Politics of Identification in the Use of Lingua Francas in Student Mobility
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Introduction

This chapter deals with language and identity in student mobility by exploring the use of English and French as lingua francas in the daily life of mobile students in Finland and France. The issue of English as Lingua Franca (ELF hereafter) has an increasing presence in the field of applied linguistics (House, 2002; Siedholfer, 2004; Firth, 2009; Mauranen & Hynninen, 2010; etc.), which has been ‘officialised’ by the yearly organization of the International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca (Helsinki, Southampton, Vienna and Hong Kong in 2010) and the release of two large international corpora (Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English – VOICE - and the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings – ELFA). Research on French as a Lingua Franca (FLE hereafter), on the other hand, is in its embryonic state (cf. Yun & Demaizière, 2008; Dervin, 2009; Johansson & Dervin, 2010; Dervin & Vlad, 2010).

Though there are many studies on identity and language (ex: Polanyi, 1995; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Llamas & Watt, 2009), research on lingua francas has hardly tackled the theme of identity, having worked mostly on the effectiveness of ELF use (e.g. in the academia), language policy/planning and the description of language forms and functions (cf. e.g. Mauranen & Ranta, 2009). If we consider the context of European academic mobility, the studies on the use of lingua francas are also limited to these topics (cf. Shaw et al., 2009; Cogo, 2008; Kalocsaí, 2009 for ELF; and Behrent, 2007 for FLF).

The few studies on identity and LF use are related to the context of formal language learning and teaching (ex.: Jenkins, 2007; Prodromou, 2009; Baker, 2009; Firth, 2009). Dervin (2009) and Virkkula & Nikula (2011) are, to my knowledge, the only researchers to have worked on them in the context of student mobility. For Virkkula & Nikula (2011: 256), who have examined the use of ELF by Finnish trainees abroad, “this is perhaps because ELF has been perceived as serving very practical purposes of information transfer rather than featuring strongly in identity construction”. But this perception doesn’t do justice to the ‘identity game’ in the use of lingua francas (LF): as such whenever two individuals interact, there cannot but be identification (A.-Pretceille, 2006; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000), be it in a 1st, 2nd, 3rd…/ foreign language or a lingua franca.

In this chapter, I follow the anthropologist K.P. Ewing’s proposition that (1990: 251): “in all cultures people can be observed to project multiple, inconsistent self-representations that are context-dependent and may shift rapidly. At any particular moment a person usually experiences his or her articulated self as a symbolic, timeless whole, but this self may quickly be displaced by another, quite different ‘self’, which is based on a different definition of the situation”. Her words summarize well poststructuralist, postmodern or constructionist understandings of identity, whose principles I try to apply here. Inspired by Z. Bauman’s insight into identity, which he divides into “solid”-modernist and “liquid”-postmodern (2004), identity is understood in this chapter as acts of co-construction which take place between ‘complex’ individuals, who ‘do’ identity together in an ongoing transformative process in specific contexts of interaction – for better or for worse, in a
non-free floating but sometimes programmatic manner (cf. Piller, 2000; Dervin, 2008b; Kramsch, 2011).

1. Representations of Lingua Francas in Study Abroad

My understanding of representations in this chapter is derived from social psychology and, amongst others, the work of S. Jovchelovitch (2006). For the researcher (ibid.: 11), “the reality of the human world is in its entirety made of representation: in fact there is no sense of reality for our human world without the work of representation”. This is why when one works on e.g. a language (lingua francas here), one cannot claim to try to find a “reality”, a single “entity” summarizing identity at work because what people say about languages cannot but be the result of representations, of “the interrelations between self, other and the object-world” (ibid.).

The concept of lingua franca, though it has stabilized recently, is sometimes used interchangeably with other expressions such as interalloglot language (Behrent, 2007), vehicular language, International language, artificial language and even “langue de traite” (Renaud, 2001; for a discussion of these terms, cf. Dervin 2010). In this chapter, I concentrate on the use of “invisible”, supranational and intercultural lingua francas (Dervin, 2009), in opposition to official, political and traditional lingua francas (cf. Calvet, 1985; Renaud, 2001; Wright, 2007). Lingua Francas are thus understood here as “ unofficial contact languages”, which speakers do not share as a first language but as a 2nd/3rd/4th… language. Speakers can be geographically from near or far. Besides, LFs can be spoken in any sort of space: the country of ‘origins’, the ‘target’ country, over the Internet (e.g. via social media), etc. Let us note also that the question of Lingua Francas is often related to the classical issue of the native/non-native speaker and has allowed questioning this dichotomy further in applied linguistics (Seidhofer, 2001, 2005; Knapp & Meierchord, 2002; Dervin 2009; Berns et al., 2009; Mauranen & Hynninen, 2009).

Research on representations and the “doxa” (commonsense) attached to lingua franca use started to emerge in English-speaking research in the early 2000s, especially for English as a Lingua Franca (Jenkins, 2007). These studies emphasise negative perceptions and attitudes towards ELF, especially because of its hybrid and unstable nature: it is often characterized by language mélange (or mixing) and non-standard use of language. Results also show that ELF speakers have a strong preference for native speakers of the language (Jenkins, ibid.). Most of the studies have examined the context of formal language learning and teaching by surveying teachers and learners. Professional, personal and casual contexts are rarely at the centre of studies on representations of LFs.

While English as a Lingua Franca has been studied from many different perspectives since the early 2000s, French as a Lingua Franca still needs to be explored. Behrent (2007) is the only researcher, besides my own studies, who, to my knowledge, has done some systematic work on speakers of FLF, especially in the context of academic mobility. Based on a corpus of interviews and recorded daily situations at the Cité Universitaire Internationale in Paris France, what the researcher has to say about their use of FLF can be summarized as follows – note that these elements can be generalized in a way to any lingua franca user:

- FLF not being a 1st language, the students’ language skills are rather heterogeneous – which means that even though they are “non-native” speakers, there is still potential hierarchy between them (cf. Jenkins, 2007: 201 for ELF);
- recourse to other languages in FLF is common: code-switching or mixing are often present in FLF interaction.

In terms of representations:
- the students know that they don’t know;
- they have a need/wish to improve language skills or not;
- many students have suspicions towards FLF speakers in terms of skills and they often use “discursive technology tools” such as grammar books, dictionaries, etc. (Paveau, 2006) to ‘check errors’;
- as a consequence Behrent identifies a clear sense of “fetishism of the norm” (Fenoglio, 1996) in the students’ discourse.

Behrent has concentrated on describing the forms and use of French as a Lingua Franca but not really looked into the issue of identity. I feel that, just like ELF, its use is potentially very interesting to study self-images and identification. Pellegrino Aveni (2005: 6), who has worked extensively on identity and language use in study abroad tells us that: “language plays a fundamental role in the development, manipulation and expression of the self”. When we think of lingua franca use this has some interesting consequences as when people interact in a lingua franca, they are, in a way, “in-between” languages, “cultures”, spaces, etc. As such frames of reference become marginalized, see “fuzzy”. For instance when we think of FLF, what are its ‘cultural’ boundaries? France? French speaking countries? Official French speaking countries? Etc. The same can be said about ELF or any other FL for that matter. It is easy to see how this can lead to extremely unstable identification and how mechanisms of creating the self can be enhanced, diminished but also threatened, protected... This is precisely what this chapter is interested in: how do mobile students present and construct themselves as LF users? What does it reveal about their attitudes towards LFs in student mobility?

2. Researching identification

In the early 2000s, inspired by socioconstructivism, Ingrid Piller (2000) suggested a change in the way scholars analyse intercultural communication, which she defines as follows: “Just as research on language and gender has moved away from a focus on difference ("women’s language vs. men’s language") to an interest in the social construction of a gendered identity (…), I am suggesting that a social construction approach would also offer new insights in the field of intercultural communication. Instead of asking how Germans and Americans, for instance, use different communication styles, it might be much more useful to ask how cultural and national identity is ‘done,’ i.e. how it is constructed in ongoing interactions”. The term identification translates this processual understanding of identity. Bauman’s liquid identity is also synonymous, though it is often misunderstood as a “free-floating” element – but it is not: there are many restrictions imposed on identity in interaction (Bauman asserts 2004). The concept of identification has also been suggested to clarify the anti-essentialist approach to identity that has been put forward in research for many decades (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). In order to study identification and at the same time representations, the methods that are often used are: content analysis of documents (questionnaires, interviews, observation-participation), matched-guise technique, folk linguistics, etc. But these methods can be extremely unsatisfactory if they fail to reflect the fact that discourse is unstable, contextual and (co)constructed and thus that identity is in a mode of perpetual co-Construction. Of course this doesn’t mean that identity is “free-floating” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000) and that people can
thus do what they want when they identify, i.e. project an image of the self which will be accepted and simply co-created by others the way we want it to be. For Bauman (2004: 15), identity is “invented rather than discovered”. Thus by examining identity and the representations that people attach to languages, the following principle is followed in this study: “researchers should not pursue to find out what the ‘true’ attitudes of a person or a group of people towards varieties of, for example, English are, in the belief that these can be located as stable entities in their minds” (Kalaja, 1997).

The following analysis is based on two different types of data. First of all I use answers from a questionnaire which was distributed anonymously to exchange students in Finland via the Internet (N = 250). I call this data a macro-level study of identification in ELF, as I am interested here in a general approach to the theme and to make general representations emerge. As such questionnaires have often been questioned as a valid way of collecting data (Gray, 2009: Chapter 3). They are used here not in an exhaustive or statistically oriented manner but to study some representations and thus ‘politics’ of identification (A.-Pretceille, 2003) in relation to LFs in study abroad. In other words, I am not interested in finding some ‘truth’ about the students and LF use (the results will not be presented as such) but in discourses of identification, which cannot but be constructed. The second analytical section derives from an interview with a Finnish student who was on an exchange programme in France. This second type of data will serve as a micro-level analysis of identification and as a case study or as Merriam (1998) puts it a special case which is, amongst others, particularistic, heuristic and inductive, but in no way generalizing. Just as Denzin (2009: 255) suggests, “theory (will) emerge out of data”, i.e. a clarification of processes involved in the emergence of identification (solid and liquid identity) in study abroad.

3. A Macro Approach to ‘Politics’ of Identification in the Use of ELF

Representations of Spoken English

A few words about the Finnish context of study abroad are needed here to clarify some of the elements from the questionnaire presented below. The data is derived from Erasmus students, who are specific types of mobile students in Europe. Based on our previous studies (Dervin, 2008ab, 2011) and other scholars’ (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Tsoukalis, 2008; Ballatore, 2010), it seems that the experiences of Erasmus students in Finland are not exceptional but resemble what most mobile students experience in other European countries: the students find it difficult to meet the ‘locals’ (i.e. Finns) as they are often in ‘segregated’ positions in Finnish society (they have their ‘own’ district in student villages, Finnish institutions create special courses in English for the students, etc.). This often results in the students forming special “cocoon communities” (Dervin & Korpela, forth.) with other foreign students. This always creates a general feeling of tiredness of being “parked” together and disappointment of not “living a Finnish life”. I have explained elsewhere the imaginaries contained in these arguments (Dervin, 2008b). As a consequence of this specific context, the students are often led to use English as a Lingua Franca with each other. They also use their own first language – depending of course on the ‘availability’ of co-‘nationals’. For many students, learning or improving their English is actually one of the reasons why they choose to study in Finland. In fact if we look at the statistics provided by Finnish institutions, it is clear that the majority of
exchange students are non-native speakers of English: e.g. in 2007 there were 1241 students from Germany, 1020 from France, 815 from Spain and 500 from Poland versus 235 from the UK, 36 from Ireland and 246 from the USA.

In the questionnaires, the students were asked what sort of English they felt they spoke in Finland. The question was formulated in such a way that the plurality of Englishes is emphasized. It is interesting to note that one student reacted strongly to this question by answering: “What sorts of English are there? Strange question!”, showing his belief in the “unicity” of the English language.

Amongst the types of English which were described by the participants, I found what I call Solid Englishes, or forms of canonical – yet imagined – English attached to a specific space (without making any social, regional, “foreign” distinctions):

British English mostly. I did Cambridge Certificate I spent one year in Britain so i speak british English Native speaker-level with a strong British accent I’m speaking American-English coz I was in the US during high school

For the participants, having had physical, relational or institutional experiences in these countries serve as authorities to define their English as solid.

Contrary to the Englishes described above, altered versions of the language are also mentioned by the participants. These appear as deteriorated, less good and less valuable. They also often mark an identity metamorphosis for the speakers, who start speaking another form of English. The first form is internationalized English, which is based on negative descriptions and whose characteristics are mixing but also incorrectness (i.e. it is the ‘norm’):

International broken English

easy for everyone to understand easy structures and words being used with some systematic mistakes my pronunciation isn’t really good and I don’t know many words

Erasmus English

we have even joke –that we have Erasmus English –English with many mistakes I call it Erasmus English : ) In my opinion it’s limited to a certain amount of words (as there’s not much native speakers to improve your vocabulary while speaking) It can be poor English sometimes Erasmus English, with my German accent, without getting better, the same vocabularies, grammar is not correct

European English

It contains a lot of mistakes, especially in grammar and the usage of some kinds of words and phrases, e.g. sayings which one directly translated from the respective language Globish which is defined as a simplified English spoken in the international community

The use of evaluative words such as easy, systematic mistakes, bad pronunciation… confirms a rather negative view of these forms of English.

It is clear in what follows that English as a Lingua Franca also means having become “an Other” – which alters the students’ identity in this language. English is:

Slower

I need to speak slow to be in synch with Finns

Basic

I use fewer idioms and simpler grammatical constructions

I try to use unambiguous international English

It has become Finnish
My English sounds Finnish now adapted to the Finnish pronunciation

English is even described as “deteriorated” by some students, especially because of the negative influence of the others:

*My English got* a bit worse since most other people exchange students aren’t native speakers and therefore make quite a lot of mistakes which you eventually get used to and adopt I used to speak good English until I landed in Finland I have to slow down and speak in a way that people understand that means no grammar, just broken words

*When I talked to other exchange students I did recognize how my English became worse, because I adjusted to their style of speaking luckily I had the chance to speak with native speakers* English that I speak is quite familiar coz I speak to people who are not native speakers I speak not a good English because I usually speak with foreigners not very good because the problem is that there are too less native speaker so if you are not sure about grammar or words you can’t really ask someone and therefore continue to speak wrong English

For some students, it is evident that they are conscious of these issues and they express clearly the strategies they use to try to avoid what could be labeled as “contamination” – or becoming like the other speakers:

*Correcting in my head the mistakes I hear others make – so that I do not acquire them because you get used to the bad Erasmus English. And also you have to be aware that Finns have an accent and you shouldn’t get it.*

In a few cases, the students’ discourses show that they position their use of English in linguistic duplicity and complexity, which alters the dichotomy of the native/non-native speaker. Through these continua, the students demonstrate that they are aware of the transformative nature of ELF (though in a rather neo-essentialising way: identity is reduced to two aspects only):

- *Informal / formal (depending on with who I speak)*
- *Common English (discos) / special English (at university)*
- *Slang form (with friends) / medical English (at university)*
- *Instrumental English / communication English (shops vs. friends)*
- *Proper English (at university, essays) / simple English (friends / flatmates)*

The proposed dichotomies are context-bound (formal and informal contexts). We can see that the informal is reserved for a far less developed kind of English (simple, communication English). The ‘compartmentalisation’ of English taking place here is also described in relation to interlocutors:

*I have to use simple English to speak for instance with Spanish friends on the other side I can try to be more complicated speaking with native English speakers.*

A few descriptions indicate hybrid/mixed versions between languages (usually the students’ 1st language and other languages), genres, etc.:

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1 These comments are in fact interesting as the students claim that they do not have contacts with Finnish people…
Lithuanian-English / Chinglish / Polish-English, Itanglish...
a funny but helpful mix of ‘MTV-slang’-like English polished up with scientific vocabulary

I speak multilanguage English... why? Because of different accent that depends on who i am speaking to and also because we sometimes add some words in many other languages. It’s not a strict English (esp. About the grammar) it is a kind of slang-globalvillage-language

It is interesting to note that these are the two only excerpts that do not contain negative assessment of ELF.

As a whole, representations of ELF in the questionnaire appear to be quite negative. Most participants seem to be aware of what they report as “the damaging impact” of ELF use on their own skills, and on its hybrid aspect. This confirms results from previous studies on English as a Lingua franca from other contexts of study (Jenkins, 2007; Baumgarten & House, 2010). What emerges also from this macro analysis is the fact that the students seem to be aware of the fact that ELF means having to adapt to speakers – and thus identify differently.

The Others’ English

When the students describe their own English, they cannot not but talk about the others’ language skills as we have already seen in the previous section. One question was specifically about this point. Most of the received comments resemble differentialist categories which have been proposed by e.g. the highly criticised interculturalist Hofstede (McSweeney, 2002), who has classified the world into clear-cut cultural spheres. Of course we need to bear in mind that by asking this question, the results are biased as the students are led directly to position themselves towards the others. Yet the followings give a good indication of how English as Lingua Franca is used to identify others (and thus the self):

Finns are usually assessed positively. The use of adjectives speak for itself (excellent, exceptional, good):

Finns speak English good but they are too shy to accept it

As far as Finns go, I find that generally their English is exceptional I think that Finnish people speak excellent English but their problem is that they don’t believe in their skills easier to understand than native speaker

Two of the above respondents use a somewhat auto/hetero-stereotypical explanation for Finns’ lack of “belief in their skills” – reducing 5 million people’s identity to these words. Sometimes, the ‘locals’ are also described as being slow speakers (cf. supra):

in general I think Finns have a better English than most foreigners concerning the pronunciation and vocabulary

Finns speak slow in general so they speak English slow also

A few students even propose rankings of Finnish speakers of English, which shift the previous categories and ‘complexify’ them:

on the scale of 10 : the academics have grade 8-9 (with some exceptions –it could be either 10 or lower), those in the public institutions have grade 5, those in shops have grade 5. Those who are selling sausages, or strawberries in the summer –they do not need English I would say that younger generations spek it
better than the older ones. I do not know if the ones who sound ‘less Finnish’ (=have more intonation and not that monotonous and using more the article) are simply more talented or if they watched more TV :) 

When they talk about the other exchange students, the respondents also create categories, which reflects perceived Englishes and levels of English, such as: 

Spanish people: mostly bad English; portuguese people: very good English; Italians: bad English; Czek Republic: generally good English; polish people: quite good; Netherlands: very good English; Germans: in the most cases good English, but very often the awful German accent

That depends on the home country of these people. I have the feeling that people from the Netherlands, Belgium and from germany have better language skills than, let’s say, people from Southern Europe or Africa.

The words are simple and do speak for themselves again (good, bad) in the proposed gradation and thus hierarchy between ELF speakers.

People from the participants’ country (France + Italy here) are also often assessed negatively:

As I am French, I am one of the worse English speaker here... As you must know it, French people have so many issues with foreign languages so in a way I have some linguistic complexes hehehe other people knows English better than italians, for sure! But this is a problem of our school plab that only in the last year introduced English also in the primary school.

**Speaking English as a Lingua Franca with people from one’s own country?**

Many students complain about the fact that there are too many ‘representatives’ of their own country in Erasmus communities and that this has many consequences on their language use (Tsoukalis, 2008). The participants were asked if they use ELF with people from their own country. This question is quite revealing of the attitudes and representations that the students have of LF.

**Refusal of the “Same”**

What emerges from the questionnaires confirm the negative attitudes and representations exposed supra. The choice of adjectives to describe speaking English with people from the same country are interesting in this sense: too artificial, useless, bizarre etc. while when they talk about using their 1st language with them the situation then becomes more comfortable, more precise, easier... Often the students assert that their compatriots’ language skills are too limited to allow interaction in ELF. It is fascinating to see that this sort of discourse seems to be shared by people regardless of their country. The only time when it appears acceptable to use ELF is when there are speakers of other languages around them:

when there are some non-Korean around, we only speak English because we think that speaking Korean in front of people who can not understand it is impolite.

The negative attitude to using ELF with compatriots appears to be general but at least
in two cases, the respondents show that in their cases, the question is irrelevant. That is the case of one student from Namibia and another from Spain, whose ‘home’ context urges them to be more plurilingual:

we have about 7 different languages spoken in my home country and some of the namibians I met here do not speak my language, so we speak English

yes I speak english with some Spanish students, because I am from barcelona and I speak catalan, not Spanish, and with them I prefer speak english because it is not very easy for me speak spanish fluently and in this way I will improve my english

**Disappointment with Finnish**

For most students, it is clear that the use of ELF is a positive thing as it allows them to interact with others, as they do not know Finnish or Swedish, the two official languages in Finland.

It feels comfortable Finland does not force me to use Finnish at all I can go everywhere with my English and this is very good it is simply natural to speak English here

Yet some students note the paradoxical situation and the impact it has on their identity:

I am pretty happy. However I should reduce speaking English and put effort to start speaking some Finnish

good and guilty at the same time I should be speaking Finnish since I am also a resident of Finland

The use of the modal “I should” shows that there is an external force (himself? Finland? His friends and family back home? EU discourses on student mobility?) which pressures the student to consider learning Finnish. It is quite interesting actually that some students use adjectives such as “guilty”, “ashamed”, “ignorant”, “sad” and “impolite” to talk about the situation, as if by not learning the language, part of their identity doesn’t correspond to what is expected of them.

I feel a bit guilty I feel as though i should speak their language

I feel a bit ashamed that i have not committed myself to learning the Finnish language more. I really feel like an ignorant foreigner...

would rather try to speak Finnish as I feel it’s rude not to comfortable but rude (when speaking to Finns) because I don’t know much Finnish

A. Phipps (2007: 119) reminds us that, while abroad, people face an important issue as far as learning the local language is concerned: “our own status as good guests is up for grabs (…)”. Yet all the students in the questionnaire who wish to present a positive face to the ‘locals’ by speaking their language report being ‘rebuked’ and answered back in English…
4. A case study: French as a Lingua Franca in Study Abroad

Moving on in our examination of identification and representations of LFs, I would now like to look at an interview with a Finnish university student of French who had studied in Paris as an Erasmus student during 6 months. This section represents a micro-level approach to the issue. The student had been a student of mine during her study time at Turku so we shared a lot of intertextuality on the issues of interculturality, language, etc. which probably had an impact on the data reported below.

A few words about the method

The suggested method for examining identification in relation to LF use here takes into account the writings of e.g. Abdallah-Pretceille, 1986; Holliday, 2010; Jack, 2010; Nynäs & Illman, 2004 on diversity and intercultural communication. The concepts of positioning and repositioning are also central in the approach and will serve the purpose of identifying the gaps and fluctuation in identification (Hermans, 2001) and of detecting unstability/diversities of identities in seemingly stable and homogeneous self-images. The method is based on the central idea of “self-others interdependence” (Markova et al., 2007: 1), which can be reformulated as “self-images = self-other-images” in the sense that there is no self without the other / others, thus no voice without other voices and no sense-making without other sense-makers (Linell, 2009: 36).

The concept of voice is central here. Any discourse is crossed by many and varied voices which construct what is being said and at the same time identification. These voices constitute strategies (cf. Tannen 1989; Vincent & Perrin, 1999; Dervin 2008b) which allow speakers to negotiate, build up and work on their identities during interaction. Voices can be internal (I as a lecturer, I as a neighbour, I as a father...) and/or external i.e. they “refer to people and objects in the environment that are (...) relevant from the perspective of one or more internal positions” (Hermans, 2001: 252). Besides interaction between these voices takes place within conversations: internal positions interact between themselves (I said to myself), internal and external positions together (I told Math), external positions between themselves (Paul said to Henry...), etc. What these voices are made to say and how, contributes to constructing identification.

Ideal-type of the Pro-FLF User

The student under scrutiny is very interesting for our purpose as she represents one of the few students that I have interviewed who is a pro-FLF user. Generally speaking attitudes towards FLF are as negative as what has been reported on ELF in the previous section. Her position might be first explained by the fact that the student appears as very much socially-oriented vs. linguistically-oriented as is shown in the first excerpt:

Je suis d’accord qu’il faut parler avec les Français ou les natifs ou les francophones pour apprendre plus mais c’est pas seulement le côté d’apprentissage pour moi c’est important que dans une conversation je me sens bien moi
She describes her social networks during her stay in Paris as being composed mostly of other exchange students, with whom she shared FLF. She also had a few French acquaintances (with whom she used French), American friends (English + some French?) and a few Finns (Finnish + some French).

**Deficiency in French – competence in FLF?**

During the interview, the student co-constructs with the interviewer a consistent self-image in relation to French. This image appears as principally deficient and she often compares her French Self to others' (natives/non-natives) and to her own ‘English’ self – her competences in English are excellent – to justify her negative perception of her own skills. In the following abstracts she describes her French:

I: Y a des différences entre votre français et celui des francophones natifs?
S: Oui bien sûr y en a
I: Quel aspects?
S: Bon ben je parle pas très bien français ça c’est une différence (laughter)
S: (...) quant à moi je parle pas si bien le français (...) S: (...) Oui la situation est un peu différente en français parce que je parle pas aussi bien (…)
S: **Tous mes amis** ont parlé français **mieux que moi**

Two main voices appear in these excerpts: the self and others (‘all my friends’, which contain an extreme case formulation; Pomerantz, 1986), which allow her to describe and emphasise her identity as a deficient speaker (cf. the constant use of negations and comparatives) and the fact that she cannot reach an ‘ideal self’ in the language, which is represented by her friends.

**Deficiency expressed through others**

The interviewee often shows that she feels insecure and that the “French” fail to validate her as a competent user of their language. The latter are represented as very powerful.

Parce que j’ai pas si peur que avec les natifs bien sûr j’ai l’impression que les Français pensent que moi je suis idiot parce que je peux pas parler la langue si bien et avec des non natifs ils comprennent que c’est pas facile

In this excerpt three main voices can be identified: the Self, “the French” and FLF users. It is through the imaginary figure of the ‘French’ that the student’s Self is diminished and presented as deficient. The ‘French’ are also made to evaluate her in a negative light through a represented discourse: “les Français pensent que je suis idiot”. The voice of other imaginary and generalized figures (FLF users) are used to empathise with her. The choice of the verbs to qualify what the French and other non-native speakers do to her is relevant as to the support or boost she gets from both groups in terms of identification: understanding (FLF users: ils comprennent) vs. judgment (native speakers: ils pensent que).
In the next excerpt, the student uses the same voices to confirm the importance of non-native speakers for her:

Il y a une grande différence à mon avis franchement en France pour moi c’était un soulagement de parler avec les non natifs en français parce que avec les natifs c’est vous savez très lourd et parce qu’ils connaissent très bien la langue et c’est vite et tout ça et avec les non natifs c’est plus facile et moi je peux parler plus ouvertement

FLF users represent relief and ease for the student. She can be “herself” with them and especially be in control of what is occurring and being constructed in interaction. FLF also represents an opportunity for her Self (positive identification) to emerge in French. When she talks about the native speakers, many subjective markers are used (très lourd, c’est vite, soulagement) to express the fact that these ‘forbid’ her from being an image she would probably like to project, that of a legitimate speaker of French.

**Strong identification with FLF users**

During the interview it appears clearly that the student has a preference for the use of FLF. What she has to say about the “natives” gives the impression that she is leading a common battle with other non-natives. She even goes as far as using two metaphors which reflect this: “on était tous comment on pourrait dire en guerre une bataille”. Through the use of the impersonal pronoun on in French, she constructs an imagined collectivity, that of non native speakers, who together with her become fellow fighters. This gives her Self a positive boost.

Furthermore, in this “battle” and ‘identity game’, English is presented as an important “crutch”:

I: Entre non natifs, on ose se corriger?
S: Oui voilà et on peut ajouter des mots en anglais et ça passé aussi avec des Français s’ils peuvent parler anglais bien sûr mais pour moi c’était impratiquant si quelqu’un ne comprend pas un mot d’anglais et je vais rajouter comme RUN quoi?

Four different voices are put on the scene to construct her discourse: on (FLF users/exchange students), some French people, somebody (quelqu’un) as well as an enacted dialogue with a French native. The pronoun on underlines again the importance of the English ‘crutch’ which helps her (“practical”), makes her feel confident and is shown to boost her self. On the other hand, the voice of the ‘French’ is enacted through a represented dialogue: “RUN quoi?”. This French voice represents again an element which threatens her face and doesn’t allow her to be a fully accepted speaker of French. The possibility of using English (the ‘crutch’) means that she can feel more confident when interacting in French.

**Compartimentalised ‘in-groups’**

In her interview, the student presents several groups, as we noted earlier. Each group seems to have a different impact on her Self. In this excerpt, she talks about the use of FLF with her American friends:
À Paris moi j’ai parlé français avec les autres Erasmus ou les autres étrangers presque toujours mais y a une exception c’était les Américains en fait parce qu’on était moi et cinq Américains et moi et dans cette situation ce serait un peu bizarre si on parlait toujours français parce que moi je parle beaucoup meilleur anglais que français et pour eux c’est la langue maternelle.

Two different voices are used here: the Americans’, who impose the use of English to her and lead her to position her English self (dans cette situation ce serait un peu bizarre); the Self, which is presented as stronger when it expresses itself in English. The use of English appears as normal and positive in this context.

As to her Finnish contacts, her discourse is different:

et bien sur avec les Finlandais Finlandaises je parlais finnois à mon avis c’est assez prétentieux si on parle en anglais ou en français avec les autres qui parlent finnois (…) Oui oui parce qu’on a quand même une langue commune et a mon avis c’est c’est assez nul d’utiliser une autre langue mais bien sur si on a des autres qui parlent pas anglais ou finnois on va parler français ou anglais.

Three voices are presented: Finns (her Finnish self) through the use of on to describe another constructed collectivity; her FLF and ELF selves with Finns, which she qualifies negatively (“fake” self: prétentieux, nul). She also mentions the fact that when other foreigners are present, it is fine to use a French self with Finns (cf. results of the first section). All in all different nationalities are attached to different attitudes to LFs and thus different identification.

**FLF vs. ELF**

For the student, and as has been shown earlier, FLF and ELF differ in terms of representations. For Pellegrino-Aveni (2005: 55): “Learners’ sense of Self in social interactions is inextricably linked with the language they use”. This is very true for our student:

(... ) pendant l’automne quand je rencontre des Polonais ou des Russes surtout ça et je parle anglais entre nous je crois que j’ai beaucoup des stéréotypes des … que je pense bien que je sais que c’est pas vrai je pense qu’ils sont plus stupides ou je sais pas quoi parce qu’ils ont un accent de l’est.

This episode is narrated through different voices: the self, which differentiates itself from the Russian and Polish exchange students, but also interestingly replicates the negative evaluation that she presented earlier as what the French thought of her (stupid). She is well aware of this attitude and stereotypes (modalities: je crois que, je sais que…).

The student also expresses her awareness of the fact that the language one speaks impacts on identification and that different skills in different languages will modify the image that one has of people.
mais en français parce que les gens que j’ai rencontrés une Tchèque au moins et un Macédonien ils ont parlé un français très bon et ils étaient tous les deux intelligents et gentils tout ça

In this excerpt, the voices of 2 FLF speakers from Eastern Europe are used to show this change of attitudes. She had the impression that they were ‘stupid’ when they spoke English but when they speak French, they sound ‘intelligent’. Would it be that when she becomes aware of this, the comparison with her ‘double identity’ (competent in English, deficient in French) comforts her in the idea that she can be both ‘stupid’ and ‘intelligent’ depending on the language she speaks.

Conclusion

This chapter was interested in these two questions: how do mobile students present and construct themselves as LF users? What does it reveal about their attitudes towards LFs in this precise context? The central concept of identification, especially in its representational/’political’ aspect was the main emphasis of my analysis.

Let’s go back to what Ewing had to say at the opening of this chapter: “I argue that in all cultures people can be observed to project multiple, inconsistent self-representations that are context-dependent and may shift rapidly”. Did we find some examples of rapidly changing and multiple self-representations in the answers?

For the questionnaires, it is indeed hard to say as a macro-level approach to identity is more static (it was not always possible to check if the students were consistent in the way they talked about ELF). Yet there are clearly differences in how the students describe ELF in student mobility and an indication that ELF modifies the way students identify with others – and thus their self-images.

As far as the interview is concerned, the “pro-FLF use” student appears to be consistent in her opinions about the self and the use of FLF. Her self-images and what she has to say about others are quite stable for French/FLF. Her feelings of security and insecurity are associated to the same groups (natives / non-natives). Besides in the analysis of her interview, we noticed that one group may mean different attitudes to languages, lingua francas, identities and self-images.

But such images are always unstable – even if they appear otherwise in discourse. Once again, according to Ewing (1990: 251): “the person will often be unaware of these shifts and inconsistencies and may experience wholeness and continuity despite their presence”. As such the Finnish student’s representations of FLF are positive but this doesn’t mean that she has a positive attitude towards lingua francas in general, for example when she speaks about ELF, she clearly ‘compartimentalizes’ speakers (Russians/Poles).

There were similarities and differences in the way ELF and FLF were talked about as is reflected in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>ELF</th>
<th>FLF (+ ELF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>‘Fetishism of the norm’</td>
<td>‘Fetishism of the norm’ (for English too)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The students know that they don’t know</td>
<td>The student knows that she doesn’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The students mix languages</td>
<td>The student allows herself to use some English when she speaks FLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The students reject speaking ELF to the “Same”</td>
<td>The student rejects speaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FLF/ELF with the “Same”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differences</th>
<th>The students are aware that they use different types of English (multiple identities)</th>
<th>The student says she is deficient in French but is not really aware of her ‘multiple identities’ in French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The students assess ELF and qualify it in an often negative light</td>
<td>The student is not judgmental towards FLF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The students are ‘suspicious’ towards ELF users and fear becoming like them</td>
<td>The student is critical of French speakers; she forms a common ingroup with FLF users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The student is not judgmental towards FLF</td>
<td>The student is aware of the fact that the use of languages can trigger certain representations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, in terms of research methods, we need to emphasise further the paradoxical role of the interviewer. If discourse/identity is co-constructed, then students can’t be “held responsible” for their discourse. Let us take the following example from another interviewed student to show how the researcher can alter the interviewee’s opinion and thus mitigates her discourse on such issues:

avec les Finlandais vous parliez français?
oui quand on était avec les autres stagiaires et quand on a oublié qu’on aurait pu parler finnois mais quand on était 2 ou 3 là non
ce serait bizarre?
oui c’aurait été bizarre et c’était déjà bizarre quand on a dit une phrase en français quelqu’un est finlandais mais vous ne les connaissiez pas avant?
on
on pourrait parler français alors?
oui peut être on aurait pu parler français mais quand même notre niveau de français c’était pas tellement bien haut mais quand vous parliez avec les autres, c’était pareil?
oui ok oui je comprends l’idée

The discussion on the use of LF in study abroad has an important impact on the issues of preparation and ‘politics’ of identification for study abroad. It asks the question of educating future mobile students for reflecting on lingua franca use and the various misunderstandings that the notions of non-natives vs. natives can trigger.

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