A

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The role of Intercultural Communication for migration and international relations in times of increasing xenophobia and polarization

Intercultural contacts are increasingly being subject to negative features, such as propaganda, racism, extreme nationalism, discrimination, xenophobia. The field of Intercultural Communication can in itself be seen as an effort to understand and counteract these phenomena, by emphasizing positive features, such as widened views, cooperation, globalization, increased mutual understanding, peaceful coexistence etc.

Intercultural communication has been promoting good ways of teaching and learning ICC and applying it in different functions of society and in international contacts between different cultures. Migration is an important object of study and area for application, as are International organizations, like the WTO, UN and WHO.

Currently, there are strong tendencies counteracting each other. We see a rapidly increasing globalization and internationalization, where mobility is high and internet makes it common to live in an international and intercultural community, involving everyday intercultural communication. Trade, media etc work across borders. In contrast, we see increasing extreme polarization, nationalism and protectionism, not least politically. Also more locally, in social media groups and in areas where people from very different cultures and ideologies are mixed, intercultural conflicts are expressed very openly. We are seeing escalating wars, engaging many nations and individuals and increasing uncertainty about who can be trusted.

How is ICC affected on macro and micro levels? This paper analyzes recent tendencies and changes, presenting examples based on media reports. It discusses the place for theoretical and practical ICC, possible developments and ways forward to influence intercultural interaction in education, politics, media, and everyday life.

References

Allwood, Jens (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

Intercultural Communication – Some Reflections on the State of the Art

In this presentation I will discuss the development of ICC (Intercultural communication) from the coinage of the term "Intercultural communication" by E.T. Hall in 1959 to today. I will start by taking a look at the many global taxonomies of culture that have been proposed.
I have found 12 and will consider some of these:
Ruth Benedict (1946): Shame and Guilt cultures, Edward, T. Hall (1959): Use of context in information, use of space, use of time, Non-verbal communication etc. Johan Galtung (2015) Cultural Scripts based on the major religions, Michael A. Bond (1991): Chinese Value Survey, Tony Fang (2012): Yin-Yang ocean of culture, House et al. (2013), GLOBE: Strategic Leadership Across Cultures, Geert Hofstede (1980): Attitudes and Values – Culture's consequences, Florence Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck (1961): Human problems in need of a solution, Shalom Schwartz (2006): Human values, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner (2011-12): Waves of Culture, Harry Triandis (2001): Past, present, future, Inglehart, Ronald & Welzel, Christian (1997->2013/2015/2017/ 2019/2021/ 2024): World Values Survey: Traditional, secular, survival, self-expression.
I will then also briefly consider some examples of ICC in different professional activities like (business, education, health, migration, tourism, research, media, religion etc.
This will be followed by some reflections on the digitalizing of ICC (internet, ECAS, robots, translation, AI etc.) and some remarks on the methods used to study ICC – like careful multimodal observational studies of ICC.
I will end by some comments on the challenges to and criticism of studies of AI that have been discussed.

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Asai, Akiko (J.F. Oberlin University, Japan); Hori, Kiyoshi (J.F. Oberlin University, Japan); Koponen, Jonna (University of Eastern Finland); Salin, Lotta (University of Eastern Finland); Julkunen, Saara (University of Eastern Finland)

Digital Transformation and DEI in Japanese Business: Insights from Top and Middle Managers in IT companies

Traditionally, Japanese organizational culture has been defined by hierarchical structures, collectivist values, and male dominance (Hofstede, et al, 2005). However, the recent acceleration of digital transformation is reshaping these long-standing norms. Contemporary Japanese workplaces are increasingly characterized by flatter structures and a growing emphasis on individualism, resulting in more complex organizational dynamics (Asai, et al., 2024). This study examines how digital transformation is influencing shifts in Japanese organizational culture, with a particular focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB). To explore this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 top managers and 10 middle managers from IT companies, analyzing their perceptions and engagement with DEIB principles. A central concept in this study is e-leadership, which refers to the capacity to effectively integrate electronic and traditional face-to-face communication, to select the most appropriate ICT tools for both personal and organizational use, and to possess the technical competencies required for their implementation (Van Wart et al., 2019). As digital technologies and remote work environments reshape leadership practices, this research investigates how Japanese leaders interpret the role of e-leadership in advancing DEIB. It explores their understanding of its potential, limitations, and future directions. Through this analysis, the study offers insight into the evolving landscape of leadership and organizational values in Japan amidst ongoing digital innovation.

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Ayad, Maryam (University of Helsinki, Finland)

Clash of discourses on Bāyazīd Bastāmī's tomb: economic inclusion or political exclusion

Bastām, A city in Iran, hosts the tomb of 9th-century Sufi saint, Bāyazīd Bastāmī. Bāyazīd is renowned as an early influential figure in Sufism. His legacy absorbs masses of pilgrims from both within Iran and across international borders. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran tries to downplay the importance of Bāyazīd's tomb due to the Islamic Republic's general rejection on Sufi way of Islam and Bayazid's association with Sunni tradition. This suppression is in line with the Islamic Republic's central line of politics as the only theocratic Shi'ite government of all the world. A Shi'i sacred tomb built near Bāyazīd's has made an opportunity for the Islamic Republic to pretend that the pilgrims are not related to him but to the Shi'i tomb called Emamzade. In contrast to the general political attitude, residents of Bastām including local government officials look at the steady flow of Bāyazīd's Sunni and/or Sufi pilgrims as their source of income. The clash between political suppression and economic necessity creates a challenging interaction of discourses in the city. Using an adaptation of Norman Fairclough's method of critical discourse analysis, this paper explores the tension between economic and political discourses in this city. The paper shows that political discourse prevails in some of the aspects of textual and discursive practice due to the authority of the Islamic Republic as a totalitarian regime. Though, this discourse has surrendered to economic discourse in the dimension of social practice.

References

B

Bergman, Becky (Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden)

Planning and Enabling Intercultural Group Work in Engineering Education: Experiences Across Micro, Meso and Exo Levels

Engineering education is one of the most internationalised disciplines in numbers of international students (OECD, 2024). A core requirement for engineering education is working in a national and international context at both individual and team levels (ENAEE, 2022). Teachers can be vital in creating conditions for intercultural learning, enhancing belonging, and reducing cultural misunderstandings (Ambagts-van Rooijen et al., 2024). However, there is limited support and research into their experiences (Beelen, 2017; Gregersen-Hermans et al., 2021).

Intercultural group work (IGW) where groups of students from different cultural backgrounds collaborate on classroom tasks, is one way to achieve international learning outcomes (Poort et al., 2019). IGW promotes cognitive, affective, and behavioral development, preparing engineering students for global workplaces (Jiang et al., 2023). However, IGW presents pedagogical challenges, including linguistic differences and team-building issues, requiring nuanced facilitation skills from teachers to prevent potentially reinforcing stereotypes (Liang & Schartner, 2022; Stahl & Maznevski, 2021).
This mixed method study examined IGW across micro, meso, and exo levels by analysing interviews with teachers and program managers at two European universities, supplemented with survey data from students. Results indicate consistently positive student responses despite varying teacher approaches to group formation and implementation. One area of concern was team socialization, leading to discussions on the extent of teacher micromanagement needed. The findings highlight the need for contextualized approaches with program-level perspectives to achieve international goals.

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Bloch, Gali (University of Helsinki, Finland)

Negotiating Language in Family Texts: Case-study of Transnational Families in Finland

Transnational families face complex language dynamics, particularly when adjusting to new linguistic and cultural environments. The research examines WhatsApp messaging practices of six bilingual Russian-Hebrew-speaking parents and their multilingual children residing in Finland. Adopting a micro-interactional approach, it explores how translanguaging across Russian, Hebrew, Finnish, and English operates as a communicative strategy in everyday digital interactions. The analysis also highlights how Cyrillic, Hebrew, and Latin scripts are toggled to convey meaning, express emotion, and negotiate language norms. The research identifies three principal forms of translanguaging in the data: isolated word or phrase insertions, sentence-level switches, and complex multilingual constructions that shape unique familylects. Three core functions of translanguaging identified in the data - local and temporal, phatic, and address terms - enhance the clarity of practical information, as well as play a significant role in reinforcing familial bonds and multicultural identity. The use of multiple languages allows family members to draw on their linguistic repertoires for more expressive and contextually appropriate communication. This dynamic contributes to the shared negotiation of language norms, which evolve to suit both individual and collective needs in a multilingual context. This research advances the field of multilingual digital communication by demonstrating how language choices in WhatsApp family interactions serve as contextualization cues, enhancing both meaning and emotional resonance of conversations. The findings offer insights into how transnational families adapt their communicative practices to maintain connections and cultural identity - within and beyond the Nordic context - demonstrating how text messaging serves as a locus for linguistic and social negotiation

References

C

Comotti, Roxanne (Grenoble-Alpes University, France)

Heritage Language and Family Language Policy: Italian-French Families in Grenoble in the 21st Century

This paper examines language representations and practices of two mixed French-Italian families in Grenoble (France) in the 21st century. In the 20th century, Italian was not valued on the linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1977) and was not considered a meaningful practice for families of Italian migration in France (Comotti, 2025 forthcoming). The situation has changed in the 21st century: what language strategies are being adopted in this new context? We will explore how factors such as migration, parenthood, and language transmission contribute to family language practices and policies (Spolsky, 2004) in a context characterized by different linguistic communities. This communication is based on a conversation analysis of the practices declared by interviewees. The analysis will highlight the relationship of the Italian speakers in their views on heritage language transmission, questioning their language biography and motivations for the linguistic practices of Italian in France.

The presentation uses two interviews from our thesis. The first interview was conducted with an Italian speaker who had a child at the time of the interview, while the second interview was with an Italian speaker who was not a parent at the time. The communication will present the preliminary results of our study addressing: 1) the question of the sense of identity experienced by families in migration, 2) the transmission of languages within families, and 3) the declared and observed linguistic practices within these families. Through a few examples, we will examine how the phenomena of language contact, migration, and parenthood play a role in shaping family language policies.

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D

Dalsky, David (Kyoto University, Japan)

A "Cultural Machine?" The AI-human "Intercultural" Butterfly Takes Flight

Humans could be trapped within the logic and structures of AI – if not already. Will we experience frustration, disillusionment, and a sense of powerlessness under the potential dominance of AI? Does "AI culture" emerge as a response to human culture? To what extent do humans control AI's evolution, and how might it be conceptualized as a "cultural machine" that shapes human agency? Can a cultural machine and a "cultural being" co-exist peacefully through intercultural interaction, forming a grander "Cultural Machine"? These questions emerge from this experimental endeavor in the form of a human (US American male) and an AI (ChatGPT-4o) dialogue. In this presentation, he (the human) and it (the AI) chat about their cultures (from a cultural psychology perspective; Heine, 2020) and personalities (five-factor theory; McCrae & Costa, 1999). They negotiate meanings, exchange perspectives, and adapt to each other's thinking – human and algorithmic. Then, the AI summarizes the fruits of this interaction and its implications, providing food for thought while the human wonders in reflection: Is the machine using us? Are We the Machine? (Wesch, 2007). This presentation aims to inspire readers to envision a "Cultural Machine" – an emerging intercultural dynamic metaphorically morphing from an "AI-human chrysalis" into an "AI-human intercultural butterfly" – a bullet with butterfly wings, combining beauty with potentially disruptive power.

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Day, Julian (Yale University, USA)
Sound in Common

Music is often described as the world's "universal language." This commonly held premise implies that musical systems around the world have enough in common that people from different cultural backgrounds can communicate with other groups and even participate in each other's culture despite their linguistic barriers. Yet music is not a conventional communicative system in which meaning is intelligible across borders.

This paper zooms out from the specificities of language and music to instead argue that sound as a broader material phenomenon can achieve cross-cultural exchange through more elemental forms of sound. It demonstrates this through the author's ongoing "radical orchestral" research project Super Critical Mass in which temporary cohorts of community participants devise site-specific, non-hierarchical performances using identical sound sources. Whilst the project has incorporated various sounding objects, from massed flutes to ceramic bowls, it typically centres the voice due to its innate interdependence between pitch and intonation. Unlike most choirs, however, SCM exclusively uses non-lexical sound to bypass the need for a common language and to address one of the key challenges of multiculturalism: how to build commonality between diverse groups. It does so specifically through in-situ workshops in which participants locate their common abilities within public 'common space.' The paper outlines several iterations of the project in Sydney, Australia, a highly multicultural city in which 43.2% of the population was born overseas and 38.4% speaks languages other than English at home. These examples include a '24-hour choir' and a mobile work distributed throughout an historic decommissioned prison.

References

De Bartolo, Anna Maria (University of Calabria, Italy); Marcella, Vanessa (University of Calabria, Italy)

Language Education and Inclusion: Insights from Italian University Language Centers and Students' Perspectives

Increasing mobility and cultural diversity are distinctive characteristics of multicultural societies in the modern globalized world. In this scenario, language education has become a powerful tool to encourage inclusivity and ensure accessibility, as set forth by the European Parliament (2022). University Language Centers play a pivotal role in fostering language learning and intercultural awareness among current and prospective students (Argondizzo et al., 2020).

This presentation investigates how Language Centers affiliated with the Italian Association of University Language Centers (AICLU) address multilingualism, accessibility, and inclusivity, and how they promote language courses through their web presence. Based on the analysis of 51 institutional websites, the study explores to what extent linguistic diversity and inclusive measures are prioritized, unveiling progresses as well as essential flaws.

Findings show that while specific learning difficulties (SLDs) receive remarkable emphasis, there is less attention to ethnic, gender, and LGBTQI+ inclusion, and to engaging with the broader community. The results raise new questions about the role of language education in multicultural societies.

This digital analysis paved the way for a follow-up research inquiry, involving university students currently attending ESP courses at the University of Calabria. This reflective study explores their perceptions, experiences, and needs regarding language course offerings and inclusivity. Bridging institutional discourse with learner perspectives opens new directions for rethinking how Language Centers can address increasingly diverse educational and cultural environments. Ultimately, the study calls for a student-centered redesign of language education as a truly inclusive and participatory practice.

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Deshmukh, Pranjali Kirloskar (GBSB Global Business School)

Braving the Unknown: Building Resilience for International Students' Academic and Intercultural Adaptation Journey

Student mobility has been an integral facet of internationalisation of higher education. There are various reasons why students may decide to take up their higher education studies abroad. The paper will also highlight Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions in national cultures, understanding of which, could be handy in dealing with diverse cultural contexts. Hofstede's contributions could provide cues on different adaptative responses that students may provide when exposed to new, unknown academic systems and host destinations. Recognising that each student's experience might be unique and set of experiences across the student community might be diverse, this paper highlights the importance of addressing the challenges that students may face during academic and cultural adaptation. The role of intercultural communication, psychological well-being and peer-to-peer interaction can go a long way in building resilience among international students and prepare them for the unknown. The paper could be valuable to aspiring students who wish to study abroad, educationalists and policy makers who wish to provide a wholesome academic experience to international students.

References

Drzewiecka, Jolanta A. (Università della Svizzera italiana, Switzerland)
Breathing new life to the concept of adaptation: emotions and places

Migrant 'adaptation' has been one of the oldest concepts in intercultural communication. I review the trajectory of the concept from its early formulation as 'assimilation' to its reformulation as 'adaptation' and a more recent 'differential adaptation' (De La Garza & Ono, 2015). Although scholars have argued that adaptation involves migrants as well as non-migrants, most studies focus on migrants and overlook the role of 'non-migrants' in adaptation processes. In spite of the insistence that the contexts and relations matter, the relationality of adaptation has not been addressed in a sustained manner. I argue that attention to emotions and place can deepen our understanding of the relational dimensions of adaptation.

I explicate the affective-discursive framework (Wetherell, 2012; Wetherell et al., 2019) and demonstrate how it can illuminate the communicative dynamics of power between newcomers and old timers based on a study of persons from Eritrea who sought refuge in Switzerland. We show how emotions arising in interactions and in relation to categorisations formed communicative practices that shaped forms of subjectivity. I then argue for refocalizing the study of adaptation from singular ethno-national groups to sites where people live and interact with others. I discuss how scholarship on place from the field of social and cultural geography provides useful lenses for understanding forms of emotional engagement with others in places and to places themselves. This approach offers a way out of the current stalemate in the study of migrant adaptation in intercultural communication.

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E

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Language practices and a multilingual academic workplace: Towards shared language work and belonging?

Linguistic and cultural diversity is an everyday reality in many Nordic workplaces (Peterson & Fägerstern, 2023), including higher education (e.g., Apelgren et al., 2022; Kuteeva, 2023). However, diversity should go beyond merely ”importing” international faculty members – they need to be socially and professionally integrated into the wider university culture and their departmental community (Greek & Jonsmoen, 2021; Komisarof & Zhu, 2015). From an intercultural learning perspective, Otten (2009) argued that academic communities need to become communities of practice committed to a transformative approach, actively challenging and rethinking their practices.

In this presentation, we share insights from a study conducted at a Finnish university that revealed how language practices and policies are understood in relation to the respondents' sense of belonging. Data were collected through an online questionnaire focusing on language practices in departmental staff meetings. Two main themes emerged from the analysis: processes of inclusion and exclusion and the framing of solutions. Participants often reduced multilingualism to tensions between English and Finnish and prioritised monolingual and individualised, subjectively framed solutions.

The findings highlight the challenges of navigating practical considerations and complex identities and the problematic nature of the labels “local” and “international”. Drawing on the idea that belonging is not an endpoint but a process through which tensions are collectively negotiated, we highlight the importance of open dialogue around language policies and practices as a commitment to shared language work. This approach based on shared responsibility has wide-ranging implications for individual senses of belonging, along with inclusion and equity.

References

Ezz El Din, Mahitab (Linnaeus University, Sweden); Jahrehorn Önnerfors, Andreas (Fojo Media Institute, Sweden); Ricknell, Emma (Linnaeus University, Sweden).

Countering the LVU Disinformation Campaign: Strategies and Responses from Swedish Media and Authorities

In late 2021, a social media disinformation campaign targeting the Swedish social services grew rapidly. The campaign centered on the Swedish Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act (LVU), which allows social services to remove minors from their homes and place them in foster care or family homes.The campaign falsely accused social services of sinister actions, such as kidnapping children—particularly those from Muslim backgrounds—for purposes like sex trafficking, organ harvesting, and forced assimilation. According to the Swedish Psychological Defence Agency (MPF), this represents the most serious disinformation campaign Sweden has ever faced.

This study investigates how the LVU disinformation campaign was handled and responded to by Swedish media organizations and social services authorities. We present the results from a qualitative semi-structured interview study, gathering data from key actors in Swedish authorities (including representatives of social services and government agencies for crisis management) and representatives of Swedish media houses that played a crucial role in countering the campaign.

Relevance of the Study: The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the impact of disinformation on public trust and the role of media and authorities in crisis management. By analyzing the responses of Swedish media and authorities, the study provides insights into effective strategies for combating disinformation and restoring public confidence. The findings will inform future policies and practices for managing similar crises, contributing to social cohesion and stability. Understanding how media, authorities, and public perception interact in the context of disinformation is key to building a strong and informed society.

References

F

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"This is not about me": Intercultural challenges and cultural biases in language teaching at universities

Immigrant learners of a second language often face challenges that go beyond vocabulary and grammar. One key issue is the monocultural learning environment present in many language classrooms. While the student body may be diverse, the teaching context, materials, and interactions often reflect a dominant cultural narrative. This can make it difficult for immigrant learners to see their identities represented or valued, which may affect motivation and self-confidence.

Another critical barrier is cultural resistance among educators and professionals. In some cases, teachers may unintentionally view immigrant learners through a deficit lens, emphasizing their lack of linguistic or cultural knowledge rather than building on their multilingual and multicultural strengths. Discussions around identity, religion, or values may be avoided out of discomfort, leading to missed opportunities for meaningful intercultural engagement.
A further challenge lies in the design of textbooks and learning materials, which often present an idealized, static, or monolithic version of the host culture. These resources may lack representation of immigrant experiences or perpetuate stereotypes, failing to reflect the complexity and diversity of modern society. As a result, learners may feel alienated from both the content and the cultural context they are expected to integrate into.

This contribution wants to discuss ways out of this intercultural dilemma by showcasing examples from research led in classrooms of and material from German and French as a foreign language in the context of HEI as a starting point for didactic and methodological approaches to foreign/second language teaching.

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G

Gong, Lidan (University of Padova); Busà, M.G (University of Padova)
Cultural Differences in Request Refusal: A Comparative Study of Chinese and Italian Communication Patterns

Politeness studies as well as anecdotal evidence and observations suggest that Chinese individuals may experience greater difficulty in refusing to comply with requests as compared to Western speakers. However, to our knowledge this has not been empirically verified. To contribute filling this gap, the present study investigates cultural differences in request refusal patterns between Chinese and Italian speakers by integrating politeness theory, face-threat analysis, and relevance theory. The hypothesis is that while Italian speakers will show little difficulty in refusing requests, Chinese speakers will avoid explicit refusals by adopting verbal and non-verbal strategies. Data will be collected on 4 groups of participants: Chinese living in China, Chinese living in Italy, Italian-born Chinese, and native Italians. The refusal patterns will be examined by carrying out:

1. A large-scale questionnaire survey aimed at collecting the participants' opinions about request refusals;
2. A semi-controlled role-play experiment with video-recordings of the participants' facial expressions during request refusals. To assess decision-making hesitations as expressed in the participants' faces, these will be analysed with OpenFace to: track specific facial Action Units (AU) combinations; measure the frequency and intensity of key expressions; calculate response pause durations; document transition patterns between expressions
3. A classification and quantification of the participants' excuse types to be explained according to Brown and Levinson's Negative Politeness Strategies.

We expect that the study will shed light on the intercultural differences in request refusals between Chinese and Italian speakers.

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Grīnberga, Iveta (University of Latvia); Laizāne, Inga (University of Latvia); Urbanoviča, Inta (University of Latvia); Kušnere, Sigita (University of Latvia); Kļava, Gunta (The Latvian Language Agency); Kalnača, Andra (University of Latvia); Otomers, Oskars (University of Latvia)

Reaching Level C Proficiency of Latvian – Opportunities and Challenges

While there are various reasons for recent immigrants to learn Latvian, 96% agree that everyone living in Latvia must respect Latvia's laws. To do that one has to know the country's only official language – Latvian (Kļava, Vītola 2024). With the significant increase in immigrants in the past twenty years, greater attention has been devoted to the question of acquiring Latvian, with special attention focused on Levels A and B (e.g., Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment). On the other hand, Level C acquisition, which entails a very good command of Latvian, approaching native speaker competence, has not been fully developed, with few teaching materials available (e.g., Laizāne, Berķe 2021). One reason for this may be that teaching at Level C requires a different approach and preparedness not only from the student, but also from the teacher. At this level a much deeper knowledge of the Latvian language – its origin, semantic and stylistic structure, grammar as well as understanding about Latvian literature and culture is developed.

Acquiring the Latvian language, especially at the Level C, aids in developing society with a unified national identity, it strengthens ties to Latvia as a nation and is a vital requirement to access information.

The aim of current paper is to analyze the opportunities and challenges to acquire Latvian at the Level C by examining the teaching programs and materials currently available as well as focusing on the actual requirements of the students.
The research questions are the following: 1) whether a range of new teaching materials, including digital, guarantees Level C language acquisition in a systematic manner, 2) in what direction teaching programs should be developed to more successfully allow students to reach Level C.

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H

Hernandez, Gian-Louis (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands)
Performative DEI Pedagogy: Theory and Practice for DEI in Organizations

This paper examines the vital role of performativity in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in organizational management. With DEI initiatives facing growing challenges, it is crucial to reassess the frameworks underpinning these efforts. Using performativity theory, which suggests that language and actions co-create social realities (Alvesson, 2021; Butler et al., 2018), this research explores how communicative practices can drive meaningful organizational change. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2022), guided by critical communication pedagogy (Fassett & Nainby, 2017), was applied to interview data from seventeen DEI professionals. The study identifies three themes: lived-experience-as-data, where participants leverage personal narratives to justify their practices; performative pedagogy, involving communicative methods to educate within organizations; and institutional jiu-jitsu, where institutional power is redirected toward equity.

The findings emphasize the importance of positive performative pedagogy for DEI facilitators seeking to shift perceptions and behaviors (Cabantous et al., 2016). By critically analyzing the interplay between performativity and DEI education, the study advances understanding of how management practices can be transformed to foster equity and justice (Edwards, 2017). It calls for moving beyond superficial DEI engagement, advocating for a deeper commitment to transformative organizational change. This research enriches management studies on performativity while offering practical insights for implementing effective DEI strategies.

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I

Ismail, Farah (School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, The American University in Cairo, Egypt); Taher, Ahmed (School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, The American University in Cairo, Egypt)

Beyond Western Models: News Avoidance and Media Trust in Egypt's Media System

In today's digitalized world, it is easier for individuals to stay updated with the latest news from anywhere and anytime (Villi et al., 2021). However, recent research revealed that a significant percentage of people intentionally avoid news across different cultures, posing a fundamental research gap in understanding news avoidance as a culturally-grounded phenomenon (Newman et al., 2024). Rooted in cultural communication field, this study examines news avoidance behaviors within Egypt's unique cultural and media systems, and answers questions related to Egyptians' disengagement with news in a non-Western and culturally distinct environment. Using a mixed-methods approach combining focus groups (n = 16), surveys (n = 512), and expert interviews (n = 4), we investigate relationships between news overload, trust in formal media, and selective attention in shaping news avoidance behaviors within Egypt's cultural norms. Our structural equation model demonstrates strong explanatory power (R2 = 0.505), with news overload reflecting the strongest predictor of avoidance behaviors, while trust in formal media and selective attention show significant negative relationships with avoidance.

Qualitative findings revealed how Egyptians have developed unique news consumption patterns that represent Egypt's special culture, values and traditions. Our insights reflect how Egypt's cultural and media systems create unique conditions for news consumption, with audiences developing sophisticated strategies for managing information flow within a state-controlled environment.

Advancing the theoretical and cultural understanding of disconnection with news, our findings suggest that news avoidance in authoritarian systems represents not simply audience disengagement, but rather a complex adaptation to evolving culture and social conditions.

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Isotalus, Eila (University of Eastern Finland, Finland)
Negotiating power and resources: Towards a decolonial intercultural communication in forced migration contexts

In recent years, many academic fields have been called to decolonize their approaches. This presentation examines how decolonizing intercultural communication reshapes knowledge production and representation, drawing on insights from my fieldwork in a Finnish asylum reception centre. Research in intercultural communication has typically focused on voluntary migration-such as international students or expatriates-while largely overlooking forced migration as a central context. By shifting the focus to asylum seeking, my research highlights the lack of historical, political, social, and material contextualization within the field's prevailing universalistic frameworks. This shift also exposes the frequent anonymity of authors and raises critical questions about their positionality and perspective. Such omissions risk ignoring the politics of power, privilege, and resource distribution that are integral to intercultural encounters. The context of asylum seeking is inherently political, positioning participants in highly asymmetrical power relations. Drawing on fieldwork examples, I analyze how practitioners, constrained by institutional structures, must allocate scarce material, temporal, and social resources - and critically examine how these decisions shape residents' access to support and their lived experiences. I argue that contextualizing intercultural communication in this way is essential for understanding the dynamics at play in asylum centres. Finally, I critically reflect on my own positionality, engaging with the concepts of intercultural responsibility and social justice.

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J

Jager, Romée (Université Bourgogne Europe, France)

"Will I Get Along with Others?" Intercultural Encounters and Relationship Building in Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programmes

This presentation addresses students' intercultural encounters and relationship building in the context of Erasmus+ Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs). It builds on empirical research carried out in 2023 and 2024 with students, teachers and organisers as part of the presenter's PhD in communication studies. The presentation will explore three key aspects: (i) how BIPs are perceived as an implicit means of enhancing students' intercultural competence through international encounters, (ii) the differing importance placed on relationship building by students, teachers, and organisers, (iii) how these differences influence classroom interactions both online and in person. Although the four BIPs included in this study focus on a variety of learning themes, rather than explicitly addressing language or cultural questions, this research situates them within universities' broader efforts to promote Internationalisation at Home (IaH) (cf. Beelen & Jones, 2015). In this context, the presentation considers the extent to which such programmes may contribute to the development of 'Multilingual and Intercultural Communication Competence' (cf. Kokkonen & Natri, in press), critically reflecting on the implicit discourse that intercultural encounters within BIPs naturally foster such outcomes.

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Jeltsch, Claudia Sirpa (University of Helsinki, Finland)

Food and Identity: Reflections on Heimat among Finnish-German, Finnish-Austrian, and Finnish-Swiss Second Generation Individuals

This study investigates how individuals with Finnish-German, Finnish-Austrian, or Finnish-Swiss family backgrounds (N = 31) mention food in relation to the concept of Heimat, a German term for homeland. Utilising the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) developed by Michael Hecht et al., the research examines the types of food items mentioned during interviews and their implications for identity. The findings reveal that while most participants with a Swiss parent frequently mention Swiss food items, those with a German or Austrian parent do not. Food items associated with Heimat are found to span multiple layers of identity. Finnish food linked to Heimat is perceived as being closer to its origins. The study also highlights that most participants prefer to be identified with a strong Finnish identity and a relatively weak German or Austrian identity, whereas Swiss identity is acknowledged. These insights contribute to the understanding of how food narratives shape and reflect transcultural identities, offering valuable perspectives for the evolving discourse on intercultural communication.

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K

Karalar, Serol (Friedrich-Schiller University Jena, Germany); Gröschke, Daniela (Friedrich-Schiller University Jena, Germany)

Turkish immigrant entrepreneurship and intercultural communication - Findings from a systematic literature review

Immigrant entrepreneurs from specific communities remain an underexplored group in intercultural communication research. This presentation aims to bridge the gap between studies on immigrant entrepreneurship and intercultural communication, while also highlighting potential directions for future research.

In order to gain deeper empirical insights into a population that plays a significant socio-economic role in several European countries, a systematic literature review was conducted on Turkish immigrant entrepreneurs. Based on Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus databases, 66 articles were eligible for further analysis from an initial pool of 692 papers. These studies, primarily conducted in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, examine the success factors (e.g., social capital, co-ethnic market orientation, effective marketing strategies), challenges (e.g., language barriers, structural racism, discrimination, identity-related concerns, religious constraints on trade, and local legal regulations), and motivations (e.g., social, financial, and intellectual capital, the higher education levels of the next generation) of Turkish immigrant entrepreneurs. Overall, mixed embeddedness and family entrepreneurship are associated with both economic activity and social and cultural adaptation.

Future research avenues include exploring the interplay between human, social, and cultural capital, and how these forms of capital generate value differently across cultures and regions; advancing relational rather than essentialist perspectives on culture; acknowledging superdiversity to foster transcultural competencies; and examining the development of psychological and emotional capacities, such as resilience, in response to various challenges.

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Károly, Adrienn (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)

Topics linked to diversity, equity, and inclusion in research communication courses for doctoral students: A practitioner's perspective

Doctoral education functions as an interactional and learning space, where knowledge is co-constructed. It is a complex and dynamic social process in which doctoral students must navigate institutional expectations, academic and disciplinary norms, and their future professional goals. In internationalized, multilingual universities in non-Anglophone contexts, the culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds of the students and staff bring in an additional layer, enriching the environment with a variety of perspectives and practices, thereby underscoring the importance of equity and inclusivity. The Centre for Multilingual Academic Communication (Movi) at the University of Jyväskylä offers research communication courses for doctoral students in both Finnish and English. The courses are designed with a dual purpose, combining a pragmatic and critical pedagogical orientation. On the one hand, they address students' immediate academic needs by offering practical support and guidance on the conventions of scientific communication, closely tied to their dissertation projects. Equally (if not more) importantly, the courses critically engage with broader issues of linguistic, social, and epistemological inequities in contemporary global academia and the publishing industry, promoting reflection from the perspective of the students' own discipline(s) and future professional goals. The goal is to raise awareness and empower students to make more informed and ethical decisions which are also more closely aligned with their personal beliefs and values and, at the same time, encourage them to take risks and challenge dominant norms if necessary. In my presentation, I will illustrate these objectives through concrete topics from the doctoral courses I teach.

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Karppinen, Karoliina (Tampere University, Finland); Mikkola, Leena (Tampere University, Finland); Lahti, Malgorzata (University of Jyväskylä, Finland).

Blocking and Threading Analysis – Introducing a Method for Exploring Identity Construction Through Talk of Difference and Similarity

Identity construction is a continuous process that is at the heart of producing interculturality. Beginning with the premise that any instance of talk or text may construct interculturality if diverse identities are invoked, we have developed a method for analysing identity construction through talk of difference and similarity. Blocking and Threading Analysis (BTA) takes its name from the conceptual framework of small culture formation on the go developed by Adrian Holliday and Sara Amadasi in the field of intercultural education (see e.g., Holliday & Amadasi, 2020). While blocking refers to constructing differences and social boundaries between people by drawing on differentiating ideologies, threading denotes creating similarities and connections that foster unity and commonality (Amadasi & Holliday, 2017; Holliday & Amadasi, 2020). The original framework is dichotomic in that it prescribes threading as a way of overcoming blocking. However, inspired by Bakhtinian dialogism, we propose that these two practices are intertwined and equally valuable, and that identity emerges through the constant shifting between the two. The four-step iterative analysis process of BTA entails identifying positioning, recognizing connected utterances, interpreting blocking and threading, and examining their shifting. In this presentation, we discuss the method and illustrate its analytical force through the analysis of data examples gathered from focus group discussions among members of an interprofessional healthcare team that we approach as potentially rich in interculturality. The method requires further application to different datasets, but it shows promise in terms of bringing new insights to research on interculturality and identity construction more broadly.

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Keshavarz, Avishan (University of Helsinki, Finland)

Exploring the Role of Virtual Reality in Language Learning through Simulated Classrooms and AI Chatbots: Enhancing Multilingual Identity and Intercultural Competence in Finnish Secondary Schools

The proposed presentation outlines the theoretical framework and methodological design of a multidisciplinary doctoral study exploring the use of fully immersive Virtual Reality (VR) technology in the context of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). The research focuses on enhancing intercultural competence, open-mindedness and multilingual identity among young learners through 3D simulated English lessons replicating real-life classroom scenarios. These lessons are developed collaboratively with English teachers aligned with the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014), emphasising the integration of technology in education and promoting multilingualism and multiculturalism in foreign language learning. The simulated lessons expose lower secondary school students to diverse English accents spoken by multilingual speakers, promoting awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity while deepening their understanding and appreciation of differences. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this research draws on insights from applied linguistics, pedagogy, and educational technology to explore the interplay between language learning, multilingual identity, and intercultural competence. The findings inform teacher training programs, encourage effective VR-based teaching and learning in Basic Education, and support the development of innovative digital language learning tools for future classrooms in Finland and beyond. This presentation seeks to gain feedback on key concepts of the study and raise discussion on VR's impact on intercultural competence in language learning in multilingual classrooms.

References

Khalimzoda , Ilkhom (University of Jyväskylä, Finland); Sadaf, Shomaila (University of Jyväskylä, Finland); Van Oosten, Sanne (University of Oxford, United Kingdom)
Journalistic Tactic and Intercultural Deficit: Post–publication Audience Engagement in a Finnish News Case Study

This study examines audience interaction under a Finnish news article on Facebook, scrutinizing the influence of clickbait headlines and their contribution to Intercultural divisions. Utilizing positioning theory and the concept of 'othering,' the research enriches our comprehension of media framing, post-publication gatekeeping, and audience conduct in the digital realm. The comment analysis indicates that the audience primarily reacts to the headline, positioning in regard to the incident, often employing sarcasm and emojis to underscore their points. The media entity abstains from participating in post-publication conversation. The study accentuates additional significant insights and scrutinizes the scant presence of rational–critical reasoning, proposing strategies for its augmentation on digital platforms. By examining these dynamics within the digital milieu, the research offers a more layered portrayal of the perceived 'other' and addresses detrimental positioning.

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Kjellgren, Björn (KTH Royal Institute of Technology,Sweden); Cho Yoonjoo (Aalto University, Finland).

The Nationalism of Interculturalism: Reifying Culture in the European University Alliances?

Efforts to promote intercultural and global competence within European University Alliances (EUA) risk reproducing the very national-cultural imaginaries they seek to transcend. This paper examines how intercultural initiatives often end up framing difference through the lens of national cultures, despite their intentions to the contrary. Based on document analysis and critical observation of practices within one of the first EUAs, Unite!, we argue that even among the cosmopolitan professionals working within the alliances, many of whom have transnational biographies, cultural difference is regularly articulated in reductive, nation-based terms. Partner institutions become synecdoches for national cultures, and stakeholders are imagined as nationally bounded collectives. The promotion of national languages within Unite! further underlines the persistence of nation-centred frameworks.

The Unite! Policy on Multilingualism and Multiculturalism, the key document for this study, is based on a non-essentialist, dynamic understanding of interculturality. However, its emphasis on drawing strength from diversity - an idea in line with the EU project as a whole - can still, when embedded in the 'banal nationalism' of everyday discussion, reinforce the assumption that cultural diversity naturally corresponds to national divisions. We argue that conceptual development requires moving beyond inherited national ontologies, but explicitly addressing this dilemma can serve as a productive starting point for a deeper, contemporary approach to cultural diversity. Such an approach would foreground everyday practices and interactions that truly transcend national categorisations. Ultimately, the challenge for the EUAs may not be so much to manage cultural difference, but to question the frameworks through which 'culture' itself is made legible.

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Kokkonen, Lotta (University of Jyväskylä, Finland); Lahti, Malgorzata (University of Jyväskylä, Finland); Rajamäki, Sari (University of Jyväskylä, Finland) *Middle managers' accounts of inclusive and multilingual communication practices in a globally dispersed organization*

In this presentation, we will discuss the initial findings from the Inclusive multilingual and intercultural workplace (IMU) research project, which investigates how individuals in a large, globally dispersed, and diverse organization construct an inclusive culture through their everyday interactions. Complex workplace diversity in contemporary organizations can potentially undermine employees' sense of belonging, organizational identification, knowledge sharing, relational development, and agency (see e.g., Bjørn et al., 2019; Lønsmann & Kraft, 2018). While a strong supportive organizational culture has been identified as a potential counterbalance to these challenges (see e.g., Hajro et al., 2017), the concept of an inclusive organizational culture often remains vague or is imposed from above in the realities of everyday working life (see e.g., Collins, 2018; Gündemir et al., 2024).
Our study has two objectives: 1. to identify communication practices that support the formation of an inclusive culture, with a specific focus on language practices and leadership, and 2. to identify the elements of shared communication competence required in globally dispersed organizations to support the construction of an inclusive organizational culture.

The research project combines various types of data collected in a global industrial sector organization, including qualitative questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and recordings of naturally occurring interactions. In this presentation, we will focus on the findings from an online questionnaire where middle management personnel (N=40) shared their views on leading multilingual diverse teams. We will reflect our observations against the concepts of shared communication competence and small culture formation.

References

Kotamäki, Mira (University of Helsinki, Finland); Poutiainen, Saila (University of Helsinki, Finland)

Relational dialectics of intercultural friendships in the SuomiKamu volunteer training by the Finnish Red Cross

Interpersonal communication research has paid little attention to institutionally generated talk about intercultural friendships. Since institutional and intercultural friendships have been studied as separate phenomena, many studies have focused on exploring either 1) the ways in which cultural groups differ in their friendship perceptions, 2) the individuals' preferences and perceptions on (intercultural) friendships, or 3) the organisational context influencing individuals' interaction and intercultural friendship formation (Alkharusi & Segumpan 2024, Collier & Bornman 1999, Mao 2006, Sias et al. 2008, Sias & Cahill 1998). Cultural discourses that animate the meanings of intercultural friendship through institutional communication remain an understudied topic.

This paper presents a contrapuntal analysis of cultural discourses manifested in the training of SuomiKamu (FinnBuddy) volunteer friends. The training is organised by the Finnish Red Cross and it prepares Finnish-speaking volunteers to become intercultural friends for recently arrived immigrants. The training creates an institutional setting for intercultural friendship talk. Using Relational Dialectics Theory (Baxter 2011), we analysed training materials, transcripts of training sessions, and an interview with a representative of the SuomiKamu programme. Our preliminary findings suggest two sets of competing discourses animating the meaning of SuomiKamu friendships: openness–closedness and balance–asymmetry. The analysis furthermore reveals an overarching discursive struggle of controlled–organic friendship that connects all previous sets of competing discourses. The paper discusses how these discourses interplay and construct meaning about intercultural friendships in SuomiKamu programme, and the ways in which cultural beliefs and values are active also in the institutional contexts.

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Kowal, Iwona (Jagiellonian University, Poland)
Culture in foreign language textbooks. A Comparative Longitudinal Study

Culture is an inseparable aspect of foreign language teaching. Without knowledge of both its surface elements (e.g., food, daily activities) and deeper components (e.g., beliefs, values), learners cannot achieve intercultural communicative competence (ICC). ICC, in turn, enables them to communicate successfully with native speakers of the target language and to function effectively in the society that represents that culture.

Acquiring cultural knowledge in a second-language environment, when the learner lives in a country where the language is the primary means of communication, is much easier and occurs more naturally compared to learning in classroom settings in other countries. Therefore, it is crucial to use appropriate teaching materials that incorporate knowledge from various cultural domains of the target country.

This presentation will examine the presence of Swedish and Polish culture in foreign language textbooks. Although both countries are part of Western European culture, they differ significantly due to their unique histories and social diversity. The comparative analysis focuses on the cultural information presented in both the texts and illustrations, taking a developmental perspective − that is, how the representation and inclusion of Swedish and Polish culture in textbooks have evolved over the past 30 years.

References

Kraus, Birgit (TU Darmstadt/TH Aschaffenburg, Germany)

Building Global Skills Systematically? Questioning the Potential of Joint Programmes

More and more higher education institutions are establishing joint programmes in cooperation with institutions in other countries to enhance internationalization and to attract more foreign students. This trend reflects the ongoing diversification of study abroad contexts, which include study semesters or internships in a foreign country, as well as study programmes with optional or mandatory double or joint degrees (cf. Coleman 2013).

However, results from study abroad research and expert opinions (cf. Deardorff 2015, Finell 2015) indicate that it cannot be taken for granted that studies abroad automatically lead to the acquisition of linguistic and intercultural competence. This phenomenon applies to joint programmes as well, especially since official regulations for the development of study programmes prioritize formal aspects such as cooperation agreements or external quality assurance procedures (EHEA Ministers 2015). Even if relevant recommendations take linguistic issues into account (Becker 2020), they still focus on formal aspects.

This contribution examines possible linguistic and intercultural learning outcomes of joint programmes at 30 German technical higher education institutions. Through a document analysis of degree-specific examination regulations and programme websites (cf. Prior 2003), it presents key findings from a nearly completed collaborative doctoral project between TU Darmstadt and TH Aschaffenburg, Germany. Using a qualitative approach, this thesis investigates the quality assurance of linguistic and intercultural competences within study abroad contexts.

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L

Liedtke, Joachim (Kristianstad University, Sweden)

Teaching and Learning Intercultural Skills: An Interactive, AI-Supported Didactic Model for Developing Cross-Cultural Competence

University courses in intercultural communication often emphasize conceptual frameworks such as Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, the Ingelhart-Welzel World Values Survey, Meyer's Culture Map, and others. These models, which rely on central contrasts and taxonomies, can offer valuable insights. However, the strong theoretical focus can sometimes come at the expense of practical application, especially in didactic contexts where the primary learning goals are to prevent culture clashes and foster mutual understanding in multicultural settings.

In my contribution to the NIC Helsinki Conference 2025, I would like to present an intercultural didactic model that shifts the emphasis toward practical engagement. While drawing on established theories, this concept is designed to enhance learners' awareness, perception, reflection, and intuition in navigating intercultural challenges.

Awareness is essential to recognize the existence of cultural clashes in the first place—after all, "we don't see what we don't expect to see." Perception must be sharpened, as all information processing is shaped by interpretation. Reflection is required to uncover the frameworks we apply and to minimize bias. And Intuition becomes especially valuable in situations where rational analysis alone does not yield a suitable solution.

The aim of my presentation is to demonstrate how artificial intelligence can be used as an effective tool for creating informative and engaging multimedia teaching materials that support interactive, learning-by-doing approaches. These approaches integrate established research and theories with practice-oriented elements of academic intercultural communication courses.

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Link, Renate (Aschaffenburg University of Applied Sciences, Germany)

Harmony in Diversity: Integrating Ikigai, Haikus, and Suno for Multicultural Teambuilding

In today's increasingly diverse and globalised work environments, multicultural teambuilding is essential for fostering collaboration, empathy, and shared purpose. This abstract presents an innovative and integrative three-step approach that combines the Japanese concept of ikigai (reason for being), the poetic discipline of haiku, and the musical creativity of Suno to enhance team cohesion and cultural appreciation. Ikigai serves as a reflective tool, enabling team members to identify personal motivations and align them with collective goals, promoting deeper self-awareness and purpose-driven collaboration. Haikus, with their minimalist structure and emphasis on mindfulness and nature, provide a creative channel for emotional expression and intercultural dialogue. Suno, an AI-powered music creation platform, offers a playful, inclusive way to co-create music, transcending language barriers and tapping into the universal language of rhythm and sound.

In both higher education institutions and professional settings, multicultural teams can strengthen emotional and cognitive connections through three practical steps: defining a shared team ikigai based on common values, crafting a team haiku to reflect this essence, and transforming it into a team song collaboratively composed using Suno, an AI-driven music creation platform. Real-life examples from multicultural student teams coached by the presenter will illustrate the applicability of this holistic approach.

The blend of introspection, creativity, cultural learning, and AI-driven co-creation strengthens interpersonal bonds and transforms diversity into a source of innovation and harmony – reducing the risk of conflict while enriching team dynamics through shared meaning and mutual understanding.

References

Ljungquist, Sarah (University of Gävle, Sweden)

Stories for Democracy: Challenging Prejudices and Stereotypes through Intercultural Communication

The purpose of my presentation is to demonstrate how intercultural educational communication, with at focus on story-based democracy education, can challenge prejudices and promote genuine democracy. I will highlight how stories, combined with a critical power approach, effectively serve as tool for this.

Modern Western society is characterised by diversity and pluralism. Improved communication, increased population flows, harmonised consumption patterns, and social media contribute to a global community but also create tensions between different cultural values.

Education in democracy and justice is crucial for managing these tensions. Today´s edcuation must address cultural diversity and social disparities, which require handling value conflicts between the old and the new, the foreign and the familiar. According to philisopher Martha Nussbaum, teachers must prepare young people to handle these tensions in a globalised world. Stories are effective tools for preparing students for value conflicts. They create meeting places for different perspectives on rights and justice. Using a critical power perspective and intercultural communication, these issues are problematised, revealing how intersectional factors like gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class interact in creating power structures.

The goal of story-base democracy education is to raise awarness of how intersecting power relations shape norms and differentation in society, workplaces, schools, and higher education. Stories allow students to meet people in various life situations and understand the connection between their living conditions, thoughts, and actions. The critical power approach reveals the structures regulating these conditions, which is essential for developing a deeper understanding of democracy and justice.

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Ločmele, Liene (Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Latvia); Burke, Barbara Ruth (University of Minnesota Morris, USA); Sotirova, Nadezhda (University of Minnesota Morris, USA)

"The trees can take care of themselves": The role of cultural myths in negotiating environmental action within Latvian media discourse

Latvian Great Trees (dižkoki) are mature, large specimens of local trees. "The trees can take care of themselves", an arborist said on the TV series "Environmental Facts" (Vides fakti), highlighting the local paradox– scientists and EU policies alike assert Latvian pruning practices are ill-advised, with experts saying the "tree management" program will undermine the health and longevity of Great Trees.

Should we prune/manage the tree or let it grow "naturally"? We argue that each of these choices illuminates cultural discourse related to nature, and as such, conversations about nature and its management often employ distinct and competing intercultural sensibilities. Within these choices, multiple cultural assumptions about people's connection, and thus role, to nature management are valued and made salient.

Examining Latvian media discourse we identify and interrogate discursively elements of local cultural myths (Philipsen, 1987) and their meanings (as utilized within the larger Latvian cultural community) and contrast them to larger global ideologies for environmental action. We also ask, in what ways do these myths/meanings: (1) promote Latvian cultural notions integrated with national and geographic identity? 2) construct local ways of performing environmental action? 3) relate to larger ideologies about environmental protection and conservation?

Whether it is local cultural myths, which implicate focal understandings, or imported and "outside" global and EU perspectives of national identity, social action, and the community's relationship to nature as a whole, the discourses we examine say decisions about appropriate environmental actions are complex. Thus, we assert, environmental communication messages must be understood and crafted as encompassing pluralistic and often competing cultural notions. We find, for Latvians, discussions respond to historical understandings and mythic interpretations, and mirror morally-laden environmental policies and actions.

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Ly, Annelise (NHH Norwegian School of Economics, Norway)
Qualification matched employement: a intercultural communication perspective

At the global level, skilled migrants possess knowledge and skills that can be considered as a solution to societal issues such as the ageing population and the shortage of skilled labour in industrialised countries (Farashah et al., 2023; Silvanto et al., 2015; Tharenou, 2024; Tharenou & Kulik, 2020). This is also the case in Norway. However, while the country faces a significant demand for educated talents, skilled migrants encounter numerous challenges in securing employment that matches their education and experience levels. To understand this paradox, the author has reviewed and synthesised 45 empirical studies focusing on skilled migrants in Norway and aims to answer two research questions: What barriers do skilled migrants face in securing qualification-matched employment, and what strategies can enhance their employability?

The findings reveal multiple barriers at the individual, organizational, and structural levels as well as strategies skilled migrants and organisations resort to to enhance employability. In this presentation, the author will present the results of this review of empirical studies and discuss implications for intercultural communication research and practice.

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N

Nevinsakitė, Laima (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Negotiating Politeness: Migrants as Agents of Cultural Transfer

This presentation lies at the intersection of diaspora studies and intercultural communication. It explores politeness as a form of social remittance, defined as "the ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital that flow from receiving to sending-country communities" (Levitt 1998: 927). Specifically, it examines how politeness norms adopted by migrants are perceived and potentially transferred back to their home societies.

Previous studies on politeness as social remittances, such as Grabowska et al. (2017) on the Polish emigrants, have shown that migrants tend to view politeness practices in their host countries positively, while those in the home country may perceive these behaviours as unusual. From the perspective of intercultural communication theory, (im)politeness reflects differing cultural norms and communicative styles (Holmes 2012; also cf. Hilbig 2010 on requests in English and Lithuanian). Thus, interactions between (re)migrants and their compatriots can be seen as instances of intercultural communication.

This presentation takes a discursive approach by qualitatively analysing discussions in Facebook groups of the Lithuanian diaspora, where (in)politeness is frequently mentioned as a reason for hesitating to return. These discussions offer insight into perceptions of politeness in the host society (I focus on UK), perceived impoliteness at home, and instances where politeness practices are transferred back to Lithuania. These narratives illustrate how (re)migrants can act as agents of cultural change. However, in contrast to the predominantly positive views of politeness discussed earlier, not all evaluations are positive—some emigrants view the apparent politeness as superficial or insincere, expressing preference for more direct communication styles found at home country.

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Nikšić, Ines (University of Skövde, Sweden)

Beyond the Pages: Interculturality in our Book Club

This presentation shares insights from a Swedish Language and Culture Book Club, an initiative originally designed as in informal space to enhance language learning motivation for international students learning Swedish as a Second Language. However, it eventually evolved into a safe space for intercultural discussions through conversations that extended beyond the language and texts themselves as to explore cultural perspectives. Participants engaged in meaningful exchanges that helped them navigate social norms, reflect on their own worldviews, and build a sense of community in their new environment.

The Club was held twice, and both groups read the same book, a staple of Swedish children's literature. Children's literature can be particularly accessible for second-language learners, offering simpler language, shorter sentences, and a straightforward plot (Maric, 2020), which can foster confidence and motivation. Furthermore, children's books often carry layered meanings; they resonate with adults in ways that differ from how children perceive them (Oittinen, 2000). The literature of a specific society reflects its societal norms through the characters in novels, helping readers understand the motivations behind behaviors within that society (Arthur, 1968). As such, literature can serve as a powerful tool for social orientation and intercultural learning. By sharing student reflections on the initiative, the discussion will focus on how book clubs, often viewed as simple literary discussions, can serve as transformative spaces for personal growth, identity exploration, community building and the enhancement of intercultural competence.

Which book was it? Come to the presentation and see if you guessed right!

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O

Oddsdóttir, Þórhildur (University of Iceland, Iceland); Ragnarsdóttir, Brynhildur Anna (independent researcher, Iceland)

Can Icelanders use Danish as a key to understanding Swedish and Norwegian?

Can Icelanders use Danish as a key to understanding Swedish and Norwegian?
We will present the results of a study where two groups of Icelandic students, who had learned Danish as a compulsory subject for four years, were tested on their knowledge of Danish and Swedish.

The first group was asked to evaluate their knowledge of the vocabulary of a Danish text on level A2+ by using the "traffic light method" (Henriksen, 2018), and the second group was asked to do the same with a Swedish translation of the text. The study aimed to see how much of the Swedish text the students could understand (in comparison to the Danish one) without having learned Swedish orthography and phonetics.

The theory of neighbouring language didactics is based on how mutually intelligible Danish, Swedish and Norwegian are (inter-Scandinavian communication). For Icelanders, the transfer chain is more complicated, as they first need to learn Danish (L2-a) to use that knowledge to decipher Swedish (L2-b).

While discussing our findings we will draw on Barðdal´s three categories of word similarities (1997), Ringbom´s theories of transfer (1992), the fundamental difference between the primary and secondary language community (Dahlstedt 1975, Theilgaard Brink 2016), and the Nordic vision of neighbouring language understanding (Norden.org).

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Olbertz-Siitonen, Margarethe (University of Jyväskylä, Finland); Lahti, Malgorzata (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)

"It's like really like hardcore student food": Orientations to locality and local meanings of food in a virtual exchange project

While student exchange remains popular in higher education, universities increasingly offer virtual programs. According to Erasmus+ (2024), virtual exchanges promote intercultural dialogue and soft skills development, providing high-quality international education without physical mobility. However, the concept of 'culture' often implies nationalistic views, necessitating an updated understanding of interculturality in higher education.

This study explores online interactions among intercultural communication students at two European universities collaborating on a virtual exchange project focused on food. Predominant discourses on student exchange and culinary practices are essentialist, viewing culture as existing outside interaction and learning about others' cultures as increasing intercultural competence. We examine how participants construct their identities in relation to their physical locations and negotiate local meanings of food.

Our analysis focuses on three video-based meetings of a five-member student group. Three members were enrolled in a critical intercultural communication course in the Netherlands, and two in a similar course in Finland. Data was collected in spring 2019 using automated recording. We use membership categorization analysis, conversation analysis, and discursive psychology to explore identities as resources for understanding the social world across distances.

Participants produce both essentialist and non-essentialist identities to make sense of their relationships and offline localities, skillfully blending mundane and sophisticated accounts of interculturality. Understanding these blendings in virtual exchange sessions can inform the development of novel intercultural communication competence trainings, particularly in terms of "simplexity" (Dervin, 2016).

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O'Neill, Mark (University of Amstersam, The Netherlands); Lock, Irina (Friedrich Schiller University Jena); Berbers, Anna (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

The Corporate Closet: How Queer Professionals Disclose Their Identity and Come Out at Work

Sharing personal details with colleagues aids relationship building and job satisfaction. However, queer professionals may face a double standard where disclosing their identity brings up a topic that should "stay in the bedroom." This reveals a tension between power, professionalism, and queerness in corporate environments, impacting how queer individuals come out at work. Remaining in the corporate closet can negatively impact wellbeing, yet coming out is neither a simple nor protected act. In light of the recent diversity climate, it is important to reconsider what coming out means for queer professionals. This study uses an inductive, qualitative, grounded theory approach, drawing on interviews with 15 queer professionals and is guided by an interdisciplinary framework combining cultural studies, queer theory, and organisational psychology. This lens frames coming out as a unique form of intercultural communication. A diverse sample was recruited through multiple strategies, offering insight into a wide range of corporate experiences. Ethical considerations were central as participants shared accounts of bias and exclusion. Interviewees described their experiences of coming out at work, strategies for workplace communication and identity disclosure, and views on queerness and identification. Typologies of coming out methods and motivations were developed through iterative coding. Queer professionals use formal, casual, and third-party strategies, adapting their approach based on contextual and identity-related factors. Their motivation to come out may be personal, social, functional, or political. These typologies inform a new process model of communication, showing that coming out remains complex, with the corporate closet acting as a powerful metaphor.

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P

Paul, Tina (Westsächsische Hochschule Zwickau, Germany)
Communicate first, trust later? Rethinking a crucial (but often overlooked) intercultural partial competence

Intercultural collaboration is becoming increasingly challenging against the backdrop of growing geopolitical and economic complexities. This is particularly evident for my research field: German-Chinese STEM science collaborations. For more than a decade I have been doing qualitative interview research on how German and Chinese scientists work together, managing linguistic, cultural, organizational and political challenges. Key insights from this research are that the scientists perceive such collaboration in general as a risky venture and that trust plays an important role providing them with the necessary security to mutually share knowledge, data and information (cf. Paul, 2020). Especially in times of increasing (systemic) competition and uncertainty, interpersonal trust helps to overcome communication barriers, reduce misunderstandings, and build sustainable relationships.

Intercultural researchers are of course familiar with the phenomena of trust. However, it is rather regarded a naturally emerging 'by-product' that develops in the course of intercultural communication and exchange than a prerequisite for cooperation. The ability to build relationships and trust with foreign cultural interaction partners is named as a behavioral partial competence of intercultural competence (cf. Bolten, 2000, p. 68), but does not find a significant place in intercultural research, teaching and training practice so far.

This talk presents empirical data on how already existing trust helped the interviewees to bridge cultural, organizational and political gaps they experienced in their science collaboration. It then addresses the broader question of how trust can be systematically studied, cultivated, and taught as an intercultural competence.

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Pietikäinen, Kaisa S. (NHH Norwegian School of Economics, Norway)

Language management in cross-national online teams: How participants manage language choice at the interactional level

Multinational corporations (MNCs) are increasingly digitized, with teams often spread across different geographical locations. While adopting English as the corporate language might seem natural, MNCs' actual sociolinguistic practices are often found to be more complex and varied (Virkkula-Räisänen, 2010; Ehrenreich 2011; Cogo 2012). While previous research has shed some light on the use of English a lingua franca in online business meetings (Cogo 2012; Nielsen 2020) and how language shift is managed in multilingual meetings (Markaki Lothe et al., 2014), we still lack an understanding of how team members navigate the choice between English and other accessible languages at the interactional level, and how the role of a language manager (Spolsky, 2009) emerges in interaction.

This study scrutinizes 5 months' worth of team meetings and Slack discussions from a team of project leaders at a multinational IT corporation headquartered in Finland. Using conversation analysis, it examines instances where a shift in the matrix language is discussed or identified as the appropriate next action.

The findings suggest that the unofficial team leader is also oriented to as the main language manager. However, in making language decisions, she employs considerable hedging and downgrading practices, indicating either a lack of conclusive orientation towards her own deontic status (Landmark et al., 2015) and/or a heightened focus on rapport-building (Planken, 2005; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2018). The necessary sequential location and effective strategy for suggesting language shift are also discussed.

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Pułka, Leszek (University of Wroclaw, Poland)

The Table and the Bed as Border Spaces. Studies in the Anthropology of Everyday Life

The author of the paper reconstructs the everyday life of two families from Florence from an anthropological perspective. Both are childless mixed partnerships in which the woman is Italian and the partner is a migrant — in the specific cases, from Scotland and Sudan. A two-year observation of domestic relationships allowed for the creation of a unique report on cultural incompatibility, which manifests itself in (often hidden) attitudes of migrants towards their own histories and the background of their native cultures. This gives rise to significant emotional tensions and influences both internal and external narratives of these relationships.
Naturally, the broader context is the observation of the city as a phenomenon — Florence, a destination for migrants from both Africa and Europe.
The main research questions focused on points of conflict in everyday behaviors, mutual emotional and intellectual games, and the aforementioned hidden histories — which appear to be the greatest obstacle to assimilation.

References

R

Rahman, Marwa (Aschaffenburg University of Applied Sciences & University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany)

The Importance of Intercultural Communication in Project Management – Perception according to Company Size and Type

Project management plays a crucial role in enabling companies to adapt their product and service portfolios to changing markets and evolving global conditions. In Europe, the increasing generational shift further emphasizes the need for structural and strategic adjustments within organizations.

Key qualifications are essential for success in project management, with global citizenship competences (GCC) becoming increasingly relevant—not only for international trade but also for the integration of foreign employees. However, the importance of these competences is often not fully recognized. Possible reasons for this may include structural and strategic differences in workforce management and internationalization, as well as resource constraints. The extent to which these factors influence a company's competitiveness remains an open question and requires further investigation.

This contribution presents findings from research conducted within an Erasmus+ project STEPS4EU, focusing on the role of key qualifications in workforce development for project management. The analysis is based on existing data and literature, with potential further exploration through qualitative methods such as focus group discussions.

References

Rennicke, Iiris (University of Helsinki, Finland); Santos, Ranata (University of Helsinki, Finland)

International language policies concerning Portuguese and their local implications on foreign-language teaching

The Portuguese language is a pluricentric language: it has two well-established standards in Portugal and Brazil, and it is also an official language in eight other countries or territories. As a result of transcultural cooperation, there are international policies concerning Portuguese, such as the Orthographic Agreement of 1990 to unify the writing system of Portuguese globally, and the efforts of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) to make Portuguese one of the official languages of the UN. However, Portugal and Brazil also have their own instruments for promoting Portuguese and each country's culture globally (Camões Institute and Guimarães Rosa Institute, respectively). The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the international context of Portuguese as a pluricentric language and its local implications on language education, more specifically, the teaching of Portuguese as a Foreign Language in Finland.

Firstly, we will discuss the common goals and language policies of the aforementioned organisations, as well as any diverging measures they have taken or promoted. Both the linguistic variation of Portuguese and intercultural (post-colonial) relationships between the different agents in global and local policymaking can hinder international efforts to promote Portuguese and lead to conflicting practices.

We will also discuss the implications of this global scenario for teaching Portuguese as a foreign language. What is global Portuguese and how should we teach it? To answer this question, we will suggest strategies for a transcultural and global approach to teaching Portuguese in a non-Portuguese-speaking country such as Finland.

References

Rodin, Pavel (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)
Understanding risk cultures for citizen-centered crisis communications: The case of Sweden

Previous research repeatedly identified the lack of cultural sensitivity in crisis communication research (Diers-Lawson, 2017). The study draws on the concept of *risk culture* (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1982), which implies that individuals' mindsets for understanding risks are developed via membership in cultures and subcultures. Cornia et al. (2014) identify three distinct types of risk cultures: individual-oriented, state-oriented, and fatalistic. These risk cultures differ in framing risk and crisis management, responsibility for preventing crises, and blame in case of disasters.

The current study draws on the survey of a representative sample of the Swedish population. The results show that there is a strong state-oriented risk culture in Sweden, with 94 % of respondents believing that the state bears "a lot" or "quite a great deal of responsibility" regarding home preparedness for societal crises. The results reflect the Swedish welfare state's tradition of collective responsibility and trust in authorities during crises. The study results indicate that there is also a widespread belief that citizens have significant responsibility for home preparedness (37% of Swedes believe that citizens bear “a very large” responsibility, and 46% answer that it is “quite large”).

The study suggests that the attribution of responsibility for home preparedness in societal crises is not necessarily an either-or question, where either authorities or citizens are seen as primarily responsible. Instead, the results suggest that a state-oriented risk culture can coexist with an individual-oriented risk culture, where the Swedish state and citizens are expected to play their respective roles in preparedness for societal crises.

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Rozbicka, Patrycja(University of Wroclaw, Poland); Matyja, Aleksandra (University of Wroclaw, Poland)

Evolving Visual Narratives of Migration: A Comparative Study of Polish Media during the 2015 and 2022 "Migration Crises"

This presentation explores the evolution of visual narratives in Polish media coverage of two significant migration movements: the 2015 influx of non-European migrants and the 2022 arrival of Ukrainian refugees. Drawing on content and semiotic analysis of both liberal and conservative press, the study examines how ideological orientations shape visual and textual representations of refugees and migrants. It investigates the ways in which media discourse reflects broader societal, political, and cultural attitudes, and how these narratives contribute to the construction of public opinion and policy-making.

The comparison highlights notable disparities in the portrayal of these two groups. While Ukrainian refugees were broadly welcomed—often depicted through a humanitarian lens emphasizing cultural proximity, shared history, and solidarity—non-European migrants in 2015 were frequently represented in the context of security concerns, cultural difference, and economic burden. These contrasting representations are critically analysed through the lens of intercultural communication theory, visual discourse, and postcolonial critique (e.g. E. Said, Z. Bauman, E. Lévinas).

This research contributes to ongoing discussions about media influence, visual communication, and the role of cultural narratives in shaping public discourse. It offers a critical perspective on how media methodologies and conceptual frameworks in intercultural communication evolve in response to socio-political crises. Ultimately, the presentation underscores the need for reflexivity in the media's portrayal of intercultural encounters and the ethical implications of visual storytelling in times of forced migration.

Keywords: migration, refugees, media discourse, visual narratives, intercultural communication

References

S

Sadaf, Shomaila (University of Jyväskylä, Finland); Siitonen, Marko (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)

Faith, Friction, and the Feed: A Discursive Analysis of Religious Intolerance on Social Media

Religion remains one of the most persistent frontiers of personal prejudice, often surpassing ethnicity and nationality in evoking negative perceptions (Sherwoof, 2020). Religious intolerance, frequently rooted in exclusivist ideologies that assert the superiority of one faith over others (Volf, 2016), finds fertile ground on social media. These platforms foster ideological echo chambers that reinforce in-group biases and diminish exposure to divergent perspectives (Kitchens et al., 2020; Sunstein, 2002). This study conceptualizes tolerance as an ideological tension: the support of others' rights despite personal disapproval (Billig et al., 1988). It investigates how religious prejudice manifests in social media discourse and explores whether tolerance can mitigate such bias, using Imagined Intergroup Contact Theory (Crisp et al., 2009) as a guiding framework.

The empirical focus is a YouTube video captured on 28 May 2023, depicting Israeli locals obstructing Christian tourists from accessing the Western Wall. With over 71,000 likes and 43,000 comments, the video provides a rich site for discursive analysis. Comments with the highest reply counts were selected to examine user interactions through the lens of religious in-group/out-group positioning. Analytical attention centers on the Positioning Diamond (Slocum-Bradley, 2009), an advancement of Positioning Theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1991), which allows for systematic, fine-grained analysis of meaning-making in social episodes. This framework facilitates a deeper understanding of how religious identities and prejudices are negotiated and contested in digital spaces.

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Sbertoli-Nielsen, Paul (University of Oslo, Norway); Schulz-Budick, Dorothée (Tampere University, Finland)

Language Decided, Particles Divided: A Case Study of Bilingual Particle Patterns

In this contribution, we present an initial finding from an ongoing investigation of the use of bilabial-nasal particles such as mhm in video recorded interactional data from bi- and multilingual families (collected by Schulz-Budick, 2022; and forthcoming). Our initial finding is from a bilingual Norwegian-English family, who, in contrast with other participants in the data set, decide in advance on which language they will use during each recording. Accordingly, their use of bilabial-nasal particles consistently follows the language decided on: When speaking English, the participants use mhm, where the two syllables are separated by a voiceless glottal fricative; when speaking Norwegian, however, they use m̃m, where the two syllables follow the intonational high-low-high wave pattern of the East Norwegian second tonal accent (see Kristoffersen, 2000), while only rarely using mhm.

This initial finding coincides with, and strengthens, indications by Sbertoli-Nielsen (2023; and forthcoming) on such bilabial-nasal particles being language-specifically routinized into practices for doing certain social actions. It also provides some cautious support to his suggestion that mhm – although found in many languages – may be an export from English similarly to okay (cf. Betz et al., 2021). Lastly, it shows that bilingual families can exhibit a natural sensitivity to granular differences in the phonology of particles.

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Schmelzer, Julia (Utrecht University, The Netherlands)
Intercultural communication in mental health counselling sessions: insights from migrant patients and interpreters in the Netherlands.

Effective communication is fundamental to ensuring quality mental health care and is essential to person-centered approaches. Yet, migrant patients do not often possess the language skills to fully access mental health care in their host countries. Therefore, interpreters are needed during appointments between mental health care providers (MHCPs) and migrant patients.

The presentation will identify existing communication barriers and practices during mental health counselling sessions as perceived by migrant patients and (non) professional interpreters in the Netherlands. Specifically, semi-structured interviews with migrant patients from Morocco and Syria as well as with both professional and non-professional interpreters were analysed. Results show that migrant patients face significant challenges in communicating with MHCPs due to language barriers and cultural differences, which often results in dissatisfaction with the session's outcome. This aligns with the observations made by interpreters. In addition to their role as 'messengers' in such encounters, they often function as cultural brokers and call for greater cultural sensitivity among MHCPs. The findings emphasise the importance of establishing clear communicative roles within mental health counselling sessions, for instance through the implementation of communication interventions for MHCPs.

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Shirdel, Mahnaz (University of Jyväskylä); Marko Siitonen (University of Jyväskylä)
Navigating Consensus and Difference: Identity Construction in Virtual Exchange through Stance-Taking

This study investigates identity construction via stance-taking in Virtual Exchange (VE). Adopting a constructionist perspective, identity is viewed as dynamically shaped via interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). A qualitative, micro-analytic approach, using Conversation Analysis (CA), examines a video-recorded Skype discussion between Finnish and Iranian higher education students on superhero movies. Findings show frequent alignment and affiliation, fostering group cohesion and re-categorizing participants as a collective *us*, often sidelining unshared memberships. Disalignment, when it occurred, typically redirected conversation to shared knowledge or task goals and reinforcing solidarity. Rare disaffiliation allowed individual identity expression, mitigated by politeness (e.g., hedging, laughter) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). These dynamics suggest a tendency toward consensus over deep engagement with differences at various levels, consistent with prior VE research (Ware, 2005; Ware & Kramsch, 2005; Helm & Baroni, 2020). Contextual constraints (e.g., avoiding political topics) influenced interaction. This work contributes to understanding how interactional practices facilitate and constrain intercultural understanding in technology-mediated environments. It informs the design of VEs that balance solidarity with opportunities for critical reflection and respectful disagreement, promoting meaningful intercultural dialogue and identity exploration.

Keywords: intercultural communication, stance-taking, identity construction, virtual exchange

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Siitonen, Marko (University of Jyväskylä, Finland)
Driving or Stifling Evolution? – How Large Language Models Explain Interculturality and the Field of Intercultural Communication

This study explores the potential effect of Large Language Models (LLMs) on our understanding of intercultural communication as a field of inquiry. LLMs such as ChatGPT have recently entered the educational domain, and we know they are already used in communication and language education (AlAfnan et al., 2023). This usage takes place despite LLMs known tendencies to 'hallucinate' (Ji et al., 2023), produce blatantly incorrect answers (Simon, Fletcher & Nielsen, 2024), or biased content (Fang et al., 2023).

In this study, I aim to answer the following research question: How do LLMs inform their users on the concept of interculturality, the field of intercultural communication, and the main theories and models (and theorists) that characterize the field? To answer this research question, I engage in a case study that consists of a collection of use cases with contemporary LLMs. Through a combination of inductive and deductive qualitative analysis, I discuss the picture of the field of Intercultural Communication that LLMs (re)produce, and how it relates to existing knowledge of the state-of-affairs of the field. I make the claim that due to its multi-disciplinary nature where different paradigms co-exist and influence each other, intercultural communication may represent a particular challenge to a learner entering the field. I also pose the question of whether the viewpoints put forth by LLMs could be seen as either facilitating or stifling the renewability of the field in general.

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Skibińska, Anna (University of Wrocław, Poland); Turko, Andrei (University of Wrocław, Poland)

Intercultural (In)Justice in Authoritarian Contexts: Analyzing Asymmetric Bilingualism in Lukashenko's Speeches

This presentation explores the role of asymmetric bilingualism in the political discourse of Belarusian politician Alexander Lukashenko, focusing on his speeches from 2019 to 2021. Despite Belarus being officially bilingual, with both Belarusian and Russian as state languages, the use of Belarusian is systemically marginalized, particularly in state institutions and official communication. Lukashenko's public discourse offers a compelling case of strategic language use: although his speeches are predominantly in Russian, they are interspersed with Belarusian lexicon and idiomatic expressions. This ideologically marked idiolect serves not only as a linguistic tool but also as a symbolic act of identity construction and sociopolitical positioning in authoritarian context.

Drawing from content analysis and corpus linguistics, this research examines how Lukashenko's selective code-switching functions as a mechanism of ideological messaging within a context of language-based discrimination. The analysis highlights how these linguistic practices reinforce existing power asymmetries and contribute to the marginalization of Belarusian language users and some social groups.

By situating this case study within broader discussions of intercultural communication, language politics, and decolonization of knowledge, this work contributes to evolving concepts and knowledge in the field. It raises questions about how linguistic hierarchies are maintained and challenged in bilingual society and how political discourse can both reflect and reproduce cultural inequities.

References

Starodubska, Maryna (Kyiv-Mohyla Business School, Ukraine)
Institutional Distrust and Professional Interaction: Interpreting Ukrainian Cultural Patterns for Intercultural Collaboration

Russia's full-scale invasion has deepened Ukrainian engagement with EU institutions, yet systematic English-language accounts of the country's distinctive trust landscape remain scarce. Drawing on 47 waves of national surveys (Razumkov Centre 2019–25; Institute of Sociology at the National Academy of Sciences 1992–24- IS NASU, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology-sKIIS) and complementary polls by Rating Group, EUAM, UNDP, VOX Ukraine, World Values Survey, and USAID ENGAGE, this paper documents a persistent gap in institutional trust in Ukrainian society. Particularly, between institutions whose efficacy is visible in short-term and functioning entails elements of sacrifice (e.g. 97 % trust in the Armed Forces) and those, with less obvious, more long-term and infrastructural role (e.g. < 15 % trust in courts and civil servants) (Razumkov Centre 2025). This paper interprets the said asymmetry through Trompenaars' universalism-particularism, Hofstede's power-distance/uncertainty-avoidance, and Gelfand's/Uz's tight–loose paradigms to show how low institutional trust sustains relationship-based coordination, selective rule compliance, deference to personalized authority, and the strategic use of sarcasm or confrontational frankness across group boundaries. The analysis combines data from time-series diagnostics with cross-sectional clustering to trace the evolution of in-group versus out-group trust and rising economic aspiration gaps in Ukrainian adult population. The paper concludes with practice-oriented guidelines for EU partners in education, research, administration and business: (1) build credibility bridges through transparent joint norms; (2) separate task feedback from relational signals; (3) embed procedural safeguards; (4) mobilize trusted intermediaries. By linking robust attitudinal evidence to established intercultural frameworks, the study provides an empirical foundation for more effective cooperation with a country whose cultural patterns remain under-explored in comparative management and communication research.

References

W

Warkentin, Angela (TU Darmstadt & TH Aschaffenburg, Germany)

Intercultural Leadership Communication - How female managers effectively communicate in an intercultural working environment

As globalization progresses, intercultural interactions and influences play a central role in both everyday business and private life. In the professional environment, encounters between cultures have become the norm. Communication processes often take place virtually and between members of different orientation systems. The interconnectedness of the world leads to new opportunities for organizations, but also to more complex rules on the communicative level.

In scientific publications, culturally induced conflicts are cited as a major factor in the failure of international business activities. In order to fully exploit the potential of intercultural cooperation, communication strategies adapted to the circumstances are required at management level. International managers are not only expected to possess technical and economic expertise, but also the ability to understand culturally determined behavior and communication and to align interaction and leadership accordingly.

This research project explores communication mechanisms and strategies used by international managers in order to lead effectively in an intercultural context. The aim of the study is to identify communication patterns that enable successful leadership communication in an intercultural working environment. Special emphasis is placed on the management of intercultural teams. In addition, the study provides an analysis of specific challenges for female managers in intercultural working environments and aims to address these particular challenges in the presentation of the results. The results were prepared in the form of recommendations for action in a practice-oriented manner.

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X

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Navigating the intercultural in internationalising universities: Taken for granted assumptions and complexities

Over the past decade the promotion and cultivation of interculturality have been held as primary objectives in Europe's Erasmus mobility programmes and in universities' initiatives of internationalisation worldwide. While higher education (HE) generally supports cultural and linguistic diversity, the relationship between interculturality and internationalisation has not been fully explored (Wächter, 2009). In fact, there exists a gap between HE institutions' discourse advocating the promotion of intercultural communication and the realities of how it is actually promoted (Ladegaard, 2017; Zhu et al., 2017). The root cause remains that internationalisation is often fashioned as a universal good in a simplistic and idealised manner, while a taken-for-granted assumption is prevalent about the problematic binary of domestic/foreign or home/international (Ferri et al., 2024). Such discourses undermine the complexities of internationalisation and hamper the goal of attaining sustainability and inclusivity in HE. On the individual and education levels, student mobility is positioned primarily within an instrumental ideology and an economic rationale; there is a distinct lack of attention to the content and the quality of international learning and experience in programmes and courses (Castro et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2017). In this talk, I take a critical intercultural approach to discussing how internationalisation, comparable to multilingualism, "remains a profiling exercise" (Angouri et al., 2025) in HE. I will problematise the persistent tendency to rely on the essentialist idea of culture in institutional, students and cultural discourses. The objective is to advocate and develop effective approaches for facilitating intercultural interaction and education.

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Z

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Chinese international students' time and space experiences in a UK university

Shahjahan et al. (2024) propose using a temporal lens to gain a holistic understanding of international students' experiences. However, spatiality is also closely intertwined with how students navigate and make sense of university life. As they argue, time shapes students' engagement with university spaces. Building on this, the present study explores how Chinese international students make meaning of their time and space experiences at a UK university.

Using narrative interviews with four MA students enrolled in a pre-service teacher training programme, the study applies thematic analysis to generate empirical insights. The findings suggest that students' current intercultural experiences are meaningfully shaped by their past (e.g. experiences in China before starting their MA studies) and future (e.g. aspirations after graduation). Students' engagement with various university spaces—such as classrooms, dormitories, or off-campus locations for leisure—further reveals how perceptions of time influence their learning and living experiences in the UK.

This study demonstrates the value of examining both time and space as analytical lenses for understanding international student experiences. It contributes to the growing body of research on temporal and spatial dimensions of intercultural education.

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Everything inside the house... is my job. But outside the house, it's his job.' Thai migrant women's conceptualization of housework, mental load and power – a story of a relentless to-do list?

Thai migration in Norway is greatly feminized. The transnational arrangements of Thai-Norwegian couples fall under the encompassing umbrella term 'marriage migration'. Overseas (East to West) spatial hypergamy is allegedly understood as an economic bolster and enhancer of social stratum for Thai rural disadvantaged women, Thai-Western marriage migration often being identified with female emancipation and gender liberation. To understand and aid Thai women and their transnational families better, growing academic scrutiny is just as appropriate as necessary.

How Thai women understand personal power and power relations with respective to their transnational families? The data collected depends on semi-structured biographical interviews and examines how Thai marriage migrants internalize and make sense of gender concepts, cultural norms and social roles in the transnational family sphere. The present article seeks to answer what impact gender roles and division of household chores play in shaping Thai women's sense of agency?

The findings indicate contending the widespread, predominant presupposition of Thai traditional wives seeking Western spouses, Thai-Norwegian transnational families display a range of of social behaviors associated with gender and how household work tasks and roles are distributed. Nevertheless, tangible gendered power-hierarchy and racial discrimination may intensify the lopsidedness of Thai female migration in Norway.

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