

Negotiation of identities in intercultural communication

Zdeněk Janík

Masaryk University Brno, Czech Republic
janikz@mail.muni.cz

Abstract

Negotiation of identities in communication entails affirming the identities we want others to recognize in us and ascription of identities we mutually assign to each other in communication. The study of intercultural communication focuses on cultural identity as the principal identity component that defines intercultural communication. In this article, the assumption that cultural group membership factors determine the context of intercultural communication is questioned. The article examines how intercultural interlocutors negotiate their identities in various intercultural interactions. The aims of the research presented in this paper are: 1) to examine which identities – cultural, personal, or social – intercultural interlocutors activate in intercultural communication; 2) to determine whether interlocutors' intercultural communication is largely influenced by their cultural identities; 3) and to identify situations in which they activate their cultural identities (3). The research data were collected from 263 international students studying at Masaryk University in Brno in the years 2010 – 2016. Although the research results are not conclusive, they indicate that cultural identities predominate in the students' ethnocentric views and that stereotypes constrain the students' cultural identities and affect the negotiation of identities in intercultural communication.

Key words: cultural identity, facework, identity management theory, identity salience, intercultural communication, international students, negotiation of identities

Introduction

Throughout the years when the author of the study has been teaching Intercultural Communication to international students studying at Masaryk University he has always explained to the students that misunderstanding arising in their intercultural communication might not have its cause in their personal dislikes, different interests or incapacity to communicate adequately in English but it could be their failure to recognize cultural differences in styles of communication that result in miscommunication. After all, the context of intercultural communication is defined by participants in conversation and their membership

of different cultures (Janík, 2016, p. 41). The aspects of cultural group membership and cultural differences, including differences across national cultures, predominate in the definition of culture (see, for example, Samovar & Porter, 2003). Intercultural communication is thus defined as communication between people from different cultures (Gudykunst 2003a, p. 1; Kim, 2007), or people from different national cultures (Gudykunst, 2003b, p. 163), or as communication in which cultural group membership factors (such as cultural values) affect the communication process (Ting-Toomey & Chung 2012, p. 24). The study of intercultural communication then involves studying cultural group membership differences with the goal of acquiring “the necessary knowledge and skills to manage such differences appropriately” (ibid., p. 5).

It is therefore assumed that participants in intercultural communication are to be viewed as members of different cultures, such as Americans, Czechs, or Chinese, and the differences they see in their communication behavior should be attributed to and explained by their cultural group membership. Intercultural communication emphasizes the concept of culture as a group of people who share certain meanings based on their worldviews, values and experience. The view of culture as a group forces a researcher in intercultural communication to divide the participants in IC into groups according to some features they share and which “help us to understand something about them and how they are different or similar to other people” (Scollon et al., 2011, p. 3). But in Scollon’s words, “[w]hen you are dividing people up, where do you draw the line?” (ibid., p. 4). Scollon et al. warn us against presupposing that intercultural communication will be always guided by cultural group membership factors and will be influenced by cultural differences. Further, since we simultaneously participate in many other groups based not only on our culture, but also age, profession, and so forth (Janík, 2016, p. 41), group membership is multiple and intercultural communication could be also considered as “one type of intergroup communication” (Gudykunst, 2003b, p. 163). But again, can a researcher in intercultural communication know “in advance of undertaking research that people are members of different groups and what different groups they are members”? (Scollon et al., 2011, p. 278). Scollon et al. consider this a bias in the research of intercultural communication and they caution the researchers to be aware of “differences between people which may potentially lead to miscommunication, but at the same time constantly guard against assuming differences that do not actually exist” (ibid., p. 275).

This approach was not new to the author of the study herein presented when he started teaching Intercultural Communication. He has always drawn the students’ attention to the fact that they are not fully defined by membership in one single group and they should not let themselves be constrained by stereotypes - that is, assuming that group characteristics hold for every single member of the

group - but rather they should acknowledge an individual's unique characteristics as well (Janík, 2016). As an intercultural communication teacher he has likewise guarded himself against forcing his international students into predefined categories or cultural groups. As a researcher in intercultural communication, however, he did not know how to avoid the bias in intercultural communication outlined above until he asked himself the following questions: is it always cultural identity derived from membership in a culture that predominates in intercultural communication? Could not be that personal identities characterized by unique traits of the participants in intercultural communication, or their social identities derived from their membership in the same profession guide their interaction in a given context of intercultural communication? Following this logic of multiple-group membership and multiple identities, how can these questions be answered without contributing to the bias in intercultural communication? Rather than trying to assume which group membership factors or aspects of identities influence intercultural communication, it is preferable to research how participants in intercultural communication view themselves and others in various intercultural interactions and how they negotiate their identities in intercultural communication. The following chapter introduces theories of intercultural communication, social identity theory, and negotiation of identities in communication with the goal of offering an insight into the theoretical underpinning of the research.

Theory

1.1 Social identity theory

The focus on group membership, intergroup issues, and multiple identities in intercultural communication has its roots in social identity theory. According to social identity theory people derive their identity from the social groups to which they belong (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). Identity, that is one's sense of who one is, is formed in the context of interpersonal relations in which the self identifies with other selves based on some common features it shares with them. We identify with others because we hold similar views and common social identifications as members of the same group; in other words, we claim certain social identity. Social identity theory accentuates the group perspective in social identity: similar persons identify with each other and see themselves and each other in similar ways or as members of the same group (ibid.). Social identity theory also emphasizes intergroup relations: how people see themselves as similar and as members of one group (the ingroup members) in comparison with others whom they perceive as different (i.e., the outgroup members) (ibid.). Further, in social identity theory there are multiple social identities as we are members of various social groups, based on our age, sex, profession, vocation, nation, and so forth.

Since each person is a member of a unique combination of social groups, the person views herself as a unique entity distinct from others and acts in terms of her personal goals and desires, rather than as a member of a group (ibid., p. 228). The view of ourselves as unique individuals constitutes our personal identity. In sum, the social identity theory focuses on group membership, intergroup issues, and multiplicity of identities (social identities and personal identities).

1.2 Identity salience in social identity theory

The concept of multiple identities posits the question of which identity – whether personal or social – will become active in a situation. According to social identity theory, different self-concepts derived from memberships to different groups will become active as the situation changes (ibid., p. 231). In other words, one aspect of identity will predominate in a particular situation as a function of the specific relationships of the participants and the context of their interaction (Cupah & Imahori, 1993; Gudykunst, 2004). For instance, one will view herself and others as classmates in a classroom and as members of different teams in a sport competition. Activation of identity is referred to as identity salience. In social identity theory, when a social identity becomes salient, it “psychologically increases the influence of one’s membership in a group on perception and behavior (Qakes, 1987, p. 118, as cited in Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 229). To return to the example from a classroom setting, a person will feel a strong attachment or sense of belonging to her classmates who rise in protest against their teacher presenting them with an unexpected test. In this case, the person’s social identity of a classmate becomes salient. However, the situation does not say whether the social identity is actually played out or expressed: will the classmate join others in the protest or will she decide to act independently (drawn by her personal interests)? As we will see later in more detail, we need to distinguish between salience (activation) of an identity and that “an identity actually will be played out in a situation” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 230).

1.3 Cultural identity in intercultural communication

In intercultural communication, with its emphasis on cultural group membership and differences, individuals’ self-concepts are predominantly derived from their membership to cultural groups. It is not a personal identity characterized by the unique traits of an individual, nor a social identity based, for example, on a gender or profession, but a cultural identity that defines and influences the context of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication therefore focuses on cultural identity – that is the self-concepts of individuals as having certain cultural traits (e.g., set of beliefs about the world, values, thought patterns) that characterize them as members of a culture vis-à-vis

members of other cultures. Some authors consider cultural identity one type of social identity (Gudykunst, 2004) or attribute the aspect of membership to national cultures (Gudykunst, 2003b, p. 163). Others draw distinction between national and cultural identities, claiming the former means “one’s legal status in relation to a nation” whereas the latter implies “the emotional significance that we attach to our sense of belonging or affiliation with the larger culture” (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012, p. 79). Cultural identity “influences whom we befriend, what holidays to celebrate, what language or dialect we are comfortable with, and with what nonverbal gestures we are at ease in expressing ourselves” (ibid.). The content of cultural identities is defined by specific traits, such as “physical appearance, biological/racial traits, skin color, language use, self-appraisal, and other-perception factors” (ibid.)

Following the theory of identity salience introduced above, our cultural identity becomes salient, that is we become aware of the influence of our cultural identities on our communication, mostly when we are in another culture or when we are interacting with members of other cultures (Gudykunst, 2004, p. 68) or when someone asks us “Where are you from?” on our travels abroad (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012, p. 77).

1.4 Negotiation of identities in communication

Both the idea of multiple identities (social, cultural, and personal) and activation of an identity in a situation suggest that we need to approach the concept of identity not as a collection of unchangeable traits one possesses, but as a dynamic process of *identifying with* others and exploring how we see ourselves and how others see us in communication (Barker, 2003). Identities are negotiated and co-created through communication with others: they are “shaped by our own and by others’ communicated view of us” (Abrams et al., 2003, p. 210).

We communicate our sense of self to others through presentation of our *face*, that is a portrayal of ourselves we want others to recognize in us (Scollon et al., 2011, pp. 46-47). The face we present in communication reveals aspects of our identities (Gudykunst, 2003c, p. 176) and we can refer to such identities as situated identities (Scollon et al., 2011, pp. 46-47). Through our presentation of face we *avow* a certain identity; at the same time others may attribute to us (that is *ascribe*) a different identity – they recognize us, or simply see us, differently (Cupah & Imahori, 1993). Participants in communication then negotiate their favorable self-images and the images they mutually grant each other in communication (Scollon et al., 2011, pp. 46-47). They are involved in facework strategies in order to validate their situated identities (Cupah & Imahori, 1993; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

1.5 Negotiation of identities in intercultural communication: Identity management theory

Negotiation of context-situated identities has been studied also in intercultural communication. The focus here is on how situated identities are defined and enacted as a result of specific relationships of the participants in intercultural communication and the context of their interaction. Identity management theory (hereinafter refer to as IMT) “attempts to explain how cultural identities are negotiated through development of an interpersonal relationship (...) ranging from initial acquaintance to a relationship with deep intimacy and commitment.” (Cupah & Imahori, 2005, p. 196). Since development of relationships of participants in intercultural communication is not the subject of the research, the subchapter does not describe the three phases of competence in developing intercultural relationships (for more, see *ibid.*, pp. 203-205) and summarizes only the principles of IMT that are relevant to the research.

IMT admits multiplicity of identities but puts cultural and relational identity to the centre (*ibid.*, p. 197). Similarly to other scholars, IMT considers cultural identity “a focal element in intercultural communication” (*ibid.*). Relational identity then arises from particular interpersonal relationships of intercultural partners and their relational cultures (*ibid.*). Successful “negotiation of mutually acceptable identities” entails effective management of relational and cultural identities (*ibid.*, 198) and requires competent facework (*ibid.*, p. 196). As explained above, facework validates situated identities (*ibid.*, pp. 198-199). More particularly, facework involves communicative strategies we use to avoid face threats or to restore face (*ibid.*, 198). Face threatening acts include a person’s behavior that challenges another’s situated identities or her face needs for involvement and approval from others (i.e. positive face) or, on the other hand, the need for independence and autonomy from imposition by others (Cupah & Imahori, 2005, p. 198; Scollon et al., 2011, p. 48). Before we proceed to the most common face threats and facework strategies related to cultural identities in intercultural communication, let us take a close look at how IMT explains the theory of identity salience in intercultural communication.

Following the social identity theory on identity salience, IMT places salience among one of the three dimensions of identity, the other two being scope and intensity (*ibid.*, p. 197). Whereas scope is a stable dimension, signifying the size of the group of people who share the same identity, salience and intensity vary across situations (*ibid.*). Further and more importantly, IMT accentuates the difference between salience (i.e. the psychological importance an individual feels with respect to an identity) and intensity (i.e. how openly an individual expresses an aspect of identity in a given situation) (*ibid.*). The two need to be studied separately as the salience of identity is a factor that motivates the expression of

identity with high or low intensity (ibid.). To give an example, a U.S. American who is asked in an intercultural situation about her preferences for the U.S. presidential candidate in the U.S. elections will probably experience cultural identity salience. However, whether the U.S. American will communicate her cultural identity to the other interlocutor with high intensity, for example by using the style of communication characteristic of her culture or by voicing opinions congruent with the leading values of her culture, or with low intensity, for example by not expressing herself as an American, depends on the person asking her the question and the context of their interaction. Nonetheless, as will be explained in subchapter 3.4, identifying and distinguishing salience from intensity in intercultural communication is hard to accomplish. Therefore, suffice it to say with IMT that intercultural communication occurs when “people’s cultural identities are experienced as salient and distinct.” (ibid., 198).

IMT studies how in the process of negotiation of identities participants in intercultural communication issue and receive face threats to their cultural identities and proposes certain facework strategies for coping with such face threats. Especially in their first encounters and conversations, when participants in intercultural communication ask one another the question “Where are you from?” they “tend to see each other as members of their respective cultures and to ignore other aspects of each other’s identity.” (Cupah & Imahori, 2005, p. 199). They experience *identity freezing*, which threatens their face because they cannot avow an identity that differs from the cultural identity ascribed by others (ibid.). Identity freezing entails stereotyping since it forces an individual into a predefined category and disregards her unique characteristics (ibid., p. 200).

IMT suggests complex facework strategies for dealing with the face problematic related to cultural identity (see ibid., pp. 201-203). The following are strategies for restoring the face in the case of identity freezing. For example, an individual whose identity is being constrained (stereotyped) may seek self positive face support by letting others know they are threatening her face, educating them about the nature of stereotype, and asking them to stop stereotyping. Identity freezing can be also countered by mutual positive face support, in which case the intercultural interlocutor receiving the face threat laughs off the stereotype or jokes back with a stereotype applicable to the partner. Conversely, the person may respond by accepting the stereotype as true and even apologize for being true to the others’ stereotypes and thus seeking other positive face support. The last strategy is mutual negative face support in which participants in intercultural communication avoid interaction about stereotypes (ibid., 201).

The research presented below draws on the theory of cultural identity salience, identity freezing, and facework strategies in IMT. Similarly to IMT, the research

agrees that identity freezing in intercultural communication contributes to cultural identity salience. Unlike IMT, however, the facework strategies detected in the research are treated here as expressions of identity: as we will see, the facework strategies appear to reveal the intensity with which intercultural communicators communicate their identity to others who have threatened their face through identity freezing.

To summarize, the research uses the theoretical tool of identity salience and intensity to study how and in what situations intercultural interlocutors activate their cultural or other identities (i.e. personal or social identities). The research further detects facework strategies the interlocutors apply in order to deal with cultural identity freezing and how the facework strategies are closely linked to the interlocutors' intensity of expression of their cultural identity.

2. Research

2.1 Research Questions

Based on the theories outlined above, the research attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) Which identities (personal, cultural, or other social identities) do intercultural interlocutors activate in intercultural communication?
- 2) Is interlocutors' intercultural communication influenced predominantly by their cultural identities?
- 3) In what situations do intercultural interlocutors enact/activate their cultural identities?

Rather than assuming that cultural identities predominate in and define people's intercultural communication, the research studies the process of negotiation of identities in intercultural communication with the goal of finding out whether people in intercultural communication view themselves and others as members of different cultures or whether they enact identities other than cultural. The research further attempts to detect the situations in which intercultural interlocutors enact their cultural identities and how theses influence their communication.

2.2 Research sample

The research sample includes 263 international students studying at Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, who enrolled and studied in the course of Intercultural Communication in the years 2010 – 2016. The course takes place every semester on a weekly basis in the form of a two-hour seminar and its objective is to train the international students in developing their intercultural communicative competence (for more see Janík, 2016). The students in the sample came from 35 countries and Table 1 shows the top countries based on the number

of students. The prevalence of U.S. students (25% of all the students) is not relevant to the research, despite some interesting findings that will be described later. Firstly, the number of students from the U.S. but also from other countries changes every semester. Secondly, cross-cultural research that would concentrate on the comparison of two specific cultural groups (for more see Gudykunst, 2003d, pp. 149-161), for instance U.S. Americans and Spanish, was not a subject of the research.

Table 1: List of countries the research participants came from

Country	Number of students
USA	67
Spain	25
Poland	14
Greece	12
Turkey	10
Romania, Japan	8 each
Germany	7
China	6
Lithuania, Hong Kong, Taiwan	5 each
Albania, Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, Croatia, Czech, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Syria, Ukraine, UK	< 5

Listing the countries of the students and participators in the research is important for several reasons. Firstly, the research sample clearly indicates the international status of the students since they come from countries across the globe to study in a host culture that is new to most of them. Secondly, the university setting is considered one of the possible loci of intercultural communication (Barnett & Lee, 2003, p. 266) and multiple pieces of research in intercultural communication involve international students (see, for example, Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). In the class of Intercultural Communication, the pair-based or group discussion of the students in the English language is truly intercultural as they are seated in the classroom so that none of them speaks with a classmate of the same culture. What is more, the students experience intercultural communication most of the time they study at Masaryk University: in the classrooms, canteen, dormitory, when shopping, and so forth. Thirdly, although membership of a country indicates a legal status and thus cannot be equated with cultural identity,

knowing the students' country of origin is important for identifying certain groups (such as the different members of Asian cultures); further, it is significant for illustrating, but not drawing definite conclusions about, which nationalities based on country membership experience cultural identities salience and identity freezing in intercultural communication. Last but not least, indicating the country membership of the students also has a practical implication: the data collected in the research are anonymous (all the participators gave consent to the use of their data for the research) and the results herein presented are linked to the students' corresponding countries and not to their names.

2.3 Research method

The nature of the research could be characterized as qualitative: it is a case study of a smaller but focused sample providing information on how a group of international students at Masaryk University negotiate their identities in intercultural communication. The research data were collected and interpreted by means of content analysis of approximately 1300 short essays submitted by the students of Intercultural Communication in the years 2010 – 2016. More specifically, every student in the class was required to submit six short essays during the semester. The method of qualitative content analysis (for more on this method, see Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009) was implemented to look for manifest or latent expressions of identity salience in the students' essays. The essays, for the purpose of the course entitled Reflective Journals, are the students' self-reports in which they record and reflect on their intercultural experience with stereotypes, ethnocentric talks, and the like, while studying at Masaryk University. For instance, in the first essay the students are instructed to pay attention to their identities and write how identities guide their intercultural communication. In another essay the students' task is to focus on their ethnocentric perspectives and how ethnocentrism affects their intercultural communication, or similarly, they are asked to reflect on how cultural stereotypes influence their intercultural communication. The students also observe their use of non-verbal communication and reflect on non-verbal signal differences they experience in intercultural communication (Janík, 2016, p. 49). The essays essentially meet the main purpose of the course: the students interpret their intercultural experience based on the intercultural theories they study in the class. This means the students are not informed in advance of submitting their essays that their journal entries will be subjected to the research of negotiation of their identities in intercultural communication.

With the exception of the first essay, which directly asks the students about which identities (personal, cultural, or any other social identity) generally predominate in their intercultural communication, an in-depth analysis was implemented in the case of all the other essays in order to determine how the

students negotiate their identities in situations involving ethnocentric talks, experiences with stereotypes, or while encountering non-verbal communication differences. The Appendix presents extracts from some of the students' essays that were analyzed for identity salience and intensity, identity freezing, and facework strategies. Patterns of cultural identity salience and the circumstances leading to the salience (i.e., ethnocentric views and perception of differences in communication behavior) are highlighted in the extracts. Examples of cultural identity salience and high or low intensity due to identity freezing are presented in Tables 2a – 2c and Table 3.

2.4 Research findings: Experience of cultural identity salience in intercultural communication

1. The students experienced cultural identity salience when perceiving themselves or others as members of different cultures. The perception of cultural differences was most apparent in situations involving communication behavior: 80% of the students experienced cultural identity salience in situations in which they perceived differences in their styles of communication and they ascribed the differences to their cultural membership. This is in accordance with the premise that members of different cultures use different styles of communication, such as high-context or low-context communication (Hall, 1976), or that non-verbal communication differs across cultures (Liu et al., 2011, pp. 139-152; Ting-Tomney & Chung, 2012, pp. 130-153). The most common situations in which the students experienced cultural identity salience due to communication styles differences involved:

- Use of smile in communication with others and not getting from them the response they expected (experienced by 32% of the U.S. American students; one Turkish student).
- Experiencing a lack of personal space when communicating with others (U.S. 28%, others: China, Japan).
- Experiencing less or no eye-contact than they expected based on their culture (U.S. 13%, others: Albania, Greek, Spain).
- Experiencing more or excessive eye-contact than they expected based on their culture (Japan, China).
- Perceiving oneself as different/not feeling comfortable when encountering frequent use of touch, hugging and kissing for greeting (U.S. 25%, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Cambodia).
- Perceiving oneself and being perceived as different from members of other cultures because of the frequent use of touch, hugging and kissing for greeting (Turkey 60%, Spain 60%, Greece 50%, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Albania).

- Perceiving oneself as loud in comparison to the host culture (noticing how quiet the people in the host culture are) (Spain 60%, Greece, U.S., Mexico, Brazil, South Africa)
- Being more direct in communication and personal than members of other cultures (US 15%)

Quite an interesting finding is the one concerning the use of touch in communication and hugging and kissing as behavioral patterns in greeting conventions. There were students expressing cultural identity salience due to encountering excessive use of such communication behavior and, on the other hand, there were students whose cultural identity salience was a result of limited use of or disapproval with the communication behavior in intercultural communication.

2. Forty-six percent of the students experienced cultural identity salience due to their ethnocentric views. In other words, they assigned psychological importance to their cultural identity when judging others from the perspective of their own culture and comparing others' cultures to their own (for definitions of ethnocentrism, see for example Samovar & Porter, pp. 6-17; Begley, 2003, pp. 406-411). The situations included the following:

- Identifying with others as ingroup members, i.e. members of the same culture: sharing the Mediterranean culture (Greece 4, Turkey 3); experiencing cultural identity salience when sharing ethnocentric views within ingroups (Spain 32%, US 13%, China 2).
- "The members of host culture are rude/cold/reserved/quiet" as opposed to "My culture is more easygoing" (U.S., Greek 3).
- "The people in the host culture do not speak English/speak English less than expected" (U.S.).
- "Northern cultures are more distant than people from the southern Europe" (Greek 2).
- "My Greek friends and I always complained about the Czech food. Greek products/food/civilization/weather are better" (Greek 4).
- "Eating habits: sharing plates with others, sitting around the table" versus other/host cultures' eating habits (China 3).
- Power distance difference: "the teachers are not respected here as they are in my culture" (Greek 2, China 1, Taiwan 1, Poland 1).
- Following the values of modesty, quiet, and indirectness in Asian cultures and noticing how different they are from the values of self-confidence, loudness, and directness in western countries (Asia 42% - China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan).

- Following the value of restraint as opposed to other students' value of drinking and partying (China 2).

The situations in which the students experienced cultural identity salience due to their ethnocentric views routinely involved comparison of cultural practices (eating habits), climate, value systems, and behavior of the members of other cultures (they do not speak English; they are cold and reserved). The last example of ethnocentric views could be also linked to stereotyping. Stereotyping was studied separately as a factor influencing the students' cultural identity salience *and* intensity due to identity freezing. Before we proceed to identity freezing, however, it needs to be emphasized that the research into the cultural identity salience experienced as a result of the students' perception of differences in communication behavior and their ethnocentric views does not reveal the intensity with which the students expressed their cultural identity in such situations. All the situations presented above, and as described by the students in their essays, point only to the attachment the students felt to their cultural identity (i.e. cultural identity salience) when, for example, being greeted differently than they expected or comparing the values of their culture to those in other cultures. However, it is impossible to detect from the students' description of the situations whether they openly expressed their cultural identity by, for example, insisting on greeting others the way they are used to in their culture or by letting the others know what their cultural values are. We can only presuppose that a student, who ascribes her use of smile and eye-contact to the expression of her cultural identity (cultural identity salience) but witnesses a lack of such communication behavior in others, will nevertheless go on to express her cultural identity by smiling at others as she is used to (high intensity of cultural identity) or will retreat from her culturally-induced communication (low intensity). As explained in subchapter 1.5, such presuppositions of the influence of cultural group factors on intercultural communication create bias in the research. Therefore, the intensity with which the students expressed their salient cultural identities in situations involving communication behavior and ethnocentric views was not studied in this part of the research.

The third part of the research focused on the students' experience of cultural identity salience caused by cultural identity freezing (i.e. stereotyping). When being perceived by others as different because of their cultural membership, the students used certain facework strategies to counter the face threats and negotiate their identities with others. The research identifies the facework strategies described by the students in the essays and reveals how the strategies point at the intensity with which the students communicated their cultural identity to others who threatened their face by identity freezing.

2.5 Research findings: Experiencing cultural identity salience and intensity in intercultural communication

Based on the interpretation of the students' essays, 40% of them experienced cultural identity salience due to cultural identity freezing (stereotyping). Tables 2a – 2c summarize the most frequent examples of identity freezing and stereotyping resulting in the students' cultural identity salience and their use of certain facework strategies. The facework strategies demonstrate the high intensity with which the students avowed their cultural identities. The avowal of cultural identities clearly indicates how the students negotiated their identities with others who threatened their face in intercultural communication.

Table 2a presents examples of cultural identity salience activated by the students' impression, which they gathered through their experience in intercultural communication, that they are representatives of their cultures (first column). The facework strategies the students used in order to deal with this identity freezing corresponds to other positive face support in Identity Management Theory (see subchapter 1.5), as the students seem to accept the stereotypes as true. What is more, as we can see in the second column of Table 2a, the students were determined to express their cultural identity ascribed to them with high intensity, claiming that they should represent their culture in the best light. The third column lists the cultural membership of the students.

Table 2a Experience of cultural identity salience and high intensity as a result of identity freezing and other positive face support

Cultural identity salience	High Intensity of Cultural Identity	Cultures
Representing one's own culture:	Representing their cultural identity in the best way:	Hungary, Ukraine, Greece, Germany, Estonia, Japan, China
"I represent Greece..."	"...so I need to show these traits that people expect to see from me because I am from Greece."	
"My acquaintance will make an image of my country due to my behavior"	"I try to represent the best and fit in."	

"They ask me what Hungarians are like."	"I'm trying to be extra friendly and nice to give a good picture of Hungarians."	
---	--	--

Most of the Romanian students, twenty-four percent of the Spanish and eighteen percent of the U.S. American students experienced cultural identity salience due to negative stereotypes (see the first column of Table 2b). The students responded to this identity freezing by self-positive face support: they let the others know they were threatening their face. In using this facework strategy they were expressing their cultural identity with high intensity (second column) in order to defy the negative stereotypes.

Table 2b Experience of cultural identity salience and high intensity as a result of identity freezing and self-positive face support

Cultural identity salience	High Intensity of Cultural Identity	Cultures
"All Romanians are gypsies." "Chinese eat dogs." "They had a preconceived notion that I was an arrogant American."	Defending one's own culture against the stereotypes.	Romania 5 out of 8, Spain 24%, US 18%, Greece, France, China, South Africa
"Turkey has a bad impression on European people." "They ask me if people in Turkey drink alcohol or have many wives."	"I usually have to explain to them how some stereotypes are wrong."	Turkey 4 out of 10

Table 2c shows an interesting negotiation of identities concerning the students from Canada, China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The students reported to be mistaken for another culture (e.g., a Canadian student was thought to be a U.S. American, a student from Taiwan was ascribed the cultural identity of Chinese), which clearly points at identity freezing. Identity freezing here initiated the students' strong feelings towards their cultural identity (first column) and their need to avow their correct cultural identities with high intensity (second column).

Tab. 2c: Experience of cultural identity salience and high intensity as a result of identity freezing and self-positive face support

Cultural Identity Salience	High Intensity of Cultural Identity	Cultures
Being ascribed other cultural identity than one avowed	Activating (avowing) one's cultural identity	Canada, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong

Similarly to Table 2b, the first column in Table 3 presents how the students' cultural identity became salient due to identity freezing (negative stereotyping). Unlike in the tables above, however, the students' response to the identity freezing was to "keep a low profile" of their cultural identity. In other words, fifteen percent of the U.S. students and two Chinese students reported that they avoided expressing their cultural identity or they communicated their cultural identity to others with low intensity (see the second and third column). The students' facework does not seem to correspond to any of the facework strategies of IMT introduced above, as the students did not report which identity other than the cultural one they avowed towards those threatening their face. The picture of identity negotiation in intercultural communication is, therefore, in this case incomplete.

Table 3 Experience of cultural identity salience and low intensity as a result of identity freezing

Cultural Identity Salience	Low/no Intensity	Cultures
"Americans are ignorant or arrogant."	"Holding back and not fully expressing myself as an American."	U.S. 15%
"I did not want to be thought of as a narrow minded, Trump-loving American."	"I want to be proud of my country but it is hard to talk about it with some people for the fear that I will say something dumb about European politics or world views and that will just add to the idea that Americans know nothing."	

"I assumed my U.S. identity influences others' perception of myself."	"I don't want to be <i>that</i> American (...) I'm careful in how I present myself."	
"We have the reputation of being loud and outspoken."	"I started noticing here that I try not to stand out by smiling too much or talking too loud and fast."	
"Westerners have negative feelings to the Asians."	"I tend to be quiet and avoid contact most of the time."	China 2 out of 6

The research findings as presented so far are the following:

- 1) The students' intercultural communication is predominantly influenced by their cultural identities. Eighty percent of the students experienced cultural identity salience in situations in which they perceived differences in their styles of communication, forty-six percent of the students experienced cultural identity salience due to their ethnocentric views, and forty percent of them experienced cultural identity salience due to cultural identity freezing (stereotyping).
- 2) The question whether the students activated their cultural or any other identities in intercultural communication was answered only partially. The research into cultural identity salience experienced as a result of the students' perception of differences in communication behavior and their ethnocentric views did not disclose the intensity with which the students expressed their cultural identity in such situations, nor did it show whether and how the students negotiated their identities. The research, however, provided some instances of the students' activation (high intensity) and negotiation of cultural identities when experiencing identity freezing.

Although it can be concluded that cultural identity largely influenced the students' intercultural communication, some students reported feeling attachment to other identities as well.

2.6 Research findings: Enactment of other than cultural identities in intercultural communication

Based on the interpretation of data collected from the students' essays, some students from the U.S., Germany, Spain, Poland, France, Turkey, and Taiwan:

- Experienced personal identity salience in intercultural communication, claiming to view themselves and others as unique individuals.

- Experienced a social identity salience, identifying themselves and/or others as students or international students.
- Experienced a European identity salience.

Although the data correspond to single instances and thus are not quantified, personal identity salience repeatedly occurred among students who openly expressed in their essays multiple cultural memberships or a previous experience with long-term stays in host cultures or with intercultural communication. This was the case of a German Turk student, a student whose mother was a Czech and father a U.S. American, and a Ukrainian student living in Germany. A bicultural identity (see for example Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012, pp. 224-225) or intercultural sensitivity developed thanks to a long-term experience with living abroad or intercultural communication (see *ibid.*, pp. 164 – 165) are likely to transform the view of oneself and others in intercultural communication from cultural identity salience to relational identity salience (Cupah & Imahori, 2005), but this would be a topic for a different paper. At the same time, the factors mentioned above must not be ignored as they influence the context of intercultural communication as well as other factors that were not subjected to the research but quite likely impacted the students' intercultural communication and affected the research result. The last subchapter briefly comments on the possible shortcomings and provides suggestions for further research.

1.7 Challenges and Suggestions for Further Research

1) The research method, based on interpretation of data collected from the students' essays, proved to be insufficient for the goal to detect the intensity with which the students expressed their identities. The goal was met only when the students reported about the facework strategies they used to counter identity freezing. A more adequate research method would include an observational study of the students' intercultural interactions, or, in order to rule out the researcher's interference, recording and subsequently studying the students' interactions. Further, a semi-structured interview, rather than self-reports, would yield more reliable data.

2) The research sample also questions the reliability. The sample consisted exclusively of the students in the course of Intercultural Communication in which they gained knowledge and expertise in the theories of Intercultural Communication. This fact might have influenced the students' interpretation of their intercultural experience as reported in their essays, because they might have been motivated to answer "in accordance to the theories". It is therefore essential for further research to include in the sample also other international students studying at Masaryk University.

3) The research did not take into consideration the following factors that could have determined the students' intercultural communication:

- a) Culture shock. To counter this shortcoming, a further research will be required, incorporating the theories of cultural adjustment, adaptation, and acculturation (see, for example, Kim, Y. Y., 2003, pp. 243-257).
- b) Development of the students' intercultural relationships over the time spent in the host culture (Cupah & Imahori, 2005, pp. 196-197). To monitor such development means conducting repeated interviews with the same sample of respondents for a set period of time.
- c) Gender factor. Gender did not seem to influence the students' enactment of cultural identities. On the other hand, gender should not be ignored, as it is a significant aspect of identity that is negotiated in communication.

Conclusion

The case study conducted in the years 2010-2016 revealed that the students' (N=263) cultural identities influenced their intercultural communication particularly in situations in which they perceived cultural differences in communication behavior (80% of the students), experienced ethnocentrism (46%) and stereotyping (40%). The last also enabled us to see how the students negotiated their situated identities when these are threatened due to identity freezing. Although the research results show congruence with the theories claiming that cultural identities define the context of intercultural communication, the research does not come to a definite conclusion on the question of which identities – personal, cultural, or social – predominate in intercultural communication, also because the research fell short of fully determining the process of negotiation of identities in intercultural communication. The research will therefore incorporate suggestions listed above to counter its shortcomings and will continue in the attempt to analyze how participants in intercultural communication negotiate their identities.

The research results so far, and the forthcoming research in negotiation of identities in intercultural communication, will find their application in teaching intercultural communication. Cultural awareness, becoming aware of one's own culture and how this influences intercultural communication, is one of the key components of the development of intercultural competence (Janík, 2016, p. 43). Knowing which identities intercultural interlocutors activate will tell us whether and to what extent they are aware of the influence of their culture on intercultural communication and which "identities affect their choice of meanings they assign to messages exchanged in intercultural communication" (ibid., p. 44). Further, knowing that ethnocentrism is closely related to cultural identity salience, as the research revealed, becomes significant for teaching ethnocentrism. Students of

intercultural communication will learn that cultural identity determines their ethnocentric perceptions and in what situations they will mostly experience cultural identity salience due to ethnocentric views. Lastly, knowing how stereotypes constrain cultural identities or prevent one from avowing another identity than the one ascribed by others, is essential for understanding how stereotypes influence intercultural communication and for learning strategies that will enable intercultural interlocutors to successfully negotiate mutually acceptable identities.

References

- Abrams, J., O'Connor, J., & Giles, H. (2003). Identity and Intergroup Communication. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Cross-cultural and Intercultural Communication* (pp. 209-224). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Barker, CH. (2003). *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.
- Barnett, G. A., & Lee, M. (2003). Issues in Intercultural Communication Research. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Cross-cultural and Intercultural Communication* (pp. 259-273). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Begley, P. A. (1998). Sojourner Adaptation. In M. Byram & M. Fleming (Eds.), *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective: Approaches through Drama and Ethnography* (pp. 406-411). Cambridge: CUP.
- Cupach, W. R., & Imahori, T. (1993). Identity Management Theory. In R. L. Wiseman & J. Koester (Eds.), *Intercultural Communication Competence* (pp. 112-131). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Cupach, W. R., & Imahori, T. (2005). Identity Management Theory: Facework in Intercultural Relationships. In W. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about Intercultural Communication* (pp. 195-210). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2003a). Cross-cultural Communication. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Cross-cultural and Intercultural Communication* (pp. 1-5). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2003b). Intercultural Communication. Introduction. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Cross-cultural and Intercultural Communication* (pp. 163-166). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2003c). Intercultural Communication Theories. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Cross-cultural and Intercultural Communication* (pp. 167-189). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2003d). Issues in Cross-Cultural Communication Research. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Cross-cultural and Intercultural Communication* (pp. 149-161). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2004). *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication*. (4th Edition). London: Sage.

-
- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. New York: Doubleday.
- Janík, Z. (2016). English Language as a Cultural Tool for Intercultural Communication. *CASALC Review*, 2, 39-50.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2003). Adapting to an Unfamiliar Culture. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Cross-cultural and Intercultural Communication* (pp. 243-257). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2007). Ideology, Identity, and Intercultural Communication: An Analysis of Differing Academic Conceptions of Cultural Identity. [Electronic version]. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 36:3, 237-253. Retrieved from:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/17475750701737181>.
- Liu, S., Volčič, Z., & Gallois, C. (2011). *Introducing Intercultural Communication: Global Cultures and Contexts*. London: Sage.
- Samovar, L. A., & Porter, R. E. (2003). Understanding Intercultural Communication: An Introduction and Overview. In L. A. Samovar & R. E. Porter (Eds.), *Intercultural Communication* (10th Edition) (pp. 6-17). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Scollon, R., Scollon, S. W., & Jones, R. H. (2011). *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*. Somerset, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory. [Electronic version]. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63:3, 224-237. Retrieved from: <<http://wat2146.ucr.edu/papers/00a.pdf>>.
- Ting-Toomey, S., & Chung, L. E. (2012). *Understanding Intercultural Communication*. (2nd Edition). Oxford: OUP.
- Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. M. (2009). Qualitative Analysis of Content. [Electronic version]. *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 308-319. Retrieved from: <https://www.ischool.utexas.edu/~yanz/Content_analysis.pdf>.

Contact

Mgr. Zdeněk Janík, M.A., Ph.D.
Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Education, Masaryk University
Poříčí 7, 603 00 Brno
janikz@mail.muni.cz

Appendix

Example of cultural identity salience:

*I've been communicating with people of other cultures on a daily basis for about two months and I believe that my identity really depends on with who I am communicating (...) Although almost always my **cultural identity as an American comes first** and can even be my identity throughout the entire exchange.*

Examples of cultural identity salience experienced due to ethnocentric views (1-3):

- 1) *I have realized that as a Greek student I **feel more comfortable** when I communicate **with Italian, Spanish or Portugal** people because we are coming from collective countries and our ways of living have **many similarities**.*
- 2) *It is rather weird to see that Czech people or Western cuisine have very few vegetables (...) In this case we definitely used **our own culture's standard to judge the eating habit** of each other's.*
- 3) *In my culture you should **not talk** over when somebody else is saying their opinion. By the debates of **American people**, the atmosphere in class was changed. **I judged from the Japanese culture** that they argue a lot (...) I was really overwhelmed by their energy and also a bit scared.*

Examples of cultural identity salience experienced as a result of perceived differences in communication (1-4):

- 1) *Having only been in the Czech Republic for a month now I feel like I have noticed that people in general here are **much quieter than Americans** (...) I feel like **Americans** in general are more **talkative and outgoing** (...) in America people are always **smiling** at each other, waving and shaking hands. **Rarely here** in Brno do I see **people smiling** on the tram or while they are out and about waving at friends.*
- 2) *For **me as an Arab**, I use **my hands gestures** and my **body language** more than any **different** culture, which seemed a bit strange for some people...*
- 3) *One of the biggest **shock** initially and still today is how the **Spanish, Greeks**, and other European countries **kiss on the cheeks** when meeting or seeing each other. **Growing up in America**, I had never seen this method of greeting...*
- 4) *As **South Africans** our non-verbal communication is very much based on affection and non-verbal actions. It would be normal for me to walk in the street at home (...) to **make eye contact** with them and give them a brief **smile** or a nod of the head (...) When I first arrived **here** it was so strange **not to get a response** to this greeting. I suddenly **realized** that it is something unique to **my culture**...*