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Construing the Foreigner Identity in Intercultural Interviews

1. Introduction

The main problem of the paper focuses on the relationship between the foreigner identity construction and the mediative competence in intercultural interviews. The concepts of foreignness and identity are analyzed in two main aspects:

- a) in the constructivist conversation analytic perspective as an interactive achievement of interview participants;
- b) as a developmental determinant of the mediative competence in a foreign language (FL), observable as a dynamic discourse construct.

The data used in the research has been collected in the course of the action research and analyzed by means of ethnographically oriented conversation analysis (CA). The study draws on the series of interviews with various foreigners conducted by Polish students learning English at the university course.

1.1. Identity construction in conversation analysis perspective

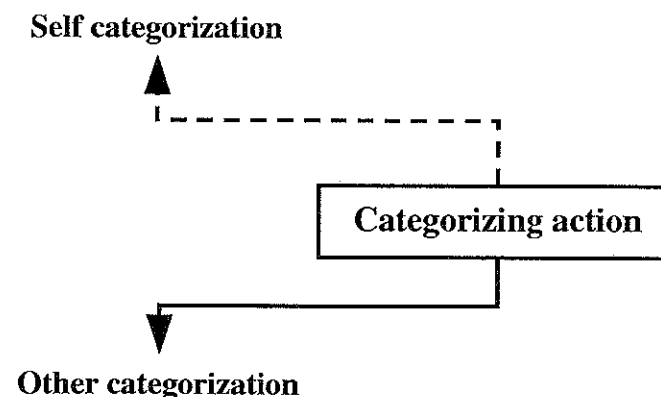
The social category in the conversation analytic perspective is perceived as an interactive and dynamic construct of interaction participants. To observe the process of social identity construction, the notion of membership categorization device (MCD) developed by CA will be used. To emphasize the intentional nature of communication, MCD will be redefined in this paper as a categorizing action. CA interprets social categories on the microlevel of communicative actions and observes them as an interactive achievement i.e. the result of the interaction expanding over a few turns of talk of different speakers (Psathas 143; Sacks 40–48; Silverman 79, 83). MCDs are classifications used to describe persons such as: women, politicians, astronauts, etc. They have category bound predicates, meaning they comprise certain actions (appropriate for a given category to initiate), motifs, obligations, knowledge, competence and characteristic features. The identity construction can be achieved indirectly; for example types of actions (such as asking questions) can classify a person as belonging to a certain category (interviewer) in the understanding of interaction participants. MCDs constitute **culturally available** resources which allow to identify or make reference to other people or to ourselves. Since they are not exclusive, a single individual can belong to a few categories at the same time (Hutchby and Wooffitt 213). MCDs aren't neutral descriptions (Sacks 330); they are **inference rich** since there are strong expectations and conventions associated with them. Namely, we negotiate the interpretations of categories, referring to the conventional knowledge or common social and cultural framework, or to the commonsense expectations associated with social categories such as "mother" and their relations to other categories. However, this reference framework does not determine the meaning of social categories, since MCDs are locally occasioned, locally significant and triggered into relevance then and there. In other words, CA view implies that categories and **representations** concerning the social life or traditional explainers of social action such as "class," "ethnicity" or "values" (Moerman 4–7) assumed to exist *a priori* before a communicative event can be interpreted as consequential for the course of communication and meaning construction by speakers, only if an analysis proves the relevance of those macrocategories for the intersubjectivity reached in the microactions taken during an interaction in the perspective of its participants.

Evidence shows that social category construction is not only a part of the universal discourse structure, but can be a culturally sensitive process, because

different cultures show their characteristic patterns of categorizing. For example in the Greek discourse (Kakava 2002) argumentative discussions are characterized by a more intense role negotiation than in other cultures. Speakers routinely and directly express their critique of other speakers' roles, whereas relations become a common discussion theme.

The diagram presented below sums up the main focus of the observation of the interactional identity construction from the CA perspective:

Diagram 1



Engaging in a social interaction speakers mutually co-construe their social identities. An interaction participant usually identifies himself/herself in reference to other categories (for example, the other interaction participants, the third party person that is somebody absent during the interaction). The categorization of the other person may imply also indirect self categorization. How we talk about other persons, the way we address them indirectly categorizes us. Summing up, the following categorizing actions will be analyzed:

1.
 - a) Self categorization — the way the person identifies herself/himself;
 - b) Other categorization — the way she/he perceives other person's perspective.
2.
 - a) Negotiating the understanding of categorizations;
 - b) The negotiation aimed at modifying or challenging other categorizations.

1.2. The role of interactional identity construction in developing mediative competence

It has been argued (Wilczyńska 2002; Kasper 352–358) that in a FL communication roles and relations and hence social identities tend to be more indeterminate than in an endolingual one. In consequence intercultural communication implies an enhanced continual and conscious identity construction. The construction of identity in a FL has been postulated to be an indispensable part of developing communicative and intercultural competence in a FL.

Successful intercultural communication is directed at gaining intersubjectivity, that is a deeper understanding of mutual social and cultural perspectives, as well as the styles of thinking realized in discourse patterns. However, in contrast to the first language communication, the process takes place in the conditions of greater indeterminacy as far as the meanings of social identities are concerned.

The problem arises, what kind of identity should be construed? Native identity domination can impair communication and the development of our communicative competence in a FL. Assuming a target culture identity can result in the deculturation and dependency on the imitation of FL models, not their real acquisition and personalization. The conclusive proposition would be developing a plurilingual/pluricultural identity (Wilczyńska 2004: 69–79), the hypothesis to be verified empirically in this paper.

It can be thus concluded that successful mediation will be based on construing such multicultural identity in discourse. The dialogical openness can be claimed to be a prerequisite of such identity. The task of this analysis will be to determine empirically what it really means in intercultural communication. What kinds of categorization actions construe such identity and lead to successful mediation?

Current researches in intercultural mediation in FL didactics develop a vision of social mediator as an agent of social cohesion who regulates the functioning of the social bond and contributes to the cohesion of a society in so far as he or she possesses conceptual tools independent of national categories. The main aim of the mediator comes down to expanding meaning (Zarate 231). The underlying assumption in this paper is that the processes of intercultural communication and mediation, as well as developing intercultural competence and intercultural identity, remaining still not a widely researched area, call for

a less assumptive, less deterministic and more phenomenological focus on microactions by which interaction participants negotiate deeper intersubjectivity. The basic and as it seems empirically justified assumption is that mediation is primarily the constructivist communicative process based on the **negotiation of meaning**, not the expanding the already predetermined meanings of social categories.

In conclusion to the discussion the following **research questions** are formulated:

1. How are the foreigner identities negotiated? What types of identity construction become relevant in the intercultural communication and which of them evoke relationship problems?
2. How do specific strategies of negotiating/mediating the foreigner categorizations point to the mediative competence in a FL and a native English language?

The processes claimed to be universal as well as individualized realizations of those patterns are going to be addressed in the analysis. Due to the complexity of the issue and the fact that the research is still in progress, only those so far more explicit results concerning the influence of group and individualized categorizations on mediation will be presented in the paper.

2. Data analysis

The students' task was to conduct the interview with the foreigner. The role of the interviewer allegedly allows one to take over the communicative control and function in the communicatively natural role of the mediator between the audience and interviewees. A possible disadvantage of the format is that students may refer to the traditional models of interviews in which interviewers one-sidedly assume the roles of public representatives. Hence the tendency for group categorizations which evoke troubles as it will be discussed further in the paper.

Tab. 1. General target project format¹

Target communicative format			
Roles/relations	Genre	Discourse type	Content/intentions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewer-interviewee • Intercultural mediator • FL speaker • Native speaker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argumentative, conversational and journalistic negotiative and mediative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore intercultural relations
Target academic task format			
<p>Role: FL Learner and teacher</p> <p>Main learning and teaching/communicative aims from the perspective of developing mediative competence:</p> <p>→ the interview format was chosen to practice and learn discursive and interactional control and thus go away from the classroom discourse based on the traditional, teacher fronted didactic relationship:</p> <p>→ to develop intercultural awareness, intercultural identity and mediative competence</p> <p>→ communicative competence evaluation and self evaluation.</p>			

The format presented above combines two structures assumed to be important in intercultural interactions discussed in the paper. Namely, the general communicative situation determinants such as roles, aims relations, genres etc. and the academic task structure determinants which may influence speakers' communicative orientations. The format is treated as the aim to be reached and construed. Nevertheless, it proposes certain social categories to be potentially more relevant in intercultural communication than other roles, since they were shown to be valid in the institutional discourse and postulated to be important in developing communicative competence. These are the roles of a learner, interviewer and intercultural mediator, as well as national categories. Their empirical validity for intercultural communication will be continually verified in the study.

Two interviews with native English speakers were selected for this analysis, one with GC, British teacher who has lived in Poland for a few years now and the other with E, a newly arrived American medicine student, who at the time of the interview spent about half a year in Poland.

¹ This modified format has been adapted from J. Górecka, A. Nowicka, W. Wilczyńska, B. Wojciechowska. "Specyfika języka mówionego jako przedmiotu doskonalenia na poziomie zaawansowanym. Wymiar społeczny, komunikacyjny i indywidualny."

Excerpt 1² [E's interview]

- 38. AP yeah↑ [so:: do you consider a Polish people
39. E [yeah
40. AP to b[e: (..) ni:::ce ru:::de or
41. [((E clearing his throat))
42. (0.5)
43. AP I don't know
44. (..)
→ 45. E it depends (.) it depends on the individual (.) you can't
46. really [(...) I can't really (.) generalize cause I had
47. AP [mhm
48. E pretty experiences a:nd bad experiences
→ 49. AP mhm (.) so it is a difference between boys and girls or
50. ((E clearing his throat))
51. AP young and older generation (.)
52. E oh definitely

Excerpt 1, line 38, and fragment 2, verse 92, interviewers are deliberately prompting E to collective other-categorizations: "yeah↑ [so:: do you consider a Polish people to be:: (..) ni:::ce ru:::de or." E perceives such actions as problematic, for he precedes his utterances by hesitation signals, verses 49, 50, clearing his throat, making pauses, line 103, skipping his turn and later on he tries to avoid answering the question by producing the cliché statement of the general differences between people, lines 53–54: "it depends (.) it depends on the individual (.) you can't really (...) I can't really (.) generalize cause I had pretty experiences a:nd bad experiences." Such actions are perceived in American conversations as closing the subject, since they are considered to be generally true and not very negotiable ones. They also allow speakers to avoid taking the stance and articulating more personalized evaluations or categorizations (Nowicka 2002). These actions point to GC's unwillingness to group categorizations and the awareness of possible problems they might evoke.

² 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 and <slower> utterance,
/interrupted or discontinued utterance or a sharp cut-off of the prior sound,
= latching between utterances.

Excerpt 2 [E's interview]

90. AP an::d yh::m [(.) what does tolerance means to you (.) do you
91. [(E clearing his throat)
→ 92. AP feel that Polish people are tolerant
→ 93. (2.0)
→ 94. E n::::- (..) that's that's too vague I don't I can't really
95. (.) (knowingly) (..) honestly how do you want me to answer
96. that (..) like (.) to:lerant (..) like in terms of what
97. attitude†
98. (.)
→ 99. AP yeah (..) how did they treat you (xxx)
→ 100. AS how do you yh: (.) how do you feel as a foreigner in Poland
101. how=
102. AP =mhm
103. (1.0)
→ 104. E again it depends on an individual [(.) I mean I had a good
105. AP [mhm
106. E experience and bad experience (for) seven months here most
107. foreigners including me: (..) come from USA (.) and other
108. (.) countries [(.) such as Swe:den (.) Germany: and No:rway
109. [mhm
→ 110. E we all had our (.) you know ups and downs (.) so it just
111. depends on the (.) on the individuals
→ 112. (1.0)

The same orientation gets realized even more directly in excerpt 2, verses 94–97 and 104, 110, E uses **metaevaluating action** to refuse answering questions aimed at collective categorization of Polish, lines 90–92. Metaevaluations are generally the actions assessing the quality of the ongoing discourse, for example evaluating the theme or the types of actions. In this excerpt at this point of the interview, they allow the interaction participant E to change the role from an interviewee to the person controlling discourse. At the same time they are quite direct and show a strong dispreference for collective other-categorizations, they also point to the fact that those yet unarticulated categorizations that would appear in answers might be negative. E displays the awareness that introducing those categorizations may evoke communication troubles and hazard the status quo of the mutual relationship.

In conclusion:

- Collective negative categorizations are perceived as problematic and thus more negotiable than other categorizing actions;
- Metaevaluative actions are used to negotiate the identity and take up the control in interaction.

In the interview with GC a different and meditatively more effective style can be observed. The basic difference between E and GC is that GC manages to

negotiate, and more specifically to individualize group categorizations, while still cooperating with interviewers to reach a deeper intercultural intersubjectivity, understood as the mutual understanding of the negotiated cultural content referring to social categories and relations.

Excerpt 3 [G's interview]

- 1. KJ and as far as your impressions (..) your first impressions
2. (.) .hhh about the .h (..) Polish students are concerned (.)
3. uhm (.) what- (..) what was the most striking difference
4. between the Polish and British students you could observe
5. (1.0) during your career (..) at Polish university
6. (...)
→ 7. GC Ok (..) I uh:: m:: (..) w:: hhhh (..) striking
8. difference
9. (3.0)
10. KN well are [there† there any†
→ 11. GC [no no no there are it's just that I want to make
12. sure [that my answer is (.) sensual and intelligent (.)
13. KN [aha:
14. GC °hhhhhhhhh° so I [so I'm going to so I'm going to I'm going
15. KN [hhhhh
16. GC to (pore: some thing) (..) as my (..) my my acting tea- my
17. acting teacher used to say (.) engage brain before opening
18. mouth
19. (.)
20. MJ hhhahahahahahaha
21. GC hahahahahaha
22. GC (chrzaka) which I've: (hhhh) a- always considered to be a
23. good advice (..) I I think uh uhm
24. (0.5)
25. KN it's a very good advice (.) hhh[hhhh
26. MJ [hhhhhh
→ 27. MJ cause (.) you know when we think about Polish students are:
28. (1.0) they (.) simply (1.0) learn by heart (..) they
29. memorize (.) material (.) they have to memorize (..) and
30. they're not very critical (.) they do not discuss with the
31. teacher (.) they simply memorize
→ 32. GC OK (.) tha- that's not so much a difference (.) of the
33. student [(.) yeah rather a difference of the:: (.) eh:
34. MJ [yeah
→ 35. GC environment and the contexts within which they have to work
36. (...)
37. MJ m[m:
→ 38. GC [the environment and the context of education an- and of
39. schooling in Poland
40. MJ mhm
→ 41. GC eh: eh: (.) still has (.) a lot (.) eh: (..) of remnants
42. from (0.5) basically from the communist system (1.0) .hh eh
43. where there was (.) an authority (0.5) [who WHO (..)
44. MJ [yeah

45. GC ha:- who gave the: perfect interpretation of something and
 46. (.) and your job is just to (ca-xx) learn [by rote to
 47. MJ [mhm
 48. GC memorize that (.) that (0.5) w- what the authority told you
 49. (.) so (.) yes there is much (.) less (.) in the (.) in the (.) sense
 50. of:: .hh (0.5) uh:m: (2.0) the ability to oah- to:: (0.5)
 51. criticize the ability to to e= express opinions ,hh (..)
 52. and to: express those opnions m more coherently than just
 ➔ 53. to say↑ well that's my opinion
 54. (..)
 ➔ 55. KJ aha
 56. GC you know
 57. KJ mhm
 ➔ 58. GC there is a: (...) there is a sense of that however (1.5)
 59. lots of people in England (.) complain that (1.0) eh::
 60. English students (..) don't know any facts (..) now (...)
 61. all they have is opinion
 ➔ 62. GC (1.0)
 63. MJ oh

In lines 1–6 KJ formulates the question evoking the group category of “Polish students.” GC’s orientation to the dispreferred character of KJ’s action is realized by pauses, prolonged hesitation signals combined with time gaining partial repetition of the question, lines 7–8. After KJ’s prompt in line 11, this is followed by a jocular meta evaluative, hedging action. Namely, GC defines what problems he has with KJ’s categorization prompt. Since he applies a jocular tone, he manages to avoid communicative trouble and at the same time he premodifies the ensuing categorization. In the meantime, lines, 27–31, MJ speaking from a group perspective produces a negative other-categorization of Polish students. In lines 32–33, 35, 38–39, GC reformulates this categorization in terms of the evaluation of the system possibly influencing the group behavior. This action redefines the category, which was primarily defined as a stable feature of the group, into a more dynamic process dependent feature of the situational context. In this way GC manages to avoid a negative, collective other categorization and modify the invoked categorization to a less direct and more complex one. At this point it can already be inferred that GC’s aim is the mediation based on problematizing the categories.

Excerpt 4 [G’s interview]

- ➔ 64. KN and uh:m (..) so let’s switch for a (.) for a while to
 65. the politics because (.) [there’s a hard issue nowadays
 66. GC [OK
 67. KN (..) uh:m especially in Po:la:[:nd
 68. GC [aha
 69. KN (..) you know what I mean (..) eh: mean today is the
 70. sixteenth of April (.) .hh in about two weeks we’re going
 71. so Poland is enlarging the European Union (.) [and uh as far
 72. GC [mhm
 73. KN as your (xxxx) probably you have discussed this issue with
 74. your students (.) or [maybe eh:m you might have probably
 75. GC [mhm
 ➔ 76. KN (..) heard eh: about this issue (.) eh: I mean (.) eh::
 77. the British students’ opinion or the Polish students’
 78. opinion and (..) eh: could you please tell us yh:m (1.0)
 79. .hh what do (.) do the Poi- the British students (.) think of
 80. the fact that Poland is eh entering the Euro- European Union
 81. (.)
 ➔ 82. GC aha (hh) (..) yeah uh uh uh the the obvious is that they
 83. probably don’t think about it all:: ehhehehehe .hhh uh:m
 84. that I I I guess the average Polish student would be Poland↑
 85. oh where is that Holland↑ (.) .hh n- no Poland w- what where
 86. is that (.) here isn’t that part of Russia↑ (..) yeah do
 87. they have snow on their boots all the time or somethi-
 88. something like that s-s-so th-the perception of (.) of
 89. Poland I I don’t think is particularly (..) strong (.)
 ➔ 90. MJ oh so so you mean (.) the perception of Poland is quite poor
 91. in Great Britain’
 ➔ 92. GC y-yeah people are (.) (no) not the perception is poor
 93. i-i-it’s just not very strong people aren’t terribly
 94. awa::re of (1.0) the average person doesn’t really (0.5)
 95. think (1.5) [about (...) Poland
 96. KN [yeah
 ➔ 97. GC where- where (..) whereas > you say if if you’re Po:land
 98. England i:s (..) or Britain i::s (1.0) a powerful rich
 99. Western European country
 ➔ 100. KN mhm=
 101. MJ =yeah
 102. GC m: To:ny Blai:r who’s bid- buddies with Geo-rge Bu-sh and
 103. Kw- Kwasniewski who’s trying to hit in there but (.) you
 104. know (..) eh:: he’s very mu::ch (.) you know the: the kind
 105. of °eh° (2.0) not (..) not (has him) you know (.) when
 ➔ 106. you’re in:: Britain (...) sounds horrible °right° real does
 ➔ 107. sound horrible but but yeah Po:land yh w: we would we would
 108. mention Germany we would mention France we’d [mention Italy
 109. MJ
 110. GC Spain (1.0) and only then (1.0) Po:land (.) you know
 111. MJ yeah

112. GC yeah it doesn't really matter .hhh (0.5) Poland would figure
 113. a bit more strongly perhaps in some ways (.) that (..) eh::
 114. as I'm sure you're aware (.) only THE Republic of Ireland
 115. a:nd (..) the UK (0.5) eh: will have no: restrictions at
 116. a:ll on (0.5) eh Polish working there
 117. MJ yeah
 ➔ 118. GC so I mean it's fantastic there for you (.) I'm actually very
 119. happy because (1.0) I've always found it (.) really em-
 120. embarrassing going through the (.) the border (.) to the UK
 121. with lots of Polish people (.) where they have to answer all
 122. these silly que:stions:: (.) about (..) hhh how much eh:
 123. money they've got with them: and they: (.) very often get
 124. turned back at the border and (xxxx) (.) come first of May
 125. second of May I still (.) delighted that Polish people will
 126. be as welcome in the UK as I: (.) 've been in Poland °so°
 127. hurray hallelujah
 128. (0.5)
 ➔ 129. MJ hhh (.) (and do you) (...) I can't stop m (.) myself from
 130. asking you (.) what doe::s (.) an average British man
 131. (...) thi:nk (.) of average (.) Pole:: when (.) he (..)
 132. hears Pole what does he think
 133. (1.5)
 ➔ 134. GC uh yh (.) no you're asking the wrong person (.) I've been
 135. here fo:r too lon:g to tell you what (hh) the average (hh)
 136. English [(..) yeah
 137. MJ [yeah::

In verses 76–80, KJ asks a question again generating the group category of “British students” and their views as a group. Indirectly, she categorizes herself in a quite **polonocentric** perspective in which Polish affairs are in the spotlight. GC answers, lines 82–90, create a dramatized categorization, based on active voicing and parodying of the invoked character's aloud thinking and the colloquial style of the utterance. The aim is to diminish the distance with the interviewers also by a deliberately comic effect. The categorizing action becomes a dialog of two divergent voices and styles. One voice is more conscious, negotiating with a less aware student of some British college. The effect is the **relativization of categories** aimed at construing a more complex, multicultural identity. It is realized by **individualization** of categories and socio-cultural perspectives. In lines 118–127, GC formulates the empathic categorization including the evaluation of possible feelings of a Polish as a foreigner in Britain. This categorizing action tends to embrace the understanding of the other person's emotions from the inside in a situation of a possible intercultural tension. Finally, GC's unwillingness to be categorized as a cultural representative of the nation, excerpt 4, line 134, can be observed. After a pause marking dispreference and a problem with the request denial,

a direct refusal to act as a representative of a group category follows. This also points to the tendency to negotiate problematic identities ascribed by the other party. He reformulates this other-categorization by evaluating it as inappropriate, but he performs this action more interactively and less directly, since he justifies his inability to act as a national representative with a personal reason.

To sum up this part, GC's conducts effective mediation by an intercultural identity construction which explores implicit or understated sociocultural categories implied in the interview and reformulates them into more individualized and more complex ones.

- Movement from collective other-categorization → individualized and more complex other-categorization. Reformulating other categorizations for example: dramatic, parodic voicing;
- Individualization of categories is effective from perspective of the mediation improves mediation;
- Relativizing categories → intercultural identity construction → successful mediation.

In the analysis of excerpt 5, taken from the interview with E, I will aim to show how an interviewee E willingly assumes the role of the national representative and how this leads to mediation problems. Another aim is to explore how student's group self-categorization leads to communicative troubles and a loss of discursive control.

Excerpt 5 [E's interview]

392. ((recording break))
 ➔ 393. AP eh:: (..) what do you think ((clearing her throat))
 394. AS is it yh::m (1.0) would you agree that (.) intolerance may
 395. (.) cause eh: violence and eh: even armed conflicts
 396. AP mhm
 397. AS (as is this)
 398. (1.0)
 ➔ 399. E for example what↑ Poland going into the Union
 400. (2.0)
 ➔ 401. AS no I mean intolerance generally (.) intolerance (.) for
 402. instance yh: towards yh: foreigners
 403. E mhm
 ➔ 404. AS is it possible↑ that it yh: would yh:: cause violence
 405. and even yh:: conflicts
 406. (1.0)
 ➔ 407. E possible↑
 408. (1.0)
 409. AS ehhhh
 410. E hhhhh
 411. AS so yhm (...)

- ➔ 412. AP OK so: (..) you cannot (..) ask this question
- ➔ 413. E °no° I could but (.) I'm [not really sure °uhm°
- 414. AS [why
- 415. AP yeah
- ➔ 416. E I'm just not really sure (..) uh:: the specific of what you
- 417. are asking me (1.0) (xxx)

AS's question in line 394 initiates the problem because for some reason E has troubles with understanding possibly the argumentative aim of the question and its reference to the discussed topic, thus he repeatedly initiates comprehension checks, lines 399 and 407. After a long 2 second pause, indicating a communicative trouble, AS undertakes a trial to reformulate her own question. However, in the second part of the utterance, she repeats almost verbatim her first version of the question. This is perceived as an indirect categorizing action construing E in the role of the communicative trouble maker. Since problems with hearing the message can be excluded, in this situation a paraphrase would be a cooperative action, indicating that the listener's trouble with understanding the message might be caused by the speaker's own utterance not necessarily by listener's unwillingness to comprehend it. Paraphrase is usually a typical action undertaken in comprehension troubles, even used frequently in cases of simple mishearing or not hearing the utterance by the listener.

In line 412, AS initiates another trial to cope with the communicative problem, this time, however, she uses a metaevaluative action, pointing to E as the main communicative trouble maker, who does not want to answer the question. Since she additionally makes a mistake in the word choice, saying "ask" instead of "answer", the misunderstanding and communicative relationship problem increase. E interprets her action as a criticism and reacts with cooperative action showing his readiness to talk and at the same time in line 416 he produces an outward expression of misunderstanding in another metaevaluative action aimed to restore the flow of the interview, saying "I'm just not really sure (...) uh:: the specific of what you are asking me." In lines 418, AP does not negotiate the communicative problem but abruptly starts a new subject. Usually opening and closing of the subject is negotiated and realized in pre-opening and pre-closing sequences. Since E has the reason to think this is the continuation of the theme, this leads to deepening of the misunderstanding, lines 434. This again shows AP orientation to the traditional group role of the student, as controlling communication to a minimal extent.

AS's actions, exacerbating the communicative crisis, can be ascribed to her lack of skills in recognizing possible sources of communicative troubles and negotiating them. However, they mainly reveal AS's identity orientation to

a traditional communicative relation in the classroom communication. AS orients to the traditional student categorization in which a learner is not responsible for the negotiation of meaning with the person perceived as communicatively more competent or perceived as institutionally more entitled to control communication. Such orientation puts a native speaker in the role of an all understanding message recipient, who is perceived as impossible to have comprehension problems. This orientation construes speakers not as interaction-participants negotiating meaning but as recipients and senders of stable and nonnegotiable meanings. That is why the trials to negotiate understanding are realized by almost the same word repetitions not paraphrases. For that reason as well, AS indirectly criticizes E for not fulfilling his role in communication. In consequence, E starts to negotiate understanding more than interviewers and gradually he utterly takes control over the interview, which at the end turns more into a self-discursive monolog than a dialog bound by dialogic coherence or conditional relevance.

Excerpt 6 [E's interview]

- ➔ 418. AP OK and you (..) as far as I know (.) your mother is: (..)
- 419. Greek-Korean†
- 420. E mhm
- 421. AP and your father yh: eh:: Korean
- 422. (..)
- 423. E °mhm°
- ➔ 424. AP an::d yh::m (..) you come from America (.)
- 425. E mhm
- 426. AP an::d [hh you're s- hhh
- ➔ 427. E [°Northern America°
- ➔ 428. AP and you're studying medicine now: (..) and how do you manage
- 429. to bring all those cultures together
- ➔ 430. (1.0)
- ➔ 431. E cultures†
- ➔ 432. AP yeah you know your mother is: (..) eh Greek
- 433. E it's [it's in America it's kinda like (..) it's not like
- 434. AP [ehehehe
- 435. E Polish (where) a Poli[sh is just Polish
- 436. AP [mhm
- 437. AP eheheheh
- 438. E in America
- 439. AP ehehehe
- 440. E in America a lot of (..) there is actually a lot of (1.0)
- 441. mixed kids (.) so it's like for me:: (..) in here (..) I'm
- 442. like exotic (...) [but back home (..) it's it's (.) n- not
- 443. AP [hehehe
- 444. E like no::rml but (.) it's a high::er let's say percentage

445. then (1.0) (in)really a lot of other country (.) because
 446. we're the country where it's (..) it's every other race so
 447. (..) we become (.) more tolerant (..) and we gradually accept
 448. other individuals (..) here it's a little more (..) you know
 449. Polish (tylko) Polish (..) and that's all we notice (.) but
 450. the younger generation (..) I'm noticin' (.) is a little
 451. different (.) than older generation (.) they they're just
 452. more tolerant (1.0) [(or)
 453. AP [mhm
 454. E let's say: just other (1.0) [just foreigners in general
 455. AP [xxxxxxxxx
 456. E foreigners↑ they accept'em (.) almost
 ➔ 457. AP so (.) in other words (.) they con:: (.) consider you to be
 458. normal↑ =
 459. E =yeah
 460. AP yeah↑
 461. E to be
 462. AP that's xxxxxxxx
 ➔ 463. E yeah you know I'm not Polish but [I'm no:rml
 464. AP [ehehehehehehe
 465. E hehehehehe
 466. AS hhhh [hhhh
 467. E [hhh

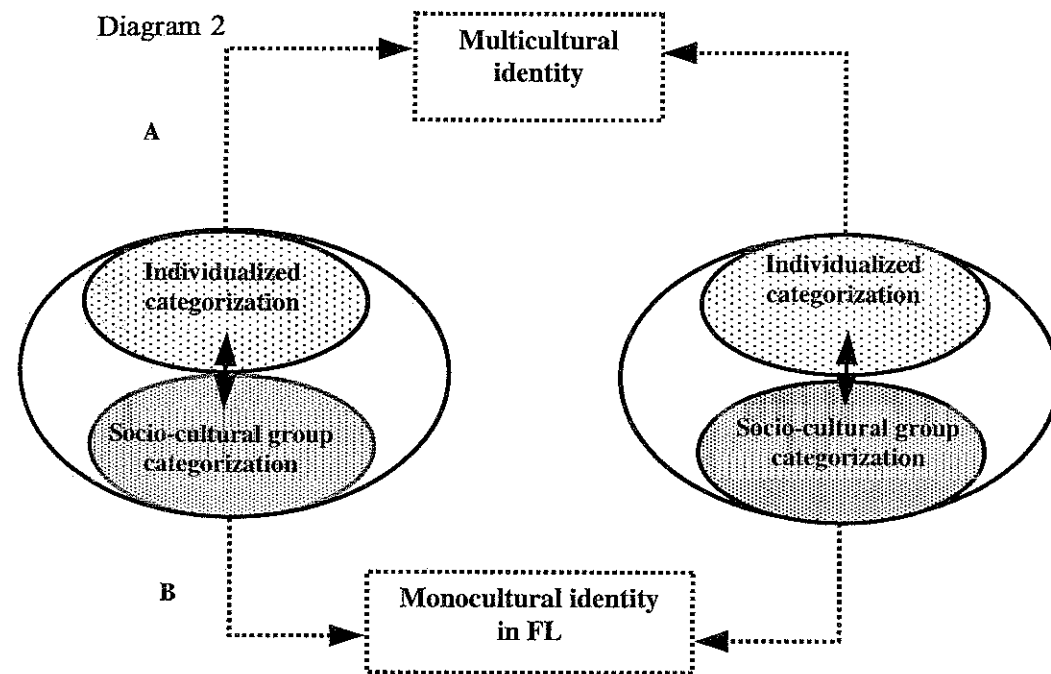
In verses 418–432, AP initiates inductive categorization, asking E for confirmation of each categorization action. In a way her actions seem interactive and cooperative, but ultimately, they are perceived as potentially argumentative, because he does not know the outcome or the aim of those actions. Finally, E finds AP's actions as undermining his identity. AP alludes to E's identity as nontypical in the Polish context, lines 419, 424, and in a quite direct action in verse 428, she indicates there is something problematic with his identity: "and how do you manage to bring all those cultures together." AP's other-categorizations of E sound as unspecifically allusive and negative inference rich, even though such interpretation might run counter to her intentions. AP does not explain clearly what she means by the "mixed cultures identity" notion thus she ascribes a problematic status to her communicative partner's social identity. This in turn causes intercultural relationship problems. Not only does not AP specify her personal understanding of the problem, she also does not repair her categorization in response to E's signals of the lack of understanding and acceptance of such identity construction, lines 407, 431, 412. E actually refrains from the multicultural identity and reformulates it as normal or regular in the US context, lines 441–452, 464.

3. Conclusion

Concluding, the following types of identity construction have been observed to cause problems in the mediation oriented intercultural communication:

- An orientation to a **monocultural** identity and especially to a **group-monocultural** identity;
- An orientation to the collective category of a student in the **traditional didactic relationship** (b is actually a type of a);
- Ascribing** a problematic identity to the communicative partner.

Diagram 2 presented below illustrates the main relationship observed in intercultural interviews between a type of categorization and a kind of cultural identity construction in an interaction. The figure shows two speakers engaged in a dialogic construction of social identities in an interaction, hence the mirror image structure of the drawing. The following tendencies have been observed: as shown in the diagram in a) individualized categorizations tend to lead to a multicultural identity construction and the improvement of intercultural mediation while as shown in the diagram in b) socio-cultural group categorizations result in a monocultural identity construction and tend to hinder the mediation process.



The stronger and yet to be proved hypothesis is that ascribing any type of identity to a partner in intercultural communication is bound to evoke communicative problems. The following mediation oriented types of identity construction have been observed to improve intercultural communication:

- a. Negotiating the ascribed, problematic identity;
- b. Relativizing and individualizing categories;
- c. Interactive other categorization aimed at understanding other person's perspective.

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Constructing Meaning in the Process of Translation

1. Introduction

The idea of constructivism is based on the assumption about subjectivism, limits of human cognition, and inability to determine the ultimate truth. According to constructivists, human mind not only receives but also assigns meaning to our experience through the use of language and cultural experience. Thus, knowledge emerges as a form of psychological representation and does not exist independently of the construing subject.

In my paper I would like to concentrate upon the issue of constructivism in relation to translation process, on the one hand, and reception of translated texts and literary criticism on the other. What links those areas of research is the problem of interpretation and meaning construction.

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