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Negotiation as the way of engagement in intercultural and lingua franca communication: Frames of reference and Interculturality

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Abstract

The paper argues that Negotiation (capitalised to differentiate from negotiation as an activity type such as business negotiation) is the most important means of engagement in intercultural and lingua franca communication. In intercultural and lingua franca communication, thus also in English as a lingua franca (ELF), variability, heterogeneity and uncertainty are the norm, and therefore, the need to negotiate common frames of reference and cultural identity is greater than in other types of communication. By providing a Negotiation approach for intercultural and lingua franca communication, we are able to focus on individuals taking part in interactions along with their agency rather than cultural groups, the here-and-now nature of interactions rather than assumed or predicted course of actions, the resources individuals bring with them rather than problems, and the process rather than the outcome.

Key words: cultural identity, engagement, frames of reference, Negotiation, Interculturality

协商作为跨文化和通用语言交流参与方式：参考框架和文化认同互融性

本文提出“协商”是跨文化和通用语言交流最重要的参与方式。在跨文化和通用语言包括以英语作为通用语言（ELF）交流中，可变性、差异性和不确定性是常态，因而双方更需要对参考框架和文化认同进行协商。通过这个协商的概念，我们可以专注于交流中的个人，而不是群体背景；专注于交流中“此时此地”的特点，而不是假设或预测的行为；专注于双方带来的资源，而不是问题；专注于过程，而不是结果。

关键词：文化认同，参考框架，协商，文化认同互融性

1. Introduction

The term *negotiation* is frequently mentioned as one of the key processes in managing or preventing mis- or non-understanding in the literature on intercultural encounters and lingua franca communication. In this paper, I would like to argue that the term Negotiation (capitalised to differentiate from negotiation as an activity type such as in business negotiation) requires a fresh and critical examination in light of recent development in the fields of Intercultural Communication and ELF (English as Lingua Franca). In interactions involving speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, Negotiation is not limited to the understanding of meaning, linguistic or otherwise. It is the key to the process whereby participants adjust their (cultural) ways of speaking, apply and refine their cultural schemata, and orient to, assign or reject social, cultural or situational categorizations. It is the most important means of *engagement* in intercultural and lingua franca communication in which participants work collaboratively towards making sense of on-going interactions and making contributions. Negotiation is the very mechanism that enables participants in intercultural and lingua franca communication to employ, mobilise or manipulate diverse resources to achieve their goals of interaction.

The paper is inspired by the theme and discussion of two conferences in which I took part: the 1st ELF-REN Workshop *Teaching (B)ELF and/or Intercultural Communication?* in TU Dortmund University, Germany in 2012 and ELF6 Rome, September 2013.ⁱ As an applied linguist working in the field of Intercultural Communication, my main research agenda in recent years includes foregrounding the role of language in intercultural communication studies and understanding how participants deal with perceived intercultural differences in interactions. The workshop and the conference created a space for me to reflect on the link between Intercultural Communication research and (B)ELF, both of which are interested in interactions among participants from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. I would refer to the communication involving participants with perceived different linguistic and/or cultural backgrounds as intercultural and lingua franca communication although intercultural communication and lingua franca communication are not synonymous, as discussed in Section 2.

The paper is structured as follows: I start with a brief review of the field of Intercultural Communication and ELF with the dual aims of clarifying the scope of the

present discussion and understanding the features of intercultural and lingua franca communication that make Negotiation a necessity and a top priority. I will then discuss why Negotiation is important and necessary and which aspects of interactions require Negotiation, followed by a section on how to negotiate that draws on spoken ELF data. In the concluding section, I will revisit the main arguments of the paper with reference to the role and place of ‘culture’ in intercultural and lingua franca communication.

2. Intercultural Communication and/vs ELF

While the fields of Intercultural Communication (IC) and ELF are both primarily interested in interactions among participants from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, they differentiate from each other in focus and point of departure: IC often starts with *cultural differences* and is concerned with potential problems which arise in intercultural encounters while ELF emphasises *linguistic sharedness* and refers to situations where all – or some – participants interact with one another in a common language of choice other than their native languages (Jenkins 2009a). These two fields also differ in their disciplinary affinity and research agenda. IC studies are informed by multiple theoretical and disciplinary perspectives with an overall aim of facilitating understanding between different (cultural) groups (e.g. Halualani and Nakayama 2010). In contrast, studies on ELF have moved away from the dominant paradigm of regarding non-native speakers as being “inherently problematic” in studies of language learning and teaching and shifted their attention to successful communication (Meierkord and Knapp 2002: 16) in the context of the “changed and changing role of English as a lingua Franca” (Seidlhofer 2002: 295).

These differences notwithstanding, studies of IC and ELF both offer insights into interactions involving participants from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As a field of enquiry, IC studies were founded on the belief that cultural values and beliefs underpin one’s language use and communicative behaviour and when participants from different cultural backgrounds interact, cultural differences can lead to mis- or non-understandings (e.g. Scollon and Scollon 1995). Therefore, they provide a useful interpretative and analytical cultural lens to problematic interactions. A large number of IC studies are dedicated to identifying culture-specific ways of communication (such as high vs. low context, Hall 1976; high vs. low involvement, Tannen 1984; directness vs. indirectness, Katriel 1986) and sources that lead to misunderstandings in intercultural communication (such as inadequate linguistic proficiency, e.g. Bremer 1996; pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic failure, Thomas 1983; clash of communication styles, e.g. Bailey 1997;

mismatch in schemas and cultural stereotypes, e.g. Nishida 2005; Sharifian 2005, 2013; Kecskes 2013; and mismatch in contextualisation and framing, Gumperz 1992). Not limiting themselves to words, IC studies also identified cross-cultural differences in the conceptualisations of time and space (Hall 1973 [1959]), uses of turn-taking (e.g. Eades 2000), silence (Jaworski 2000), emotional expressions (Matsumoto and Hwang 2012) and other aspects of non-verbal communication.

In recent years, the field has taken a ‘critical’ turn in an apparent paradigm shift. Some scholars challenged the ‘cultural account’ approach adopted in previous IC studies. Questions have been asked about the issue of cultural regularity over variability (e.g. Spencer-Oatey and Franklin 2009; Kecskes 2012; Scollon et al. 2012), and the potential problem of circularity and reification in isolating a situation to study as intercultural communication (Scollon et al. 2012). Elsewhere (Zhu 2014), I have argued that, in order to avoid the issue of reification and to minimise potential bias, it is important to bear in mind that while there are cultural ways of speaking and communication and that culture impacts on behaviour and thinking, not all the problems of intercultural interactions are due to or should be attributed to cultural differences. Intercultural interactions are subject to an array of influencing factors, some of which are cultural, some are not cultural in themselves but interplay with cultural factors, and some may have nothing to do with culture. Zhu (2014) further argues that the best way forward is to envisage IC studies as primarily concerned with how individuals, in order to achieve their communication goals, negotiate cultural or linguistic differences which may be perceived relevant by at least one party in the interaction. By moving away from the traditional *cultural account approach* which attributes problems in interactions involving participants from different cultural backgrounds to culture, IC studies should focus on not only how individuals make use of their different linguistic and cultural resources to negotiate understanding, but also the impact of perceived differences (be it socio-cultural or linguistic) on the process of interaction. In both foci, Negotiation plays a key part.

Approaching interactions among participants with different ‘lingua-cultural’ backgrounds (Jenkins 2006: 164) from a different angle, the field of ELF is relatively new, although the use of a contact language for the purpose of communication among people not sharing a common language could be traced back as early as the fifteenth century. The turning point of the field, according to Jenkins, Cogo and Dewey (2011), was two key publications at the beginning of the 21st century, i.e., Jenkins’ works on common features of ELF pronunciation (2000) and Seidlhofer’s conceptual paper which argued to move away

from native speakers' norms and to treat lingua franca users as legitimate (Seidlhofer 2001). Of particular relevance to the agenda of the present paper are the findings that help us to understand the underlying mechanisms of lingua franca communication. While there are some common core features in syntax (e.g. Ranta 2009), phonology (e.g. Jenkins 2009b) and pragmatic and discourse strategies (e.g. House 2002; Pullin 2009) among lingua franca speakers, "heterogeneity" (Mauranen 2006) and "heightened variability" (Dewey 2009) both characterise linguistic forms and norms of communication in lingua franca communication and contribute to the "inherent fluidity of ELF" (a term used by Seidlhofer 2009a). Other relevant features include a greater and shared emphasis on communicative efficiency rather than linguistic accuracy (Ehrenreich 2010), increased willingness to cooperate and accept unsolved situations and arbitrary solutions among participants in informal talks (Meierkord and Knapp 2002: 16), and attention to the "ad hoc, situated negotiation of meaning" among ELF users (Seidlhofer 2009a: 242).

To fully understand the nature of lingua franca communication via English, Canagarajah (2007: 935) argued that lingua franca English is best interpreted through a practice-based model which assumes the following, among others:

1. What brings people together in communities is not what they share—language, discourse, or values—but *interests* to be accomplished.
2. These mutual interests would permit individuals to move in and out of multiple communities to accomplish their goals, without considering prior traits that are innate or that are exclusively shared with others.
3. This view would redefine communities as lacking boundedness and a center; they are, rather, contact zones where people from diverse backgrounds meet. (Canagarajah 2007: 935, emphasis in original)

Based on these assumptions, Canagarajah (2007: 935) further argued that what enabled participants to work together in interactions are "*negotiation* practices participants bring to various tasks (not common language, discourse, or values)". His views are reinforced by Cogo (2010: 296) who, drawing upon the notion of community of practice, argued that the norms in ELF are neither "pre-established" nor "exonormatively imposed". Instead, "they are negotiated by its users (mutual engagement) for specific purposes (joint enterprise) by making use of members' lingua-cultural resources (shared repertoire)" (Cogo 2010: 296).

The explanatory potential of 'community of practice', or CofPs, in understanding the lingua franca communication of a German multinational company and Business English as Lingua Franca in general is discussed in Ehrenreich (2009). In the case of the German company, Ehrenreich (2009: 132) noted that there were several CofPs co-existing and

overlapping with each other; each individual CofP seemed to be “in a state of constant flux” in terms of the membership with people joining and leaving; and individual members can have different roles simultaneously in several CofPs. Under the overall corporate goal of profit-making, members of the CofPs within the company *negotiated* “‘what matters’ as well as what is ‘appropriate’ in which context” (Ehrenreich 2009: 132). This has important implications on ‘shared repertoires’ including linguistic issues. As Ehrenreich observed, while multiple languages including German, English and many more languages are used by the company employees, there is also a tacit agreement within the company (which she termed as “linguistic respect”) that English is used when a non-German-speaking person is present. In addition, the company employees were reported to use their language(s) with self-confidence and more concerned with efficiency than correctness.

To sum up, despite the fact IC and ELF have developed from different traditions and have different research agendas, they converge on the role of Negotiation in intercultural and lingua franca interactions and share the same interest in understanding the process of Negotiation. In the next section, I will focus specifically on the notion of Negotiation and discuss different aspects of what can be (and is) negotiated in intercultural and lingua franca communication.

3. Why Negotiation?

There are many different theoretical and analytical models of negotiation as an activity type especially in the business context and international diplomacy, focusing variably on how different parties set their goals, what strategies different parties employ, and how different parties deal with the outcomes (Lewicki et al. 2003). It is often assumed that the parties should set their goals higher as compromise is the common, and perhaps desirable, outcome of negotiation (Raiffa 1982). In terms of discourse type, structure and strategy, a number of potential areas of cultural differences in how to negotiate have been identified in language-based studies as well as business management, communication, and anthropology studies. Examples are the way speakers make statements about their communicative intent (i.e. point-making style), and the way conversation is conducted (i.e. how participants orient to relationship-building or competition, for a review, see Zhu 2014)

As an activity type or discourse, negotiation is often a visible, hearable or identifiable practice with each party involved, knowingly, taking positions and seeking resolutions over matters of conflict of interest. However, what I would like to argue in this paper is that metaphorically speaking, the process of resolving apparent, potential or perceived differences

embodied in these practices of negotiation constitutes a way of engagement in intercultural and lingua franca communication. The very metaphorical process is denoted in this paper as Negotiation in capital letter to differentiate it from negotiation as an activity type or discourse. Negotiation via mutual engagement emphasises that conversation is a collaborative joint enterprise in which participants are committed, in a partnership, to working towards making sense of on-going interactions and making each other's contributions relevant, a point supported by observations in some studies. For example, those participants who "make an effort" are reported to be understood best, regardless of what kind of variety of English they speak (Ehrenreich 2010: 422). Those who are willing to be cooperative and share responsibility in understanding on-going interactions and are, at the same time, resourceful and creative are likely to have better experience in ELF in business context (Pitzl 2005, 2010). Below I shall start with an account of why it is necessary to foreground the notion of Negotiation as an important means of engagement in intercultural and lingua franca communication (Sections 3.1 to 3.3) before unpacking how to negotiate in such contexts (Section 4).

3.1 The social and psychological motivation for Negotiation in interactions

As mentioned above, studies suggest that participants in intercultural and lingua franca interactions often demonstrate increased willingness to be cooperative, resourceful and creative to keep a conversation going (e.g. Bremer et al. 1996; Meierkord and Knapp 2002; Pitzl 2005, 2010). In fact, these behaviours are typical of accommodative behaviours in communication whereby people, driven by the goals of seeking approval, maintaining group identity and attaining communicative efficiency, often subconsciously, modify their ways of speaking to achieve a high degree of fit between their "typically different, but potentially 'attunable', behaviours" (Coupland et al. 1988: 28). This psychological model was initially referred to as 'speech accommodation theory' (e.g. Giles 1973; Street and Giles 1982) and later renamed as Communication Accommodation Theory when Giles and his colleagues realised that adjustments took place not only to accents, but also at non-verbal and discursive levels, such as speech rate, patterns of pausing, utterance length, gesture, posture, smiling, gaze and so on (Giles et al. 1991). In order for accommodation to be successful, speakers need to modify their way of speaking on the basis of their assessment of their listeners' linguistic ability, interpersonal needs and goals of communication, among others. In the context of intercultural and lingua franca interaction where there are likely to be disparities in linguistic proficiency and shared frames of reference among participants, Negotiation through

accommodative behaviours among participants is a necessity rather than an option, as several studies, some of which cited below, demonstrate.

The psychological model of accommodation may explain why it is frequently reported that participants in ELF, in anticipation of their partners' linguistic proficiency and interpersonal needs, among others, work harder than usual to make sense *in situ* and to adopt a cooperative style (cf. the cooperative and the territorial imperatives originally proposed by Widdowson, discussed in Seidlhofer 2009b). However, convergence is not the only type of adjustment speakers make. Depending on the context of interactions (such as gate-keeping interviews or other more goal-oriented settings), a speaker can seek to accentuate communicative differences between her conversation partner and herself, or choose not to modify her way of speaking relative to her conversation partner (i.e. divergence). Nevertheless, divergence has not been well-researched in the ELF and IC literature. Among a small number of available studies, Knapp (2002) argued that in more formal and competitive situations, there may be a shift to a less co-operative style (i.e. divergence) if differences in linguistic ability are deemed as a resource to mark boundaries against perceived outgroups. In his study of a large scale international conference where English is used as a lingua franca, non-native speaker participants faded out in the conversations when resolutions were discussed and their turns were competed for – they had the least number of turns in group discussions and when they ran into lexical difficulties, they were cut short or silenced by native speakers.

The model of accommodation captures the social and psychological motivation for Negotiation in interactions. Driven by their goals of communication, participants negotiate, often subconsciously, the degree and the direction of convergence (or divergence) from their listeners as part and parcel of interaction. Some researchers have investigated how linguistic differences and difficulties in interactions are accommodated and how Negotiation contributes to understanding. Rogerson-Revell (2010), for example, found that there were intuitive understanding and operational solutions as to how to accommodate linguistic differences and difficulties in international business meetings (cf. Sweeny and Zhu's 2010 work on native English speakers). Participants tried very hard to normalise and to make sense of each other's contributions to conversations and assumed mutual understanding even if it is not the case. They followed and were guided by the genre of formal international meetings and converged towards a procedurally and linguistically formal and careful speech style (Rogerson-Revell 2010). The work on the use of idioms by Seidlhofer (2009b) and Pitzl (2009, 2012) shows that Negotiation, as understood in this paper, provides a mechanism for

participants to make sense of expressions that do not conform to conventional native-speaker idiomatic usage and at the same time, to co-construct new and temporary idiomatic expressions. These acts serve to establish a sense of playfulness and in-group solidarity and fulfil the cooperative function of communication and the “territorial function of establishing shared affective space” (Seidlhofer 2009b: 195). Other examples of strategies and procedures have been identified in signalling and managing potential mis- or non-understanding include ‘confirmation checks’, ‘self-repair’ and ‘interactive repair’ (Mauranen 2006) and ‘letting it pass’ (Firth 1996), hypothesis-forming, reprise of non-understood part and metalinguistic comments (Pitzl 2005, 2010), among others.

3.2 Negotiating (cultural) frames of reference

In intercultural and lingua franca communication, potential differences are not confined to purely linguistic issues. Mismatches in frames of reference can also cause problems in understanding and require engagement of speakers via Negotiation. To make sense of what is said by a speaker and why, participants often rely on their cognitive knowledge about speech events and speakers. This kind of knowledge is known as schemas, a term having its root in psychology and cognitive science. They are “generalised collections of knowledge of past experiences that are organised into related knowledge groups and are used to guide our behaviours in familiar situations” (Nishida 2005: 402, cf, the term ‘encyclopedic knowledge’, Kecskes 2013). A variety of schemas have been identified, ranging from fact-and-concept schemas to context schemas, from self schemas to person schemas, and from procedure schemas to strategy schemas (Nishida 2005). In the context of interactions involving participants from diverse cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds, cultural schemas are pertinent. Sometimes referred to as ‘cultural model’, this type of knowledge is abstracted from people’s cultural experiences and internalised through everyday practice and shared collectively among a sociocultural group (Sharifian 2013).

In intercultural and lingua franca interactions, there is a greater need to negotiate what and which cultural schema, and in some cases, conflicting cultural schemas, participants would go by in interactions. As Kecskes (2013) argued, the way cultural schemas are negotiated in intercultural interactions has both a normative and an emergent side: they are brought in from prior experience of participants to guide participants’ interpretation of new experience, and at the same time, transformed through the new experience. The result is “intercultural discourse in which there is mutual transformation of knowledge and communicative behaviour rather than transmission” (Kecskes 2013: 39). There are plenty of

examples of misunderstanding caused by the lack of the relevant schemas and, at the same time, plenty of examples of how communication is facilitated by shared schemas despite poor linguistic skills (e.g. Bremer 1996). Below is an example of how a cultural schema is negotiated in an interaction provided by Sharifian (2013: 74-75). In the interaction, a Persian speaker of English, operating from his cultural schema of *Târof* that one needs to decline offer of the food several times before accepting it, gave an automatic refusal to the potato salad offered by his colleague, despite the fact that he was hungry. When he realised that the other party, an Australian English speaker, neither re-offered the food nor had any intention of engaging with the *Târof* ritual of offer-decline-reoffer, as he had expected in the first place, he quickly changed his strategy. He turned around and showed interest in the food in the next turns by asking questions and commenting about the salad ('did you make the salad yourself', 'what is in it?', and 'Sounds very yum!'). The outcome was pleasing: he was offered the salad again and this time he accepted with little hesitation.

3.3 Negotiating cultural identities: Interculturality

In the previous section, I have argued that participants need to negotiate (cultural) frames of reference rather than taking them for granted. The same argument also applies to cultural identities that participants either orient to or are assigned to by other speakers in intercultural and lingua franca interactions. One line of enquiry that has been fruitful in understanding what and how participants do with their cultural identities is the Interculturality paradigm.

As an emerging research paradigm, Interculturality problematises cultural differences and emphasises the 'inter' nature of interactions (e.g. Nishizaka 1995; Mori 2003; the special issues by Higgins 2007; Sercombe and Young 2010; an overview can be found in Zhu, 2014). Its primary focus is to seek to interpret how participants make (aspects of) cultural identities relevant or irrelevant to interactions through the interplay of language use and social relationship. Borrowing Sacks' analytical concept of Membership Categorisation Device (MCD, Sacks 1972), the Interculturality paradigm proposes that given that an individual belongs to several different membership categories such as a foreigner, a Latin American, a Mexican, a student, a stamp collector, not all the identities evoked in an interaction involving speakers of different backgrounds are about one's ethnicity and race (for the debate on the notion of cultural identity, see Zhu 2014: 204-208). Neither are all the identities salient or relevant in the same way at a given point in an interaction.

Through the Interculturality paradigm, studies have revealed that participants can do a number of things with cultural identities. They can, on one hand, ascribe or cast cultural

memberships to others; on the other hand, they can accept, avow, display, ignore, reject, or disavow cultural memberships assigned to them by others. They can also claim or appropriate memberships of groups to which they do not normally belong. The key is to negotiate the degree of alignment between self-oriented cultural identities and cultural identities assigned by others through interactions. Zhu (2014: 217) used the following figure to show the process of Negotiation: alignment or misalignment.

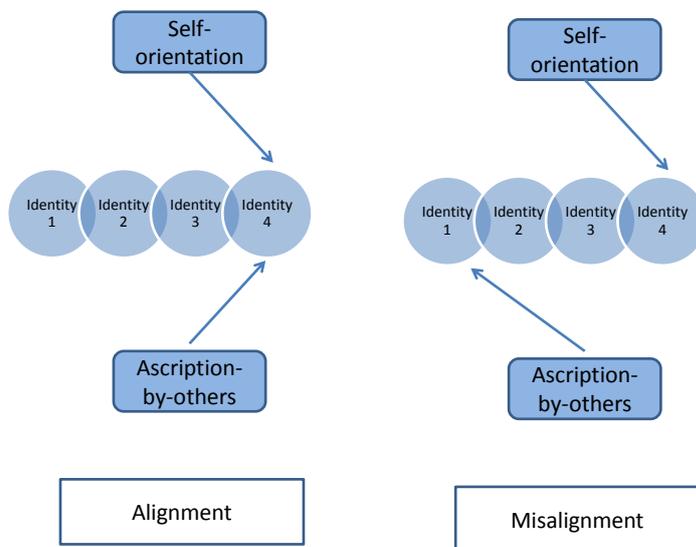


Figure 1 Alignment and misalignment between self-oriented and ascribed identities (Zhu 2014: 217)

Alignment occurs when self-oriented identity matches the identity ascribed by others. However, when they do not match, there is a misalignment and participants can negotiate whether and to what extent they would accept identities assigned by others.

4. **Engaging in intercultural and lingua franca interactions: Negotiating frames of reference and cultural identity**

In the previous sections, I have identified two aspects of Negotiation in intercultural and lingua franca communication that I consider salient for speakers' engagement in these situations: (cultural) frames of reference and negotiation of (cultural) identities as proposed in the Interculturality paradigm after discussing the social and psychological motivations for Negotiation. In the next sections, I shall explore how Negotiation takes place in intercultural and lingua franca communication in stretches of naturally-occurring interactional ELF data.

All of the examples (except for Example 3) are drawn from the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English, or VOICE, a computer-readable corpus of spoken ELF interactions (http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/page/what_is_voice). For the subsequent discussion, I have selected examples that demonstrate how participants make use of their resources to negotiate cultural frames of reference (Section 4.1) and cultural identities (Section 4.2).

4.1 Cultural frames of reference

Intercultural and lingua franca communication requires Negotiation of (cultural) frames of reference to facilitate understanding. Some of the interruptions in the flow of conversation may surface as linguistic difficulties. But in fact, the so-called linguistic difficulties may be the result of the possible confusion over, or the lack of, the shared cultural frames of reference and therefore can be minimised through Negotiation of these cultural frames of reference.

Example 1 contains a discussion in which the participants engaged in a step-by-step and collaborative Negotiation of what kind of *hat* one participant was wearing over a protracted length of utterances. What is particularly interesting about this conversation is how the cultural schema of a traditional Austrian hat was jointly negotiated by the participants (national hat → normal hat → traditional hat → from Austria → Austrian) underneath the apparent negotiation in the choice of words as seen in the first half of the conversation.

Example 1

Dinner table conversation among international students (VOICE, LEcon8)

(S1: female, Korean; S2/3 female: Kyrgyzstan; S5: male, Peruvian; SX-2: unidentified speaker; see Appendix for transcription conventions)

310 S3: <soft> @@@ </soft> (57) is it kind of national hat or no. (1) is it normal hat or (.)

311 S5: normal hat?

312 S3: <5> hat </5>

313 S2: <5> i think </5> (traditional) <6> traditional </6> (.)

314 S3: <6> national?</6>

315 SX-2: traditional

316 S3: hat your hat

317 S5: <fast> yeah yeah it's mine </fast> (1)

318 S3: no is it traditional or no =

319 S5: = yeah i think <fast><7> yeah yeah i think so i hope </7></fast>

- 320 S1: <7> it's (from) austria right </7>
321 SX-2: it's aust<8>rian yeah </8>
322 S5: <8> yeah austrian </8> yeah
323 SX-2: it's austrian <9> one </9>
324 S3: <9> austr<9><1>ian you bought it </1> here?

It started with S3 asking a question about the *hat* S5 was wearing in Utterance 310. However, she was not sure about which was the right word to describe the hat, as evident in her self-repair in the same utterance (*is it kind of national hat or no. is it normal hat*). The word *normal* is problematic in the conversation because it is not clear from the immediate utterances about ‘normal in what sense’ and ‘normal for whom’. In the next utterance, S5 signalled her difficulty in understanding with a question repeating the word *normal hat*. In Utterance 313, working on a possible frame of reference brought in by S3, S2 stepped in and suggested the word *traditional*, which overlapped with S3’s repetition of *national*. SX-2, in Utterance 315, repeated the word *traditional*, though it was not clear from the conversation whether SX-2 was merely confirming his/her agreement with S2/S3 or was suggesting that *traditional* might be a better word in describing the hat. In Utterance 316, S3 resumed her question to S5, but with a rather fragmented phrase, i.e. *hat your hat*. In the subsequent utterance, S5 misunderstood her question as a question about the ownership of the hat and confirmed that it was his hat. This time S3 took up the repair offered by other participants several turns ago and rephrased her question into a specific one. S5 responded immediately, but with a tentative tone, i.e. *I think* and *I think so I hope*. Perhaps because of the uncertainty conveyed in S5’s reply, the participants (S5, S1 and SX-2) went on, in the subsequent conversation, to further specify the cultural identity of the hat and eventually agreed that it was an Austrian hat.

In the conversation, the participants successfully engaged in the Negotiation over what kind of *hat* it is. The discussion, which may appear to be centred around a linguistic issue in the first half of Example 1, was in fact the manifestation of the process of Negotiation of cultural frames of reference in action. Participants brought in their knowledge from prior experience to guide their interpretation of the on-going interaction (its normative sense) and developed the (new) shared cultural frame of reference (its emergent sense).

The following Example 2 from VOICE corpus, which happens in the same conversation as Example 1, further illustrates the normative and emergent dimensions of cultural schemas.

Example 2

Dinner table conversation among international students (VOICE, LEcon8)

(S3: female, Kyrgyzstan; S4: female, Albanian)

- ...
- 278 S3: albania is muslim or not (3)
- 279 S4: sixty per cent (1)
- 280 S3: you are not (1)
- 281 S4: i'm orthodox (.)
- 282 S3: oh (2)
- 283 S4: but we are (thirty) per cent orthodox (2) christian orthodox and ten per cent (2) catholics. but (3) sixty per cent who are muslims aren't real muslims (2) they (.) they do everything that christian do (2) they drink they eat pork (.) the:y (.) they don- (1) they don't follo:w (1) very in a fanatic way (1) the: the tradition <soft> yeah </soft> (16) <2> why did you ask </2>
- 284 S3: <2> does anyone </2> wants (two) bread? (1) because <un> xxx </un> she doesn't eat (.) she eats only vegetarian so i thought maybe she's a muslim (.) and then i look <3> at you </3>
- 285 S4: <3> she may </3> be a muslim but sh- sh- she doesn't do that for for the religion maybe she's for (1) <un> x xxx </un> (55) {everyone is eating}

In this passage of the conversation, S3 asked S4 a general question about Muslims in Albania in Utterance 278 and probed about S4's religious affiliation in Utterance 280. S4 confirmed that she was not a Muslim in Utterance 281 and offered further explanation in a long utterance (Utterance 283). As if she could read S3's mind, she made two points: one is that Albania does not consist of Muslims only and the other is that Albanian Muslims are not too different from Christians in their behaviours. Having explained these, S4 enquired why S3 asked these questions. It transpired in Utterance 284 that S3 was trying to make sense of the different dietary behaviours she had observed among two Albanian students, i.e. S4 and another one (student X), in relation to their religious affiliation.

A possible rendition of S3's thinking and application of her prior knowledge about Muslims could be like this:

- a. Student X (another international student) is an Albanian. Most Albanians are Muslims. Muslims do not eat pork and student X seems to be a vegetarian. This aligns with my assumption that most Albanians are Muslims.

- b. However, S4, who I'm speaking to at the moment, is also from Albania, but she eats pork. This contradicts my assumption that most Albanians are Muslims and/or that Muslims usually do not eat pork.

In response to S3's comments, S4 explained further that dietary habit was not the defining attribute of Muslims in this context, suggesting that S3's cultural schemas about Muslims were not accurate, at least in relation to Muslims in Albania. The example provides an opportunity to uncover how participants make use of cultural schemas to guide their sense-making process, and, at the same time, how frames of reference can be revised or fine-tuned, i.e. negotiated through mutual engagement and thus emerge through interactions (see the argument on normative and emergent nature of cultural schemas in Section 3.2). Similar to Example 1, this example shows that how interactions of this kind provide an opportunity for intercultural learning that affects participants' (cultural) frames of reference and knowledge of the world.

The above example concerns frames of reference regarding the typical behaviours of Muslims. In intercultural and lingua franca conversations, it is very often the case that cultural frames of references emerge "in a hybrid, mixed and liminal manner, drawing on and moving between global, national, local, and individual orientations", as Baker (2009: 567) pointed out. He also highlighted that the complexity of cultural frames of reference in ELF does not mean that ELF is culture-neutral or free (cf. House 2003). Instead, cultures should be "conceived as liminal, emergent resources that are in a constant state of fluidity and flux between local and global references, creating new practices and forms in each instance of Intercultural Communication" (Baker 2009: 568).

Given the hybrid, mixed and liminal nature of cultural norms, Negotiation is the best and only way to navigate conversation, a point I would also like to illustrate through an example from Baker (2009).

Example 3

Conversation in a Thai University (Baker 2009: 577-578)

(OY and NAMI: female Thai speakers; CHAS: a male Australian English teacher; WILL: a male British English speaker; transcription conventions: (()): non-verbal behaviour; []: overlapping utterances; (): unintelligible utterances)

- 1 OY: so carry on or drop it
- 2 NAMI: I hate saying up to you because I'm not really conservative type girl
- 3 ((laughs)) don't like it

- 4 OY: err I don't like it either
- 5 CHAS: make a decision then ((gestures with hands to Nami and Oy))
- 6 OY: yeah you make it you're older than me ((gestures with hand to Nami))
- 7 CHAS: ((laughs))
- 8 WILL: ((laughs))
- 9 NAMI: [I think like. I think that's (?)]
- 10 OY: [a bit of respect] ((smiling and laughing))
- 11 NAMI: [thank you very much] ((places hand on Oy's shoulder smiling and laughing))
- 12 WILL: [that's very Thai] very conservative and Thai defer to the older person
- 13 NAMI: you used to be Thai ((places hand on Oy's shoulder laughs))
- 14 OY: ((laughs))
- 15 NAMI: actually no I don't think so actually I have a lot of things to do
- 16 CHAS: ok
- 17 OY: oh ok right (I'll go as well)

In Example 3, the participants were discussing, in a playful manner, as to who was to make a decision to end their discussion. The frames of reference about decision-marking in the Thai culture (i.e. deferring to an older, male participant) the participants drew upon and challenge at the same time could be traced through turns in the interaction as well as the post-interview. When Oy asked about whether to carry on the conversation in Line 1, Nami did not answer her question in a way directly. Instead, she claimed that she was not the *conservative type*, thus signalling and, at the same time, legitimatising her deviation from the norm. In the following Line 6, having agreed with Nami's 'subversive' comment, Oy repeated the request again. This time she justified her request on the ground of age, referring to the seniority factor in decision-making in the Thai culture. Judging from the subsequent laughter and the uptake by Nami in her subsequent turns, Oy was only teasing Nami and trying to bring the funny side out of the so-called traditions and norms of behaviours. In the subsequent turns (Lines 9-11), Nami continued the joke by claiming that she was appreciative of the respect that comes with age, although it is highly likely from the context that Nami is no older than Oy. In Line 15, Nami finally made a decision to end the conversation.

The fact that the Negotiation of cultural frames of reference on decision-marking took place between Nami and Oy, two persons supposedly from the same cultural ground, in English is most meaningful. It suggests that the sharedness of a cultural frame of reference cannot be assumed even if participants are supposed to be from the same cultural background.

In fact, whether a cultural frame of reference is relevant is contingent on situations and subject to individual Negotiation. The participants also showed a high level of critical awareness of Thai cultural norm of decision-making (e.g. the gender and age factors). They were able to move in and out of the frames of reference and to turn it into a source of comity.

4.2 Cultural Identity and Interculturality

As discussed previously in Section 3.3, in intercultural and lingua franca communication, the degree of alignment between self-oriented identities and ascribed-by-others identities is also a matter of Negotiation. In such Negotiation, participants rely on the combination of symbolic and indexical cues that evoke the relevance of particular identities and signal their identity work through a range of linguistic means and interactional resources contingent to contexts. In making one's ethnic or national identities salient or irrelevant to interactions, participants in intercultural and lingua franca communication often make use of nationality and ethnicity talk, the talk that evokes or orients to one's ethnicity or nationality either explicitly or implicitly. Abbreviated as NET, nationality and ethnicity talk includes questions or comments by participants to establish, ascribe, challenge, deny or resist nationality and ethnicity of others or themselves. This could be observed in Example 2, for example, where S4 positioned herself as an informant about Albania, using the personal pronoun *we* at the beginning of Utterance 283. Similarly, the conversation cited in Example 3 climaxed with Nami's comment about Oy, *you used to be Thai*, following the previous collaborative teasing about the Thai ways of interaction. The explicit nationality and ethnicity talk disclaimed Oy's identity of being Thai, an act of ascription which Oy took light-heartedly in the contextⁱⁱ. Other resources for doing Interculturality include topical talks related to cultural expertise and practice as in Example 2 here (e.g. Zimmerman 2007), address terms (e.g. Zhu 2008), linguistic expertise (e.g. Day 1998), and codeswitching (e.g. Cutler 2007).

In Figure 1 (see Section 3.3), we have seen how Negotiation in relation to identities can be characterized as exhibiting different degrees of alignment or misalignment. The following example from VOICE shows how (mis)alignment between self-oriented identity and ascribed identity is signalled and subsequently negotiated and managed in the conversation. The conversation took place at a party in one of the participants' house. The recorded conversation started with S2 (who studies English and Spanish) talking about her language choice for a writing task.

Example 4

Conversation between international students about language differences at a party (VOICE, LEcon352)

(S1: Spanish; S2, 4, 5 & 7: Austrian; S3 & 6: Argentinian; All participants are male except for S2 &7)

...

- 2 S2: yeah you're always speaking spanish so (.) <1> it </1> doesn't work @@@
- 3 S3: <1><L1spa> aun {but} </L1spa></1>
- 4 S3: <L1spa> ya que tenemos otra memoria y: {that we have another memory and} </L1spa> @@ (.)
- 5 S2: but maybe i'll change the subject and write in spanish or something like that (.)
- 6 S3: yeah but actually we're NOT SPANISH (2)
- 7 S2: hh (1) yeah but (.) you're <2> speaking </2>
- 8 S4: <L1ger><2> jetzt hast </2> ein <9> problem </9> {now you've got a problem} </L1ger><3> @@@ </3> @@ (.)
- 9 S3: <9><L1spa> ya aun {yes but} </L1spa></9>
- 10 S2: <3> no:</3>
- 11 S2: i don't know? (.) is it a problem? when i (.) when I say that you're spanish?
- 12 S5: yes it's =
- 13 S2: = but you're spa<4>nish-SPEAKing </4>
- 14 S6: <4> yeah that's different </4>
- 15 S5: <4> yes it's exactly the same if </4> they say WE <5> have <un> xx </un></5>
- 16 S6: <5> it's a quite </5> different spanish =
- 17 S2: = yeah but we speak GERman. (.) <6> and you speak </6> spanish.<7> mhm okay </7>
- 18 S1: <6> you know even </6>
- 19 S1: <7> even for my </7>
- 20 S6: <7> it's different </7> it's a (prime) (.) <1><un> xxxx </un></1>
- 21 S5: <1> yeah but </1>
- 22 S4: <1> it's just </1>
- 23 S2: <1> ye- yeah </1> yeah <2> it's interesting i KNOW </2>
- 24 S6: <2> yeah </2>
- 25 S4: <2> think about it </2> when somebody tells us (.) well you're german i say no my GOD i'm austrian. (1)

- 26 S7: thanks god not @ =
27 S3: = no =
28 S2: = yeah but (.) but we are speaking german? (.)
29 S7: no

In Utterance 2, S2, who is Austrian, made a quite negative comment about people (using the second personal pronoun *you*) always speaking Spanish. S3, an Argentinian himself, went on to explain his (dis)connection with the Spanish language in Spanish in Utterances 3 and 4 (note the laughter in Utterance 3). The choice of the language carried a sense of irony in the context given S2's complaint in the previous turn. However, S2 ignored S3's contribution and carried on her topic in Utterance 5. In Utterance 6, S3 declared, in English this time, that *we're NOT SPANISH* with a clear emphasis on 'not being Spanish'. It is highly likely that the first person plural pronoun *we* in his utterance, in contrast with the second person pronoun used by S2 in her previous utterance (Utterance 2), refers to other Argentinian participants in the conversation and hence serves as an inclusive marker for Argentinian participants, but exclusive marker for other non-Argentinian participants. In Utterance 7, S2 signalled her disagreement with *yeah but* and reiterated her argument.

S4, whose Utterance 8 partly overlapped with S2 and partly with S3, teased in German (note his laughter) that there was a problem there. In Utterances 11 and 13, S2 continues to probe why it is a problem to call someone who speaks Spanish Spanish. S6 pointed out in Utterance 14 that speaking Spanish is different from being Spanish. In the rest of Example 4, the participants continued to engage in an animated discussion on the tricky issue of establishing immediate nation-language correlations and participants' experience of mistaken ethnic or national identities over a considerable number of the utterances. There are many overlaps as well as latching between turns in the multi-party conversation. In Utterance 25, S4 showed some empathy by comparing with his own experience of an Austrian being ascribed the identity of German, a comparison acknowledged by S7 and S3 alike. While S2 began to show some appreciation of the fact that there are different kinds of Spanish in Utterance 23, she repeated her question again in Utterance 28. S7 gave her a blunt rejection in Utterance 29.

Throughout the conversation analysed here, S3 resisted the Spanish identity assigned by S2. His resistance was sympathised or echoed to various degrees by other conversation participants including S6 (an Argentinian, the same as S3), S4, S5 and S7 (Austrian, the same as S2) and S1 (a Spanish). Although there was laughter between utterances, the conversation

– characterised with overlapping and latched utterances, collaborative completion of turns, fast turn-taking – came through as an emotionally charged event.

The conversation also shows how the ownership of a language is brought in or downplayed in the Negotiation of ethnic identity and how Interculturality goes hand in hand with negotiating shared frames of reference regarding what counts as category-bound activities or features for an ethnic group. On surface, the issue under debate in the conversation is whether it is legitimate to assume one's ethnicity on the basis of the 'language' they speak. In effect, the main issues here are two. One is the scale of differences between language varieties as opposed to different languages. For some outsiders, differences between language varieties such as Argentinian Spanish vs. the variety of Spanish spoken in Spain (note the existence of different languages/language varieties within Spain) may be negligible, but for native speakers of these varieties, differences are noteworthy and sufficient enough to give their speakers separate and different identities. The second issue is the 'identity complex' of invisible ethnic and national groups which are often mistaken as other ethnic groups for various reasons (appearance resemblance, language link, or historical, political, economic or religious ties). In their effort to assert their rights and identities, they may choose to accentuate differences between themselves and others (cf. differentiation between language expertise and allegiance in Rampton 1995).

There are various contexts for and consequences of doing Interculturality in intercultural and lingua franca communication. For unacquainted or newly acquainted participants, Interculturality serves to establish common territories through 'autobiographical talk' specific to the audience (Maynard and Zimmerman 1984). In the context of diasporic families (Zhu 2010), Interculturality plays an important part in reinforcing and negotiating social relationships among different generations of diasporic families who, more often than not, face the tension between cultural values of diasporic communities and those of the local communities, and the need to deal with different language ideologies and discrepancies in linguistic abilities. Interculturality can create inclusion and a sense of common ground and therefore can be used as a resource for "comity, affiliative positioning and mutual understanding" in conversations among friends and colleagues (Higgins 2007: 3).

The interaction in Example 5 shows how Interculturality can be manipulated to a humorous effect and to serve the purpose of rapport-building in a business meeting.

Example 5

Business meeting on the status of a project (VOICE, PBmtg280)

5. Conclusion

My main objective in this paper is to make a case that Negotiation as a micro-level mechanism is a necessity and a top priority for participants in intercultural and lingua franca communication. Negotiation is motivated by a range of goals, including maintaining the interactional flow, resolving differences, attaining communicative efficiency, seeking approval, reaching agreements, gaining advantage, building solidarity, and developing identities. The need for Negotiation in intercultural and lingua franca communication is greater, given the variability in discourse, heterogeneity in linguistic and cultural backgrounds and uncertainty in frames of reference. By providing a Negotiation approach for intercultural and lingua franca communication, we are able to focus on individuals taking part in interactions along with their agency rather than cultural groups, the here-and-now nature of interactions rather than assumed or predicted course of actions, the resources individuals bring with them rather than problems, and the process rather than the outcome.

I have identified two areas which are up for Negotiation: cultural frames of references and cultural identities. These two aspects are not isolated. In fact, it is difficult to separate them from each other. Ascription of cultural identities very often relies on participants' schemas of what are salient category-bound activities and features. The idea of multiplicity of Negotiation is echoed in Pitzl's works (2013), which used 'territory' as a metaphor and demonstrated how participants in IC and ELF were not only acutely aware of, but also actively engaged in constructing similarities and differences in geographical, cultural and linguistic territories.

Negotiation also highlights the agency of participants. Through Negotiation, participants are able to employ, mobilise or manipulate their resources to achieve their goals of interactions. In doing so, these resources are renewed, developed and changed. What emerges through Negotiation is not only shared understanding of local interactions, but also newly acquired knowledge and schemas and locally constructed (cultural) identities and, for some, "shared affective space" (Seidlhofer 2009b: 195). In this way, interactions offer many opportunities for intercultural learning. In light of this, it may be worth revisiting the issues raised in Meierkord (2002) that there seems to be a preference for 'safe' topics related to the immediate situation of the conversation such as food and student life in small talks. As illustrated in the data analysed here, small talks are not small. Participants demonstrably engage in all levels of Negotiation: applying and querying their existing knowledge about

other cultures and trying to make sense of intercultural differences perceived, brought in or talked into being by participants.

A final point of clarification. At the beginning of the paper, I have briefly discussed some of the differences between IC studies and ELF studies regarding focus, point of departure, disciplinary affinity and research agenda. Despite these differences, the two fields share the same interest in understanding interactions involving participants from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. However, while we use cultural differences as a ‘way in’, it is wrong to assume that cultural differences are always relevant to interactions. Cultural differences only become relevant when participants make them relevant. It is more interesting to study how participants negotiate cultural differences perceived and made relevant through interactions. In some studies, scholars have proposed an opposite approach and argued that lingua franca communication is ‘native-culture-free’ (Pözl 2003: 5). For example, in view of hybridity of culture, Meierkord (2002: 128) compared lingua franca communication as both a “linguistic masala” and a language “stripped bare of its cultural roots”. House (2003: 560) also asserted that lingua franca is “a mere tool bereft of collective cultural capital”. Where these arguments give emphasis to the here-and-now nature of interactions, it is hard to imagine that participants do not bring in their ways of doing and saying things and their own anticipation and interpretations of on-going interactions filtered through their cultural and/or individual lens. The truth is that culture permeates and means different things to different people. As Kramsch and Zhu (forthcoming, page number tbc) argued, “culture is getting smaller, imagined and localised through communities of practice. At the same time, paradoxically, it is getting bigger and global”. Culture manifests itself through different dimensions, levels, forms, modalities, and voices and varies across time and contexts (also see Baker, this issue). It is precisely due to its both open and bounded, both reference-providing and -developing nature of culture that Negotiation becomes the key means of engagement in intercultural and lingua franca communication.

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Bionote

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Appendix

Transcription Conventions Extract (for full details of transcription and markup convention, see VOICE Project. 2007. VOICE Transcription Conventions [2.1]. http://www.univie.ac.at/voice/voice.php?page=transcription_general_information (Accessed on 31 Oct 2013).

S1, 2, ...	Speaker ID
?	words spoken with rising intonation
< >	contextual information
()	pause counted in seconds, whereby (.) short pause
(xxx)	unintelligible speech
<L1=X> text </L1=X>	speaker's L1; the L1 expression is written Roman alphabet and in italics
@	laughter
S1: <1> text </1>	
S2: <1> text </1>	simultaneous speech
=	B's utterance occurs without a noticeable pause after A's utterance
:	lengthened vowels or hesitation markers, e.g. uh:
dir-	a hyphen marks the self-interruption of a speaker
PEOPLE	words or syllables spoken with emphatic stress are written in capital letters
(...)	some parts of conversation are left out
(generous)	word fragments, words or phrases which cannot be reliably identified
<un>xx</un>	Unintelligible speech

ⁱ The paper is based on two conference presentations (at the 1st ELF-REN Workshop *Teaching (B)ELF and/or Intercultural Communication?* in TU Dortmund University, Germany in June 2012, and at ELF6 Rome, September 2013). It benefits from discussions with other colloquium members and conference participants and Marie-Luise Pitzl and Susanne Ehrenreich's comments as editors of the present special issue. I am also grateful to Li Wei, Will Baker and an anonymous reviewer for their comments on earlier versions of the paper.

ⁱⁱ In a personal correspondence, Will Baker has kindly provided further interpretation and information about the participants. Although Oy took the comment *you used to be Thai* light heartedly, it was actually quite a serious comment on Nami's part. There was a feeling among this group of students that Oy had become 'English' as she spent almost all her time with her English boyfriend and his friends and spoke mainly in English. Her best friend at the university was Filipino and they communicated together in English as well. This was something Oy rejected, at least in interviews, saying that she was a 'Thai girl' and 'Thailand was her home'. As an interesting follow-up Oy married her English boyfriend and has moved to the UK.