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## Negotiating the Racial Other in Interactions in English as a *Lingua Franca*

### Introduction and Aims

The main aim of the paper is to analyze how the descriptions of *the racial other* are realized in interactions in English as a *lingua franca* and to show how they influence the course of an interaction and the mutual relationship of interaction participants.

The ethnomethodological conversation analysis framework is used to observe the social categorization process and thus the focus, itself phenomenological, is on how interaction participants themselves understand the meaning of racial descriptions as they are co-created in interactions. Namely, which of those descriptions are understood as negative assessments and hence treated as problematic by interaction participants and consequently repaired or moderated in interactions.

My aim is also to explain how the meaning of the category of *the other* in general, but especially *the racial other*, becomes an ambiguous and touchy issue in intercultural communication and how it is negotiated. I intend to show how interaction participants characterize themselves as the racial other, how they create the category of a racist in reference to an ethnic category, and how those descriptions are accounted for and construed to be perceived as valid and not as a display of prejudice or a negative stereotype.

### Theory: Social Categorization

Ethnomethodological conversation analysis perceives social categorization as an interactive process and assumes that the meaning of social categories and social practices is situated in communicative events. Interaction participants show how they understand a given social activity or a category and display their understanding which social category or description is relevant in a given communicative event and at a given moment of an interaction. Conversation analysis (CA) has an empirical tool for verifying the speakers' understanding,

namely, an adjacency pair along with the recipient design and the next turn proof procedure. An adjacency pair, as opposed to a single utterance, is also a minimal analytical unit in CA and consists of two parts, the first pair part action and the second pair part reaction, in which recipients display their understanding of an action in the first pair part. The first utterance in a pair, on the other hand, can be additionally analyzed by the use of the recipient design; that is the speaker's anticipation of the possible understanding of his or her utterance by an addressee is displayed in the first utterance in a pair. An example of such a design would be mitigating criticism knowing that it is treated as a dispreferred and problematic activity for a listener. This knowledge of which activities are dispreferred ones is not just an individual's characteristic, but is shared by members of a community.

This shared or social structure exists on an *a priori* level as communicative and socio-cultural competence, however, as ethnomethodologists argue, it does not determine or program social action and social actors. Rather, interaction participants orient to it while producing and understanding social activities. Additionally, as Lee (2001) points out, the social structure and principles are assumed to exist but are not drawn from theory but from empirical, phenomenological observation of the social interaction. An "instance," an activity in the world of practice or communication, and a social "pattern," a representation in the world of concepts, are mutually elaborative, one influencing another and building upon another. In other words, social structure can be perceived as an interpretation scheme which is socially shared or sanctioned and which is reconfirmed or negotiated in interactions in social settings (Lee 2001: 162, 165).

An important part of the process of speakers making sense of the social world in face-to-face interactions is social categorization, consisting in participants describing social agents and their activities. The process is called membership categorization and consists in society members categorizing or characterizing other members (Jayyusi 1984: 1, 20). Sacks (1992: 40–48) introduced the term membership categorization devices (MCD) for the practices of doing social description and defined it as consisting of "resources and practices of their deployment" or as composed of collections of categories and rules of application. Collections are claimed not to be simple aggregates of categories but sets of categories that would fit together, such as for instance an age collection (a child/a teenager/an adult) or a gender collection (male/female) (Schegloff 2007: 466).

Each category has also category-bound activities, some of which are category-constitutive ones. The idea of 'category bound' activities defines some social activities as normatively connected to certain categories of persons, such

as "crying" is the thing that usually "babies do" (Lee 2001: 159). Many a time, instead of explicitly referring to a category, it is enough to mention a person performing certain category-bound activity to make a given category relevant in interpreting what is going on in the interaction (Schegloff 2007: 470). A phenomenological and situated character of categorizations needs to be emphasized as the meaning of categorizations in CA differs significantly from the one in the more deterministic social sciences. An important point made by ethnomethodologists is that even though there might exist a multitude of possible categorizations that might be logically correct for a given person (somebody can be a female, a driver, a student, Jewish, a hobo and Polish) or as Coulter (2001: 41) puts it "correctly predicable," only those categories and categorizations count as meaningful in a given interaction which get visibly co-selected by interaction participants. Thus, if speakers interpret or make sense of each other's actions on the basis of an orientation to a given category, those categories become relevant.

Racial and ethnic collectives, such as Poles and Africans, as Jayyusi observes, are organized as collectives of an open texture as opposed to the type of collectives such as Hell's Angels, the Roman Catholic Church or Ku Klux Klan, which are self-organized groups, serving a purpose, and thus similar to institutions. If somebody ascribes a certain category-constitutive features (such as mother) rather than category-bound features to such ethnic or race collectivities, by describing them for instance as: a "good German" or a "self-hating Jew," this might be perceived as "doing prejudice" or fanaticism (Jayyusi 1984: 50–51). In the case of type categorizations, to avoid doing prejudice or to make their descriptions comprehensible and valid, interaction participants usually provide warrants for certain descriptions, by arranging the category-bound activities in certain logical lists and by providing personal stories or accounts of actions, in general by revealing their ascriptive procedures, showing on what basis they pass certain judgments (Jayyusi 1984: 90–91).

However, the above process refers only to the type categorizations, while I would like to show that in intercultural encounters describing ethnic categories is a common procedure and does not necessarily result in doing prejudice. It is frequently a matter of a situated interpretation and negotiation whether a given description can be understood as ascribing a category-constitutive activity or feature such as being a racist to an ethnic category. Interaction participants frequently produce category-bound activities for ethnic categories. To what extent they are category-constitutive depends often on understanding of interaction participants and is a negotiation-based and situated process.

As Jayyusi (1984: 25–26) notices, apart from the existence of culturally available category concepts such as: doctor, poet, murderer or a saint, for example, there exist more specific, “type like” or “umbrella categorizations” consisting of an adjective and a category such as: a nice man, a nervous person, a pretty girl, an intelligent woman, etc. I aim to show that such umbrella categorizations play a vital role in negotiating negative ethnic categorizations, since they can be used to modify generalizing ethnic descriptions into more specific and thus more credible (implicitly less “prejudice like” ones) descriptions that refer to certain types within an ethnic collectivity.

### Data

The data focused on here comprises excerpts from an interview conducted by students of English as a foreign language with a Kenyan, Celia, and a Zimbabwean, Tracy, who are the students of medicine in Poland. The interview was recorded by students and was a part of a class project. The categorization processes discussed here tend to reappear in other interviews and thus a tentative conclusion can be proposed that they are important ways of construing and negotiating the category of the other in intercultural encounters.

The students show significantly lower command of English in comparison to their interviewees for whom English is a second language, and as is usually the case of educated Africans it is one of *lingua franca* languages (Crystal 2003: 102–103). However, as has been discussed (Kasper and Rose 2002: 21–22, 261), in foreign language learning contexts, pragmatic competence seems to develop quite independently from language competence. Thus at the higher intermediate level, language competence deficiencies do not dramatically influence students discourse performance.

In the first excerpt of an interview, an African student gives an account of Polish racist behavior directed at her and she provides warrants for her description. She, however, construes her categorization in such a way that it still remains to be negotiated to what extent the described behavior is category-bound or even category-constitutive for an ethnic category of Polish. In other words, the categorization “Polish are racists” is an issue open to negotiation and an undetermined but pending interpretation possibility. In all of the discussed excerpts, ethnic and racial categories are topicalized thus they become relevant as a topic of a discussion.

The categorizations are presented as stories, or as accounts of observed actions. There is no direct naming of the category as racist, but the di-

rect request for cases of racism might have affected interviewees’ reactions.

#### Fragment 1.<sup>1</sup> (Data: 1Africans2004)

Psychology students interview with Tracy and Celia.

- 1 S1: OK so (...) eh:::m::: maybe we just yh::: (1.0) start from:: the worst  
 2 (.) thing (...) that you yh:: eh::m (1.5) that you (...) ex- (1.5) that you  
 3 have to=  
 4 S: =(clearing throat)  
 5 S1: yh manage in Poland↑ about racism about (1.0) about being in Poland↑  
 6 (.) the the worst thing (..) that you (2.0) have experienced  
 7 (2.5)  
 8 S1: [the most] the most  
 9 C: [well]  
 10 S1: the most (2.5) ((gesturing)) the mos- [the worst]  
 11 S2: [hhhhh] hhhh  
 12 (1.5)  
 13 S1: that you that you remember  
 14 (2.5)  
 15 C: °uh::m° (2.8) °the most xxxxx° (1.5) well:: (..) other than the every  
 16 day::: (..) being called murzynka or someone pointing (..) well the  
 17 worst I’ve ever experienced was (1.0) once when: (.) this (..) group of  
 18 kids ((gulping)) I was walking and .hhhh like they snatched my hat (.)  
 19 [and they all started laughing]  
 20 T: [hhhhhhhh]  
 21 C: you know and it was so bad because everyone was there even grown-ups  
 22 .hhh and no one stopped them no one ((shaking her head)) (.) did anything  
 23 s [about it]  
 24 T: [hhhhhhhhhh]  
 25 C: [they just]  
 26 S: [yeah it is normal]  
 27 C: yeah (.)they just (1.5) were laughing (..) and so I had to go by (..) myself .hhh and I was so mad that they didn’t want to do xxx  
 28 (.)  
 29 (.)  
 30 S: and what did you do  
 31 (.)

<sup>1</sup> Transcription symbols: (.) micropause; (1.0) pause in seconds; [ the beginning of an overlap; : prolonged sound, h outbreath or laughter, .hhh inbreath, a emphasis, CAPITALS utterance louder than the surrounding talk; °silent° utterance; ↑ raising intonation, ↓ falling intonation; >quicker< utterance; <slower> utterance; / interrupted or discontinued utterance or a sharp cut-off of the prior sound; = latching between utterances.

- 32 C: well I just (...) asked them (...) for my hat (...) back because of course I  
 33 couldn't (...) do anything to them but I just can't  
 34 S: but you want to  
 35 T: [ehhhhhhhhhhh]  
 36 C: [but I wanted to I was very] tempted to but (...) °I didn't do anything°  
 37 S: it was the worst thing  
 38 (...)  
 39 C: yeah (...) it was h::u- humiliating=  
 40 S: =yeah((nodding))[xxxx]  
 41 C: [because] everyone was watching (...) and no one even  
 42 (...) ((shaking her head)) there were grownups there and they didn't do  
 43 anything about it-  
 44 S: =was it in Poznan↑  
 45 C: yeah in Poznan  
 46 (1.5)  
 47 S: I think the:: the center of the city  
 48 (...)  
 49 C:((nodding)) uh:: well::it was like at a bus stop  
 50 (...)  
 51 S: mhm::  
 52 (...)  
 53 S: it's normal (1.0) I think  
 54 (2.5)  
 55 C: °well°it wasn't nice

In verse 1, S asks very directly for the formulation of the “worst experience in Poland they have experienced” connected with racism. C treats the answer as a problematic one because she delays it for several turns and does not answer in transition relevance places (TRP), when speech turns can be taken, as in lines 7 and then 12. Thus, S has to repeat her question for several turns. C's answer is delayed, line 14 when a long second pause appears. In lines 15–18, “°uh::m° (2.8) °the most xxxxx° (1.5) well:: (...) other than the every day::: (...) being called murzynka or someone pointing (...) well the worst I've ever experienced was (1.0) once when: (...) this (...) group of kids ((gulping)) I was walking and .hhhh like they snatched my hat.” C also produces hesitations, delays and dispreference tokens such as “well.” The delays and other dispreference tokens are exceptionally long even for dispreferred utterances. This means that there follows a negative categorization, but I would also like to argue that those “intensified-hesitation tokens” appear because it is not only that S's request for the description is very direct but it appears very early in the interaction, that is

before the possible mutual affiliations and belonging to respective categories have been negotiated. This seems to be mainly the problem of identification with a reference, whether interaction participants understand the assessment or a specific reference to a category as also referring to them or characterizing them or not. There is a pending interpretation: “I'm not/you are not these persons in the street that I/you met but perhaps you/I have reasons to think that being Polish I am/you are somehow responsible for the racist activity and might have similar attributes and be bound to perform similar category (racist) bound activities.” The problem is that interaction participants can understand the racist described in an account as: a) racist group in a specific nation, or b) a national group described as racist, which would be a display of prejudice, as national categories are “open texture” and cannot be described in this way without generating prejudice.

Those descriptions are hedged since such assessments, as I would like to argue, might be treated as potentially pertaining to the present part, that is to the interviewers. Here, the category-bound activities describe the group of Poles as racists. The exemplary group described in C's story is absent during the interaction, but potentially the description of an ethnic category of Polish racists might also describe the present party. The interviewers are Polish and cannot be sure if C's description is generalizing, thus including also them and to what extent they can identify with this description. In brief, they might choose to think it pertains to them and react accordingly in the interaction. So the issue to be negotiated is whether only these specific Poles in the street are racist, or whether Polish people in general display racist tendencies, or if there exists any umbrella description such as: “people in the street are racists, but it is a specific group, who just happens be Polish.”

C and T also provide other accounts of being called names they perceive as derogatory such as “murzynka,” and this understanding is discussed with other interaction participants whether it is disparaging or not. The first account appears in lines 21–23, in fragment 1: “you know and it was so bad because everyone was there even grown-ups .hhh and no one stopped them no one ((shaking her head)) (...) did anything s about it.” Then comes another one in line 39, “humiliating,” and finally another one in lines 41–42: “because everyone was watching (...) and no one even (...) ((shaking her head)) there were grown-ups there and they didn't do anything about it.” C, in lines 15–18, gives an account of an event, describing indirectly both Polish adults and kids (probably teenagers) she met in the street as racist because they performed category-bound activities of racists, that is doing inequality,

treating an adult person as inferior "kid like" category for no apparent reason other than her different racial features, as she didn't report any action on her part that could have provoked such behavior. She also describes herself as a helpless victim "who just couldn't do anything" since she wasn't a member of the community, that is neither Polish nor white. By implication this was the Polish adults' responsibility to prevent the kids from acting the way they did.

C reports both the kids and adults as treating her not as an adult person but perhaps as a child, by ignoring her request of giving back the hat, by not treating her as a serious partner in a social interaction, and in this way ascribing an inferior status of a child to her and letting "kids" play around with her hat and not intervening. However, it can be inferred from C's report that even though she perceives the kids' actions as racist, the gravity of their racist behavior is lower than in the case of the adults and their passivity, since the category of "kids" allows for a lesser responsibility for one's actions.

C creates a list of activities to prove that the behavior of described Polish was racist, that is that their actions created asymmetry between categories of white Poles and her, a black person. This is different from simply stating without any accounts that a given nation is racist. Thus she mitigates her action and tries not to do prejudice.

Additionally, C reports the event that happened in public and was performed by two groups of adults and kids. This enhances the humiliating aspect of an action since it is an action co-created communally by a members of a locally formed group. This implies a racist activity to be bound if not to the whole nation, then at least to a large group within an ethnic category. The categorization, however, is still open for further specification. The racist behavior of Polish adults and children was observed and reported, but prejudice is not created as the account for the action is produced, however, more negotiation job is still to be performed.

An implied explanation of the adults' lack of reaction for C is that the adults took C to be a kid. At the same time, the kids' teasing behaviour shows that they treat her as equal or lower in status to them, while visibly, there must be a perceptual difference of age and thus status. As she perceptually is not a child, then another interpretation follows, namely, that she is being unjustly perceived as a "non-adult," as somebody with the same rights and attributes as kids; since she is not a kid, then she is just treated in an inferior manner. As nothing in her behavior justifies the kids' and adults' behaviour then the basis for their treatment must be a bias, that is the kids' and adults' categorization of

C as "murzynka," so the person whose skin colour and different race attributes remove her from the category of an adult.

However, on top of that, there seems to exist as well a cultural difference in perceiving category-bound activities, responsibilities and duties of an adult category. As Polish perception of the relation between an adult and a kid who is a stranger to an adult, or who is not a member of the adult's family collection, is that an adult can but is not bound to intervene when children unrelated to them misbehave. Frequently, intervening in such cases is socially frowned upon or at least creates problems and requires a special explanation on the part of an adult. In the Polish context the understanding of mutual obligations and category-bound activities for adults in relation to kids who are not their own children does not mean intervening, unless it is a specially, institutionally empowered category of a teacher or other caretaker, or, for instance, a policeman. So additionally, there seems to be a difference in the cultural perception of category-bound activities of adults in relation to children's misbehavior. Still C's description of the kids' activities as inappropriate and even racist remains a valid interpretation.

S's reaction in fragment 1, verses 26, 52, "that is normal" has an equivocal status, as it can be understood as "the activity you report happened, but it is nothing strange, it is normal not racist," or "an event happened and I agree with your description." C understands S's response as contesting her categorization and she opposes S's formulation in line 54, "well it wasn't nice." She treats it as contesting her characterization, even though S's aim was probably to set up the agreement on the common version of the world that C's understanding of it is valid.

In conclusion, racism accounts, apart from other features, are characterized by the formulation of a specific category pair, the account of how a person is perceived by others, a reported self-description, or a description in a reported story of being "the other" or "the alien," "the inferior different one," with respect to the group of the insiders' majority. The juxtaposition pair frequently contains some reference to the skin color attribute or other race features (usually loaded with category-specific implications), "murzynka" vs. "Polish." So the juxtaposed categories are the race category vs. an ethnic one, which makes an asymmetric pair and implies the category of a specific nation as being racist. However, also the juxtaposition of categories "the black person" in any relation to "the white person" can, depending on the situational context, be perceived as asymmetrical, that is implying an unequal distribution of rights and duties because the mentioned pair is charged with implications and cultural attributes

which historically make the pair asymmetrical, the fact that can and often finds expression in social interaction.

**Fragment 2.** (Data 2Africans2004)

Psychology students interview with Tracy and Celia.

- 1 S: Tracy you didn't (...) your (.) worst  
 2 (.)  
 3 T: ((shaking her head)) xxxxxxxxxxxx (.) I (didn't have)(..) anything sad  
 4 (except that) so people spit an::d (..) ((clearing her throat)) (..)  
 5 an:::d (...) m::: nothing bad today actually I met one man .hhh whose (.)  
 6 I think it's only the problem with young people (..) like (of our) age  
 7 .hhhh an:::d:: (..) (and of this with) kids of (..) lower age .hh older  
 8 people (I never met a person and) old people (..) and old person who::  
 9 would point at me and say bad things .hhhh today I met some guy who wa:s  
 10 (1.0) maybe in his fifties and was with his son maybe twenty something  
 11 .hhhh so the guy was like hmm: the little kid was like murzynka and then  
 12 the father's like no yi: why do you call her murzynka (that's) not murzynka  
 13 that's just a black person  
 14 (.)  
 15 T: so I don't think (..) old people are that bad  
 16 (1.5)  
 17 T: [yes I] I'm  
 18 S: [xxxxx]  
 19 T: (cause now) think this is the young people that are supposed to  
 20 appreciate (1.5) ((waving her hand)) more::: (..) uh:::m (.) more black n-  
 21 n:- not more blacks necessarily OK t- to tell the truth I really don't care  
 22 if whether they hhhhhh (.) they do appreciate me or not but it will be  
 23 (1.0) I don't know it will (..) for me (.) it doesn't really affect me >me  
 24 I'm not affected by the thing< but I feel sorry for them .hhh it's .hhh  
 25 rather m: (1.0) humiliating not for me but for them that they act like that  
 26 it's it's stupid (...) rather (...) so:: I think (in it) it will be the  
 27 young people who ('d learn) to .hhh appreciate people from other countries  
 28 .hhh (rather) the old people (..) because old people they haven't had the  
 29 opportunity to be going outside the country .hhh outside this country but  
 30 (.) young peo::ple:: (..) they ha::ve and they've seen:: videos they've  
 31 seen  
 32 (3.0)  
 33 C: sports  
 34 T: [sports music]  
 35 C: [yeah everything]  
 36 T: everything they they know that's (it's a black) and is a person (..)

- 37 .hhh it's still (look) they:: (1.0) say:: (.) bad things  
 38 (1.0)  
 39 S: but uh:

In fragment 2, in lines 6 and 7, T classifies the younger people as racist, but she avoids using the direct attribute "racist," and construes instead quite an indirect description, which is also the reference to earlier descriptions provided by C: "I think it's only the problem with young people (..) like (of our) age .hhhh an:::d:: (..) (and of this with) kids of (..) lower age." So here the umbrella category is used, the description of a Polish racist refers to a specific group. Still, a problem of possible overgeneralization does not disappear since a group of Polish young people is not an organization.

In lines 8–9, "(I never met a person and) old people (..) and old person who:: would point at me and say bad things," T implies indirectly that the category-bound activity of young Polish racists is "pointing and saying bad things" and in this way singling out a person as different. Her negative assessment categorization is thus softened by using a negative hypothetical description of what actions an older person would never undertake that supposedly younger people do.

In the same fragment, in lines 10–13, T specifies the category of Poles excluded from the category of the Polish racist, namely, older people. In this way, she creates an umbrella category of Polish young people. Additionally, she gives explanations and accounts in the form of stories to create categorizations: "I met some guy who wa:s (1.0) maybe in his fifties and was with his son maybe twenty something .hhhh so the guy was like hmm: the little kid was like murzynka and then the father's like no yi: why do you call her murzynka (that's) not murzynka that's just a black person." T actually reports the categorization job referring to her, the one she overheard, as directed to her. So what occurs here is a reported speech categorization, this time referring to somebody's categorizing or more specifically, repairing the categorization done by other persons. She points out that people whose actions she refers to are a family. According to Polish cultural norms, it is more appropriate for one family member to repair an activity of another than in the case of strangers. This situation is clearly different from the one described by C, but the topic of the difference is not developed in the interview. Instead, T decides to construe her umbrella categorization by building on C's description of kids or young people as racist.

This time T classifies the older man's action as repairing racist-bound activity of his son or grandson and restoring the category symmetry, the "black person" in pair with "the white person." He uses the noun "person," implying

adulthood and equality. "The person" whose attribute is race; it is one of numerous and not her most important and culturally determining attribute. In this way, just like C, T reports a communal action, whose effect is repairing a negative categorization of Polish adults as racists that C reported earlier in the interaction. This functions as a counterbalance for C's earlier descriptions and makes them more specific, as more specific umbrella categorizations are produced.

In lines 19 and 20, T provides category bound activity for Polish young people to be classified as racist: "(cause now) think this is the young people that are supposed to appreciate (1.5) ((waving her hand)) more::: (.) uh::m (.) more black." This is a case of modified criticism. Instead of saying directly "they don't appreciate black people," she uses the modal construction "they are supposed to appreciate." She also provides an explanation of her categorization of the young Poles as racist and she defines their activities as inexplicable, since they (the young Poles), as she says in lines 27-30, "have been exposed to the world, they have seen lots of the world" and a variety of races. She later concludes their description with ascribing a category-bound activity of a racist, in lines 35-36 which is: "saying bad things about black people and not perceiving the black person as a person." This is preceded by the description of a racist young Pole's behavior as contemptible, self-humiliating, and morally incomprehensible, when T described it as "stupid." Additionally, T in lines 21-26, unlike C, distances herself from being a victim of a racist action or as an affected recipient of it by saying "it's not humiliating for me but rather for them." All in all, she refuses to be categorized in any terms by young Polish racists, as she perceives their actions as incomprehensible and thus unjustified: "to tell the truth I really don't care if whether they hhhhhh (.) they do appreciate me or not but it will be (1.0) I don't know it will (.) for me (.) it doesn't really affect me >me I'm not affected by the thing< but I feel sorry for them .hhh it's .hhh rather m: (1.0) humiliating not for me but for them that they act like that it's it's stupid." T redefines the whole relation or relational pair and gains a superior moral position by assessing the action as "stupid" and "incomprehensible." To sum up, T refuses to be categorized in racist terms and evaluated as a part of an asymmetrical relational pair, "murzynka" vs. "the white person" which implies culturally available collections and pair attributes of inferior vs. superior.

In conclusion, those two categories of older, rational people and younger, "stupid" racist ones are contrasted as umbrella terms coming from the same ethnic collectivity of Poles as well as from an age collection and an implied family one (young people vs. older ones). In both categorizations, done by C and T, those categories are related to one another and they constitute Sack's relational,

asymmetrical pair. In T's example it is a pair of a parent or a grandfather and a child (a son and probably a grandson).

### Conclusions

Negative ethnic categorizations are realized as dispreferred or problematic actions and produced very carefully and possibly with greater mitigation hedges than regular dispreferred actions, as they may describe present interaction participants. Thus the reference of such descriptions needs to be negotiated or specified in the course of the interaction.

The racist activity and racist victim descriptions, when correlated with an ethnic category, constitute relational pair: "murzynka" v. a "white person," which is a culturally asymmetrical pair. Interactants such as S negotiate or contest it and try to modify the descriptions by changing the pair into a more symmetrical or less ethnic bound one, into an insiders vs. strangers relational pair.

Interactants such as T distance themselves from being a victim of a racist action or being described by the category term "murzynka" by contesting a victim attribute in "meta actions" or "frames" defining such descriptions as incomprehensible or "stupid" and by refusing to be affected by them.

Accounts and umbrella categorizations are used not "to do unaccounted for prejudice" and to specify more concrete types that those descriptions refer to. In effect, Polish ethnic category regains its open texture status and racist activity is ascribed to a specifically defined type one of the attributes of which is being Polish, however, the racist activity is no longer implied to be constitutive for a Polish collective.

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## Lost Meanings? Some Reflections on Clichés in the Language of American “Born-Again” Christians

My discussion aims at analyzing how certain expressions originally loaded with theological meaning lose that meaning when used (and overused) in non-theological contexts. The meaning shift may be of various kinds: terms and phrases may start serving as names of ritual procedures, or become equivalents of neutral, non-religious terms, or even turn into what seems to be mere platitudes, used for marketing purposes. In all these cases theological meanings are lost and the expressions become hackneyed, hence I propose to refer to them as clichés (cf. Partridge 1978). Examples of such clichés are drawn from recent American Evangelical press and Evangelical web resources. Evangelical Christians stress the importance of conversion, viewed as a momentous experience, tantamount to becoming a Christian, and hence being saved. The moment is marked by professing one’s faith in being saved by Jesus Christ, and is often made publicly. “Accepting Christ as personal Savior” means “new birth,” or being “born-again” (Coleman 1980: 133; Stromberg 1993: 4–6).<sup>1</sup> The phrase “born-again” is of biblical origin: In John 3, Jesus said to Nicodemus the Pharisee: *You must be born again*. The image involves the metaphorical conceptualization of “conversion” in terms of “birth,” where one is as if born into a totally new way of life in embarking upon a certain belief: the belief that Christ is Savior (cf. the cognitive approach to metaphor in Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff & Turner 1989).

The phrase itself has become a catch-phrase describing anyone adhering to the Evangelical movement. An advert analyst James Twitchell, the author of a book on Christian marketing, made the following pertinent remark concerning the usage of this phrase:

Born-again has come to mean any member of a church that uses the term. For instance, at the end of Joel Osteen’s sermons, he says: “If you can pray this: ‘Lord

<sup>1</sup> For an in-depth insider overview of the Evangelical beliefs, see: Burgess 2005: 16–31.

Ambiguity and the Search  
for Meaning:  
English and American Studies  
at the Beginning of the 21st Century

Volume 2: Language and Culture

Edited by

Maria Jodłowiec  
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Jagiellonian University Press