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"I Start to Doubt Myself When I Am Watching This": Moments of Think-Aloud Reflexivity About Interculturality in a Virtual Exchange Project

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Abstract

Although virtual exchange has been widely discussed during the (post-)pandemic era, how students do reflexivity in this context has yet to be fully explored. This study invites students from Chinese and Finnish universities to think aloud and reflect on their virtual exchanges by presenting them with video clips of their online intercultural encounters. This is referred to as "think-aloud reflexivity" in this study. Grounded in Foucault's (1988) *technologies of the self* and Clark and Dervin's (2014) *multidimensions of reflexivity,* the study 1) identifies and analyses moments of think-aloud reflexivity as triggered by the video clips presented to students; and 2) examines how students' reflexivity is constructed. Research findings, based on an analysis of students' speech acts (Austin, 1962), reveal three ways of constructing reflexivity: *evaluating, clarifying* and *reviewing.* Three themes also emerge while doing reflexivity in the study: *self-criticality, empathizing with others,* and *reconceptualizing doing interculturality*. Recommendations for international telecollaboration are given based on the findings, inviting scholars and researchers to un-re-think the notion of reflexivity in intercultural communication education.

Key words: virtual exchange, reflexivity, interculturality, China, Finland

Introduction

A person may be unaware that they engage in reflexivity on a regular basis. In some cases, we need to be reminded by others that we perform reflexivity continuously. While co-writing this paper, one

Data Availability Statement: *All relevant data are within this paper.*

of us (Jun) visited the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Nice (MAMAC) in France. She was particularly drawn to Niki de Saint Phalle's (1930–2002) painting *Black is different: A giant black woman in her bikini*. As she read the accompanying texts to the exhibition, words by the artist concerning this figure caused her some discomfort. However, she was unable to pinpoint what this uneasiness was about. As the authors discussed the exhibition together, Jun realized that the piece as well as some of the text had (unconsciously) intrigued her, making her reflect back on the social injustice and discrimination experienced by some people of colour that she had become aware of during her stay in Europe. In our conversations, Fred provided Jun with a mirror through which she could become aware of her reflexivity – in return, Fred was urged to reflect on why, having seen the same piece in Nice a few years back, he was not particularly moved by it. Such dialogic encounters often create opportunities for individuals to identify more clearly elements of their inner experiences (e.g., thoughts, emotions, memories) and make sense of them in relation to their own personhood, interconnectedness with others, and positionality. In this paper, we focus on the relations between such moments and interculturality in relation to an international virtual exchange (telecollaborative) project between China and Finland.

Dimensions of reflexivity as the aforementioned ones have been recognized by scholars and thinkers, ancient and modern, West and East, albeit with different (and often inconsistent) terminology and contextualization. Let us take Chinese as an example. When translated into this language, the English word reflexivity is expressed as 反思 (reflection/reflexivity) (see Deepl.com.). The term 反思 in Chinese literally means to look back and reevaluate one's actions. Another Chinese term, 自我反思 (reflexivity), has a similar meaning to 反思. They both refer to reflexive activities. However, the object and scope of what is reflected vary between the two. 自我反思 underscores 自我 (*the self*) while engaging in a reflexive activity. Here *the self* is the subject who is doing a reflexive activity as well as the object that is to be scrutinized (Foucault, 1988; Popoveniuc, 2014). In this sense, the Chinese term 自我反思 is closer to the English meaning of reflexivity. Both refer to the ability to examine one's own feelings, reactions, and motives (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Beyond such examinations of the self, a strong action orientation that foregrounds the presence of the other is found in the work of the Chinese philosopher Zengzi (505-436 B.C.E.), who describes how to do reflexivity in Confucius's *Analects* as follows: "I reflect on what I have done in a day three times on the following three aspects (吾日三省吾身). Did I try my best to help other people? Did I keep my words with my friends? Did I share something which I have studied very well with others?" (Qian, 2011, p. 40). In Zengzi's view, reflexivity is what we can and should do as a daily activity. Thus, two main foci are found in Zengzi: *the self* (e.g., did I do my best, did I keep my word, did I share with others?) and *the other* (e.g., other people, my friends). As such, reflexivity involves engaging with the questions of *how* and *why I* interact with *the other*. We see such engagements as central to our understanding of reflexivity and fundamental to intercultural communication (see Dervin, 2020).

Based on a telecollaborative project, this paper focuses on the specific case of how Chinese and Finnish university students construct reflexivity by inviting them to think aloud about their interactions on their intercultural online experience during research interviews. The study employs a sociocultural and critical approach to reflexivity in interculturality (Blasco, 2012; Dervin, 2023; Foucault, 1988; Pöllmann, 2016). While much attention has been devoted to the notion of reflexivity in the context of intercultural communication, little work has focused on its linguistic construction. In this paper, we attempt to capture "snapshots" of reflexivity by examining the ways and the themes of doing it based on *speech act theory* (e.g., Austin, 1962). The paper invites scholars and researchers as well as educators to un-re-think the notion of reflexivity in intercultural communication education. In his work on interculturality in education, Dervin (2023) proposed

that the processes of *unthinking* and *rethinking* are in fact inseparable and thus suggested to merge these two processes linguistically as *un-re-thinking*.

In the first section of the paper, we discuss the theoretical framework which guides our data analysis to answer the core question of this paper: How is reflexivity co-constructed by students' reflection about their interactions in a virtual exchange project?

Theoretical Framework

Positioning Interculturality, Reflexivity and Change

The notion of interculturality has been discussed by many scholars and researchers from different disciplines (Holliday, 2010; Zembylas, 2023). This term can have various meanings, ranging from issues within a country to international matters (Boccagni & Bonfanti, 2023). It could involve factors such as ethnicity, race, and language (Dervin, 2016; Dix & Corbett, 2023). Interculturality can also be used interchangeably with other terms such as *multiculturality* or *transculturality* (Rings & Rasinger, 2023), without necessarily relying on different ideological positions. In this paper, interculturality refers to both the online *international* encounters as experienced by Chinese and Finnish students as well as to how they try to make sense of these encounters. We adopt a critical perspective towards the notion which is based on the discursive examination of (changing) identity co-constructions between interlocutors, power imbalance and inequalities, and ideological positionings towards interculturality (e.g., Dervin, 2016, 2023; Peng & Dervin, 2022; Tian & Dervin, 2023).

As hinted at in our introduction, reflexivity is polysemic and yet it is often deemed universal across space and time (Blasco, 2012). Since reflexivity has often been dealt with in Cartesian ways, it might be (wrongly) assumed that it can lead to the self being "accessible and transcendable" and "act as its own remedial change agent" or "inner consultant" (Blasco, 2012). In this paper, we see reflexivity as part of the other-self continuum, and as a changing and unstable phenomenon, which does not necessarily lead to "right," "epistemically/ideologically correct" or "definitive" decisions and/or positions in relation to interculturality. In other words, a specific act of reflexivity might push us to make "wrong" moves. This is where reflexivity and interculturality as both never-ending co-constructed processes revolving around *I-you-the world*, meet.

From a sociocultural perspective (Foucault, 1988; Pöllmann, 2016), reflexivity is a process of endless un-re-thinking about how we interact with others considering social norms (Ang, 1989; Foucault, 1988). In other words, un-re-thinking is the process of continuously questioning one's own and others' assumptions as well as challenging dominant ideologies (Mudambi et al., 2023), and thus reshaping one's understanding of the self, others, and the world (e.g., Haydari et al., 2023; Dervin, 2023). Bearing this in mind, we argue that reflexivity is a potential booster for interculturality, playing an imperative role in the critique and evaluation of intercultural interactions (e.g., O'Neill & Viljoen, 2021). It might thus help a person to become aware of their (re)actions and emotions in intercultural communication and be able to explore interacting strategically with others in different contexts (e.g., Peng & Dervin, 2022). It might also empower people to un-re-think continuously the ideologies of dominant voices pertaining to how they should interact with others interculturally (e.g., R'boul, 2022).

Making Use of the Multidimensions of Reflexivity

It is important to note that reflexivity has often been described as "the central generative mechanism behind behavioral change in intercultural education" (Matthews, 2020, p. 332). It should be said,

however, that some researchers (e.g., Blasco, 2012; Pöllmann, 2016) have questioned the validity of using reflexivity as an indicator of e.g., intercultural competence for the purpose of assessing interculturality. Reflexivity is said to be often based on a "market-oriented and pragmatic" perspective focused on how individuals communicate in an "appropriate" and "effective" manner (Matthews, 2020, p. 331). "Appropriateness" and "effectiveness" however reinforce the neoliberal hegemony of intercultural knowledge. The question of "for whose appropriateness and effectiveness" has been raised repeatedly by Dervin (2022) since intercultural interaction involves a variety of parties. The goal of doing reflexivity could thus be to un-re-think interculturality *ad infinitum*, potentially beyond western viewpoints and dominant epistemological perspectives (R'boul, 2022). Researchers also urge to engage with the notion of reflexivity beyond the neoliberal hegemony of intercultural knowledge (Matthews, 2020; Pöllmann, 2016; R'boul, 2022).

Taking these elements into account, as well as the polysemy and changing characteristic of reflexivity, in this study, we examine the notion from three multidimensions - criticality, awareness, and hyper-reflexivity – to better understand "what it could mean to be reflexive" (Clark & Dervin, 2014, p. 3) at moments X and Y rather than to define what reflexivity is in a static and generic way. As asserted earlier, reflexivity is a dynamic process of (re)constructing the knowledge of interculturality through scrutinizing one's own positionalities in interactions. In what follows three dimensions of multidimensional reflexivity in intercultural communication are discussed, in relation to the central aspects of action, emotion, and meta-cognition.

Criticality involves a strong actional aspect in that it stresses the ability to rethink the impact of (re) actions on the self and others in intercultural interactions to deeply reflect on how to (potentially) act and (re)act interculturally. *Awareness* is closely linked to the emotional dimension of being sensitive to "one's own feelings and emotions" in intercultural communication (Clark & Dervin, 2014, p. 17). For us, some "unsettling" feelings and emotions, triggered by intercultural "accidents" or "failure," should not be ignored. Rather, they could lead an individual to face and overcome their "weaknesses" or "failures" in interculturality (Clark & Dervin, 2014, p. 17). *Hyper-reflexivity* represents a meta-cognitive aspect, involving being "critical of one's own constructions, strategies, investment, and social background" through self-other engagements (Clark & Dervin, 2014, p. 24). This hints at deeply (re)examining the factors of e.g., our own life experiences, positionings, and failures that could influence our understandings of intercultural communication (Clark & Dervin, 2014, p. 25). We argue that examining reflexivity through these multidimensions can enable us to comprehend how students position themselves in intercultural communication and thus to understand how they conceptualize interculturality through their reflexivity (R'boul & Saidi, 2023).

Reflexivity Through "Technologies of the Self"

Reflexivity as a core ability of critical digital literacy has been deemed essential to the development of new practices of intercultural communication in the digital age (Dooly & Darvin, 2022; Hauerwas et al., 2021; Potolia & Derivry-Plard, 2022). For a better understanding of intercultural communication in online contexts, researchers have invited students to reflect on their own online intercultural experiences. As such, various studies have investigated how technology impacts intercultural communication. For example, Susilo et al. (2023) utilize videos as intercultural exercises to enhance students' critical intercultural awareness. Gutiérrez et al. (2022) provide recommendations for the development of communicative strategies and pedagogical mentoring for online intercultural communication through student reflections on virtual exchange. Kokkonen et al. (2022) examine how students conceptualize interculturality by analyzing their learning logs that contain reflections on their online interactions. It is, however, rare to find research on how students construct reflexivity based on their online performance in intercultural interactions. Our study thus aims to fill this gap

by analysing moments of students' think-aloud reflexivity. The distinctiveness of the study can also be found in the reflective content gathered for the research, explicitly reflecting on virtual exchanges during research interviews.

Many studies have employed *Technologies of the self* as a theoretical framework to discuss how individuals (re)construct their identities within an embedded power society, which is impacted by political, economic, and cultural elements (Landolt & Bauer, 2023; Lin & Zhao, 2023). In this study, we employ Foucault's (1988) *Technologies of the self* to focus on how reflexivity is constructed by our participants to position themselves in an intercultural online context.

Technologies of the self emphasize "the methods individuals employ to understand the self" (Hutton, 1988, p. 139). Although the methods vary from writing diaries on one's own to getting help from others (e.g., dialogue, listening, confession), the central theme is the self (Foucault, 1988, p. 27). Foucault, on the one hand, emphasizes the agency of individuals "to effect by their own means" to understand the self (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). On the other hand, he highlights "the help of others" in the process of understanding the self (Foucault, 1988, p. 18).

Foucault uses the phrase "money changer" to describe the role of the self in the process of reflexivity (1988, p. 37). The self should be like a "money changer" who "verifies the authenticity of currency, looks at it, weights and verifies it" (Foucault, 1988, p. 37). The self here is like a "jury" to scrutinize one's own actions. With the help of others, individuals are "pushed" to rethink "what they have done" and "what they should have done" in society (Foucault, 1988, p. 37). The purpose is to "make adjustments and seek the rules for acceptable behavior in the relations with others" (Foucault, 1988, p. 22). In this process, individuals (re)gain the "power of self-control" for (re)entering a society that "creates forms and rules ironically imprisoned our creativity" (Hutton, 1988, p. 131&137).

To our knowledge, in their work on the contribution of today's technologies (e.g., videoblogging, multiplayer online role-play gaming) to the expression, (co-)construction and enactment of identities, Abbas and Dervin (2009) were the first to explore Foucault's concept in relation to interculturality, which they renamed *Digital Technologies of the Self* (see also Dervin & Abbas, 2009).

In our study, the video clips of the students' own intercultural online encounters presented to them during the interviews lead them to scrutinize themselves – *to confront self with self in front of (and indirectly with and through) the other*. As technologies of the self, the clips push them to reflect on what they have done, what they could have done or what they could do in intercultural online contexts. Through think-aloud reflexivity (reacting verbally to the clips in front of a researcher), the students un-re-think how to deal with similar situations online. From this perspective, reflexivity could represent an important booster for interculturality.

Data and Method

Based on the aforementioned elements related to interculturality, reflexivity and technologies of the self, the following questions guide our research.

1. How do the students do reflexivity when they are asked to reflect on the recordings of their online intercultural interactions?
2. What are the themes of their think-aloud reflexivity?
3. What does students' reflexivity reveal about their understandings of interculturality since their engagement with this polysemic notion cannot but influence the ways they reflect during the interviews?

Data Description

The data are derived from interviews with Chinese and Finnish university students after a one-month online exchange project. Both Chinese and Finnish universities integrated the project into their intercultural communication education courses as an intercultural practice during the COVID-19 period (autumn 2020). 62 students were divided into eight groups (5–6 Chinese students and 2–3 Finnish students per group). They met twice online to prepare a presentation regarding intercultural affairs (i.e., a short orientation program for new international students). Chinese and Finnish students both majored in education. English was their communication language, with some differing levels in their practice of the lingua franca. Their online meetings were recorded and stored. After the virtual exchange 9 students (6 Chinese and 3 Finnish) agreed to be interviewed about their encounters (see Table 1 for information about students).

The interview was primarily designed to provide students with an opportunity to reflect informally on their online experiences outside their formal context of education. Each interview lasted 1–1.30 hours and was divided into two parts. A language that was compatible for both interviewees and the interviewer was used for the interview. Chinese students felt confident to be interviewed by the Chinese interviewer/researcher in Chinese. Finnish students were interviewed in English since both the Chinese interviewer/researcher and Finnish students were proficient in English. The first part was about what they had learnt from the online project. In the second part, students were shown 3–5 video clips (VCs) (2–3 mins each) of their online interactions and asked to share their thoughts after watching each VC. In some cases, students from the same group were presented with the same VCs (e.g., Amy and Jing from Group 8). Thus, the total number of VCs presented to the students was 24.

Through the use of these VCs, the intent was for students to be able to study their own performance and possibly reinterpret (re)actions that they may not have noticed during online interactions (Guth & Helm, 2012; Kern, 2014). In what follows we focus solely on the second part of the interviews, i.e., how the students react to the VCs. We refer to this second part as *watching moments* (WMs). Students were asked to think aloud about their reflexivity during WMs. We identify these WMs as triggered reflexivity in a research-based context. 35 WMs were identified in the interviews in total, involving 24 VCs. Our analysis covers two WMs per student due to the length limit of the article. 18 WMs involving 11 VCs (coded from VC1 to VC11) are included (WM1-WM18).

As we reviewed all the recorded interactions prior to the interviews, we identified three types of VCs which we felt, if watched again by the students, could possibly trigger reflexivity: *3 monological VCs,*

Table 1 *Students' Information*

No.	Participants (pseudonyms)	Gender	Nationality	Age Range	Interview Duration
1	Amy	F	Finnish	33–37	1h 13mins
2	Li	F	Chinese	18–22	1h 23mins
3	Cindy	F	Chinese	18–22	1h 43mins
4	Donna	F	Finnish	18–22	1h 09mins
5	Jing	F	Chinese	18–22	1h 28mins
6	Fiona	F	Finnish	28–32	1h 07mins
7	Wei	M	Chinese	18–22	1h 15mins
8	Fang	F	Chinese	18–22	1h 30mins
9	Iris	F	Chinese	18–22	1h 26mins

Table 2 *Types of VCs and list of WMs*

Name	Video Clips	Types of VCs	Watching Moments
Amy	VC1	Monological	1
Amy	VC2	Vague	2
Li	VC3	Monological	3
Li	VC4	Monological	4
Cindy	VC5	Floating	5
Cindy	VC6	Floating	6
Donna	VC3	Monological	7
Donna	VC4	Monological	8
Jing	VC2	Vague	9
Jing	VC7	Floating	10
Fiona	VC5	Floating	11
Fiona	VC6	Floating	12
Wei	VC8	Floating	13
Wei	VC9	Vague	14
Fang	VC5	Floating	15
Fang	VC6	Floating	16
Iris	VC10	Vague	17
Iris	VC11	Floating	18

5 floating VCs, and *3 vague VCs.* These three types of VCs represent three typical situations in online intercultural interactions among students according to researchers' online participant observations (Bernard, 2018). These VCs serve as mirrors for students to observe what happened during the online meetings and also as triggers for their reflexivity (see Foucault's Technologies of the Self, 1988). VCs where only one student is talking is labeled as *monological* (e.g., VC1, 3, and 4). VCs where there is a disconnection between the interlocutors are *floating moments* (e.g., VC 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11). In floating moments, one student is discussing a topic while another is focusing on a completely different one (i.e., they "float" past each other). VCs in which speakers provide vague responses to others' questions are considered as *vague moments* (VCs 2, 9, and 10) (see details in Table 2). 18 WMs were transcribed by the first author who is competent in both Chinese and English. The WMs in Chinese were first translated into English. The second author who is fluent in six languages and has extensive translation experience proofread the English versions with her and transcribed/translated some elements from Finnish when the Finnish students used the language between them. When the two researchers had divergent understandings of a sentence, they referred back to the Chinese/Finnish versions for discussion**.** Attempts were made to ensure that the English translation accurately represented the Chinese/Finnish versions.

Analytical Approach

We follow a postmodern approach to this qualitative research, which recognizes and takes into account the importance of participants and the medium of interaction in co-constructing knowledge (Holliday & Macdonald, 2020). Using a postmodern approach, we are reminded that reflexivity is a multidimensional process involving many factors. In analyzing the data, we keep in mind that students'

reflexivity is influenced by the media presented to them (i.e., video clips). The reflective process of the students is based on what they decide to share with us about their online intercultural interactions after watching the VCs. As such we do not claim that the following "snapshots" of reflexivity reflect e.g., any true access to an enduring inner self or any additional reflexivity taking place *in* them during the interview with the researcher as well as afterwards (see Blasco, 2012).

Since reflexivity can be identified through many and varied linguistic phenomena (Nozick, 1981; Popoveniuc, 2014), we employ *speech act theory* (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) to distinguish the moments of reflexivity based on the linguistic characteristics of students' utterances. According to speech act theory, "uttering an utterance is performing an action" (Austin, 1962, p. 6). In this sense, utterances and actions are simultaneously occurring in a situation where the speakers are participating (Butler, 2021; Gruber, 1975). The speakers thus constitute utterances that could correspond to their "intent motivation" and "overt behavior" in a particular situation (Bullowa, 1977, p. 201).

As a grammatical criterion for defining performative acts in utterances, Austin, Urmson, and Warnock (1979) propose the use of the first person singular present indicative active. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to assume that all performative utterances follow this standard format (Austin, Urmson, & Warnock, 1979). It has been shown for instance that some performative utterances lack an expressed verb (Bullowa, 1977; Grube, 1975). It is also pertinent to emphasize here that issuing utterances encompasses a wide variety of acts (Searle, 1969). We employ Austin's (1962) five general classifications of performative acts to identify moments of reflexivity from a linguistic perspective, which will be presented in the following analysis. It is through these linguistic characteristics of students' utterances that we are able to analyze the ways in which they engage with reflexivity.

Data Analysis

Reflexivity Construction: Ways Reflexivity is Taking Place

In this section, we illustrate the moments of think-aloud reflexivity triggered by the video clips presented to the students and examine how reflexivity is constructed from the linguistic characteristics of their utterances. Based on Austin's (1962) performative acts, students' utterances reveal three general ways of doing reflexivity while watching their own performances: *evaluating* (28 instances in total), *clarifying* (18) and *reviewing* (7) (see details from table 3). The three ways demonstrate reflexivity from actional, meta-cognitive, and emotional aspects based on multidimensional reflexivity (Clark & Dervin, 2014; see 1.2.). Among the three, evaluating, which focuses on the actions and performances in the VCs, happens the most. Clarifying seeks to discover the reasons behind what happened, ranging in the middle. Reviewing is done least frequently, considering that not everyone can respond emotionally on the spot to what they have observed from the VCs. Three themes emerge from the students' reflexivity: *evaluating the self critically, empathizing with others,* and *reconceptualizing doing interculturality*. Due to the length limitation of the paper, we provide a detailed examination of reflexivity construction by making references to carefully selected students' utterances.

Evaluating

The Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defines evaluating as judging or calculating the quality of something. Based on this definition, when students take the act of giving a conclusion to something based on "an estimate, reckoning, or appraisal" (Austin, 1962, p. 150), we claim that they do *evaluating* reflexively. Using verdictives from Austin (1962) as a starting point, the themes of evaluating are identified through the subjects (i.e., a noun or pronoun that performs the action of the verb) in the students' utterances.

Table 3 *Instances of doing reflexivity*

Name	Ways of doing reflexivity		
	Evaluating	**Clarifying**	**Reviewing**
	1) evaluating the self critically 2) evaluating others 3) reconceptualizing doing interculturality: miscommunication is normal	1) the self as a direct yet harsh reason for "floating/vague" moments 2) the other as a hidden yet influential reason for "floating/vague" moments 3) reconceptualizing doing interculturality: distinctiveness of online contexts	1) emotional self as a hint of reflexivity 2) reconceptualizing doing interculturality: each voice should be heard
Amy	2	1	3
Li	4	2	0
Cindy	4	2	0
Donna	1	3	0
Jing	4	3	1
Fiona	3	3	1
Wei	3	1	1
Fang	4	2	1
Iris	3	1	0
Total	28	18	7

Once an idea comes to mind, the rules "for acceptable behavior in the relations with others" are activated to evaluate (Foucault, 1988, p. 22). The rules that individuals intend to apply for evaluating aim to help "make adjustments between what one had done and what one ought to have done" in a given online intercultural context (Foucault, 1988, p. 34). Based on Austin's (1962) commissives, intending is covered by the performative "shall" (p. 157). In the data, speakers' intentions of applying the rules are demonstrated via modal auxiliary (e.g., *should, would, could*) and conditional sentences (e.g., *if*-). That is, what they should have done in the past and what they would do in the future. The VCs presented to the students and the questions asked to them represent the triggers of reactivating "acceptable rules" in an online intercultural context (Foucault, 1988, p. 34). The following excerpts demonstrate how students do evaluating.

Evaluating the self critically

Chinese student Li evaluates her performance in VC3 as follows:

> **Excerpt 1**
> Li: *I* was talking all the time and *I* was very *stuttering*. *It* was a "*large-scale social death scene*." *It* was very *embarrassing*. I feel that I did not prepare fully. *I should have* fully completed the work before our online meeting then *I could have* spoken fluently. (VC3; WM3)

In the two-minute monological VC3, Li shares her ideas about preparing an orientation day for international students. She struggles to articulate her thoughts in English and turns to her Chinese group members for assistance. She sighs and stammers, expressing her need for help while both are

visible in the same camera. Donna, a Finnish student, responds with "I think we understand what you mean" when no one replies to her. VC3, evaluated by Li as "大型社死现场" ('a large-scale social death scene': a popular Chinese phrase to describe embarrassing social interactions), urges her to be aware of the rule she had previously forgotten in the online intercultural context. In doing evaluating, she tries to "make an adjustment" between what she has done (i.e., talking and stuttering all the time) and what she ought to have done or do (i.e., fully completed the work before the online meeting) (Foucault, 1988, p. 34). For Li, the rule for acceptable behavior is to speak English fluently. The self, here as a "money changer" (Foucault, 1988, p. 37), scrutinizes her own actions in order to make necessary adjustments for acceptable behaviors in similar situations in the future.

Evaluating others

In the monological VC1 presented to Finnish student Amy, she is sharing her ideas for her group presentation. Only one group member replies to her with "Ok." She then transcribes her previous remarks onto their group PowerPoint (PPT). After writing down her point, there is silence among everyone. Excerpt 2 occurs while Amy is watching VC1 during the interview:

Excerpt 2

Amy: *Nobody* says anything. I always get the feeling that *I should* put myself back a bit. I try to get confirmation from the group. This is a very big difference in a different kind of culture where we expect affirmation and confirmation. (VC1; WM1)

First Amy evaluates others' reactions to her behavior. She then applies the rule that she "should put herself back" in their online intercultural discussion. VC1 leads her to be hyper-reflexive about her own intercultural communication strategies (Clark & Dervin, 2014, p. 24). After examining her strategy of "getting confirmation from the group," she realizes the significant distinction between expecting affirmation and confirmation in various settings (Clark & Dervin, 2014).

Reconceptualizing doing interculturality: Miscommunication is normal

When students evaluate their online interactions in the VCs, they tend to draw the following conclusion about *doing interculturality*: Miscommunication is a normal phenomenon in intercultural communication. After watching the video clips, they realize that miscommunication often happens in their online meetings. In other words, they find that, sometimes, they do not fully understand each other.

For instance, after watching VC6, Fiona (Finnish) and Fang (Chinese) reach the same evaluation about VC6: "classic miscommunication." In Excerpt 3, Fiona is attempting to delegate tasks for her group presentation, but some of the Chinese members (e.g., Fang) are engaged in a separate conversation in their native language. For Fiona, this miscommunication could be easily solved in person but is challenging to solve in an online context restricted by "physical surroundings" (Auer, 1996, p. 11). VC6 triggers her to be critical of her surroundings while engaging in intercultural communication (Clark & Dervin, 2014):

Excerpt 3

Fiona: This is *classic miscommunication.* […]. I feel like that this kind of group work could be a lot better in person than online because we can't point and show with our hands. I don't know what is the best solution for that (miscommunication) because a lot of teamwork is based online and a lot of international work is done online. […]. I really don't know what it could be especially at the time I didn't know how to solve it. (VC6; WM12)

Fang considers miscommunication to be a typical occurrence in any communication. It is not an exceptional situation in intercultural communication. In her reflexivity triggered by VC6 (Excerpt 4), the primary issue with miscommunication is that individuals often fail to comprehend each other during their interactions:

Excerpt 4

Fang: The main problem was that *we didn't get each other.* It is *not about intercultural communication or not.* We also had this kind of problems when we had groupwork only with Chinese students. (VC6; WM16)

In a similar vein, after viewing VC11, Iris concludes that miscommunication is a common occurrence, as anticipated. In the floating moment in VC11, Finnish students suggest spelling corrections, while Iris misunderstands their suggestion and thinks they want to change the content of their PPT. They discuss this back and forth to clarify the issue:

Excerpt 5

Iris: It looks like we didn't *communicate very well but I think this is very normal.* I don't think this task was difficult. It is very normal just as I expected. There will probably be some misunderstandings, and if you don't know exactly what the other person wants to say, then just ask a few more times. (VC11; WM18)

Although miscommunication is often considered as a failure in intercultural communication, it highlights the intricate and unstable nature of interculturality in real-life situations (Dervin, 2023).

These video clips provide students with a second chance to figure out how to solve e.g., misunderstandings. Fang suggests sending what they have discussed to group members in WM16. Iris in WM18 recommends asking a few more times if one does not understand the other.

Clarifying

According to Austin (1962), the performative act of expositives emphasizes the clarification of reasons, arguments, and acts of communication (p. 162). Based on this and the definition of clarifying-making something clear to understand by giving more details or a simpler explanation (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023), we categorize utterances that individuals use to elaborate on something while doing reflexivity as clarifying. A cause-effect conjunction/phrase (e.g., *because, so, and because of*) is the linguistic characteristic indicating that students are clarifying reflexively. Clarifying can demonstrate why floating, vague, monological moments happen in online intercultural interactions. Clark and Dervin (2014) refer to clarifying as a sign of hyper-reflexivity: trying to understand the factors that could influence how we understand interculturality.

A direct yet harsh reason for "floating/vague" moments: The self

One of the themes of clarifying revolves around the self. For example, Fiona, who is Finnish, clarifies a floating moment in VC6 where she is trying to assign tasks to the members of her group, but some of the Chinese members are discussing something else in their native language:

Excerpt 6

Fiona: It's definitely *my fault* that I didn't remember the names *because* that part *could be easier* like, "Hey, Cindy," "Hey, Fang." It is more effective if you can say people's name. (VC6; WM12)

Fiona attributes this floating behavior directly to her own behavior in the triggered reflexivity. She critically and harshly "blames" herself arguing that "It's definitely my fault that I didn't remember the names." The self serves as the "money changer" here to scrutinize her own behavior (Foucault, 1988, p. 37). By clarifying, she focuses on how to "make an adjustment" in the same online intercultural interaction (Foucault, 1988, p. 34), "because that part could be easier by directly calling someone's name like, 'Hey, Cindy,' 'Hey, Fang.'"

A hidden yet influential reason for "floating/vague" moments: The other

Another theme of clarification relates to the figure of the other. What follows could demonstrate that the other is a hidden yet influential factor for "floating/vague" moments in their online meetings. The VCs presented to students lead them to be aware of other voices which are always present, influencing how, when, and what they wish to communicate.

In the floating moment presented in VC6 (Excerpt 7), Cindy shares the same camera with Chinese students as they discuss work arrangements in Chinese. After watching it, Cindy (Chinese) critically un-re-thinks her performances in the VC and the consequence of it: wasting their online meeting time. She attributes this consequence to her ignorance of others (both Finnish group members and other Chinese group members who do not share the same camera with her in VC6):

Excerpt 7

Cindy: We didn't discuss the labor division before *so* we *wasted* our online discussion *time because others* didn't know what we were talking about. (VC6; WM6)

In VC2, Jing (Chinese) edits a PPT for her group presentation while other students share their ideas:

Excerpt 8

Jing: I was *anxious* about spelling *because everyone* was watching me. Misspelling is not a big deal if you misspell you can correct. But when *others* were watching the whole process, I felt I was *wasting others' time.* (VC2; WM9)

The whole process of editing is watched by other group members in Zoom. Jing is humming during the process. When one student asks her to reorganize their PPT, Jing provides a vague response, giggling, "Er, What? What am I doing?" This VC triggers her to be aware of her anxiety at that moment. She attributes the anxiety to her vague response to her group members. She further digs into the reason for this anxiety. As another Chinese student puts it in excerpt 7 (Cindy), Jing expresses the same concern about wasting others' time, wrongly spelling, and correcting online while others watch the entire process.

Reconceptualizing doing interculturality: Being aware of the distinctiveness of online intercultural interactions

When the students clarify the "floating/vague" moments in the VCs presented to them, they become aware of the distinctiveness of the online context for intercultural communication. Even though students might have grown more accustomed to the online context during the COVID-19 pandemic, some students may struggle with resolving issues in this context. As Fiona states in WM12, there is much international work based online, but she does not know how to solve miscommunication in online contexts (see excerpt 3). After watching VC6, she becomes aware of the distinctiveness of the online context, which might cause miscommunication that could easily be resolved face-to-face.

Cindy is also prompted to focus on the online environment she is in after watching the floating moment in VC5 where Cindy and Fang (Chinese students) share the same camera, and Fiona, a Finnish student, shares the screen to display the group's PPT. During a screen-sharing session, Fiona expresses her difficulty in organizing a Zoom meeting. However, her comment is met with no response as Cindy and Fang converse in Chinese, seemingly unaware of Fiona's presence. Cindy clarifies three reasons for the "mess" (as she qualifies VC5; Excerpt 9). In the triggered reflexivity, Cindy is conscious and critical of the online context in which the intercultural interaction occurs (Clark & Dervin, 2014):

Excerpt 9

Cindy: We had a problem to share the PPT made by us so we asked Fiona to do it. This is the *first* thing that *causes* the mess. *Second*, we were not familiar with the procedure of our online meeting. *Also*, the noises coming from our cameras influenced our discussion. (VC5; WM5)

Reviewing

Reviewing is defined as "to carefully examine a situation to find out whether changes or improvements need to be made" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). An individual's "emotional reaction" to a situation might correspond to the awareness of any changes and improvements (Wittgenstein, 1953; Laugier, 2020). Understanding one's own emotions or feelings could represent the awareness for individuals to face their own "weakness," leading to a better understanding of the self (Clark & Dervin, 2014). Based on this understanding, reviewing here refers to carefully examining one's own emotions or feelings in order to find out whether changes or improvements need to be made.

The utterances indicating reviewing are identified based on the performative act of behabitives, which involves the speaker's expression of feelings regarding their past or imminent conduct and the behavior of others (Austin, 1962). The linguistic characteristic involves using first-person subjects and verbs (e.g., *regret, doubt, feel*) or adjectives (e.g., *conscious, self-critical, guilty*) expressing emotions or cognitions. The reviewing theme revolves around the self: their feelings (e.g., *regret, guilt*) and attitudes (e.g., *doubt, be conscious, be aware*) toward their actions displayed in the VCs. Students' "cognitive understanding" and "emotional response" are depicted while reviewing reflexively (Colapietro, 1997, p. 262).

Emotional self as a hint of reflexivity

As we previously mentioned about the monological VC1, Amy's feeling about it is "regret." She doubts her behavior in her group's online meeting where she writes down her own ideas concerning the group PPT without getting any enthusiastic confirmation:

Excerpt 11

Amy: Somehow, I kind of *regret* unless there is enthusiastic ok to something maybe their suggestions should not be applied. […]. I *start to doubt* myself when I am watching this. […]. I *wasn't very conscious* about it (i.e., confirmation) in the online discussion. I'm *becoming more conscious* about it now. I *am more aware, more self-critical*. (VC1; WM1)

By understanding her own feelings after watching VC1, she claims to have become "more conscious and aware" of the different ways of getting confirmation. The self is the subject who does reviewing as well as the object to be examined here (Foucault, 1988).

VC7 contains three clips of Amy and Jing's online group meeting. In VC7, no one from this group replies to the student who proposes a third online meeting twice. However, when Jing suggests having a third meeting, Amy agrees with her at the end of their online discussion. In WM10, Jing reviews her own feelings for the one whose proposal is ignored by the rest of the group. Guilt is the feeling that seems to lead to her self-awareness and the critical evaluation of her (re)actions towards others (Clark & Dervin, 2014). As she says while reviewing in Excerpt 12, "[student's name] must be very sad." The feeling aroused after watching VC7 seems to drive her to pay attention to others' voices in the future:

Excerpt 12

Jing: I *feel so guilty* about her after watching the video clip. She must be very *sad.* I *think* everyone *should* be noticed and their voices *should* be heard. (VC7; WM10)

Reconceptualizing doing interculturality: Each voice should be heard

While reviewing, students seem to understand that each voice should be heard in intercultural communication. That is, it is equally important to listen to others as well as to let one's own voice be heard. As discussed earlier, Jing (Chinese) in WM10, for instance, expresses guilt after watching video clips where another student's proposal for a third meeting is not heard. When she is asked why she feels guilty after watching the VC, she positions herself as a "harmony seeker." She thinks that "everyone should be noticed and their voices should be heard." She is critical of her own reactions to the other, which is often perceived to be imperative in intercultural communication (Clark & Dervin, 2014).

Similarly, Wei (Chinese) believes that making one's voice heard is equally essential. According to him, this is how to "take responsibility for group work" and to "show one's presence". In his act of reflexivity after watching the floating VC8, he is aware that different language proficiency (e.g., English) could result in unequal intercultural communication. For him, Chinese students tend to remain silent in the presence of their Finnish group members who might appear to be more proficient in English to them, thereby missing out on the opportunity to make their own voice heard:

Excerpt 13

Wei: When I was watching the VC, I feel that I started to *be aware of* the fact that I wanted to say something compared to the first time we met. *I hope that we could express ourselves more and take more responsibility.* At beginning, *I felt* that our Chinese students didn't have the sense of presence because they (Finnish) spoke English well and we tend to be silent and they continued the discussion. (VC8; WM13)

Discussion and Conclusion

Amadasi and Holliday (2018) maintain that not everything can be observed as one engages in intercultural interactions. In this paper, we presented "snapshots" of reflexivity to examine and problematise how students constructed think-aloud reflexivity about interculturality in a Sino-Finnish virtual exchange project. The study pointed at three ways of doing reflexivity when the students reflected on the video clips presented to them: *evaluating, clarifying,* and *reviewing*. The three ways of doing reflexivity demonstrated "multifaced and overlapping" reflexivity based on actional, meta-cognitive, and emotional perspectives (Clark & Dervin, 2014). The research enriches our understanding of how individuals engage in reflexivity interculturally by closely examining the "possible force of their utterances" (Austin, 1962, p. 251). At the same time, the study provides some hints as to how the students engage with the polysemous nature of interculturality as a notion.

Evaluating demonstrates the actional aspect of reflexivity. When the students did evaluations, they were critical of their (re)actions and attempted to find out how to take action in the future (Clark & Dervin, 2014). Evaluation of their own actions in online intercultural interactions tended to be critical. They were straightforward about their own weaknesses in reflexivity (e.g., excerpt 1), while the evaluation of others' reactions could be deemed as "neutral" (e.g., excerpt 2). By evaluating their own (re)actions and others' in the VCs, they reactivated "the rules for acceptable behavior in the relations with others" in online intercultural contexts (Foucault, 1988). They were also more aware of the significant distinction of behaviors in various settings (e.g., confirmation). The students noticed that miscommunication was a normal part of intercultural communication by evaluating actions and reactions in the VCs. In light of this specific interpretation of interculturality, we may be unable to avoid making "mistakes" in both online and offline intercultural interactions. No one is a "superhero" in intercultural communication (Dervin, 2022, p. 24) and, although the students seem to speculate about what they could do "right" and how while reflecting, there is no guarantee that they will do so in the future or that this would lead to some kind of 'success'. As Blasco (2012) reminded us, reflexivity should be considered beyond the Cartesian view of self as the successful "inner consultant."

For Dervin and Jacobsson (2021), there is no end in interculturality, and we need to try to negotiate again and find out how to communicate with each other, improvising and testing out new things on the spur of the moment. Students are often taught to behave "appropriately" and "effectively" in intercultural communication by teachers and scholars. They thus tend to be afraid of making mistakes, which are actually inevitable in life. Dervin (2022) argues that "we tend to prepare individuals to become some kind of "superheroes" of interculturality who never fail" (p. 24). However, failures and errors could be viewed as opportunities to develop strategies for dealing with similar situations in the future (e.g., miscommunication or noncommunication) (Foucault, 1988, p. 34).

When the students delved into the reasons behind the "floating/vague" moments that occurred during their online intercultural interactions, they demonstrated the meta-cognitive aspect of reflexivity. Some students made direct and harsh "accusations" about themselves (e.g., excerpt 6). Other students realized that *the other* was a hidden yet influential factor influencing how they act and react in online intercultural interactions (e.g., excerpt 7). To a certain extent, students' reflexivity in relation to the other could illustrate well e.g., Sartre's (1977) discussion in *Being and Nothingness* about how individuals are influenced by the other (e.g., the other's body, the other's look). Through clarifying, they were aware that the virtual environment could affect intercultural communication significantly. For example, supporting their expression with other forms (e.g., gestures) was reported as being more challenging online than in person. Also, online intercultural context exposes interactions directly in front of interactants, which may create extra pressure on the students.

Finally, reviewing hints at emotional aspects of reflexivity. Moments of emotional "weakness" compelled students to become aware and conscious of what they had done to others. For example, one of the students felt sad when she noticed that the rest of the group ignored one group member during the online meeting (e.g., excerpt 12). Emotions towards the self and others seemed to make them realize that every voice should be heard in (online) intercultural interactions. This could indicate that people seek to be heard and seen in intercultural communication. Yet we should be aware of the context we are in and the impact of the media on our communication (Kern, 2014). Voices or the presence of individuals via the Internet are even more unlikely to be heard or seen due to the limitations of "physical surroundings" in an online context (Auer, 1996, p. 11). When interacting online, only the individual who is speaking is acknowledged at a time, while others are kept "quiet." Nevertheless the "quiet" participants, who can be easily ignored, may also want to show their presence and voices and take responsibility for intercultural activities, as indicated by one of the students. The ability to recognize

emotions could be helpful in assisting individuals in making adjustments in intercultural communication (Arghode, et al., 2022; Yoo, et al., 2006).

The three ways identified in this study tend to demonstrate that reflexivity could represent a unique discursive capacity to become the subject and object of one's self (Foucault, 1988; He, 2023). If "'knowing yourself' is the whole of science" (Nietzsche, 1983, p. 47), then our study shows that the self is one of the main foci of students' reflexivity. If "being-for-others" appears to be the prolongation of the pure reflexivity (Sartre, 1977, p. 299), our study demonstrates that the other is another important theme in their reflexivity. By testing and verifying how the self behaves in different situations with different people, the students tend to "overcome otherness" to become a new self (Bakhtin, 1981). If interculturality is co-constructed, changeable, and unstable (Dervin, 2023), our study shows how students try to re-conceptualize doing interculturality through their think-aloud reflexivity. These "snapshots" of self-reflexivity, based on students' intercultural online experiences, provide a glimpse into the complexities of "interculturality" but we do not claim that they postulate one single "truth" about the students' inner thoughts. As such a research context like the one created for this paper cannot but lead to careful positioning and reflexive performance (e.g., in the way the students discuss self versus others) and "short-term" reflexivity (we had access to "live" reflexive acts but not to longer-term ones).

Our research argues that reflexivity as a booster for interculturality is essential to potential emancipation. Reflexivity helps to be constantly aware and critical of what the self and the other are experiencing in different contexts so as to be able to (re)act in strategic and purposeful manners. Interactions between individuals are unpredictable and fluid (Bauman, 2000; Dervin, 2011) and we cannot always prepare for "appropriate" and "effective" intercultural communication (Dervin, 2022). Reflexivity, visible or invisible, is not only a gauge of, for example, "intercultural competence," but also a way of preparing ourselves for the complex realities of life (Foucault, 1988).

Based on the study, we recommend that teachers guide students to reflect on their own intercultural interactions in different ways (e.g., writing diaries, having meaningful long-term dialogues). They can start by asking students how they evaluate their (re)actions in intercultural interactions, how they clarify them, and how they feel about what they have done and said. The purpose is not to judge what they have done/said but to help trace again and keep an eye on what they have done/said and what they ought to do/say in relations with others (Foucault, 1988) in flexible and changeable ways, trying out different strategies and practices. In this way, students could be able to understand their own capacities and creativities in intercultural communication while being reminded that that "there are options among which they are free to choose not simple continuities to which they must adapt" (Hutton, 1988, p. 139).

We started and now conclude our study with the authors' own reflexivity about their intercultural experiences in life and research. We follow Mahadevan and Moore's (2023) "reflexive ethnographic engagement" which urges us to be transparent with readers about our understanding of the central concepts in our research. As we mentioned at the beginning of the article, the two authors constantly encourage, critique, inspire, and remind each other to be reflective. As such Fred triggered Jun's reflexivity about something that she was not fully aware of during her sojourn in Europe in 2022: invisible injustice – due to race, nation, gender, and so on – is rampant in our everyday lives. In turn, Jun pushed Fred to un-re-think and doubt his own takes on invisibility and blindness to discrimination in this context. The feeling of doubt may prove to be useful for reflexivity, just as in the quotation from a student used in the paper's title: "I start to doubt myself when I am watching this…"

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