Intercultural Learning as an Interactional Achievement in a Digital Space

Milene Mendes de Oliveira and Mario Antonio Tuccillo

Abstract *Digital spaces offer individuals the opportunity to interact and connect with others, to engage with more perspectives, and to develop intercultural competence. In this chapter, we explore processes of learning and participation by newcomers in a team, pursuing the goal of becoming fully-fledged members of that community. We observed the behaviour of a team consisting of four students from a German university and two students from a Finnish university, all participating in a number of sessions of an online simulation game. Particular attention was given to the participation development of the two students from the Finnish university, positioned as newcomers in the already-established team from the German university. We describe interactional practices adopted by the two newcomers and by the other members which foster participation and inclusion. Our findings show two learning paths by the newcomers, one in which legitimate participation became connected with performing a specific role in the group and another in which participation meant sharing the interactional routines established in the team. This case study, based on successful experiences of a remote team, can shed light on the link between intercultural learning and interactional practices.*

Keywords *Intercultural Learning; Interaction; Participation; Interculturality*

1. Interculturality, Learning, and Participation

The intercultural communication literature is replete with descriptions of critical incidents (Spencer-Oatey, 2013), interactional mismatches (Gumperz, 1982), and communicative failure (Mendes de Oliveira, 2023) in intercultural encounters. There is also a vast literature on intercultural competence that describes the conditions under which this competence may be identified

amongst actors (Rathje, 2007) or the characteristics of a so-called intercultural speaker (Byram, 2021). Additionally, there has been a growing interest in "intercultural learning", with most studies focusing on tools and final outcomes of instructed education (Çiftçi, 2016), thereby building frequently on nation-state-based notions of interculturality.

Relatively few empirical studies have focused on how exactly learning takes place in intercultural environments, i.e. studies that build on the microanalysis of interactional practices, and their changes in such settings (see Borghetti et al., 2015). In this chapter, we focus on how learning takes place through interaction in a series of Zoom meetings involving two previously established groups. The definition of learning in our case study leans on learning as participation, a paradigm that counters a view of learning as a cognitive process of knowledge transmission (Freire, 1996; Sfard, 1998). This is in line with Bennett's reflections (2012; see the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity) that posit the existence of different experiences of intercultural relations, from denial of cultural differences (Bennett adopts a broad definition of culture that goes beyond national cultures; see Grosskopf, 2023), at one end of a continuum, to integration, i.e. the expansion of one's self as including a broader repertoire of cultural worldviews (Bennett & Castiglioni, 2004, cited in Bennet, 2012), at the other end. According to Bennett, when integration takes place, people consciously construct "dynamic identities for themselves that acknowledge their primary socialization but […] extend who they are into alternative worldviews".[1]

As widely known, human beings participate in several collectives, each of which contain more or less conventionalized ways of thinking and acting. These ways of thinking and acting can be referred to as 'culture'. In this vein, Bolten (2015, p. 118) defines culturality as "familiar multiplicity" in recognition of the plurality of lifeworlds encompassed by the concept of culture. Thus, culturality denotes a condition in which individuals act within a known and familiar field of action; that is, they are familiar with the conventions – i.e. expectations of behaviours and moral judgments – used in the group and can easily understand communicative practices used by other individuals in that same field of action. By contrast, interculturality is characterized as "unfamiliar multiplicity" (from the German *unvertraute Vielfalt*) (Bolten, 2015, p.118) and is manifested when actors find themselves in a position where the frames of reference are unfamiliar (see Schütz, 1944) and cannot be grasped quickly.

1 This is in opposition to Bennett's own past and more static views of identity and self (e.g. Bennett, 1993).

According to Bolten's theory, interculturality can be gradually transformed into culturality as the unfamiliar becomes progressively familiar and routines of thought and action begin to emerge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

A framework presumably able to explain how interculturality is transformed into culturality is Lave and Wenger's Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP). This is a framework that describes learning as a social phenomenon that leans on participation in certain communities of practice. It describes the processes experienced by newcomers in their attempt to become members and eventually old-timers in these communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Becoming a member of a community is a gradually evolving process that entails a newcomer participating first in simple but still meaningful tasks in the community, and through these interactions, developing an understanding of and participating more actively in the practices in this same community. As time goes by and participation evolves, newcomers eventually become old-timers. As for the power relations between old-timers and newcomers, the former have the power to confer legitimacy to the latter and to control their access to sets of practices and experiences within the group.

In connection to their case studies on apprentices in communities of practice, Lave and Wenger state that:

> Newcomers' legitimate peripherality provides them with more than an "observational" lookout post: It crucially involves participation as a way of learning – of both absorbing and being absorbed in – the "culture of practice". An extended period of legitimate peripherality provides learners with opportunities to make the culture of practice theirs. From a broadly peripheral perspective, apprentices gradually assemble a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community. This uneven sketch of the enterprise (available if there is legitimate access) might include who is involved; what they do; what everyday life is like; how masters talk, walk, work, and generally conduct their lives; how people who are not part of the community of practice interact with it; what other learners are doing; and what learners need to learn to become full practitioners. It includes an increasing understanding of how, when, and about what old-timers collaborate, collude, and collide, and what they enjoy, dislike, respect, and admire. In particular, it offers exemplars (which are grounds and motivation for learning activity), including

> masters, finished products, and more advanced apprentices in the process of becoming full practitioners. (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 95)[2]

The notion of participation has also received attention from scholars interested in the micro-analysis of social interaction. Even though the procedures for allocating turns in conversations (Sacks et al., 1974; see section 2 below) do not favour any particular participant, in actual conversations (especially institutional ones), rights to speakership are not equally shared (Drew, 1991, p. 21–22). An early and empirical study is analysis by Erickson and Shultz's (1982) of counselling sessions in junior colleges in the USA. Amongst other aspects, they show how differing listening responses by students and counsellors and a mismatch in the use of cues by white teachers and African American students can lead to conversational trouble. In a study on participation structures in classrooms, Philips (1983) also investigated student-teacher interaction and their allocation of turns and learned that there is a major mismatch between participation at home, where learning follows observation in community activities, and school, which fosters separation between individuals. The use of bodily and prosodic cues has been observed by Goodwin & Goodwin (2005) in their analysis of how a man with aphasia manages to position himself as a ratified participant in the conversation. Their contribution set forth theoretical and methodological foundations for the multimodal conversation analysis[3] of participation. In a similar vein, in a recent study on decision making in mental health settings, Weiste et al. (2020, p. 2) called attention to the fact that participation presupposes social interaction, "which in return requires the capacity to coordinate with and make sense of each other's actions."

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2 Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 37) explain that periphery is a positive term: "Full participation, [...] stands in contrast to only one aspect of the concept of peripherality as we see it: It places the emphasis on what partial participation is not, or not yet. In our usage, peripherality is also a positive term, whose most salient conceptual antonyms are unrelatedness or irrelevance to ongoing activity. The partial participation of newcomers is by no means "disconnected" from the practice of interest. Furthermore, it is also a dynamic concept. In this sense, peripherality, when it is enabled, suggests an opening, a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement. The ambiguity inherent in peripheral participation must then be connected to issues of legitimacy, of the social organization of and control over resources, if it is to gain its full analytical potential".

3 Multimodal Conversation Analysis takes into consideration different modalities employed in the interaction, both verbal and non-verbal, i.e. eye gaze, speaking activity, facial expression, body movement, and hand movement (Penzkofer et al., 2021).

In keeping up with the aforementioned notions of learning and participation, in this chapter, we aim to answer the following research question: "How does learning through participation take place in a newly established online group?" We are especially interested in investigating whether processes of intercultural learning follow the patterns described in the LPP framework presented above. Thus, we investigate how the participation of new members is achieved interactionally in online exchanges via Zoom and his this reflected upon by participants themselves in journal entries written after the online sessions.

2. Dataset & Methods

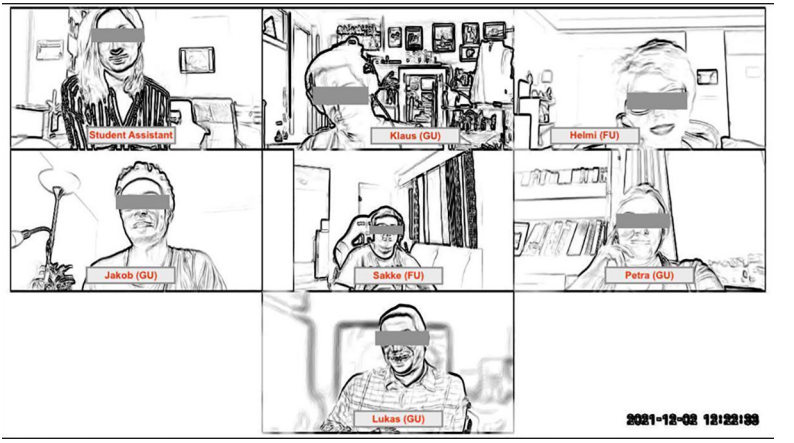
This study is based on the observation and analysis of data extracted from the virtual intercultural game "Megacities" (Bolten 2015). The script of the game involves a large piece of land ("Wasteland") which three neighbouring cities will inherit from a wealthy senior citizen under one condition: The cities must cooperatively develop a plan on how to use the land that is profitable for all three parties. The students participating in the game considered in our study met for five Zoom sessions – which from now on will be respectively called round one (the "Kick-off session"), two, three, four, and five (the final session). After being assigned to the different cities, in round one, each team has to come up with characteristics for their city (e.g. name of the city and its socio-economic strengths and limits), as well as the role each participant will cover throughout the game (e.g. moderator, presenter, etc.). After this initial phase, the teams are to exchange ideas and devise a plan on how to use the wasteland that will be submitted to the senior citizen. The participants are students who, at the moment of the game, live in different countries, study at different universities, and have different linguistic backgrounds. The language chosen for communication amongst the participants of the game is English as a Lingua Franca. None of the members is a native speaker of English.

The data used in the context of this study comprise video recordings from round one, round two, and round five of one of the teams. Automatically generated transcripts from these Zoom meetings were used for an initial appraisal of the instances which needed to be isolated and analyzed. Such cases were then transcribed according to the conversation analytic transcription system GAT2 (*Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem*, "discourse and conversation-analytic transcription system") with conventions to notate the wording and the

prosodic features of naturally occurring interactions (Selting et al., 2011). In some of the excerpts transcribed, it was necessary to consider the multimodal features and other means of communication employed by some of the members. These include gazes and gestures, which contribute to the interaction and convey specific messages. A third sample of primary data collected for our observations consists of the learning journal entries which were submitted by each student at the end of every round: In these, the participants shared their impressions on the teamwork and what they learned during the session.

The team selected for our analysis is City Three from a game which took place during the Winter Semester 2021/22. The members were students from a German and a Finnish university which were respectively acquainted with peers from their own institution, but not with those from the other university. City Three of this game consisted of two students from the Finnish university and four from the German institution. The focus of our analysis lies on the participation patterns of the two students from the Finnish university, namely Sakke and Helmi (the real names of the participants were replaced with pseudonyms). Figure 1 shows the members of City Three, with their respective pseudonyms and the acronyms "GU" and "FU" which stand for "German university" and "Finnish university", according to the institution they are enrolled at.

Fig.1: Screenshot of the Team Members of City Three.



While the analysis of the learning journal entries leaned on the method of inductive qualitative analysis (Thomas, 2006, p. 238), the analysis of interactions that follows is based on conversation analytic methods (Sidnell, 2010). Specifically, we focused on participation features from a multimodal perspective (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2005). This perspective considers the foundational conversation analytic notions of (a) turn-taking and speaker selection (Sacks et al., 1974), (b) preferred and dispreferred responses (Pomerantz, 1984), as well as (c) displays of alignment (Stivers et al, 2011). These concepts are explained hereinafter.

The turn-taking and speaker selection system is at the heart of Conversation Analysis and describes how speaker allocation follows a set of clear operations in dyads or multi-party conversations (Liddicoat, 2007). According to this system, there is a general orientation towards the norm of one-speaker-at-a-time in conversations. Despite this general characteristic, overlaps and long silences routinely occur in communicative interactions. Both phenomena may be considered interactionally significant in the course of a conversation, and people often orient towards them as potentially problematic. Hence, when they occur, they are generally handled as phenomena in need of repair. Within the system, speaker allocation usually follows a pattern according to which the current speaker selects the speaker of the next conversational turn (e.g. by asking "*Sarah*, what time is it?", the current speaker is selecting Sarah as the next speaker). In situations where the current speaker does not select the next one in a multi-party conversation, the next speaker may self-select (e.g. someone answering, "it's four o'clock" to the question "does anyone have the time?"). Alternatively, the current speaker may choose to take the next turn (e.g. "what time is it, guys?" (silence) "Livia, can you tell me the time, please?"). In the latter situation, the speaker orients to the silence as potentially problematic and, instead of waiting for conversational partners to self-select, they decided to select the next speaker explicitly (Livia, in the example).

The concept of *preference* used in the analysis of interaction "does not refer to personal desires of the speakers but rather to the recurrent patterns of talk in which actions are carried out" (Liddicoat, 2007, p. 110–111). In short, dispreferred actions are actions that are avoided or delayed in their production (such as invitation declines being preceded by long pauses and tokens such as 'hm' or 'well'). Preferred responses, such as the acceptance of an invitation, are usually performed directly with little or no delay.

Displays of alignment are a broader notion and can comprise turn allocation and preference practices. Stivers et al. (2011, p. 21) has explained align-

ment in the following way: "Aligning responses cooperate by facilitating the proposed activity or sequence; accepting the presuppositions and terms of the proposed action or activity; and matching the formal design preference of the turn." Thus, alignment can be broadly defined as interactional practices that display cooperation with the conversational partner(s).

3. Analysis: Learning and Participation as an Interactional Achievement

In this section of the chapter, we depict the analysis of interactional sequences that showcase changes in communicative practices, which, in turn, point to how learning happens within the newly established online social environment. The analysis of such interactional sequences will be complemented by excerpts from the players' learning journals where they report how they themselves perceived the participation patterns in the game rounds. Sections 3.1 and 3.2 are centred upon the two students from the Finnish institution, Sakke and Helmi.

Sakke

Right after round 1 of the game, Sakke writes the following: "Currently I feel a bit overwhelmed when I would have to interrupt someone else while they are speaking." By contrast, after the final session of the game, he reports the following: "The biggest improvement when thinking about my own ways of working in group projects is that I do not need to be so 'afraid' of other people and I just can bring forth my own ideas and opinions more bravely. What I would still change is that I could have started talking more earlier but as I said, that improved during this project." In contrast to his fellow player Helmi (section 3.2 below), Sakke's speaking rate does not vary significatively from round one to round five of the game.

The first excerpt reproduced below has been selected from round one of the game. During the meeting, the group was asked to create a name for their city. Following this task, each of the participants had to pick up one of the proposed roles and/or skills they would like to be responsible for in the remaining sessions of the game (e.g. presentations, negotiations, management of virtual tools). Besides that, the participants were given the possibility to add additional roles which would be considered important for the game. The excerpt has been extracted from this latter phase of the discussion, namely that of the

addition of new possible roles. After the common decision of a name for their city and the assignment of the pre-set roles, Klaus asks the group whether there is any other role/skill which could be included in the list. Given his position as a moderator, Klaus is the person in the group who most frequently elicits his peers' contributions in the discussions. For this reason, the assignment of the next speaker within the group is strongly dependent on Klaus' moderation.

Excerpt (1) – Further ideas (Round 1, 00:16:39-00:17:18)

```
01  KlausGU   °h all right
02            anything we want to add on our own (-)
03            helmi (-) sakke (.) any ideas for <<len> an> additional role (.)
04            [(we're ha- (.) havin-)]
05  LukasGU   [     or maybe (.) some]thing (.)
06            you wanna: uhm (1.8)
07            you wanna dive <<len> into>
08            (1.8 sec)
09  HelmiFU   mh (---) <<len> i don't have any: further (.) ideas h°>
10            (1.7 sec)
11  PetraGU   ((click)) °h=
12  SakkeFU   =well=
13  PetraGU   =maybe we would need someone who will communicate
14            with the: members of the other cities (--)
15                                    °h [uhm: ]
16  KlausGU   ((with a doubtful expression)) [isn't] that negotiation
17  LukasGU   th- yeah <<f> that would be you:>
18            (0.7 sec)
19  KlausGU   i can join you if you don't want to do it alone petra=
20  PetraGU   =<<len> yeah> (.)
21            (if) i don't know if there's a role for this i mean
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At first, Klaus elicits participation by the group by asking the other players about possible additional points for the assignment of roles they did not discuss or consider during the previous phase of the discussion. In doing so, he uses an inclusive "we" (line 02, *anything we want to add on your own?*). What follows is a silence in which the rest of the participants refrain from taking the floor. Klaus orients to the silence as potentially problematic and reframes the previous broad question (line 03, *Helmi, Sakke, any ideas for an additional role?*). He replaces "we" with the specific vocative "Hemmi, Sakke" and specifies the content of the question, from "anything" to "any ideas for an additional role." In overlap with Klaus' turn, Lukas orients his turn to the two students from the Finnish university to ask whether they would be interested in any role, also including the specific ones already discussed (lines 05–07, *or maybe something you wanna dive into?*). This general orientation towards the inclusion of the team members from the Finnish university can also be seen in Klaus' learning jour-

nal, which states: "I would have liked to involve the Finnish students even more as they face a somewhat difficult situation as all of us German students know each other quite good by now."

After the questions posed by his teammates in lines 02–03 and 05–07, Sakke gives bodily signals of thinking, through eye gaze, specifically by looking up and facing back and forth the two screens he is working with (presumably one for the collaborative board and the other one for the Zoom meeting). These signals seem to point to the intention to say something and the fact that he is trying to detect a transition-relevant place[4] in order to start a new turn in the conversation. As soon as Helmi starts her turn (line 09), Sakke appears to be opening his microphone. At the moment in which he produces the turn-initial item "well" (Heritage, 2015), Petra starts her turn (lines 13–15). Thus, Sakke's attempt to take the floor is not ratified by Petra nor by the rest of the group, and Sakke gives up joining the conversation, which moves slightly in another direction. Petra continues her turn without hesitating, in spite of the latching (i.e. "the absence […] of the beat of silence which commonly occurs between turns", Schegloff, 1986, p. 114) with Sakke's "well" (lines 12–13). Here, it is not possible to state with certainty whether Petra did not hear Sakke talking or if she already interpreted the content of Sakke's turn as similar to Helmi's previous dispreferred response (line 09, *I don't have any further ideas*). Note that "well" is often a hesitation marker preceding dispreferred (i.e. a disagreement or a rejection which misaligns with the prior turn) responses.

The second extract took place in the second round of the game. The group discusses the characteristics and the concept of the imaginary city they are representing. Once again, Klaus selects the next speaker by calling out Sakke's name and orienting a question directly to him on his willingness to add any detail to what the rest of the group has already discussed.

Sakke's response to Klaus' question starts with "uhm" (line 13), so once again with a filler which might indicate a state of uncertainty and the projection of a dispreferred answer. The delay with which his reaction comes (line 12) is another indication of a dispreferred answer. On the other hand, his reaction, together with the facial expressions and gaze movement (lines 07, 09, 11–13), are embodied displays of "doing thinking," showing his involvement in the joint interactional activity (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986). What follows

4 A transition-relevant place is the span that "begins with the imminence of possible completion" of a turn-in-progress. The transition to a next speaker must not necessarily occur at this place, but it becomes "possibly relevant there." (Schegloff, 2007, p. 4)

is the use of a doubled token "well, well" (line 15), which, besides signalling the non-straightforwardness in responding – also to gain time for his answer (Schegloff & Lerner, 2009) – projects a sarcastic tone to Sakke's answer. The "well, well" used by him, in fact, is an intertextual element that refers to other discourses, especially the ones circulating on the internet through memes (see Figure 2 below). This type of intertextual element might be used to position the speaker (Internet-user), sarcastically, as an expert making a judgement they are entitled to (on entitlement, see Asmuß & Oshima, 2018). Klaus orients to the sarcastic tone and laughs after Sakke's uttering this prefacing-token (line 17).

Excerpt (2) – Well, well (Round 2, 00:13:11-00:14:57)

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01  KlausGU   [yeah (.)           ]
02  SakkeFU   [((looks at camera))]
03  KlausGU   [and                          ] then (.) later on
04  SakkeFU   [((looks back at other screen))]
05  KlausGU   we can (.) categorize (-)
06            °h so uh maybe: (.)
07  SakkeFU   ((turns to the camera))
08  KlausGU   sakke: (.) [any ideas                    ] (.)
09  SakkeFU              [((turns back to other screen))]
10  KlausGU   what would you [like to see in our beautiful city]
11  SakkeFU                  [((looks again to the camera))    ]
12            (2.3 sec) ((Sakke looks down, then up again))
13  SakkeFU   ((looks back to the other screen)) uhm::
14            (1.2 sec)
15  SakkeFU   ((click)) well well
16            (2.1 sec)
17  KlausGU   ((laughs))
18  SakkeFU   ((click)) i'm looki- looking at the: (.)
19            what info we have <<len> like uhm> (.)
20            the city has the national champions in the field hockey so
21            °h ((turns to the camera)) maybe something more to do with
22            sports like
23            ((looks down)) i would (.) like to see this becoming:
24            sort of a: (-) ((faces the camera, then the other screen, then
25            the camera)) s- sports city as well (-)
26            since (--) we already have a good team here
27  KlausGU   yeah [of course]
28  SakkeFU        [and:     ] ((faces the other screen)) i thin- i think-
29            h° (1.1) we have enough (-) <<len> population for> (.) for more
30            than ((turns to the camera)) a one <<giggling> one team> (.)
31            for (.) ((turns to other screen)) considering (.) fan (.) base
32            (1.4 sec)
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33  KlausGU   oh that's a good ₁[idea                ]₁
34  SakkeFU                    ₁[((faces the camera))]₁
35  KlausGU   so uhm (.) first ₂[of all              ]₂ (.)
36  SakkeFU                    ₂[((faces the screen))]₂
37  KlausGU   we have a large and extensive network of bicycle lanes so: (.)
38            goes well with the [sport theme for     our      ] city (.)
39  SakkeFU                      [((faces the camera and nods))]
40            ((faces other screen))
41  KlausGU   so how about we [do like         ] (.)
42  SakkeFU                  [((faces camera))]
43  KlausGU   we have two major teams for field hockey (.)
44  SakkeFU   ((faces other screen))
45  KlausGU   and they're rivals
46            (1.0 sec)
47  SakkeFU   sure
48  KlausGU   and we have a northern team and a southern team for our city:
49  SakkeFU   ((faces camera))
50  KlausGU   they're rivals they hate each other (.) uhm
51  SakkeFU   ((chuckles and nods))
52  KlausGU   there are a lot of hooligans (.) who drink a lot of wine and
53            then (.) i don't know (-) [(xxx xxx)            ]
54  SakkeFU                           [((faces other screen))]
55            (2.3 sec)
56  SakkeFU   ((faces camera))
57  KlausGU   [okay]
58  SakkeFU   [yeah]
59            (0.5 sec)
60  SakkeFU   ((turns to the camera)) [should i create]
61  KlausGU                           [sounds fun     ]
62  SakkeFU   a sticky note or something
63  KlausGU   (.) °h yeah sure (.) [go ahead]
64  SakkeFU                        [since   ] i- i guess i'm sort of the:
65            °h (.) like you know ((giggles)) (1.0)
66            the zoom and ((click)) (1.0)
67            miro guy (-) uh:: (2.5) okay ((click)) °h (1.9)
68            <<len> so:>
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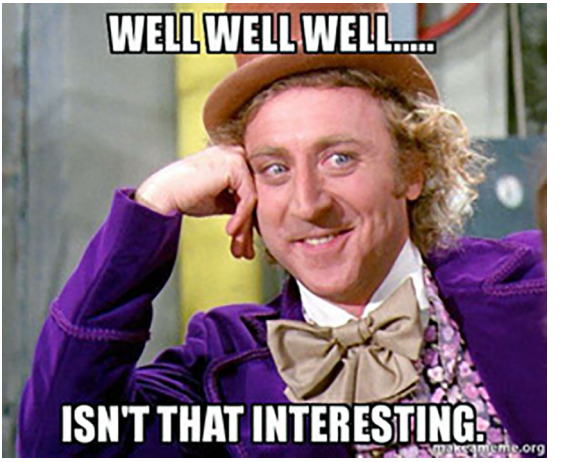
After an initial pre-explanation of his assessment, Sakke uses the exact same structure (line 23, *I would like to see…*) as the one used by Klaus for his question (line 10, *what would you like to see…?*). After that, it is possible to identify a progressive display of affiliation between Sakke and Klaus, beginning with the alignment of the team moderator by agreeing (line 27, *yeah of course*) and with an assessment (line 33, *oh that's a good idea*), and then with his enthusiastic elaboration of Sakke's proposal by adding new features to it (starting in line 35 and finishing in line 53). Sakke, who, before that moment, seldom explicitly displayed alignment in other cases of group discussions, appears to feel entitled to give clear signs of support to Klaus' ideas, as this confers legitimacy to his own initial idea. Examples of evidence suggesting alignment include the nodding (line 39), the use of an agreement token as a continuer/backchanneling (line 47, *sure*), and the chuckle (line 51). The latter of these signals shows another level

of intersubjectivity: Sakke displays understanding and affiliation by "sharing" Klaus' smile, approving of his rather funny ideas. In the conversation-analytic literature, smiles have been described as invitations for the others to share the laughter (Jefferson, 1979).

Fig. 2: Willy Wonka Sarcasm Meme



(Meme Generator, 2020)

At the end of the exchange, Sakke makes his role in the group relevant: He is the person in charge of – or entitled to (Asmuß & Oshima, 2018) – the management of the virtual collaboration (lines 64–68, *I'm sort of the Zoom and Miro guy*).

This analysis shows that a member's behaviour requires the detailed consideration of behaviours by others as well. Thus, such an interactional perspective stresses that participation is a product of practices used by the group, which complicates accounts of participation solely based on e.g., word-count, number of turns, or even perceptions of participation (as raised in interview or survey studies of intercultural groups). Such measures would therefore neither be able to account for participation nor intercultural learning.

Helmi

A different manifestation of the processes of change in the participation style as well as a progression in the adoption of a variety of conversational strategies throughout the game are to be found in the case of the second student from the Finnish university, Helmi.

Her rate of engagement seems to be higher than that of the others at the beginning of the game (that is, during round one). On this occasion, she is the participant who, for instance, is the keenest to answer questions asked by one of the peers to the whole team (even when the answer is solely: *I don't have any further ideas,* as in line 9 in excerpt 1 above), to backchannel during group discussions, and to deliver positive and supportive feedback to others. In transition-relevant places, she often self-selects as the next speaker and uses tokens such as *yeah, that's a good idea*; *that sounds cool*; and *that sounds like an interesting subject*. Moreover, she shares additional ideas to what has been said in group discussions, even when not being directly called to talk. A similar behaviour should not be surprising when taking into consideration what she documents in her journal. After the first meeting of the group, she writes that she is "delighted at how easy-going and talkative [her] German team members [are]" and opposes this to her experiences in her home university, where students are usually "a bit reluctant to get started in teamwork". Similar situations often drive her to cover a managing and moderating role when working with peers from her university, as reported in her journal entry: "[with students from the home university] I have got used to taking a leading and managing role, which has sometimes felt almost a responsibility." Nonetheless, the presence of someone else in the team taking the moderating role pleases Helmi, who documents in the journal entry "[…] today there clearly was someone else in our group doing that, which I felt as a great relief." In the same entry, she carries out some self-criticism on her turn-taking style, claiming that "[…] something [she] would do in a different way would be to listen to others more instead of talking" and that "[she] may have talked over people or said unnecessary things." Noticeable consequences of this critique are found during round two of the game: Here, we identified a number of cases in which she abandons her attempts to take turns as well as cases in which she speaks exclusively when directly spurred to talk, which results in a lack of propensity to compete for the floor. Besides, during this session of the game (round two), the turn-taking style of the peers from the German university stands out: They continuously overlap, actively participate in discussions, and use a quite ironic tone. In this context, Helmi seems to

learn the participation dynamics and the communicative style from the "old-timers" by observing them and, at first, refraining from talking ("listen[ing] instead of talking", as documented in her learning journal). In his definition of experiences in intercultural processes, Bennett (2012) explains that before integration – thus, expansion of one's world view – is reached, actors often take a self-reflexive stance that allows them to see others' actions and behaviours as different from their own, thereby expanding their repertoire of worldviews.

When considering the fifth (and final) session of the game, a conspicuous change in Helmi's participation style – in terms of turn-taking patterns, joking style as well as her participation rate – can be identified when compared to round two. The most crucial change in the turn-taking style during the session is the high rate of cases in which she jumps into the discussion without being directly spurred to talk, at some points even in overlap with other members' contributions. The following excerpt illustrates this finding. It was taken from a task in which the players reflect upon their behaviour and communication style during the game.

Jakob shares his opinion on the communication (turn-taking) style the members of their group adopted when meeting with others (lines 01–03, *most of the time we don't really care if we are […] more or less jumping in and interrupting each other as long as we are all cool with it,* and lines 05–07, *but I feel like the other groups might have done that a bit different, I don't know*). Jakob and Helmi keep on talking and competing for the floor, and a series of overlaps occur in a very short lapse of time (lines 08–18). Ironically enough and not intentionally, this set of overlaps happens right at the moment in which the members are engaged in a meta-communicative discussion led by the topic of the task: Jakob points out that they constantly interrupt each other (lines 01–03). This caused not only Jakob and Helmi but also the other peers to laugh at the dense exchange of turns (line 16). This is also clear by Helmi's question (line 17, *did I interrupt you?*), which is an evident reference to what has been said by Jakob (lines 01–02, *we don't really care if we are like jumping in and interrupting each other*). What is striking here is that, differently than what happened in the previous analyzed sessions, Helmi does not hold back from talking when another participant is occupying the floor but rather jumps into the conversation (in an overlapping position), keeps talking although the other participant has still not completed their turn, and only stops her sequence when explicitly asked to let that person finish (line 14, *let me quickly finish*). This evidence of a shared way of communicating within the group shows that the newcomer, Helmi, has become more outspoken during team activities, similarly to her peers. Further

evidence for her growing outspokenness is the fact that the initial self-critique carried out after the kick-off session does not emerge in the final entry of the learning journal: Here, instead, she explains how "more outgoing, active and relaxed" she has become. In the journal, she also engages in explicit remarks on the whole team's communication culture by saying how it was "relaxed and informal" and how the members could "quickly and easily […] adapt to other's communicative culture in interaction" – i.e. to the members who were already acquainted with each other and already shared a communication culture (the group of "old-timers").

Excerpt (3) – Did I interrupt you? (Round 5, 00:07:44 - 00:08:06)

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01  JakobGU   most of the time we don't really care if we are (.) like
02            more or less jumping in: and (.) interrupting
03            [each other as long (.) as we are all cool with it]
04  HelmiFU   [((opens mouth as to utter something, nods))      ]
05  JakobGU   °h but i feel <<chuckling> like the other groups> might have
06            done that a bit different (.)
07            i don't know
08            °h [i mean i'v ]
09  HelmiFU      [yeah and i-] think (.) yeah [what i wrote about] my
10            ((looks up))
11  JakobGU                                    [also (wrote) the- ]
12                           [ehm  ]
13  HelmiFU   ((looks at Jakob)) [uh s-] sorry
14  JakobGU    let me [quick finish]
15  HelmiFU           [yeah go     ] ahead
16            ((Klaus laughs loudly in the background))
17  HelmiFU   [did i interrupt you] ((laughs))
18  JakobGU   [uhm we wrote       ] down that we had those roles
19            in the very first kickoff session right
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4. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Throughout our analyses of Sakke and Helmi's participation patterns in the game, we had the following research question in mind: "How does learning through participation take place in a newly established online group?" Our reflections were guided by Lave and Wenger's (1991) LPP which considers learning a social phenomenon related to membership in communities of practice. Our analyses demonstrate that the LPP framework does provide an adequate starting point to understand learning processes by newcomers in groups. We showed, for instance, how Helmi's interactional practices confirm that the player was able to first take up and later go beyond the observational lookout

post connected to peripherality in the group. Her case is indeed illustrative of peripherality changing into legitimate access: By observing and reflecting upon the interactions in the group, she was able to get an understanding of how to operate in the group and to later position herself centrally in group discussions and decisions. In Sakke's case, legitimate access was shown to be less a matter of emulating the existing speaking styles of old-timers; instead, his access and fully-fledged membership was enacted in relation to his role in the group (as the person responsible for Zoom and the shared virtual boards). This latter point can be connected to the very use of digital tools as affordances of participation in virtual settings. For instance, in Conti et al. (2022, p. 199), players of the same intercultural game (Megacities) reported that virtual tools "enabled everyone's involvement despite language barriers and insecurities" and allowed them "to convey their opinions and ideas in the written format."

Thus, Helmi and Sakke seem to follow different learning paths. While Sakke's overall participation rate, as per the number of words and turns, did not vary much during the sessions, the quality of his participation changed, with sequences evidencing engagement with teammates and participation in key game decisions. For Helmi, the interactional practices changed substantially in comparison with Sakke. The analysis of her learning journal entries helps us understand why: She suddenly became aware of interactional practices that are usually taken for granted in everyday conversations, a process of self-awareness and self-reflection connected to interculturality (Bennett, 2012). At the end of the game, both her journal entry and her interactional practices show how comfortable she is with the interactional routines (Schmidt and Deppermann, 2023) of the group.

In our analysis, it became clear that Sakke and Helmi's contributions were facilitated in several moments by members of the German university (such as Klaus and Lukas), who showed an orientation toward the inclusion of the members of the Finnish institution, both in the learning journal and through interactional moves in the game. Overall, the styles and remarks of the members of the German university unveil that these players already had a shared communication culture which had been established prior to the game. These players, thus, orient to Sakke and Helmi as newcomers confronted with interculturality and in need of a 'helping hand' to become fully integrated into the team (which goes along with how Sakke and Helmi position themselves in the group as evi-

denced in their learning journals).[5] These findings confirm that the capacity to coordinate and make sense of each other's actions is at the core of the participation dynamics in a team (Weiste et al., 2020). They, moreover, demonstrate the multimodal character of participation, which is manifested not only in verbal language but also in laughter and facial expressions (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2005).

Our answer to the research question of the case study corroborates a view of learning as a fully social rather than a solely individual process. Thus, investigating Sakke and Helmi's learning processes independently without taking a holistic view of all participants and actions within the sequence would invariably lead to an incomplete picture of the situation. In fact, a complete view of learning will necessarily need to take the trajectory of the group as a whole into account. In this connection, it is important to acknowledge that this is a limitation of the present study: By focusing on Sakke and Helmi's learning trajectories, we needed to leave behind the descriptions of other potentially meaningful practices including a practice introduced by Helmi that was emulated by the group from the German university, i.e. the use of self-deprecating jokes. This finding indeed complicates the application of the LPP, which does not account for old-timers adopting newcomers' practices, since the former are, according to the framework, the ones retaining the power to confer legitimacy to the latter and to control their access to sets of practices and experiences within the group. Thus, while the LPP does describe much of what we found in the data, it cannot account for all processes found within the group.

We find that the magnifying-glass effect provided by the micro-analysis of interaction coupled with the analysis of the learning journal shows the contingencies of the learning process in intercultural groups. These are relevant points for a more situated view of 'intercultural learning,' which should account for the development of interactional histories of actors and groups in situations of interculturality.

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5 Even though we have, throughout the chapter, avoided reflections of cultural dimensions of national groups, it is interesting (not least to defy stereotypes) that the group from the German institution (in which most of the participants report to be of German nationality) displays a style that goes counter several descriptions of German cultural dimensions in which German nationals are claimed to appear "humourless" to some other national cultures (Lewis, 2006, p. 227) and smiling is described as being reserved for friends (Lewis, 2006, p. 229).

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Appendix: Conventions used in the transcripts (GAT2)

[ ]	overlapping talk
₁[ ]₁	overlapping segments belonging to each other
(.)	micro pause, up to 0.2 sec duration
(-)	short pause of ca. 0.2-0.5 sec duration
(--)	intermediate pause of ca. 0.5-0.8 sec duration
(--)	longer pause of ca. 0.8-1.0 sec duration
(2.3)	timed pause of 2.3 sec duration
well=	latched utterances
=maybe	
((laughs))	non-linguistic actions, transcriber's comment
°h	audible inbreath of ca. 0.2-0.5 sec duration
h°	audible outbreath of ca. 0.2-0.5 sec duration
:	lengthened sound or syllable of ca. 0.2-0.5 sec
::	lengthened sound or syllable of ca. 0.5-0.8 sec
thin-	cut-off word
<<len> >	speech tempo change, lento (slow)
<<f> >	speech loudness change, forte (loud)
<<giggling> >	non-linguistic actions, with indication of scope
(if)	uncertain hearing
(xxx)	unintelligible hearing