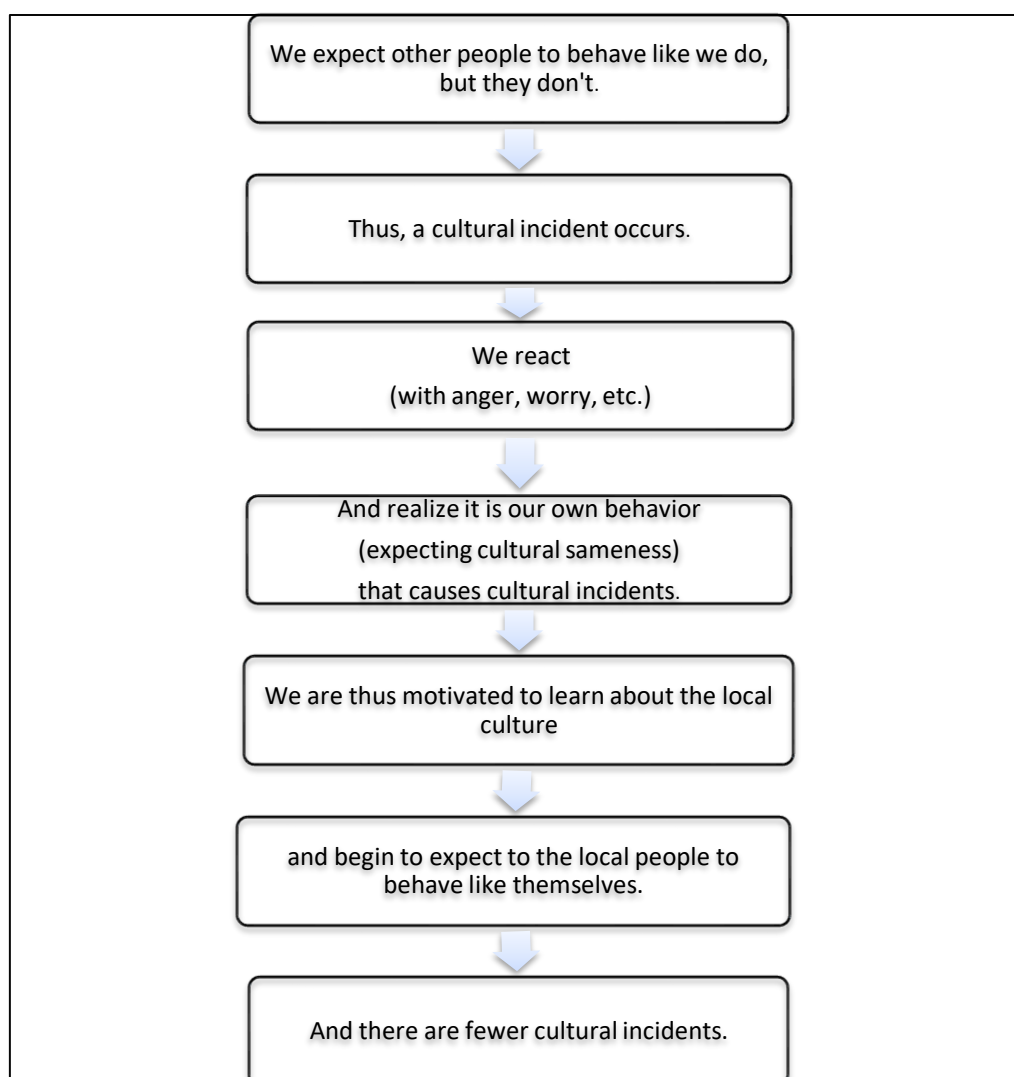
Storti (2007), on the other hand, distinguishes between cultural shock and cultural incidents. For him, cultural shock happens due to the clash with a new culture and loads of new information, while cultural incidents are often the result of ethnocentrism. The scholar also sets apart country and culture shock. According to the author, country shock is connected with new climate, the lack of comfort an expat used to have in her/his own country, the change in ordinary routines such as driving a car, taking a bus, going shopping which were easy before and turn to be a sophisticated task in the new country. In the same sphere are social actions like communicating with strangers, adapting to a new city and a new job. However, Storti mentions that adjusting to the new culture, however, is even harder. An expat gradually gets used to new conditions and in a matter of weeks adapts to a new routine. Adapting to a new culture and passing through stages of cultural shock takes longer.

The researcher points out that cultural incidents occur because of cultural differences and misunderstanding while communicating. Still, despite the possibility of cultural incidents Oberg (1960), Baier (2005), Storti (2007) and Marsh (2012) highlight that avoiding communication with locals by an expat is a mistake. Often after some experience of misunderstanding and unpleasant cultural incidents with natives

newcomers choose to isolate themselves at home and to avoid social events. However, communication and social life are important components of well-being. Norton (2013) emphasizes that learners and expats should be active members of social and historical collectives and not isolated individuals. So, such a strategy of isolation together with cultural shock just lead to negative consequences, such as depression, weakness, extensive sleeping and even some health problems.

Based on the above argued, Storti (2007) recommends expats to bond with local people, but taking the responsibility for avoiding cultural incidents. These incidents occur due to contradictions between expat's and natives' values, customs and patterns of behavior. Obviously, locals will not change their customs and patterns of behavior because of one newcomer. Moreover, successful communication and avoiding cultural incidents are beneficial to expats. Taking responsibility for intercultural interactions and avoiding misunderstanding leads an expat to decreasing the level of his or her anxiety and frustration. Thus, a newcomer may experience cultural shock easier. In order to achieve this, Storti proposes the following steps of actions for expats:

Figure 3 (Reproduced from Storti, 2007, p. 84)



As we can see in this simple scheme, cultural incidents occur because of an expat's expectations for locals to behave like it is customary in his or her own country. Storti argues that the best way to avoid cultural incidents is to learn more about native culture and to understand why natives behave as they do. There are various ways to learn more about native culture: reading books and articles about it, observing locals, talking with them and finally critically analyzing gathered information. Thus, an expat stops to expect natives to behave like he or she wants and better understand how to behave in the new society. This leads to the decrease of cultural incidents and easier adaptation to the new culture, which, in turn, leads to easier passing through culture shock.

Thus, for international students to adapt rapidly it is necessary to explore a new culture even before arriving to a new country. Arriving to a new country with the



knowledge of local values, customs and patterns of behavior facilitates the process of adaptation and the stage of cultural shock. Another key aspect which helps a student to succeed in both adaptation and academic goals is a good command of the target language.

Ignatova and Burykina (2010) state that university can help its international students in overcoming cultural shock by providing information about traditions, values and customs of the new country. University can do this by offering international students courses of the target language and lectures about local culture. Another important challenge of a university is to perceive cultural differences of the international students not as a problem, but as an advantage.

It should be noted that cultural shock besides its negative effects also has a positive side. Ignatova and Burykina (2010) state that by overcoming difficulties international students can broaden their minds and transform their identities by getting used to new values and patterns of behavior. This is an important aspect of self-development. Kim (2005) also underlines that the result of cross – cultural adaptation is marked with such positive aspects as increased security, mobility and a sense of belonging. As expats become fluent in the target language and adapt to host community's cultural norms, values, and customs, they gain intercultural mindset. Kim (2001) stresses that the new culture does not replace the old one. While observing elements of the new culture individuals retain some of their original cultural identity. Thus, expats develop their identities gaining valuable intercultural experience. In other words, building cultural knowledge and experience results in positive intercultural growth and identity transformation.

### **3.3 Methodological approach: narrative inquiry**

In the given study we adopted narrative inquiry (NI), which views stories as data (Murphy & Clandinin, 2009). Josselson (2006) defines NI as a qualitative method of research that involves the gathering of narratives focused on people's experience. In the case of this research, NI is focused on my own experience of cross-cultural adaptation as a Russian student in Brazil. Thus, my autobiographical narratives, written for a period of two months, act as the data for the present investigation.

Aiming at contextualizing the reader, here is some information about me. I am a twenty four year old student of Russian origin studying in a master's program in a Brazilian Federal University. At the time of writing the present study I had been living in Brazil for two years, the past year and a half of which I was a postgraduate student. My initial reason for coming to Brazil was relationship and marriage with a Brazilian. All of the time living in Brazil, I spent with him and his family. So, in my NI I describe my experience of being an expat in Brazil, the way I went through country and culture shock, coped with stress and adapted to both Brazilian university and daily life.

It is my understanding that NI focused on cross-cultural adaptation is a way to elicit and listen to the stories of expats, who, in turn, usually belong to the minority in the host society and thus, usually keep silenced. Thus, expats' narratives express a unique kind of knowledge that allows investigating immigrants' experiences previously inaccessible.

After writing the autobiography, I have categorized it by stages of cultural shock based on Stefanenko's classification. Then for the given research I collected the excerpts with the examples of my adaptation experience and analyzed how this intercultural experience influenced my professional identity namely my own way of teaching.

In support to this type of study, Barkhuizen (2016, p 47) argues that

experiences become narratives when we tell them to an audience and narratives become part of narrative inquiry when they are examined for research purposes or generated to report the findings of an inquiry.

In similar perspective, Webster (2007, p 3) identifies NI as

set in human stories of experience. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories.

Thus, NI is focused on human beings life and experience. That makes NI ideal for examining how international students experience adaptation to a new culture and culture shocks.

Most narrative researchers emphasize that experiences occur in continuous interaction of a person with social environment (Murphy & Clandinin, 2009; Souza, 2016). Thus, my NI and adaptation process were influenced by such aspects of social environment as socio-economic, political, and cultural constraints (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Within this social context I explore my cross cultural experience, namely the periods of initial cultural shock, reconciliation and re-establishment of identity in Brazil.

#### **4 Analyses**

In this section I analyze my process of adaptation in Brazil as a student of Russian origin. The evidences of my experience provided below were selected from my autobiographical NI and categorized in accordance with Stefanenko's (2008) cultural shock phases' classification. Each phase is focused and discussed through the most representative excerpt from my NI. Based on Stefanenko's classification specified before, the phases identified in my autobiography were honeymoon, cultural shock and reconciliation.

The following excerpts from my autobiography may be interpreted as my Honeymoon phase:

*[...]Everything seemed so new and even breathtaking for me [...]*

*[...]When I just arrived in Sao Paulo I was rather excited. It was quite different from the Russian big city; it has a totally different aura. I was rather interested with everything: skyscrapers next to parks full of tropical plants, business people next to street performers, street musicians' shows, just passersby in the street, fairs [...]*

*[...]After my arrival to Lavras I continued to wear my pink-colored glasses and to keep a positive outlook on everything [...]*

*[...]I was struck by the beauty of Brazilian nature. I was very happy to see the ocean for the first time in my life in Recife. It was really nice to visit beaches in the suburb of Recife as well. However, I especially enjoyed Lavras, as I had never seen such a green place before. Also I was rather fascinated with the camping by the waterfalls [...]*

*[...]While one and half year in Brazil I moved three times from one state to another. I arrived in Pernambuco, spent two months there, and then I moved to Sao Paulo for*

*three months and finally went to Minas for one year. As all these states are rather different and even have different cultural peculiarities every time we moved everything seemed new and exciting for me. Thus, my honeymoon stage in Brazil lasted half a year [...]*

All excerpts mentioned before represent honey-moon stage of my immigration to Brazil. As described in Stefanenko's (2008) classification while honeymoon phase I felt myself rather enthusiastic and excited with a new environment.

Then, some cultural shocks were experienced:

*[...]Every simple action which I used to do unconsciously in Russia such as daily routine turned into a complicated mission in Brazil [...]*

This excerpt from my NI represents country shock while dealing with daily routine in a new environment. My experience confirms the Storti's (2007) theory there he claims that country shock and getting used to new routine pass rather easier and faster than culture shock.

*[...]I had no more job, no more friends near me, no more possibility to practice sport I liked, no comfortable and cozy home with my library. Generally all things which used to make my life full and me feeling happy just vanished from my life [...]*

*[...]One of the hardest things I passed through while adapting in Brazil was social isolation. In Russia I used to be a very active person. I spent out seven days by weeks going to work, to the gym, to university classes and to Spanish course. When I had some free time I neither stayed at home. I preferred to go out with friends, to go to some social events to meet new people with the same interest. But when I come to Brazil it seemed to me that I was all alone in the whole world. It frustrated me a lot. When I arrived I did not still know Portuguese very well, almost nobody knew English or even Spanish. So for the first time in my life I just stayed with myself with nothing to do, with no friends or family near and communicating just with my boyfriend [...]*

Social isolation and passing a lot of time alone at home contributed greatly to my depression. Thus my experience confirms Oberg's (1960), Baier's (2005), Storti's (2007) and Marsh's (2012) theory about the importance of social interactions with locals for expats' well-being.

*[...]To improve my life in Brazil I started to look for master's program and for a job. After half a year I achieved both goals. I entered to a Federal University and got a job as a teacher in a local language school. However, the new job just made me more frustrated. In Russia I really enjoyed teaching school age students, we got along with them very easily and due to this they had good results. In Brazil, due to big cultural differences, I had a lot of cultural incidents with my students. For example, I had one student who brought homework made by her elder sister. In Russia, it is quite for teacher to ask a student to do his or her homework again in such a case. In Brazil a student felt herself offended in this situation. Another big disappointed of my job experience was politics of the school. The head of the school gave absolute priority to getting money rather than to the knowledge of students. I could not agree with this. So I was fired and felt myself even more depressed than before [...]*

Even now with the knowledge in Brazilian customs relationships in a work place and environment continue to be challenging for me. It happens due to big differences in Russian and Brazilian work ethic and patterns of behavior.

*[...]In Russia I worked since I was eighteen giving particular classes of English language and I used to have my own money and some kind of independence. When I came to Brazil, I become fanatically dependent on my boyfriend. I should say it is not a very pleasant experience to pass through. It makes you to feel down [...]*

*[...]I was afraid of getting sick in Brazil. I had no money to pay a medical consult or health security. So I worried what would I do if something happens to me. Also even if I could go to free hospital, I could not explain what is with me in Portuguese. I needed to ask my boyfriend to go with me. This made me feel vulnerable and it was embarrassing [...]*

My socio-economic status as an unemployed immigrant and financial difficulties was a factor that made my phase of cultural shock harder. Besides losing the comfort I used to have in Russia, I could not afford myself even necessary things like a medical appointment or public transportation.

*[...]Many times I wanted to give up all even my master's course and just return home. Also While being depressed I often thought that getting married with foreigner and going to Brazil so far away from home was a big mistake [...]*

This expat represent the signs of depression which usually accompanies an expat during the crisis of cultural shock. However, as mentioned before in the theoretical remarks, even such negative emotions after going through them bring benefits and reconstruct our identity. In my case, I became more tolerant and empathetic with my own students.

A reconciliation phase may be identified through these lines:

*[...]To be able to talk with locals, I studied Portuguese by myself every single day. I studied grammar, watched Portuguese lessons on YouTube, read books in Portuguese and tried to communicate as much as possible [...]*

My experience supports Oberg (1960), Baier (2005), Storti (2007) and Marsh (2012) theorem of importance of communication and social interactions with locals. Fortunately, I had never had fear of communicating and making mistakes in foreign language, as I always remembered that we learn just if we practice. I tried to talk to local people as much as I could in Brazil. This for sure contributed a lot to my knowledge of Brazilian customs and culture, thus, helped me to pass through the stage of frustration and cultural shock. So my findings demonstrate that cross-cultural adaptation is facilitated by intercultural communication competence and engagement in host communication activities. Such intercultural communication in the context of Brazil was possible just with the command of Portuguese language.

*[...]However, I am not that kind of person who is waiting for problems to be solved by themselves. In spite of being depressed I tried to find a way to feel myself better. Even if there was no company I went out alone to not stay at home all the time. I had no money so when I lived in Recife I went to walk on the beach. In Sao Paulo I went to parks or I chose free entrance day in museums to go there [...]*

*[...]Now passing through difficulties and hard situations caused by cultural differences I try to remind myself all the benefits which brought this intercultural experience to me [...]*

*[...]Later I attended an intensive course of Portuguese and a course of Brazilian culture. This gave me the opportunity to better understand Brazilian customs and patterns of behavior [...]*

Given excerpts from my NI correlates with Storti's (2007) algorithm for passing through cultural shock. In accordance with the algorithm by attending the course of Brazilian culture and by learning more about Brazilian customs I took responsibility for my own adaptation and for avoiding cultural incidents with locals. I also took responsibility for my well-being and forced myself to go out. Knowing the new language and new customs not just helped me in adaptation but also transformed my identity and made me more tolerant and broad-minded person. This confirms Kim (2005) and Ignatova and Burykina (2010) statement of that besides negative sides passing through cultural shock also has positive impacts on expats.

*[...]I reached the phase there I neither idealize Brazil nor see everything in a negative light. I realized that Brazil, Russia and any other country have their positive and negative sides [...]*

All these actions mentioned here helped me to overcome the stage of cultural shock and achieve reconciliation stage.

Later on, one may observe an adaptation phase:

Right now after two years spent in Brazil I have not reached total adaptation in the country. I believe that due to big differences between Russian and Brazilian cultures I am still on the reconciliation phase. I certainly need more time to reach the final adaptation phase and feel myself in Brazil like at home.

## **5 Final remarks**

By observing my narrative, it becomes evident that in order to fit in a different country, it is not enough for a foreigner just to know the target language, but it is also necessary to adapt to a new culture.

I understand that my experience of learning Portuguese language among natives was positive because Brazilians like to communicate with foreigners. So native speakers were rather patient with my attempts at communication, which encouraged me to talk and practice more. Such safe and supported environment facilitated the phase of cultural shock and made the process of my adaptation to Brazil faster and easier. Learning of Portuguese language also made my adaptation process faster and easier as due to acquisition of a native language I was able to successfully communicate with natives.

In spite of studying cultural shock at university before going to Brazil, I was not ready for experiencing it. As it also was my very first trip abroad, I was full of positive expectations and not rather conscious of difficulties which I had to face later. My main mistake was not searching for information about Brazilian culture and going to live in a country without even basic knowledge of its cultural peculiarities, values, history, customs and behavior patterns. If I had followed the Storti's (2007) scheme and had learned about the local culture earlier, many of cultural incidents would not have happened and I would have gone through cultural shock more easily and faster.

Russian students coming to Brazil are essential to build links and partnership between Brazil and Russia. Such cultural and educational exchange brings benefits to both countries. Student exchange between Brazil and Russia contribute to the development of science, research and economy in both countries and graduate specialists fluent in both Portuguese and Russian. Such specialists play an important role in successful interactions between Russian and Brazilian universities, companies and even diplomacy.

A further research that could be interesting would be examining my autobiography under the perspective of emotions, as Barcelos (2017) recommends, especially because she stresses the close relationship between learning and emotion in language learning.



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## Workshop

### WORKSHOP: STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES

Natalia Pavlushina

#### WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

The objective of the given workshop is to share my experience as a learner of four additional languages with the students of philology department. Effective language learning strategies and the other factors which can influence language learning process will be discussed during the course. The discussion will be based on my own experience as a learner of four foreign languages, namely: Tatar, English Spanish and Portuguese. Firstly, I will deal with the context of my additional language learning process; secondly, the strategies that were applied in this process; and thirdly, other aspects that influenced the learning process. At the end of the workshop the audience may ask their questions.

**Audience:** Students of UFLA's philology department

**Purpose of the course:** To share my experience of the effective language learning with the students of philology department.

**The specific objectives:**

1. To discuss how language learning strategies may be applied while learning an additional language
2. To discuss other factors which may influence language learning.

**Applied language:** Portuguese