

## SELF-CONSTRUALS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN EFL REFLECTIVE ESSAYS WRITTEN BY SWEDISH ADVANCED EFL STUDENTS

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**Abstract.** *The article presents a cognitive linguistic analysis of reflective essays in English as a foreign language written by 12 advanced university students (further referred to as 'participants') whose first language (L1) is Swedish and foreign language is English (EFL). All the participants were enrolled at an advanced EFL course at Stockholm University (Sweden). The participants were instructed to write a one page reflective essay titled 'As a Swede, I am...' in English. After six months the same participants were instructed to write another one page reflective essay titled 'As Swedes, we are...'. The participants' essays were examined for the presence of self-construals referring to their national identity on the individual and collective levels respectively. The analysis of the participants' essays revealed the following findings: first, it was found that the participants' reflective EFL essays involved independent self-construals of national identity, second, data analysis revealed that reflective EFL essays on national identity involved predominantly cognitive metonymy with cognitive metaphor playing an epiphenomenal role. Those findings are presented and discussed in the present article.*

**Key words:** *EFL reflective essay, cognitive metaphor, cognitive metonymy, national identity, self-construal*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This article involves a cognitive linguistic analysis of reflective essays of national identity of Swedes written by Swedish students who study English as a foreign language (EFL). Self-construals of national identity are regarded as a cognitive phenomenon embedded in EFL written discourse. Presumably, self-construals of national identity are likely to emerge in reflective EFL essays when EFL students are asked to expand upon the topic of who and what they are, i.e. to expand upon the students' 'self' through the lenses of their national identification, their 'national' voice. It is suggested that voice - personal, academic, socio-cultural or national - is involved in academic writing as an integral part of the students' identity construction (Tardy & Matsuda, 2009). Following Atkinson (2004), the socio-cultural and ethno-specific voice of an EFL writer is viewed as an important variable contributing to a better understanding of the complex process of EFL writing. Previous research supports a contention that EFL students' reflective essays about themselves are associated with their levels of academic success, metacognitive knowledge, EFL writing skills and socio-cultural variables (Donohue & Erling, 2012). EFL writing is exacerbated by the local writing context, which exerts influence on an

EFL writer by means of acculturation into a particular discourse community, thus both reflecting and modifying it in the process of writing (Cumming, 2001:7). Given that culture is regarded as a source of activation of different self-construals (Kühnen & Hannover, 2000:800), it can be assumed that self-construals in EFL students' essays would be organised and structured from a particular perspective of the writer's culture-specific cognition, models and schemata (Kristiansen, 2008).

Culture-specific schemata and scripts in cognitive construals are not salient and occupy a neutral default niche in one's construals of the 'self' (Gibbs, 2013). Following this line of argument, it can be assumed that culturally motivated self-construals map into generalised default perceptions of the individual within a particular society. Provided that these default construals of the 'self' are not salient, they are not typically reflected upon in a given culture, i.e. they are 'known' to the members of the given group who share commonly available resources, e.g. experiences, the surrounding reality, default cultural schemas and interactions with other individuals (Oyserman & James, 2011). Construals of personal identity involve interactions which are embedded into discourse patterns and culture-specific schemata prevalent in a given society. Hence, personal identity is constructed by means of interactions on a variety of levels, for instance, in-group, societal and national levels respectively. National identity is constructed by a person's relationships with others, group memberships and/or social roles (Kitayama et al., 1997). Since cognition is situated and is meaningful when individuals engage in socio-cultural practices within a given social group, then concept formation, concept maintenance and concept distribution of the 'self' are thought to be group-dependent (Kristiansen, 2008:412). It is suggested that national identities are macro-socially necessitated, whilst other identities are micro-socially enforced (Norris, 2011:33). This suggestion implies that national identity involves a series of identifications of the 'self' with social and cultural roles, nations, or social groups. Specifically, national identity is regarded as a process of group identification (Ukosakul, 2003). In this process, the 'self' is co-constructed via dynamic interactions with social networks, the environment, artifacts, cultural schemata and scripts respectively (Norris, 2011). Self-construals of national identity provide orientation for self-reference, since they define the individuals' place in the society by providing the individuals with an identification of themselves in social terms (Kristiansen, 2008). Hence, self-construals of national identity form a part of an individual's self-concept which involves national group membership in conjunction with values and expected behavior associated with that membership. It is posited that national identity is regarded as a multidimensional set of identities which is dynamically construed at a given moment in the given socio-cultural context. Whilst national and personal identities respectively are dynamic, they nevertheless involve relatively stable construals based upon both individual and group experiences (Norris, 2011).

The stability of self-construals of national identity involves conceptualisations of relationships between the 'self' and the 'not-self', i.e. the 'other'. These relationships presuppose connection or distance between the 'self' and the 'other' (Zhang & Mittal, 2007:558). In this regard, conceptualisations of the 'self' and the 'other' may involve both general and concrete features, which reflect instantiations of psychological, physical, temporal, social and cultural distance or connection between the 'self' and the 'other' (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2008). Distance and connection in self-construals of national identity are theorised to involve two relatively stable mental representations: i) independence from the 'other' and attending to the 'self' as a unique entity; ii) similarity with the 'other',

connectedness to the 'other' and attending to the 'other' (Lieberman & Förster, 2009). It is assumed that independence from the 'other' in self-construals of national identity is prevalent in European and North American societies, whilst connectedness to the 'other' is emphasised in self-construals of national identity in East Asian societies (Lim et al., 2008). Presumably, East Asians define themselves in terms of their social networks, group obligations and intra-group relationships. In these cultures, the 'self' is construed as an extension of contiguity where a part stands for the whole, whereby suggesting that the 'self' as a personal part is strongly connected to the collective 'other' and represents it as a whole. However, recent research suggests that self-construals of national identity are dynamic (Lim et al., 2008). It is indicated that self-construals in East Asian societies exhibit features of both connectedness of the 'self' to the 'other' and uniqueness of the 'self' in contrast with the 'other'. Similarly, findings in social psychology suggest that self-construals of national identity in Western cultures involve connectedness of the 'self' with in-group and, to an extent, collective interdependent variables. These findings are suggestive of the dynamic nature of self-construals within a given culture. Arguably, whilst self-construals of national identity highlight certain common, stereotypical aspects of behavioral scripts shared in a cultural group, they nevertheless involve flexible on-line adjustments to suite an individual's respective purposes and goals in a given communicative situation.

Presumably, a reflective EFL essay written by a Swede about Swedes would involve a stereotypical set of default schemata and scripts associated with Sweden and its inhabitants, e.g. *'a Swede is tall, blond and blue-eyed'*. It can be assumed that the default scripts may involve mechanisms of cognitive metaphor and cognitive metonymy respectively as general mechanisms underlying conceptualisation. These assumption factors can be grouped in two types of conceptual relationships, namely that of a cross-domain mapping (i.e., cognitive metaphor) and that of a within domain mapping, i.e. cognitive metonymy (Torralbo et al., 2006). Metonymic and metaphoric mappings respectively are theorised to be involved in conceptual categories, image schemata and a plethora of socio-cognitive models (Alousque, 2013). Consequently, it can be presumed that construals of national identity involve instances of cognitive metonymy and cognitive metaphor respectively. In this article, authentic data involving socio-cognitive dimensions of self-construals of national identity of Swedes are analysed in conjunction with cognitive metaphor and cognitive metonymy respectively. The article presents experimental data involving self-construals of national identity construed by the speakers whose first language (L1) is Swedish and who reflect upon their perceptions of 'self' as Swedes through the filter of English as a foreign language (EFL). These data are derived from the experiment conducted with 12 advanced EFL students enrolled at Stockholm University (Sweden) who reflect upon their 'self' as Swedes in a series of experimental tasks. The experiment focuses on self-construals of national identity as a cognitive phenomenon occurring in EFL discourse. In the experiment, self-construals of national identity are identified on two levels: independent and collective respectively. Further in the article, the experiment and its data are elucidated from the vantage point of cognitive linguistics.

## 2. THE EXPERIMENT

The experiment was aimed at identification of self-construals of national identity in EFL reflective essays written by advanced EFL students (further referred to as 'participants') whose L1 was Swedish. Self-construals of national identity were examined

through the lenses of methodological apparatus offered by cognitive linguistics. The experiment sought to elucidate whether or not self-construals of national identity would involve individual and/or collective levels respectively. Additionally, the experiment aimed at establishing whether or not the participants' national identity construction would involve instances of cognitive metaphor and/or cognitive metonymy respectively.

### **2.1. Hypothesis**

The hypothesis involved the following assumptions. First, it was hypothesised that on-line unprepared execution of the reflective essay writing task '*As a Swede, I am...*' would yield self-construals of national identity on the individual level. Second, it was assumed that an on-line unprepared execution of the reflective essay writing task '*As Swedes, we are...*' would yield self-construals of national identity on the collective level. Third, it was assumed that self-construals of national identity would be associated with a range of cognitive metaphors and cognitive metonymies respectively dominant in the participants' socio-linguistic context. Following the assumptions, the following specific research aims were formulated: i) identification of self-construals of national identity in the participants' EFL reflective essays '*As a Swede, I am...*' and '*As Swedes, we are...*' respectively; ii) establishing whether or not self-construals of national identity would involve cognitive metaphors and/or cognitive metonymy respectively.

### **2.2. Participants**

Twelve participants (M age = 22.4), eight females and four males, were recruited at Stockholm University, Sweden. The participants' inclusion criteria involved i) Swedish as their L1; ii) no bilingual background; iii) enrollment in an identical advanced university course of EFL at Stockholm University; iv) no prior exposure to similar experimental procedures. The participants' real names were coded to ensure confidentiality.

### **2.3. Methods**

Methodology involved in self-construals identification was based upon the premises described in Kuehnen & Hannover (2000). Cognitive metonymy and cognitive metaphor respectively were identified in accordance with methodology provided by Goatly (2007) and Zanotto & Palma (2008) respectively. In addition to the afore-mentioned qualitative methodology, the participants' written data were analysed quantitatively in computer software CLAN.

### **2.4. Procedure**

The experiment consisted of two experimental sessions. Both sessions took place at Stockholm University, Sweden. The participants were tested in their usual EFL classroom. At the first session, participants were instructed to write a reflective essay of maximum one page A4 format on the topic "*As a Swede, I am...*", in English. Participants were instructed to employ any writing strategy they deemed appropriate for the task. The time frame for the essay write-up was 60 minutes. Prior to writing, the participants were instructed to reflect

upon the topic for five minutes without consultations with the experimenter and their fellow students. No additional study aids, such as books, course-books, dictionaries or the Internet were allowed. To factor out practice effects, the second session took place six months after the first experimental session, as suggested by Manchon et al. (2005). The second session involved writing a reflective essay of maximum one page A4 format on the topic “As Swedes, we are...” in English. Apart from the topic, the second session was identical in procedure with the first experimental session described above.

## 2.5. Results

All the participants completed both experimental sessions producing two reflective essays per participant. The participants’ essays were coded and analysed. The following quantitative measures were counted in CLAN in each individual essay: total number of words per each essay, total number of sentences per each essay, total number of paragraphs per each essay and total number of self-construals of national identity per essay. Mean values of those statistics were compiled in Table 1 below

Table 1 Mean values of quantitative statistics  
in Experimental session # 1 and Experimental session # 2

Mean values	Experimental session #1	Experimental session #2
M words	226,6	93,3
M sentences	13,5	5,3
M paragraphs	2,5	1,4
M self-construals	2,4	1,5

Qualitative data involving self-construals of national identity were presented in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

Table 2. Experimental Session 1. Qualitative data

Self-Construal	Total number of occurrence in the group of participants
a Swede is shy	8
a Swede is moderate	6
a Swede is organised	6
a Swede is boring	3
a Swede is popular abroad	1
a Swede is free	1
a Swede is peaceful	1
a Swede is well-educated	1
a Swede is like Swedish weather	1
a Swede is a neat customer at a shop	1

Table 3. Experimental session 2. Qualitative data

Self-Construal	Total number of occurrence in the group of participants
Swedes are shy	6
Swedes are organised	3
Swedes love Swedish food	3
Swedes are private	2
Swedes are moderate	2
Swedes are honest	1
Swedes are blond	1

## 2.6. Discussion

Data reveal that on-line execution of the essay writing tasks yields a range of self-construals. Data analysis indicates that self-construals of national identity are identified in the participants' EFL reflective essays '*As a Swede, I am...*' and '*As Swedes, we are...*', respectively. It appears that the participants' self-construals of national identity are subject to change by priming manipulations, namely the shift of focus from '*As a Swede, I am...*' to '*As Swedes, we are...*', yields a qualitatively and quantitatively diverse set of data. Data analysis indicates that mean quantitative measures involving total number of words per each essay, total number of sentences per each essay, total number of paragraphs per each essay and total number of self-construals of national identity per essay are different (see Table 1). Specifically, the group mean of self-construals in the task '*As a Swede, I am...*' is 2,4, whilst in the task '*As Swedes, we are...*', the group mean is 1,5. Judging from the data, it can be observed that the participants' self-construals of national identity exhibit diverse patterns associated with self-construals' verbalisation. Specifically, in the essay writing task '*As Swedes, we are...*' there are seven patterns of self-construals of national identity: 'Swedes are shy', 'Swedes are organised', 'Swedes love Swedish food', 'Swedes are private', 'Swedes are moderate', 'Swedes are honest' and 'Swedes are blond'. Whilst a higher degree of variability is observed in the writing task '*As a Swede, I am...*', the execution of the task yields ten self-construals, namely 'a Swede is boring', 'a Swede is moderate', 'a Swede is organised', 'a Swede is shy', 'a Swede is popular abroad', 'a Swede is free', 'a Swede is peaceful', 'a Swede is well-educated', 'a Swede loves Swedish weather', 'a Swede is a neat customer at a shop'. Presumably, the participants' writing in EFL restricts lexical choices, thus rendering the verbalisation of self-construals a relatively uniform surface realisation. Arguably, the participants' lexical choices would exhibit significant variation in terms of the lexical forms if the tasks were executed in Swedish, the participants' first language (L1). It can be theorised that EFL induces an impoverished lexical repertoire in comparison with a more substantial lexical repertoire present in the participants' L1. This assumption can be supported by several instances when the participants refer to the lexical repertoire of their L1 to express themselves better, e.g.: i) '*Swedes like 'lagom'. It is, for example, when it's not too warm or too cold. It's in-between and you don't want to change the temperature.*'; ii) '*In Sweden we should be moderate, be in the middle, not too much, not too less. Back in the old days we had in Sweden something called 'Jantelagen'. It is about don't do anything no one else has done or don't be a unique person.*'

Several overlapping patterns of self-construals are observed both in the writing tasks 'As a Swede, I am...' and 'As Swedes, we are...', e.g. i) 'a Swede is shy'/'Swedes are shy'; ii) 'a Swede is organised'/'Swedes are organised'. For instance, in the writing task 'As a Swede, I am...' one participant instantiates the self-construal 'a Swede is organised' as follows: *'I am a typical Swede, because I like to have everything in proper order and I want to know what is going to happen.'* Another participant in the writing task 'As Swedes, we are...' verbalises the same construal in the following manner: *'Swedes (including me) are very organised and have to do everything well.'*

Presumably, three identical patterns of self-construals in the two experimental tasks can be attributed to cognitive activation of similar and semantically relevant content in self-construals involving independence and interdependence respectively. In concert with previous research (Kitayama et al., 1997), it is claimed that independence is a predominant feature in self-construals of national identity in the present data. It is evident from the quantitative data that the stimulus 'As a Swede, I am...' is associated with different statistics compared with the stimulus 'As Swedes, we are...', e.g. M words = 226, M sentences = 13.5, M paragraphs = 2.5 and M self-construals = 2.4. A wider range of self-construals in the task 'As a Swede, I am...' is suggestive of unique personal attributes and independence from the 'other'. The stimulus 'As a Swede, I am...' evokes a set self-construals which are specific to this task, e.g. 'a Swede is boring', 'a Swede is popular abroad', 'a Swede is free', 'a Swede is peaceful', 'a Swede is well-educated', 'a Swede is like Swedish weather' and 'a Swede is a neat customer at a shop' respectively. These task-specific self-construals are highly individual and are absent in the participants' essays 'As Swedes, we are...', i.e. the participants do not verbalise such self-construals as 'Swedes are boring' or 'Swedes are well-educated', etc.

Two self-construals of national identity in the task 'As a Swede, I am...' are interdependent, e.g. 'a Swede is popular abroad' and 'a Swede is a neat customer at a shop' respectively. Interdependence in these self-construals is evident from the participants' interactions with the 'other' involved in the verbalisation of these self-construals. The following examples are indicative of the interdependence of the 'self as a Swede' with the 'other/non-Swedes':

(1) *'When I travel abroad I try to show my best behaviour to foreigners so that their impression of Sweden is only positive. And I think that as a Swede I am popular abroad. When people ask me where I come from and I answer that I am from Sweden they are smiling happily and they usually say 'Sweden, great!'.'*

(2) *'I was working as a shop assistant at a grocery store over summer. I noticed that Swedes placed their purchases neatly one after another on the moving belt in front of the check-out counter. People who I thought were not from Sweden, just hoarded the belt as a messy pile of stuff. Then, I realized that I myself, as a customer, had always put my stuff neatly on the counter, I had never made a pile of my purchases. I as a Swede have always been a very neat customer'.*

It should be noted that the latter self-construal involves references to both the 'other/Swedes' and the 'other/on-Swedes'. These two quotations imply interdependence in self-construals of national identity by exhibiting social interactions with the 'other' in conjunction with socio-cultural values and norms. However, no such interactions are observed in self-construals of national identity found in the writing task 'As Swedes, we

*are...*'. Self-construals in this task are characterised by adjectives referring to personal independent attributes, e.g. 'Swedes are shy', 'Swedes are organised', 'Swedes are private', 'Swedes are moderate', 'Swedes are honest' and 'Swedes are blond' respectively. These self-construals provide evidence that participants who in the previous task verbalised their 'self' as a Swede with a reference to interdependence, in the experimental task '*As Swedes, we are...*' describe their collective 'self' as Swedes using independent self-construals rather than interdependent ones. These findings seem to support previous research (Kitayama et al., 1997) which indicates that independent self-construals are prevalent in Western cultures (e.g., Sweden), comparing with interdependent self-construals of those participants who hail from collectivist cultural backgrounds (e.g., East Asia). Thus, the present experimental data indicate that self-construals of Swedish national identity are predominantly independent.

It is assumed in the hypothesis that the participants' self-construals of national identity are marked by the presence of cognitive metaphor and cognitive metonymy respectively. This assumption is based upon a contention that cultural schemas are distributed across members of the particular cultural network (Norris, 2011). Presumably, cultural schemas rely on cognitive metaphor and cognitive metonymy within in-group contexts, since the group's existence eventuates from shared beliefs, values, norms and cognitive cross-domain mappings (Casad, 2003). It is theorised that social categorisation and stereotyping involved in self-construals of national identity depend on metonymic mappings involving in-domain contiguity and metaphoric mappings between two distinct domains respectively. Qualitative data analysis of both the written tasks '*As a Swede, I am...*' and '*As Swedes, we are...*' indicates that self-construals of national identity are marked by mappings based on contiguity, i.e. cognitive metonymy. The presence of cognitive metonymy in self-construals is suggestive of the participants' ability to establish a set of contiguity relationships. Arguably, contiguity relationships facilitate the self-construals' verbalisation on the level of specific semantic domains. In particular, the participants' self-construals of national identity are based on the stand-for metonymic mapping 'person for the personal trait' within the same domain 'person'. This type of metonymic mapping is involved in the following self-construals: 'a Swede is boring', 'a Swede is shy', 'a Swede is free', 'a Swede is organised', 'a Swede is moderate', 'a Swede is peaceful', 'a Swede is well-educated', 'Swedes are honest', 'Swedes are private'. In addition to the mapping 'person for the personal trait', three types of stand-for mappings can be distinguished in the present data. These mappings are i) 'person for the bodily trait' in self-construal 'Swedes are blond', where contiguity involves the mapping within the same domain 'person'; ii) 'person for the doer' in self-construal 'a Swede is a neat customer at a shop' with contiguity between the person what she/he does as an customer; iii) 'person for the food lover' in self-construal 'Swedes love Swedish food'. In the latter mapping, contiguity involves such related domains as 'person', 'eater' and 'food' which activate the participants' encyclopaedic frames involving images, words and meanings (Cameron, 2008).

Data analysis reveals that the participants' self-construals of national identity are non-metaphorical, with the exception of one self-construal, namely 'a Swede is like Swedish weather'. This independent self-construal is identified in the experimental task '*As a Swede, I am...*' in the following excerpt:

(3) *'If I think of myself as a Swede, I have to say that I am high maintenance. I mean that I am very sensitive to the weather and I do not like extreme weather. I hate when it is too hot and I equally hate it when it is too cold. I think that I am like Swedish weather, mild and temperate, neither too warm in summer nor cold in winter.'*

As illustrated, the self-construal 'a Swede is like Swedish weather' is instantiated by referring to two distinct domains, 'person' and 'weather' respectively. The mapping between these two unrelated domains results in cognitive metaphor (Gibbs, 2013). It should be noted that the metaphoric mapping 'from a person to weather' is exacerbated by prototypical features of Swedish weather which are instantiated by iconic visual imagery, e.g. a temperate Swedish summer and not too cold winter (the participant hails from Gotland, an island off the East coast of Sweden, well-known for its mild and rainy winters). In the self-construal 'a Swede is like Swedish weather' imagery facilitates the participant's comparisons involved in metaphor production. As suggested by Cameron (2008), an unprepared EFL essay writing does not presuppose prefabricated and refined tropes, in particular, metaphors. However, the present data suggest that a metaphor does emerge in the form of mental imagery evocative of visual and perceptive gestalts, e.g. 'too hot', 'too cold', 'mild and temperate', etc. The limited use of cognitive metaphors in the participants' self-construals of national identity suggests that socio-cognitive context of Swedish national identity purports to a non-metaphorical conceptualisation. The present data seem to support this contention. Data analysis indicates that the participants' self-construals are predominantly metonymic.

Data analysis in computer program CLAN reveals that stand-for metonymic mappings tend to cluster in the initial sentences of the participants' essays, as well as in the mid-sections being typically confined to the second paragraph. The only metaphoric mapping is located in the initial section of the essay. No metonymic and metaphoric mappings respectively are identified in the concluding sections. Metonymic clustering in the salient positions in the text seems to indicate that the participants conceptualise the topic in order to persuade the reader. This observation is supported by previous research, which reports that metonymic and metaphoric clusterings respectively in the initial sentences of the essay set the agenda in terms of the topic conceptualisation (Koller, 2008:111). The present data reveal that the participants' essays appear to involve metonymy in salient, text initial positions. Then, the text initial metonymy is further explained and exemplified in the subsequent parts of the essays, as evident from the participant's essay excerpt:

(4) *'I should say that I am a typical Swede, because I am shy. I'm not very good at small talk and really dislike when strangers are taking the seat next to me on the bus. That's why I always put my bag on the seat next to me so that the new passenger would think that the seat is taken.'*

In this part of the participant's essay 'As a Swede, I am...', the salient position is occupied by the metonymic mapping 'person for the personal trait', i.e. the personal trait of being shy stands for the whole person who is a Swede. This metonymy is further elaborated by the participant immediately after the essay initial sentence. The elaboration involves an explanation of shyness, e.g. 'I'm not very good at small talk...', as well as exemplification of shyness in terms of personal space, e.g.

(5) *'I always put my bag on the seat next to me so that the new passenger would think that the seat is taken. When I was travelling in Thailand, I was surprised that people there would sit next to me on the bus even though there were other free seats on the bus. I would have never done that.'*

The above-mentioned excerpt is evocative of previous research findings suggesting the relational nature of any identity construals (Norris, 2011). Whilst the participant writes about herself in the essay *'As a Swede, I am...'*, the participant nevertheless refers to the 'other' to exemplify her 'self' by means of a negative contrast with the 'other'. This particular quote illustrates an identity schema construed as 'I am not X' rather than a schema 'I am X', e.g. *'...in Thailand, I was surprised that people there would sit next to me .... I would have never done that.'*

It should be noted that several participants employ two or three self-construals in their respective essays. In such cases, the initial sentence predominantly contains a metonymic mapping which is subsequently elaborated upon in the whole of the opening paragraph, as evident from this quote:

(6) *'As a typical Swede, I am quite shy. It can be hard for me to speak in front of a large group of people. A lot of people say that Swedes are quiet, reserved and afraid of what other people will think of them. I can't do nothing but agree. Although all Swedes aren't like this, many are and I am one of them. I don't like talking in front of a whole bunch of people and among people I don't know I can be rather quiet, standing in the background.'*

Then, the participant proceeds to another metonymic mapping, presented in the second paragraph of the essay:

(7) *'There are sides of me that are very Swedish, taste in food is one of them. I like Swedish food and prefer Swedish food to dishes which might be more typical of other countries and cultures.'*

Arguably, these metonymic mappings form a chain of metonymies extending from the first to the second paragraphs as a grid which renders the participants' self-construals a metonymic scaffolding. A chain of metonymies is present in one participant's essay where the participant (coded P7 in this research) produces one paragraph with two metonymic transfers and four self-construals based upon cognitive metonymy respectively. In that case, no elaboration of the self-construals are involved. Instead, the self-construals of national identity are presented as a list, organised by a grid of metonymic mappings.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The experiment described in this article seeks to identify self-construals of national identity in EFL reflective essays written by advanced EFL participants whose L1 is Swedish. The outcomes of the experiment involve quantitative and quantitative data garnered in an EFL reflective essay writing context. Data analysis executed within the framework of cognitive linguistics reveals that writing tasks *'As a Swede, I am...'* and *'As Swedes, we are...'* respectively yield self-construals of national identity. These self-construals appear to be predominantly independent and metonymic. Only one metaphoric

mapping has been identified in the data. Contrary to previous research findings, which suggest that variation in self-construals' instantiation is to be expected (Cameron, 2008), the present data indicate that the participants' self-construals of national identity both on the individual and collective levels tend to form several overlapping categories where variation plays an epiphenomenal role.

It should be reiterated that the experimental tasks involve on-line unprepared reflective essay writing, which is dynamic and presupposes a certain degree of variability. However, the participants' essays are characterised by limited categories involved in the instantiation of self-construals. Presumably, a possible explanation of low variability involves the execution of the writing tasks in EFL, which streamlines the verbalisation of the participants' self-construals into a rather limited set of categories. Another possible constraint on variability may involve the predominance of metonymic mappings in the present self-construals. Metonymy is considered a basic and automatic cognitive process (Alousque, 2013), which is universal to human cognition. Arguably, metonymy puts constraints on variability and limits the distribution of self-construals. However, this assumption should be tested in a separate experiment. Another avenue of research which is left for future experiments might involve experimental tasks both in Swedish and in English to explore the effect of Swedish L1 and EFL on the instantiation of self-construals. However, any future experiments involving these two languages have to factor in significant practice effects in the tasks. Additionally, it should be noted that the limited number of participants (N = 12) in the present experiment poses limitations which should be resolved in future studies with a significant number of participants.

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