

Identity, language and power dynamics in online exchange

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This presentation

- ▶ Identity in online exchange and language learning
- ▶ Context of this study – the Soliya Connect Program
- ▶ Research questions and methodology
- ▶ How do participants construct identities, affiliations and disaffiliations?
- ▶ How do identities impact participation?
- ▶ How do the pedagogic model and design of space influence identity construction?
- ▶ Participants' personal reflections

Where I'm coming from and who I am

- ▶ Teach English at the Department of Political Science, University of Padova, Italy.



A screenshot of the UNICollaboration website. The page features a navigation menu with items like Home, Partners, Tasks, Sample projects, Evaluation, Training, Forums, About UNICollaboration, and My account. A world map displays numerous orange location pins across various continents. A "Member login" section includes fields for "Username or email" and "Password", along with buttons for "Login" and "Forgot your password?". At the bottom, there are welcome messages for educators and students, and a "Welcome" section with introductory text about the platform's purpose.

Bilingual, 'bicultural' models and learner identities



eTandem

The Cultura Exchanges Site



[Home](#) [What is Cultura?](#) [Methodology](#) [Teacher's Guide](#) [Archives](#) [FAQs](#) [Articles](#) [News](#) [Credits](#)

What is Cultura?

I Introduction

Cultura is a Web-based, intercultural project situated in a language class, that connects American students with other students in different countries. Designed and created in 1997 by a team from the French Section at MIT (Gilberte Furstenberg, Sabine Levet and Shoggy Waryn), it has been developed thanks to an initial grant from the Consortium for Foreign Language Teaching and Learning and a subsequent one from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the French Initiatives Endowment Funds at MIT. It was originally created as an exchange between American and French students. It has since been adapted to other schools and languages, for instance connecting students in the US with students in Germany, Italy, Mexico, Russia, Spain.

Welcome to eTandem

The purpose of these pages is to introduce learners all over the world to the opportunity of learning a language with eTandem and to make it easy to get started. We offer free search for eTandem in all languages, help for learning, tips for teachers etc.

eTandem with a partner is fun and effective

eTandem - how does it work?

When you work together with a learning partner from another country - by telephone, e-mail or via a chat - you learn his or her language while he or she* learns your native language. [Learn more...](#)

Can you learn with eTandem?

Above all, you learn to understand the language better and to express yourself in it - and this in an authentic oral situation. But you can learn much, much more from each other. [Learn more...](#)

eTandem partners learn from each other?

Speak and/or write about topics of interest in your own language. You learn from what your partner writes or says in his or her native language and from his or her corrections and help in your language. [Learn more...](#)

Who is eTandem suitable for?

eTandem is suitable for anyone who is presently learning a language or who wishes to brush up on old skills. Basic knowledge of the foreign language will generally suffice. Anyone can take part, regardless of age, profession, place of residence. [Learn more...](#)

How can I find an eTandem partner?

We bring eTandem partners from all over the world together, free of charge for all languages. Even for less-commonly taught languages there are possibilities of finding you a partner. [Learn more...](#)

The first steps

We have compiled tips to make it easy for you and your eTandem partner to get your learning partnership started. [Learn more...](#)



Aims to:

- Establish a deeper understanding for the perspectives of others around the world on important socio-political issues and why they feel the way they do;
- Develop “21st Century Skills” such as critical thinking, cross-cultural communication and media literacy skills.

Home

Login

and defined
generation &



to join our
committed



We're constantly up to new & exciting adventures. Sign up for our newsletter to stay informed on the latest.



Seda Akran
Connect Program Facilitator
From: Istanbul, Turkey

Overview

What We Do

Exchange 2.0

Everything we do at Soliva combines best practices for constructive dialogue with innovative use

This research study

- ▶ How do participants construct identities, affiliations and disaffiliations through interaction?
- ▶ What effect do these identities have on participation?
- ▶ How do the pedagogic model and the design of the online space influence identity construction in this situated learning context?
- ▶ **Research method:** Membership Categorization Analysis and multimodal analysis
- ▶ **Dataset:** video recordings and text transcripts of 7 sessions of Soliya Connect Program; diaries and final papers
- ▶ **Support:** Nvivo software for qualitative data analysis

What is MCA?

MCA, which is considered a strand of Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis **identity is seen as being constructed by participants** as they engage in interaction and *display* or *ascribe* to membership of what Sacks (1992 in Antaki and Widdicombe) has called **categories**, which have associated *characteristics* or *features*.

It is participants who do identity work, not analysts, it is they who 'orient to' something as live or operative, without necessarily naming it out loud.

For a person to 'have an identity' – whether he or she is the person speaking, being spoken to, or being spoken about is to be cast into a category with associated characteristics or features;

The force of 'having an identity' is in its consequentiality in the interaction;

▶ (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998, Identities in Talk)

Different types of identity

Zimmerman's (1998) makes a distinction between situational identities, discourse identities and transportable identities.

- ▶ **Situational identity** (context specific, institutional): facilitators and participants in Soliya
- ▶ **Discourse identity** (assumed in sequentially organized activities): eg. Speaker-listener, questioner-respondent
- ▶ **Transportable identity** (travels across situations): a visible identity which is “assignable or claimable on the basis of physical or culturally based insignia which furnish the intersubjective basis for categorization”.

Situational and transportable identities

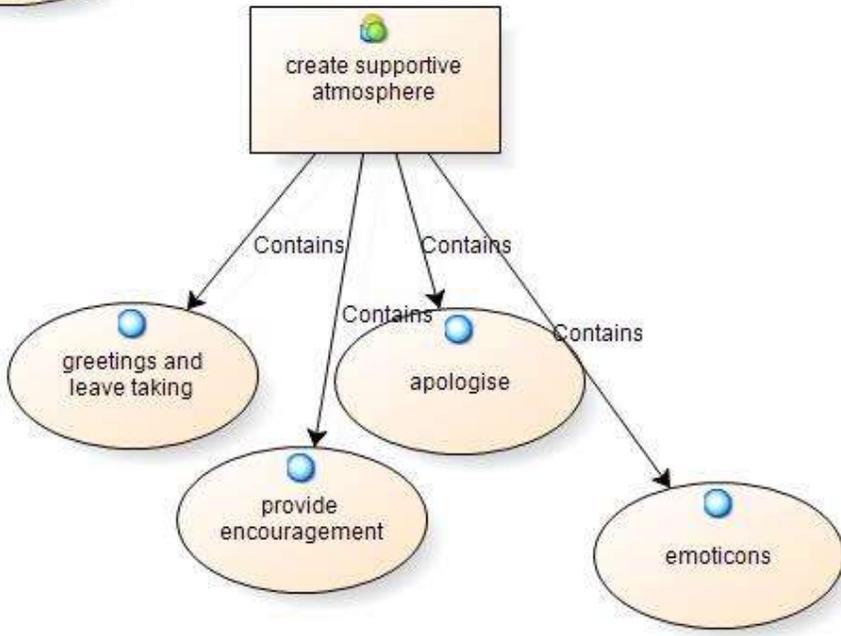
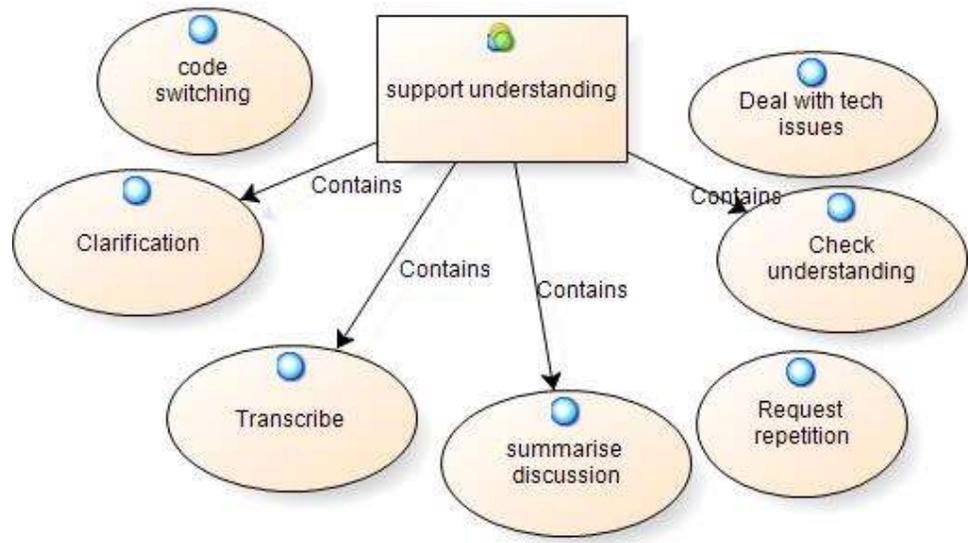
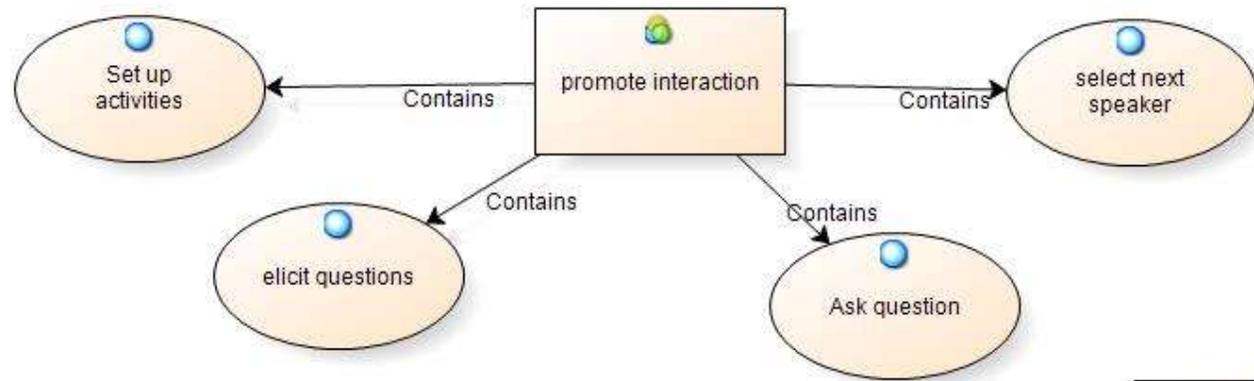


The Soliya Connect Program

www.soliya.net

Facilitator identities

- ▶ **Transportable identities:** both female, one European, other Middle-Eastern – wearing veil, visible Muslim symbol – not often made relevant in sessions
- ▶ **Discourse identities – support situational identity:** greeter, organiser of activities, organiser of turns, questioner, elicitor of questions, transcriber, summariser, prober, encourager





FacM: •Why they decided to participate in the program.?

FacW: what are you hoping to gain from it

FacW: Jack - see other people's viewpoints

FacW: Jack: more personal insight

FacW: that's great! Thanks

FacW: What do you expect to gain from Soliya?

FacW: Alef_ same as Jack

FacW: heard from classmate

FacW: excited about this opportunity to talk about issues that all humans share

FacW: like religion, politics,

FacW: exciting to meet others from other parts of the world

FacW: and what they think of me, my country and people

FacW: Thanks Alef

FacW: FacM: let's hear more from our ladies

FacW: :-)

FacW: Deni: taking a class at uni of maryland

FacW: prof wanted 5 volunteers

FacW: Class is about intercultural dialogue

FacW: with Arab world

...

FacW: Fadela: suggested by the teacher

FacW: F: will graduate this semester

FacW: hopefully will get to know more people this semester

FacW: ok guess we could have a male?

FacW: to talk now I mean

FacW: Brendan: also suggested by teacher

FacW: to get opinions from other people

FacW: clas is Middle East and media

Participant identities

- ▶ Discourse identities (eg responding to facilitator questions or tasks) reflect situational identities, ie participants
- ▶ Participants produce talk that aligns them with other participants - shared membership categories (affiliation with Soliya)
- ▶ Different aspects of participants' transportable identities are made relevant in interactions by facilitators and participants
- ▶ Identities can empower (or disempower) participants and foster (or hinder) participation in discussions

FacW: Thamena: I don't thin the Americans weill help us

FacW: Thamena: they made the situation worse in Iraq

FacW: Alef _ I do agree with you Thamena

FacW: the kind of help in Iraq wasn't what the Iraqis needed

FacW: but in Tunisia and Egypt

FacW: they are not going to help with militatry force

FacW: but food medical help, logistics

.....

Alef: com on JACK :D

FacW: slowly please :-)

FacW: Jack: I don't exactly think the US did everything right
obviously

FacW: the proper way

FacW: Jack: don't know what to say

FacW: I don't know what exactly we are supposed to do

FacW: I'm on the other side, the outside looking in

FacW: so it's hard for me to say

FacW: it's hard to speak about teh government with teh cat

FacW: in front of the computer

Extract from
session 1



FacW: quick round

FacW: of what liked or didn't like about program,

FacW: then final activity

FacW: Jack: liked hearing everyone's opinion

FacW: and haven't felt personally victimised by anyone in the group

FacW: something I personally was paranoid about was that I was going to be the American

FacW: and the bad guy

FacW: but nobody made me feel like that

FacW: I've missed people when they haven't been here

FacW: and actually hearing about stuff that is not a popular issue here

FacW: like the Palestine/Israel question

Extract from
session 7

'Non-native speaker' identities

FacW: how do you feel about using English as a language in this program

FacW: and for video project

FacW: are you happy with it?

FacW: Mohammed: found it difficult at times, but facs made it easier :-)

...

FacW: Fadela: feels comfortable speaking English

FacW: after session will go home and continue speaking English - right?

FacW: is happy about using English

Extract from
session 7

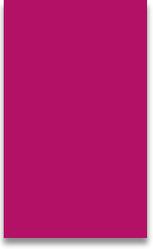
My paper is a reflection. I want to explain how Soliya prompted me to flush out the stereotypes that prevented me to practice my work with more respect for the foreign people I meet.

I am a police woman, I love my job because I can help people.

The most important thing for the work I do is to be impartial, to work without prejudices, respecting everyone regardless of race, religion or social status.

I am a believer, my religion taught me the love for neighbor, for the enemy and for the last.

Despite the principles that I have since I was born, some time ago I **discovered I also had a little form of racism**. Several incidents have helped me to arrive at this result



I was at this point of my work experience when Soliya came into my life.

Two things united Soliya to my life and to my work: **my difficulty with English language** and **my dislike to the non-European people** of the last period.

The first session of Soliya was strong. American, French, Tunisians and Moroccans, were all in the same chat room and **all spoke the same incomprehensible language!**

When I closed the first chat, **I decided to drop out.** But nothing is random and if Soliya had entered in my life there had to be a reason.

So the second meeting arrived , and with it the consideration that in front of me there was an opportunity to be seized: **to know my "enemies" in their own home**, in their country; I could better understand their personality and maybe improve my way to work .

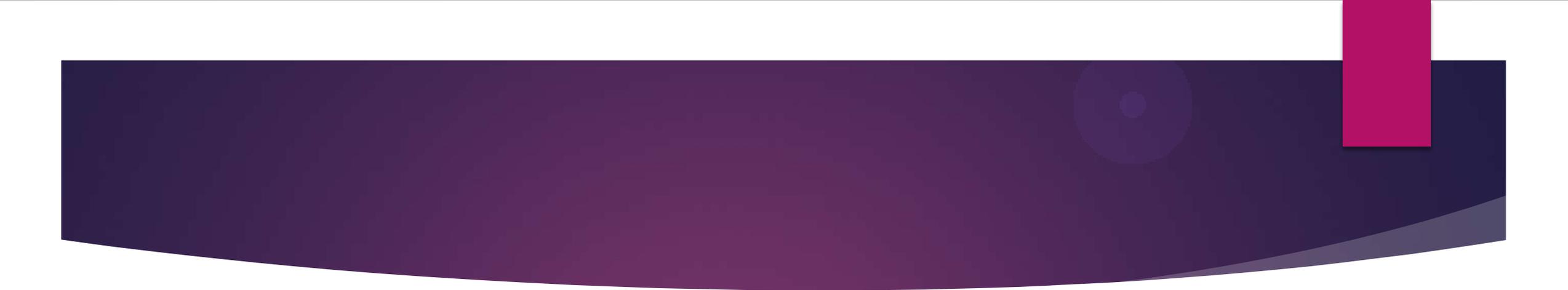
My experience with Soliya continued , at the beginning it was to be just an experience to improve the way I work and my English language, **I now realize that this experience has changed me.**

So, I arrived at the end of the program, meeting after meeting awareness has grown: **we are really all brothers**, with our weakness, our ideas, our ideals, sentiments and fragility.

I have certainly to **thank my fellow travelers** because they dug inside my heart, so I could discover and crush that small part of racism that kept me from living completely tolerance. **I think the school plays its role when it manages to transmit not only knowledge but also to look from a different perspective at things.**

Impact of pedagogic design and IT interface

- ▶ Not designed for EFL, English learners did not position themselves as learners
- ▶ Activities were designed to call different aspects of identity into play
- ▶ Facilitators were trained to make use of identities
- ▶ Facilitators sought to address power imbalances
- ▶ Video/audio makes aspects of transportable identities salient



Any questions?

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