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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION OPPORTUNITIES BY THE SOUNDING OF FOOD LIKES AND DISLIKES

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***Abstract:** In a world where globalization has been pointed out as a main social and political phenomenon, but improved by cultures in a ‘glocalization’ way, a collective expression method has been tested, about food likes and dislikes as a sounding and a sensitive way to communicate over borders. Three workshops’ results are analyzed, taking especially into account multilingualism but also para-verbal ways of expressing oneself, in front of the question of food pleasure and disgust and within the will to be widely understood.*

***Keywords:** intercultural context, food, sounding, sensitive, communication.*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper tries to point out what can be understood and exchanged thanks to a method called Sensitive Sounding Approach, which is a collective expression method that can be considered, as well, both as a sensitive data collecting method and an intercultural communication starter. During the sessions that have been taken into account in this text, the method was focused on food likes and dislikes. After embedding in some globalization or even glocalization theories, some SSA sessions experiments will be analyzed. In both sessions have been involved young people coming from different countries, gathered for studies (Master AgroFood Chain⁴) or international projects (Erasmus projects, including Across project⁵ workshops). We usually think that intercultural gaps exist about food. The aim of this text is to show that expressing oneself about food, following the SSA method, can reach an actual crossing over stake. After discussion, we may keep in mind that food speech exchanges, driven within a specific method, may give a way of keeping hope in intercultural communication possibility.

2. FOOD AS A COMMON CONCERN

Collective issues and stakes we are led to have in mind may drive us to think about food only through collective concerns as economy, environment, health (not only collective, of course), etc. But these collective concerns may contain inter-individual divisions. According to cultural, especially religious, points of view, some foods are forbidden. Facing both some geographical and social points of view, some foods are for some people scarce or unavailable.

⁴ cf Toulouseagricampus.fr.

⁵ Project included in Erasmus program, gathering from 2017 to 2019 research and training centers from Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Netherlands.

But what is really interesting in feeding oneself, is to take it into account not only as a way to satisfy a natural need, but also as a practice shared with other human beings, giving possibilities to make links with a symbolic domain and also to tie with peers and, maybe, to distinguish oneself from others.

If the second point is stressed, then there is only a weak interest in trying to watch the daily practice of feeding oneself, as some previous researchers have done (Shu-Li Cheng, Wendy Olsen, Dale Southerton and Alan Warde 2007). It seems better to focus on remarkable acts of feeding oneself, choosing some food or avoiding some food. And also, to pass by individual remembrance, touching on what one may choose or avoid...

So, this is a reason of leaving behind any kind of research based on feeding diaries or investigation repeated very frequently. Let us choose a kind of method mobilizing at one time a big amount of emotional remembrance, in a way to give back what could be emotion connected to food in some special events...Of course, this needs to spot indicators of what suggests “extraordinary meals and extraordinary dishes” given by speech, but not only, also by para-verbal and non-verbal ways of expressing oneself.

Another reason to focus on “extraordinary” dimension is the fact that maybe extraordinary food can be included in more ordinary food because this may remain of the first one by an ingredient or something connected to presentation or circumstances. Sometimes it may help to appreciate ordinary food. Sometimes it may get the meal harder, by comparison. We may not forget that food is getting more and more a flashing time in our life, especially in a decreasing meal time since 1975 (Shu-Li Cheng, Wendy Olsen, Dale Southerton and Alan Warde 2007).

3. A CO-CREATION AND ANALYSIS METHOD SUPPORTED BY COSMOPOLITAN SOCIOLOGY AND ORAL LITERATURE TRANSCRIPTION ANTHROPOLOGY

3.1. Description of the Sensitive Sounding Approach process

People are gathered in a room, most comfortably as possible. The better configuration is to be all around a circle. In the middle of the circle is the sounding machine, that happened to be a loop station connected to a loud speaker or a simple recording machine connected to a computer and a loud speaker. It implicates that there is a game master or mistress, it is important to notice it.

This should normally be organized when the participants have different cultural backgrounds, especially when they come from different countries, even different continents. The game master or mistress will use a common language – mainly English, trying to speak as clearly as possible because most of the people may have another first language. He or she will also invite everyone to speak in their home language at first, and then give understandable explanations in the common language. They will also encourage this by giving fore-explanations and thanks in every home language, when it is possible to know them before. Sometimes, a previous sample demo may implicitly suggest the creative dimension of the activity.

The first invitation is: “You are invited to close your eyes and remember what was your favourite food when you were a child... I shall turn around the participants’ circle... When I touch gently your shoulder, call your favourite food, of course call it with all your body’s strength and the language you used as a child...”

Then, the game master or mistress turns around and records everybody’s sounding expression.

The second invitation is: “You are invited to keep your eyes closed and keep thinking of your favourite food... I shall turn once more around the circle... When you hear and feel that I put the pot in front of you, express your pleasure, even only shouting, free to express it as a child...”

Then, once more, the game master or mistress turns around and records everybody.

The third time, after the invitation to open their eyes: “Who wants to explain in common language what is her or his favourite food?”

It may happen that some participants explain, or the game master or mistress ask especially to somebody; once guessed that the explanation could be interesting for the whole group, or after a first explanation, the participant chooses another one, asking for explanation and so on...

The third invitation: “Once more, you are invited to close your eyes and to think about the kind of food you would absolutely refuse to eat... ... I shall turn around the participants’ circle... When I touch gently your shoulder, name it and express your rejection by all means of body and voice...”

Then, the game master or mistress turns around and records everybody.

The fourth invitation: “Please, keep your eyes closed... ... I shall turn once more around the participants’ circle... When I put the pot in front of you, if you still worry that it may be a disgusting food, please express your disgust by all means of body and voice...”

Then, once more, the game master or mistress turns around and records everybody.

The sixth time, after the invitation to open their eyes: “Who wants to explain in English – in every experienced session, English, but we should rather say Globish, was the common language among the participants – what is her or his disgusting food?”

It may happen that some participants explain, or the game master or mistress ask especially to somebody, once guessed that explanation could be interesting for the whole group, or after a first explanation, the participant chooses another one, asking for explanation and so on...

3.2. Various co-creation workshop contexts

This text refers precisely to three cases in which were led sensitive sounding workshops:

- Workshop 1, March 14th, 2018: workshop included in Agro FoodChain Master course (year 1), 5 students about 23 years old, from Czech Republic, Taiwan, Kampuchea, India, Mexico. The space was managed into table square configuration. The workshop leader was the author of the article, who knew quite well the group at this time, after six months of weekly teaching mutual understanding.

- Workshop 2, March 28th, 2018: evening workshop included in an Erasmus project meeting, 26 youngsters about 17 years old, almost one third from Turkey, one third from Romania and one third from France, including Caribbean islands. The space was managed in a wide speech circle configuration. The workshop leader was the author of the article, who had just met the whole group for the workshop.

- Workshop 3, June 5th, 2018: Across project Summer School in Wageningen (Netherlands), 23 participant students, about 23 years old, 5 from Austria, 4 from Bulgaria, 4 from Czech Republic, 3 from France, 3 from Germany, 4 from Netherlands. The space was managed within six tables' configuration, gathering people from various countries, four by four. The workshop leader was the author of the article, who had met the main part of the participants the day before.

For each workshop, the sounding creations have been registered, to be analysed afterwards.

4. GROUNDINGS IN GLOBALIZATION THEORIES

Starting from sport (which seems to be on the opposite of food in a kind of needs ladder, but may be taken together, thinking to the part of daily time dedicated to both activities of sport and cuisine⁶), Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson (2004 : 546) have considered: « (...) sport generally, and football in particular, constitutes a vital site for the theorization and empirical exploration of the multidimensional and long-term process of globalization. One might say something similar about cuisine (...) »... This has invited us to wonder if food practices may be this kind of theorizer's opportunity but, of course, before that, an actual agent of what is called "globalization" needs to know more or less precisely what globalization is. In the same article, the so-called theory is developed thus:

We understand globalization as being characterized by two distinct but closely-connected processes. Social actors possess greater senses of 'globality': that is, globalization is marked by increasing subjective consciousness of the world as a 'single place' (...) It is also characterized by a global intensification of social and cultural 'connectivity', such as through telecommunications and international travel (...). Moreover, we argue here that globalization is marked culturally by processes of 'glocalization', whereby local cultures adapt and redefine any global cultural product to suit their particular needs, beliefs and customs (...). (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004 : 546)

And here we feel a way to consider food and cuisine in a very similar way to sport, taken in this theoretical frame of 'glocalization'. This is relevantly completed by: "« While the universalism-particularism nexus is rooted in interdependent cultural processes, the social consciousness of globalization provokes misguided anxieties that the 'global' is abolishing or subverting the 'local' (...) » (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004 : 548). Going further forward than what sport only reveals, the authors arrive to the point: « Rising conceptions of humankind reflect a stronger cultural imagining of a common humanity, opening spaces for

⁶ Cf, among others, Elias Norbert and Dunning Eric (1986).

constructive inter-cultural dialogue, and introducing the possibility of citizenship principles that may emerge within a global cosmopolis » (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004 : 558). And here we are led to understand better what cosmopolitanism within a sociological approach refers to.

But let us sum up, before going further on, what kind of indicators research about food practices in crossing borders contexts should choose in order to take into account “globalization” or even “glocalization” and then try to play a part in understanding better our more and more mixed humanity, but also our more and more nationalist humanity:

- subjective consciousness of the world as a ‘single place’, and even, a single plate... In the way people name dishes or, better, the way they express likes and dislikes, how do they suggest that they consider taking part in a single world eaters’ community? Or do they suggest that they still belong to various eaters’ communities gathered around language shares?

- interconnected cultural processes: even if the expression of like and dislike is raw, is it possible to find links to cultural constructions, sometimes connected to local history, local way of living and thinking about life?

- anxiety provoked by globalization: especially in the expression of dislike, or the anticipation of what could be the other’s dislike; what could be caused by the fact that food could be an “alien”, something similar to what I am supposed to be used to eating but in fact made up within another process because it was made up in an unknown place... One good example could be the GMO concern. In places where people are not used to eating genetically-modified food, could not they be afraid to eat food coming from a country where genetically-modified production is legal?

- feel citizen of a “global cosmopolis”: in the specific expression of food pleasure and in the reception of it by people hearing it, what could be connected to a kind of relationship pleasure and pride? “We sometimes eat the same kind of food”... “I am pleased to find piece of eaters’ brotherhood”... “So, we share, all over the world, food pleasure and, maybe, food concern...” But we are maybe citizens in different ways to re-connect the ‘single reality’ and the local one, that would be applied glocalization...

Later on, we shall take from those theories some indicators to analyze expression material and try to point out what kind of position as world inhabitant can be perceived through it and, so, what degree of intercultural communication potential may be extrapolated.

5. TRANSCRIPTION RULES ADAPTED FROM POPULAR LITERATURE ANTHROPOLOGY

Considering this stage of the scientific work, our main reference has been given by Vivian Labrie. The first rule is to keep into account the rights and the dignity of the participating persons. This was not difficult to apply, even if this food issue may reach an intimate domain. Then, second, do the best so that the written signs represent what was expressed orally, within the whole sequence. It is not difficult for short sequences but here comes into account the question of paraverbal expression and even non-verbal expression (here, we have to admit that no special equipment allowed to register non-verbal signs). So, special emotion marks as shouts, laughs are noticed this way. Hesitating is also pointed by

“...”. Exclamation point has been used to point out perceived emphasis. Any kind of onomatopoeia has been transcribed in the way supposed to be the most recognizable by international phonetics. When something was not hearable, it has been represented by “[]”, and sometimes, when hypothesis was possible, the square brackets contain it.

Then, we have added some extra-rules, concerning our specific data. Interlocution is very important in such a co-creative process. Sometimes, interlocution is in itself the key point. Then, each reply is preceded by “_”. Multilingualism is also very important in our specific cases of method use. Sometimes, hearable specific pronunciation deserves to be pointed out by a non-academic writing. For instance, we have written “mutch” instead of much to be connected with a special central and Eastern Europe way of pronouncing English.

6. ANALYSIS

6.1. First analysis step: indicators search

The three workshops sounding tracks have been analyzed in such a way as to find some indications built after taking into account globalization and ‘glocalization’ theories, indications that are directly connected to awareness of globalization and the emotive aspect, taking into account:

- indication 1, own world inhabiting position: apparent unconsciousness of the world as a ‘single place’, at least, a single plate... In the way people name dishes or, better, the way they express likes and dislikes, how do they suggest that they consider taking part in a specific eaters’ community? This could be a remaining feeling as if people would still live before globalization or, taken from another point of view, not being yet aware of globalization.

- indication 2, globalization awareness and perception of it as a pleasant phenomenon with no need to improve: feel citizen of a “global cosmopolis”: in the specific expression of food pleasure and in the reception of it by people hearing it, what could be connected to a kind of relationship pleasure and pride? “We sometimes eat the same kind of food” ... “I am pleased to find piece of eaters’ brotherhood” ... “So, we share, all over the world, food pleasure and, maybe, food concern...”

- indication 3, globalization awareness and perception as threatening: anxiety provoked by globalization: especially in the expression of dislike, what could be caused by the fact that food could be an “alien”, something similar to what I am supposed to be used to eating but in fact made up within another process made up in an unknown place? Here, globalization is taken into account but maybe as a threatening phenomenon that could prevent some across borders communication...

- indication 4, glocalization process meaning: interdependent cultural processes: even if the expression of gust and disgust is raw, is it possible to find links to cultural constructions, sometimes connected to local history, local way of living and thinking life? Globalization has reached, then, awareness or, at least, has been introduced into language practices. It may become similar to before-globalization time but it is more an extra-step where food is re-named or partly named referring to local languages and habits, but also in a way that it could widely be understood.

6.2. Analysis step: picking up “explicit words” in the three multicultural contexts

	Indicator for 1	Indicator for 2	Indicator for 3	Indicator for 4
Workshop 1	.[...] → The like expressions use some terms from the following languages: Czech, Telugu, Khmer, Taiwan Chinese, Spanish (but not especially in a specific Mexican way).	.[...] → It seems that dislike expressions use more home languages than pleasure expressions do...	.“Brussels sprouts” → Czech dislike, expressed in English, may join a children dislike spread all over Europe.	.“cool”; “super” → seem to have included some local pronunciations. .“karakaya”, “concombre amer” ⁷ → Strange connection between an Indian and a Chinese dislike, but recognized after some inter-linguistic research helped by internet... .“Pleasure is expressed quite softly, even in a context where everybody knows each other quite well but coming one by one from different countries /Disgust is expressed in home languages, pronounced quite neutrally...”
Workshop 2	.[...] → First round (pure expression): Turkish youngsters use a lot of Turkish terms.	.“ice cream”, “strawberries”, etc. → First round (pure expression): Romanian youngsters keep speaking in simple English. .“football” → do not refer specifically to food but interesting because given by Guilanotti and Robertson as example in globalization process... .“atchoum” → that may express directly the pleasure of a recent intercultural discovering? (the way to imitate sneezing in French ⁸)	.“iskender kebab” → refers directly to a possible fight for legitimacy, between what was supposed to have been invented in the Turkey by Iskender Efendi in the nineteenth century and what was supposed to have been invented in Berlin in the thirties... .“froggy legs” → may be taking into account stereotypes concerning French food ?	.“glupglup” → Brilliant explanation about a Turkish dish interesting by referring to eating sound giving pleasure. .“_teşekkür ederim_ you’re welcome” → English reply to a thanking expressed in Turkish, as other students have replied the Turkish way... .“slanina”, etc. → Second round (explanations): Romanian youths add foods named in their own language, (slanina for bacon), including English translation .“filet mignon” ⁹ → just used as a necessary precision or just instead pork meat, in a purpose

⁷ Lagenaria siceraria

⁸ “hapciu” in Romanian, “hapşu” in Turkish

				to avoid Turkish youngsters, supposed to be Muslims to be shocked by the expression of pleasure connected to a forbidden food from religious point of view ? ."lasagna", "macaroni", etc. → Some Italian dishes seem to be pronounced closely to Italian language
Workshop 3	."Kroasan s shokolat" (told by a Bulgarian person) → unlike the Italian terms, this probably French term has become "exotic" and the original language seems forgotten...	."brrr" → a very specific way to express disgust. Makes a lot of other participants laugh...		."pizza", "spaghetti", "spaghetti bolognese", "macaroni" → some Italian dishes seem to be pronounced closely to Italian language ."empty plate" → may refer to more or less dramatic situations according to various local and geographical references but seems to pull, in the workshop context, a common laugh...

As a first comment, we could say that food sensitive sounding approach drags participation of most of possible participants. Rarely are people totally mute. Among the participants, from every country may rise persons using possibility of putting food on stage, especially preferred food, to earn global attention (both through supposed universal foods – indicator 2 - and well explained “own food” referring to sound for instance¹⁰ – indicator 1 -) or to earn peers laughing complicity (indicator 2). And, as a side-noticing but interesting as well as directly referring to “sensitive approach”, bad smell may be suggested for disgust as though good smell has never been suggested in such workshops. In next step, we shall be able to notice that food nice sound (before eater’s speech) can be connected to liked food and has never been connected to disgusted food in such workshops...

⁹ tenderloin

¹⁰ This especially happened with two Turkish youngsters, imitating the “djoss” sound of hot butter sauce dropping on roasted meat and the “glupglup” sound of spoon touching the surface of a thick soup...

6.3. Analysis step: picking up paraverbal facts in polyphonic contexts

	Indicator 1	Indicator 2	Indicator 3	Indicator 4
Workshop 1	<p>.”yam” (told by a Czech person) → seems to be understandable in most of European languages (yum, nyam, nam, miam, gnam, etc.) but maybe not by some other languages (for instance mogumogu in Japanese)</p>	<p>.”hmm” → used as well by Indian than Taiwan Chinese...</p> <p>In general, paraverbal expression is more diverse for dislikes than for likes...</p>		<p>.”hmm” → sometimes used as hesitation sounding and sometimes as pleasure expression but seems to be no problem for intercultural communication...</p> <p>.”wow” → seems to be used directly from international TV and movies /</p>
Workshop 2	<p>.”hmmm” → Where to put this, that should express pleasure but also hesitation in French...</p>	<p>.”strrrawberry” pronounced like sleeping → like in hypnosis trance</p> <p>.”chocolate” ; “it’s chocolate” heard with emphasis → suggesting a kind of waterfalls</p> <p>.”peach” with emphasis on “ea” → makes echo effect with “beach”, well known all over TV watching world, as a symbol of pleasant place and time.</p> <p>.”wow” ; “cool” → may be the kind of pleasure exclamation well known all over the TV watchers’ world...</p> <p>.Laugh after mouth clapping expresses the pleasure → of wide understanding?</p> <p>.”Ah” as a collective echo after “tiramisu”...</p>	<p>.”steack” heard like “stake” → with refers to a heavy concern for such a question as meat eating...</p> <p>.”meat” pronounced with a plaintive tone → as including that meat is currently a disgusting food for other people.</p> <p>. chuckle after “cabbage” → because it’s a disgusting food for some, especially for people coming from countries where cabbage is too often cooked?</p>	<p>.”creps” → could be a bad translation to English from French crêpes (instead of pancakes). But the sounding of “creps” may suggest a greedy saliva sound.</p> <p>. throat clearing before “ice cream”; once heard “ice keam” → may prepare for an important shared pleasure, eventually connected to what is called eskimo, for instance in French, as a kind of popular ice-cream, the name pronunciation being closer to “ice keam” than “ice cream”...</p> <p>.”Mutch mutch” → pronounced in an odd way for English people but common for people coming from other parts of the world (already found in some movies of the thirties showing central Europe immigrants).</p>
Workshop 3	<p>.”Miam” → see for “yam” in workshop 1</p>			

Here, as a first statement, we may point out that the contexts that can actually be described as polyphonic contexts – especially referring to Ducrot introducing Searle (1969) – made raise up non-verbal relevant points rather as numerous as verbal ones, except for workshop 3, where recording conditions were specific. As these points, those points show that ‘glocalization’ appears more than the other ones...

7. LOOKING BACK ON INDICATORS COLLECTION AND INTERCULTURAL POTENTIALITY OF SENSITIVE SOUNDING APPROACH APPLIED TO FOOD LIKES AND DISLIKES

Most liked dishes may be named in national languages, as if they only existed in a single place, even on this occasion, enthusiasm may be connected with the offer to the other of an available explanation, using a kind of language and, more than that, a kind of exclamation, that are supposed to be shared in a globalized world. Sometimes, the names of the dishes are pronounced in such a way that the original language has disappeared and we may suppose that such an intercultural communication practice is activating a kind of active and maybe aware glocalization process.

Of course, there are some paraverbal sounds that should not be considered as universal communication means. “miam”, used in some different European languages for expressing eating pleasure, is a good example. On the other hand, “hmm”, that has the double meaning of pleasure and hesitation, is no communication impediment as the suggestion of slowness may both be connected with the pleasure that may last and the need of taking time in a hesitating situation...

Let us consider now the indications workshop by workshop:

For workshop 1, indication for glocalization in progress seems to be the most visible. We must keep in mind that the participants were all students coming from very different countries but gathered to study together in France and study food processes...

For workshop 2, indication for glocalization in progress seems to be the far most visible, especially referring to paraverbal indicators. This is the case of a non-lasting group, just composed for the time of a short meeting, gathering a group from Turkey, a group from Romania and some small groups from various French areas. Time is short and maybe the part of common paraverbal means of expressing is all the more important to communicate. Food gives a relevant number of possibilities.

For workshop 3, paraverbal indicators are very few but, once more, verbal indicators pull towards glocalization in progress... This was a new born group, from six different countries, whose participants knew they would share training time for a week. Maybe, paraverbal language was at this stage more of a way to test national solidarities and verbal expression, in English, according to the organization rule; it was a way to start building relationships with people coming from other countries...

So, we can point out that Sensitive Sounding Approach gives rise to different co-creations according to the participating group structure and life story. That could be considered as a proof that the method is not directive at all...

In other words, we may notice that in any case, expression has been made in such a way that we feel ‘glocalization’ in progress, that is to say a way to adapt globalization in such a way that specific identities would not disappear but that intercultural communication is possible, apart from the background of globalization auxiliaries (movies, TV series...), but also apart from the collective creative potentiality to play with and from other languages than home languages (English, Italian, etc.).

8. DISCUSSION TO CONCLUDE AND KEEP OPEN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION POTENTIALITY

We hope that these three experimental uses of Sensitive Sounding Approach and connected analysis have shown its possibilities as an intercultural communication starter, a mutual understanding process and also a way to understand better what globalization generates, especially in a resisting but also adapting way that can be named ‘glocalization’.

Of course, conditions of method use may bring some drawback but also some sharp effects. Method leaders may pay attention to the specific group stories, especially their duration, as well as the individual stories. Space conditions are also important but maybe more than that, the time of the workshop and position in the meals time sheet. All that could produce various “adorning” wills, searching inside of the memories with various stresses and giving tasty explanations with different levels of enthusiasm.

We may not hide that the analysis steps need to be led as a kind of controlled interpretation and need to be connected to some writing precautions. For instance, it is very important to write “heard like” and not “pronounced like”. This kind of method needs also a subjectivity surrounding backed by a regular auto-analysis work. For instance, the hearing and analysis person, who was also a performer trained with sounding effects of language in the experiments analyzed here, should consider himself as a tool whose sensitivity as instrument to catch sounding possibilities may be specifically taken into account.

We may say that a lot of written comments come from personal perception of the “hearer” and must be considered as hypothesis. But this daily subjectivite work analysis gives height to what is pointed out, as in the main qualitative methods. And, last but not least, the advantage of the SSA as a leading change method: the average of emotional exclamation and laughing, as a proof that something pleasant and maybe more than that has happened and, especially thinking of the moments of relaxing and peaceful laughing times, something has happened between persons coming from different places all over the world...

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