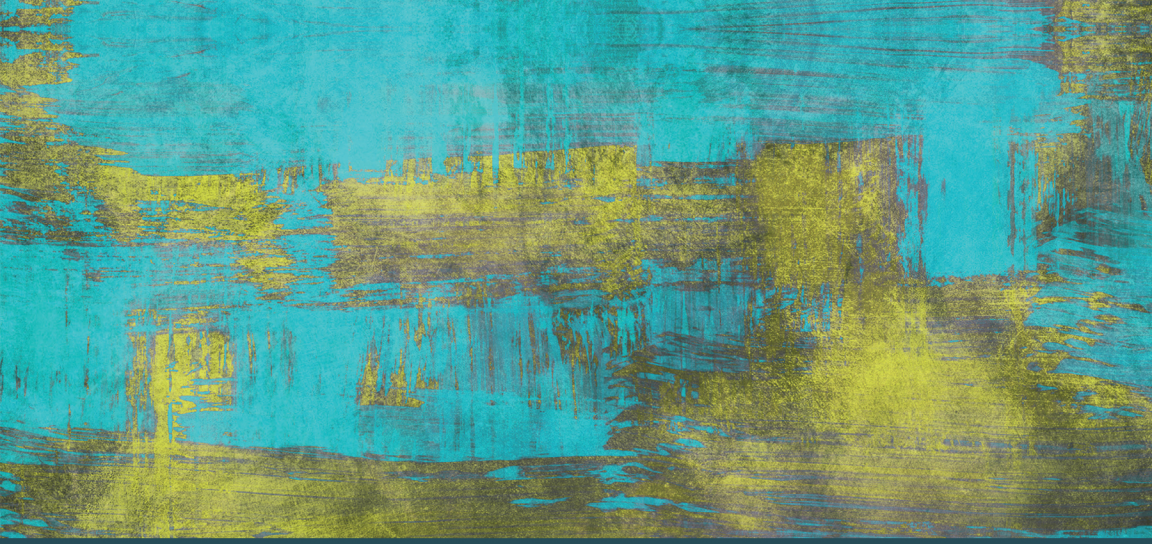
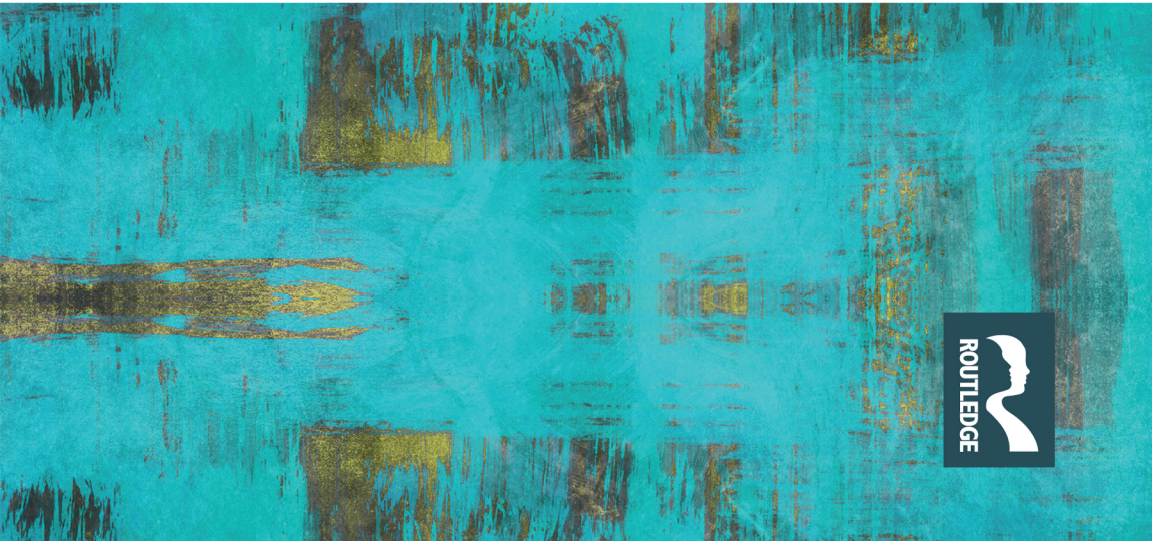


Routledge Studies in Language and Intercultural Communication

MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION IN INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION

Edited by
Ulrike Schröder, Elisabetta Adami,
and Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain



Multimodal Communication in Intercultural Interaction

This collection brings together a range of perspectives on multimodal communication in intercultural interaction, bridging cognitive, social, and functional approaches towards promoting cross-disciplinary dialogues and taking research at the intersections of these fields into new directions.

The volume assembles conversationalist, socially oriented, cognitive, and sensory approaches in considering culture as a dynamic construct, co-constituted and (re)negotiated among participants in interaction and filtering it through a multimodal lens, drawing on a range of examples, such as educational settings or online video platforms. Each chapter offers a unique perspective on "culture" and "intercultural," while also situating their own definitions of these labels against those of the other chapters. Taken together, the chapters form a fluid conversation on the nature of intercultural encounters in today's globalised world, as digital environments intertwine with the physical mobility of people, encouraging researchers across these fields to adopt a more holistic multimodal perspective to approach intercultural interaction.

This book will be of interest to students and scholars in intercultural communication, multimodality, sociolinguistics, cognitive and interactional linguistics, and semiotics.

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1 Introduction

Multimodal communication in intercultural interaction

Ulrike Schröder, Elisabetta Adami, and Jennifer Dailey-O'Cain

Sketching the problem

Our contemporary reality has given rise to new forms and styles of interaction. Human beings face the challenge of coming to terms with globalisation, hybridity, transnational circulation of practices and people, and the development of virtual spaces on the one hand and, on the other hand, with new kinds of borders arising out of these processes as an attempt to keep communities "intact." This book addresses this new reality in a bottom-up approach that originates from the editors' collaboration on the project *Intercultural Communication in Interaction: Multimodal Approaches*, funded by the Worldwide Universities Network Research Development Fund in 2019.[1] It gathers different voices and approaches to the study of multimodal communication in intercultural interaction through the contributions both of authors who had already significantly contributed to key research in the area and of authors who took their work in new directions as a result of connections they made over the course of the project. The volume has unfolded against the backdrop of new theorising, innovative tools for multimodal analysis, in line with methods that allow researchers to capture much more precisely what is going on in interaction, both face-to-face and online. These tools and methods help researchers approach the topic with an understanding of the concept of "intercultural" not from an external, top-down perspective but instead as an emerging and dynamic *ad hoc* and *in situ* construction that takes participants' interactions and angles as its starting point. Within this perspective, interculturality—and indeed "culture" itself—are conceived not as imposed by nation-states or institutional actors but as constructed within interactions carried out by people, and therefore as concepts that can best be observed and analysed in (multimodal) interaction.

Culture and intercultural communication

The notions of "culture" and "intercultural communication" have long been the focus of a series of debates (see Chapter 2 by Adami, this volume).

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Within these debates, a series of turns can be identified, beginning with a more essentialist and nation-bound conceptualisation during Romanticism, initiated by Herder, and then moving towards a more semiotic view during its interpretive conceptualisation as first coined by Cassirer (1998 [1923–1929]) and later on by Geertz (1975), which ushered in an explosion of culture-related research starting in the seventies. According to Delanoy (2020) and Bachmann-Medick (2016), this marked the beginning of a series of turns—the linguistic, performative, postcolonial, translational, reflexive, spatial, iconic, and cognitive turns—with respect to the definition of culture.[2] Zhu (2014) labels these directions as the "critical approach," in which culture is seen through a lens of power and ideological struggle. This point of view still dominates today (Zhu, 2014, p. 206). She nonetheless points out that there are in fact four coexisting approaches to culture in the current literature (Zhu, 2014, pp. 197–206), namely (1) the compositional approach that conceives culture as a collection of "things" shared by people, (2) the interpretive approach that understands culture as a web of significance that humans themselves have spun, (3) the action approach that sees culture as a dynamic process, and finally (4) the critical approach, which looks at discourses about culture and identity as they circulate in society. Each of these throws a different light onto the phenomena under investigation, and each is also increasingly attentive to the other perspectives, while responding and adjusting to criticisms on their own limitations; thus the scholarly landscape is becoming more open to dialogue and mutual influence in perspectives (Komisarof & Zhu, 2016).

In a similar vein, intercultural communication has also been discussed in innumerable ways by multidisciplinary approaches over many decades, each of these dependent on the particular spirit of the current dominating academic discourse and paradigm. As Kulich et al. (2020) show, this development is also manifold and has a multifaceted prehistory ranging from early European applications before the nineteenth century (e.g., Montaigne, Goethe, Pascal, Comenius), philosophical writings during the enlightenment period (e.g., Locke, Voltaire, Kant, Herder), post-enlightenment contributions (e.g., Hegel, Durkheim, Simmel, Weber), and early initiatives in the USA coming from Columbia University (from the 1920s to the 1950s, e.g., Boas, Mead, Benedict), as well as the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (from the 1950s to the 1970s, e.g., Hoggart, Williams, Hall). The outset of intercultural communication studies is frequently associated with the famous works of Birdwhistell, Trager, and especially Hall from the Foreign Service Institute, particularly from 1951 to 1954.[3] Later on, for at least two decades, large-scale macro approaches mainly focused on geographically distributed differences during a first wave of studies. This body of work became dominant especially in the fields of economics and psychology (e.g., Hofstede, Trompenaars, Levine). Together with the growing

criticisms these studies received, the elaboration of cultural dimensions such as "individualism" and "collectivism" and to some extent even the concept of "culture" itself have fallen out of fashion and have largely been replaced by a heightened attention to the phenomena of hybridisation and highlighting the "across" aspect rather than looking at cultures as reified separate phenomena.

More recent approaches try to overcome the gap between seemingly opposing perspectives to the concept of "culture" by pointing to their different foci and their complementary contributions and by questioning their corresponding claim of absoluteness (Busch, 2015; Antor, 2020; Schröder, 2015; Wolf & Polzenhagen, 2006; Kecskes, 2014, Sharifian, 2017). In fact, many theories attempt to bring these kinds of perspectives together. This has given rise to the concept of *intercultures* defined as "situationally emergent and co-constructed phenomena that rely both on relatively definable cultural norms and models as well as situationally evolving features" (Kecskes, 2014, p. 14). This approach is in line with Loenhoff's (2003) observation that in interaction, indeed, individual predispositions blend with culturally and socially coined presuppositions. From this perspective, neither communication nor culture is solely conceivable from the subjective intentions or strategies displayed by the participating individuals, nor are they exclusively governed by a predetermined stock of knowledge and socially agreed-upon meaning structures.

As with culture itself, intercultural communication may also be conceptualised from different angles. For example, ten Thije (2020) illustrates how the notion has slowly become more and more removed from the idea that assumes all communication between people with different linguistic-cultural backgrounds must necessarily be communication in which culture becomes relevant to the participants in the interaction at hand. According to ten Thije (2020), five approaches to intercultural communication can be distinguished: (1) an interactive approach (e.g., Gumperz, 1982; Kecskes, 2014), (2) a contrastive approach (e.g, Lado, 1957; Hofstede, 1981), (3) a cultural representations approach (e.g, Beller & Leerssen, 2007), (4) a multilingual and linguistic diversity approach (e.g., Thije & Zeevaert, 2007), as well as (5) a transfer and intercultural competence approach (e.g., Bolten, 2020). As alluded to previously, our volume is grounded first and foremost within the first of these: the interactive approach. This is because we regard interculturality as something that only becomes an observable, analysable phenomenon through a rigorous consideration of various kinds of phenomena involved in multimodal interaction. In this light, this book views *culture* in terms of a dynamic construct co-constituted by interlocutors in interaction and as an emergent meaning based on the participants' experiences that are signalled as culturally relevant by them. By implication, then, we define *intercultural communication* by its situatedness within the interaction itself.

While the authors of each of the chapters that follow do approach notions of *culture* and *interculturality* from somewhat different theoretical angles and by building on the previous research of rather diverse perspectives (each individual chapter elucidates the perspective in which its conceptualisation of these notions is rooted in the chapter's introduction), the idea that these concepts only become observable and analysable by teasing out the phenomena of multimodal interaction is a unifying thread that ties the collection together and gives it a common theoretical foundation.

Multimodal interaction

So what, then, is multimodality, and why is it crucial to an analysis of intercultural interaction? As the term is used today, it defines the intersemiotic character of human communication, i.e., the fact that humans develop, use and combine all sorts of resources to make meaning, of which language is only one. The term "multimodality" first entered linguistics, media and communication studies (and more broadly the arts, humanities, and social sciences) thanks to the pioneering work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996/2006, 2001) on texts combining images and writing. Yet multimodality is not only a feature of disembodied texts and artefacts but also a characteristic of embodied social interaction. "Multimodal interaction" therefore refers to the understanding of human communication and interaction through the combination of different semiotic resources (Norris, 2004). In face-to-face settings, it can be conceived as "bodied practice," "multisensory achievement," "visible action" in a "semiotic environment" or as "embodied interaction."

In recent times, the paradigm of *embodiment*[4] has increasingly led semiotic, cognitive, and interactional fields of research to focus their work on multimodal talk-in-interaction (Deppermann, 2013; Müller et al., 2013; Goodwin, 2007; Schröder, 2017, 2022; Schröder & Streeck, 2022). Although the use of this label can be criticised for maintaining a centrality for talk, it is nonetheless laudable that increasing attention in conversation analysis has been brought to the relevance of the material environment, embodied activities, as well as environmentally coupled gestures (Mondada, 2019; Goodwin, 2018). Along these lines, social interaction is conceived as locally organised and achieved incrementally both in simultaneity and in temporal-sequential unfolding, as well as through the co-deployment of embodied multisensorial resources by the co-participants *in situ* (Goodwin, 2000, 2007; Mondada, 2013, 2019; Deppermann, 2013).

Due to this shared interest in embodiment, social, semiotic, cognitive, and interactional approaches have begun to influence one another and draw on one another's findings. For example, the study of prosody makes it possible to reveal elements of experience, emotion, and

stance to the researcher but also reveals resources for constructing and organising the shared experience that therefore become a locus of embodied *habitus* within the dialogic framework (Goodwin et al., 2012; Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018). At the same time, gesture studies have pointed to the integration of speech and gesture and moved away from a mere cognitive conceptualisation of gesture as representation of thought. Gestures are therefore instead conceived as "a way of cognitively existing, of cognitively being, at the moment of speaking" (McNeill, 2005, p. 99).

To McNeill's psychological-pragmatic but still rather individualistic approach, Streeck (2008, 2013, 2017) adds a more praxeological and intersubjective view by emphasising the role of gesture in embodied interaction and the organisation of interactional trajectories. Meyer et al. (2017) then, offer Merleau-Ponty's (1964 [1959]) concept of "intercorporeality" as an alternative since it refers to pre-predicative and pre-reflexive planes of engagement: in intercorporeal interaction, a double embodiment is created in which interacting body-subjects are coupled since the body is experienced as both subject and object at the same time, e.g., in the act of a handshake (Meyer et al., 2017). Here, social cognition arises when bodies are intertwined in an ongoing process of bodily resonance, which can be mimetic or complementary. At this point, culture becomes a crucial component of such an analysis, since speech and gesture are both related to sedimentation and creativity (Cuffari & Streeck, 2017). This aligns with the idea Kecsckes (2014) advocates by blending the cultural backdrop with *in situ* and *ad hoc* created intercultures in interaction. This implies first of all the necessity that cultural phenomena be considered when analysing the embodied practices of interactants, as well as the importance of multimodal analysis for understanding cultural and intercultural dynamics. Yet these two strands of research are not well developed yet, and the chapters that follow stand as our attempt to address this.

While most situated analyses on intercultural interactions to date have proceeded with interactants' use of language as a starting point, this should not be taken as a given. A multimodal approach to intercultural communication can shed light onto the dynamics of emergence, co-construction, and the negotiation of sharedness and non-sharedness more holistically in order to account for overall meanings made through all resources and for semiotic practices shared among interlocutors (Chapter 2 by Adami, this volume)—after all, culture is often considered to be shared values and behaviours (hence, translated semiotically, as meanings and forms, and their associations in signs). Moreover, and beyond the semiotic, such a multimodal approach to intercultural phenomena can underscore the sensorial perceptions and the actions a "cultural stranger" has to learn to coordinate in order to "feel through" dyssynchronous interactions into communicative synchrony as a form of intercultural competence,

engaging in a new rhythmic exchange and attunement with culturally different patterns of practice (see Chapter 3, Sekimoto, this volume).

Finally, there is a need to go beyond the boundaries of embodied interaction, which, according to Nevile (2015) has been the label that has proliferated widely since 2001, to the point where the "embodied turn" was initiated. In our volume, we opt for "multimodal" since the interactions are not always and not only embedded in (inter)corporeal actions but can also happen online, taking place through avatars or by means of images, writing, and music. A multimodal approach to intercultural communication can indeed be crucial beyond the realm of face-to-face communication, exploring interactions with (perceived) others taking place online. Indeed, a whole new area of research on intercultural interaction is emerging and needed for interactions taking place online. Encountering others digitally rather than in person is an increasingly frequent and ordinary communicative experience for many, and yet it adds layers of complexity and requires further development in analytical approaches from those elaborated for face-to-face interaction. In digital media platforms, the embodied aspects are paired with disembodiment and with visual and auditory resources that semiotically/textually represent participants' experiences and actions in interaction. In online interactions thus, sensory, performative, and representational aspects intertwine, while new dynamics and arena for cultural affiliation emerge too (see Chapter 10, Toh et al., this volume).

In light of all this, this volume takes stock of the work done in embodied interaction, multimodal conversation analysis, and multimodal interaction analysis, applies these lenses to the analysis of intercultural communication, and brings it forward to encompass social, cognitive, semiotic and sensorial phenomena. It attempts various integrations among the respective approaches and accounts for both face-to-face and online contexts (whose boundaries are increasingly blurred, as the digitalisation of social interaction through video-mediated apps during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown), thus looking at the complex intertwining of both embodied and disembodied practices.

Theoretical and methodological perspectives in dialogue

As previously hinted, in addressing interaction, multimodality, intercultural communication, and the relationship between culture and language from different disciplinary angles over our respective careers, we have noted a number of holes in the research that stem from a lack of dialogue between perspectives.

While it is certainly the case that a recent "multimodal turn" or "embodied turn" can be observed in fields like conversation analysis and interactional linguistics (see, e.g., Nevile, 2015; Deppermann et al., 2021; Cekaite & Mondada, 2021) and that these developments are beginning

to build exciting bridges between structural, post-structural, social, and cognitive perspectives on interaction (see, e.g., Müller et al., 2013), it is nonetheless the case that intercultural matters are still a rather neglected issue in these types of work or narrowed down to mere multilingual phenomena. Anyway, there is a growing interest within areas such as the study of English as a lingua franca (ELF) in approaching the (inter) cultural side of ELF talk from a conversation-analytical perspective (see, e.g., Baker, 2015, 2018; Zhu, 2015). This line of inquiry has just begun to consider the important role of multimodal resources of communication. In parallel, interactional-sociolinguistic researchers who have been trying to make sense of multilingual practices like *translanguaging* by taking increasingly multimodal perspectives (e.g., García & Wei, 2014) are usually reluctant to embrace the role of the cognitive in their analysis. At the same time, studies on multimodality that have developed and flourished within social semiotics and multimodal interaction analysis (for reference works, see, e.g., Norris, 2004; Kress, 2010; Jewitt et al., 2016) have arisen and caught a lot of attention, e.g., in second language teaching, but have nevertheless not devoted adequate attention to intercultural contexts (Adami, 2018).

The field of intercultural communication has largely approached these same bodies of research from the reverse direction. Much work within this vein has indeed already been done from the anthropological, psychological, sociological, and political perspectives, but this work has frequently tended to focus on macro analytic research, cross-cultural discourse patterns, or written discourse and media. Work that is informed by interaction *in situ*, i.e., based on an embodied, linguistic, semiotic, and multimodal understanding of communication as it occurs, is still quite limited.[5] For example, cultural linguistics is a linguistic strand that focuses on the cultural aspect, stressing the important role of cultural models and schemas; still, that body of work rarely bases its analysis on transcribed interaction that brings together verbal, prosodic, and gestural-corporal cues as well as the use of resources such as space and handling of objects but instead leans on corpus-based written data or singular anecdotes (see, e.g., Sharifian, 2015, 2017).

In a departure from these earlier perspectives, each of the chapters in this volume—while approaching these issues from different disciplinary perspectives and with different methodological specifics—all use an analysis of the fine-grained detail of multimodal interaction to reveal how alterity, sharedness, intercultures, cultural key concepts, dimensions, attitudes, and identities are co-constructed *in situ* and multimodally, that is, corporally, gesturally, verbally, prosodically, and proxemically, integrating also space, objects, technologies, and any resources that interactants use to make meaning with others in a specific context. As a part of this, each of the chapters in this volume also draws attention to the question of how interlocutors employ semiotic resources and communicative strategies to

co-construct common ground and mutual understanding and, as a result of the interwoven character of the worldviews and communicative practices that the co-participants bring into the interaction, also construct emergent, shared cultural spaces. The importance of focusing on the multimodal process of the construction of meaning in situated interaction is last but not least also due to the need to conceive of "understanding culture and intercultural" as inherently involving the need to take into account participants' points of view.

Structure of the volume and presentation of the chapters

In tune with the aim of showing the potential for dialogue among diverse perspectives, we have structured the volume in three sections that reflect more global aims of the various chapters. A first section on "Conceptualising Multimodality in Intercultural Interaction" includes two chapters that have a more theoretical focus, while also using insights drawn from the analysis of specific examples as a support for the perspectives they advance. These chapters are not intended to sketch the boundaries of the sole possible theoretical perspectives on the issue; rather they develop two specific approaches—one on social semiotic multimodality (Adami, Chapter 2) and the other (Sekimoto, Chapter 3) on sensory multimodality—that fill a gap in the existing frameworks for the analysis of intercultural dynamics. The two chapters expand the perspectives of social and sensorial multimodality respectively to resonate with and reconceptualise culture and intercultural communication and offer conceptual toolkits to look at encounters with others. Elisabetta Adami lays out a theoretical conceptualisation of multimodality drawn from social semiotics integrated with conceptualisations in cultural anthropology and intercultural communication. It introduces the key principles, concepts, and tools of an integrated approach and shows how the perspective can be used to uncover and trace the interculturality within any communication, not just communication among people from different nationalities or languages spoken. In Chapter 3, Sachi Sekimoto focuses on sensorial multimodality, situating the body as an active and open field of experience. On the basis of examples dealing with traditional Japanese femininity as a form of embodied entrainment, Sekimoto argues that bodies that sense and feel are at the heart of multimodal interaction.

In the two sections that follow, chapters instead take issues of theory in cognitive, cultural, sociolinguistic, and ethnographic research as jumping-off points for methodological and situational applications. The second section on "Analysing Multimodality in Intercultural Interaction" hosts chapters that use fine-grained analysis to provide methodological insights; the chapters in this section show how existing approaches can be integrated and applied to intercultural interaction and how the analysis of gestures, gaze, and other semiotic resources can provide novel and

more nuanced insights on the meanings made by interactants in these contexts. In this way, Chapter 4 (Ladilova) draws on gesture studies and shows how analysis of co-speech gestures can be used to shed light onto participants' perspectives and conceptualisation patterns as well as onto how interactants try to co-construct common ground and achieve mutual understanding. Chapter 5 (Dailey-O'Cain and Sluchinski) shows how the combination of sociolinguistic perspectives on positioning and cognitive studies on membership categorisation, integrated through insights from gesture studies, can be used to reveal how participants construct their identities and those of their interlocutors, in a way that the analysis of speech alone could not. Aspects of communication such as gestures and gaze go beyond just what interactants are saying and provide insight into what they are thinking and feeling about their identities.

Finally, the third section on "Doing Multimodality in Intercultural Interaction" gathers chapters whose empirical analyses show how participants deploy multimodal resources to co-construct meaning with others, position themselves, and/or shape their own and their interlocutors' identities. In Chapter 6, Schröder looks at how gestures and prosody, together with verbal resources, are displayed by participants in a German foreign language classroom and how the understanding of the cultural specificities of modal particles comes to the fore, normally considered as extremely difficult to grasp through learning. She is thereby introducing a double perspective since she lays open the multimodality and interculturality of the use of modal particles, as well as that of the L2 teaching and learning process. Chapter 7 by Milene Mendes de Oliveira and Adriana Fernandes Barbosa also deals with a language-learning context, but this time from the perspective of pre-service and in-service teachers of English as a foreign language, asking for how they negotiate their personal and professional identities as future teachers. The authors find that the participants use a wide range of multimodal resources to negotiate their conceptions of themselves and the languages they speak by deploying gestures and gaze to position themselves in relation to what is said and to each other, revealing and at the same time co-constructing their worldviews and beliefs on languages, as well as on foreign language learning and teaching. In Chapter 8, Fernanda Roque Amendoeira and Thiago da Cunha Nascimento analyse taboos in intercultural communication and ask how interactants use multimodal resources to negotiate tense subject areas such as sexuality, homophobia, death, financial status, and religion. They find that euphemisms involve more than just the substitution of one word for another and comprise other semiotic resources such as manual gestures, facial gestures, and laughter. In keeping with this theme, in Chapter 9, Emilee Moore, Margaret R. Hawkins, Júlia Llompart, and Claudia Vallejo use a transmodal analysis to look at how issues of sexuality that arise from possible interpretations of a video produced by a group of youth are deemed too taboo to be shared with their international peers.

This research sheds light on how new meanings arise in the transcultural flow of semiotic resources and how communicating with others through multimodal artefacts, such as videos, can present challenges for the different interpretations that visuals might achieve—and the impact this might have in different social contexts. Finally, Weimin Toh, Fei Victor Lim, and Elisabetta Adami examine the authoring of a gameplay video of YouTubers from different ethnic and national backgrounds through a social semiotic lens, analysing their presentation of themselves/avatars and their interactions with one another. The analysis examines the meanings expressed through their multimodal orchestration and shows how they (re)produce the culture of their gaming affinity space; while the participants' ethnic and national backgrounds are irrelevant in the dynamics of sharedness and non-sharedness emerging in the video, intercultural dynamics emerge instead in terms of difference and the co-construction of common ground both among the interactants and with viewers (including the analysts).

While the chapters of this book can scarcely be regarded as a comprehensive inventory of the different types of work that can be done on multimodal communication in intercultural interaction, they do bring together theory, data, and perspectives not just from around the world but also from different disciplines and different jumping-off points in their approaches. Our aim in this book is therefore not just to show what is possible within this field but also to underscore the intersections of the multimodal and the intercultural in interaction research, in order to make such research accessible to scholars who are already familiar with some but not all of these lines of inquiry.

Notes

1. https://wun.ac.uk/wun/research/view/intercultural-communication-in-interaction-multimodal-approaches/
2. For Bachmann-Medick (2016) the linguistic turn sets out in the seventies with the premise that people's understanding of reality is largely shaped by the usage of language, a view that is replaced later on by the performative view that puts emphasis on culture as generated through continuous acts of performance. The postcolonial and translational turns focus on "zones of contention" and the fractured reality, while the reflexive turn brings in the researcher's limited pre-understanding. More recent approaches stress new spatial perceptions expressed in the prefix *trans-* that goes "across" and "'beyond" traditional cultural boundaries. The iconic turn draws attention to visual culture, such as images, videos, and films. Finally, the cognitive turn promotes a non-dualistic approach and looks at the brain as a natural as well as a cultural phenomenon (cf. also Delanoy, 2020).
3. Hall himself was strongly influenced by cultural anthropology, linguistics, ethology, the study of animal behaviour, and Freudian psychoanalytic theory. His work deals chiefly with out-of-awareness communication behaviour, the unknowing and often uncontrolled dimension of interpersonal communication (Everett et al., 2002) and has recently influenced a revitalisation in the context of the "embodied turn."

4. See also Mondada (2019) who refers to this turn as "corporeal," "intercorporeal," "carnal" or "embodied."
5. For an overview, see the study conducted by Kim (2017) on the main topics of intercultural communication research currently focused on by IC scholars and practitioners: Studies on cultural diversity, conflict and competence compose 36%, cross-cultural studies such as cultural dimension studies in business compose 16%, critical intercultural communication approaches compose 18%, intergroup studies, such as multilingual educational context approaches, compose 9% of the total amount, works related to educational intercultural trainings compose 6%, and 15% of the total is composed by studies on culture in communication where talk-in-interaction falls in but only forms a small part and does not even explicitly include other communicative resources (see, for an overview, Kulich et al., 2020).

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