

DEVELOPING COSMOPOLITANISM THROUGH INTERCULTURAL MEDIATION ACTIVITIES: AN AFTER-SCHOOL DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT IN CATALONIA

DESARROLLO DEL COSMOPOLITISMO MEDIANTE ACTIVIDADES DE MEDIACIÓN INTERCULTURAL: UN PROYECTO EXTRACURRICULAR DE NARRATIVA DIGITAL EN CATALUÑA

DÉVELOPPER LE COSMOPOLITISME PAR LE BIAIS DES ACTIVITÉS DE MÉDIATION INTERCULTURELLE : UN PROJET DE NARRATION NUMÉRIQUE EXTRASCOLAIRE EN CATALOGNE

DESENVOLVENDO O COSMOPOLITISMO POR MEIO DE ATIVIDADES DE MEDIAÇÃO INTERCULTURAL: UM PROJETO PÓS-ESCOLAR DE NARRAÇÃO DE HISTÓRIAS DIGITAIS NA CATALUNHA

Miaomiao Zhang

PhD Candidate, Department of Language, Literature and Social Science Education, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Cerdanyola del Vallès, Spain.

secondsmiao@outlook.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0279-2999>

[org/0000-0003-0279-2999](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0279-2999)

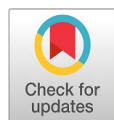
ABSTRACT

This article analyzes interaction taking place in an after-school digital storytelling project, involving a group of teenagers in Catalonia, Spain, with different linguistic-cultural backgrounds. It focuses on intercultural mediation activities carried out in one of the early project sessions in which a young girl of Ghanaian origin mobilizes her previous life experience to mediate, for her local peers in Catalonia, understanding of a video produced by Ugandan youth. The data is transcribed and analyzed using a multimodal conversation analytic perspective. Drawing on the theoretical concepts of intercultural mediation, cosmopolitanism, and funds of knowledge, this article investigates the following: (a) how the girl mobilizes her funds of knowledge to mediate the content of the video and the other audience members and, (b) how cosmopolitanism is developed in intercultural mediation. The article also touches on how intercultural mediation is collaboratively constructed across modes, languages, and material objects. The findings indicate that the young participants' cosmopolitan stances are enacted and enabled in intercultural mediation, as the youngsters can make sense of cultural concepts that they can not tackle as well on their own. The findings further help to reconceptualize the competences, knowledge, and resources of youth in the superdiverse and interconnected world.

Keywords: intercultural mediation, cosmopolitanism, funds of knowledge, digital storytelling

RESUMEN

En este artículo se analizan las interacciones, en un extracurricular proyecto de narrativa digital, entre un grupo de adolescentes de Cataluña, España, provenientes



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de distintos contextos lingüísticos y culturales. El artículo se centra en las actividades de mediación intercultural realizadas en una de las primeras sesiones del proyecto, en la cual una joven de origen ghanés moviliza su experiencia de vida para mediar, para sus compañeros de Cataluña, la comprensión de un video producido por jóvenes ugandeses. Los datos se transcriben y se analizan mediante un enfoque de análisis conversacional multimodal. Con base en los conceptos teóricos de mediación intercultural, cosmopolitismo y fondos de conocimiento, en este artículo se investigan los siguientes aspectos: 1) la manera en que la joven moviliza sus fondos de conocimiento para mediar el contenido del video para los demás espectadores, y 2) la manera en que el cosmopolitismo se desarrolla a través de la mediación intercultural. El artículo también describe cómo la mediación intercultural se construye de forma colaborativa entre modos, lenguas y objetos materiales. Los resultados indican que la mediación intercultural posibilita y promueve las posturas cosmopolitas de los jóvenes participantes, pues estos comprenden conceptos culturales que no podrían asir del mismo modo por sí solos. Los resultados también ayudan a reconceptualizar los conocimientos, competencias y recursos de los jóvenes en un mundo superdiverso e interconectado.

Palabras clave: mediación intercultural, cosmopolitismo, fondos de conocimiento, narrativa digital

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article analyse les interactions qui ont eu lieu dans le cadre d'un projet de narration numérique extrascolaire, impliquant un groupe d'adolescents de Catalogne (Espagne) issus de milieux linguistiques et culturels différents. Il se concentre sur les activités de médiation interculturelle menées lors de l'une des premières sessions du projet, au cours de laquelle une jeune fille d'origine ghanéenne mobilise son expérience de vie antérieure pour servir de médiatrice, pour ses pairs locaux, d'une vidéo produite par des jeunes Ougandais. Les données sont transcrites et analysées dans une perspective d'analyse de conversation multimodale. S'appuyant sur les concepts théoriques de médiation interculturelle, de cosmopolitisme et de fonds de connaissances, cet article étudie les points suivants : 1) comment la jeune fille mobilise ses fonds de connaissances pour assurer la médiation entre le contenu de la vidéo et les autres membres du public et 2) comment le cosmopolitisme est développé dans la médiation interculturelle. L'article aborde également la manière dont la médiation interculturelle est construite en collaboration à travers les modes, les langues et les objets matériels. Les résultats indiquent que les positions cosmopolites des jeunes participants sont mises en œuvre et rendues possibles dans le cadre de la médiation interculturelle, car elles donnent un sens à des concepts culturels qu'ils n'auraient pas pu aborder aussi bien seuls. Les résultats aident en outre à reconceptualiser les compétences, les connaissances et les ressources des jeunes dans un monde super-diversifié et interconnecté.

Mots-clés : médiation interculturelle, cosmopolitisme, fonds de connaissances, narration numérique

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa a interação que ocorre em um projeto pós-escolar de narração de histórias digitais, envolvendo um grupo de adolescentes da Catalunha (Espanha) com diferentes origens linguístico-culturais. Ele se concentra nas atividades de mediação intercultural realizadas em uma das primeiras sessões do projeto, na qual uma jovem de origem ganense mobiliza sua experiência de vida anterior para

mediar a compreensão de um vídeo produzido por jovens de Uganda para seus colegas locais. Os dados são transcritos e analisados usando uma perspectiva analítica de conversação multimodal. Com base nos conceitos teóricos de mediação intercultural, cosmopolitismo e fundos de conhecimento, este artigo investiga o seguinte: 1) como a garota mobiliza seus fundos de conhecimento para mediar entre o conteúdo do vídeo e os outros membros da audiência e 2) como o cosmopolitismo é desenvolvido na mediação intercultural. O artigo também aborda como a mediação intercultural é construída de forma colaborativa entre modos, idiomas e objetos materiais. As descobertas indicam que as posturas cosmopolitas dos jovens participantes são promulgadas e possibilitadas na mediação intercultural, já que eles dão sentido a conceitos culturais que não conseguiriam abordar tão bem sozinhos. As descobertas também ajudam a reconceituar as competências, o conhecimento e os recursos dos jovens em um mundo superdiverso e interconectado.

Palavras-chave: mediação intercultural, cosmopolitismo, fundos de conhecimento, narração de histórias digitais

Introduction

Transnational mobility has become an integral part of human life and has had a significant impact on the linguistic and cultural diversity of schools and society, presenting new challenges for language education (Erling & Moore, 2021). Approaches to language teaching and learning have also shifted, and intercultural dimensions, including the development of learners as intercultural mediators, are considered of paramount importance (Busch, 2022; Zarate, 2004).

Intercultural mediation, I argue, implies an ethical engagement with linguistically and culturally diverse people. It includes an acknowledgment of the value of all languages and cultures and an open attitude toward the possibilities that result from cross-linguistic and cross-cultural contact (Liddicoat & Derivry-Plard, 2021). Empathy, hospitality, and respect for “otherness” are key components of intercultural mediation (Stathopoulou, 2015, p. 24). These ideas are compatible with the concept of cosmopolitanism, which is a key theoretical construct in the research presented in this article.

Cosmopolitanism refers to an ethical stance emphasizing individuals’ shared responsibilities and obligations as global citizens towards one another, including dispositions of respect for cultural diversity, openness, care, curiosity, hospitality, and empathy towards others in intercultural relationships (Appiah, 2006; Hawkins, 2014, 2018; Nussbaum, 1997; Robbins & Horta, 2017; among others). Little existing literature on intercultural mediation in the field of language and cultural education has explicitly incorporated the concept of cosmopolitanism or demonstrated how cosmopolitanism might be enacted and enabled by youth by studying their interactions at a micro level.

In responding to these two gaps, in this article, I interpret intercultural mediation activities emerging in the audiovisual recording of a natural

interaction collected using ethnographic methods at an after-school digital storytelling project site in the province of Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain). Specifically, I zoom in on a conversation between a group of teenagers as they watch a digital story shared by youth from a site in Uganda which is part of the same project. In the interaction, a young girl of Ghanaian origin mobilizes her previous life experience—which I refer to in terms of funds of knowledge, following Moll, et al. (1992)—to mediate the cultural nuances of the digital story content for her peers. The objectives of this article are 1) to explore how this mobilization of funds of knowledge for intercultural mediation takes place and 2) to investigate how cosmopolitanism is developed during the mediation process. I further explore how intercultural mediation activity is collaboratively constructed across modes, languages, and material objects.

In the following section of the article, I discuss the theoretical foundations of the study, concentrating on the concepts of cultural mediation, cosmopolitanism, and funds of knowledge. The research methods deployed for the present study are then described. The majority of the article is devoted to data analysis, after which a discussion will be offered with theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical Framework

This study is founded on three interrelated concepts: intercultural mediation, cosmopolitanism, and funds of knowledge. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens through which to explore and analyze the complex dynamics of intercultural interaction, global citizenship, and culturally grounded learning. This section will delve into each theory, detailing its practical applications, and elucidating their interconnectedness and relevance to the research inquiry.

Intercultural Mediation

Intercultural mediation, also referred to as cultural mediation or cross-cultural mediation, is “a

complex, contextualised, embodied communicative process” (Liddicoat & Derivry-Plard, 2021, p. 5) implicating individuals and culture/society (Engeström, 1999). From a sociocultural standpoint, Engeström’s (1987) cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) provides a comprehensive framework for examining intercultural mediation. Rooted in Vygotskian psychology, CHAT highlights the significance of cultural tools and artifacts in shaping human cognition and activity. Vygotsky (1978) posited that higher psychological processes emerge through interactions with cultural tools and signs, which serve as mediational means, transforming individuals’ relationships with the world and facilitating the development of higher psychological functions. Consequently, mediation assumes a pivotal role in molding human cognition and activity, especially in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts.

According to CHAT, an activity system comprises subjects (individuals or groups), objects (goals or motives driving the activity), and mediational means (tools, signs, and symbols) that enable the transformation of objects into outcomes. Within intercultural mediation activities, subjects represent individuals or groups from varying cultural backgrounds; objects refer to shared goals or motives of understanding and cooperation; and mediational means encompass the cultural tools and artifacts employed to bridge communication and/or understanding gaps.

Within this framework, intercultural mediation can be perceived as a distinct type of activity that necessitates employing cultural tools to overcome barriers in understanding, communication, and collaboration across diverse cultural contexts. Language, in all cases, plays a central role in mediation as it served as the primary cultural tool.

Thus, intercultural mediation can take place (as it does in the data studied in this article) within processes of language mediation, in which a mediator transitions between a source language and culture and a target language and culture for the purpose

of facilitating understanding (North & Piccardo, 2016, p. 8; see Zhang & Llompert, 2021 for a detailed exploration of language mediation in the same data corpus as presented in this article). It can also be considered a relational activity that involves interpreting meanings intended by others for oneself and for others (Liddicoat, 2016). Thus, as Iriskhanova et al. (2004) indicate, intercultural mediation includes “understanding, explication, commenting, interpretation and negotiating various phenomena, facts, texts, behaviour, situations, feelings, emotions, etc., between people belonging to different cultures or subcultures” (p. 103) in which reflexivity and criticality are crucial (Byram, 2021; Kramsch, 1993).

Gohard-Radenkovic et al. (2004) define multiple roles of the mediator as “[a] facilitator intervening in the transmission of cultural information, an interpreter of cultures, an agent mediating intercultural communication” (p. 219). Intercultural mediators both analyze the meanings of others constructed within cultural framings and facilitate a cultural framing for those for whom they are mediating (Liddicoat & Derivry-Plard, 2021, p. 3). That is, the intercultural mediator is a pluricultural (and often plurilingual) intermediary who constantly interprets to help interlocutors successfully manage experiences of otherness. In doing so, one also creates a cultural acquisition space that goes beyond the presentation of cultural facts and moves towards a process of understanding foreignness (Kramsh, 1993, pp. 205–206). Successful cultural mediation mobilizes and develops pluricultural repertoires (Council of Europe, 2018) in overcoming sociocultural barriers, cultural prejudices, and cultural stereotypes, as well as creating positive pluricultural spaces for interlocutors from diverse national, regional, religious, and social subcultures for interaction and cooperation (Victoria, 2018).

Intercultural mediation relates to the notion of cultural awareness, which concerns idiolects, sociolects, diverse sub-cultures, styles, textual genres, and so forth (North & Piccardo, 2016, pp. 8–9).

Related to this, Byram (1997) defines critical cultural awareness as “an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (p. 53). In other words, it requires students to be able to critically analyze their own and others’ culturally determined assumptions. By doing so, one can develop an ability to help others discover and understand the cultures and societal backgrounds of different social groups they are unfamiliar with. Thus, being and becoming a competent intercultural mediator implies having a certain degree of intercultural competence (Busch, 2022; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Zarate, 2004). As Barrett et al. (2014) indicate, intercultural competence encompasses an association of attitudes, knowledge, understanding, and skills, which enable intercultural mediators to acknowledge people with different cultural affiliations, understand and respect their diverse perspectives, act appropriately in intercultural interactions, and establish positive and constructive relationships among interlocutors. In this sense, intercultural mediation and intercultural competence are closely related to cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism

In an interconnected and diverse world, where national hostilities and far-right discourses against cultural diversities persist, cultivating a sense of global citizenship and responsibility among students is vital. Drawing from ideas by Appiah (2006) and Kleingeld and Brown (2013), cosmopolitanism can be conceptualized as an ethical and educational stance promoting the notion that all human beings are, or ought to be, members of a global community. Within this community, individuals share responsibilities and obligations towards each other, regardless of nationality, race, or culture (Appiah, 2006). According to Birk (2014), holding a cosmopolitan perspective requires people to recognize that our obligations and commitments toward each other are not limited by national boundaries, to think about issues of identity, difference, and power inclusively, and

to maintain purposeful concern for all humanity, resulting in ethical and meaningful ends for global learning. Indeed, one of the rationales of the digital storytelling project studied in this article is that youth participants work collaboratively with local and global peers to explore commonalities and differences, thereby developing a “complex, multifaceted and layered view of human lives, identities and relationships” (Hawkins, 2020, p. 26).

Hawkins (2018, 2020) uses cosmopolitanism to indicate the way individuals interact with each other within the worldwide dynamics of mobility, whether these interactions occur through the movement of people, materials, resources, or messages. According to her, it is essential to recognize that the semiotic modes facilitating these encounters—whether in person or virtually—embody, reflect, and influence the meanings that are derived and constructed.

In other recent educational scholarship, cosmopolitanism has been empirically and conceptually enriched (e.g., Hansen, 2010, 2011, 2014; Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014; Kromidas, 2011; Moore et al., 2023, Rizvi, 2009; Vallejo et al., 2020; Vasudevan et al., 2014) with researchers emphasizing the crucial role of teachers/educators in facilitating cosmopolitanism through interventions and curriculum design. Hansen (2010, 2011, 2014) highlights the importance of localized experiences, interactions, and relationships in developing a cosmopolitan outlook. He contends that cosmopolitanism is not merely an abstract ideal but can manifest in everyday educational practices and experiences. In this sense, teachers can create conditions and environments allowing the cosmopolitan practice to occur, for instance, by ethically navigating *challenging conversations*, making practices and beliefs visible, experimenting with new digital tools, and promoting shared understanding through respectful and open dialogue (Stornaiuolo, 2016). Hull and Stornaiuolo (2014) argue that curricula should be centered around cosmopolitan activities promoting *proper distance*—a balance between engagement

and detachment, enabling students to reflect on diverse perspectives and develop empathy. Vasudevan et al. (2014) investigate the role of cosmopolitan literacies in an after-school program for court-involved youth, suggesting that fostering belonging through cosmopolitan literacies can create inclusive learning environments where students from diverse backgrounds collaborate and learn from one another. Sharing a similar context with the current study, other educational research employing the notion of cosmopolitanism has considered the role of young people in sharing their stories and experiences in virtual spaces (e.g., Hawkins 2014, 2018, 2020; Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014; Sobre-Denton, 2015; Moore et al., 2023, Vallejo et al., 2020).

Funds of Knowledge

In the present article, the notion of funds of knowledge is also taken into consideration to understanding the resources (i.e., the cultural tools and artifacts) that the youth participant at the center of the analysis brings to her intercultural mediational activities. A key principle of a sociocultural approach to learning is that knowledge is built from and within sociocultural experiences. Tied to this, the notion of funds of knowledge is based on the premise that “People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge” (González et al., 2005, pp. ix–x). People build up different funds of knowledge through their daily lived experiences in their households, communities, schools, and cultural practices. It follows that when different people come into contact, different funds of knowledge also come together. According to Moll et al. (1992), funds of knowledge refer to “the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for households and individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133).

The funds of knowledge approach considers students’ families and communities and their

practices, which anchor their prior knowledge and represent valuable educational resources. As Li (2014) stresses, funds of knowledge involve valuable cultural and cognitive assets that can be exploited in educational settings with the purpose of fostering culturally responsive, engaging, and successful learning. Furthermore, Esteban-Guitart (2016) claims that the aim of the funds of knowledge approach is to establish a connection between parents and teachers so that students’ backgrounds can be understood better and teaching can be adapted accordingly. Related to this, Noda and Zhu (2022) investigate multimodal interactions in an eikaiwa (English conversation) classroom in Japan and discover that when the students were encouraged to bring about their funds of knowledge in their conversation, eikaiwa is transformed into a far more meaningful and productive learning experience.

Method

The study reported on in this article was conducted as part of a broader ethnographically informed action/activist research project entitled “Inclusive epistemologies and practices of out-of-school English learning (IEP!)” (see Moore & Vallejo, 2021). One of the research sites in IEP! was an after-school digital storytelling project, part of the Global StoryBridges (GSB) educational network (led by professor Margaret R. Hawkins at the University of Wisconsin-Madison). GSB links young people from different global sites who create digital stories of their lives and communities. These videos, which utilize English as a lingua franca, are shared and discussed through a dedicated website. It is a youth-led project designed to develop participants’ communication skills in English, their digital skills, and their critical cosmopolitanism (Hawkins, 2014). All the project sites serve communities facing socioeconomic disadvantage. It is important to note that such “disadvantage” is relative to the local contexts; for example, access to mobile phones or computers—a topic which comes up in the interaction studied in

this article—is taken for granted by the Barcelona youth, while such access may not be universal for their global peers. Each site is equipped with Macbooks and video cameras provided by the project coordinator.

The digital storytelling activity at the site in Barcelona ran once a week for two hours at a youth center. There were 14 years olds involved in the project. The site was overseen by four adult facilitators and one student volunteer, who aimed to support the youths' work without controlling it.

The educational setting was complex, characterized by complicated relationships, inconsistent attendance, wavering interest, and different levels of English among the youth. Disruptive behavior by some participants and internal group tensions were also prevalent, making it challenging to initiate and maintain interactions in English. To preserve the identity of the participants, in the transcripts included in the analysis, the names of people are replaced by pseudonyms, with the exception of the adult facilitators—Emilee and Claudia—whose real names are used with their permission. Miaomiao, the author of this article, is one of the adult facilitators participating in the session. Nonetheless, she is not verbally involved in the interaction analyzed in this article.

The participants have a variety of lingua-cultural backgrounds. Nanyamka (pseudonym) was born in Ghana, West Africa, where she was educated in an English-medium school before migrating to Barcelona at the age of eight. Many of her relatives, including her mother and grandparents, remain in Ghana. The other youth participants involved in the interaction were born in Catalonia though some have families from other regions of Spain. Claudia and Emilee are originally from other parts of the world (Chile and Australia) and had lived in Catalonia for many years at the time the research was conducted.

All the youth participants are proficient in both Spanish and Catalan and are learning English.

Nanyamka, however, speaks English fluently, and she often spontaneously takes on the role of linguistic mediator in the sessions (see Zhang & Llompart, 2021, for an analysis of this). In this article, I focus on how she engages in intercultural mediation, drawing on her lived experiences in Ghana during her childhood.

The research project is qualitative in nature, guided by principles of ethnography to collect different data sources (mainly fieldnotes and audiovisual recordings) and of conversational analysis for examination, namely by attending to the sequential order and micro-details of interactional turns and tracing the *evidence* of analytical arguments within those turns. Before starting this research, informed consent was duly signed by the parents or legal guardians of all youth participants following the procedures and models approved by the IRB of the coordinating university. The data I analyze in this article is a video-recorded interaction from one of the early sessions in the after-school digital storytelling activity in Barcelona. The video has been transcribed using basic conversation analysis conventions (Jefferson, 2004), and I account for multimodal interactional features (e.g., gaze, facial expression, posture, and gesture) as well as a non-human actor (i.e., a laptop computer) in the transcripts by adding comments and/or screenshots when most relevant for the analysis.

Before turning to the analysis, I would like to reflect on my positionality in the research. As mentioned, I assumed a dual role as researcher and facilitator, actively participating in activities with the participants and offering support and assistance. As a researcher from China, my cultural background is markedly distinct from the backgrounds of the youth involved and my co-researchers. This discrepancy may give rise to certain cultural barriers in participating at the site and in interpreting the data while also allowing a unique perspective. I endeavor to uphold sensitivity and respect towards the participants and their viewpoints while remaining cognizant of the influence of my own cultural values and beliefs on

the research outcomes and evading the introduction of cultural biases during the research process. In some cases, transglobal or even local interactions may lead to controversy or perpetuate unfair positions. In such situations, my duty is to manage and mediate contentious issues and discussions following the guidelines laid out by Ho et al. (2017) and Noddings and Brooks (2017). Additionally, I draw attention to the appropriateness and respectfulness of the messages conveyed by the youth to their audience. This study adopts qualitative methods and lenses for data collection and analysis, which inherently encompass a certain degree of subjectivity. To ensure the reliability of the research results, I engaged in reflection during the data collection and analysis process and anchor my arguments in the evidence available in the data.

Results

In the sequences of interaction represented in the transcripts, some of the youth at the site in Barcelona decided to re-view a video shared the previous year by youth in Uganda via the Global Storybridges platform. Some of the youth at the Ugandan and Barcelona sites had already discussed this video the previous year using the asynchronous chat facility integrated into the platform. Consequently, a portion of the youth in Barcelona thus display a lack of interest in watching the video again. Building on this context, my focus is on the local interaction at the Barcelona site during the re-viewing. Before analyzing the local interaction, I describe the scenes in the video being watched by the Barcelona youth, as they are important for the interpretation of the data analyzed, referring to the analysis presented by Hawkins (2020).

The digital story, entitled “Domestic Work” was posted by the Ugandan youth on the Global Storybridges online platform in May 2017—one year earlier than the interaction analyzed in this article. As Hawkins (2020) describes it, the whole video is approximately 5 minutes long, and

it opens with the image of a world map. It then transitions to the next shot, showing a school, accompanied by the sound of the school bell. The third shot, captioned “Heading Home After Classes 3:00 pm,” shows a group of Ugandan youth wearing white uniforms, coming out of school, and speaking Lugbara with each other on their way home. The video then transitions to the next scene with the caption “Time for Domestic Work After Classes” showing two girls (with shaved hair) leaving their house carrying jerrycans (large yellow plastic containers with side handles) to a muddy stream. Then, a new scene appears, captioned “The Two Ladies Are In The Valley Fetching Water.” The two girls sink the jerrycans into the stream and fill them with water. They twist a rag into rings, put them on their heads, then balance the jerrycans on top of the fabric, and carry them home without using their hands. As they near home, music starts and the video transitions to a new shot. The two girls collect some dirt using a hoe, mix it with cow dung, soil, and water in a tub, then knead it with their hands into smooth mud. The caption says, “Smearing Their Parent’s room: Using the Manure of Cow Dung, Soil and Water.” They bring the tub inside the cottage and smear the floor using their hands. The next scene appears with the caption “The Three Boys Washing Utensils.” Three boys wash dishes, a kettle, and a pot outside on the ground and dry them on a wooden rack. Then, they take a plastic basin and a jerrycan of water to the farm and give water to cows.

The final part of the video lasts 1 minute and 23 seconds, all with background music, with the caption “The Four Boys are Pounding Cassava in the Traditional Way.” We see three boys enter a hut, and bring a metal pan, a mortar, a straw basket, and dried cassava outdoors, then they pound the cassava into cassava flour and sift it using the basket. The closing shot is a scrolling text, entitled “Acknowledgement,” expressing their appreciation of and thanks to God, to the project leaders, and to the video viewers.

It is important to note that in response to the video the previous year, the Barcelona youth created and posted a 49-second video titled “Trying to Imitate the Ugandan Friends’ Skills.” In their response video, they tried to carry water bottles on their heads and threw them into air, wasting water as they did so. In their words, “We throw the bottles because it’s funny and it’s a trend.” In their quite frivolous response, the Barcelona youth displayed, therefore, very limited understanding of and respect for the lives and customs of their Ugandan counterparts (see Hawkins, 2020 for a detailed analysis).

When re-viewing the video in the interaction studied in this article, the youth from the Barcelona site gradually display interest and curiosity but still lack the knowledge to understand the video content fully, as many of the scenes depicting the Ugandan youths’ lives in the video remain completely unfamiliar to them. Nanyamka takes on the role of intercultural mediator to interpret the cultural phenomena in the video for her peers, mobilizing her funds of knowledge (i.e., her previous life experiences in Ghana). I argue that the Catalan youths’ cosmopolitanism is enacted and enabled through Nanyamka’s mediation work.

The participants named in the transcription and who are visible in the screenshot from the video recording (Figure 1) are, from left to right, NAI: Naiara (pseudonym, youth participant); NAN: Nanyamka (pseudonym, youth participant); DAN: Daniel (pseudonym, youth participant); JUL: Julián (pseudonym, youth participant); SAR: Sara (pseudonym, youth

Figure 1 Screenshot from the Video Recording. Nan Tries to Draw her Peers’ Attention



participant); EMI: Emilee (a facilitator/researcher). CLA: Claudia (a facilitator/researcher) also participates in the interaction but is not in the camera view. Miaomiao (a facilitator/researcher/author of this article) is also present but does not verbally participate in this interaction.

Extract 1 begins with Nanyamka, in line 1, trying to draw her peers’ attention to the video and silence them, both verbally (“pst pst pst”) and non-verbally (placing her index finger on her mouth). the analysis continues after Extract 1.

Extract 1

- 01 NAN: °pst (.) pst pst° ((placing her index finger up on her mouth))
- 02 ((all the participants are looking at the computer))
- 03 SAR: ((to NAN)) qué las chicas también (.) con cosa en el pelo y todo (1) o parece
that what the girls also (.) with something in their hair and everything (1) or so it seems
- 04 NAN: (.)
- 05 SAR: (.) en plan que preguntamos eso.
(.) you know we asked about that.
- 06 NAN: es verdad=
it’s true=
- 07 SAR: =porque (.) ellos nos preguntaron que por qué teníamos el pelo largo.
=because(.)they asked us why we had long hair.
- 08 NAN: largo (.) y nosotras no hicimos eso.
long(.) and we didn’t do that.
- 09 SAR: sí.
yes.
- 10 (2.5)
- 11 NAN: yo me acuerdo llevaba un uniforme madre mía qué feo el uniforme.
I remember I wore a uniform oh my goodness how ugly it was.
- 12 (3)
- 13 NAI: es una niña?
is it a girl?
- 14 NAN: sí.
yes.
- 15 NAI: es otra niña?
is that another girl?
- 16 NAN: sí. (1) quieres ver una foto de cuando era pequeña? espera. ((looking for a
- 17 picture on her phone))
yes. (1) do you want to see a photo of when I was little? wait.

18 NAI: sí me la has enseñado pero:
yes you have shown it to me but:
 19 NAN: ((referring to scene in which girls carry water on the heads)) y eso es lo que
 20 hacía mi madre- con mi madre.
and that's what i did my mother- with my mother.
 21 SAR: y dijeron que había leones por ahí pero que no solían atacar.
and they said there were lions but they weren't used to attacking.
 22 NAN: ((laughs)) la () dice come ahí come ahí () (.) la () hace un montón de
 23 estupideces (.) ((points at the computer screen, places her hand on head,
 24 Figure 2)) y haces eso te le pones en la cabeza para: eso.
the () says eat there eat there () (.) the () does a lot of stupid things(.) and you do that you put it on your head for: that.

Figure 2 Nan Pointing at the Computer Screen and Placing Hand on Head



25 NAI: ((to NAN)) pero con qué graban?
but what do they record with?
 26 NAN: eso ((pointing at the computer screen)) (0.5) te lo haces [en redondo ((gestures
 27 of twisting a rag in a circle, Figure 3))
that (0.5) you do it [in a ring

Figure 3 Nan Twisting a Rag in a Circle



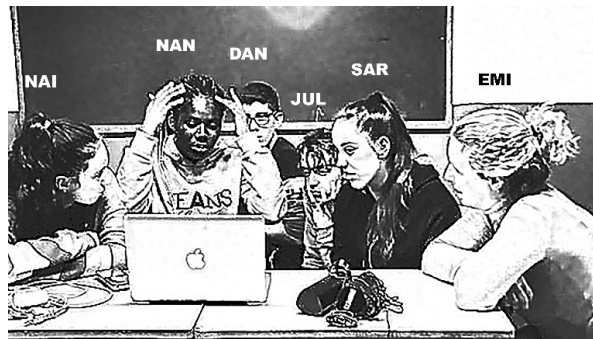
28 SAR: [con qué graban? (.)
 29 con la cámara?
[what do they record with? (.) with a camera?
 30 NAN: son pobres pero no tanto. ((laughing))
they are poor but not that poor.
 31 NAI: ((laughing slightly)) () así tan (.) no sé.
() so much (.) i don't know.
 32 NAN: ya tanto no. (1) y eso te lo pone- yo a eso [(.)
 ((gestures of twisting a rag in a
 33 circle, Figure 4)) hace: qué?
now so much no. (1) and that puts it- i do that [(.) does: what?

Figure 4 Nan Twisting a Rag in a Circle



34 NAI: [(.)
 35 JUL: ((to NAN)) ah para que no te duela tanto.
ah so it doesn't hurt so much.
 36 NAN: ((to JUL, gestures showing how to make use of the rag, Figure 5)) no no es para
 37 que no te duela sino para que se aguante también. (.) lo haces redondo (.) y hace-
 38 depende de qué tamaño a veces puede [ser pequeño o más. (.) te lo ()
 39 [pones (.) o puede ser hasta flat (.) o hasta incluso: o tsk. ay cómo se dice?
no it is not so that it does not hurt but so that it can hold on too. (.) you make it round (.) and does- it

Figure 5 Gestures Showing How to Make Use of the Rag



depends on what size sometimes it can [be small or smaller. (.)] you (.) [put it (.) or it can be even flat (.) or even: or tsk. uh how do you say?

40 NAI: [(looks at NAN)]

41 DAN: [(turns around and look at the computer)]

42 JUL: al igual llevo algo en la cabeza yo se me caen.

like i have something on my head i drop it baby.

43 NAN: pues es para que sujete.

well it's for you to hold.

44 NAI: ((pointing at the computer screen)) tu vivías así?

did you live like this?

45 NAN: no. (.) vivía en una casa a ver: era eso. (.) era igual o peor que esa.

no. (.) lived in a house let's see: it was that. (.) it was the same or worse than that.

46 ((music from the computer))

47 NAN: ((swinging head to the rhythm of the music)) uh céline dion.

12

While watching the video, Sara begins recalling (Line 3) the asynchronous chat conversation with the Ugandan youth the previous year, when the digital story was originally shared, opening a sequence that lasts until Line 9 in which the Barcelona youth remember the questions exchanged by the two groups about their hairstyles and head-dresses at the time. In Line 11, reacting to the image of the Ugandan students in uniform on the screen, Nanyamka recalls her time at school in Ghana wearing a school uniform and makes an exaggerated evaluation — “madre mía que feo el uniforme” (“oh my goodness how ugly was it”). She thereby positions herself as somebody with lived experience of using a cultural feature reflected in the video.

The viewing of the video continues. Naiara asks Nanyamka, who is thereby positioned as a cultural expert, whether the Ugandan youth appearing on the screen, who have shaved heads, are girls (Lines 13 and 15). Nanyamka confirms with a “sí” (“yes”) in Lines 14 and 16, then she asks if Naiara would like to see a photo from her childhood, in which she presumably has a similar haircut to the girls on the screen. She looks for a picture on her mobile phone. Naiara says she would like to see the photo but also starts that she thinks she has seen it before.

In Lines 19–20, in reaction the scene in the video in which girls carry water on their heads, Nanyamka explains that she did similar work with her mother. Sara, in Line 21, again refers to the asynchronous chat with the Ugandan youth the previous year, in which the Catalan youth asked stereotypical questions about Africa, including whether there were lions. Following a comment which is not entirely audible, in Lines 23–24 Nanyamka points at the computer screen and places her hand on her head trying to explain to her Barcelona peers how to do the work done by the Ugandan youth in the video. After this, Naiara questions what device the Ugandan youth would have used to make their film (Line 25), displaying another stereotypical understanding of Africans as being poor as evidenced also in later turns (Lines 30 and 31). In Line 26, Nanyamka does not seem to have heard Naiara’s question about how the Ugandan youth had recorded, as she continues with her explanation of how water is carried, accompanying it with embodied movements (gestures of twisting a rag in a circle, Lines 26 and 27). Sara does notice Naiara’s question, however, and repeats it in overlap, inquiring whether the Ugandan youth use a camera to record (Lines 28–29). Thus, Naiara and Sara’s focus and interest are seemingly not the video’s content, but other aspects related to their stereotypical understanding of Uganda as being a poor African nation where people cannot access technology. In the following line, Nanyamka responds by affirming that “son pobres pero no tanto” (“they are poor but not that much”), followed by a mitigating laugh, possibly challenging her peers’ understanding that the Ugandan youth are too poor to have access to video recording devices. After a comment from Naiara which is not entirely understandable in Line 31, but in which she presumably justifies her understanding that Ugandans are relatively poor, Nanyamka clarifies that Ugandans are not as poor as they were before (“ya tanto no”, “now so much no”, Line 32). She then, refocuses and continues her explanation about carrying water (Lines 32–33).

In Line 35, Julián, who has not spoken thus far and who is concentrating on watching the video, asks Nanyamka if the rag the girls on the screen are twisting is used to prevent pain. In response to the question, Nanyamka, in Lines 36–37, states that the rag is also used to help with balance, and she mobilizes embodied actions (i.e., gestures showing how to make use of the rag, Figure 5), alongside a detailed description of the rag, to help her peers better understand the function and the production method of this tool, which also catches both Naiara and Daniel’s attention (Lines 40–41). Julián then comments that he would not be able to carry anything on his head like the Uganda youth do (Line 42) and Nanyamka, in the next line, emphasizes that the twisted rag is beneficial for holding what is being carried in place.

The Barcelona youth keep watching the digital story, and Naiara points at the computer screen, asking Nanyamka if she used to live in a similar house to the people in the video (“tu vivías así?”; “did you live like this?”, Line 44). This question might be considered either a face-threatening or hurtful one for Nanyamka, or a display of Naiara’s interest in Nanyamka’s life in Ghana. Nanyamka appears to interpret it in terms of the latter, as evidenced by her straightforward response that she lived in a house that was “igual o peor que esa” (“the same or worse than that,” Line 45). Indeed, Naiara and Nanyamka are close friends, and their inquiries and responses need to be interpreted within a frame of friendship (Kromidas, 2011). In Line 46, Nanyamka changes the topic, commenting on the music playing in the video, and sways her head to the rhythm.

Extract 2 is the continuation of Extract 1. The analysis follows the extract.

Extract 2

- 48 ((all participants are looking at the computer screen))
 49 NAI: ((pointing at the computer screen, looking at NAN)) tienen (.) tienen: doce años?
are they (.) are they: twelve years old?

- 50 (2)
 51 NAN: ((points at the computer screen)) éste tiene cara de ser doce.(2) y ese tendría
 52 unos [quince o dieciséis.
This one has the face of being twelve years old. (2) and that one would probably be [fifteen or sixteen years old.
 53 SAR: [me parecen muy altos ((points at the computer screen)) no? ese parece
 54 (.) igual.
[they look very tall right? that looks the same (.)
 55 NAN: éste tendrá unos catorce quince eh? (.) estos tienen catorce (.)
this one must be about fourteen or fifteen years old eh? (.) these are fourteen (.)
 56 (4)
 57 NAI: ((points at the computer screen)) y esta también?
and this one too?
 58 NAN: puede ser no sé (.) a lo mejor es el hermano mayor quien le está ayudando o
 59 algo.
maybe i don't know (.) he looks like a big brother who is helping something.
 60 SAR: bueno (.)
well (.)
 61 NAI: oye qué bien actúa no? [en plan: no hay ninguna cámara.
look here how well he acts right? [like: there is no camera.
 62 NAN: [((laughs)) (3) ((singing)) la vaca lola tiene cabeza y
 63 [tiene cola y hace mú:
lola the cow has a head and [has a tail and says moo:
 64 [((the moo of a cow is heard from the video))
 65 (25)
 66 NAN: en verdad aunque parezca: puede parecer aburrido pero si estás así tío no sé te lo
 67 pasas bien.
in reality although it seems: it may seem boring but if you are like this man i don't know you have a good time.
 68 ((music from the computer))
 69 JUL: (.)
 70 NAN: (.) porque no lo están pensando en el móvil en este [tiempo por eso.
(.)because they are not thinking about the mobile phone at this [time that's why.
 71 SAR: [((nods head)) ya.
[yeah.

Like in Extract 1, as they continue to view the video, the young audience from Barcelona show

their curiosity, voice different questions and opinions, and position Nanyamka as cultural expert. The first inquiry is initiated by Naiara in Line 49, who points at the computer screen, asking Nanyamka if the young people seen in the video are 12 years old. This is followed by a discussion around the topic of the Ugandan youths' age that lasts until Line 60. In Lines 51–52, Nanyamka responds to Naiara with her own estimates of the youths' age. Sara, in the following line, offers her viewpoint that the Ugandan youth are taller than she would expect for the ages suggested, which prompts further estimations from Nanyamka in Line 55. After a long pause (4 seconds) in Line 57, Naiara again seeks confirmation from Nanyamka about the age of one of the youth, and Nanyamka provides her appraisal in the following lines. In Line 61, Naiara evaluates what she interprets as the *performance* of one of the youth in the video, claiming “oye qué bien actúa no? en plan no hay ninguna cámara” (“look here how well he acts right? like there is no camera”), which draws Nanyamka’s laughter in Line 62. Naiara’s comment suggests how far from her understanding of *real life* the scenes in the video are for her; through her utterance, she categorizes the young person on the screen as an actor rather than a similarly aged teenager in Uganda doing everyday chores.

Following her laughter in Line 62, in reaction to images of cows on the screen, Nanyamka sings the Spanish children’s song *La vaca Lola* (Lola the cow). A long silence (25 seconds) follows (Line 65), during which the teenagers are absorbed in viewing the video, keeping their eyes focused on the computer screen. In Lines 66–67, Nanyamka shares her belief that doing the types of domestic work shown in the video is enjoyable, although it might seem boring to her peers. Her use of the second person singular (“si estás así tío no sé te lo pasas bien”; “if you are like this man I don’t know you have a good time,” Lines 66–67) is interesting and is arguably indexical of her own experience of scenes similar to those in the video. She then shares her reasoning, claiming that the Ugandan youth are not thinking about mobile phones (Line 70), possibly

making a comparative reference to how young people in Barcelona spend much of their time. This comment might also link back to her peers’ inquiries in Extract 1 about whether the Ugandan youth had access to video recording devices. Sara verbally agrees with Nanyamka with a “ya” (“yeah,” Line 71) and by nodding her head in agreement.

Thus, in Extract 2, it is interesting to note how the potentially negative assessments of young people’s life in Uganda that emerged in Extract 1 (i.e., lack of access to recording devices, poor housing) are re-framed to some degree, thanks to Nanyamka’s positive appraisal of the domestic work in the video by the Ugandan youth, based on her previous life experiences.

In Extract 3, which takes place several seconds after Extract 2, the positive evaluation of Ugandan life is developed further. The analysis again follows the extract.

Extract 3

- 72 NAN: me duele la puta espalda.
my fucking back hurts.
- 73 (1.5)
- 74 NAI: ((looking away from screen)) yo no lo quiero ver (.). ah sí sí.
i don't want to watch it (.). ah yes yes.
- 75 NAN: [ah eso lo hacía me obligaban a hacerlo.
ah that i did they made me do it.
- 76 NAI: [((looks at the computer screen))
- 77 JUL: para qué es? ((looks at NAN))
what is that for?
- 78 NAN: ((gestures showing how to grind cassava into cassava flour, see Figure 6)) eso

Figure 6 Gestures Showing How to Grind Cassava into Cassava Flour



79 era un así pero se hacía así (.) pones la olla y haces así (.) entonces tienes dos
 80 opciones (.) [aguantar el palo (.) o aguantas: si aguantas lo de [abajo no puedes
 81 ser un cabrón y pisar la mano porque tiene (.) una vez que es está arriba tienes
 82 que poner:: tienes que ir moviéndolo (.) si no se pega.

that was like that but it was done like that(.) you put the pot and you do like this(.) then you have two options(.) [hold the stick (.) or hold: if you hold the [thing below you can't be a bastard and step on the hand because it has (.) once it is up you have to put:: you have to move it (.) if it does not stick.

83 NAI: [((looks at NAN, listening carefully))

84 JUL: [((looks at NAN, then shifts gazes between NAN and the computer screen))

85 NAI: ((nods head)) huh.

86 NAN: sabes qué? a veces hacían bromas [sabes loquita la mano o te la estampoy te lo

87 estampaban y todo. ((shaking fist from top to bottom, Figure 7))

did you know? sometimes they made jokes you know what- take your hand away or i'll stamp it on you and they stamped it and everything.

88 NAI, JUL: [((look at NAN))

89 NAI: ()

90 NAN: no pero hacían [de bromas a lo (.) quita la mano porque: sabes? cuando está

91 arriba tiene que moverlo.(.) cuando está arriba tiene que moverlo.((shaking fist

92 from top to bottom, Figure 8))

no but they made jokes to (.) take his hand away because: you know? when it is up you have to move it. (.) when it is up you have to move it.

93 NAI: [((looks at NAN))

94 NAN: cada uno tiene que com: com- componerse?
each one has to com: com- compose themselves?

95 NAI: anda que como uno se vaya de la mano
well if someone's hand goes astray

96 NAN: ya por eso.

yeah that's why.

97 JUL: ()

98 SAR: este es el segundo.

this is the second one.

99 NAN: madre mía:

oh my goodness:

100 CLA: how old NAN?

101 NAI: () ahora que me gustaban ya no hay más.
() now that i liked them there is no more.

102 SAR: era la que cantábamos.

it was the one we sang.

103 CLA: NAN how old were you when you came here?

104 NAN: ocho.

eight.

105 CLA: you were eight?

106 NAN: ((nods head))

107 CLA: so you have a lot of memories right?

108 NAN: sí. (.) () ((laughs))

yes. (.) ()

109 EMI: have you ever been back?

110 NAN: qué?

what?

111 EMI: have you ever gone back?

112 NAN: no.

113 EMI: no? would you like to?

114 NAN: ((shrugs her shoulders)) sí. (.) por mis familiares.

yes. (.) because of my relatives.

Figure 7 Shaking Fist from Top to Bottom



Figure 8 Shaking Fist from Top to Bottom



As the video being viewed is coming to an end, the Barcelona youth appear to be tired of watching it. Nanyamka complains of a backache in Line 72, and in Line 74 Naiara looks away from the screen and verbalizes her unwillingness to continue watching the video before aligning with Nanyamka's complaint. Interestingly, however, Nanyamka, in Line 75, reacts to the video with an "ah," then tells her peers that she used to be asked to do the same work

as the Ugandan youth are doing, drawing Naiara's attention back to the computer screen (Line 76). In the next line, Julián addresses Nanyamka, requesting clarification: "para qué es?" ("what is that for?"). Like Extract 1, when she explained how to carry water on one's head, Nanyamka explains to the other young people how to grind cassava into cassava flour both through bodily gestures and a detailed verbal explanation (Lines 78–82). Naiara and Julián both enact active listenership through their gaze (Lines 83 and 84), and Naiara shows understanding by nodding her head (Line 85). Once her explanation is accepted and understood, Nanyamka provides extra cultural information on the matter of grinding cassava, explaining a funny anecdote from her own experience of grinding cassava flour (Lines 85–86, 90–92, and 94). Naiara, who had previously expressed her boredom, displays her attention (Line 93) and reacts to the anecdote (Line 95). Her change of attitude towards the video is made explicit in Line 101, in which she reacts to the film's ending: "ahora que me gustaban ya no hay más" ("now that I liked them there is no more").

While the youth are exploring and commenting on other videos on the GSB website, two of the adult facilitators, Claudia and Emilee, who had observed the whole interactional process, join the conversation and show their interest in knowing more about Nanyamka's life history. Claudia addresses Nanyamka in Lines 100 and 103, asking about her age when she migrated to Spain. Receiving and confirming Nanyamka's response, she infers that Nanyamka must have plenty of memories from her childhood in Ghana (Line 107), which Nanyamka confirms (Line 108). Emilee then takes the floor to ask Nanyamka whether she has been back to Ghana (Lines 109 and 111). Receiving a negative response, proceeds to enquire about Nanyamka's desire to return, to which Nanyamka responds that she would like to see her relatives (Line 114).

Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis presented in this article highlights how a youth participant in a transnational digital

storytelling project draws on her funds of knowledge to mediate between the cultural realities of young Ugandans' lives depicted in the video and those of her peers in Barcelona. In doing so, she also helped build a context of her own and her peers' development of cosmopolitanism.. The detailed sequential analysis of intercultural mediation activities allows sense to be made of the participants' behaviors as they navigated cultural representations, voiced their preconceptions, and had some of their stereotypes challenged (by Nanyamka).

The analysis has demonstrated how the cultural mediation activities are collaboratively and multimodally constructed. That is, we see how Nanyamka deploys and incorporates languages, other embodied resources (i.e., gestures representing cultural practices), her funds of knowledge, and the scenes appearing in the video to achieve successful mediation. Similarly, we see this group of young people share their questions and opinions, both positive and negative, with friendly and cooperative dispositions which support the interaction and the intercultural mediation process (Council of Europe, 2018). Nanyamka's lived experiences in Ghana become resources for the young people to inquire into, and for her to interpret, aspects of life in Uganda/Africa, including topics relating to gender, age, housing, access to digital devices, fetching water, grinding cassava, and so on.

I argue that a collaborative, intercultural learning space is open, affording youth the opportunity to access and make sense of cultural concepts that they could not tackle as well on their own, reducing, to some extent, "the gap between two poles that are distant from or in tension with each other" (Coste & Cavalli, 2015, p. 12). Although this gap no doubt remains, comparing their responses to the Ugandan video in the extracts analyzed in this article to their response to the same video the previous year (i.e., when they made their own video titled "Trying to Imitate the Ugandan Friends' Skills") is revealing of the change. When re-viewing of the video, and through the intercultural mediation by Nanyamka, the young people make

inquiries into and begin to develop openness and awareness regarding cultural practices other than the ones they have been socialized into.

The extracts reveal how Nanyamka and her peers' understanding of life in Africa is different, with Nanyamka's peers drawing on common stereotypes (e.g., about poverty) to interpret the images on the screen. However, Nanyamka's straightforward responses depict a more positive image of life in Ghana/Uganda, challenging her peers' perceptions. Her mediational practices, I argue, afford opportunities for her peers to reflect on aspects of their own lives (e.g., use of mobile phones). The positive impact of her mediational work for the youth's development of a more cosmopolitan stance is evident when Naiara, in the final extract (Line 101), verbalizes a change in her perception of the Ugandan youth: "ahora que me gustaban ya no hay más" ("now that I liked them there is no more").

The intercultural interactional context studied in this article is, however, a complex one in which a group of cultural *others* (i.e., the Ugandan youth) were present for the Barcelona youth through a video recording, and their lives were interpreted for most of the Barcelona youth through Nanyamka, without direct exchange. Future research in similar contexts would benefit from incorporating a more in-depth exploration of what Hawkins (2018, p. 61) refers to as the "arc of communication" in intercultural (transnational in her words) communication, considering both the intent, agency, and consciousness of the authors of cultural products (such as the video in this article) as well as the reception and negotiation of meanings. This would require, in the case of this research, bringing the voices of the Ugandan youth directly into the analysis, although this data was not available in this instance.

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Appendix

Transcription conventions

Participant's pseudonym:	ABC
Brief pause:	(.)
Long pause:	(no. of seconds)
Overlapping:	[
No break or gap:	=
Lengthening of sound:	te:xt
Cut-off:	-
Quiet:	°text°
Rising intonation:	?
Falling intonation:	.
Comments:	((laughing))
Incomprehensible:	()
Uncertain or rough phonetic transcription:	(text)
Approximate translation in English:	<i>text under the original</i>

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