

Diana COTRĂU

Babeş-Bolyai University

CONSTRUCTING CROSS-CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: NATIVE AND IMMERSION STUDENTS AT BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY, ROMANIA

Annotation. This paper scrutinizes if and how cross-cultural identities are created in academic discourse by means of the target language or auxiliary ones (the mother tongues of the participants) and to establish if a multicultural formal milieu can contribute to acquiring enhanced social and professional knowledge and developing, even if only marginally, intercultural communicative competence.

Summary. This paper aims to investigate whether and how cultural identities are created in the academic milieu, through a particularly focal activity, namely discussions in interactive lectures in a micro-multicultural situation. From a range of academic study activities carried out at Babeş-Bolyai University in Romania two particular instances have been focused on involving two sets of relevant languages: the mother tongues of the participants and the target language of the lectures, with the intention of finding out whether and how (cross-) cultural identities may be built, negotiated and reinforced in multilingual academic contexts, and whether the deliberate intentions or alternately unconscious tendencies of the speakers at creating a community of practice are of consequence as regards the discursive strategies deployed. While our perspective is mainly that of cultural sociolinguistics, we have rallied elements of Conversational Analysis we deemed pertinent to our study. Our analytical study has managed to establish how collective or group identities emerge in academic discourse, and while their main characteristic is fluidity in the process of their nascence they generate definite bonding within the mixed ethnic participants with no encumbrance to the flow of the academic discourse and objectives. If anything, the students involved come out enriched with knowledge, information and an extra and valid identity.

Keywords: native and immersion students, situated identities, membership categorization, accepting and rejecting categorization, marked linguistic items, code switching.

Introduction

This paper aims to investigate whether and how identities are created in an academic milieu through focal activities such as discussions in interactive lectures in a multilingual and multicultural situation. We have selected two instances from a range of academic study activities carried out at Babeş-Bolyai University in Romania

involving at least two relevant languages, if we take each participant individually, and more than three if we consider them collectively. To this end we have scrutinized the video recordings of two different lectures, whose respective student audiences are ethnically diverse and different, but each of which are delivered in a linear language: the one in Romanian, the other in French. The first lecture is delivered to an eclectic audience of immersion students (German, Austrian, Polish, Russian) participating in a Romanian Culture and Civilization class in Romanian. The other is organized for a bulk of Romanian and a couple of Maghrebian students in a Business class through the medium of French, which is organized by video-conferencing and thus simulates a submersion situation – with a French tutor delivering the lecture from France in real time. On the whole, both situations are definitely *multilingual*, since a close scrutiny of the native students in the second group reveals that some of them come from bilingual Transylvanian communities: e.g. the students of Romanian nationality may be fluent in both Romanian – the majority language, and Hungarian – the main minority language in Transylvania, so that the target language of the lecture actually trebles the language count.

Methodological Framework

The analysis is grounded on the theoretical claims that identities are not merely signalled but are actually produced in talk, which is social interaction, through self- or other-categorization (Sacks, 1972, 1979, 1992, cf. Schegloff, 2007), and that such identities as are performed are of consequence (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998) for the unfolding conversation. Such conceptualisation of social identity has been consolidated by a constellation of literature. Thus to name but a few authors of such intellectual produce, Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995) have devoted an entire volume to the idea that conversations are *activities* and that people's selves and social identities are produced in face-to-face communication. It should be noted, however, that the analytic material used by the two researchers was the respondents' answers to more or less guided interviews applied to punks and rockers, and in essence their findings have shown that what (young) people *do* in conversation is rejecting categorization or labelling and giving their own reckoning of their identities).

However, the present analysis has shifted the focus onto academic discussion/debate (Markaki, 2009) deployed as tutor-student and student-student interaction in order to find out how and what type of identities are built, to what purpose, and what are the consequential conversational effects. I have started from the by now classical observation that the identity we ascribe to someone or we assume for ourselves is neither permanent nor fixed. Instead, anyone can build for oneself an identity or, alternatively, can be assigned one, an ever differing one for that matter, depending on the interactional context. Thus all individuals have a linguistic repertoire they can resort to in a given situation and may actually exploit

the structures of conversation in order to make a particular identity relevant for the context as best suits him/her (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998, p. vi). Identity is thus *occasioned* and *indexical*, for the context of the interaction warrants the choice of a social identity that is valid there and then¹.

Consequently, I have concentrated on the *situated* identities of the interlocutors under scrutiny, rather than on their *discourse* and *transportable* identities (Zimmermann, D., 1998, p. 90-91)², and on how one creates an identity for oneself that is relevant, to which the interlocutors orient, and whose force is manifested by its consequentiality in the interaction.

I have also cursorily explored what may have motivated internally and academically the students of the two groups surveyed to opt for the particular programmes they were enrolled in at the time of the video tapings, on account that this too may be consequential. For the necessary background information, I have analyzed a number of questionnaires applied to native Romanian as well as Sociates incoming students, and while the interviewees themselves are not the students in the two groups that are the object of the present study, socially and culturally they provide a representative sample. The questionnaires applied to the two categories of students (native and non-native) gathered data from: 94 undergraduate students, 33 master students, and 3 doctoral students. The questions differed slightly depending on the ethnic extraction of the target groups and their native/non-native status. Thus with the native Romanians the central questions were: *What advantages do you see in attending a course, studying a specialty or enrolling in a programme carried out in a second language? What second languages would you prefer under the circumstances?* In the case of the incoming students, as regards our own analytic interest the main queries were: *Why have you chosen to study in a Romanian university? Has this benefitted you? and If so, in what way?* On analyzing the answers we found that they provide at least a partial explanation either for the persistent use of a certain code/variety/language or for the instances of code switching (Nilep, 2006) as registered in the two classes surveyed.

I would like to point out that this empirical perspective did not apply a conversational analytic grid, but rather tried to identify the speakers' own agenda of building, accepting or rejecting cultural identities through verbal displays and

¹ According to Antaki and Widdicombe, who have surveyed the literature after Sacks, there are five principles central to ethnomethodological and conversation analytic attitude to analyzing identity: for a person to have an identity is to be cast into a category with associated characteristics or features; such casting is indexical and occasioned; it makes relevant the identity to the interactional business going on; the force of having an identity is in its consequentiality in the interaction; all this is visible in people's exploitation of the structures of conversation.

² *Discourse* identities are the ones assumed by participants in the varied sequences of an interaction: current speaker, listener, questioner, answerer, etc. The *transportable* identities are the ones that the individuals carry along across all interactional situations, they are usually visible and identifiable based on shared understandings.

conversational practices, and diagnose the ways in which the said identities become consequential.

In addition, I also hoped in the beginning to establish whether the level of individual competence in the two languages (mother tongue and second language) was a case of *ideal bilingualism* or *ambilingualism* (the speaker has native-like competence of the two languages), or was *unbalanced* and thus was a case of *semibilingualism* (the speaker's performance in the second language is (much) inferior to that in the mother tongue) (Romaine, 2001). I was keen on establishing how or whether this may affect the speaker's (unconscious or deliberate) goal of creating an identity for her/himself; and if a poor performance in the second language may not only obstruct the interactional academic flow, but also convey a distorted or an unwarranted identity. I relied on abstracting from the verbal displays of the students surveyed the language skills necessary for the successful creation of identity in a higher education context: BICS – basic interpersonal communicative skills, or/and CALP – cognitive academic language proficiency (Cummins, cf. Romaine, 2001), also referred to as context-embedded versus context-reduced skills. However, on examining the analytical corpus I realized this goal was rather ambitious, as a critical amount of the student-student and teacher-student spates of conversation were conducted prevalently in an informal register (either dictated by the choice of topic: a mundane festival recreated through personal experiences, or by the external circumstances of the discussion: course recess).

All in all, although this present study is primarily qualitative it will hopefully offer an insight into how and what type of identities are constructed in a multicultural academic setting.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The first video recording we scrutinized was that of the Romanian Culture and Civilization lecture, delivered by a Romanian tutor to an ethnically eclectic group of incoming Socrates students. Most came from what is geopolitically known as Eastern and Central Europe. While the lecture itself was 1.30 hours long, and consisted of an introduction followed by the central topic planned in the syllabus, we selected for our analytic purpose a few conversational segments quite early on in the introductory part.

The first spate of discussion we deemed relevant for our study was recorded at the beginning of the class, where the tutor announces the topic of the day through a lengthy introduction occasioned by the fact that the day is special in Romania: it's the celebration of St. Nicholas, a dual festival – religious and mundane. With this opening, the student audience were invited not only to orient to their different ethnicities but also to assume an analytical stance, with the tutor taking on the role of the representative of the target language and culture and the students as the *other*. It soon turned out that this is a celebration far from alien to several communities/nations in Central and Eastern Europe – the regions where the students in the class originate from. In fact, as the class unfolded, after the

students recounted their experiences of the festival in Romania, the tutor skilfully guided them towards giving accounts of the festival agendas of St. Nicholas in their native countries³. All in all, the issue of cultural identity was topicalized as the participants oriented to their own ethnicities as well as to that of the tutor in order to accomplish one of the lesson's objectives: discussing and contrasting a religious festival in the host and home countries.

Since the topic management of the class was congenial to asserting cultural identities, with most organizational elements concurring⁴, one would expect for membership categorization to be quite linear, thus simplifying our self-imposed task of diagnosing the ways in which categories are ascribed or assumed, accepted or rejected, in direct or oblique fashion, and if such identities as are built are consequential to the discursive actions.

The sequence below is a transcript of the tutor-initiated dialogue about the St. Nicholas token in Romania. For analytical reasons we used T for the Romanian Tutor and S1, S2, etc. for the students in the class joining the discussion.

T: așa\ chiar aș vrea să vă spun/\ două cuvinte despre România/\ ce- cum se sărbătorește/\ cred că ați văzut/ semnul cel mai ăăă- semnul simbolic pentru moș nicolae este ...

S2: bățul/

T: un băț așa te rog S2 să ne spui cum arată\

S2: un băț/ care arată așa (...) foarte (..) kitschos.

((students laugh))

[T: *so indeed I'd like to tell you a word or two about Romania about how it is celebrated I think you have seen the most symbolic sign for Father Nicholas is*

S2: *the rod*

T: *a rod so please S2 tell us how it looks*

S2: *a rod that looks like so very kitsch*]

The fact that S2 knows the answer, and that several of the other students will contribute during the class their own accounts of the specifics of this festival in their home countries, shows that this is a transnational festival and that, although varied, the local practices share sufficient features for the whole group to lead an

³ In a separate subsequent interview, the teacher mentioned that she systematically kindled discussions on and comparisons between similar experiences in different geopolitical locations as occasioned by the varied ethnicities represented in the class, and that since this had become a pattern, class interaction was understandably swift and the students were *a priori* culturally oriented.

⁴ At the beginning of the class, the tutor placed a box of candy on her own desk, which she would later use as a prompt for inviting students to speak of the customary presents that are handed out on St. Nicholas Day in their respective communities.

informed discussion on the topic. In addition, as concerns S2, her quick answers and her monopolization of the first part of the discussion points to her linguistic and ethnic background⁵ as more meaningful than that of her fellow students. Thus through her swift replica: *băț* to the embedded question addressed by the tutor to the entire audience as to what is the most symbolic sign of the festival, and her use of one particular term (*băț* is a regional variant for *nuia* (Rom. stick)) rather than any other of the several but more standardized synonyms available, S2 is seen to possess a more refined knowledge of Romanian as compared to the rest of the class. It is apparent that while S2 uses the term with ease, as part of her bulk vocabulary, for the other students this particular lexical item counts as new vocabulary. This is evidenced by the emphatic pronunciation of the word by the Tutor and by her insistence on the topic, albeit indirect, by asking S2 to describe in detail the St. Nicholas rod. This brief but significant stretch of turns exclusively between the Tutor and S2 identifies the latter as a somewhat special student who doesn't fall quite neatly into the category formed by the rest of her class mates.

Closely connected with this topic and in a sequence immediately following the one above, another interesting use comes up, it too in S2's turn, once again singularizing her within the group. Thus, S2 comes up with the word *kitsch* (or rather, a variant of *kitsch*): a word that transgresses national linguistic boundaries and echoes the transnational nature of the festival. What definitely sets S2 apart from the rest of the participants is the fact that she actually uses a variant: *kitschos*, (derived from *kitsch* through adding the Romanian male adjectival suffix, and a few turns later the female suffix, *-os* and *oasă*.)

At face value, it would seem that S2 uses the marked term *kitschos* for an unfavourable comparison of the way St. Nicholas rods are being fashioned in Romania today to the way they used to be in her childhood past or in her present adoptive country. She then presses the point by adding that the one her own grandfather used to make was the *real* thing, for the process was quite sophisticated and it involved the use of rather hard to get by implements. Compared to the refinement of the end product of past times, the current ones in Romania, S2 observes, are rather crude, for they are merely sprayed with some silvery substance you can get at your local store.

S2: de:ci ieri am umblat în oraș și nu am ăăă- și am întrebat lumea/ ce-i ce-i ce-i asta\ și mi-a spus- că e un băț era așa pentru ăăă nicolae\ și când eram eu mică și noi aveam bățul dar noi le-am făcut ă deci bunicu-meu a făcut și a stropit bățul cu așa (.) știi așa ((rubs her palms together)) o piatră::: care strălucește ă::: argintiu/ are așa mai multe::

T: mică\ se numește\

[S2: *so yesterday I walked about the town and I didn't and I asked the*

⁵ S2 is Romanian born but emigrated with her family at a young age, as alluded to in a later but untranscribed section of the class, and is now an Austrian resident.

people what what what was that and he told me it was a rod for St. Nicholas when I was little we too had the rod but we made it like so my grandfather made it and he sprinkled the rod with like so you know like so a stone that shines silver and has like several]

T: it is called mica]

As if to reconfirm her stance, when asked by the tutor to explain what she meant by *kitschos*, a requirement couching the tutor's intention to start a vocabulary building exercise through defining, in which she clearly intends to use the student to mediate for the class the definition of the word, S2 provided *ugly* as a synonym.

*T: da\ sau pur și simplu se dădea cu un- cu ceva argintiu sau auriu/ dar fin\ era vorba numai de un băț simplu care era aurit sau argintat\ acum/ ai zis că arată foarte kitschos\ te rog să ne descrii- ce-i asta foarte kitschos\
S2: urât\ deci e:: dat cu un un plastic peste el- și nu știu\ alb și roșu și albastru și nu știu\ și aaa/\ și așa- ((rubbing her fingers)) auriu/\ (smiles)*

[T: yes or it was simply brushed with something silvery or golden but fine it was just a simple stick that was silver or gold now you said it looked very kitsch please describe to us what is that very kitsch

S2: ugly so it is coated in plastic and I don't know white and red and blue and I don't know and and like so golden]

The consequentiality of the force of the identity S2 is self-ascribing can be seen in the fact that when she speaks about her current experience of the St. Nicholas festival in Cluj she uses the term *kitchos* (an oblique yet emphatic claim to *non*-Romanian identity), which, however, she forsakes when speaking of her childhood experience (apparently spent in Romania as a Romanian born citizen) which comes across as idyllic.

As an aside, it could be said that perhaps S2's Romanian extraction and possible linguistic 'residues' explain her readiness, availability and swiftness in recycling Romanian regional terms when re-immersed. This might, then, provide a neutral and unassuming explanation for the use of the term. At any rate, this too is ruled out as a comprehensive explanation, for a few turns later S1 picks it up and employs it in her own turn when speaking about *her* experience of the city of Cluj with street vendors selling Saint Nicholas rods to passers-by. The reiteration of the term in somebody else's turn signals something more complex rather than mere linguistic proficiency:

*S1: dar eu am văzut chiar dat- făcută cu spray/ asta n-a fost așa de (...)
kitchoasă*

S2 : da\ și eu am văzut și numai atunci mi-am dat seama că asta trebuie

să fie- adică (...) un un băț de moș crăciun\
T: de moș nicolae/

[S1: *but I saw one really sprayed this was not so kitsch*

S2: *Yes I saw one too and only then I realised that this has to be I mean a Santa Claus rod*

T: *St. Nicholas*]

However, S1 uses the term for the reverse effect, making an effort to mitigate the incumbent idea, and minimises its negative connotation through the use of an attenuator: *asta n-a fost așa de kitchoasă* (Eng. *this was not so kitsch*). When S2 intervenes in the next turn and makes her own amends by admitting that not all of the rods offered for sale on the streets of Cluj are equally kitsch, it shows that the two are negotiating the re-inclusion of S2 to the group of students who are advocating neutrality rather adversity towards the Romanian St. Nicholas tokens. While S2's complex citizenship and linguistic history may warrant her more complicated treatment of the cultural topic of the class, she, nevertheless, seems prepared to temper her criticism and engage in an attitudinal reunion with her fellow students.

Eventually, the tutor herself adopts the term, which rather than a mere teaching effort at reinforcement, is rather the instrument for a more complex mission: assuming a subtle yet definite intercultural stance by joining the 'guest' group even while preserving her role as the native/local who passively registers the adversarial observations of 'visitors':

T: ai găsit și altă variantă:\ mai puțin (..) kitchoasă

[T: *you found another version less kitsch*]

Thus the use of the variants of *kitsch* in the turns of three different speakers binds the speakers in a group with shared understandings. Moreover, the rest of the class too, through collective laughter and other paralinguistic behaviour, make manifest their allegiance to this particular group occasioned by particular circumstances (immersion students in a class discussing the St. Nicholas festival in Romania and sharing mixed feelings about their cultural experience of the day). It may then be said, as it has been elsewhere (Zimmermann, 2007, p. 71), that creating cultural identities in discussions about culture where the participants are of various ethnic extractions is collaborative work which may result in *co-constructed interculturality*.

Indeed, the close knit quality of the group is acknowledged yet again a few turns later, when the Tutor is prepared to pass around some chocolates from a box that had been placed on her desk at the commencement of the class. What follows is quite a long spate of discussion in which another element essential to the festival is tackled: good children receive surprise sweets on St. Nicholas night, while naughty children get a rod symbolizing an imminent punitive action:

T: ((laughs)) ai fost cuminte\

S2: da/\ ((laughs))

T: pentru cine este acest băț\ ce simbolizează\ (...) de ce se oferă acest băț\

S2: simbolizează bătaie
(râsete)

T: așa (...) și rom- românește chiar se spunea când (.) aveau (.) oamenii de la țară un băț pentru copiii care stătea sus pus acolo ca să știe că acela este moș nicolae sau sfântu' nicolae\ vine la tine dacă nu ești cuminte/\ nu trebuia neapărat să-l folosească/\ dar se știa că (.) poți fi pedepsit cu acest ă instrument\ bună dimineața\ Ț (...) așa că: tradiția (..) într-un fel s-a păstrat/

S3: da dar atunci se cumpără numai la familii care au copii/

T: de obicei ă:: (...) toată lumea sau aproape toată lumea cumpără: dar atunci cand sînt copiii în mod deosebit\ pe urmă nu mai (..) cumperi așa: și: moș nicolae ce mai (.) trebuie (.) să aducă/

S1: dulciuri

T: dulciuri\ de obicei dulciuri (..) a venit și la noi moș nicolae
(collective oh)

T: așa căăă o vă rog să circule acest moș nicolae și să vă serviți

S2: deci fără băț înseamnă că am fost

cuminti
((laughter))

T: ați fost foarte cuminti ((laughs)) dovadă

că ați venit
xxx

S3:

[T: *you've been good*

S2: *yes*

T: *whom is this rod for what does it symbolize why is this rod offered*

S2: *it symbolizes spanking*

T: *right and in Romanian they really used to say when people in the country used to have a rod for the children that stayed up there so that they should know that that is old man Nicholas or saint Nicholas he'll come for you if you are not a good child they didn't necessarily use it but they knew you could be punished with this instrument good morning so the tradition in a way was kept*

S3: *so so then it is bought only in the families who have children*

T: *usually everybody or almost everybody buys them but when there are children in particular but then you don't buy them so and Saint Nicholas what else is he supposed to bring*

S1: *sweets*

T: *sweets usually sweets Saint Nicholas has come to us too*

T: *so please have this Saint Nicholas passed around and help yourselves*

S2: *so without the rod it means we have been good*

T: *you have been very good and the proof is that you have almost all of you have come]*

Cuminți (Eng. *good*) is the word that encapsulates the essence of the Romanian St. Nicholas tradition. Children have to be well-behaved all the year round in order to receive gifts on this particular night. The several occurrences of the word *cuminți*, as in the case of *kitsch*, in multiple turns and by several speakers binds the whole group into the category of those who not only are familiar with the festival but have become immersed in it through the tutor's mediation. The tutor evaluates the students' conduct as 'good', and consequently, rewards them literally, while the students accept both the evaluation and the gift, thus complying with their role assignment.

As prefigured in the introduction of this paper, some of the verbal displays and strategies employed in this discussion resulting in juggling with group and cultural identities may be explained by the language attitudes and orientations conveyed by the questionnaire analysis. Thus the prevailing answer to the question: *Why choose Romania for tertiary studies?* was *For reasons of cultural and linguistic affiliations*, just as *Gaining life experience and the opportunity of studying a particular specialty* was to *What is the dominant advantage in studying in Romania?*, both of which prove these students' keen interest, and their willingness to 'submerge', in the host country. It should be said that over the years quite a number of students from Africa, Asia and (mostly Eastern and Central) Europe have undertaken to follow under-graduate or post-graduate study paths in Romania in a specialty that perhaps is not accessible in their home country due to high school fees or lack of accredited schools.

As regards the second lecture scrutinized, where Romanian and a couple of Maghrebian students are taking part in a Business class delivered in French, the questionnaire was devised slightly differently, and the answers supplied by the interviewees reaffirm what Ruth Wodak (2008, p. 9, 10) has announced as *multilingual hegemony*: the moving away from equality among languages and diversity to *multilingual necessity* and language skills in certain languages which are preferred to others. Thus most of the answers to the question *If you took a course/enrolled in a programme in a foreign language what language would that be?* rated English as their highest preference, followed by German and French.

The class essentially consists in the deliverance of an academic lecture by a French tutor, with only a few personal, yet methodological, touches with the tutor asking every now and then *D'accord?* during an apparent monologue. This verbal pattern can be interpreted as a verbal tic, a filler, or, more conveniently to our analytic goal, as a strategy to give time to her (foreign) students to take notes, thus signalling that the tutor is aware throughout the lecture of the students' potential difficulties in following her 'monologue' due to their different ethnicity.

This impression is consolidated by the lecturer's emphatic use of some words, mostly specialty terms, and a slower than natural rhythm of the voice.

Consequently, in the case of this group we have concentrated on the conversations unfolding during one of the ten minute breaks interspersing the lecture, and we have found some very exciting analytic material. The fragment below is the patterned closure for each of the lecture sections where the class and the French tutor agree on a break. We have used FT for the French tutor from across the screen, RT for the Romanian tutor joining the student audience in Romania, and S1, S2, S3, etc. for the interacting students. A note should be made of the fact that S1 is one of the Maghrebian students, who is actively taking part in the spate of discussion we have focused on, while the rest are native Romanian. Apparently, the only other Maghrebian student chooses to stay silent, consequently he is not featured in our transcription. If most of the exchanges with the French tutor are assumed almost exclusively by the Romanian tutor, while the students are passive receptors and only sparsely contributing *oui, d'accord* strictly when break time is discussed, during the recess itself a fairly animated conversation kindles up with several of the same students co-opted in it:

FT: nous avons fini avec les principes/ je vous propose de faire une deuxième pause\

RT: oui

FT: et puis de reprendre en dix minutes/

RT & Ss : oui

FT: d'accord/

RT: oui d'accord

FT: merci: /\

[FT: *we are finished with the principles I propose that we have a second break*

RT: *yes*

FT: *and then resume in ten minutes*

RT & Ss: *yes*

FT: *agreed*

RT: *yes agreed*

FT: *thank you*]

During the break we scrutinized, we first note the Romanian students leaving the conference room, while the Romanian tutor confers with one of the Maghrebian students (S2) on a subject issue. This apparent tête-à-tête conversation goes on for quite a while, but every now and then RT moves her head in the direction of the remaining Romanian students willing to include them in the discussion. When the departed Romanian students start returning to the room with the break

coming to an end, the extended conversation between the two has reached the more mundane, yet still school-related matter of the spring term holidays. It is quite apparent that RT is hesitant about the precise date, and it is during her turn that one of the Romanian students, S3, returns to the room and overhears her predicament:

RT: après les vacances S1: il y aura des vacances/

RT: oui (...) entre le:: (...) ((looks to S3 for help))

S3: înainte de patru aprilie

RT: înainte de quatre avril et neuf avril sera une semaine de vacances pour le Pâques

S1: je savais pas

RT: oui nous avons une semaine de vacances

S1: je savais pas

RT: bonne nouvelle

S4: sont les Pâques

S1: oui oui sont les Pâques mais je savais pas que xxx

S3: ((addressing S1)) on a eu une l'année passée aussi

S2: când

S1: xxx

RT: c'est une fête principale pour le Pâques

S2: și examenul când e/

S3: mais l'année passée a été en quinze avril ((turns to RT)) în cinșpe

S1: ah ça varie

S3: ((to S1)) oui ((to the Romanian student seated to her right)) ca și la catolici

RT: en France/

S3: ((to RT)) nu la noi când au fost paște/

S1: mais c'était en 1er mai l'année passée

RT: l'année passée en quinze avril

S1: oui je me rappelle

[RT: *after the holidays*

S1: *there are holidays*

RT: *yes between ...*

S3: *before April 4th*

RT: *before April 4th and April 9th there will be a week long holiday for Easter*

S1: *I didn't know*

RT: *good news*

S4: *it's Easter*

S1: *yes yes it's Easter but I didn't know that xxx*

S3: *we had one last year too*
S2: *when*
S1: *xxx*
RT: *it's an important holiday for the Easter*
S2: *and when's the exam*
S3: *but last year it was on April 15th on the 15th*
S1: *oh so this varies*
S3: *as for the catholics*
RT: *in France*
S3: *no for us when was Easter*
S1: *but it was on the 1st of May last year*
RT: *last year on the 15th of April*
S1: *yes I remember]*

In the conversation immediately preceding the one on the school holidays presented above, RT uses exclusively French for what may appear as two justified reasons as far as she is concerned: she is addressing a French speaking Maghrebian student and they are discussing a specialty matter. Code choice suddenly becomes an issue, and an intricate and even cumbersome one at that when the Romanian students come in and the topic shifts to the spring term recess. Rather than using exclusively French with all those present, the Romanian tutor starts to switch codes in what can be perceived as a patterned manner: she uses French when she is confident of her assertions and when she addresses a specialty matter, and she even raises her voice when she wants to include the Romanian students in the discussion. When she becomes slightly hesitant, about a more mundane subject, and she seeks aid from a Romanian student, she switches to Romanian and slightly lowers her pitch. Some of the code switching occurs intrasententially and apparently is unconscious (Gumperz, 1982, p. 60-61), as in:

RT: *înainte de quatre avril et neuf avril sera une semaine de vacances pour le Pâques*

But most of it happens at intersentential level, as the speakers changes addressees within the same turn, and they do it in a conscious manner. For example:

S3: *mais l'année passée a été en quinze avril ((turns to RT))* *în cinșpe*
S3: *((to S1)) oui ((to the Romanian student seated to her right))* *ca și la catolici*

On the whole, RT's linguistic displays can be seen as an orchestrated effort at combining the students present in different audiences thus ascribing them to alternately ethnically- or academically-determined categories.

The same code switching pattern is lucrative for the Romanian students too, with codes being switched after some swift reasoning. Thus on noticing RT's hesitation on the topic of the spring holiday, S3 intervenes providing the answer in French when addressing collectively RT and the Maghrebian student, and then, switches to Romanian in an aside to RT reinforcing her answer. This last utterance is a clear statement, albeit conveyed obliquely through code switching, that what the student orients to at that particular moment is her two interlocutors' different ethnicities, since it is obvious that the student could have stuck with French as both herself and the Romanian tutor *are* fluent in French. Thus this instance of code switching occurring intersententially on the same topic and within the same chunk of conversation is clearly addressee-directed and determined by the fact that the speaker and her pre-selected addressee share the same ethnicity.

Conclusions

We have chosen to study two different student groups and their verbal performances in two different classes: one addressed to incoming students, the other to (prevaingly) Romanian students. In the first case, the lecture was delivered in Romanian or in what counts as a second language to the attending immersion students, and in the second case, the lecture was in French, a second language to the native Romanian students. The complex ethnic structure of the two respective audiences is matched by the marked uses registered in the discussion of the first group and the complex code switching noted in the discussion of the second group, both of which are underpinned by the culturally oriented choices and membership categorizations performed by the participants.

Thus collective or group identities emerged, with members coalescing or dissipating as cued by marked lexical uses or code switching. In the first class students are seen to create at one point an *ad hoc* situated group identity which, however, is not maintained throughout the discussion, but is sinuous and intermittent. There is very little code switching as compared to the second group, where this particular strategy is prevailing. In the first group, most of the 'multilingual' discussion is carried out in the form of body language and gesturing. Indeed, it does happen for some of the students belonging to the same ethnicity when in lack of an equivalent term in Romanian to convene on the matter whispering rather than code switch in an audible voice. Unfortunately, these exchanges could not be recorded due to the absence of state-of-the-art equipment, and could only be observed. In addition, there is an explanation for such conduct, since the students are expected in such classes to perform at the top of their abilities in Romanian. They are, perhaps, reluctant to employ their mother tongue audibly lest such display should be ruled as faulty class performance. In either case, however, all participants are clearly oriented to their respective ethnic backgrounds.

As for our secondary query, concerning the linguistic level of knowledge of a second language needed for identity building, it can be definitely asserted that an

Intermediate level (B1-B2, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is sufficient, as evidenced by the discussion samples selected for analysis. If any extra proof should be required, suffice it to say that the students involved in both of the cases under scrutiny were evaluated linguistically at the start of the respective programmes or had to provide a language certificate of competence in either Romanian or French, as required. As regards the tutors, it is a compulsory requirement at Babeş-Bolyai University for all teachers lecturing in a second language to hold a C1 language certificate in the target language.

Finally, in what concerns the actual language skills needed for the successful creation of identity in an educational context: BICS – basic interpersonal communicative skills, or/and CALP – cognitive academic language proficiency, a definite conclusion has yet to be reached, since we have focused on the linguistic performance of the tutors and students involving almost exclusively the interpersonal skills necessary to successfully conduct mundane rather than specialty discussions, and the actual sections of the two classes where CALP may have been involved were rather unilateral contributions by the tutors alone, thus not occasioning a scrutiny of how all of the participants (students included) achieve building, consolidating or rejecting cultural identities.

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Appendix

Transcription Conventions		
: elongated vowel	_ accentuated word or sound	x non intelligible word
xxx several words are non intelligible	(.) 1 second pause	(...) longer pause
/ rising intonation	\ falling intonation	overlapping
(()) noises or paralinguistic e.g. laugh, clapping, sighing, transcript comments		

Diana COTRĂU

Babeș-Bolyai universitetas

TARPKULTŪRINIO IDENTITETO FORMAVIMAS AUKŠTAJAME MOKSLE: GIMTAKALBIŲ IR UŽSIENIO STUDENTŲ ATVEJO ANALIZĖ RUMUNIJOS BABEȘ- BOLYAI UNIVERSITETE

Santrauka. Straipsnyje tyrinėjamas kultūrinio identiteto formavimas akademinėje aplinkoje per tam tikrą pasirinktą veiklą, t. y. diskusijas, vykstančias interaktyvių paskaitų metu daugiakultūroje auditorijoje. Iš įvairių Babeș-Bolyai universiteto akademinės veiklos pavyzdžių gausos analizei pasirinkti du atvejai, kuriuose vartojamos dvi kalbų grupės: pirmoji grupė – tyrimo dalyvių gimtosios kalbos, antroji grupė – paskaitose vartojamos mokymosi proceso kalbos. Tyrimu siekta išsiaiškinti, kaip (tarp)kultūrinis identitetas gali būti kuriamas, nuolatos derinamas ir stiprinamas daugiakalbiuose akademinuose kontekstuose. Kartu analizuojama, kaip dalyvių sąmoningas ar netyčinis tendencingumas paveikia diskursinių strategijų pasirinkimą kuriant kalbinę bendruomenę. Tyrimas iš esmės grindžiamas kultūrinės sociolingvistikos metodologija, bet naudojami ir pokalbio analizės bei dalyvių kategorizacijos teorijų elementai. Skiriamos dvi dalyvių grupės: studentai, atvykę iš užsienio šalių, bei studentai iš Rumunijos. Analizuota pirmosios grupės paskaita vyko rumunų kalba, antrosios grupės – prancūzų kalba. Empirinė analizė parodė, kad pirmajai grupei būdingas ad hoc kuriamas identitetas, o antroji grupė identitetui formuoti dažniau naudoja kalbos kodų kaitos strategiją. Taip pat atskleista, kaip kolektyvinis arba grupės identitetas kuriamas akademiiniame diskurse. Nors pagrindinis kolektyvinio identiteto formavimosi bruožas – lankstumas ir kintamumas, jo procese sukuriami ir tam tikri ryšiai tarp įvairių tautybių dalyvių, kurie neapsunkina sklandaus akademinio diskurso naudojimo bei akademiinių tikslų įgyvendinimo. Galiausiai daugiakultūre akademinė aplinka praturtina studentus žiniomis ir informacija bei suteikia papildomų aspektų jų identitetui.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: gimtakalbiai ir užsienio studentai, kuriamas identitetas, dalyvių kategorizacija, priimtina / nepriimtina kategorizacija, svarbus kalbos elementas, kalbos kodų kaita.