

Notes on the critical turn in language and intercultural education: The danger of delusional disorders

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Abstract: This chapter takes the January 2015 Paris events as a starting point to problematize the critical turn in language and intercultural education. The notion of the intercultural is both empty and polysemic, full of ready-made assumptions which force us to be more critical than ever towards it and to use interdisciplinarity to propose a re-/de-/construction of the notion which is more adapted to today's realities. This first requires questioning many and varied misnomers which are ambiguous and from a different era: *culture, diversity, ethnicity, integration*, etc. It also means that we need to be careful not to create new "abyssal lines" (de Souza Santos) such as opposing large entities like East-West, Europe-the rest of the world, Muslims-Christians, etc. In this chapter I problematize what I think is central in repositioning the 'intercultural' in Language and Intercultural Education by insisting on the importance to move away from 'hospitalizing' the other (Derrida), to put an end to the solidification of identity markers and their intersection and to reflect and act upon the ideologies and scientific naivety that tend to 'pollute' both research and practice. The notions of simplicity (the binding intertwinement between simplicity and complexity), critical identification, similarity and power differentials are central in here and can help to meet the objective of "giving the power to become aware of, recognize, push through and present/defend one's multiple identities, and to negotiate them in a 'satisfactory' manner with and for our interlocutors" (Dervin).

Starting point

January 2015 could mark a new era for interculturality and a need for new debates, theoretical, conceptual and methodological discussions between researchers and practitioners. Language education as one of the main educational channels for interculturality should be at the forefront of these highly political discussions (in reference to the title of Aristotle's *politika*, affairs of the cities). Language and intercultural education remained outside this sphere for decades but now it is high time to include politics in our work as linguists.

The beginning of the year saw gunmen bursting into the offices of a satirical French newspaper, *Charlie Hebdo*, and killing several people in the name of the Prophet (*Peace be upon Him*), including the editor and some of its most famous cartoonists. It is important to note that Muslims and Jews were also murdered during this and the ensuing attacks. These events shocked (part of) the world and led to calls for the respect of 'democracy', 'tolerance' and 'freedom of speech'¹ – but also for the strengthening of the fight against terrorism, the fight for 'civilization' versus 'barbarism'. Even those who had disapproved of the newspaper for their impertinent critics of Islam have participated in the demonstrations in support for these 'values'. Outside French-speaking countries very few people knew anything about *Charlie Hebdo* before January 2015 and yet, suddenly, overnight, most of them "became Charlie" (in reference to the now famous slogan "*je suis Charlie*"). Marketization of the slogan as a symbol for freedom of speech and anti-terrorist positions ensued. A certain moral hysteria also followed, with people rejecting the slogan being accused of supporting terrorists (or even being terrorists themselves!). Very few supporters of the Charlie movement seemed to remember that the newspaper had published repeatedly satirical, vulgar and offensive drawings of the Prophet while many Muslims object to representations of Allah or Mohammad. This of course did not justify the killings. The drawings were 'aimed' at extremists *only* according to the newspaper – though of course it is hard to imagine that this could not shock and offend 'normal' Muslims. For us interculturalists, claiming freedom of speech as a justification for mistreating the other could appear to be dubious as a goal. Even more so when one remembers that in 2008 the newspaper fired one of their cartoonists for making fun of Jews... This double standard could make the amalgamation of Islam, terrorism, freedom of speech and humour even more problematic.

Since the events, my feelings have shifted from puzzlement and confusion to anger. While millions of people descended into the streets of Paris (including many world leaders), sang the (very violent and aggressive) words of the Marseillaise, and shouted neo-nationalistic/Eurocentric and Western-centric slogans, tens of innocent people were massacred by Islamic extremists in Nigeria. The Nigerian president expressed his condolences for the victims in Paris but remained silent on the horrifying killings in his own country. News around the world showed pictures from Paris and rehearsed every hour the same pieces of information about *Charlie Hebdo* but spent one to two minutes to discuss the situation in Nigeria. This is my first problem with the kind of interculturality that we are promoting today: Not everyone has the same value; the centre remains the centre while the periphery remains on the side... and language education is not immune to this phenomenon.

¹ I shall come back to these terms later on.

Although most journalists tried explicitly to avoid the amalgam between Islamist extremists and the billions of Moslems around the world when reporting on the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, many famous and influential figures such as American comedian Bill Maher, British journalist and television personality Piers Morgan and the media mogul Rupert Murdoch seemed to have no qualms talking about Muslims in general. As such the latter asserted on his Twitter account that all Muslims should be held responsible for the actions of extremists. On CNN Rezla Aslan, a professor of creative writing at the University of California, Riverside in the US was interviewed about Bill Maher's provocative discourse on Islam. The interview showed that the journalists either shared Maher's arguments or were trying to provoke the scholar by presenting him with flawed and stereotypical assumptions about Islam:

Journalist: "Does Islam promote violence?"

Rezla Aslan: Islam does not promote violence or peace. Islam is just a religion and just like other religions in the world it depends on what you bring to it. If you are a violent person your Islam, your Christianity, your Judaism is going to be violent".

(...)

R.A.: "To say Muslim countries... as though Pakistan and Turkey are the same... as though Indonesia and Saudi Arabia are the same... as though somehow what is happening in the most extreme forms of these autocratic countries is representative of what is happening in other countries is frankly – and I use this word seriously – stupid..."

Towards 'rolling' and 'pitching'

The sometimes confusing, opportunistic and somewhat contradictory reactions to the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks question directly the meanings and politics of the notion of interculturality today. As such, following Chuang-Tzu (4th BCE), I have argued that interculturality is "a name (that) is merely the guest of reality" - a reality that each and every one of us can create at will. Interculturality is a theoretical fiction to borrow Chauvier's words (2014): the notion can be polysemic, a victim of groupthink and empty and it can be easily manipulated and used to chokehold discourses about today's encounters. There is thus an urgent need to revise our understanding and principles of interculturality: Who does it describe today? Who is 'in' and 'out' in the *inter-* of interculturality? Who decides? How can we move beyond the forms of *terra firma* that the notion has tended to lead to by boxing people into cultures, religions, identities, languages but also flawed 'third spaces' and im-/explicitly leading to hierarchies? How could one really "get used to the rolling and pitching" of human life and avoid "fixed points of attachment for thought and existence" (Bergson, 1934) which are proving to be dangerous?

Many scholars in the fields of language education and applied linguistics have already contributed to renewing the notion. Their ideas and arguments represent not just one critical turn but *critical turns*. These scholars have sometimes been taken seriously but they have also been misunderstood and 'abused'. One example is the French scholar Martine Abdallah-Preteuille who has proposed back in the 1980s to use the neologism *culturality* instead of culture in order to translate the idea that culture is a construct but also an array of discourses about self, other, one's environments, etc.

(1986). In the French literature the concept has now been adopted by most researchers, except that its meaning still tends to refer to ‘solid (national) culture’. The same goes for the concept of identification which should help us to conceptualise identity as an (unfinished) co-constructed element. Yet many scholars and practitioners use identification as a way of adding up traces of identity that they identify in their data. Instead of being boxed in one identity, people are boxed in two or three identities – while missing out on the importance of interlocutors in the process.

In this chapter I propose to reflect on ways of avoiding these phenomena which I label *delusional disorders* in research on the intercultural. According to Christodoulou (1986) delusional disorders correspond to the belief that the identity of a person, an object or a place has somehow changed or been altered: We claim with persistence that we have reached *a* critical turn in our field, but the reality in research and practice appears to be otherwise.

Conceptual and methodological delusions

This first section examines some of the conceptual and methodological delusions that have affected research and practice in relation to the intercultural since the beginning.

Old, tired and biased concepts

Many of the concepts used to deal with interculturality are old and tired. While they have been either renewed or even discarded in other fields dealing with the intercultural (without referring to the object as such, e.g. anthropology), many of these concepts remain unproblematized in relation to interculturality. The main problem with these concepts is that they tend to be anthropomorphic in the sense that they are used as if they had a mind of their own, ignoring the fact that individuals in interaction with others lay behind them. Of course the most problematic concept is contained in the very idea of the intercultural: *culture*. Although the concept has been de-reconstructed and deemed far too difficult to work with, it is still very much present in research on the intercultural – even among ‘critical’ scholars. As such *culturespeak* (Hannerz, 1999) or the uncritical and empty way of using the word is still a major problem. Discourses on culture in relation to the intercultural easily lead to create dichotomies which might emphasize the fact that some people are ‘good’ while others are ‘bad’; some are ‘civilised’ some ‘uncivilised’; some people are late some people respect schedules; some respect democracy some don’t (see my starting point). Adrian Holliday (2010), amongst others, has shown how such elements can easily lead to moralistic judgments. These discourses also desagentivize people and allow them to easily blame ‘their’ culture for what they do or think – as ‘robots’ would. Even though we would like to believe that these ideas are well accepted now in education, a quick look at courses given at a Finnish university shows that this is far from being the case: “Culture in Africa: Case Kenya” or “Culture in Asia: Case India”. In these two examples, people are invisible while continents (Africa and Asia) seem to become synonyms with the countries/cultures in question (Kenya, India). Surprisingly (or not) while all the courses concern continents outside Europe (based on geography? Politics? Imaginaries?) no course entitled e.g. “Culture in Europe: Case Finland” is proposed. Many anthropologists have noted how the use of the concept of culture is often used to talk about other continents, while e.g. the word

society is preferred to talk about ‘us’ (Eriksen, 2001). The main issue with discourses on culture is that they tend to prescribe how people should be rather than how they are. For some of them (e.g. certain types of migrants) the weight of culture expectations is said to be so heavy that it is impossible for them to ‘free’ themselves from it (see questions such as: “where are you really from?”; “you can’t understand because you were not born in this country”; “do you feel more English than Chinese?”, etc.). This biologization of culture is evident in the following headlines about two murders that appeared in a British newspaper on the same day in 2014:

“‘You will die now’: Husband, 76, ‘tried to stab his Russian wife to death because she hogged the bedsheets and left him with cold feet’”

“‘Pictured: The Pakistani immigrant who beat his wife to death in their New York apartment because she made him the wrong dinner – but his lawyer claims that’s just his culture’”

While the first piece of news reports that an Englishman killed his Russian wife because he was ‘crazy’, the second one promptly explains that a Pakistani immigrant ‘beat his wife to death’ because of ‘his culture’ (note how the phrase “that’s just his culture” desagentivizes him). There is a clear bias here related to discourses on self and other. In her now famous Ted Talk called *The danger of a single story*, Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie supports this argument when she recalls a discussion about one of her novels. For her it is clear that pre-conceived ideas, ignorance/knowledge about the Other but also geopolitics influence the way we talk about self/other. She says:

“I recently spoke at a university where a student told me that it was such a shame that Nigerian men were physical abusers like the father character in my novel. I told him that I had just read a novel called *American Psycho* - (Laughter) - and that it was such a shame that young Americans were serial murderers. (Laughter) (Applause) Now, obviously I said this in a fit of mild irritation. (Laughter)”

Although there is obvious irony in her tone it is clear that discourses on culture can easily create imaginary “abyssal lines” (de Souza Santos, 2007). These lines, as in the above examples, create ethnocentrism: in the case of the English newspaper above, the Englishman is simply insane while the Pakistani man does not even have sanity/insanity but is ‘led’ by his culture; for Adichie, the image of the violent African man appears ‘natural’ to her American interlocutor.

Many other concepts used in relation to interculturality draw such dangerous lines. *East-West* is one of them but also *Muslims-Christians*. As to the East-West dichotomy, although it is often used symbolically, one wonders what the boundaries between these two spaces are, and who decides where they stand. At the Chicago Festival of Humanities in 2010, the famous American developmental psychologist Howard Gardner defines the West as “basically the US and Europe as well as countries influenced by us”. This somewhat limited and biased definition is very faulty: for instance what is Europe? What countries are included in this geographical space? Does it refer to the European Union or geographically subjectively and selectively instable Europe? Second the idea of “countries influenced by us” is

interesting. In our glocalised world, isn't it the case that all countries (even closed spaces such as North Korea) are influenced by each other? Does this not make defining the boundaries between East and West problematic? In the current discussions about the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks these imaginaries are omnipresent. Associated with 'our' positive West are values such as civilization, democracy, tolerance, respect and freedom of speech. But are these faulty notions really just ours? Going back to the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, Jon Wilson (2015) shares a similar opinion when he writes:

“First of all it assumes that 'our' civilization is a good thing which must be defended at all costs, that the distribution of power and wealth in our society is right, that our biggest problems come from enemies outside. Secondly, it tries to construct a set of absolute moral polarities, suggesting we possess a single 'way of life' which is in danger. It subjugates our differences to an artificial unity which can only be imposed by an elite or the state – it's that which makes it right wing. The assumption that 'we' share a common set of values which differs from our enemies stops us from understanding the particular circumstances which shape our lives and actions. This language of absolute moral opposites is uncivil and strident, with a totalitarian edge. What if your idea of civilization isn't mine?”

Amartyan Sen (2005) reminds us for example that the idea of democracy has long been established in India. The same goes for Human Rights, which are often too easily described as a Western/European invention. One artifact at the British Museum in London, the Cyrus Cylinder, proves otherwise. A declaration of good kingship, dating back to 539-530 BCE, this Babylonian clay cylinder has been described as the first example of human rights, as it describes the restoration of peace and rights to Babylonians.

Although again most European countries have come out to support freedom of speech against terrorists, it is interesting to see that on many occasions double standards seem to have been applied. Take Finland for example, the current Prime Minister Alex Stubb went to demonstrate in Paris for democracy and freedom of speech and of the press following the Paris attacks (He tweeted after the demonstrations: “*A truly moving day in #Paris. I will, we should, never forget it*”). Yet when Danish cartoonists published offensive caricatures of Mohammed, which led to Muslim outrage in 2008, the Finnish authorities forbade the reprinting of the caricatures in Finland for fear of reprisal. The then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Erkki Tuomioja, suggested that the Danish government could apologize. The same year a certain Seppo Lehto was prosecuted for posting a blog featuring a provocative and vulgar cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed. Why the double standards when a French newspaper does the same?

Many other problematic anthropomorphic concepts tend to be used in research and practice on the 'intercultural' such as *community* (as in the Muslim community), *diversity* (a politically correct word in the Nordic context to refer to migrants from Africa and Asia).

The uncritical and un-reflexive use of these concepts can lead to problems that need to be taken more seriously in language education:

- *neo-racism*: where discourses on culture become a substitute for race and lead to discrimination, denigration and superiority complex (see above discussions);
- *symbolic violence*: the outsider (outcast) is always compared to the insider (*you don't belong, you are not like us*). The latter decides who becomes part of the inner circle;
- *Bovaryism* (in reference to the novel by G. Flaubert in which a bourgeois lady, dissatisfied with her privileged life, dreams of a better life): “the tendency to see oneself as other than one is, and to bend one’s vision of other people and things to suit this willed metamorphosis” (Jenson, 2006: 167). Bovaryism can be found in *subjective* comments on culture (“in my culture we...”), nation-state (ethnocentrism) but also language (as in: the French language is more logical than other languages or Finnish is one of the most difficult languages in the world);
- *Tyranny of the past* (and of the frontier): whereby some people remain “foreign sinners” (Rushdie, 2013) forever and for whom their ‘original’ culture and language seem to be so ingrained in their skin that they are said not to be able to ‘integrate’ or ‘acculturate’, being labeled ‘cultural dopes’. In order for them to become like ‘us’ *cultural cannibalism* or what I have called *pygmalionism* (Dervin, 2014) should occur. But what cultural model to choose? The ‘dominant culture’? Is there such a thing? Another consequence of this type of tyranny is *Hostipitality* (Derrida, 2000), or the fact that hostility always accompanies hospitality (if one does not follow the rules imposed on by the ‘powerful’ locals, one will face hospitality). All these elements reinforce power imbalances between the ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’.

There is thus urgency to revise these concepts and notions and to discard them if they contribute to treating others unfairly or to denigrate them (e.g. culture). Many scholars have used the infanticide metaphor of “throwing the baby with the bathwater” in order to defend some of the concepts and to beg for them to be kept. What they propose to do with them is often unclear or simply allows them to keep a status quo. At the same time we see unprivileged people, whose voices are not (properly) heard, suffer in silence...

Methodological delusional disorders

Dealing with interculturality not only requires questioning the concepts we use in order to give more strength to the notion and make it more convincing but it also involves discussing what it is that we consider to be intercultural methodologically and the way we approach intercultural encounters.

My first point relates to a bias that has affected research on the intercultural since the beginning. I have labeled it the *differentialist bias*. The marketization of the other, the ‘exotic’ other, has insisted on how different s/he is, ignoring the fact that this same other can also be similar to ‘us’. In 2012 the American singer-songwriter, Pharrell Williams, created a capsule collection for the Japanese casual wear retailer entitled *I am OTHER*. One of his creations read: “The same is lame”, revealing the bias that I am describing here. Research has not been immune to this incredibly resilient groupthink, often collecting lists of differences to either explain or facilitate

intercultural encounters. Of course differences matter and people are different (across and within “cultures”) but they can also be quite similar in their values, ideas, behaviours, opinions, etc. The obsession with difference seems to relate to a fear of universalism and ethnocentrism. Some of it is probably true. Yet starting critically and reflexively from similarities rather than differences might open up new vistas for both research and practice. M. Abdallah-Preteille (1986) shares the view that identifying similarities might be a more rewarding intellectual and relational exercise than mere difference as it requires spending quality time with people and in-depth discussions – which, in an increasingly busy world or even school contexts, often lacks. In an interview with *Greater New Yorkers*, the artist Tala Madani (MacGarry, 2010) who was born in Iran, defends the universality of her work which depicts mostly chauvinist men as follows:

“I hate this term of ‘stereotypical Middle Eastern’ – what I’m interested in is machismo, and we see that everywhere, in all cultures. If I were from Latin America then I suppose the figures would not be Middle Eastern, they would be Latin.”

Another methodological disorder in our field is – as hinted at earlier – an overreliance on culture and language as sole markers of interculturality. Many fields of research such as sociology, cultural studies and Black Feminism, have delved into the benefits of intersectionality to complexify their analyses and to make sure that research participants can shift the boxes that scholarly work can sometimes impose on them. In the following excerpt, Adichie (2014) shows how identity politics can benefit from opening up discussions about categorizations:

“I was once talking about gender and a man said to me, “why does it have to be you as a woman? Why not you as a human being?” This type of question is a way of silencing a person’s specific experiences. Of course I am a human being, but there are particular things that happen to me in the world because I am a woman. This same man, by the way, would often talk about his experience as a black man (To which I should probably have responded: Why not your experiences as a man or as a human being? Why a black man?)”.

Defined as examining the interconnected nature of social and ‘biological’ categorizations/identity markers such as language, race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion etc. (Collins, 1986) intersectionality is interested in how these elements contribute to injustice, discrimination and disadvantage. I have argued elsewhere (Dervin, 2014) that it is also important to use intersectionality to look into the instability of privilege. As such a potentially disadvantaged individual might also find herself empowered at a moment in her life. Intersectionality has revolutionized how diversity and social justice are examined and taken into account in education.

My last note on delusional disorders in research on the intercultural relates to the typical ignoring of the importance of contexts and interlocutors. Some of the ideas developed until now in this chapter will be familiar to those who have followed the path of critical turns. Yet the belief in individuals’ discourses as discourses of truth remains a problem. If identity and culture are constructs that involve speaking to interlocutors in specific macro- and micro-contexts then this should be increasingly problematized. By their presence and utterances researchers themselves contribute to their participants ‘doing’ identity with them. Thus what they express cannot but be

separated from the researchers, who are not invisible subjectivities (see Dervin & Risager, 2014). I believe that this is a major challenge to research and practice on interculturality: the end of truths must be accepted and taken into account. At the moment too many researchers rely on narratives as ‘objective’ and ‘truthful’ accounts and reading some research is reminiscent of reading a novel. Of course the voice of the participants must be respected but when this voice is *multivoiced* (and includes contradictions and intersubjectivities) we need to beware of simplifying our work by over-relying on ‘their’ truths as ‘evidence’ of something – and contributing indirectly to othering them. I have heard many times from my research participants whom I had asked to re-read an interview they had given me that they don’t remember saying this or that or simply that they did not agree anymore. Which voice should we then include in our research? And is it OK not to problematize them?

Beyond disorders?

Having now listed the kinds of delusional disorders that research and practice on interculturality seem to face, this section proposes to attempt moving beyond some of these disorders in order to consider the “rolling and pitching” of human life as described by the process philosopher Henry Bergson (1934).

My first argument is that there is a need to recognize and accept that, as researchers and practitioners, we can only reach a practical simplification of reality, which I have called *simplicity* in my work (Dervin, 2014). Simplicity represents the continuum that each social being has to face on a daily basis: *simplicity* <*> *complexity*. Neither simplicity nor complexity can be fully reached and what might appear simple can easily become complex and vice versa. The idea of complexity has been too easily hijacked in relation to the intercultural and is often just façade complexity. As hinted at earlier, ‘us’ and ‘them’ consist of so many and varied identifications that it is impossible to determine what is true, authentic and individual in how people define who they are, their culture, etc. This is even more complex when one considers that “even, when we are outwardly silent, within the ebb and flux of our thought, we talk with critics, with our mothers, our god(s), our consciences; indeed we do so just as steadily as we once spoke to our dolls, our imaginary companions, the people of our painted pictures” (Watkins, 2000: 1). Self’s and other’s thoughts, feelings and actions are then “populate(d)” by a collection of different characters (ibid.: 2) to whom as researchers and practitioners we do not have access. So when we conduct research on e.g. immigrants or mobile students we need to make sure that as many of these ‘populations’ are enabled and allowed to emerge in our discussions with our research participants/partners. It is also important to note that in order to free our participants from ‘symbolic violence’ we need to discuss our own contribution to interactional power differentials that we might bring to the field: us researchers as native speakers of the language used during e.g. interviews, us as potentially privileged individuals, us as ‘possessors’ of the context (for example if an interview takes place at university) and us as ‘professional speakers’. I have heard too often from colleagues that power differentials are not an issue in research as they feel that their participants felt ‘confident’, ‘equal’ and ‘spoke freely’. This all means that we need to place ‘renewed’ moral and ethical reflections at the centre of our work and practice. Ethics may not always be what we believe it to be (e.g. mere anonymity). One important aspect also consists in systematically questioning our own ideologies and the judgments that go with them. At a recent research meeting, a colleague of mine

presented the data she had collected in a school. The project was about discrimination in the Finnish school context. As a feminist the researcher always insists on fighting against essentialisation – to which I agree of course. Yet when she started presenting her data she mentioned the fact that all the participants that she had recruited for her discussions groups were teenage girls. I shared my surprise and asked her why boys had not joined the groups. She then started explaining that boys are not very involved in general and that girls were more interested in discussing issues of discrimination because – she added – they were used to gender discrimination. The ‘system’ – as she put it – was responsible for that. I tried to argue that this was maybe a bit far-fetched and that her own politics may have had an impact on her field, and that thus she might want to consider other arguments – and maybe ‘re-agentivize’ her participants instead of blaming the ‘system’. Angry, the colleague told me that my answer was typical that of a ‘straight white male’... and that as a ‘powerful’ figure, I could not understand. Strategic differentiating put an end to the dialogue and I became a persona non grata, who had dared to question the supremacy of gender in identity politics...

This leads me to my second point which interrelates. There is a need to admit that intercultural phenomena – like other ‘human’ phenomena – cannot always be grasped, controlled and/or explained and that it is perfectly fine. This is not a case of laziness but intellectual honesty. Unfortunately in today’s neo-liberal education “intellectual honesty can easily pass as incompetence” (Claessens, 2013). We thus need to consider *mystery* but also *failure* (of our research, practice, encounters, etc.) as essential components of intercultural practice and research. In a world obsessed by success, this is a major challenge. The words of the performance artist, Marina Abramovic (2014), resonate very well with these ideas: “You never know how the experiment will turn out. It can be great, it can be really bad, but failure is so important, because it involves a learning process and it enables you to get to a new level and to other ways of seeing your work.” Or as the CEO of mobile game development company Supercell (Kelly, 2013) puts it: “You have to eliminate the fear of failure. If a game goes wrong we throw a party for its developers and give them champagne to celebrate what they learnt.” I believe that this is the sort of attitude that researchers of interculturality need to develop in order to avoid contradictions and delusional disorders. For example a few critical scholars insist on resorting to quantitative analyses to prove that their deconstructivist and ‘renewed’ approach to interculturality works – while these two are, I believe, incompatible.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed aspects of interculturality that are problematic in research and practice. Just like the January 2015 events in Paris, they are symptomatic of certain delusional disorders that we do not always acknowledge as problems and of which we have had limited insight. Many of the disorders derive from the history of the notion of interculturality, the associated groupthink and from ‘established’ gurus whose work is systematically mentioned without being criticized as they give the impression to simplify the complexity of the intercultural. If we want the critical turn to be taken seriously, we need to reassess this work and to discard what is counter-productive. Again, following the events of January 2015 there is an urgent need to do that.

Certain principles were suggested in this chapter. To conclude I would like to ask the

following question: What does recognizing and accepting these principles entail for the intercultural practitioner and researcher in language education?

1. to systematically question the words, concepts and notions that we use and to stop using 'fashionable' and yet treacherous words. A word that is used increasingly is that of *essentialism* (reducing someone to one identity). Essentialism is the new enemy that has replaced *stereotypes*. Trying to set as a learning objective *helping students to use anti-essentialist perspectives to look into interculturality* is idealistic, illusionary and, in a way, dishonest (see e.g. the Erasmus Multilateral project IEREST - Intercultural Education Resources for Erasmus Students and their Teachers, 2012-2015). Anti-essentialism is an ideal and a 'simplex' phenomenon that cannot be reached;
2. to move beyond programmatic and recipe-like intercultural skills and to reject simple progression in intercultural awareness (e.g. stages);
3. to question seriously the main 'easy' models of interculturality available on the market that tend to be 'recited' and 'recycled' without much criticality or reflexivity (see e.g. the B.B.D. models: Byram, Bennett and Deardorff);
4. to take co-construction of discourses, identities, self/other seriously and to 'proscribe' individualistic perspectives that concentrate on one piece of the jigsaw (usually a sole research participant);
5. to simplexify one's analysis of interculturality by intersecting various identifications, by questioning 'truths' and looking into similarities-differences. This is in a sense what the main character of the novel *The Life of a Banana* (2014), written by PP Wong about a young girl whose parents are from Singapore and who was born in the UK, asks for (2014: 34) in the following excerpt: "I start to daydream about what it would be like to grow up in a country where I am not seen as different. Somewhere where I am popular and don't have to explain my name or that I'm Chinese. It would be a really cool place where Asians and Jamaicans are just seen as doctors, schoolgirls and businesswomen. Not the "Chinese doctor", "the Asian school girl" or the "black businesswomen of the year". It would be a country where I was not seen as "ethnic" or "exotic" but just "me". That would be great!"
6. Finally to make the intercultural more politically engaged and less 'interculturally correct'.

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