

## **Podcasting and intercultural imagination: Othering and Self-solidifying around *tapas* and *siesta*.**

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### **Introduction**

Over the last two decades, the world has become more pluralistic than ever (Augé, 1994: 127). Links with people from other countries have increased tremendously and virtual or physical hypermobilities (Adams, 1999) have become daily realities (for better or worse) for most people. All these elements are encouraging people to become more and more interested in intercultural communication (Suomela-Salmi & Dervin, 2006: VI). Intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and interculturality are some of the omnipresent buzz-words prevalent in the media, in the educational sphere, in advertising and also in scientific circles. Often understood and theorized in different ways – or not defined at all – intercultural communication has turned into a large ‘culture-shock prevention industry’ (Hannerz 1992: 251) which strives to ensure the smooth functioning of intercultural encounters. Many people and groups (scholars, NGOs, politicians, etc.) endeavor to help people to meet the Other by sharing reflections, recipes and sometimes what Abdallah-Preteuille calls ‘grammars of difference’ (2003: 13).

In this paper, I will examine how culturalists and interculturalists respond to this challenge, by examining a Podcast dedicated to intercultural communication: *Absolutely intercultural*<sup>1</sup>. A podcast is a recent addition to the new breed of technological devices that allow people to regularly post their own shows on the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.absolutely-intercultural.com](http://www.absolutely-intercultural.com), visited on 1.7.2006.

internet for subscribers to download and listen to (Dervin 2006b). *Absolutely Intercultural* was created in March 2006 by two European scholars. The official objective of the podcast is spelled out on the show's web notes: « It won't be so much about passing on information but about starting an intercultural dialogue between the makers and you the contributors and the listeners ». In the first show, the host also offers to 'make [the listener] absolutely intercultural'.

My paper tries to answer the following two questions, with the analysis based on the first episode of the podcast and one comment stemming from the editors' website:

1. How do the podcasters (producers as well as interviewees) talk about Self and the Other in the podcast?
2. What approach to Self and Otherness seems to emerge in the programme?

The structure of my article progresses along the following lines. To justify the analysis of my corpus, the first section explores the current *zeitgeist* of our times by referring to the paradigm of liquidity. This theory was introduced by the British sociologist Bauman (2000) and is central to my investigation. This section elaborates on the various definitions of the concepts of culturality, identification (1.2) and intercultural imagination (1.3). Section 1.3 presents an overview of the two main strands in dealing with intercultural communication in societal and educational terms: *culturalism* and *interculturalism*. In this section, I offer arguments for opting for an interculturalist approach to otherness and self. The remainder of the paper dwells on what a pragmatic analysis of a corpus, such as *Absolutely Intercultural*, can tell us regarding the concepts of *Othering*, *Self-solidifying* and *certainty/uncertainty* in dealing with Otherness.

## **1. Selves and Otherness**

### **1.1 Culturality and identification in liquid times**

The key-terms of *culture* and *identity* often emerge when people talk about or are involved in intercultural communication – whether it be on a day-to-day basis, in the media or ‘scientifically’. In intercultural encounters, most people understand *culture* as ‘shared habits, beliefs and values of a national group’ (Kotter, 1996: 188). To many observers (Dervin 2006a, Abdallah-Preteille, *ibid.*), this brings about a rather too imaginary, homogeneous, limited and *solid* picture of national groups. What is more, it lays down psychological ‘boundaries’ between interlocutors as individuals are perceived to be simple ‘cultural dopes’ (Garfinkel 1967: 67), who only act in such or such manners because they belong to a national group (e.g. in their use of time and space). People are often instructed that they should learn these (pseudo-)national characteristics to be able to communicate with the Other and facilitate encounters. In the early 1980s, Anderson coined the phrase ‘imagined cultures’ to refer to national cultures and stated:

« All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined... imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion » (1991: 4).

The nation-state is in itself a ‘sociopolitical and legal category’, which has neither an ethnic (Inokuchi & Nozaki 2005: 66) nor a homogeneous basis. Thus, it cannot serve as a reference in intercultural communication.

Furthermore, the concepts of *culture* and *identity* should be considered as multidimensional and unfixed, in agreement with Bauman's image of liquidity as a description of the current zeitgeist (*ibid.*). Bauman explains his liquid image in these words (Bauman & Yakimova, 2002):

« One attribute that liquids possess and solids don't, an attribute that makes liquids an apt metaphor for our times, is the fluids' intrinsic inability to hold their shape for long on their own. The 'flow', the defining characteristic of all liquids, means a continuous and irreversible change of mutual position of parts that due to the faintness of inter-molecular bonds can be triggered by even the weakest of stresses »

In liquid times, individuals 'navigate' between countless different and sometimes contradictory, cultures (sexual, generational, professional, educational, the media), groups (cf. *tribes* in Maffesoli (1997)) and witness an excess of complex identities entangled in 'connections' (*branchements*) (Amselle, 2001). As such, one could say that everyone's culture turns into *culturality* - an incessant creation of culture - and everyone's identity into *identification* (Hall & du Gay, 1996). What I call solidification (of the Self and the Other) represents the opposite trend.

## **1.2 Narrating Otherness and the Self: on intercultural imagination**

As we live in a world in which we constantly meet people in either physical or virtual forms, we need to 'identify' (i.e. have the ability to recognize and differentiate), to generate a solid *identity* and enact what I call *intercultural imagination* every time an encounter occurs. In this « complex pastiche of relationships, choices and acts enacted in a variety of parallel and overlapping contexts » (Barney, 2004: 151), positive and/or negative impressions based on

*sclerosed* (fixed) and *heuristic* (changeable) stereotypes<sup>2</sup> of the Other (Guernier 2001, cf. Legros et al. 2006: 107), are multiplied, as it is not possible for us to grasp the complexity and multi-memberships of all the people we meet (Abdallah-Preteuille, *ibid.*). We tend to reduce the Other to mere stereotypes when we talk about them, due to a variety of influential factors: the media, our educational background (e.g. history and foreign language learning lessons), what we have heard from family and friends and from foreigners themselves. In this sense, national identity, which often pops up in intercultural communication, has a ‘discursive *deus ex-machina* flavour’<sup>3</sup>. These reactions are the flip side of the coin of liquid times and will be referred to as ‘Otherizing’.

On the other hand, individuals tend to ‘narrate themselves’ in different (personal, social, societal, international) contexts and with different interlocutors. This is due to the fact that identity and representations of the Self and the Other are obligatorily created through interaction with others and cannot always be predicted (Taylor 1998). In the remainder of my paper I refer to this phenomenon as ‘Self-solidification’. As a consequence, the idea that an individual has an authentic, homogeneous and unified self is pure fantasy (Taylor *ibid.*) because our identification (who we are) is shaped through the superpersonal (i.e. other people) (Ledrut, 1979: 56). In short, intercultural communication leads to solidification of the Other and the

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<sup>2</sup> Cherrington (2002: 574) defines stereotypes as « a view of an individual or a group of people held by others based on commonly held assumptions that may not be the result of direct, personal knowledge of those people ». I emphasize here the fact that stereotypes are not fixed and that they change according to the contexts of communication and the interlocutors.

<sup>3</sup> A good example is to be found in two different interviews (the first one was in French and the other in English) given by the French psychoanalyst of Bulgarian origin Julia Kristeva who changed her discourse about what country she felt she belonged to (France and the USA) from one interview to another (given nearly at the same time). Hence she ‘identified’.

Self as well as to the creation of intercultural imagination through discourse<sup>4</sup>. The next section explores how one tries to overcome these phenomena.

### **1.3. Approaches to Otherness: epistemologising intercultural communication**

Over the past two decades, varied trends have rapidly developed (Infante et al, 1997: 435) in regard to dealing with intercultural communication in the societal, educational and scientific spheres. Basically two trends will be advanced in this section, which will be labeled, culturalist and interculturalist<sup>5</sup>. My understanding of these two concepts corresponds to what Gudykunst and Nishida (1989: 10) define as the *objectivist/ subjectivist* approaches and what Ogay refers to as the *English-speaking vs. French-speaking* approaches (2000: 11). Whilst utilizing Ogay's categorization, it is important to assert that many English-speaking researchers use the interculturalist approach that I am going to describe and vice-versa (ex: Doherty & Singh 2005, Kubota 2001). The reader should bear in mind, therefore, that there is not such a clear-cut division between both these trends.

In order to give an idea of the different epistemologies covered by the two approaches, it is constructive to refer to Abdallah-Preteuille (2001: 138), who tells us that approaching Otherness is often based on the following question: « what do we need to know about the Other or about her/his culture in order to communicate effectively with them? ». This corresponds to what I call the culturalist approach to intercultural communication: culturalists put forward strategies that can help people to communicate better in intercultural terms by providing knowledge (savoirs) about interlocutors' cultures (usually national) (Dervin 2006; Ogay, *ibid.*). Culturalists

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<sup>4</sup> In the subsequent passages, discourse is understood as « [...] a language or system of representation that makes and circulates a set of meanings about a particular topic/subject » (Inokuchi & Nozaki, *ibid.*: 62).

<sup>5</sup> The terminology in the field is quite confusing since scholars seem to attach different meanings to these terms (cf. Taylor 1994: 390).

concentrate solely on inter-individual interaction that tends to lead to *intercultural imagination* - a determinist and essentialist approach to Otherness, which ignores the fact that people belong to different social groups (cf. supra). Even though many culturalists refer to their work as being intercultural<sup>6</sup>, the image that they give of intercultural communication is that of an encounter between two 'static' cultures, encountering rather than that of complex and liquid individuals. In their use of the adjective *intercultural*, the first part of the word appears to mean anything but the creation and co-construction of an interculture (inter-culturality) between interlocutors. Besides, they are sometimes akin to what Keesing (1989) calls « dealers in exotica », or in other words, they try to sell Otherness (cf. Dählen (1997) about the culturalist industry and Rosen (2000) on how Japan is otherized by this industry). In their approach, (national) culture tends to leave individuality and liquidity behind (Winkin 1994).

Returning to Abdallah-Preteceille's above-cited question, a second attitude to intercultural encounters can be summed up with another question posed by the French scholar: « How do individuals use culture – theirs and that of their interlocutors – or, more precisely, how do they use fragments of these cultures in order to communicate? » (*ibid.*). This is what interculturalists try to do by considering the complex nature of individuals and by not imposing onto them fixed identities or cultural features. They attempt to explain and justify the fact that these elements can be used in interaction in order to construct persons and identities (Lorreyte 1989: 263 Maffesoli<sup>7</sup> 1990: 142) within a certain socio-cultural context and over a certain period

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Salo-Lee et al.'s textbook on intercultural communication (1996) which has been used in Finland for over a decade.

<sup>7</sup> Maffesoli argues that because people constantly identify, rather than keep the same identity, contemporary individuals should be referred to as being *persons*. He explains that the Latin origin of the word (*persona*) means masks and symbolizes what individuals experience in their daily liquid lives (*ibid.*).

of time. Interculturalists study how people construct their identity (i.e. how they identify) in different contexts.

Having explained our understanding of contemporary worlds and intercultural communication, the following section examines how the specific Podcast in question deals with the issues of identities, Otherness and Self and how it determines its approach to intercultural communication.

## **2. Analysis: solid intercultural imagination**

### **2.0 Contextualising the corpus**

The corpus used for the following analysis is taken from the Podcast *Absolutely Intercultural* (<http://www.absolutely-intercultural.com/>), which is hosted by two European scholars. The show was created in March 2006 and has been put online every second Friday ever since. For this paper, I am using data from two sources: a transcription of the first show and a comment left by a listener on the website. The first show was predominantly about Spain and its ‘tapas culture’. It took place partly in a studio in Germany and in the Spanish city of León. My corpus is composed of two parts. Firstly, I use a transcription of the first half of the show<sup>8</sup> (the total duration of the show is 16.09 minutes, with the times under scrutiny taking place between : 5.56 minutes and 11.41 minutes) which is comprised of an interview<sup>9</sup> between one of the podcast hosts (referred to as “L” hereafter) and a visitor from Sweden (who is originally from Britain, referred to as “D” hereafter). The interview is centered on the

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<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, a transcription of interaction cannot be absolutely faithful to what is said in oral interaction since it is a semantic interpretation of utterances and ignores what surrounded the act of communication (gestures, mimics, looks, etc.). I am using an orthographic transcription of the podcast which provides indications neither on pronunciation (rhythm, tone, etc.) nor on phonology.

<sup>9</sup> The transcription of the 16 turns is in the appendix.

tapas experience<sup>10</sup> and D's impressions of Spain and Spaniards. Interviews are a very special type of interaction, especially when they are recorded (and people know that they are being recorded). According to Guernier, interviews are a « social game of positioning and symbolic negotiations<sup>11</sup>» (*ibid.*: 3) and therefore cannot be considered as « innocent windows into the participants' interiors » (Bamberg 2004: 365). Boutet (1994: 67) adds that consequently the context of interviews allows a researcher to observe « the social construction of meaning ».

The second part of my corpus is a written comment posted on the podcast website of April 4<sup>th</sup> 2006 by a person (Su<sup>12</sup> from Denmark) interviewed in the show left on the Podcast website on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2006 (Cf. <http://www.absolutely-intercultural.com/?p=3>). In her comments, she recounts several events that happened to her while she was in Spain (cf. appendix 2).

My method of analysis is based on theories of interaction and enunciation (Vion 1992), which will help to shed light on the questions set at the beginning of my paper.

## **2.1 Othering and Self-solidifying discourses:**

The first features that arise from an analysis of both texts are the markers that allow the speaker and writer to take a broad view about whom and what they are basing their thoughts. The first generality marker is the generic 'you' present in several parts of D's interview (Da<sup>13</sup> & Db) and once in Su's comments. This gives an

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<sup>10</sup> Foods are often referred to in intercultural communication because they 'commonly serve as ethnic/cultural indexes' (Inokuchi & Nozaki *ibid.*: 66) and they can be easily used for comparative purposes. They have homogenizing and imaginative functions.

<sup>11</sup> My translation.

<sup>12</sup> Even though not all the speech analysed in this paper is spoken, I will refer to L, D and Su with the word *speakers*.

<sup>13</sup> The codes used in the study are as follows: the first capital letter is the initial of the speaker (L, D or Su). L and D's turns are indicated by a letter (Da to Df & La to Di) and the lines in the transcription by a number (ex: L25, D3). Su's comments are referred to as *Su* only.

impressionistic and imprecise air to their subject matter. The *yous* that D and Su use stand for:

1. **Spaniards, tourists in León, themselves** (*I* in disguise) or **listeners** who might visit Spain. D. makes use of this feature in her first round of answers (Da). It is actually hard to pin down who she is talking about/to.

**D5:** For every bar you go to, you buy a very small drink and you get food

2. **Swedes and Danes** or D's and Su's 'imagined communities'. D uses this in the section following the one cited above (when L9 asked her if tapas bars could be 'imported' to Sweden). Su utilizes this feature at the end of her narrative.

**D10-12:** (...) I doubt it somehow because in the winter it would be impossible because you would have to put on so many clothes to go out and in again and out again that you would hardly have time to have a drink or eat any tapas (...)

**Su:** In Denmark, you would expect breakfast to be served from 6.30 am on weekdays!

In a way, these utterances are premised on the assumption that the individuals in question are representatives of a whole nation, or a whole group, of imaginary people, and they have narrow normative functions (cf. the binary opposition of *us* vs. *them* in many utterances below). Hence, the meanings of these utterances are solid.

A second feature that plays the same role is the use of indefinite pronouns or nouns, which reinforce the vague idea of the people they are talking about. This feature can be found in both D and Su's discourses:

### 1. People

D44-45: people leave work at about 2 o'clock they have started work at 8ish or 9ish coz the streets are full of people at that time of the day

D58: people are rushing about until about 12 o'clock or 1

## 2. Everybody/everyone

D45: 2 o'clock the shops close down and everybody disappears (= Spaniards)

Su: I was totally immersed into the church community and suddenly heard myself sing and pray with everyone in... (= Spaniards in a church)

Finally, one interesting use of *everybody* by D31 reveals the voice of the *doxa* (common beliefs or popular opinions cf. Amossy, in Brès et al. 2005 : 72) regarding what D believes to be a characteristic of the Spanish way of life: the *siesta*. These pre-fabricated words tend to construct an intercultural imagination (representations, self-solidification, stereotypes, etc.) and serve as arguments to manipulate and/or convince. The person who utters 'doxic comments' tries to hide her/his own subjectivity (Kerbrat-Orrechioni, 2002).

D31: This is what everybody has heard about *the Spaniard: (they) close shop in the middle of the day and go to sleep basically and then they can be up late in the evenings and go to tapas bars*. Hum, I had decided that I would cope with this although coming from Sweden

The italicized part of the above utterance is most probably reported discourse (Marnette, 2005: 8) - the voice of the *doxa*, or, in this case, a stereotype. The prosody of the sentence (the quoted speech is followed by a *hum* and a pause before the next utterance) confirms this hypothesis.

The use of articles is also indicative of generalization, 'singularisation' and homogenization. The first episode of the podcast promises to explain how tapas was 'introduced into the Spanish culture' (singular form). On the other hand, D5 talks about 'the tapas experience' (one can think that an experience is subjective and is therefore plural) and 'the Spanish siesta' (D30). Finally, if we take a closer look at the verb tenses, we can note the frequent use of the continuous present (ex: D58: people

are rushing) and the simple present (D5: every bar you go to) in D's utterances. In a way, this is normal if one considers that L's questions lead to these usages (L is not asking about specific experiences, or events but about impressions cf. L7 and L25). By using the simple present, D gives some sort of *a-temporality* to her narratives and discourse, which leads to generality. D uses this tense in the first part of her discourse (Da - basics on tapas), as well as the fourth part (Dd – Spanish lunch) and the fifth part (Df – Spaniards' activities after work). She uses the continuous present for two purposes. Firstly, when she is giving general vivid descriptions based on what she may have witnessed (or have 'imagined'). Thus, she states that 'people are rushing about until about 12 o'clock or 1' and 'they are so busy eating' (which is also an exaggeration cf. *infra*). Secondly, when she applies the action to the people and suggests that it is their natural or normal reaction. The use of the continuous present is also found in L's eighth turn ('they are running around until late at night') and serves the same purpose. All in all, the continuous present allows for a vivid and easily imaginable picture of the scenes. Finally, D also uses the hypothetic conditional, which has a generalizing value (combined with *you*): 'you would have to put on so many clothes to go out and in again and out again that you would hardly have time to have a drink or eat any tapas so it wouldn't work, no'. As for Su, she uses mostly past tenses in the following comment: 'I arrived at the hostel gate where you had to ring a bell, and it took an eternity before a woman I had never seen before (...)'. Unlike D, she is telling stories and does not answer questions, which leads to generalizations.

## **2.2 Exaggerations – playfulness and irony?**

Exaggerations can be linguistically marked in different ways. When one reads the transcript of D's interview and Su's comments, there is a noticeable air of irony and

playfulness in their use of different tropes and speech figures (such as sarcasm, jocularity, rhetorical questions, hyperbole, cf. Colston, H. L., & Keller, S. B. (1998)). The use of hyperbole (exaggeration) ‘has two main goals: to express emotions and to reach a desired self-presentation’ (Gibbs and Colston 2002: 184). In other words, in the context of ‘Otherization’ and ‘identification’, the locutor presents a polished picture of herself and her ‘imagined in-groups’ by differentiating and presenting the other as being exotic and bizarre.

These features are found in all the speakers’ discourse. Firstly, they give imaginary descriptions of scenes and people’s activities through the use of linguistic features, such as quantifiers and modals, which allow playfulness and irony. In the following abstract, D explains the basics of the ‘tapas experience’:

D5-8: the amazing thing about the tapas experience in Leon is that for every bar you go to, you buy a very small drink and you get food to go along with so in fact you don’t need to go to restaurants to eat at all and by the time you move on to the next bar you have walked a full 2 or 3 meters so you’re terribly hungry again

In this example, *very small*, *at all*, *a full* and *terribly* are signs of exaggeration, which emphasize or alter what is being uttered. The use of *so*, *always*, *on and on* and *briefly* in the following passages serve the same purpose when D talks about what Spaniards do (De):

D51: They are so busy eating

D44: It seems to me that lunch is always eaten at home

D50: It goes on and on

D48: Everybody disappears briefly well... briefly they go home apparently and they have a sort of three-course meal with wine and water which takes hours.

Interestingly in this last sentence, *well* and the repetition of *briefly* indicates that what follows is a comment on what has just been said (*everybody disappears briefly*) and could be interpreted as ironical. This is also visible in the descriptions of the events and the people in Su's narratives.

(about a woman):

Su: Looking extremely uninviting

Su: With a very disapproving face

In her case, it is also linked to the choice of words and phrases as in:

It took an eternity before a woman I had never seen before (...)

This is a hyperbole *par excellence*.

Finally, I found two examples of exaggeration in D's utterances that pass as self-irony, or what I call *cultural deus ex machina* or Self-orientalising (Inokuchi & Yoshiko, *ibid.*). The first example is found in her answer to L's question about introducing tapas in Sweden<sup>14</sup> (Db):

D10-13: very difficult question, I doubt it somehow because in the winter it would be impossible because you would have to put on so many clothes to go out and in again and out again that you would hardly have time to have a drink or eat any tapas so it wouldn't work no

The same phenomenon also appears in two of D's utterances about the sleeping habits of Swedes:

D34: coming from Sweden where we get up early and go to bed early...

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<sup>14</sup> In any case, in our globalised world, tapas has probably become as common as a Chinese take-away or Indian food in most countries, including Sweden.

D60: as I said coming from Sweden where we need so much sleep...

The use of the simple present here again gives both sentences a sense of definition. The quantifier *so much* in the second utterance also contributes to the contradiction between *getting up early and going to bed early* and *needing so much sleep*. This confirms that D is exaggerating. In addition, it is a sign of instability in her discourse, as her representations with L as she progresses in her speech are not fixed but changeable, 'constructed' and 'co-constructed' (cf. 1.2).

### 2.3 Word choice and sentence formulation

The manner in which words are used or the way a sentence is formulated or structured can also help to detect Othering and Self-solidifying. The problematic nature of the word *culture* (cf. 1.1.) and its derived forms is the first element of analysis found in all the subjects' discourse:

D20 (talking about her children): married to a Swede have two bicultural...  
three bicultural children

L25-26: Any cultural impression of Spain that you would take home sort of like a souvenir that you take home in your suitcase?

Su (signature at the end of her comment): interculturally yours

They allow us to enter the subjects' understanding of the concept of culture. The first two uses of culture as an adjective (D20 & L25-26) reveal that it is not only seen as something static but also as impressionistic (L says *cultural impression!*). D tells us that her children are *bicultural* (Swedish and British). In this case one would expect the adjective *binational* to be adopted, revealing her notion of culture as essentially national in basis. Finally, after having shown signs of ethnocentrism and the use of stereotypes (and therefore identification), Su's use of *interculturally yours* (at the end

of her comments), shows that her conception of intercultural communication is differential and exotic (or culturalist as I defined it in 1.3), since that is how she dealt with her experiences in Spain.

Secondly, the fact that nations and nationalities are mentioned every now and then also reveals much about the subjects' attitudes to Otherness, Self and intercultural communication. By specifically referring to one's nation or nationality, one is constructing a discourse, whereby one can hide behind these concepts of togetherness (Miller (*ibid.*)).

Su: My Danish meal habits are very different

Su: In Denmark, you would expect breakfast to be served from 6.30 am on weekdays!

D33-34: hum I had decided that I would cope with this although coming from Sweden

For Su, her eating habits are Danish (it's hard to believe that over five million Danes share the same habits). Her comparative approach is made clear when she talks about breakfast. Indeed, the use of an exclamation mark at the end of the utterance strikes a strong chord and could be interpreted as a reproach or a negative comment. Finally, D uses the fact that she is from Sweden as an argument in her self-defence (introduced by the conjunction *although*). In other words, she is telling us that she thought the fact that she lives in Sweden would prevent her from 'adapting' to the Spanish way of life.

The use of other epithets also signals a determinist and stereotyping approach to the Other:

Su (about attending a catholic mass): it was a quite exotic experience.

Su (about the lady at the hostel): Looking extremely uninviting / With a very disapproving face

Su (on tourists - self-irony?): I acted as a stupid foreigner who did not understand one word of Spanish

(at the mass) As an intruding tourist

In these cases, the underlined *subjectemes* (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2002: 94-98) are affective: a person is *uninviting* and has a *disapproving* face and tourists are *intruding* and *stupid* if they do not speak a foreign language. One subjecteme is non-axiologic and gives an idea of pseudo objectivity: a mass is *exotic*. Finally, D reveals extreme stereotyping (and ethnocentrism?) when trying to explain why people no longer seem to take siestas:

D62: is it the climate? or is it just the fact that people have to work harder – even in Spain

The underlined part of the utterance shows D's surprise in comparison with what she might have heard or thought about Spaniards (that Spaniards are not hard-working, see lazy?). The fact that she also refers to the climate reveals another stereotype, which is doxic: people in the South are not as active as people in the north because it is so hot in the former region.

Finally, since any act of communication is a co-construction/co-enunciation<sup>15</sup> (Maingueneau, 1996 : 14), it is interesting to take a closer look at L's questions. L25 compares 'cultural impressions' to 'souvenirs', while L54-55 queries why 'people' in general (i.e. Spaniards) eat and spend time with their 'families' instead of 'go[ing] to bed'. The use of the plural form of the word 'families' once again probably hints at stereotypical attitudes towards Spaniards. The *vox populi* informs us that families are important to them.

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<sup>15</sup> Maingueneau (ibid.) tells us that co-enunciators may be people present during the act of communication or entities which find their way into the co-constructed discourse and which may not be part of the communicational context (ex: the *doxa* and circulated discourses).

### 3.4 Uncertainty in certainty

Our analysis has already demonstrated that most utterances in our corpus are based on subjective generalizations, solidification and imagination rather than on experiences and decentration (i.e. moving away from one's impressions and/or stereotypes<sup>16</sup>). It is also interesting to note that in linguistic terms, they contain many signs of certainty and uncertainty, which reinforce an impressionistic sensation or even a feeling of manipulation. As for certainty, one can note the following remarks in relation to that D's impressions about Spaniards:

D30: I was thoroughly expecting to experience the Spanish siesta for example

D46: I know for a fact that they eat early

These give a very categorical dimension to the utterances. However, the following utterances use linguistic features that 'loosen' the tone of the utterances and give them an imprecise feeling, even though they have the same touch of certainty:

D56: I know that they sort of stop at about 7 o'clock or so

D49: They have a sort of three-course meal with wine and water which take hours I didn't know that

D46-47: They eat what they call a second breakfast at about 11.30

In regard to a tone of marked uncertainty, one can cite, the following utterance:

D48 (about lunch in Spain): they go home apparently

D48 and D46-47 refer to the voice of Otherness (polyphony) by using *apparently, for a fact* and *what they call* (they = Spaniards). In other words, D is saying that she has heard (from a 'witness', a specialist or a Spaniard?) or read about these elements (these are 'testimonial devices'<sup>17</sup> cf. Miller 1946). Using someone else's voice

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<sup>16</sup> It's quite interesting that, at no point in the corpus, the word *stereotype* is actually used.

<sup>17</sup> On D21-22, D tells us that 'at the moment I am involved in some European projects so I get out in about quite a lot around Europe', which gives her 'authority' over questions related to intercultural communication.

guarantees a certain degree of authenticity and authority. Both utterances may also hint at the fact that she has observed some of these facts. The use of *they* (Spaniards) is also noteworthy in these utterances, and is dialectical in nature, as it comments on the in-groups discussed earlier in this paper (cf. D3 and Su: in Denmark, you would expect...). All in all, D and Su pass themselves off as specialists on Spain (their tone is rather categorical), which would have probably had an impact on some of the listeners to the podcast. However, a discourse analysis of their speeches shows that the ideas and arguments that they put forward are very uncertain and therefore probably led to the creation of a sense of intercultural imagination.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have attempted to answer two questions involving the processes of Otherising and Self-solidifying. The discourse on intercultural communication in the Podcast that I have discussed is comparable to Maingueneau's description of textbooks devoted to foreign language learning, which he argues are 'a discourse on the world' (Maingueneau 1979: XIII). However, these books do not correspond to reality and therefore provide hints of the respective writers' conceptions of cultures and identities. Each part of my analysis has been developed to confirm that the *culturalist* approach to Otherness and Self, which gives an essentialist and homogenizing view on these respective concepts, and turns the Other into a *mystery* (cf. L64). Ultimately, the podcast's prologue on not passing on information regarding the Other turns out to be untrue.

The representations of the Other and Self found in the corpus appear to be relatively unstable as we read through the documents. D tries to show how her preconceived ideas about siestas have changed after being in Spain, for example,

which can be considered as decentration or intercultural awareness. Yet, the analysis of the features of interaction and enunciation contained in the corpus displays that her speech remains filled with stereotypes and that a shift occurs in its contents (from beliefs about siestas to long lunch breaks). Her own utterances may, of course, become doxic themselves, since she acts as an 'expert' or witness in the show, and therefore has authority.

The obvious benefits of pragmatic interaction and an enunciative analysis of data concerning intercultural communication, such as *Absolutely Intercultural*, revolve around the way in which one can observe manipulations and the process of solidification produced by intercultural representations. This approach allows a researcher to move away from basic content analysis (which tends to take what people say for granted without taking into account the context of interviews etc.), and to concentrate on the potential manipulations, instabilities and contradictions of utterances, which form the basis of spoken interactions (Cf. de Fina et al., 2006). In other words, it allows people interested in intercultural communication to veer away from a unilateral vision of Self and Other and consequently opens up the possibility 'multipolarised' worlds (Fall 1998).

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## **Appendix**

### **1. Absolutely intercultural – transcription of show 1**

#### **La:**

1. OK we are in the last bar now and as you can hear it's getting louder and louder
2. in the evening
3. I am standing here with somebody from Sweden so I am talking to Dot
4. Dot tell us something about your experience with the tapas

#### **Da:**

5. the amazing thing about the tapas experience in Leon is that for every bar you go to  
6. you buy a very small drink and you get food to go along with so in fact you don't  
7. need to go to restaurants to eat at all and by the time you've moved on to the next  
8. bar you have walked a full 2 or 3 meters so you're terribly hungry again

**Lb:**

9. L: Do you think that this would be a concept which could also work in Sweden?

**Db:**

10. hum very difficult question, I doubt it somehow because in the winter it would be  
11. impossible because you'd have to put on so many clothes to go out and in again  
12. and out again that you would hardly have time to have a drink or eat any tapas so  
13. it wouldn't work no

**Lc:**

14. OK thank you

**Ld (in studio):**

15. well I am sure you're getting hungry right now but we've got more to come but  
16. you'll have to wait I am afraid I asked Dot some more questions about her general  
17. impressions about Spain for Dot who is British but who lives in Sweden Spain is  
18. quite a change from her home as you will hear

**Dc:**

19. I am ... I was born in Britain I moved to Sweden at the age of 24 and have lived  
20. there for more than half my life now married to a Swede have two bicultural...  
21. three bicultural children (laughs) sorry about that hum and at the moment I am  
22. involved in some European projects so I get out in about quite a lot around Europe

**Le:**

23. Waow that sounds interesting now is this your first stay to Spain? You say you're  
24. traveling on these European projects do you have any cultural impressions of  
25. Spain that you will take home sort of like a souvenir that you take home in your  
26. suitcase?

**Dd:**

27. well I would say the souvenir would have to be the tapas bars in the city of León  
28. it's been a wonderful experience in the evenings going around having a glass of  
29. wine and tasting the specialties from the region hum but there are some things that  
30. I wondered about I was thoroughly expecting to experience the Spanish siesta for  
31. example hum this is what everybody has heard about... the Spaniards close shop  
32. in the middle of the day and go to sleep basically and then they can be up late in  
33. the evenings and go to tapas bars hum I had decided that I would cope with this  
34. although coming from Sweden where we get up early and go to bed early I wasn't  
35. sure how I'd cope but I was going to make a good try at it

**Lf:**

36. so what was the experience when u were here in the town? I know I had one  
37. experience which I want to share with you I went out I wanted to collect my

38. washing but this was at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and I realize I couldn't get my  
39. washing at that time because everything was closed so I thought well to kill the  
40. time I go to a restaurant I went to a tapas bar which also had a restaurant at the  
41. back and I was told by the person I could have tapas but of course I couldn't have  
42. anything to eat because of course it was lunchtime so of course I couldn't eat  
43. anything so what was your experience?

**De:**

44. Yes I agree, it seems to me that lunch is always eaten at home people leave work  
45. at about 2 o'clock they have started work at 8ish or 9ish coz' the streets are full of  
46. people at that time of the day then I know for a fact that they eat what they call a  
47. second breakfast at about 11h30 2 o'clock yes the shops close down and  
48. everybody disappears briefly well briefly they go home apparently and they have  
49. a sort of three-course meal with wine and water which takes hours I didn't know  
50. that it goes on and on and on this is when I thought they took the siesta but no  
51. they are so busy eating there isn't time for a siesta there is time to get back to  
52. work again

**Lg:**

53. so do you think in fact this is something that doesn't happen any longer? That  
54. people actually go to bed so people just take time off work to relax to eat well  
55. maybe also to be with their families?

**Df:**

56. I suspect that this is true now I know that they sort of stop at about 7 o'clock or so  
57. and gives the kids a snack if they have children at home and then it's on with the  
58. evening and the tapas rounds again and people are rushing about until 12 o'clock  
59. or 1 at night so it seems to me that they sleep on average 5 or 6 hours a night and I  
60. really don't know why this is specially as I said coming from Sweden where we  
61. need so much sleep I don't know what it is got to do with? Is it the climate? Or is  
62. it just the fact that people having to work harder even in Spain

**Lh:**

63. Ok so you've been here for a week so apparently it's not enough to find out about  
64. this mystery when the Spanish actually get their sleep I have the same impression  
65. actually, I have the impression that they are always on their feet, they are very  
66. busy, they are always running around until late at night I have a feeling that  
67. maybe we are seeing different people in the morning from the people in the  
68. evening so maybe it is not the same group of people but we'll carry on trying to  
69. find out

**Li (in studio):**

70. So now it's over to you the listeners maybe you have made your own experiences  
71. with the Spanish siesta and can help us solve the mystery: how do the Spanish  
72. people actually survive with so little sleep we ask ourselves? (...)

2. Comment by Su (website)

Such fun to hear these recordings after a while back home. I'm part of this course and was indeed a bit hungry now and then when in Spain - especially on those days I had on my own. My Danish meal habits are very different, regarding the hours as well as the food. Tapas was fun, but also surprising and for an everyday meal, it would not do for me. And I had a very fun and puzzling experience on a very rainy Sunday afternoon when I came back from the Musac museum of modern art (where they close between 3 and 4 in the afternoon). I arrived at the hostel gate where you had to ring a bell, and it took an eternity before a woman I had never seen at the reception before, turned up, looking extremely uninviting, only opening the door a little bit. letting me know that I could not get in! I acted as a stupid foreigner who did not understand one word of Spanish (which is not absolutely true although you should not ask me to say anything with more than just three words in a sentence, and I might not get the answer anyway). At the moment I did not dig what was her problem, and I forced my way through the door, and then she approached the counter, trying to convince me at least I could not get my room key no. 28. Indeed the glass cupboard was locked. I insisted, and finally she gave up and handed me the key with a very disapproving face. Perhaps she was just recovering from the late midnight mass in the church that I had attended as an intruding tourist with two friends the night before, none of us being completely sober after a very successful tapas bar visit with more solid food than usual. As an absolutely non catholic brought up as an atheist and only occasionally attending a protestant service for a wedding or a funeral, it was a quite exotic experience. I was totally immersed into the church community and suddenly heard myself sing and pray with everyone in a Spanish language that I do not otherwise speak. And, at the breakfast room on Monday morning at 8am, nobody was present to serve me as usual, and my travel mates had left - so at last I had to help myself directly from the kitchen regions! Probably the kitchen staff does not start very early. In Denmark, you would expect breakfast to be served from 6.30 am on weekdays!

interculturally yours, Sus

PS The spiced and grilled wild mushroom tapas were the most delicious of all of them!