

## **Turbulence in intercultural communication education (ICE): Does it affect higher education?**

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## **Turbulence in intercultural communication education (ICE): Does it affect higher education?**

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**Abstract:** This article examines a rather neglected context of intercultural education: intercultural communication education (ICE). ICE can be found in different fields such as business, applied linguistics, intercultural communication and health education, amongst others. The authors start by reviewing the latest and ongoing changes ('turbulences') in the way the 'intercultural' is conceptualized in this field and form a template for analysing a focus group with lecturers of intercultural communication in the Nordic country of Finland. The article is exploratory and does not claim to deal with intercultural communication education as a whole in this context. Our analysis shows that these practitioners, who are also researchers specialised in intercultural communication, share discourses about the importance of the 'intercultural' in education but at the same time they are unable to clearly position themselves in its polysemic definitions and approaches. The current turbulences seem to have very little coherent impact on the way they talk about the 'intercultural'.

**Résumé:** Cet article se penche sur un point quelque peu négligé de l'enseignement interculturel, soit l'enseignement de la communication interculturelle (ECI). On retrouve l'ECI dans de nombreux domaines comme les affaires, la linguistique appliquée, la communication interculturelle et l'éducation à la santé, entre autres. Nous allons passer en revue les derniers changements en cours (« turbulences ») dans la façon dont l'interculturel est conceptualisé dans ce domaine et dégager un modèle qui nous permettra d'analyser un groupe centré constitué d'enseignants de communication interculturelle en Finlande, pays du nord de l'Europe. Cet article est exploratoire et ne prétend pas traiter l'enseignement de la communication interculturelle dans son ensemble dans ce contexte, mais il entend montrer que ces praticiens, qui sont également des chercheurs spécialisés dans la communication interculturelle, partagent des discours sur l'importance de l'interculturel dans l'enseignement sans parvenir dans le même temps à se positionner clairement dans ses définitions polysémiques et ses différentes approches. Les turbulences actuelles semblent avoir un minimum d'impact cohérent sur la façon dont ils traitent l'interculturel.

**Keywords:** Finnish higher education; intercultural communication education; renewed interculturality; internationalisation; business studies.

**Word count: 5873 words**

## INTRODUCTION

Intercultural communication education (ICE) is not a new field. Its history officially dates back to the 1950s and the birth of the field of intercultural communication in the USA (Martin et al. 2011). With the accelerated globalization of the last decades, ICE has boomed (Jackson 2011). The field as such is not unitary but complex as it is represented by ‘multiple strands of research’ and practice worldwide (Martin et al. *ibid.*). It is found in such contexts as applied linguistics, language education, business, health education but also the field of intercultural communication itself. It is easy to presume, based on this inexhaustible list of domains, that approaches to intercultural encounters are many and varied in both research and teaching (Martin et al. *ibid.*). Besides, critical voices have shown recently that the ‘intercultural’ can be perceived and defined by researchers and practitioners alike in many different ways, even within the same field. It is thus impossible to give a clear-cut overview of all these approaches. Our intention is to note some of the recent major critiques that have been made by various scholars in relation to ICE. These critiques concern, amongst others, theories and methodologies and represent what we shall refer to as ‘turbulences’ in the field (Kumaravadivelu 2008; Fougère and Moulette 2009; Holliday 2010; Piller 2011; Dervin 2012). Our use of the word ‘turbulence’ is directly inspired by the title of a conference organised by the Nordic Network for Intercultural Communication at the University of Helsinki in 2011, *Theoretical Turbulence - A paradigm shift in the field of intercultural communication?* The objective of this interdisciplinary conference was to examine the current changes in the way the ‘intercultural’ is researched.

The main goal of this article is to observe the potential presence and impact of such emerging changes, criticisms and turbulences in the work of teachers of intercultural communication in the European and Nordic country of Finland. The article is exploratory in the sense that (1) these changes are still on-going and far from being stable and (2) it is based on a case study and does not claim to apply to intercultural communication education as a whole in the context under scrutiny.

Finland has been experiencing increasing internationalization in recent years, due mostly to her excellent results in international educational rankings such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). In order to accommodate for the thousands of exchange and international students in Finnish higher education, many courses and programmes are devoted to the ‘intercultural’. Yet, very little is known of these courses, their objectives and how the intercultural is conceptualized by course leaders and teachers (Dervin and Tournebise 2012; Dervin & Layne, 2013; Tournebise *forthcoming*)<sup>1</sup>.

This article represents a first exploration of ICE in this context. It is based on the analysis of a focus group with three teachers of intercultural communication working in Finland. We are interested in how the teachers conceptualize, construct and negotiate the ‘intercultural’ when they talk about what they teach and how. Focus groups allow examining in details how such constructions occur and noting multifaceted perspectives on a specific object of discourse (Marková et al. 2005). It is our assumption that the current turbulences that we have identified in ICE can be uncovered in what university educators in Finland have to say about their work as they are required by their employers to play an active role in global research worlds (Cai and Kivistö 2011).

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<sup>1</sup>The data analyzed in this article are part of a PhD research project: Tournebise, C. *L’enseignement de la communication interculturelle en Finlande : quels liens avec les identités des enseignants ?* (supervisors: Fred Dervin and Guy Achard-Bayle).

## ***1. A template to analyse the presence and impact of current turbulences in ICE***

As asserted in the introduction, new ways of working on ICE are now appearing in research and practice. These often critical approaches represent reactions against classic approaches to interculturality provided by influential figures such as E.T. Hall, Trompenaars, Hampden-Turner and Hofstede, which Holliday calls the ‘Hofstedian legacy’ (Holliday 2010, 6; McSweeney 2002). These approaches tend to rely on the accumulation of knowledge about different cultures, often used synonymously with knowledge about ‘nations’. They often lead to stereotypes or simple categorizations, rather than attempting to reflect the complexity of intercultural actors and situations (McSweeney 2002).

In what follows we review six of the most important ‘turbulences’ that have been proposed to renew the notion of the ‘intercultural’ in ICE in recent years. This will serve as a *template* to analyse the data derived from the focus group under scrutiny. Due to limited space we can only touch on some basic elements of each define turbulence. The reader might refer to Dervin (2012), Dervin and Tournebise (2012) and Tournebise (forth.) for more detailed explanation.

### *Turbulence n°1: Putting an end to differentialist biases*

The first change that was noticed in the way the ‘intercultural’ is worked upon in ICE represents a call to put an end to *differentialist biases*, a common vision in ICE which focuses exclusively on *differences*, especially in relation to the ‘tired’ and generalizing concept of culture (Abdallah-Preteuille 1986). One such bias is the dichotomization between individualistic and collectivistic ‘cultures’, which is often used to ‘explain’ encounters between people from the ‘West’ and ‘East’ or ‘North’ and ‘South’. Holliday (2010) has analysed forcefully the ethnocentrism and moralistic judgments that such differentialism can trigger. The risk in continuing using these elements in such a loose and acontextualized way is that they can lead ‘easily and sometimes innocently to the reduction of the foreign Other as culturally deficient’ (Holliday 2010, ix).

### *Turbulence n°2: Moving away from individualist biases*

Another aspect, which is being increasingly put into question, is what we call *individualist biases*. Discourses on the self and the other – identity constructions – are always co-constructed between people. An identity is created and exists because there is another identity that can be compared or opposed to it (Bauman 2004). Therefore, when intercultural actors, but also researchers and practitioners, work on the ‘intercultural’, their stereotypes, representations and ideologies inform and influence encounters and thus *identities* (Holliday 2010, 2; Dervin 2012). That is why it is important for e.g. researchers to be aware of their own ideologies when they analyse intercultural data, clarify their own positions and take them into account when analysing data.

### *Turbulence n°3: Exhausting results is impossible*

The idea that not everything can be explained as far as the ‘intercultural’ is concerned and thus that it is often impossible to exhaust results when researching it, has not gained much ground in ICE yet. However, many phenomena that we examine or teach about derive from the playful, the imaginary and the dreamy and cannot thus always be explained (Maffesoli 1985). For Holliday (2010, 27), this means that we need to put aside established descriptions, to seek a broader picture, to look for the hidden and the unexpressed in intercultural encounters.

#### *Turbulence n°4: Looking at exceptions, instabilities and processes rather than mere structures*

A lot of work on ICE has concentrated on structures and on describing how a certain group of people (usually determined by ‘nationality’ or ‘ethnicity’) communicates with another (Piller 2011) – leading to the equation ‘*the more you know about their habits, thoughts, etc. the more able you are to “control” them and thus interact in a proper and unproblematic way*’. Many scholars argue that this does not reflect the current ‘*mélange*’ (Pieterse 2004; Wikan 2002) and urge researchers and practitioners to look instead at exceptions, instabilities and processes, which are ‘natural’ parts of sociality (cf. Baumann 1988; Bensa 2010).

#### *Turbulence n°5: Taking into account the importance of intersectionality*

The idea of *intersectionality*, ‘the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination’ (Davis 2008) is also thought-provoking for ICE. It is already very much common practice in the field of intercultural education, influenced highly by critical multicultural education (Banks and McGee Banks 2009; Sleeter 1996). Intercultural educationalists argue that it is not just ‘culture’ that guides interactions but the co-construction of various identities such as gender, age, profession, social class, etc. All these *intersect* in intercultural interaction and thus need to be taken into account (Sleeter *ibid.*).

#### *Turbulence n°6: Placing Justice at the center of intercultural communication education*

The final turbulence in ICE that we would like to put forward is that of *justice*: ‘a commitment to combat inequality, racism as well as sexism, and all other forms of prejudice, oppression and discrimination through the development of understanding, attitudes and social action skills’ (Räsänen 2009, 37). Though, again, this is far from new in e.g. the field of Intercultural Education, progress is needed in ICE. A few examples have been identified in the literature: For example, in his critical cosmopolitan paradigm, Holliday (2011, 48) suggests increasing the awareness of institutional and cultural racism and power structures in the world in ICE. He justifies this approach by arguing, rightly, that (*ibid.*): ‘inequality is largely denied in the dominant approach to intercultural communication studies’.

The six turbulences presented here are not accepted by all scholars and practitioners in ICE (Holliday 2010; Dervin 2012). Nevertheless they appear to be playing an increasingly important role in the literature. As these turbulences are ongoing, they tend to be combined with aspects of the classic approaches to the intercultural (‘the Hofstedian Legacy’), which leads to ‘clashes’ of ideas, methods and approaches (Abdallah-Preteille 1986; Aikman 2012; Dervin 2011). In the following sections, we argue that, as specialists of ICE, the teachers under scrutiny most probably undergo both the turbulences and these ‘clashes’. Working on a focus group, where the teachers need to negotiate meaning (Marková et al. 2005), will thus allow us to identify if and how they take on the turbulences when sharing their experiences on ICE.

## **2. About the data**

The data analysed here were obtained through a focus group collected in Finnish universities in 2011. A call was sent to recruit participants on different mailing lists related to

questions of interculturality, internationalization and education in Finland. The three participants of the focus group under scrutiny are all Finnish and work at major 'Schools of Economics' (lecturers (1), (2) and (3) in the transcriptions). They all specialize in Business and/or Management and teach intercultural communication – which some of them call multi-/ or cross-cultural during the focus group, without differentiating these terms. They all have experience of international mobility and speak at least three languages (Finnish + English + Spanish/Swedish). Lecturer (1) does not teach intercultural communication as a main subject but includes it in all her classes; Lecturer (2) teaches intercultural communication as a main subject occasionally, during seminars and/or workshops; Lecturer (3) teaches intercultural communication as a main subject on a regular basis. They all work with both Finnish students and international/exchange students. Only one of the lecturers has received formal education and training on intercultural communication at a Finnish University and has attended lectures and seminars by 'classic' interculturalists such as Milton Bennett and Fons Trompenaars. They have all written articles and given scientific presentations on the topic, 'at home' and abroad. In what follows, we are not describing what the teachers do but how they talk about the 'intercultural' as a practice in teaching and research. A future study will attempt to confront the latter with class observations.

During the focus group, which lasted approximately 1 hour, the participants were provided with a short list of questions to stimulate the discussion (e.g.: What do you teach in relation to the 'intercultural'? How do you teach it? What has influenced you most in the way you understand the 'intercultural'?). The discussion took place in English, was recorded with a voice recorder and transcribed orthographically. In their book *Dialogue in Focus Groups*, which also suggests a co-constructionist approach to discourses, Marková et al. (2005) recommend to give minimum guidance to the group and not to sit with the participants to allow them to feel less pressure during the conversation. We followed this piece of advice and left the teachers work together in a room.

### ***3. Constructing intercultural communication education in Finnish higher education: a look at the turbulences in practice?***

The following sub-sections are based on an analysis of the lecturers' discourses on the 'intercultural' during the focus group. Bearing in mind the 6 turbulences presented above, we read through the transcription of the focus group several times in order to determine their potential presence in the discourses they co-constructed. Our analysis of the transcripts is divided into 4 themes, each of which we review in more detail. The first step in the analysis (3.1.) was to interrogate if and how the lecturers defined the 'intercultural' and if general signs of the turbulences were present in the definitions. We believe that people's understanding of the notion should always be probed as it is polysemic (see 1.). The three other subsections examine three of the six turbulences that were identified in the focus group (turbulences 3, 4 and 5).

#### ***3.1. Multifaceted and contradictory discourses on the 'intercultural'***

In this section, we want to find out how the three Finnish teachers of intercultural communication conceptualize and construct the 'intercultural'. In so doing, we are also interested in if and how the participants take into account renewed interculturality, i.e. the turbulences that compose our template.

A first noteworthy aspect of the focus group is the fact that the notion of the intercultural seems to be shared by the group yet none of the participants clearly explains how they understand it. Neither do they provide any definition. A closer look at what the lecturers

have to say about the ‘intercultural’ shows that they do not necessarily perceive it the same way and that their conceptions differ in terms of how they relate to the turbulences.

In general it is impossible to categorize each lecturer in a specific box in relation to how they negotiate the intercultural. It appears that Lecturers 1’s and 2’s discourses seem to be more ‘classic’ than Lecturer 3’s at times. However, we can find traces of both ‘classic’ and renewed interculturality in all of the three lecturers’ discourses, with a potential preference for its classic form.

In order to show how unstable discourses on ICE (Abdallah-Preteille 2006) are in the focus group, we look at the following dialogue. The notion of *arrogance* comes back several times in the focus group, especially in relation to how some people treat others in intercultural encounters. ‘Removing’ this arrogance appears to be a common learning goal amongst the lecturers. In the middle of the focus group, Lecturer 2 starts a discussion on how arrogant ‘Western’ people can be. Yet, with the help of Lecturer 3, she co-constructs a critique of the ‘human’ in general – not just the West:

(2)Western people think they have the best everything, we have the best culture, you know, so wherever people go they’re not humble to get into... humble in the context with the other culture but they look down

(3)but that’s that’s an old um...

(2)...problem

(3)imperial problem whoever is the big power, the superpower in the world makes the rules and think think that we are the best, we are the most...

(2)yes that’s probably human actually

(3)yes and others are just ridiculous

Lecturer 1 then suggests that the Chinese themselves are ‘a bit arrogant’:

(1)don’t you find that the Chinese are a little bit arrogant foreigners also?

(2)yeah yeah that’s why I’m saying that it’s human probably

Lecturer 2 goes back to her point as a response to this ‘attack’: arrogance is human, not just eastern or western. But neither Lecturer 1 nor Lecturer 3 follows her on that point. Lecturer 3 uses very general and stereotypical representations on the Chinese and the French:

(3)because well if you study those what people think, they are sort stereotypes values so I’ve studied that the Chinese even if they are so modest and so humble in sometime in communication, they still think that China is absolutely the center of the world and they have the best everything they’ve discovered everything and they don’t even need to know anything else because China is best... in Europe it especially very much used to be the French attitude, French culture is superior

As asserted previously, Lecturer 3’s discourse on the ‘intercultural’ seems to show many pieces of evidence of renewed interculturality during the entire focus group. However the previous excerpt contains a clear ‘classic’ and limiting argument (‘they (the Chinese) are modest and humble’). She even transfers the case to Europe, and compares it with what she calls ‘the French attitude’ in the past. Lecturer 2 (who attempted to be critical in the previous excerpts), agrees with her and adds that the UK is another arrogant nation:

(2)and UK

(3)and they say so aloud as well Chinese don’t say so aloud in real... normal conversations but they think

Interestingly, the discussion around arrogance is ended by Lecturer 1 who suggests that such arrogance can also be found ‘locally’. She gives the example of the Finnish city of Turku<sup>2</sup>, which she qualifies as such:

(1)but I suppose it dies hard Turku still thinks that they’re this they are the capital of Finland in some ways

This first section has shown that the ‘intercultural’ is an unstable notion for the three university educators who took part in the focus group. Some of the turbulences presented in the proposed template were identifiable in their discourses (commonalities versus differences in ethnocentrism; the local versus the international, etc.). In what follows, we focus more specifically on some of the turbulences negotiated by the research participants.

### *3.2. Referring to instabilities and exceptions in ICE?*

The idea that the intercultural is not about structures but processes (instabilities and exceptions) was identifiable in one lecturer’s discourse, Lecturer 2, who teaches intercultural communication as a main subject occasionally and specialises in Chinese ‘culture’. Her discourse on ICE appears quite differentialist at the outset:

I’ve focused in these differences in visual cultures and intercultural communication obviously due to my research so I’ve been talking and showing the differences of how how in different cultures you use different visualities to communicate something...

The words ‘differences’ and ‘different’ are uttered four times in this short excerpt, which shows that she concentrates on the diverging points rather than studying similarities or instabilities ‘within’ and between ‘cultures’. She justifies – to a lesser degree – her approach to the intercultural by mentioning her personal experience which has led her to think that way:

I’ve always been interested in cultures and people I’ve travelled a lot alone um when I was single I just... flew somewhere and went off so that’s one way to to get more inside the culture if you’re travelling alone and you know try to really meet local people...

In her own words: travelling allows her to be ‘more inside the culture’ and ‘really meet local people’. The latter is a classic assertion in ICE: when abroad, only the ‘other’, the foreigner should be met so that we can learn about their ‘culture’ (Abdallah-Preteille 1986; Dervin 2011).

Regardless of these canonical and problematic views on the intercultural, some elements of renewed interculturality are noticeable in her discourse. For example, in the following excerpt, she asserts that it is impossible to rely merely on structures (‘cultural lists’) and that contexts should be taken into account:

my goal when I started my PhD project was to help Finnish industry in selling into China and I was hoping to find these easy business rules on how to use colors and how not to use colors like to do and not to do lists and so I found out that it’s impossible to do so, you have to understand why and why in particular context some color means this and in another context it means something completely different

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<sup>2</sup>Turku used to be the capital of Finland before the capital was moved to Helsinki in the 19th century.

In a sense, she seems to suggest that ‘cultural’ elements are unstable and context-dependent. However, in the following utterance, she contradicts herself by mentioning one of the ‘don’t’ points that she tries to avoid. Her Chinese students are used to confirm her argument:

luckily I had I have had some Chinese students in the class as well so they confirmed my findings because they some of them sound really ridiculous from the Finnish point of view, like there is this which is... mostly people think it’s just humorous, the meaning of the green hat in china which is that if a husband wears a green hat it means his wife is betraying him and um for many Finns it sounds you know they start laughing (...) but for the Chinese it’s very serious and very insulting, so if you would give out a green colored hat for example as a business gift it’s...and it’s one of this easy *don’t do this* thing but also um also it is a brilliant example

The turbulence of instabilities and exceptions seem to disappear in this anecdote. As such, by using representatives of the ‘culture’ in question (Chinese students) to confirm her analysis of the meaning of colours in China, she reinforces an a-contextualized, unproblematized representation of China to confirm her findings (Gillespie 2006; Piller 2011). Besides she gives the impression that what she co-constructs with these students is the absolute truth (‘For the Chinese it’s very serious and very insulting’).

### 3.3. *A place for intersectionality?*

The intersection of identities in researching and teaching the intercultural has been put forward as an important component of renewing the intercultural in education. That is culture is not enough in explaining intercultural encounters, we need to look at other aspects.

In the dialogue that follows, we can see an example of renewed interculturality in Lecturer 2’s discourse when she proposes the idea that the intercultural can also be within countries:

(2)we have been discussing intercultural means international but even on language level intercultural exists within Finland for example  
(3)of course  
(2)so... like like like you know Finland Swedes  
(3)sure  
(2)and the language um the Finnish that Finnish Swedes speak Finnish language that we speak together is very different or if you go to Lapland and you have the dialect (talks to Lecturer 1 who had left for a while) we are now talking about that intercultural is not international  
(1)no no no it’s not... no  
(2)that’s how we have been defining it so far but um...  
(1)that’s interesting  
(3)intercultural can be within one culture different subcultures which is religion ethnicities gender issues all those can be included in intercultural as well

Lecturer 2 raises an important point saying that, so far, they had exclusively talked about the intercultural as an international phenomenon during the focus group, showing that she understands that the notion can also be used to deal with ‘diversity within’ (Wikan 2002). Lecturer 3, whose discourse sometimes tends to go in that direction, confirms and explains in the end of the excerpt what subcultures one can find in what they call a ‘culture’, or its equivalents (a country/nation).

In Lecturer 3's utterances we have also identified a trace of intersectionality, that is, the intercultural is not just concerned with different countries and 'cultures' but also with gender, profession, generation, etc. When she talks about the Youth, she asserts that 'especially young people, they wear the same clothes, listen to the same music, like the same food'. In other words, people of the same age but of different nationalities/'cultures' can find common interests and be closer than for example two people from two different generations in the same country.

### 3.4. 'There is no absolute truth'

Lecturer 3 also discusses another turbulence that was noted in our template: it is impossible to exhaust results, or everything cannot be explained as far as the intercultural is concerned:

There is no absolute truth anywhere, nothing is black or white and what you really must try to do is to try to increase our mutual understanding of each other and in that way try to avoid conflicts.

However her discourse is still tainted with "culture": when she gives more details about what she does in her lectures, *knowledge of other cultures* becomes a central element to e.g. help avoid conflicts. This is contradictory to the idea of 'no absolute truth' as when one describes, explains and 'learns' about other cultures, one is trying to find an explanation, which might easily turn into a generic 'Truth' if not treated critically.

Her reflection on the concept of values in what follows also clearly derives from a 'classic' approach to the 'intercultural':

we have values like say politeness is a value, it's a good value but then there is directness in language use, for instance a value in Finland is directness, it is a value because you are straight forward, you are honest and sincere, in some other cultures it may not be because you have to be indirect, vague, because otherwise you may be very blunt

Even if her discourse here is close to renewed interculturality and turbulence 4 (*Exhausting results is impossible*), we can see that it is still cultures that are 'agents' and not people (Wikan, 2002). What she seems to be forgetting is the interactive aspect that she emphasized earlier: the two aspects of *directness* and *politeness* take place between people and are thus contextual and interpersonal – not merely 'cultural'. By asserting that *directness* is a Finnish value, she also resorts to a highly ideological and ethnocentric argument, which can be contested (Holliday, 2010). Her argument also establishes a hierarchy between people from different countries: directness is highly appreciated in our postmodern times as it is often associated with trust vs. Dishonesty (Aubert and Haroche 2011).

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we have discussed the fact that ICE is experiencing theoretical and methodological turbulences in reaction to the 'classic' approaches to the intercultural, a 'Hofstedian legacy' (Holliday, 2010). We have attempted to explore the potential consequences of such changes on the discourses of three teachers about intercultural communication education, using the Finnish context as an illustration. To verify how the teachers conceptualize, construct and negotiate the 'intercultural', we reviewed in the first section the most important aspects of what we named 'renewed interculturality' in ICE

(‘turbulences’) and listed the following elements, which we used as a template to analyse a focus group between the teachers:

1. Putting an end to differentialist biases
2. Moving away from individualist biases
3. Exhausting results is impossible
4. Looking at exceptions, instabilities and processes rather than structures
5. Taking into account the importance of intersectionality
6. Placing Justice at the centre of ICE.

We used these points in order to find in our data if and how traces of renewed interculturality are integrated in ICE in Finnish higher education and wondered if these ideas were ‘accepted’ or ‘normalized’ by the teachers.

Most notably it appears that the lecturers do not have the same perception of the intercultural and do not always seem to be talking about the same thing, even though they strongly share the concept.

Some traces of the renewed ‘intercultural’, together with a ‘classic’ approach were identified in the three teachers’ discourses. Amongst the six turbulences contained in our template, very few were fully and coherently negotiated: it is impossible to exhaust results/not everything can be explained, looking at exceptions, instabilities and processes rather than structures, taking into account the importance of intersectionality. Their inclusion was thus not systematic. One disappointing element was the apparent lack of concern for justice in relation to the ‘intercultural’. Our next step is to work on class observations in order to examine if discourses on this important aspect are present. It is important when working on such a polysemic and potentially confusing concept to contrast discourses and actions.

This all has some consequences for ICE and the training of educators in delivering the ‘intercultural’ in higher education. As such, we believe that the more practitioners and researchers know about the multiple ways of conceiving, researching and analysing the ‘intercultural’ - in different and opposed ways -, the easier it is for them to develop ICE beyond the ‘classic’ intercultural and in line with the current turbulences that the field is developing. It is also important for students as so many of them seem to be confused about the notion of the ‘intercultural’. Developing criticality towards its use in both practice and research is an essential part of intercultural communication education.

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