

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The place for a renewed interculturality in Finnish higher education

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As Finland is internationalizing through the “Branding Finland” campaign, the place for intercultural communication has increased in higher education. This article shows the different types of courses offered, and reviews the different perceptions of “the intercultural” that can be found through the discourse of practitioners who work around this subject. It aims at finding the place of a renewed interculturality in Finnish Higher Education and intends to dissociate the image of the intercultural as it is promoted in the country from what is actually taught in practice. To do so, I study the contradictions that can be found at different moments in the discourses of intercultural communication teachers in Finnish Higher Education: the observed discourses show that on one side the definition of “the intercultural” is shared but not perceived the same way and on the other side the different representations of the concept can vary in the speech of the same teacher, showing contradictions that can be a problem when teaching a *savoir-être* (life skills) to learners. I conclude asking the question of how the Finnish government can promote a coherent Intercultural Education without offering its teachers/researchers a training that could help them recognize the diverse diversities implied by a renewed interculturality.

Key words: Intercultural Communication, diversity, culture, Finnish Higher Education.

Parce que le pays s'internationalise à travers la campagne « branding Finland », la place de la communication interculturelle s'est accrue dans l'enseignement supérieur finlandais. Nous nous intéressons dans cet article à la façon dont la diversité est traitée au niveau universitaire, i.e. quels sont les cours d'interculturel proposés et quel est leur contenu. Notre analyse révèle différentes perceptions du concept qui peuvent être perçues après une analyse de discours d'enseignants et enseignants-chercheurs qui intègrent ou ont intégré l'interculturel dans leurs cours.

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Nous nous efforçons de trouver la place d'un interculturel renouvelé parmi ces discours et de dissocier l'image de l'éducation interculturelle qui est promue en Finlande de ce qui est proposé en réalité. En effet, les discours observés montrent d'une part que la définition de l'interculturel est partagée sans être perçue de la même manière et que d'autre part, les différentes représentations du concept peuvent varier dans le discours d'un même enseignant, mettant en évidence des contradictions qui posent problème s'il s'agit de communiquer un savoir-être aux apprenants. Nous nous demandons alors comment l'État finlandais peut promouvoir un enseignement interculturel cohérent sans proposer aux enseignants/chercheurs une formation qui leur permettrait de reconnaître les diverses diversités impliquées par l'interculturel.

Introduction

The “branding Finland” campaign, set up by the minister of foreign affairs Alexander Stubb, from 2008², designed to put forward domains of excellence (as teachers' training) and attract tourists, researchers, students, shows the country's interest for internationalization, to be seen as its desire to be appealing for other countries. The report “Mission for Finland, how Finland will demonstrate its strengths by solving the world's most wicked problems”³ ordered by Stubb, clearly shows that Education is an important part of the campaign, as it states that “Finland offers the world better education and teachers.”⁴ In this perspective, the university law of 2010 gives more financial independence to the 16 universities of the country⁵, putting pressure at the same time for obtaining results according to quantitative (for example, the number of students who subscribed/succeeded) and qualitative (with scientific publications and influence)⁶ criteria, which accounts for two thirds of their financing⁷. For this reason, universities are brought in to offer attractive programs. As a result, they benefit from a very good reputation abroad (the University of Helsinki is part of the 100 best universities of the world⁸), attracting more and more foreign students (more than 20 000 in 2009⁹). Even though they represent around only 4% of the students registered at university, their numbers have raised to 82% between 2000 and 2009¹⁰. Facing this

² <http://www.alexstubb.com/artikkelit/Stubb%20Jan%202011.pdf> and <http://formin.finland.fi/Public/default.aspx?contentid=206470&nodeid=15145&culture=en-US>, visited 3/08/2012.

³ <http://www.nation-branding.info/downloads/mission-for-finland-branding-report.pdf>, visited 4/08/2012.

⁴ See footnote 2. The report actually concerns primary Education but it is largely extrapolated to Education in general by Finnish institutions and researchers.

⁵ And 25 polytechnic schools.

⁶ http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/Fiche_Curie_Finlande_171110.pdf, visited 7/4/2012.

⁷ Aalto University of Helsinki and the University of Technology of Tampere only are managed by private funds.

⁸ <http://www.reseautudiant.com/forum/download.php/187,2033/classement-universites-2011-shanghai-381.pdf>

⁹ http://www.cimo.fi/news/other_current_issues/finland_does_well_in_isb, visited 30/12/2011.

¹⁰ http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/enjeux-internationaux_830/cooperation-educative-enseignement-superieur-formation-professionnelle_20145/les-actions-cooperation-dans-enseignement-superieur_20020/assurer-une-veille-sur-les-systemes-enseignement-superieur-dans-monde-base-curie_20025/europe_4961/finlande_13549.html, visited 4/12/2012.

increase, universities see a great interest in offering courses that deal with diversity because a) they are attractive and b) they can help students manage exchanges in this new context. This is how most of the universities in Finland provide teaching programs of intercultural communication.

But what does the term “intercultural” imply? Although it is largely shared and seems to be taken for granted by many researchers, teachers as well as institutions, politicians and the media, it is rarely defined. In reaction, the field is recently experiencing minority but vivid critics and reorientations proposals. In this context, I wonder what teaching the “intercultural” in Finnish Higher Education means in terms of objectives, teachings, and teachers’ training. Under the prism of a renewed or “liquid” interculturality that I will define in a first part, this article examines how scholars who teach intercultural communication in Finland define it (clearly or not) and how their discourses relate (or not) to their actual vision of the term. This analysis will also show what image(s) of “the intercultural” is/are promoted in Finnish Higher Education (programs or types of courses taught) in regards to what is actually offered. As such, I am mostly interested in how researchers/lecturers conceptualize and negotiate “the intercultural” through the co-construction of their identities. From this perspective, I have chosen to work on three focus groups, which have served as good tools to observe how such co-constructions occur. I aim to see the place of a critic vision of “the intercultural” in those discourses but before I attend to the analysis of the data, I will review the latest findings about how “the intercultural” has been conceptualized.

1. Research Context

1.1. A confused “Intercultural”

Intercultural communication education has existed for a long time but the rate of accelerated globalization we are witnessing today is increasing its process (Dervin and Tournebise, forth. 2013), hence the proliferation of the term in many fields for the past decade. The problem is that although “the intercultural” is understood in different ways by its practitioners (even within the same field) it is rarely defined as something obvious or in similar terms. This entails a lack of coherence and a confusion that prevents its progression. For example, it frequently happens that researchers are not talking about the same thing during a conference (Dervin, 2010). More, the term, intercultural, is often used synonymously with pluri-/multi-/cross-culturalism, which has repercussions on the models of education adopted because these approaches are not based on the same principles. Accordingly, some studies called “intercultural” have actually more to do with culturalism as they mostly describe or compare cultures without going beyond (ibid.). This way, the “intercultural” is often used as a signifier that is empty, contradictory or simply culturalist (ibid.).

In reaction to the systematic use of the term along with its many differing definitions, Dervin (2011) distinguishes three perspectives on culture in education and research: the solid, the liquid and the Janusian approach, which will be used for the upcoming analysis of the data.

1.2. A Tripartite Model of Intercultural Approaches

According to Dervin (2009), the solid approach corresponds to a differentialist perception of culture, that can be compared to culturalism because it puts forward differences on the basis of the various origins of people (social, ethnic...) and even focuses on the negative effects of differences (Puren, 1997). In this view, the group is more significant than the individual and description prevails over analysis. This way, a “grammar of cultures” (Abdallah-Pretceille, 1986) is established and predetermines the behaviours of others. Consequently, everyone would be easily recognisable and categorised from its belonging to a certain “culture”, without considering the instability and constant evolution of one’s identity/ies. This leads to stereotypical discourses and does not help with encountering the Other. This interpretation has been used a lot in intercultural communication research and teaching and continues to be spread as it allows for the convenient categorizations of people into separate boxes, decreasing fear of the unknown by reducing it to the known.

Nowadays, one can see the raise of a strong reaction against this culturalist-differentialist model and the urge to put an end to it, which brings us to the second perception of the intercultural, where critical voices approach it differently (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2011; Dervin, 2010; Ogay, 2000; Hall, 1996...). They consider that the mixings (code-switching, mixing languages, or mixing between people of different social backgrounds etc.) which constantly cross our postmodern societies lead, to the “diverse diversities” (Dervin, *op. cit.*, 2010) existing in a country and even inside a person (e.g. the liquidity posited by Bauman, 2004). This implies that an intercultural encounter is not just determined by nations or ethnicity but also by gender, religion, profession, etc. Thus, a) one cannot talk about a unique culture for all the inhabitants of another country, or even with people who have one’s nationality (culturalist approach) and b) our identity is plural and instable and builds itself through mixing. As a result, according to this model, intercultural communication helps communicate not only with a foreigner in the sense of “a person of a different nationality” but with the Other, i.e. another person. Postmodern worlds are made of heterogeneity and instability: in such context, culture and identity (both notions related to interculturality) cannot be seen as fixed and homogeneous anymore. For this reason, the modern excuse of a solid “culture” used to explain eventual problems during encounters has to be reconsidered.

The last perception (that Dervin named “Janusian” in reference to the double faced God Janus) is the most common and shows the confusion that surrounds interculturality: On one hand researchers would agree on the instability and the complexity of culture and identity as in the liquid approach, but on the other hand, they would still continue to compare “cultures”, although they correspond to very different realities, as for the differentialist approach (Dervin, 2010).

Overall, these perceptions give a general idea of confusion surrounding the term. As a consequence a “culturespeak” (defined by Hannerz (1999) as the systematic and uncritical use of the concept of culture) is spreading and needs to be overtaken.

1.3. The Responsibility of Researchers to Move from “Culturespeak” to a Critical Intercultural

Abdallah-Pretceille (2011) and Dervin (2011, 2011a) argue that it is the responsibility of the intercultural practitioners to be critical towards a “soft” intercultural and to

differentiate from the common speeches that tend to emphasize prejudices about the Other. To achieve that, it is important to realize that interculturality (as for identity) is constructed by people in a certain context (historical, societal, psychological etc.) at a certain moment of time and not something that exists out of them¹¹. Indeed, we are constantly influenced by the presence of others whether it be experienced directly or indirectly (that is the voices posited in the dialogism of Bakhtin, 1977). Therefore, we consciously or unconsciously manipulate our discourse for several reasons¹². This point of view can be seen as destabilizing because it seeks to remove a great number of modernism's points of reference by stating that not everything can be explained and that there can often be a gap between words and actions (Dervin and Tournebise, forth. 2013). It means that no findings can be established as a Truth or a proof (as it does not necessarily correspond to reality) because discourses (and identities) are unstable, imprecise and co-constructed WITH the researchers, who must then accept that results can only be incomplete (Dervin, 2011). In reaction to this "liquid fear" (Bauman, 2006), people tend to reduce the Other even more by assigning representations to them. This is how stereotypes continue to be spread as I mentioned before.

The critical approach is developing lately, showing that the field needs to be transformed and that scholars need to move beyond "culturespeak". This article aims at finding what image(s) of the concept "intercultural" teachers of intercultural communication construct at certain moments of the conversation in order to reveal some of the contradictions in their discourses. These contradictions could serve as a means of further investigation of how the teachers might teach the intercultural (which will not be my purpose here though) and the possible impact of a critical intercultural in Finnish Higher Education.

2. Context: Who Teaches Intercultural Communication in Finland? To Whom? And Where?

During year 2010-2011, from my understanding, three of the 16 universities and 25 Polytechnic schools of Finland offered a program of intercultural communication under various names: *Intercultural Encounters* (Helsinki University), *Master's Degree Program in Intercultural Communication* (communication department of the University of Jyväskylä) and *Intercultural Studies* (University of Vaasa). These are interdisciplinary programs taught in English and opened to exchange students. Some Minor programs are also provided in English at the Open University of Turku, together with Diaconia University of Applied Sciences and Åbo Akademi (*Intercultural communication*), the Open University of Eastern Finland (*Basic studies in intercultural competence*), among others.

Intercultural courses are offered in most of the Finnish Universities, mainly in language centers which largely integrate the concept but also in language departments (French studies and English departments of Turku University), in religious studies (Åbo

¹¹ See Ben Rampton (2011) about the extent to which what is referred to as "youth language" can be called as such and Foucault (1980) had already stated that people do not have a real identity that is hidden inside of them but that is rather expressed through discourses communicated when interacting with others.

¹² See Dervin, 2011.

Akademi at Turku), at the philosophical Faculty of the School of Theology of Joensuu, in Art (School of Art of Aalto University in Helsinki), in communication (Open University of Jyväskylä), in Economics and Foreign Affairs at (Turku School of Economy, Aalto and Hanken in Helsinki) and at the Universities of Applied Sciences of Jyväskylä and Helsinki. Intercultural communication is also taught in Sport, Health or Sociology (Jyväskylä) and in training center for Primary teachers (*Primary school teacher education* in Jyväskylä) and for adults.

It is quite difficult to find out exactly how many teachers of intercultural are teaching in Finland since “the intercultural” can have many designations, be understood and practiced in so many different ways and fields. The data analyzed in this article are part of my PhD research project¹³. They represent a sample from a total of 6 focus groups (26 participants). Three of the participants had pursued a Master’s degree of intercultural communication offered by the University of Jyväskylä¹⁴ but as far as I know, none of them had received a specific training for teaching intercultural communication. The participants’ age, nationality, gender or social background were not considered in this study and there was no special grouping as I do not intend to compare those criteria.

3. Presenting the Data

To show how researchers/lecturers conceptualize and negotiate “the intercultural” I have chosen to work on the data obtained from three focus groups, which I organized in 2011 in several Finnish universities. They data help shed light on how a person co-constructs his/her identity through interactions (Kaufmann, 2004; Brubaker, 2001; Bauman, 2004 in sociology; Abdallah-Preteille, 2006; Dervin, 2007 in Education; Jasper et al. 2011; Vion, 2006; Linell, 2003; Markovà et al., 2007 in linguistics) better than face to face interviews because people in a group need to negotiate how they see interculturality with others. My analysis focuses on people who teach/taught intercultural communication to adults (regularly or not) or who have integrated it within their courses in different fields (religious studies, linguistics, communication or business studies) in Finland. I also considered those who teach multi- or cross-cultural communication as we have seen that the terms are often used interchangeably. The groups are comprised of 6 teachers (-researchers) at higher education level for groups A (I call them A1, A2...) and B (B1...) and 3 for group C (C1...). The participants were sometimes colleagues or never met before. Each conversation lasted approximately one hour around the theme “Mobility and intercultural communication education”. The data were collected in English (which was not the native language of the majority of the teachers), with a voice recorder and transcribed orthographically. The participants were given five questions¹⁵ that they could answer in any order. No details were provided concerning these questions so that the participants can go any direction they wanted: The purpose was not to obtain an answer but to hear discourses on the topic. This is why I gave minimum

¹³ Tournebise, C. *L’enseignement de la communication interculturelle en Finlande : quels liens avec les identités des enseignants ?* (co-supervisors: Fred Dervin and Guy Achard-Bayle).

¹⁴ See the program on <https://www.jyu.fi/hum/laitokset/viesti/en/subjects/intercultural>, visited 6/04/2012.

¹⁵ For example: *What do you teach in relation to intercultural communication? How do you teach it? What has influenced you most in your conception of intercultural communication?*

guidance to the group and did not attend the meetings (Markovà & al., 2007). My goal is to deconstruct discourses that were constructed between the participants during these focus groups (with the indirect presence of the researcher through a digital recorder) in order not to find “proofs” but bits of diversity in the here and now (Dervin, 2010). This implies that there is no absolute Truth to be found. As the researcher is not attending, the participants cannot look for the approval of an ‘authority’ for a ‘correct’ answer.

4. Analysis of the Data

In this section, I am going to review the image(s) of “the intercultural” that are constructed in the discourses of the participants in order to find out how renewed interculturality is represented. I made the hypothesis that a certain number of contradictions could be revealed as “the intercultural” is a term that is rarely defined although it is largely shared and taken for granted. I also offered to use these contradictions to extrapolate on the possible impact of a critical intercultural in Finnish Higher Education.

I will analyse these focus groups with the help of discourse analysis from French authors, more particularly the theories of enunciation (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2009 ; Marnette, 2005) and an approach to dialogism inspired by Bakhtin (1977) who stated that all discourses include the voice of the Other (Rabatel, 2008; Vion, 2005). Working with these methods helps put forward the complexity of identity and how a person co-constructs his/her identity through interactions and the multiple voices that can be found in the discourse. Finally, mapping the presence of voices in the discourses of teachers (using pronouns, metaphors...) will help me demonstrate how these voices participate in the co-construction of their identity and what their impact on the teacher’s conceptualization of interculturality is. Focus groups can be ideal for that purpose according to Markovà & al. 2007.

4.1. The ‘Intercultural’ is ‘Complicated’

In group B, facing the perplexity provoked by the first questions (B2: *Such a simple question: “what do you teach and how?”*) teacher B6 (who has a Master’s degree in intercultural communication) rephrases:

Well shall we go from the practical side to then more deep meanings of you know teaching pedagogy and and all that sort of stuff that sort of lies behind that but I think it would be easy to start from you know what kind of courses you are teaching or you have taught taught... [...] so practical... examples.

The use of blurred terms like *sort of* or *stuff*, not to define the concept of intercultural communication but rather the way they are going to deal with it, shows the hesitations surrounding the term. She continues raising an important point that could help define what the participants understand by “intercultural”:

That is something I have to ask for myself all the time so I find this very interesting when you know, whenever we discuss to find out what you guys understand what is intercultural communication? So if you can add that to...

She admits that the concept is problematic for her (*that is something I have to ask for myself all the time*) while very few of the other teachers will admit that. Her question (*what you guys understand what is intercultural communication?*) would help gather the other participants around a common understanding and remove ambiguities but nobody will answer. B1 also wonders how intercultural communication is taught: *how are they [the teachers] communicating you know what is culture and all these things*. She also uses an imprecise vocabulary (*all these things*) and will not say how she deals with it. Eventually, none of the participants will position themselves. They talk of an object that they share and see as complicated but essential in education (C3: *that's the one of the most important topics that should be learnt everywhere in the world*) without defining it. Dervin and I have already shown elsewhere¹⁶ the strong presence of the solid perspective of interculturality in the discourses of lecturers/researchers of intercultural communication in Finland. My objective here is to focus on the contradictions that can be found in their discourses about interculturality and find traces of a renewed interculturality. To do so, I will investigate the third perception of the intercultural listed by Dervin (see above).

4.2. A 'Soft' Approach to Interculturality

This perception corresponds to the Janusian approach we mentioned in 1.B that reveals the confusion surrounding interculturality, as it represents a mix between the liquid and the differentialist approach.

In this example from group B, the speech of B1 seems to show bits of a renewed intercultural which recognize the diverse diversities of people:

I think that there really is the challenge, that how to how to more focus on what questions the students toward the people need to consider when speaking with people from cultures that are vastly different from there themselves rather than um um I I try my best to avoid any kind of cookbook teaching that if you have someone from Scotland you they they act like this and if you have someone from Afghanistan they act like this this is a great challenge to turn the tables rather than giving them information but to rather have them somehow experienced the situation in a different way and to recognize that they are that these people are individual.

She rejects the simple use of knowledges about a foreign culture (*I try my best to avoid any kind of cookbook teaching*) and proposes to change students' mentality by bringing them to think and experience a *situation (to turn the tables rather than giving them information)*. She wants to make them realize that *people are individuals*, as for the critical perception of interculturality. Yet, the people concerned in this speech are not

¹⁶ See Tournebise, C. Forth. 2013; Dervin, F. and Tournebise, C. Forth 2012 and Dervin, F. and Tournebise, C. Forth. 2013.

the others as “another me” but the foreigners, those who are different from me (*people from cultures that are vastly different*) as for the differentialist point of view. Linguistically speaking, this is demonstrated by the use of *these* (*these people are individuals*).

In group A, we can also identify arguments that seem to question the culturalist perception of the intercultural:

Lecturer A4: Or you know we have communication norms that usually compare with the rest of the world... Finns listen... before they talk... but... that's also the case for people who are brought up in Japan... so it would be interesting it would be interesting to hear what you have to say

Lecturer A6: Yeah I used to say or I still say in my... um.... courses that um... what we have in common I mean the Finns and the Japanese is a tolerance for silence

Lecturer A5: Tolerance for silence

Lecturer A6: Yeah... to... yeah tolerance how long you can stay silent with a group of strangers

In this dialogue, the participants share a similar speech about resemblances between Finland and Japan. It might seem to be a trace of the liquid perception of the intercultural which respects the diverse diversities but it is not as the discourses actually reduce those two nations to a stereotype (*tolerance for silence*) and underline a sort of opposition between Japan and Finland towards the rest of the world. Teacher A5 goes the same direction between eastern and western Finland:

There's local differences and especially between between eastern Finland and western Finland [...] there are just huge communication differences and then like eastern Finlanders um they um or we actually I should say our even our DNA is different so...

Finland is divided here in two opposite cultures according to genetic characteristics. This pseudo diversity is actual culturalism: Finland is seen as heterogeneous because it is split in two parts, reducing the number of people who are “similar” from 5 millions to 2.5 millions.

Teacher A2 also seems to go beyond “façade diversity” (Dervin, 2009):

[It is] particularly problematic for English because, you know, if we got students who are studying Russian I presume they're studying Russian because they want to visit Russia they want to do trade with Russia and perhaps interested in Russian movies or Russian literature it's quite clear that the culture which Russian is embedded in and conveys is Russian culture (...)

I don't think that's really true for English anymore... cause English is a... you know student our students in Finland or across Europe or across the world are not learning English... in order to know about... an afternoon tea or... or... Super bowl games or or... most of the people that we are teaching English to will actually use most of their English with non native speakers and many of them may actually have hardly any contact with native speakers of English at all during their entire

adult lives depending how much they travel and yet they increasingly then may be using English every days so that I think for English this link... a... the assumption that language and culture must be linked works less and less well English is becoming... multicultural I would even say it's becoming transcultural.

In the first excerpt, his speech is quite culturalist as he is mentioning imaginary students who would study Russian for the “culture” (which stands for Art and trade here) but in the second excerpt about English language, his discourse tends to reject the notion of culture: what he says is that nowadays, English is not learnt to know about “cultures” (*afternoon tea* supposedly for Great Britain, *Super bowl games* possibly for the U.S.) as it is no longer necessary to meet English natives to use it. He concludes saying that English is multicultural and even transcultural, two terms that are often mixed up with “intercultural”. His message here seems to be that English is plural and allows people to move from one culture to another. This apparently moves apart from culturalism in a way but comes back to it on another way, since cultures are still closed and fixed entities that communicate, as if naturalized (Abdallah-Preteuille, 2011; Dervin, 2011).

Finally, these contradictions are also found in group C, for example when teacher C1 states:

my goal when I started my PhD project was to help Finnish industry in selling into china and um I was hoping to find this easy business rules on how to use colors and how not to use colors like to do and not to do list and I so 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 [...] color is kind of another language in my view and um I think these revelations personally then of course [...] it has been very rewarding now that I've been teaching and 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 this which is most mostly people think it's just humorous is that 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 if I [...] and I 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 things but also um also is is a brilliant example

She says first that interculturality happens in a specific context (*in particular context some color means this and in another context it means something completely different*) and that it is instable in a way that it is not possible to use “to-do and not-to-do lists” as for a renewed intercultural. But she contradicts herself in the same excerpt when she says she is having one of the “don't” points confirmed by one of her Chinese student (*luckily I had I have had some Chinese students in the class as well so they confirmed my findings*). This gives an idea of what she teaches in class and shows a solid view of the intercultural by using a native as a representative of the whole Chinese nation to “prove” what is actually a mere culturalist fact. It would have been interesting to go further and analyse what would happen if someone who is not Chinese offers a green

hat to a Chinese. The result of this “experience” would have probably shown that it depends on the context, getting closer to the idea of a renewed intercultural. Lastly, turning to a local as an authority to confirm her point together with mentioning her PhD experience to make her a scientific expert and justify her argument gives the impression that she is saying the undeniable “truth” to the students, which can be dangerous.

Finally, in this last example, the participants gather around teacher A2 when he proposes the idea of the existence of interculturality within a country:

(Lecturer A2) we have been discussing intercultural means international but even on language level intercultural exists within Finland for example

(A3) of course

(A2) so... like like like you know Finland Swedes

(A3) sure

(A2) 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

(A1) no no no, it's not no

(A2) that's how we have been defining it so far but um...

(A1) that's interesting

(A3) intercultural can be within one culture different subcultures which is religion ethnicities gender issues all those can be included in intercultural as well

This is another example of a renewed interculturality, which we can find in the three focus groups, but always accompanied with a culturalist counterpart. Here though, lecturer A2 raises an important point, which is that “culture” is not necessarily synonymous with “nation” but can also exist within a country with languages. Teacher A3 (whose speech tends to go in the direction of a renewed intercultural) goes further and states that several subcultures can be found in the same nation. On the other hand, lecturer A1 (who tends to have a differentialist speech) agrees to the opposite of what she stated before, that is “intercultural is about the foreigner”.

Conclusion

I aimed to observe the place of a renewed intercultural through the contradictions I could find in the discourses of intercultural communication's teachers from most of the fields concerned by the intercultural in Finland. At the end of this analysis, it is quite difficult to say if their perception of interculturality is classical or renewed. I found culturalist bias together with some bits of a renewed interculturality, hence contradictory speeches. As a consequence, it is most probable that the participants are not talking about the same thing. It is striking to note that in spite of this, they seem to think that they share a common view that does not need to be defined. It gives an overall impression of a “politically correct” discourse (Dervin, 2011). From those findings, one question arises: How is it possible to train students in a coherent way then? Even if some critics are made, it is quite difficult to know what is taught in practice because very few of the participants mention what they actually teach. From what I observed, it rather

seems that what is taught is closer to a culturalist interpretation of interculturality. Yet, Education is a priority in the “branding Finland” campaign I mentioned in the introduction, and intercultural communication is a subject that attracts a great number of students as it is still considered as “trendy”. But as we saw in this analysis, it is very often not an intercultural that recognizes the diverse diversities but rather a “façade interculturality” (Dervin, 2009) that is offered. If the Finnish government seeks to promote its education system as a domain of excellence, it should offer a coherent intercultural education. For this matter, a training of the teachers would be recommended to seriously canalize the field, support the reputation that the country wishes to keep and avoid its questioning.

Note on the contributor:

Céline Tournebise is completing a doctoral dissertation about intercultural communication education in Finnish higher education at the University of Turku (Finland) and the University of Lorraine (France). In her work, she maps out the different approaches of the ‘intercultural’ that fluctuate in practitioners’ discourses and practices. She is also interested in the concept of identity and its impact on the teaching of the ‘intercultural’.

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