

**“Don’t say that word out loud”:
Testing the boundaries of communicative competence,
discourse-centered pedagogy, and a ‘slur-once-removed’**

Michaela R. Winchatz, Evelyn Ho, Saila Poutiainen and Leah Sprain

This study in-progress relies on data collected during a three-day intensive seminar on cultural communication that took place in Finland from May 30 to June 1, 2018. In this seminar four professors who specialize in ethnography of communication (three US-American and one Finnish) were the instructors to a class of graduate students from various disciplines. The paper focuses on a segment of the third seminar day during which one instructor introduced the social drama framework (Turner, 1980; Philipsen, 1992) by showing video data (accompanied by transcripts) of comedian Michael Richards, who - while performing a stand-up routine at a comedy club in Los Angeles - launched into what many have deemed a ‘racist rant’. Using Agar’s (1991) notion of rich points and Bax’s (2018) concept of the “slur-once-removed”, the authors explore how a pivotal metadiscursive moment tested the boundaries of participants' communicative competence (Hymes, 1971) within an intercultural classroom. Implications for ethnography of communication methodology and discourse-centered pedagogy are discussed.

Agar, M. 1991. The biculture in bilingual. *Language in Society* 20 (2): 167-181.

Bax, A. 2018. “The C-word” meets “the N-word”: The slur-once-removed and the discursive construction of “reverse racism.” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 28 (2): 114-136.

Philipsen, G. 1992. *Speaking culturally: Explorations in social communication*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Turner, V. 1980. Social dramas and stories about them. *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1): 141-168