

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

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CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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)

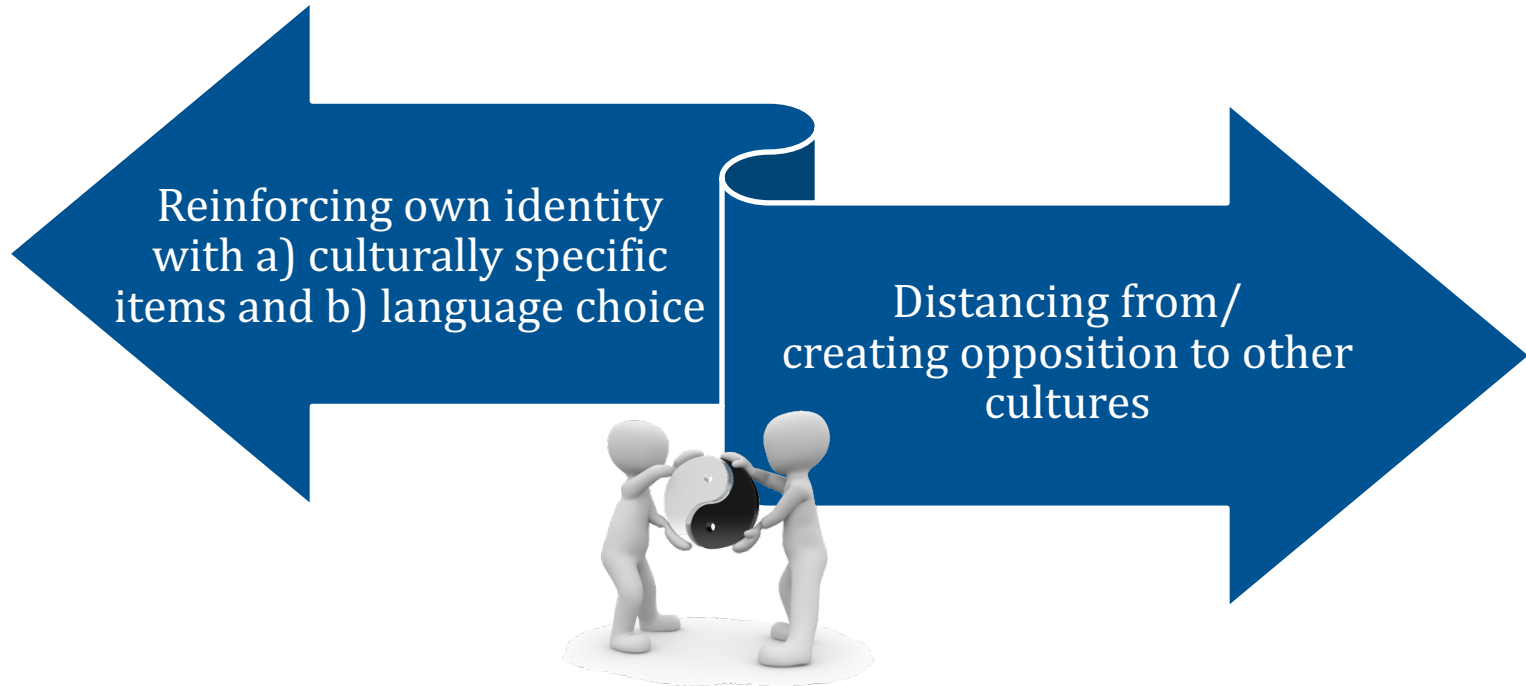


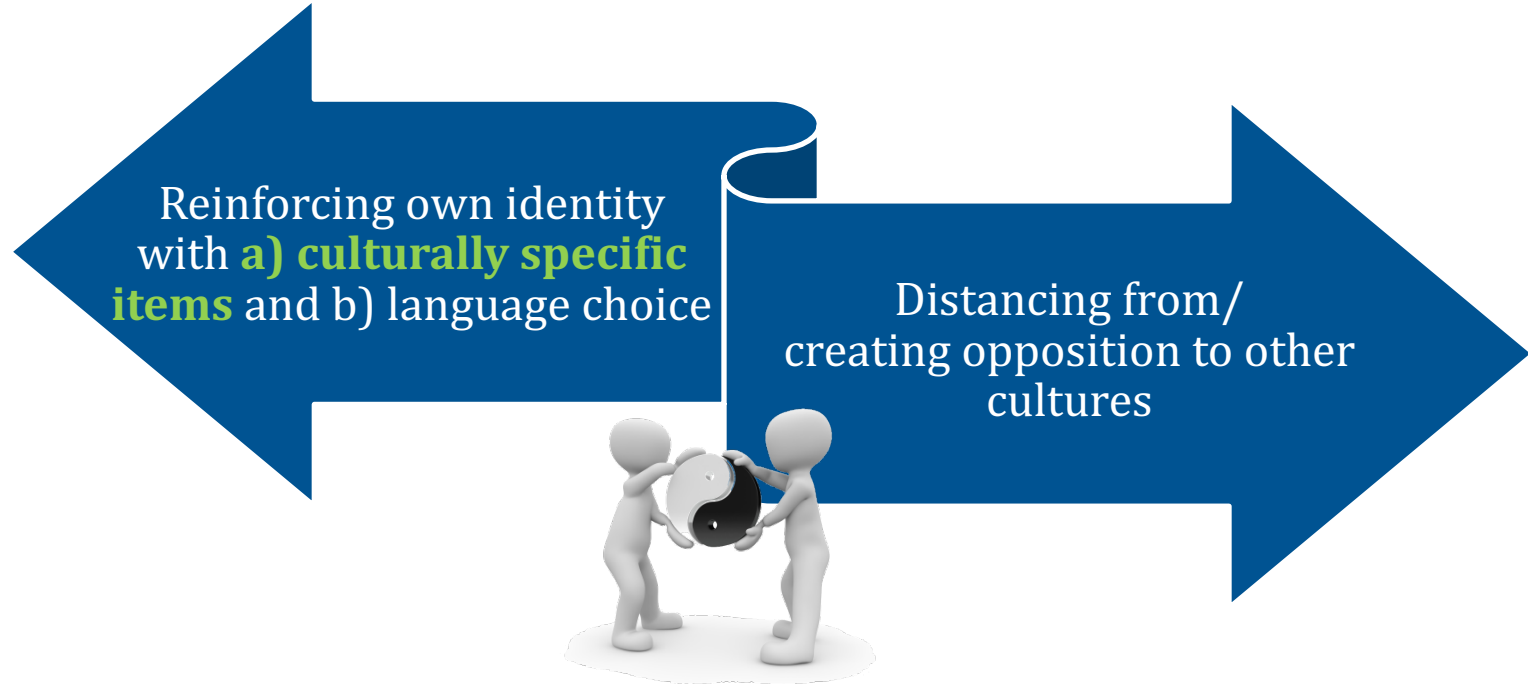


Negotiation of cultural identities

- 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)









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?

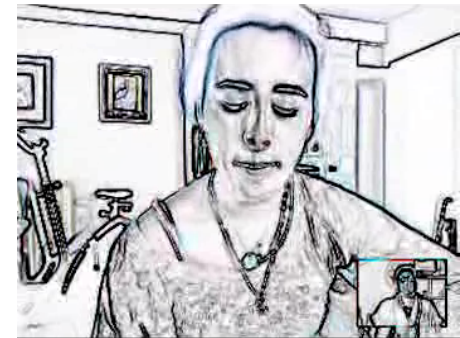
(1.0) and uhm, .t

>**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: [O]

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: mhm?

SB73: uhm where **people wear** uhm:,
yeah uhm ... **folklore**: ((/fəʊklɔːrə:/)),
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)).



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,

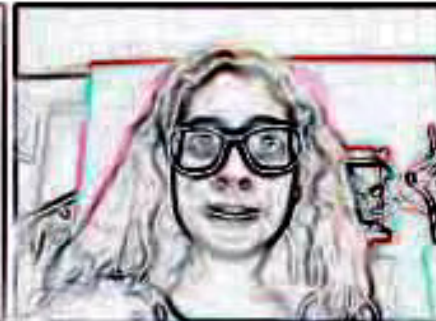
.. your classical ice cream,

not.. it sounds not.

it doesn't usually have.

uh .. shapes? ((laughs))

it's just .. ice cream.

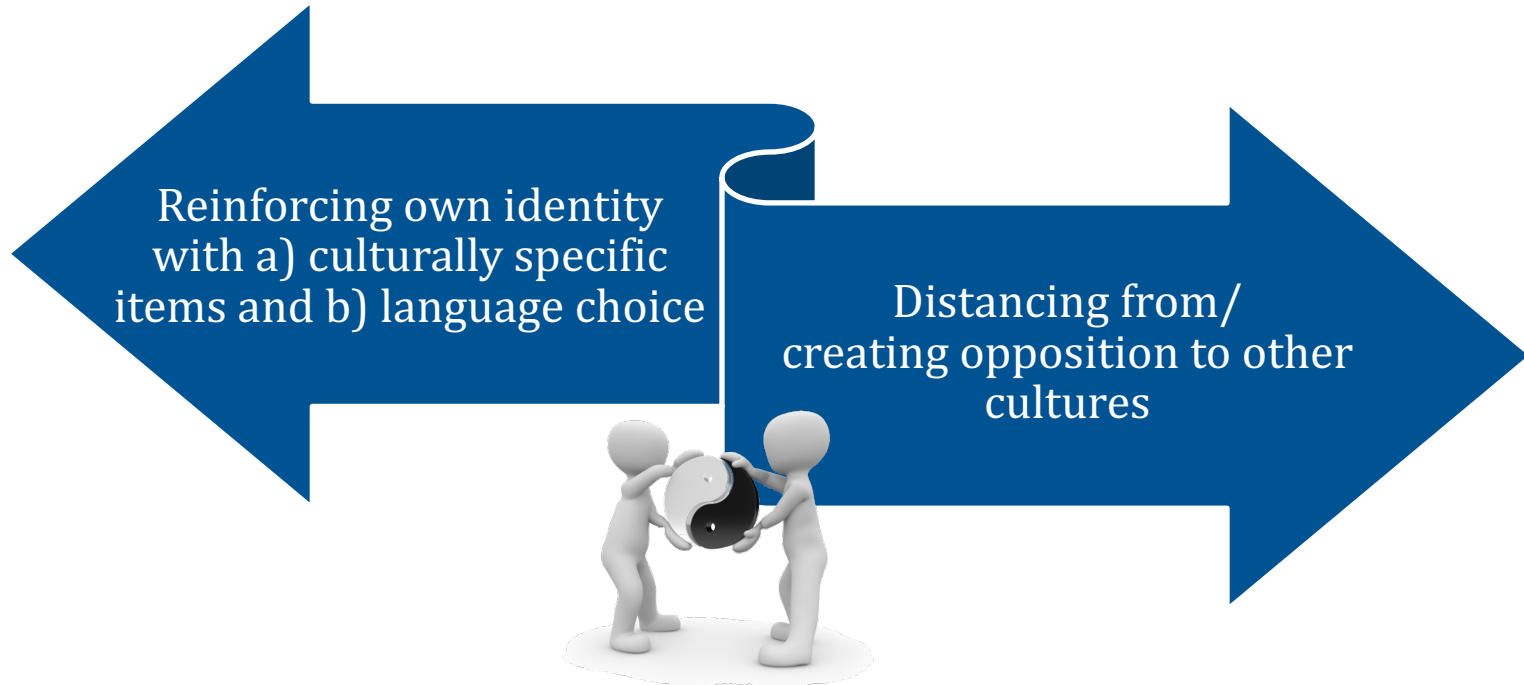


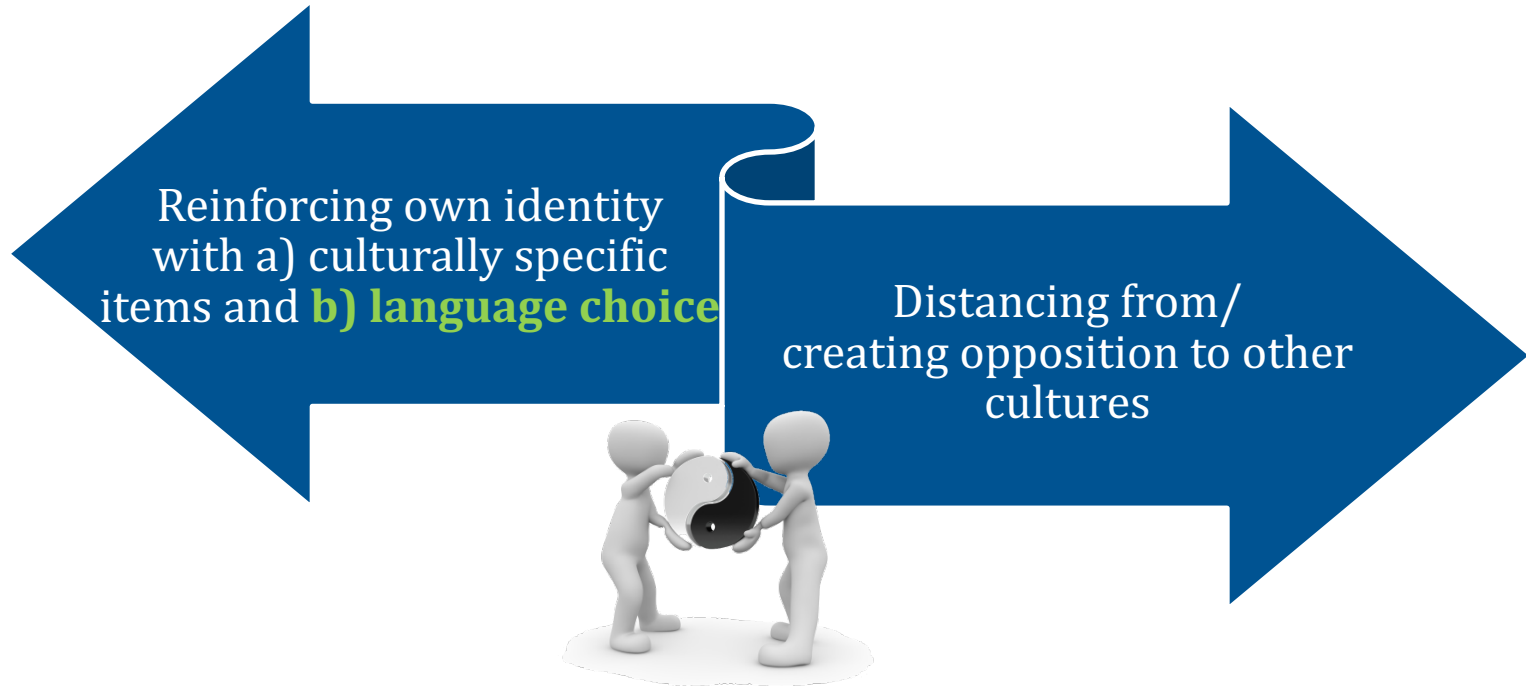


Interim summary: Cultural traditions, stereotypes, and clichés

- **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)









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.



Multilingual identities

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))

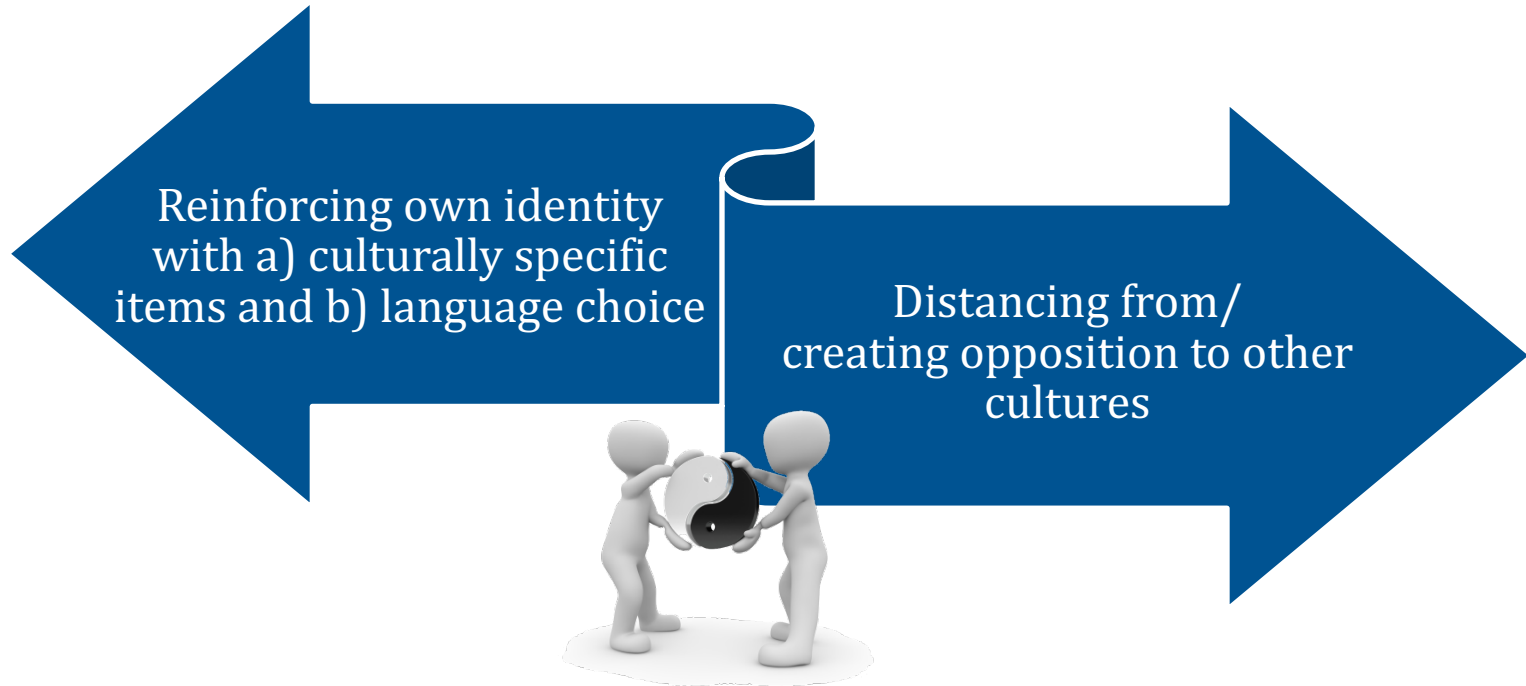


Identity negotiation through cultural traditions and language choice



- **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







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





'America' as a role model

07SB50FL34:

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

SB50: [mhm],

FL43: **[I'd] really like to move to the States,**
(1.0) ca:use (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?**





'America' as global danger in a cultural and political context

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,





'America' as global danger in a cultural and political context

07SB54ST04:

ST04: but **we prefer .. the three holy ki:ngs,**

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 ki:ngs and not Santa Claus,**





'America' as a negative counterexample

07SB28FL36:

SB28: 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.

FL36: mhm. {nods}

SB28: 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 RLight"? ((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.

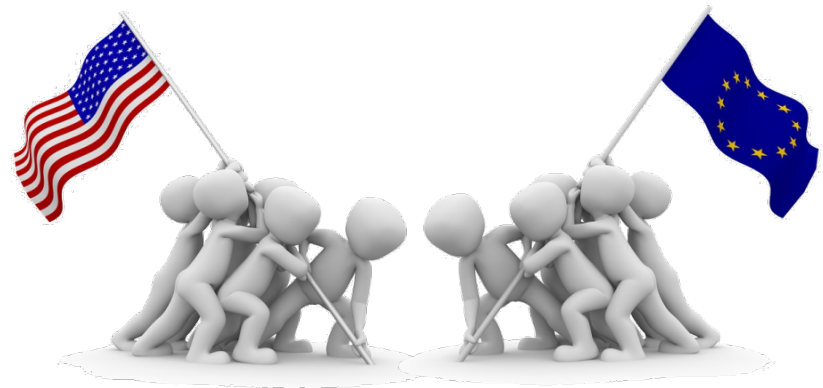
SB30: well I GUESS,
[...] when I went to America,
most time people .. wouldn't even kno:w where Belgium is.
[...] on the world map.

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**





- Negotiation of cultural identities **strongly connected to creation of rapport and common ground**
- **Three main identity negotiation strategies in CASE:**
 - Identities are negotiated with the help of **traditions, stereotypes, clichés**
 - **Code-switching** plays a major role in identity negotiations, e.g. through **untranslatable cultural concepts & expert status** regarding own culture
 - 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**



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Thank you!

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