“You know every region has its like ... stuff you know”
– Identity negotiation strategies in intercultural Skype communication

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CASE: Corpus of Academic Spoken English (forthcoming)

- **200+ hours** of Skype conversations between speakers of English as a Lingua Franca, currently being compiled at Saarland University, Germany
- Partners from Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Finland, France, Belgium, and L1 reference components from the UK and the US (planned)
- Topic prompts, academic context, 30-60 min.
- Allows research in the areas of:
  - English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)
  - Lexical innovation
  - Pragmatics & Discourse Analysis
  - Computer-mediated communication (CMC)
  - ...

CASE website: tinyurl.com/CASEproject
Research background: English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

- ELF “orients to achieving mutual comprehension” between speakers of different language and cultural backgrounds (Mauranen 2012: 7)

- In ELF “differences from native English that achieve this [successful intercultural communication] [are] regarded not as deficiencies but as evidence of linguistic adaptability and creativity” (Jenkins 2015: 45)

- ELF as a set of strategies aimed at achieving mutual and situated comprehension (Mauranen 2012)
Negotiation of cultural identities

- Anti-essentialist approach to cultural identity: **Socially negotiated** (cf. also “groupness”, Edwards 2009) and **discursively constructed** (Baker 2015)

- **Language is constitutive of culture and cultural identities** (Hall 2001, DuGay et al. 1997)

- “The subject assumes **different identities at different times**, identities which are **not** unified around a **coherent ‘self’**” (Hall 1992: 277)

- Speaker’s identity is influenced by **personal and group identities**, as well as **situational aspects** and the **partner’s contributions** (cf. Swann & Bosson 2008: 460)
Creating identity in CASE

Reinforcing own identity with a) culturally specific items and b) language choice

Distancing from/creating opposition to other cultures
Creating identity in CASE

Reinforcing own identity with a) **culturally specific items** and b) language choice

Distancing from/creating opposition to other cultures
Linguistic means for creating identity in CASE

- ...

- (later reference to Kecskes 2013, Intercultural Pragmatics, OUP)
Traditions as integral part of national identities

06SB73ST14:
SB73: (2.2) so uhm .t we have the tradition: that you search for Easter eggs.
ST14: {ST drinks from glass} ... MH ((swallows))
right. {nods}
I've heard of it.
never done it. {shakes head}
SB73: no?((ehh)
ST14: m, {shakes head}
so the kids uhm they paint the eggs,
(1.0) yeah [...] they are boiled,
first they are boiled and then,
ST14: [mhm], {nods}
SB73: the kids get some paint?
and uhm yeah they paint the ((th/ə/)) eggs?
(1.0) and uhm, .t
>afterwards< the ((th/ɪ/)) parents uhm just,
yeah hide them?
in the garden or in the house?
and [the] children have to search for them,
Traditions as integral part of national identities

04SB25SF01
SF01: .. well .. it is .. I don't know,
    maybe it's a Christian tradition,
    maybe it's something .. uhm Bulgarian,
    or something between the two,
    .h but that's that's a tradition in Bulgarian,
    we don't have any meat,
    .. on the Christmas eve ..,
    that's on the twenty-fourth,
    .h and on the twenty-fifth .. ,
    uhm we can already eat meat .. and things like that,
    .h but uhm most .. people .. don't stick to that,
    I don't know,
because .h a Bulgaria Bulgarian tradition there is this Lent,
or I don't know how it's called,
uh it's a period of time .. you you shouldn't eat meat

SB25: yeah.
SF01: yeah,
    and uh ... the end of this period is Christmas eve.

SB25: okay.
SF01: but most people do it uh just o:n the twenty-fourth.
Traditions as integral part of national identities

06SB73ST14:
ST14: I- I had it one year in the past. {right hand gesture}
but it’s not common to find.
.. all **those calendar with the chocolates in.**
**so it’s- traditional from Germany?**
  >I guess?<
SB73: ... yes uhm,
ST14: {nods}
SB73: I think every child has it?
  ... a:n[d]
ST14: []
SB73: it- uhm they get it from their parents? {nods}
ST14: {nods}
SB73: ... and uhm **some people like me?** (laughs))
ST14: {smiles}
SB73: they uhm,
yeah they **follow the tradition until they’re: old, ((ehh))**
I think [I] I like it pretty much,
ST14: [((laughs))]

Tradition and stereotypes as integral part of national identities

06SB73ST14:
SB73: ... it's a big celebration in uhm Germany?
in October?
ST14: mhmm?
SB73: uhm where people wear uhm:, yeah uhm ... foliage: (/faʊklɔːr/),
uh clothing?
yeah?
... [traditional] clothing?
ST14: [mhm]? {nods}
SB73: ... a:nd uhm,
so they have leather trousers and uhm pretty nice <dresses>?
.. yeah?
ST14: {nods}
SB73: .h and uhm all drinking BEER,
and uh yeah eating sausages? ((laughing))?
ST14: ((hehe))
SB73: and getting drunk yeah?_((ehh))
ST14: ((laughs)) {moves head back}
SB73: it's all about getting [drunk] I guess?_((laughs))
Identity creation in food discourse (cf. Brunner, Diemer, and Schmidt 2014)

Stereotypical outside views...
07SB28FL36:
SB28: I guess **Italian food** is a little bit more, known worldwide? ((laughs))
FL36: ((laughs))
I guess so.
SB28: **pizza,** **pasta.**
((laughs))

Personal traditions and personal stories
07SB49FL33:
FL33: I'm not really **typical Italian,** in that, in this field but yes. [...]
SB49: sometimes I just like to cook together with my **family,**
FL33: aha.
SB49: if I go over to see my **oldest sister,**
then we usually cook together, sometimes on a Saturday night, but uhm I think it's a nice get-together.
Explaining typical food items

07SF03SB46:
SF03: okay,
   u:hm uh is there something typical from that region?
SB46: u:hm yeah <it's> .. uh ... kind of ... potat- potato=
SF03: =uhu.
SB46: uh .. .hh potat- uh pancake pancakish potato,
SF03: [ah okay].
SB46: [[] is] it's not ... not quite a pancake,
   because it's like very .. uh rough pieces of potato,
SF03: uhum.= [...]
SB46: and then you just like .. make them into pancake style shapes,
   ... a:nd uhm .. fry them in- in a pan,
   and you usually eat them with .. uhm ... with applesauce with like .. uhm ... mashed apples.
SF03: ah cool,
   is it s- something like Kaiserschmarn?
SB46: (1.2) uhm .. a bit similar .. out of potatoes yeah. [...] 
   ... it's called Dibbelabbes ((chuckles)).

http://www.marions-kochbuch.de/rezept/6356.htm
Negotiating cultural stereotypes and cultural misconceptions

SB48: maybe that's a German invention, I don’t know.
do you have Spaghetti ice cream?

FL32: ... no. ((laughs))

SB48: you don't have that? (((laughs)))

FL32: [(what is it.)]

SB48: that's-,

FL32: no.

SB48: uhm,
that's vanilla ice cream?
that is.. uhm pressed?
in a certain form,
so it uh looks like spaghetti.

FL32: uhu?

SB48: and.,

FL32: [wow.]

SB48: [on top.]
there is uhm?
... strawberry sauce,
I think?

FL32: yeah?

SB48: and .. little pieces of white chocolate.

SF32: yeah .. [really? ((laughs))]

SB48: [yeah and that's delicious. ((laughs))]

SF32: [wow .. I must try it] ((laughing)) and uhm,

SB48: I always wondered,
if you had that in Italy too,
or if that's.
a German [invention.]

FL32: [{shakes head} no.]

no no no,

FL32: here,
I mean,
you can find,
.. your classical ice cream,
not. it sounds not.
it doesn't usually have.
uh .. shapes? ((laughs))
it's just .. ice cream.
Interim summary: Cultural traditions, stereotypes, and clichés

- **Cultural traditions** and **traditional food** as major sources of identity creation
- **Food clichés** are connected to **cultural clichés** and specific cultural expectations (e.g. *beer*, *bratwurst* and *oktoberfest*, *lederhosen*)
- **Regional** and **personal contexts**, particularly family traditions
- Focus on **contrast** (opposing national traditions/food; opposing regional and national traditions; opposing stereotypical image with reality)
Creating identity in CASE

- Reinforcing own identity with a) culturally specific items and b) language choice
- Distancing from/creating opposition to other cultures

Creating identity in CASE

Reinforcing own identity with a) culturally specific items and b) language choice

Distancing from/creating opposition to other cultures

Code-switching and the creation of identity

- Code-switching is a “phenomenon of language contact” (Auer and Eastman 2010: 85), “the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent” (Poplack 1980: 583)

- In ELF: Underlines group membership, identity (cf. e.g. Ochs 1993, Auer 2005, Cogo 2009), and cultural connotations (Vettorel 2014)

- Code-switching can be used to convey concepts that are unknown or untranslatable, e.g. “le mot juste” (Poplack 1988: 226f.)

- Contributes to the creation of rapport, especially in combination with humor and laughter (for the notion of rapport see Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2002)
Typical and untranslatable cultural traditions and identities

06SB73ST14:
SB73: uhm I think **what is special about Christmas: you uhm: bake these cookies?**
   **I don't know if [you] do that?**
ST14: [mhm]? {nods}
   ((clears throat)) {puts right arm on table}
SB73: uh **Plätzchen (German (0.6)))** [I don't know] °in German?
ST14: [we don’t] {shakes head}
SB73: no?
   uh[m] you have uh dough ((/dʌf/))?  
ST14: [H]? {moves head towards camera}
Cultural traditions and the creation of rapport through laughter

06SB73ST14:
SB73: and uhm the girls or women, they wear uhm, skirt and a apron? {ST nods}
... or uhm ... a dress?
... >a colourful dress< with the apron?
.h and uhm a nice cleavage and a blouse underneath?
... and it's called a **Dirndl ((German (0.6)))**?

ST14: (1.7) okay?
SB73: [an:d],
ST14: [I'm not] gonna be able to say that, (go ahead), ((laughing)) {nods}
okay, ((laughs))
SB73: ((hehe))
**DIRNDL ((German (0.6))) ((laughing))? ((hehe))

ST14: {shakes head}
SB73: (1.0) °no°?
ST14: I'm gonna try. now I'm gonna try. ((laughs))
SB73: ((laughs))
Cultural traditions and the creation of rapport

06SB73ST14:
SB73: and uhm the girls or women,
    they wear uhm,
skirt and a apron? {ST nods}
    ... or uhm ... a dress?
    ... >a colourful dress< with the apron?
    ... h and uhm a nice cleavage and a blouse underneath?
    ... and it's called a **Dirndl** (**German (0.6))**?

ST14: (1.7) okay?
SB73: [an:d],
ST14: [I'm not] gonna be able to say that, (go ahead), (laughing) {nods}
    okay, (laughs)
SB73: (hehe)
**DIRNDL** (**German (0.6))** (laughing)? (hehe)

ST14: {shakes head}
SB73: (1.0) °no°?
ST14: I'm gonna try.
    now I'm gonna try. (laughs)
SB73: (laughs)
>okay,<

07SB54ST04
ST04: ... and here in Spain ((/es/pain)) uh is very
    traditional for Christmas.
SB54: ... mhm? {nods}
ST04: uh:m,
    ... maybe I can: send you: ((ehh)) a bar.
    ... of **turrón** (**Spanish (0.4))** (ehh) (put)
    you try to taste if you like it or not.
    maybe we can do that.
07SB17SF10:
SF10: well_I .. I studied German, ((laughs))
[but],
SB17: [OH].
SF10: yeah .. but_I ... I can't uh say that I can <speak> it. ((laughs))
#00:06:30-1#
SB17: wie geht's dir ((German (1.4))). ((laughs))
SF10: ((laughs)) danke gut ((German (1.0))) ((laughing)).
SB17: that's- that's already very good ((chuckles)).
SF10: yeah. ((laughs))
SB17: it's a beginning it's a beginning.
SF10: yeah ((laughing)),
   it's a beginning.
Explaining and relativizing national stereotypes

Differentiating personal/regional and national identities

07SB50FL43:
SB50: and they all eat Bratwurst ((German (1.0))) and and and uhm ...
FL43: ((LAUGHS))
SB50: Schnitzel ((German (1.0))) and... ((laughs))
   [...] and we and all the rest of Germany,
   [...] the rest of the world think..
   Bavaria is whole Germany ((laughing))
FL43: ((laughing)) oh ok .. ok .. [but that‘s]
SB50: [yeah... everybody has to work] with his stereotypes.

Regional identities and dialect humor  (cf. Siegel 1995: 102)

01SB32FL06:
SB32: if you want to say,
   I have a cold,
   in Saarland, 
   I am I'm not sure I think they uhm they say,
   *ich hann freck,* ((German (0.9)))
   (1.9) and yeah actually,
   it's,
FL06: it's not the sound of German,
SB32: no, ((laughs))
FL06: ((laughs))
SB32: definitely not,
Regional identities: Explaining regional food items

07SB51ST01:
SB51: [uhm we've] got the **Schwenker** ((German (1.7))). [...] yeah it's pretty weird if you think about it.
you've got this **kind of strange barbecue** ((barbe/g/ue))? barbecue,
and it has .. three legs.
.h and then you've got like a plate,
hanging down,
and you can spin it.
**it's like a spinning barbecue.** ((laughs))
**that's e:r .. a very Saarlandish thing**
many people say that we invented it. ((ehh))
Identity negotiation through cultural traditions and language choice

- Culturally connoted and stereotypical terms are used to negotiate regional and national identities, e.g. cultural traditions, such as typical food, festivities, etc.
- Stereotypes and clichés may lead to misconceptions which are then cleared up
- Code-switching as very productive means of creating and negotiating identity, be it regional, national, or common identities (e.g. as multilinguals)
- Particular cultural terms and traditions underline expert status
- Creation of rapport, especially in combination with humor and laughter

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Creating identity in CASE

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Reinforcing own identity with a) culturally specific items and b) language choice

Distancing from/creating opposition to other cultures
Creation of personal identities in opposition to other nationalities

07SB51ST01:
SB51: .. you know this British breakfast.
    really fatty just,
ST01: [((ehh))]                  
SB51: [the-] they also call-,
call it fry-up.
ST01: (2.2) uhu?
SB51: because you know,
y- you just put everything in in the pan,
and fry [it up].

ST01: well I ca- cannot eat with- er what the English_eat in the morning,
I- I don't feel like,
(2.0) it's just too much food for,
fo- for_a breakfast you know.
I cannot eat bacon at nine p- er nine a[m].
CASE study: Identity negotiation – Construction of ‘America’ as the ‘Other’

• “Meaning generated through relations of difference”, i.e. “[s]ignifiers generate meaning not in relation to fixed objects but in relation to other signifiers (Hall 1992: 173)

• Mental concept of a boundary between two perceived groups is enough to maintain these groups, no matter how diverse they may be respectively (cf. Barth 1969, cited in Edwards 2009)

• ‘America’ in CASE: both positive and negative associations, neutral use is relatively rare
‘America’ as a recurring image in CASE (Brunner, Diemer & Schmidt forthcoming)

Frequent occurrence in
- Personal stories
- Contrastive examples from culture and society

Individual, national, European identities are negotiated in opposition to ‘America’
- As a role model
- As global danger in a cultural and political context
- As a negative counterexample

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07SB50FL34:

FL43: and ... then just .. I don't know .. maybe,
.. I will move to the States ... because I’d really like that,

SB50: [mhmm],

FL43: [I'd] really like to move to the States,
(1.0) cause (1.0) yeah you **Italy is kind of screw up** I mean,
.. fifteen years,
.. nobody is gonna have,
... anything to eat anymore because we're like -we're like falling apart.
‘America’ as global danger in a cultural and political context

07SB50FL34: 
FL43: ... oh hey.
   .. tell me one thing.
do you have Starbucks in Germany?
SB50: uh yeah we do .. u:hm,
   .. not -not for pretty long but,
   .. uh .. last couple years .. uh,
   they came out and now they're spreading more and more everywhere,
   like it used to be in the States you know,
FL43: [ah ok,]

[...]
FL43: [ah ok] (1.5) ah... actually,
   .. they're gonna ope:n,
   .. I don't .. know.. either one or two Starbucks like .. next year in Italy but,
   .. I cannot really see the point of it,
   .. I mean.. we have .. good coffee in Italy .. why do we need Starbucks?
SB50: yeah,
FL43: hm - a - and it's and it's expensive.
    Starbucks is SO FREAKING expensive I,
    .. I don't know .. and I'm sure people will go to Starbucks,
    because,
SB50: .. [because it's Starbucks],
    [...] yeah, you know I - I went to Starbucks and you're cool,
SB50: yeah,
FL43: I had good coffee well it's normal but,
    .. a: h it's li- I cannot really see the point of it.
    ... I mean,
SB50: .. yeah yeah.
FL43: .. I mean.. do you want Pizza HUT in Italy?
well .. we have the BEST Pizza in the world .. we cannot,
SB50: mhm.
[...]
SB50: if you know the taste of .. uhm,
    of Italian Pizza and,
    .. uhm house made Italian Pizza,
    .. you don't wanna eat a .. uhm uhm,
    a shitty American Pizza in Pizza Hut .. I mean,
07SB54ST04:

ST04: but **we prefer .. the three holy kings**,  
SB54: .. interesting. [((ehh))]  
ST04: [yeah] this one is more for here for Spain  
    **Santa Claus is more like well,**  
    **this is something American** [([laughing]) or something like that.  
SB54: yeah.  
ST04: and well-,  
    right now uh **tradition I think is changing because of,**  
    well more- ... parents consider that,  
      .t if they give the: .t the the pre- the presents to the childrens.  
      [...] (1.1) [so] **the tradition is changing because of that.**  
SB54: [mhm?]  
ST04: .. but .. **we prefer the three holy kings and not Santa Claus,**
and, but I think that's a really nice tradition, like always eating together, and eating like, fresh? cause for example I went to America, for six months, for an internship, and I really really missed fresh food.

mhm. {nods} like you. they have it? but it's super expensive, and it's so much easier to just, buy some fast food or, yeah prepared food,
‘America’ as a negative counterexample

03SB30FL28:

FL28: .. but li- .. mh HERE uhm the most uhm experienced I-, that I have go:t is like, "oh HEY you're from Belgium so you must speak French RIt"? ((chuckling)) .. its that ALL the ti:me. and I'm NO:, I'm .. I speak DUTCH. .. we also have a Dutch part ((laughing)), but t. yeah.

SB30: well I GUESS,

[...] when I went to America, most time people .. wouldn't even kno:w where Belgium is. 

[...] on the world map.

FL28: ... yeah indeed.
Summary: ‘America’ in the construction and negotiation of European identities

• Often no perceived common European features, but **European identities constituted through discursive creation of the ‘Other’**, prompting boundary-marking (Neumann 1998, Morley & Robins 2002)

• ‘America’ as external ‘Other’ is seen as a stereotyped entity (“out-group homogeneity effect”, Edwards 2009: 25), used to create **personal/national, even common, ephemeral (ad-hoc) transcultural/European identities**

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Conclusion

• Negotiation of cultural identities **strongly connected to creation of rapport and common ground**

• **Three main identity negotiation strategies in CASE:**
  
  o Identities are negotiated with the help of *traditions, stereotypes, clichés*

  o **Code-switching** plays a major role in identity negotiations, e.g. through *untranslatable cultural concepts & expert status* regarding own culture

  o Creation of ‘**Otherness**’ – e.g. America vs. Europe – heavily contributes to creation of common ground, as well as of individual, regional, national, transcultural/European identities
References

Brunner, Marie-Louise; Stefan Diemer; and Selina Schmidt. Forthcoming. "I mean ... we have good coffee in Italy ... why do we need Starbucks?" - "America" in the Construction and Negotiation of European Identities. "America" as intermediary in the production of transnational civic European cultures, ed. by Astrid Fellner et al. Saarbrücken: Saravi Pontes.
References


Thank you!

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CASE: tinyurl.com/CASEproject