Title: ‘Whatever I am, wherever I am, how does it matter?... why does it matter?’ - egocasting in-between identities

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Abstract: With the contemporary increased physical and virtual hypermobility, the emergence of “in-between identities” and the number of intercultural narratives have increased immensely. This article is one of the first attempts to examine the construction of identities within the context of egocasting (i.e. broadcasting about one’s self) and intercultural in-betweenness through dialogism. Based on a linguistic dialogic and multivoiced approach to identification, we demonstrate how external voices (one’s own and those of others’) contribute to constructing selves and questioning them in episodes from three podcasts related to the topic of migration and identity.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, podcasting, egocasting, external voices, represented discourse, migration
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Introduction

As more people move around the world and settle in foreign countries, the number of intercultural narratives has increased immensely. Though it is not really an innovation in itself, the emergence of “in-between identities” (Bhatia, 2002), i.e. feelings of being dual or multiple with regard to one’s national or ethnic identity, is more and more common in these narratives. This is evidenced by immigrants or members of various diasporas who share their experiences of living abroad in various personal and public spaces: be they through mere telephone calls, e-mails, (un)published autobiographies, interviews in newspapers and magazines, documentaries, films, etc. In our technological worlds, new opportunities for sharing such experiences, including Web 2.0 and Web 3.0, have developed over the last decades. Access to these opportunities depends, of course, on the migrant’s financial means and technological habits. For the researcher, this gives her/him a great opportunity to easily collect “data twenty-four hours a day across the globe” (Joinson, 2005: 21).

This contribution looks at a special case of narrating one’s experiences of mobility and identities through the personal use of podcasting in cyberspace. Podcasting is a form of technology used to supply audio (or video) programs over the Internet. It can be considered as a major contributor to Michel Foucault’s technologies of the self (1988: 18). Foucault (1988: 27) demonstrated in his book Technologies of the self how “(…) by the Hellenistic age, writing prevailed and real dialectic passed to correspondence. Taking care of oneself became linked to constant writing activity. The self is something to write about, a theme or object (subject) of writing activity”. The increase in taking care of oneself in postmodernity through the use of new technologies bears a strong resemblance to the Hellenistic technologies of the self (cf. also Turkle, 1995). References to podcasting, through the phrase egocasting, which refers to broadcasting that is solely centered on presenting, shaping and talking about the self (cf. Allard, 2005), seem to confirm this hypothesis.

For the researcher working on intercultural communication and the construction of national, ethnic and religious identities, personal podcasts are excellent data as they are not ‘created’ or ‘touched’ in any way by the researcher her/himself, as is the case of e.g. interviews, and are therefore ‘authentic’. In order to uncover the specificities of the construction of selves through such technology, the article will attempt to analyse the emergence of positions in discourse, their organization and reorganization, within this specific computer mediated context, through the adoption of a dialogical perspective (Bhaktin, 1979/1986; Marková et al., 2007) and a linguistic-pragmatic adapted version of the theory of Personal Position Repertoire (PPR thereafter), as developed by the psychotherapist Hubert J.M. Hermans (2001a). Episodes from three podcasts related to the topic of migration and identity will be examined. The study therefore belongs to a branch of research that applies the theories of positioning and multivoicedness to intercultural contexts in order to tackle unstable, unfixed and liquid identities (Bauman, 2000) and diversities, which are at the center of contemporary worlds.

1. Positioning and multivoicedness
1.1 On researching the self and identities

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1 The origin of the naming of the technology is unclear. Officially, it combines iPod (the Apple player) and Broadcasting.
In terms of research, the notions of *self* and identity have been the subject of “a veritable discursive explosion in recent years” (Hall, 1996: 1). The way researchers have been looking at them has moved away from solid conceptions or from what Michel Maffesoli has described as the “fantasy of the unicity of the self” (1997). In other words, the existence of a core, objective and immutable self has been challenged by many scholars across disciplines. This is not a new development, given that philosophy, since Ancient Greece and through Socrates, Plato, Heraclitus, had already proposed that the individual is always in the process of becoming. The recent explosion of the conception of self and identities as being fluid, fragmentary and contingent has resulted from the proposition of related terminologies such as, *inter alia*, Protean (Lifton, 1993), saturated (Gergen, 1991), multiple (Rosenberg, 1997) narrated or storied (Sarbin, 1986) and liquid (Bauman, 2001). Our chapter is based on this understanding of the self and identities.

Based on this paradigm, many theories across various scientific fields, such as *social identity theory, optimal distinctiveness theory* (Brewer, 1991), *intersectionality theory* (Collins, 2000) but also the more linguistically orientated *narrative studies* (de Fina et al., 2006), *theories of enunciation* (Marnette, 2005), or *intercultural hermeneutics* (Dahl et al., 2006) can be used in the analysis of the expression, construction and enactment of identity. This paper will explore a linguistic approach to identity.

A review of the research on the topic of identities in this field shows that various approaches are used by researchers (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006) and that numerous terms such as “position”, “role”, “personality”, “category”, “subject” and “agent” are used to as a substitute (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006: 6). Research has been done on most ‘common’ identities such as gender, age, national identities, and migrant identities. Two approaches will be explored in this chapter: we firstly adopt dialogism, which emphasizes that “humans live in the world of others and that their existence, thought and language are thoroughly interdependent with the existence, thought and language of others” (Marková et al, 2007: 1). Secondly, we concentrate on the method based on the organization of personal repertoires of internal and external positions in discourse, as proposed by the Dutch scholar H.J.M. Hermans (2001a). Through the selected approaches, we shall look at the concepts of multivoicedness and positioning. References to French theories of enunciation will also be made, as they are very close to these theories and can act as a tool when attempting to linguistically identify such phenomena.

### 1.2 Positioning

Positioning is a concept which has been widely introduced in narrative studies (Bamberg, 2004) and is defined as “the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (Davies and Harré, np). Inspired by the work of M. Bakhtin, H.J.M. Hermans (2001b: 337) proposed a theory of the *dialogical self* by which to study the self as a fluctuation of positions. According to the therapist, the *I* functions as a process of positioning and repositioning (Hermans, 2004), which is dependent on the presence of others. The current contexts of *hypercommunication* and multiple encounters that are made possible in our society have an impact on positioning as “increasingly we find ourselves in a situation of ‘mediated dialogue’” (Hermans, 2004: 305), whereby individuals’ repertoires of the self are rendered more heterogeneous, hybrid and “subjected to larger ‘position leaps’ than ever in history” (Hermans 2004: 307). In other words, the presentation of the self (selves) varies according to contexts and continuously changes as “one cannot be a self on one’s own” (Taylor, 1989: 36). It is also important to note, along with Talamo & Ligorio

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2 Though some scientific approaches to identity and intercultural communication still configure their research methodologies on an essentialist solid paradigm (cf. Abdallah-Pretceille, 1986 chapter 2).
(2001: 112), that “each person is also carrying his or her own story and his or her multiple selves in the interaction”.

These various positions can be approached from two angles: they are either internal or external (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). Internal positions form the different parts of the self (I as a lecturer, I as a passionate person, I as a neighbour…), while external positions “refer to people and objects in the environment that are (…) relevant from the perspective of one or more internal positions” (Hermans, 2004a: 252). External positions in one’s discourse can therefore be adopted by in-groups, helping to examine selves and operate a disclosure of oneself. It is also through differentiation from out-groups that people identify.

According to Hermans and Dimaggio (2007), various interactive acts can take place between all these positions in discourse: internal positions between themselves (I is talking to I and confronting e.g. two positions, which is the case when dealing with virtual voices or self-talk (Goffman, 1978), e.g. I said to myself…), internal positions can dialogue with external ones (I is arguing with a colleague) and external positions can dialogue together within the I (two individuals’ interaction is enacted in somebody’s else speech). Choosing a self to exploit/explore in interaction is related to a specific situation and the significance of this situation. As such: “playing different identities is then a resource that participants use to give relevance to their argumentations during the discourse in interaction” (Talamo & Ligorio, 2001: 112). Finally, all these positions can vary in their level of identification. It is also important to note that boundaries between internal and external positions can be fuzzy, with some positions, as we will see later, not always being identifiable. In a previous study, Dervin (2007 & 2008) has shown how, in intercultural communication, many unidentifiable internal and external positions cross the interlocutors’ discourse (e.g. by means of the pronoun on in French (which can correspond to the generic and impersonal one, you, they… but also to personal referents in English, free indirect represented speech…). He has demonstrated how these positions allow interlocutors to use various discursive strategies to construct their identities.

Let us now explore the notion of multivoicedness, which is attached to positioning.

1.3 Multivoicedness
1.3.1 Strategic presence of others in discourse

The notion of multivoicedness derives from the works of Michael Bakhtin (1981) and his theory of polyphony, which has inspired numerous theories, such as that of the French linguist Ducrot, the praxemic movement (Montpellier, France), ScaPoline (Scandinavian theory of linguistic polyphony)... According to the Russian author, discourse is filled with an uncountable number of voices: visible entities, which can be easily identified (as in e.g. Paul told me he was happy) and unidentifiable “invisible guests” (Watkins, 1986) (as e.g. the voice of the doxa or common sense, but also “professional jargon, authorities of various circles, sociopolitical ideologies (…)” (Hermans, 2004)4). As such: « The personal voices of other individuals or the collective voices of groups enter the self-space and form positions that agree or disagree with or unite or oppose each other. Along these lines, real, remembered, or imagined voices of friends, allies, strangers, or enemies can become transient or more stabilized positions in the self-space that can open or close itself to the globalizing environment » (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). As various voices are multiplied in postmodernity (technology has a major role to play in this trend - cf. infra), every individual’s voice can be under the influence of many ideas, thoughts, words and sentences from very different and even sometimes contradictory sources (Hermans, 2004: 305). This is why Bhatia (2002: 73) argues that voices and positions can also be conflicting in one’s discourse.

3 Though there’s no guarantee regarding the authenticity of the discourse as it might be altered to fit one’s purpose and/or misinterpreted.
4 Cf. also Paveau, 2006 and her theory of pre-discourse.
1.3.2 Types of represented discourses

The presence of otherness in discourse (others but also one’s own otherness) can be identified through what is usually referred to as reported speech, but which we will label represented discourse (Johansson, 2000: 78) as this term appears to be closer to reality\(^5\) (one never knows if a discourse has really been uttered in a particular way as it is decontextualised). Canonical and non-canonical forms of represented speech are found in the literature. Direct represented speech, whereby someone directly takes somebody’s words and includes them in their own speech by showing boundaries between both discourses (through the use of verbs such as to say, to tell,… and other marks (Moët, 1986: 127) is the most explicit form of dialogism (Verine, 2005: 188). In this type of discourse, at least two speakers are present. On the other hand, Indirect represented speech incorporates the voice of an other into that of the speaker. Pronouns, verbs and deictics from the represented discourse are transferred to the hic et nunc of the speech (Marnette, 2005: 23) and introduced by verba sentiendi. In this sort of represented discourse, one speaker is involved but two enunciators and one unique context of enunciation can be found in this type of discourse.

On top of these two canonical forms of represented discourse, one finds their free forms where the boundary between the speaker’s discourse and the discourse that is integrated is fuzzy and possibly more difficult to identify. Various researchers have also included the following in this kind of discourse: the use of the conditional tense in the media (Dendale, 1992), the use of incises such as “apparently” (Fleishman & Yaguello, 1999), metadiscourse and modalities (Marnette, 2006: 31). Finally, the concept of self-quotation (Rabatel, 2006; Maynard, 1996) or “a quotation by oneself of utterances that are presented in discourse as uttered before by the speaker” (Rabatel, 2006: 81) is increasingly attracting greater attention from linguists.

Several elements have an impact on the apparition of such discourses in interaction. First of all, the genre (i.e. the type of interaction and means of interacting: a letter to a friend, an email, a formal interview…) may lead to various identifiable/unidentifiable voices and positions being introduced in interaction. The context of interaction (at a supermarket or in a meeting…), the power relations that are established between the interlocutors, the identities that interlocutors impose on each other (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 21), their familiarity, emotional and mental states of the interlocutors, what is at stake in the interaction, pre-discourse (or ‘frameworks of knowledge, beliefs and practices’ Paveau, 2007), etc. also play a role in the introduction of voices. This is why positions and multivoicedness are actually co-constructed by the interlocutors and do not just depend on one speaker (Shotter, 1999: 77).

In this paper, we will focus on the canonical forms of represented speech and concentrate on the presence of identifiable and unidentifiable exterior positions. We will nonetheless take self-quotations into consideration as we argue that this type of represented discourse can be categorized as external positions (the speaker ‘dissociates’ themselves as s/he defines her/himself by using her/his own exteriorized voice).

2. Selves and identity

2.1. Previous research on the construction of selves and identity

Research on the expression and construction of identities is an emerging branch in many major scientific fields. Let us start with general studies carried out on new technologies and identification. In 1995, Shirley Turkle published one of the first books about the Internet and the impact of its use on the expression of identities and games of identities. She demonstrated how

\(^5\) Rosier (2005: 17) lists the following neologisms that have been proposed to refer to reported speech: “imported speech, deported speech, evoked discourse, quotational disjunction…”.
users in the 1980s and 90s mixed and played with identities in the use of e-mail and Multi-user domains. Since the early 2000s, research has boomed in psychology (cf. the psychosemiotic approach proposed by Hevem & Vincent, 2004), language learning and teaching (synchronous chats, Thorne, 2003), gender studies (Herring, 1996; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Rellstab, 2007), queer studies (Rak, 2005), etc. Various technologies have been used for collecting corpora: chats, SMS, iTV SMS Chat, videoconferencing, avatars in metaverses, etc. The technology that has attracted researchers the most is blogging.

Though studies on the expression of identities have been the focus of various fields of linguistics (Ewins, 2005; de Fina et al., 2006; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), few researches have devoted themselves to the study of the expression and construction of immigrant identification through new technologies. Our previous study (Dervin & Riikonen, forth.), which examined identification in two genres of podcasts (an academic talk-show and a personal diary) based on discussions on immigration, and Dervin’s study of the construction of self and otherness in a podcast produced by mobile academics, are the only ones based on technologically-produced oral corpora (Dervin, 2007). This makes our study pioneering but can also be seen as a call to use such data for analysis.

2.2. Podcasting: Technical considerations

Podcasting is a technology that allows unlimited personal creations to be posted on the Internet. Anyone can post any of their productions on a website (e.g. iPodder.com or Podcast.net) or a music software platform (e.g. Apple computer’s iTunes, Quicktime or Windows Media Player). Subscribing to a podcast or downloading it entitles users, in theory, to listen to the programs of their choice, when they want, where they want, and how they want. Any digital audio player (mp3 players, USB players, iPods...) or computer (Windows, Linux or Apple) can play podcasts. With very simple technology (e.g. a simple microphone plugged into a computer), podcasters can record “shows” on just about anything: life stories, reviews, conferences, discussion, news... just about anywhere: over the (mobile) phone, on a plane, on the streets... They can be monologues or conversations between different people which have been recorded in different spaces-times. Like radio shows, podcasts can be edited or recorded live and contain various sources: music, recorded speech... by the podcasters or ‘guests’. Podcasts in themselves are not live as they need to be uploaded to a music software platform or website to be downloaded. They are therefore components of asynchronous communication.

Similar to a weblog, but oral in its form, a podcast is usually linked to a website (the podcast’s relational anchor, as it can bring together podcasters and listeners) where listeners can comment on the episodes in writing (by means of a ‘comment’ function), send in documents to the podcaster (either by e-mail or through a website) and send mp3 files to the podcasters who might use them in their own shows. This makes podcasts extremely interactive, contributing to podcasters’ virtually constructed identities as they become showcases of the self. This is why they seem to correspond to the technologies of the self as defined by Foucault (1988: 18): “technologies of the self, (…) permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality”. Rory Ewins (2005: 373), in his analysis of weblogs, expresses what podcasts could potentially be doing to their creators: it is “a form of self-administered therapy, allowing one to work through the issues in one’s life day by day, and can play a significant role in identity formation”.

Another aspect of podcasting is that it can allow its producer(s) to expose themselves to potentially anyone who has an interest in their podcast and who owns the (readily available) technology to listen to their episodes. Like other media, such as television, a podcaster typically is unaware of who listens to his productions (though s/he may have his/her ‘followers’). According
to Hermans & Dimaggio (2007), this novelty is a factor which makes podcasting meaningful in research terms: “The process of globalization implies not only an increase in the number and heterogeneity of addressees and their various cultural backgrounds but also the number and heterogeneity of audiences that are implicitly present in the speech of everyday life”. In a sense, podcasting contributes to the dramatization of both the self and the selves, which in turn become constructions.

Finally, podcasts have different formats, amongst which we have identified the following: monologues (one speaker, either live or edited, improvises, self-reflects or reads a text), monologues accompanied by extra documents (as above plus music, messages sent in by listeners or friends), big brother style podcasts (someone continuously records what they do and say), interviews (two or more speakers in a studio or outdoors), talk-show (like the example one but more professional, with jingles...), etc.

We will now explore the specificities of the dramatization in podcasts. We shall try to demonstrate how the presence of external positions (but also indirectly internal positions) can contribute to acts of self-examination and positioning in three podcasts.

3. Analysis
3.1. About the corpus

Our analysis is based on episodes from three different personal diary-like podcasts: Fusionview⁶, Nik-in-Paris⁷, and Generation 1.5⁸. The three recordings differ from, and are similar to each other, in many ways. All three podcasts are monologues and we chose to analyse them because of their reflective and very personal nature. Let us give some information concerning each podcast to start with. First of all, Nik-in-Paris was recorded live and includes ‘natural’ unedited noises (from ambulances to phone calls). The author even records his podcasts on the street, while shopping, on his way to work… The analysed episode was probably recorded at the podcaster’s home. Fusionview, on the other hand, was edited after the recording. In Fusionview, listeners can hear some editing effects (pauses and scratches) at least twice during the episode. As for Generation 1.5, the show doesn’t include editing noises but does include clear pauses in the podcaster’ speech. The following analysis is based on one entire episode of Fusionview and Generation 1.5, while the episode from Nik-in-Paris is only a short extract which concentrates on the expression of the podcaster’s in-between identification.

The first podcast, Fusionview, was edited by Yang May Ooi who is originally from Malaysia and has lived, studied and worked in Britain most of her life. In the specific episode that we analyse below, she is responding to a message that a Malaysian writer left on her website after listening to her podcast: “this is the first time I am listening to a podcast here I had a culture shock when I heard your voice Is this English sounding voice Young May’? I ask myself. Of course it is why should I be surprised as you have been living in the UK for years it is just when I look at your very Chinese pix I couldn’t reconcile it with the very English accent”. This message triggers an 8.41-minute monologue in which Yang May Ooi discusses what she calls her ‘split personality’ as she feels that she is both English and Malay - which corresponds par excellence to the “in-between” identities that we are concentrating on in this paper.

The second podcast is similar to the first one. Generation 1.5’s episode What tribe am I?, is a 21.58-minute monologue recorded by Yesha, who was born in India and has been living all her life in America, growing up in New York and New Jersey and working later on in San Francisco. The name of the podcast, Generation 1.5, refers to the idea of an immigrant youth who has moved to a new country early in their lives and has evolved between two or more ‘cultures’.

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⁶ www.Fusionview.co.uk
⁷ www.nikinparis.com
⁸ www.podbazaar.com/view/126100789566373927
The analysed episode *What tribe am I?* includes the podcaster’s diary entries from 1976-1994. This podcast thus differs from the other ones in the sense that multivoicedness is more marked than in the others (at least textually). The reason for Yesha’s reflections on her identity is an internet-based discussion that she had had on the meaning of her Indian identity: “in a recent internet conversation, that got a little heated, someone asked me “what does Indian really mean?” when I insisted that I was Indian... I said: “great question”... and he said: “no, really, I wanna know, what does Indian mean to you?”... and I still said: “great question”. I’ve been thinking a lot about that since then...”. In response to this enacted chat-conversation, Yesha presents some extracts from her diary about notable events from the past concerning her identity and self-construction as an Indian living in America. Before reading the entries, Yesha discusses the use of various terms attached to her identity: “one interesting thing I have noticed and heated discussion of the word Indian and Desi, is that Desi is in a diaspora, well, I guess Indian Desi is in a diaspora, really can’t win when it comes to the word Indian because if we use the word Desi to describe ourselves, many people would take umbrage of that and say: “just say what you are, if you’re Indian, say you’re Indian”... however, if I do use the word Indian to describe myself, many Desis from the home country would say: “You’re not Indian, you’re American”... I guess I can’t win... well...”. This reflection is the starting point for her in-between identity construction in the podcast.

The third podcast, Nik-in-Paris, is a diary-like personal podcast (duration: 6.37). In the excerpt, Nik also reacts to a comment left by a listener about his accent in English. Though Nik says he is half-English, half-Brazilian, the listener asserts that Nik sounds French. From there, Nik questions his own identities, his in-betweenness (English, Brazilian, French but also other identities related to places in Britain). The listener’s words are also introduced by Nik, as follows: “Leo writes to me and says by the way I still think that you have a French accent while the British one is still (… )ful”. Nik constantly asks for reactions from his listeners on this issue during the episode (cf. the excerpt from which the title of this article was taken). This podcast differs from the other podcasts as Nik puts forward a range of identities which is not limited to two (in Ooi’s case: Malay and English; Yesha: Indian and American) but includes as many as five (Brazilian, Scottish, French, ‘Cambridgean’, Welsh).

All in all, we see that the three episodes emerge from what others have said and asked the podcasters and serve as answers, that, as we will see later, do not offer clear-cut responses. The inclusion of external positions (be they one’s own voices from the past, the voices of others or unidentifiable voices) and represented speech included in discourse is not innocent, but in fact rather meaningful. What we will be looking at in what follows is the intervention of external positions in the three episodes and the impact that they have on what the speakers are uttering. We take into consideration voices which are identifiable and unidentifiable (or fuzzy) in the three documents. Fuzzy voices are either generic voices or voices that are difficult to specify as they can represent a large group of individuals or an unspecified person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Podcasters</th>
<th>Identifiable External positions</th>
<th>Identifiable External positions</th>
<th>Identifiable External positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nik-in-Paris</td>
<td>-a taxi driver</td>
<td>-Hugh Grant in the film <em>Four Weddings and a Funeral</em></td>
<td>-an aggressive 9-year-old girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang May Ooi</td>
<td>-the guys who picked me up at the airport</td>
<td>-An English girl</td>
<td>-little John, or maybe it’s Tony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yesha</td>
<td>-Bruno (the podcaster’s)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-my anthropology professor</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-my family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 Desi refers to “the homeland” in Hindi and Urdu, i.e. India here. For Cullity (2002: 409), “global desi” is a combination of “how the global and the local, the cosmopolitan and the traditional, modernity and tradition, are all inextricably bound together in a hybrid (…)”.
The table shows that all three corpora include both identifiable and fuzzy external positions. The identification of the voices is, of course, not always straightforward. For example, in May Ooi’s episode, the podcaster enacts a dialogue with “an English girl” that she met when she was a child, but Ooi doesn’t give any details about who the girl really is. Yet, this categorisation is based on the fact that if the voice is referring to one person that the podcaster has tried to specify in one way or another, it is considered as identifiable. In other words, identifiable voices refer to a person who can potentially be reached and identified, such as Nik’s mum and a taxi driver, Ooi’s Malaysian writer and English friends, and Yesha’s anthropology teacher and Madonna. These identifiable voices make the episodes more personal in nature, and can serve as authorities in the construction of identities (again the fact that one chooses an external position to support one’s claims may not be arbitrary). On the other hand, non-identifiable voices, which have been identified in great numbers in the podcasts, tend to be more broad and nonspecific: personal pronouns (you), representatives of countries (The English, South Asians, so-called ‘imagined communities’), generic words (people, nobody, many people) and impersonal markers such as the generic ‘you’ (Ooi and Yesha) and the use of the passive voice (Nik: “What I’m told…”). A selection of the external positions presented in the table will be used for the analysis which follows.

Having now identified positions used in the podcasts, we will examine three principal roles that the external positions play in the speakers’ discourse: imposing identities, contributing to the speaker’s discourse of becoming and to the construction of in-between identities.

3.2 Imposing identities

In all three corpora, we identified a way in which the external positions impose identities on the speakers. All three podcasters had different emotional reactions concerning these imposed identities, generally involving either confusion, acceptance or rejection.

3.2.1 Confusion and multiplicity
In the first excerpt, the imposed identities that Nik presents emerge from his identification based on different accents that he attributes to himself. As previously stated, Nik is binational (Brazil-England), has moved around a lot within Britain and has been living in France for ten years. After defining himself as an *outsider*, Nik lists a series of external positions that contribute to this state:

I always feel a bit of an outsider because for instance *Scotland people would say* I was English because they heard my accent and it sounded English to them it wasn’t definitely Scottish in any case and euh when I was in S... in England I was even more surprised when *people said to me* I had a Scottish accent so in way the accent made me feel different and when I am in France I speak French and *people say* I have an accent I don’t necessarily sound like an English person speaking French *that’s what I am told* but *they can tell* I am not French you know *they say* you have got an accent when you speak so that makes me feel different again

In this excerpt, we can identify various kinds of fuzzy external positions, which have an impact on the description of imposed identities. These positions, or voices, are expressed in the form of indirect represented discourse and are accompanied by various tenses which give them a generic tone: the conditional in *Scotland people would say* I was English; and the present in *people say I have an accent* (i.e. French people). In three cases, the external position *people* refers to imagined national groups (i.e. places where Nik has lived): Scotland, England and France. Generally speaking, an accent can be perceived differently by people who share the same language (native and non-native speakers), depending on the context and the ‘images’ or ‘masks’ that interlocutors put forward or impose on each other. Moreover, as N. Pepin (2007) has demonstrated, accents can serve as discursive ploys in interaction. In his book on French migrants in Switzerland, he has shown how French migrants identify through alternative use of Swiss and French accents. The reason why accents can be interpreted as imposed identities in the podcast is that they have an influence on Nik’s emotions: “*in England I was even more surprised when people said to me I had a Scottish accent so in way the accent made me feel different*”. Nik’s feelings show that he doesn’t really agree with the definitions of his accents (cf. the use of “surprised”, “different”, “outsider”), which makes him feel like a stranger to himself. The imposed nature of these identities comes to the surface in Nik’s discourse through yet another device: the passive form in a different external voice, *that’s what I am told*. This passive form of an external position is a very strong form of imposed identity because it can be said to exclude the speaker’s responsibility and action in deciding upon who s/he is.

Two other excerpts show the strength of Nik’s feelings when people associate him with Frenchness and doubt his Britishness. In order to demonstrate this imposed identity, Nik introduces two identifiable voices in his discourse, *a taxi driver* (accompanied by *or something*) and *the guys who picked me up at the airport* (when he went to a wedding in England a year prior to the recording):

what really shock me is about a year ago I went back to the UK and I think it was *a taxi driver* or something like *they said to me* you know you’ve got... where you from? And I said well I am from the UK but I am living in France and they said I heard... well because I heard your French accent and I thought you are French

and then it happened again when I went back to Coventry just recently for the stag party, *the guys who picked me up at the airport they also said* you know they thought I was French because of my accent so hum it’s kind of weird because it makes me feel as if awww it’s a link with the UK that has been cut off  I don’t know maybe it’s just in my head
With these two voices, the podcaster is defined by blending direct and indirect represented speeches of external and internal positions, whose contents correspond precisely to what the listener who triggered this episode wrote. In the narrative on the taxi driver (note the fuzziness in “it was a taxi driver or something”), Nik enacts a dialogue he had with this person. In representing the dialogue, Nik self-repairs when he introduces the first voice of the taxi driver: “you know you’ve got… where are you from?”. The self-repair could indicate that Nik wishes to insist once again on the fact that he is from the UK and that he lives in France, instead of admitting and/or reintroducing the idea straight away that he has a French accent in English. The second excerpt contains confusion and negative feelings: Nik appears to be shocked and asserts, in a very emotional way, that “it’s a link with the UK that has been cut off”. In other words, external positions, which emphasise his non-Britishness, deprive him of his solid declared ‘identity’.

### 3.2.2 Imposed identities accepted

In Yang May Ooi’s podcast, as many as three voices are inserted, each serving to impose identities: two generic and unidentifiable voices (the English in general and Malaysians who are listening to the podcast) and one identifiable voice (her English friends when they were visiting Malaysia together with her). These voices are linked to both her appearance (she looks ‘Asian’) and her accent (she sounds ‘English’).

In the first unidentifiable position, Ooi explains how English people only see her as Chinese when they first meet her. She says:

> when I am with the English and when I am talking to them they may think when they first see me oh she looks different she is Chinese but then when I start talking they actually seem to forget what I look like and they start to respond to me as if I am just you know who I am and that’s the important thing (…)

The podcaster seems to be aware of this imposed identity and includes a direct represented speech of the imagined ‘English’ to express what they must be thinking when they see her (“oh she looks different she is Chinese”). If we refer back to the comment that triggered this episode, it is easy to see that the same argument was found in the Malaysian writer’s discourse (cf. the ‘Chinese’ face in her comment). So in a way, Ooi is telling the Malaysian writer that even English people get confused by her. Eventually, Ooi explains that, thanks to her voice (she calls it her English voice), this imposed identity (that of being non-English) is reviewed by the English. She explains the change of attitude by saying “they start to respond to me as if I am just you know who I am” while she asserts at the end of the episode that she doesn’t actually know who she is and that she has a split personality. This is the first example of a series of contradictions in the podcasts.

While the English external voice positioned her as Chinese, her native in-group’s voice is also included in the episode, imposing an identity on her: that of a non-Malaysian speaker of English. At one point, she comments on her Malaysian English, as she has been mimicking this type of English several times in the episode, to show her Malaysian side (she says she uses this kind of English with her parents and friends back in Malaysia). She addresses Malaysians who are listening to the episode and says:

> as you have heard I have done the Malaysian accent earlier on in this podcast and I suppose maybe that the Malaysians who are listening to this podcast would say [takes on a Malaysian accent] that’s not a real Malaysian accent in my ear it sounds more Malaysian than English and of course it is not a Malaysian accent of someone who’s
lived in Malaysia all this time but of course it is a Malaysian accent of someone who’s lived in England who remembers back to the time I lived in Malaysia.

In this excerpt, Ooi is dialoguing with her ‘peers’ and defending herself against potential criticisms of her Malay-English accent. Once again, she imagines an utterance that she forces into other people’s minds: “that’s not a real Malaysian accent” and responds to this by dissociating, through the use of someone (internal positions): “it is a Malaysian accent of someone who’s lived in England who remembers back to the time I lived in Malaysia”. Is the criticism something that she has heard before? Is she reusing an external voice from her past experience that questioned her identity?

Finally, May Ooi resorts to the direct and identifiable voice of some her English friends’ during a joint trip to Malaysia. She explains:

they told me afterwards when someone asked where is Yang-May? and one of them said oh she is outside being Malaysian and I have always remembered that because being Malaysian to me meant being out there you know having a good time having a laugh making a lot of noise which when I am in my English persona perhaps I don’t make that much noise perhaps I am quieter perhaps I would be sitting with my English friends having a chat.

In this excerpt, she firstly enacts a dialogue between external positions (cf. ‘someone asked’ and ‘one of them said’). This dialogue allows her to introduce an interpretation and a discussion on what her Malaysian and English ‘personas’ are. The difference between this last imposed identity (‘she is being Malaysian’) and the first two is that Ooi questions the first two (they question who she is or who she thinks she is) while she seems to accept her English friends’ identification.

3.2.3 Calling imposed identities into question and rejecting imposed identities

The third podcaster, Yesha, shares the same duplicity in questioning her “in-betweenness” and presents many voices in the podcast, which can be seen as constructing imposed identities. In what follows, we shall analyse two voices that are potentially identifiable and refer to one specific person. These voices are a little John or maybe Tony and my anthropology professor and they emerge in the second diary entry that she reads. Unlike the excerpts supra, a sense of unfairness and impossibility to defend oneself against the way external positions impose an identity on the podcaster can be felt. The first example dates back to her childhood and school years and deals with religious beliefs:

the teacher tells everyone: “let’s take a minute to pray, I want everyone to close their eyes and pray the God”... I shut my eyes tight, I know about prayer... at my Saturday school I learn the Gita, I learn about the Vedantic philosophy and Swami Vivekananda’s ideals about character building education, so I shut them tight and pray to the God that I haven’t believed in so strongly since... and then the minute is over and little John, or maybe it’s Tony pipes up: “Mrs. Zoeno, why did Yesha close her eyes, she doesn’t believe in God, she’s Indian!”... I don’t remember Mrs. Zoeno having a good answer to him, I don’t think she said anything.

The end of this extract is based on an enacted conversation between two external positions which contribute to imposing an identity on Yesha. The podcaster gives the impression that she had a very passive role in this conversation as she recounts the dialogue as a mere ‘witness’. The last sentence of the excerpt, which goes back to the hic et nunc of the podcast,
serves as a conclusion and shows that Yesha was surprised at her teacher’s reaction as she wasn’t capable of responding to the identity imposed to her as an “Indian who cannot pray God”.

In the second excerpt, Yesha recalls the time when she was older and becoming more aware of her in-between identity. The represented conversation enacted below is based on a discussion between Yesha and her anthropology professor about her cultural conscience:

(...) for the first time I become aware that I’m an American as well as an Indian, until now... I truly have thought of myself as been on the outside, an Indian in America, but my anthropology professor asks me to see him after I write a paper discussing my culture: “this is a good paper, some good insights, but why do you call yourself Indian, you’re American, you grew up here”?, “I thought you had to be white or black to be an American..?”, “no, you’re American”, “but I’m not, I was born there in India”, “Yesha, You’ve lived in this country since you were one, and now you’re eighteen... you’re American, like it or not”, “then why don’t I feel like it?”?, I don’t think I like it, I’m bewildered... but slowly I accept it that maybe, perhaps, I’m American too... a little...

This is a very good example of how other people can influence someone’s identity construction. Yesha’s professor is insisting that she is American because she has grown up in the US, while Yesha doesn’t see herself as an American because she thought that “you had to be white or black to be an American”. In other words, though Yesha is solidifying Americaness by limiting its representatives to black or white people, she does not accept her professor’s imposing voice by insisting on her being born in India (“but I’m not, I was born there in India”). Yesha’s use of the represented speech of the professor “you’re American, like it or not” is presented in a very peremptory way, leaving her without the choice of reflecting on her identity but evoking nonetheless strong feelings in her: “then why don’t I feel like it?”, I don’t think I like it, I’m bewildered... but slowly I accept it that maybe, perhaps, I’m American too... a little...”. When she returns to the person that she is at the time of the recording, these feelings lead her to draw the conclusion that she has changed her mind and accepted that she is also “a little” American.

As we saw before, the major impact of imposed identity on the podcasters is that either they accept these identity constructions from the ‘outside’ or they deny, criticize or respond to them through negative feelings. In the next section, we will examine the discourses of becoming which refer to the ways podcasters narrate their identity formation.

3.3 Discourses of becoming

In all three podcasts, the speakers describe how they have become who they are in their own ways. Discourses of becoming are very important in order to self-construct, given that, according to the post-modern definition of identity, identity is storied and narrated.

In Nik’s podcast, he describes who he is/who he has become through narrating his ‘mobile’ past. He introduces the positions of his parents, their backgrounds, his Britishness and “the problem” of moving around the United Kingdom during his childhood to provide arguments for his in-betweeness, as well as the fact that he speaks English in a French accent. Self-quotations (as I said; I’d always assumed), which reintroduce previous speech presented in the episode, allow him to insert these positions in his discourse:

I have always been well as I said my mum’s Brazilian and my dad’s English and I grew up in the UK so up until now I’d always assumed that I had a British accent and I think it probably I definitely had one and then euh the problem was when I was growing up well it is not really a problem but what happened was when I was growing up my parents moved every four years or so and they moved like to different regions of the United Kingdom
Nik reminds the listener (as he had done several times before in the episode) that his mother is Brazilian and his father is English and that he grew up in the UK. Though these are omnipresent pieces of information (in the episode, in previous episodes, on his weblog...), the podcaster seems to be reintroducing these elements to provide further evidence and authority to his accent being British (despite demonstrating to himself indirectly that there is no such thing as a British accent, as he gives a list of accents such as Scottish, Cambridgian, Welsh... later on in the episode). His becoming ‘British’ through recounting his past seems to help him to support his claim to a British identity.

In Yang May Ooi’s episode, the Malaysian writer’s comment (that she reads at the beginning of the episode) was the starting point for questioning her own identities. The beginning of the episode introduces various narratives on how Ooi managed to become ‘English’ or how she acquired, what she refers to as an ‘English voice’. Her answer to the writer’s comment, which simulates a dialogue, is as follows:

Yes, Lydia I have been living in this country for ages but I didn’t always speak like this I suppose because I have been surrounded by English voices I was at school here at university my friends were generally English at work I speak in English, I write in English so I guess it’s quite natural I sound English

Ooi’s explanation shows that she considers that the presence of external positions such as ‘English voices’ and ‘friends’ has allowed her to become a ‘copy’ of the English and speak like a native. In a way, this contributes to the phenomenon of auto-solidification that Ooi seems to be using quite a lot in the episode. Given the diversity of accents, lexicons and errors which characterise native speakers of English in England, one can question the fact that Ooi is giving the impression that there is only one type of English (this is similar to what Nik does in his episode). She in fact develops this limited vision of Englishness throughout the episode. So her discourse of becoming appears as a mere transition from one identity (that of a Malaysian speaker of English) to another (Ooi ‘sounding English’). Later on, she asserts that she can actually juggle with both.

In the rest of the narratives on how she learnt to speak English like an ‘English’ person, Ooi explains her motivations for wanting to sound English. She introduces a story from her childhood from when she came to England:

There was one time I was telling someone about my school about my work and I was good at English but I wasn’t good at saits and she said
- [imitating interlocutor’s English accent] you’re not good at saits?
- [taking on her Malaysian accent] You know I not good at saits-la
and she said
- what saits? I don’t know that subject
- you know saits like maths, chemistry, and biology and things like that-la
- Oh she said science
- ja-la science.
You know it’s been a long time since that conversation and I remember it I remember exactly where I was I remember what the girl looked like because it was very traumatic for me I felt so embarrassed I felt that I was having to repeat myself I felt like an idiot that’s pretty hard

This long narrative includes a represented dialogue between her and an English classmate, which shows how ‘foreign’ she was and sounded in that situation. The external position (that of the English girl) leads to Ooi introducing one of her internal positions for the first time: her Malaysian voice from the past (which will come back later on in the episode but
within her grown-up voice). The introduction of both positions allows Ooi to draw conclusions (‘it was very traumatic’) and justify why she sounds English.

In the third podcast, Yesha constructs her discourse of becoming at the beginning of the podcast during the introduction to the diary entries. Yesha’s discourse of becoming includes all the potential ‘masks’ that she has and that she associates with her identity. She starts by grouping the external positions that represent nationalities and ethnic groups in her home country:

I’m Indian, originally from India and... I grew up calling myself Indian... however, in the last few years I felt myself many times substituting the word Desi where I used to use the word Indian... not in all cases, of course, if I’m just talking about my family’s culture, or traditions specific to us, I may even get more specific and use the word Gujrali... but I find that the word Indian can be very restricting, especially when I’m trying to refer to experiences that are shared by many, if not all South Asians...

In this excerpt, a series of self-quotations demonstrates how Yesha has adopted various words and phrases that she has used throughout the years to create and categorise her self/ves: “I grew up calling myself” + Indian, “I felt myself substituting the word” + Desi, “I may even get more specific” + Gujrali, “I’m trying to refer to” + South Asians. These positions are used to introduce a discourse of becoming across multiple spaces-times (when she grew up, in the last few years, India, South Asia...). Yet, this multi-referencing to times and relative localities is contradicted by other external positions in the rest of her podcast:

one interesting thing I have noticed and heated discussion of the word Indian and Desi, is that Desi is in a diaspora, well, I guess Indian Desi is in a diaspora, really can’t win when it comes to the word Indian because if we use the word Desi to describe ourselves, many people would take umbrage of that and say: “just say what you are, if you’re Indian, say you’re Indian”... however, if I do use the word Indian to describe myself, many Desis from the home country would say: “You’re not Indian, you’re American”... I guess I can’t win...

In this example, Yesha uses two unidentifiable external positions (many people and many Desis from the home country) in order to describe the difficulty that she has faced and that she still faces, from various sides, in defining herself and using some of the words and phrases presented before. Actually, in reference to the previous section, these voices can also be seen as imposing identities on her (“If you’re Indian, say you’re Indian”; “You’re not Indian, you’re American”). Yesha’s discussion is linked to the use of different terms, Indian and Desi, which includes different groups of people, different points of view and stakes, different (nested) places and localities.

3.4 ‘Whatever I am, wherever I am, how does it matter?’ Concluding on one’s self/elves

In this section, we concentrate solely on the conclusions that the podcasters draw from the demonstration of their in-betweenness that they deliver in their podcasts. All three podcasters explicitly conclude that, in one way or another, they have an in-between identity. They also question the existence of clear boundaries between these identities. As such, at the very end of each podcast, the podcasters insert a macro-sequence/proposition (Adam, 1985: 48-52), which is reminiscent of Labov’s coda in his macro-model of narrative (1972: 365). Adam proposed calling this type of sequence ‘evaluation’ or ‘the moral’ (ibid.). We shall see how this model can be applied to all three podcasts and what indications they provide us with regarding identification.
The first podcaster, Nik, reflects on the definition of his identity through the accents that he attributes to himself or that are attributed to him. He introduces an unidentifiable external position *people* to draw a conclusion about who he is:

so I am coming to the conclusion (...) I am coming to is that I probably have an indefinable mix of accents there is a little bit of Scottish for *people* who recognize that there is a little bit of English there is a bit of French and I know when I speak Portuguese when I speak French I have a Portuguese intonation from the way I speak Portuguese so maybe it’s just a mish mash accent mish mash accent I don’t know it’s kind of confusing for me

As we can see at the end, Nik feels that he has a *mish mash accent* which means to him that people can recognize many influences of different hybrid accents in his speech (cf. the external position). Yet, the podcaster expresses his feelings and uncertainty towards this identity: “*I don’t know it’s kind of confusing for me*”. In a way, we can say that Nik tries to define his identity through otherness (“there is a little bit of Scottish for *people* who recognize that”) but that he is not capable of defining his own identity. This is probably because he doesn’t acknowledge his multiple in-betweenness and the fuzzy nature of identity, but tries to explain them instead.

The second podcaster, Young Mai Ooi, also has difficulties in defining herself in the last macro-sequence - though her discourse is less unstable in a way. Responding to her English friends’ direct represented discourse “*she is outside being Malaysian*”, and having talked about her Malaysianess and Englishness, she concludes that she has ‘a split personality’:

(...) *she is outside being Malaysian* [English friends’ speech] and I have always remembered that because being Malaysian to me meant being out there you know having a good time having a laugh making a lot of noise which when I am in my English persona perhaps I don’t make that much noise perhaps I am quieter perhaps I would be sitting with my English friends having a chat so then that’s why I think that I have a split personality I am English but also I am Malaysian-la which one is the real me? Very difficult to say.

When one compares Nik’s and Ooi’s identity construction, Ooi solidifies herself to a greater degree and solely oscillates between two identities (cf. ‘split’, i.e. Englishness and Malaysianess) and that is why she suggests that she has ‘a split personality’. The difference between Ooi’s and Nik’s conclusions is that Ooi tries to form her own definition of her identity. As we can see, she *solidifies* Malaysianess and Englishness in her discourse. Being Malaysian to her means *having a good time and making a lot of noise*, which is in contrasted with her English ‘persona’: *perhaps I don’t make that much noise perhaps I am quieter perhaps I would be sitting with my English friends having a chat*. In spite of this tentative definition of her identity, in the end, Ooi admits the impossibility of a clear definition of identity: “*which one is the real me? Very difficult to say*. This is why Ooi’s definition remains open. Though she tries, she admits that she cannot name the real me.

The third podcaster, Yesha, also defines her in-betweenness at the end of the episode. Like Ooi, Yesha’s reflections on identity are based mostly on two solidified identities (Indianess and Americaness) in her diary entries. At the end of the podcast, Yesha draws this conclusion:

I do have reasons to be angry, I wish I had met different influences in my childhood, they shaped me through hurt for years, and yet, now it’s different... they are just ghosts, I can choose to be angry or I can choose to get on with my life and laugh... I let go, I’m Indian from India, and American from America, either way, whatever I am, wherever I am, how does it matter?... why does it matter?
Though this excerpt doesn’t contain any clear external voices, we suppose that her repetition of phrases such as “I’m Indian from India, and American from America” are pure confirmations of the external voices of e.g. the anthropology professor or Desis that she mentioned earlier, as these two identities need to be defined in contrast with other individuals. The major difference between Yesha and the two other podcasters is that she definitely leaves it completely open and questions the use in giving a delimited definition: “either way, whatever I am, wherever I am, how does it matter?... why does it matter?”. Yesha’s identity definition can be seen as the archetype of the postmodern liquid identity: it is a process which is never complete and ever changing.

Conclusion

This chapter has been one of the first attempts to examine the construction of identities within the context of egocasting (i.e. broadcasting about one’s self) and intercultural in-betweenness through dialogism. Based on a linguistic dialogic and multivoiced approach to identification, we have demonstrated that external voices (one’s own and those of others’) contribute to constructing selves and questioning them. Though our corpora were very similar in their formats (the questioning of identification was triggered by an other, many voices and positions were introduced to question, argue for and bring to light identities, a coda admitting to in-betweenness concluded each podcast...), there were differences in the ways the podcasters accepted the identities that were put forward in the episodes. May Ooi is probably the only one who used external positions to construct who she thinks she is (both Malay and English) without rejecting the ways these external positions perceived her duality. On the other hand, Nik didn’t really contradict the various voices that he introduced to describe his feeling of “foreignness” with regard to his “Britishness” but expressed his confusion at them. Finally, Yesha was more skeptical about (and sometimes rejected clearly) what external positions said about her and concluded that choosing one’s identity when in in-betweenness is but useless.

As any other social experiences, podcasts are based on dialogicality and multivoicedness. Of course, these phenomena are not just found in technologies of the self such as podcasting. Yet, this act of computer-mediated communication does undoubtedly contribute to the contemporary multiplication of voices in the definition of identities (anyone in the world can download, listen and react to such podcasts, Hermans 2004: 304) and the ability to “create ourselves as a work of art” (Foucault, 1997: 262). Consequently, as part of a self-construction, egocasting in-betweenness can itself be a matter of shutting out the unease and confusion felt after the speaker realises how others want to define and pigeonhole him/her.

Through their easy availability, podcasts allow anyone’s voice to become part of the attire of the contemporary nomad individual (Abbas, 2008) as they can be listened to by potentially anyone, anywhere (Abbas speaks of the invisible “technological tapestry” that is around us, cf. Wifi technology) and at any time. Otherness has thus become readily available “on request”, can be easily contacted (by e-mail or voice-mail left on weblogs that accompany podcasts) and is therefore potentially omnipresent (one can listen to podcasts while walking down the street, be moved by them and self-reflect, something which was impossible two decades ago). In a way, while a mere radio producer would have never had the opportunity to be stimulated by just about any listener on the planet, now podcasters cannot but be influenced by what other people have to say about their shows - across multiple spaces and times (in fact, some podcasters often spend time at the beginning of their programme reviewing and answering comments received from listeners worldwide on their website). This makes podcasts the space of dialogicality par excellence, a form of technology that we could sum up as a collage of voices.
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