# Facilitating the Construction of Cultural Diversity in Classroom Interactions

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*Abstract:* This paper focuses on the ways of constructing the cultural meanings of diversity in classroom interactions, mingling sociological, pedagogical and linguistic theories. Firstly, it analyzes the meanings of cultural diversity in theories of intercultural education, the importance of analyzing this education from a sociological perspective on classroom interaction, and the importance of facilitation of pupils' participation and production of narratives in this interaction. Next, it focuses on sequences of classroom interaction to highlight the different ways of enhancing the social construction of cultural diversity through the facilitation of pupils' participation, with different effects in terms of their authority in producing knowledge. The analysis focuses on the forms of facilitation, as social structures enhancing the production of narratives of cultural diversity in classroom interactions. It shows that, while facilitation is always based on the same types of actions, these actions may have different effects on pupils' participation and production of narratives, depending on the form of facilitation. On the one hand, facilitation may lead to enhance narratives of cultural identity, as based on group membership and as presupposition of intercultural communication. On the other, it may lead to enhance narratives of cultural diversity as based on pupils' personal experience and knowledge.

*Keywords:* cultural diversity, classroom interaction, facilitation, narratives

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## Introduction

This paper concerns the production of cultural meanings of diversity in classroom interaction, aiming to show how different forms of classroom interaction can lead to different views of cultural diversity. For this purpose, it mingles different types of study. First of all, sociological studies on educational interaction, which analyze the hierarchical structures of the education system (Luhmann, 2002, chapter 4) and the organization of educational interactions (Fele & Paoletti, 2003; Housley, 2012; Mehan, 1979). Secondly, sociological studies on children's social participation, which highlight the importance of the concept of children's agency in the analysis of adult-children interaction (Baraldi, 2014; James, 2009; Wyness, 2013). Thirdly, pedagogical studies on intercultural education, which stress the importance of dealing with cultural diversity in order to enhance intercultural competence and educational treatment of students' cultural identity. Besides, these pedagogical studies focus on cultural identity as depending on individuals belonging to specific groups (e.g. Grant & Portera, 2011; Gundara & Portera, 2008; Mahon & Cushner, 2012; Portera, 2008). Fourthly, studies of applied linguistics on intercultural communication and education, which show that fluid and contingent meanings of cultural diversity are produced and negotiated through intercultural communication rather than fixed through individual belonging to groups (e.g. Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014; Holliday, 2011; Zhu, 2014). Finally studies of applied linguistic, which show that the production of narratives is a basic feature of social interaction and construction of participants' identity (e.g. Bamberg, 2011; Norrick, 2007).

Against this theoretical background, the paper analyzes some forms of facilitation of classroom interaction, which do not present the form of hierarchical education. This analysis aims to show how these forms of facilitation work as social structures that lead to different views of cultural diversity. These views can be divided into: (1) essentialist views of cultural diversity based on pupils' membership in specific groups, which share the dominant approach to intercultural education; (2) views of cultural diversity based on pupils' expression of personal experience and knowledge, which share the assumptions that children's agency is important and that meanings of cultural diversity are negotiated in the interaction. The innovative contribution of this paper consists in the analysis of the ways in which different forms of facilitation enhance the production of different types of narratives of cultural diversity, providing questions and feedback in the interaction and giving value to children's active participation. The paper aims to show if and how different methods of facilitating classroom interaction and pupils' active participation lead to the production of cultural meanings of diversity. For this purpose, it provides empirical evidence of methodological differences re-

garding facilitation through the detailed analysis of classroom interactions. This type of analysis is not provided by the current literature on intercultural education.

The first section of the paper introduces the ways in which education is supposed to deal with cultural diversity according to some important studies on intercultural education and communication. The second section highlights how intercultural education may be enhanced in classroom interactions from a sociological view. The third section presents two examples of facilitation of classroom interaction, in which cultural identity is constructed as based on group membership. The fourth section presents three examples of facilitation of classroom communication, in which cultural meanings of diversity are produced as based on personal experiences and knowledge. The concluding section provides some reflections on the ways in which different forms of facilitation, as social structures of classroom interaction, may give meaning and importance to cultural diversity.

## Handling cultural diversity in education

Several important studies on intercultural education focus on the ways in which cultural diversity influences classroom communication. For instance, Gay (2000) focuses on the underachievement of ethnic groups in US schools, advocating for a culturally responsive pedagogy that can deal with ethnic diversity. She stresses the importance of cultural identity, difference in communication styles, linked to cultural groups, and culturally diverse curricula. Mahon and Cushner (2012) focus on "multicultural" classrooms, as based on the observation of predefined cultural diversity among pupils, stressing the need of teachers' intercultural communication competence, that is learning about students' experience, building trusting relationships across cultures and recognizing the importance of culturally influenced factors such as communication contexts and styles (p. 438). In this view, the production of examples and tasks regarding cultural diversity, in particular cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills, on the one hand, and intercultural encounters on the other, can be used to enhance effective intercultural education (e.g., Herrlitz & Maier, 2005; Huber & Reynolds, 2014; Radstake & Leeman, 2010; Valentine & Valentine, 1983; UNESCO, 2006).

This approach follows the well-known type of theory that dealing with "both interaction between people of different cultures and comparative studies of communication patterns across cultures" (Zhu, 2014, p. 1), highlights the guiding cultural differences of intercultural communication (e.g. Hofstede, 1980; Schell, 2009; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Ting-Toomey, 1999). In this perspective, individual identity is associated with membership to a specific cultural group. In particular, the recognition of students' cultural

identity is considered as the condition of intercultural education, which allows the enhancement of positive intercultural relations. These relations both create and presuppose cultural identities. For instance, Collier (2015) suggests on the one hand that "cultural identities are negotiated, co-created, reinforced, and challenged through communication" (p. 56) and on the other hand that it is possible to "outline the properties or characteristics of cultural identities and then compare the properties across different cultural groups" (Ibid.). Without denying the relevance of communication, Collier takes for granted that cultural identity is necessarily shared by participants in communication processes, and that communication necessarily leads to establish group identities. Communication shapes culture as "a system of values and practices of a group or community of people" (Zhu, 2014, p. 1). Participants in communication are expected to follow this system of values and orientations, which construct their cultural identities, or we-identities (Ting-Toomey, 1999), and display these identities in communication.

According to this approach, the acknowledgment of cultural identity and the learning of intercultural competence can promote intercultural dialogue in education (Barrett, 2012; Guilerhme, 2012). Therefore, the communicative construction of cultural diversity is a presupposition of dialogue. The construction of cultural identity is a normative outcome of communication, requiring an intercultural competence that can lead to positive relations.

> "Explaining what your own cultural identity norms are and why you behaved in a particular way can also be a useful way to increase the other person's understanding and can help develop relational trust" (Collier, 2015, p. 60).

This widespread interpretation of cultural diversity has been recently criticized as "essentialism", which "presents people's individual behaviour as entirely defined and constrained by the cultures in which they live so that the stereotype becomes the essence of who they are" (Holliday, 2011, p. 4). The anti-essentialist approach investigates intercultural communication as construction of "a relationship through negotiating images of the self and the other, cultures, languages" (Dervin & Gao, 2012, p. 8). Culture is "something people do or which they perform" (Piller, 2011, p. 15), therefore cultural diversity is the product of discursive practices. Intercultural communication primarily concerns with negotiation of "cultural or linguistic differences which may be perceived relevant by at least one party in the interaction" (Zhu, 2014, p. 200).

Accordingly, some studies on intercultural education focus on relationships and dialogue, rather than on cultural identity (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2003; Grant & Portera, 2011; Portera, 2008). The anti-essentialist view stresses the prefix *inter* and explicitly warns against insisting on cultural identities: "it is the 'inter-' of the intercultural that is important, not so much

the '-cultural' because the concept tends to be too limiting" (Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014, p. 10). Identity is fluid, malleable, and contingently constructed in communication (see also Dervin & Liddicoat, 2013; Piller, 2007, 2011; Tupas, 2014). Some author adopts the concept of hybridity, as a space multiplicity, negotiation and resignification of culture(s), mixing diverse cultural elements (Jackson, 2014; Kramsch & Uryu, 2012; Nair Venugopal, 2009). Other authors criticize hybridity as an essentialized idea of "third culture" (Benjamin & Dervin, 2015; Holliday, 2011; 2012).

Essentialist and anti-essentialist views mingle in manuals and handbooks on intercultural communication (e.g., Jackson, 2012; Nakayama & Halualani, 2010; Zhu, 2014) and education (Grant & Portera, 2011). This highlights the ambiguous ways of combining the concepts of communication and cultural diversity. This paper aims to show how the different ways of dealing with cultural meanings of diversity in classroom interactions. For this purpose, the paper presents an empirical analysis of ways of facilitating the production of cultural meanings of diversity in classroom communication.

## A sociological perspective on classroom interaction

According to Holliday (1999, 2011), the production of cultural diversity is always associated with specific social groupings or activities, therefore with contingent communication processes, rather than with national or ethnic dimensions. Holliday defines these contingent meanings of diversity as *small cultures*. This paper analyses some communicative processes, in which the meanings of cultural diversity emerge, to show what small culture means in these processes, in the context of the classroom. This analysis requires a specific focus of on classroom communication.

From a sociological point of view, education requires the systematic production of interaction in the classroom (e.g., Fele & Paoletti, 2003; Housley, 2012; Luhmann, 2002). According to Luhmann (2002), classrooms are communication systems, based on interaction. Classroom interaction has the function of conveying knowledge and skills. Conveyance (*Vermittlung*) of knowledge and skills is the basic operation that must be carried out so that education takes place in all classroom situations. Moreover, conveyance of knowledge and skills requires evaluation, which can highlight the outcomes of conveyance, thus showing pupils' learning. Conveyance of knowledge, on the one hand, and evaluation of the outcome of conveyance, on the other, are both necessary and intertwined in classroom interactions. Against this background, intercultural education, as a specific type of education (Gay, 2000; Gundara, 2000), may be considered effective if conveyance and evaluation of knowledge on cultural diversity and intercultural skills are visible in classroom interactions.

However, classroom interaction also needs pupils' active participation. Active participation is always expected in social interactions (Luhmann, 2013), where any action is communicatively visible and important (Luhmann, 1995). Several studies on intercultural education share the importance of pupils' active participation in classroom communication (e.g., Godley, 2012; Mahon & Cushner, 2012; Valentine & Valentine, 1983). From a sociological point of view, the problem is that conveyance and evaluation establish hierarchical relations in the classroom, which do not promote pupils' participation effectively (James & James, 2004; Wyness, 1999). For this reason, the so-called Sociology of Childhood proposes to replace the hierarchical form of education with forms of facilitation of pupils' participation (e.g. Baraldi & Cockburn, 2018; Percy-Smith, 2018; Wyness, 2013).

Facilitation means attributing epistemic authority to pupils, i.e. attributing them rights and responsibilities for producing knowledge, and thus attributing them *agency* (Baraldi, 2014). Agency is a *specific form* of participation, which stresses children's ability to act autonomously from external conditions (James, 2009), including conditions fixed by adults' actions (Baraldi, 2014). Therefore, agency is a form of participation that shows availability of choices of action, which can open different possible courses of action, and highlights children's ability in constructing knowledge and skills. In this sense, agency is also at the core of children's active construction of their own identities in social interaction.

Following Fisher (1987), all knowledge and identities are constructed in form of narrative, in communication processes. Some research in applied linguistics has investigated how each participant can contribute to the interactional production of narratives, as a teller, co-teller, or elicitor (Norrick, 2007). Several studies in this field have also shown that the interactional production of narratives highlights the participants' identities (e.g., Bamberg, 2011; De Fina, 2015; Tracy & Robles, 2013), including cultural identities (De Fina, 2003; Koven, 2015; Zhu, 2014). From the perspective of a sociological approach to communication processes, narratives are social constructions, in which the observed reality is interpreted and storied, on the basis of specific social structures. Therefore, the analysis of the cultural meanings of diversity and identity may focus on the interactional and structured production of narratives. In particular, the production of narratives can be enhanced through forms of facilitation of communication in classroom interactions (Baraldi & Iervese, 2017).

In applied linguistics, narratives are generally conceived as storytelling, regarding past events that possess "personal and contextual relevance", and contain "evaluation by the teller" (Norrick, 2007, p. 128). However, in social interactions, telling of past events can evolve in other types of narratives, starting from co-telling and listeners' comments. The complex chain of tell-

ing, co-telling and comments can enhance different narrative formats. This complex articulation shows that narratives cannot be reduced to a specific format. In this paper, the concept of "narrative" includes *all* the ways in which the observed reality is interpreted and 'storied' in structured classroom interactions.

To sum up, this paper analyzes the ways in which narratives that include meanings of cultural diversity are produced through the facilitation of pupils' agency. In particular, the paper aims to understand if and how facilitation may enhance pupils' agency as epistemic authority in constructing the meanings of cultural diversity and which types of narratives are thus constructed. In this view, the concepts of cultural knowledge, attitude, skills and intercultural competence are not relevant since they focus on individual learning as necessary outcome of intercultural education, rather than on participation and interactional production of narratives.

## Data and method

I will analyze some examples that belong to three different research programs conducted in so-called "multicultural" classrooms in Italian schools involving children aged 9-12. Whereas in the school system, "multicultural classrooms" are frequently observed as based on the cultural variety of participants (Mahon & Cushner, 2012), this paper focuses on the social construction of narratives about cultural diversity in classroom interactions. This focus implies a sociological approach to cultural diversity as constructed in specific social activities. Multicultural classrooms are conceived as *social systems of interaction* (Luhmann, 2002) in which cultural diversity can emerge in narrative forms, based on different experiences, expectations, views, emotional expressions. This implies that the "ethnic" origin of pupils only exists when narrated in classroom communication. A preliminary association of children with ethnic groups (e.g. addressing them as "Chinese" children or "Ghanaian" children) would undermine the importance of children's personal stories in defining their own identities. For this reason, this paper does not provide data on the "ethnic" origins of the pupils participating in the analyzed workshops.

I will analyze five transcriptions extracted from workshops video-recorded during these research programs, aiming to understand the forms of facilitation of classroom interaction and their structural consequences for what concerns the production of narratives of cultural diversity. These workshops were video-recorded with the consent of all the participants and of the children's parents. The video-recorded interactions were transcribed using a simplified version of Conversation Analytical conventions (Psathas & Anderson, 1990). In the following presentation, I will describe the most import-

ant characteristics of these research programs. More details are provided in papers published in international journals, which cannot be made explicit for reasons of anonymity.

The workshops were video-recorded in the region (mainly in the town) in which the author works as academic researcher. The research involved primary schools (age 9-11) and first grade secondary schools (age 11-14). Although there may be differences in approaching children in different types of school, here the analysis focuses on the theoretical foundations of the meanings assigned to cultural diversity, which do not depend on children's age or type of school.

The first program (see Baraldi, 2008) included a set of 94 hours of video-recorded and transcribed workshops between adults (teachers and experts) and 9-13 year-old students, in 15 classes in the region of Emilia-Romagna (Italy), involving about 350 children. Some of these activities (28 hours) were video-recorded during experiences of education to dialogue. The remaining 66 hours were video-recorded during workshops coordinated by experts, dedicated to the promotion of children's active participation as a way of displaying and negotiating diversity. Extract 1 belongs to this set and was video-recorded in a primary school, with children aged 9.

The second program (see Baraldi & Farini, 2011) included a set of 32 hours of video-recorded and transcribed interactions between two mediators and 12-14 year-old students in 8 classes in the town of Modena (Italy), involving about 150 children. These workshops aimed to explore new and effective ways of treatment of diversity and relationships in communication. The mediators gave voice to the students, coordinating their discussions to foster positive relationships among them. Extract 2 belongs to this set and was video-recorded in a secondary school, with children aged 12-13.

The third program (see Baraldi & Iervese, 2017) included a set of 68 hours of video-recorded and transcribed interactions between a facilitator and 9-12 years-old students in 8 classes in the town of Modena (Italy), involving about 150 children. The activities were based on the children's collection of photos; working on their collected photos, the children were invited to produce, compare and negotiate their memories in classroom workshops. The workshops aimed to promote the children's active participation in dialogic communication producing the narratives of their memories. For this purpose, facilitation of dialogic communication was enhanced during the workshops. Extracts 3-5 belong to this set and were video-recorded in three primary schools, with children aged 9-10.

Two basic concepts of Conversation Analysis, i.e. turn-taking and sequence organization (e.g., Heritage & Clayman, 2010), are used here to analyse the ways in which facilitation produced narratives in all these workshops. The analysis, however, does not simply concern the features of turn

design and sequence organizations. Conversation analysis focuses on the social and linguistic dynamics by which meaning is achieved in classroom interactions (e.g., Fele & Paoletti, 2003; Heritage & Clayman, 2010; Housley, 2012). It looks at the ways in which, by responding to each other in conversation, teachers and pupils make sense of the interactional dynamics, contributing to sequences of turns of talk. In this paper, the analysis of classroom interaction is developed beyond the conversational meanings and the organization of sequences of turns of talk, to show (1) the ways in which facilitation functions as structural presupposition of the conversational sequences, and (2) the stories that are socially constructed in conversational sequences based on facilitation. These developments imply a more complex approach to classroom interactions, focusing on their structural presuppositions and contents, a focus that is not provided by Conversation Analysis.

The extracts that I will show in the next sections highlight different interactional constructions of narratives regarding cultural diversity. These extracts have been selected to show that different forms of facilitation lead to produce different narratives of cultural diversity. The extracts are not representative of the total number of video-recorded workshops. Rather, they are representative of the most important forms of facilitation observed in these workshops.

## Facilitating the production of essentialist narratives

The first extract (first research program) shows that cultural identity is stressed in classroom interaction through the narrative that intercultural dialogue requires difference between cultural identities. In this extract, the teacher (T) facilitates the pupils' re-telling of a fairy-tale that was previously narrated in the classroom.

> Extract 1
> 1. T: Poi abbiamo letto alcune storie. Per esempio dalla prima abbiamo notato diverse cose. Tu, Paolo, cos'hai notato da questa prima storia?
> *Then, we read some stories. For example, in the first of them we noticed different things. M1, what did you notice in this story?*
> 2. M1: Che anche gli animali si possono aiutare insieme.
> *I noticed that animals can also help together.*
> 3. T: Sì, che anche gli animali possono aiutarsi a vicenda. Ma questa storia l'hai trovata molto diversa dalle nostre oppure hai notato qualche somiglianza?
> *Yes, that animals can also help each other. Did you notice that this story is very different from ours or did you find some similarities?*
> (..)
> 4. M1: No, ci sono alcune somiglianze.
> *There are some similarities.*

5. T: Direi che ci sono diverse somiglianze. Sono molto simili ad alcune storie che ci raccontiamo qui in Italia. E ve la ricordate? Tu Gennaro.
*I would say that there are many similarities. They are very similar to some stories that we tell here in Italy. Did you remember, M2?*
6. M2: C'è una formica che sta affogando e la colomba la prende e la tira su
*There is an ant which is drowning and a dove saves her.*
7. T: Sì, e poi che succede Marco?
*Yes, and then what happens, M3?*
8. M3: Che poi la formica lo punge per salvarla.
*The ant stings him to save her.*
9. T: Che nel momento in cui un cacciatore sta per sparare alla colomba, la formica lo punge in modo da fargli sbagliare il tiro. Abbiamo quindi un caso di?
*When a hunter is shooting the dove, the ant stings him in order to make him miss. We have here a case of?*
10. All: Amicizia.
*Friendship.*
11. T: Bene. Siamo nel mondo arabo! Qua da noi c'è questo valore, questa amicizia?
*Good. We are observing the Arab world! Here, in our world does this value, friendship, exist?*
12. F1: Sì, certamente.
*Yes, of course.*
13. T: Nello stesso identico modo. Quindi già da questo primo lavoro abbiamo capito che questo sentimento è condiviso da noi come da loro.
*In the very same way. Consequently, from this story, we understood that this feeling is shared both by us and by them.*

In turns 1–10, the teacher encourages the pupils to recall the details of the fairy-tale, calling each one of them to tell a part of it. In turns 11–13, she stops the facilitation of the process of re-telling and becomes the elicitor of a narrative of cultural identity. She locates the fairy-tale in the Arab world, presenting this world as "similar" to the Western world in sharing with it the meaning of friendship. This is an attempt to stress dialogue between two "cultures", based on the shared positive value of friendship. However, the teacher's final comment also addresses cultural difference between "us" and them" ("Consequently, from this story, we understood that this feeling is shared both by us and by them"). The narrative of "shared friendship" is based on the us/them difference, which produces the effect of stressing the teller's and the participants' cultural identity. The teacher positions herself and the children as members of a Western type of us. She enhances the meaning of a We-Identity based on the paradox of being both different from and similar to "them" (the Arab world). This paradoxical communication is

based on cultural essentialism, stressing the Arab and Italian cultural identities.

The teachers' facilitation of pupils' participation is based on a Question-Answer-Feedback (QAF) scheme. Since the Seventieth, the QAF scheme has been studied as a fundamental expression of the hierarchical structure of the teacher–student relationship (Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). This hierarchical structure is made evident by the primary right of the teacher to ask a question in the first turn and to give an evaluative feedback in the third turn, and the primary duty of the pupil to provide an Answer in the second turn. In extract 1, the QAF scheme is systematically reproduced and also used to enhance cultural identity: in turn 11 the teacher provides a positive feedback to the children and a question; in turn 13, she concludes the sequence with a feedback. These turns show a peculiar version of the QAF scheme, as the teacher's third turns are *formulations* rather than evaluations. Formulations are types of turn that summarize, explicate, gloss, or develop the "gist" of previously uttered contents (Heritage, 1985). The participant who initiates the QAF sequence with a question concludes it with a formulation of the utterance in second-turn position, thus showing a direction for the interaction (Hutchby, 2007). Formulations replace evaluations in the QAF scheme, showing sensitivity for the pupils' active participation in interaction. However, in extract 1, this scheme also shows the hierarchical conveyance of knowledge. In turns 11 and 13, the teacher formulates the meanings of Arab world, cultural similarity and us/them distinction, thus turning the children's utterances into intercultural meanings. This essentialist narrative is elicited and conveyed by the teacher, while the pupils' participation is based on the teacher's guide.

Against this background, it may be argued that the production of essentialism depends on a structure of interaction in which pupils cannot *propose* alternative views, i.e. they cannot show their agency and therefore they cannot propose narratives autonomously. Therefore, it may be interesting to analyze what happens if the pupils can autonomously propose narratives of cultural diversity.

In extract 2 (second research program), the narrative of cultural diversity is initially produced with the active participation of two children. The meaning of cultural diversity is negotiated by the children, who display their epistemic authority. In this conversation, pupils' epistemic authority is systematically enhanced by the mediator's facilitative actions.

> Extract 2
> 1. F2: non salutano mai
> *they never say hello*
> 2. M: lei dice che non salutano mai
> *she says they never say hello*

3. M1: ma F2, se nel palazzo in cui abiti [loro non salutano -
*but F2, if in the building where you live [they don't say hello-*
4. F2: [no, ma in tutti i palazzi
 *[no, but in all buildings*
5. M1: in tre o quattro palazzi c'è anche gente che saluta, non puoi dire che tutti sono antipatici
*in three or four buildings there are people who say hello, you can't say they're all unfriendly*
6. M: Ma questa è la sua impressione, non sta giudicando. Lei è stata a Napoli e dice che ha notato questa differenza qua: a Napoli c'è più accoglienza, che so, ci si conosce di più, qua a Modena dice che non c'è questa apertura
*But this is her impression, we are not judging. She has been to Naples and says she noticed this difference; in Naples there is more warmth, maybe people know each other better, here in Modena she says this openness is not there*
7 M2: accoglienza tra napoletani, perché se uno di Modena va a Napoli fa una brutta fine
*warmth between Neapolitans, because if someone from Modena goes to Naples they come to a bad end*
8 M: qualcuno c'è mai stato a Napoli?
*anyone ever been to Naples?*
 ((*some raise their hand*))
10. M: quelli che sono stati a Napoli, come vi sono sembrati i napole-tani? Come vi siete trovati? Lei dice benissimo
*those who have been to Naples, how the Neapolitans were like? How did you get on with them? She says very well*
11. M3: perché tra Modena e Napoli c'è una differenza, se tu vai a com-prare una cosa a Napoli, se tu gli porti i soldi un'altra volta ti dicono va bene, e invece qua a Modena
*because there's a difference between Naples and Modena, if you go to buy something in Naples, if you take them the money another time it's OK for them, whereas here in Modena*
((*his classmates laugh and some try to take his turn*))
12. M: fallo finire
*let him finish*
13. M3: a Modena anche se ti manca un centesimo non te la danno la roba e invece a Napoli sì
*in Modena even if you're a cent short they won't give you the stuff, but in Naples they will*
14. M1: c'è una napoletana nel bar dove io prendo le sigarette per mia madre, se mi mancano venti centesimi mi dice "ma no dai, magari poi me li porti"
*there's a woman from Naples in the bar where I go to get my mum's her cigarettes and if I'm twenty cents short he says "it doesn't matter, you can bring it another time"*

15. F3: ma dipende dalle persone
*but it depends on who the people are*
16. M: quindi secondo voi (.) lei sta dicendo una cosa, che dipende dalle persone, non da napoletani e da modenesi
*so you think (.) she's saying one thing, that it depends on who the people are, not on whether they're from Naples or Modena.*
17. M4: ma se ti vedono la prima volta non è che ti danno -
*if it's the first time they've seen you they won't give you -*
18. M5: la differenza è un po' quella lì, che a Napoli lo fanno anche se è la prima volta perché comunque si ci conosce tutti e si è sempre lì, a Modena invece lo fanno solo se sei uno che ci va sempre allora dicono -
*that's part of the difference, that in Naples they do, even if it's the first time because anyway everyone knows everyone and you're always there, but in Modena they only do if you're someone who always goes there so they say*

The children are talking of the typical behaviors observed in the population of a specific area of an Italian town (turns 1–5). In turn 2, the mediator stresses F2's essentialist narrative ("they never say hello") through a repetition. In turn 6, the mediator defends F2's rights of expression, challenging M1's non-essentialist objection ("there are people who say hello, you can't say they're all unfriendly"). While defending F2's right to contribute, trying to prevent evaluations ("But this is her impression, we are not judging"), the mediator formulates the essentialist narrative, to promote opinions on cultural diversity ("She has been to Naples and says she noticed this difference; in Naples there is more warmth, maybe people know each other better, here in M. she says this openness is not there"). This formulation differs from those used by the teacher in extract 1 as it stresses the children's epistemic authority much more clearly. However, by comparing two cultural identities, this formulation enhances a new essentialist narrative, ironically expressed in turn 8 ("warmth between Neapolitans, because if someone from M. goes to Naples they come to a bad end"). In turns 8 and 10, the mediator asks questions to understand the pupils' opinions about this difference between cultural identities. He does not oppose the essentialist narratives, despite formulating an alternative view in turn 10 ("She says very well"). The discussion continues until turn 15, when F3 states that the problem of acceptance, which is under scrutiny, depends on the difference among individuals. In turn 16, the mediator formulates this content, explicating the non- relevance of cultural identity that it implies, and thus co-telling the meaning of personalized difference ("she's saying one thing, that it depends on who the people are, not on whether they're from Naples or M."). Nevertheless, the following turns show new divergent opinions on difference between cultural identities, including a new essentialist narrative (turn 18: "in Naples they

do, even if it's the first time because anyway everyone knows everyone and you're always there, but in M. they only do if you're someone who always goes there so they say").

The mediator acts as co-teller, both formulating essentialist narratives and supporting non-essentialist narratives, without evaluating the pupils' utterances. The mediator's formulations promote the children's epistemic authority ("she has been". "she says", "she's saying"), and do not show the mediator's intention to convey his own knowledge. Therefore, the mediator formulates essentialist narratives to invite children's reflection and expression of opinions. By promoting personal perspectives, without evaluating them and without conveying his own knowledge, the mediator also promotes the communicative production of essentialist narratives of cultural diversity. Therefore, extract 2 shows that facilitation can produce cultural essentialism through the enhancement of pupils' proposals, as pupils' epistemic authority conveys essentialist narratives of cultural diversity. This leads to question the relevance of facilitation in promoting the negotiation of cultural diversity through the enhancement of children's agency.

## Facilitating personal experiences and knowledge of cultural diversity

In extracts 1 and 2, facilitation is based on the same type of primary interactional resources, i.e. questions and formulations, but children's active participation is enhanced in different ways. Therefore, these extracts show that facilitation is a malleable form of interaction, although the repertoire of interactional resources is limited. Since facilitation is malleable, different forms of facilitation may be observed in classroom interactions, with different effects on the construction of cultural diversity.

The following three extracts concern facilitation in the third research program. These three extracts show that essentialist narratives of cultural diversity are not conveyed in the facilitated dialogue with and among the pupils. They show that the change of the way of producing narratives depends on the negotiation between the facilitator and the children in the interaction.

In extract 3, the facilitator (F) and a pupil (M1) are talking about a photograph that shows the pupil's family. The photo was taken in Romania, the country of origin of the family, as M1 explains in turn 4.

> Extract 3
> 1. F: allora aiutami a descriverla (..) perché da laggiù non si vede (.)
> prova a descrivere cosa c'è nella foto
> *So help me describe it (..) because you cannot see it from down there (.)*
> *try to describe what is in the photo*
> 2. M1: ci sono: (.) cioè sono i miei parenti

*There are: (.) I mean there are my relatives*
3. F: e dove vi trovate qui? Cioè dove si trovano?
*and where were you here? I mean where were they?*
4. M1: eh in: (.) in Romania
5. F: in Romania quindi è una foto che è stata fatta in Romania (.) nel paese di origine del vostro: compagno (.) e ci sono tutti i suoi parenti ma: ((li indica)) li conosci tutti?
*in Romania, so this picture was taken in Romania (.) in the country of origin of your classmate (.) and there are all his relatives but ((F pointing at them)) do you know all of them?*
6. M1: non tutti ma alcuni. In mezzo c'è: la mia bisnonna, c'è dietro di lei c'è: mia nonna, poi c'è mio nonno, mia madre, (.) mia sorella da piccola, una mia (.) zia da piccola, e: un cugino di mia madre che tiene in mano un agnellino (.) e dietro: alla gente c'è un gallo bianco
*not all of them but some. In the middle there is my great-grandmother, behind her there is my grandmother, then there is my grandfather, my mother, (.) my sister when she was a baby, one of my aunts (.) when she was a child, and one of my mother's cousins, who holds a small lamb (.) and behind the people there is a white cock.*
7. F: ((nodding)) che ha un significato particolare in Romania il gallo bianco?
*does the white cock have any particular meaning in Romania?*
8. M1: no è che era un curioso
*no, he was nosy*
9. F: era un curiosone che si è infiltrato
*he was very nosy and got into the picture*
10. M1: sì
*yes*

In turns 1–6, the pupil's description of the photo of his family is elicited by the facilitator's questions. In turn 7, the facilitator suggests the possible cultural meaning of the cock pictured in the photo, which was included in the pupil's description. This hypothetical cultural meaning is not confirmed by M1 (turn 8), and in turn 9, the facilitator supports the pupil's alternative interpretation of the cock with a formulation ("he was very nosy and got into the picture"*)*, which is confirmed by the pupil. With this formulation, the facilitator shows that he has abandoned the interactional construction of the Romanian culture, accepting the pupil's interpretation. The facilitator actively contributes to expand the pupil's description above all through his open questions, as well as the formulation in turn 9. The facilitator introduces a tentative question about the Romanian culture, but he is ready to withdraw it when the pupil rejects his hypothesis. The pupil focuses on his family as part of his personal identity, and the interaction does not lead to a narrative of cultural identity.

In extract 4, the facilitator invites a pupil (M3) to describe the African place of origin of his grandparents, by asking several questions (turns 1-10), and thus encouraging the pupil's participation.

Extract 4
1. F: Tu hai conosciuto tuo nonno tua nonna?
*Have you met your grandfather your grandmother?*
2. M3: Sì!
*Yes!*
3. F: E hai delle foto con loro così?
*And do you have some photos with them in this way?*
4. M3: Sì
*Yes*
5. F: Sì? E dove le hai fatte? Dove sono state fatte?
*Yes? And where did you take them? Where were they taken?*
6. M3: In un villaggio
*In a village*
7. F: Che si trova?
*Which is where?*
8 M3: In Burkina Faso
9. F: Burkina Faso che è un posto, voi lo conoscete questo posto?
*Burkina Faso which is a place, do you know this place?*
10. Many: No!
 ((14 turns omitted))
25. M3: Un villaggio son delle case con sopra cioè non dei tetti, così forti
*A village are houses with a not so strong roof on top*
26. F: Come sono fatti questi tetti?
*How are these roofs made?*
27. M3: Non lo so
*I don't know*
28. F: Sono fatti con che materiale?
*what material are they made of?*
29. M3: Non so come dire
*I don't know how to say it*
30 F: Ma sono tu lo sai? ((rivolto a F2)) Come sono queste case?
*But are they do you know? ((to F2)) How are those houses made?*
31. F2: Ma cioè io sono stata in Africa varie volte cioè di solito i villaggi erano fatti del tipo i muri erano di legno e i soffitti erano o di paglia oppure certe volte capitava anche cioè io ho visto un villaggio con delle canne di bambù
*But well I have been several times to Africa, well usually villages were made somewhat the walls were of wood and the ceilings were thatched or sometimes it also happened well I have seen a village with bamboo canes.*
32. F: Sono così i villaggi dove vivevi tu? ((rivolto a M3))
*Are the villages where you used to live made that way? ((to M3))*
33. M3: No tipo le muri erano tipo con i mattoni

*No the walls were somewhat made in bricks*
34. F: Con i mattoni
*With bricks*
35. M3: E i tetti di paglia
*And thatched roofs*
36. F: Ma si viveva bene lì? Hai un buon ricordo?
*But did you live well there? Do you have good memories?*
37. M3: Non lo so
*I don't know*
38. F: Non ti ricordi?
*Don't you remember?*
39. M3: No
40. F: Ma ci sei tornato?
*But did you go back there?*
41. M3: No cioè non in questi anni ma negli anni
*No, well not in these years but in years*
42. F: Passati
*Past*
43. M3: (?)
44. F: Ma ti ricordi qualcosa?
*But do you remember something?*
45. M3: In che senso?
*In what sense?*
46. F: Ma i tuoi genitori ti raccontano qualcosa che accadeva nel villaggio quando eri piccolo?
*But do your parents tell you something that happened in the village when you were little?*
47. M3: Mh sì là non c'era la luce ma adesso c'è
*Mh yes there was not electricity but now there is*
48. F3: Non c'era?
*wasn't it?*
49. M3: La luce
*electricity*
50. F4: Non c'era?
*wasn't it?*
51. M3: Non c'era la luce però adesso c'è
*There was not electricity but now there is*
52. M2: Perché non c'era la luce?
*Why wasn't electricity there?*
(4.0)
53. F: E tu torneresti a vivere in Burkina Faso?
*And you would return to Burkina Faso?*
54. M3: mh
55. F: Non ti interessa? Da grande? Non ti piacerebbe?
*Aren't you interested? When you're older? Wouldn't you like?*
56. M3: ((nodding))

57. F: Cosa vuoi fare da grande?
*What do you want to be when you're older?*
58. M3: O il dottore o il calciatore
*Either the doctor or the football player*
59. F: Il dottore o il calciatore
*The doctor or the football player*
60. M3: ((nodding))

In turn 25, following the facilitator enhancement of a conversation about the term "village" (turns omitted), M3 takes the initiative of explaining what the "African" village is, but his explanation is uncertain. In turn 30, the facilitator invites another pupil (F2) to describe the "African" houses, and then invites M3 to provide further description of his village. Starting from the description of the village, the facilitator invites M3 to reflect on his relationship to his country of origin (turns 53 and 55). M3 confirms his interest in this country, but he seems uncertain, showing that he does not mean to convey a complete sense of belonging to it. The following question shifts from M3's possible return to the country of origin to his professional future (turn 57). The pupil's idea about his professional future indicates that his identity takes a fluid form in the relationship between his past experience and future perspective. The facilitator confirms understanding without evaluations (turn 59). The facilitator invites the class to communicate about "African" life and culture. However, he promotes the narrative of personal experience, rather than of cultural diversity. In the final turns, by inviting M3 to relate his personal identity to his future, the facilitator enhances the narrative of a hybrid identity, mixing "African" life and Western professions.

In extract 5, the facilitator enhances the pupil's telling of her personal biography. The extract shows that the pupil was born in Spain from parents who are of Cuban (her mother) and Romanian (her father) origins. Therefore, the narrative of her origins highlights her hybrid identity.

Extract 5
1. F: e i tuoi genitori sono tutti e due spagnoli?
*And are you parents both Spanish?*
2. F7: ((shaking her head)) no
3. F: chi è la mamma spagnola?
*Who is the Spanish mother?*
4. F7: no la mia madre è cubana e mio padre è rumeno
*No, my mother is Cuban and my father is Romanian*
5. F: ah hai la mamma cubana e il papà rumeno che si sono incontrati (.) a Barcellona
*Ah you have a Cuban mother and a Romanian father who met in Barcelona*
6. F7: s- no si sono incontrati: in Romania
*Y- no they met in Romania*

7. F: in Romania

8. F7: ((nodding))

9. F: e la mamma da Cuba è andata in Romania?
*And your mother went to Romania from Cuba?*

10. F7: no è è nata in Cuba
*No she was was born in Cuba*

11. F: è nata a Cuba
*She was born in Cuba*

12. F7: dopo è uscita (su) e è andata in Romania
*Then she went out (on) and she went to Romania*

13. F: è venuta a vivere in Romania
*She came to live in Romania*

14. F7: Sì
*Yes*

15. F: tua mamma è un è un'atleta?
*Is your mother an athlete?*

16. F7: mh

17: F: faceva dello sport?
*Did she practice sport?*

18. F7: no

19. F: no (.) e cosa fa la mamma adesso?
*No (.) and what does your mother do now?*

20. F7: eh (.) lavora in un bar
*Eh (.) she works in a bar*

21. F: mh sai perché ti ho detto così? Perché (.) come stereotipo no? noi sappiamo che a Cuba ci son dei grandi atleti
*Mh do you know why I said that? Because (.) as a stereotype you know?*
*We know that in Cuba there are good athletes*

22. F7: ((nodding)) Sì
 *Yes*

23. F: e allora pensavo che fosse venuta a giocare non so a pallavolo
*So, I thought that she came to play I don't know, volleyball*

24. F7: ((shaking her head))

25. F: qua (..) e invece no
*Here (..) but no*

26. F7: no
((10 turns omitted))

37. F: e invece come carattere? Come sono i tuoi genitori?
*And about the personality? How are your parents?*

38. F7: eh la mia madre è buona, (.) e mio padre è anche buono [e
*Eh my mother is good (.) and also my father is good, [and*

39. F: [ ma sono estroversi:, gioco- gioiosi
 *[but are they outgoing play- joyful?*

40. F7: Sì
*Yes*

41. F: perché a Cuba ci raccontano che sono tutti molto gioiosi

*As they tell us that they are all joyful in Cuba*
42. F7: ((nodding))
43. M1: Sud America
*South America*
44. F: e invece in Romania com- come s- siete?
*And in Romania are ho- how are you?*
(..)
45. M1: simpatici
*nice*
46. F: simpatici
*nice*
F7: ((nodding)) Sì
 *yes*
48. F: quindi fa una bella combinazione gioiosi e simpatici eh?
*So joyful and nice that makes a beautiful match eh?*
49. F7: ((nodding))
50. F: è nata una spagnola che
*A Spanish was born that*
51. F7: ((smiling))
52. F: è molto gioiosa e simpatica la tua amica?
*Is your friend very joyful and nice?*
53. F1: Sì
*Yes*

The description of the pupil's origins and relationships is promoted by the facilitator though several questions, repetitions (turns 11, 46) and formulations (turns 5, 13), showing listening and encouraging the pupil to contribute to the interaction. Through these actions, the facilitation also elicits the view of the pupil's Cuban mother as an athlete (turns 9–26), which is rejected by the pupil. Then, after collecting more details on the pupil's story (turns omitted), the facilitator enhances narratives of the cultural identity of Cubans (turn 41) and Romanians (turn 44), which are accepted by the pupils. He concludes his co-telling by shifting to the pupil's personal identity through an interrogative formulation (turn 48: "So joyful and nice that makes a beautiful match eh?"), continuing this shift in turn 50 with a formulation, which is finally transformed in a question to another pupil looking for confirmation of her friend's personal identity (turn 52). The facilitator firstly elicits narratives of cultural aspects of identity, thus stressing hybridity, but then he shifts to a narrative of personal identity. The narrative of cultural identity, which is elicited by the facilitator, is assessed by the pupil, starting from her personal experience and knowledge.

To sum up, extracts 3–5 show that the facilitator's questions and formulations stimulate the narratives of potential meanings of cultural (Romanian, African, Cuban) diversity, but they also enhance narratives based on personal experiences and knowledge of places and persons, which highlight

the pupils' epistemic authority. Therefore, these actions do not enhance the value of or opinions on cultural diversity but highlight the value of personal experience and knowledge. In this way, while promoting the narrative construction of hypothetical cultural meanings of children's identity, facilitation enhances the negotiation of these meanings thus making the construction of cultural diversity improbable, subordinating it to the pupils' personal experiences and knowledge.

## Discussion and conclusions

The analysis presented in the last two sections regards the production of narratives of cultural diversity in educational interactions through a facilitative methodology. In particular, the analysis of extracts 1-5 shows that (1) although all the examples regard facilitation of classroom interaction, this facilitation takes different forms, (2) these different forms have different consequences for the production of narratives of cultural diversity, (3) these forms and productions are associated with children's active participation in different ways.

In extracts 1-5, facilitation is always based on questions and formulations, which display facilitators' authority and competence in interactions; however, these actions may have different effects. Extract 1 shows that the teacher's authority elicits an essentialist narrative of cultural identity. This extract shows a form of facilitative teaching that still recognizes the expert's authority. Extract 2 shows that the facilitator's authority promotes personal, but essentialist narratives of cultural identity. This extract shows a form of facilitation as mediation, which aims to coordinate children's autonomous and conflictive narratives. In these two cases, facilitators' authority enhances the social construction of essentialist narratives. Extracts 3–5 show that the facilitator's authority enhances personal experiences and knowledge of cultural meanings.

Extracts 3–5 show a form of facilitation which enhance personal experiences and knowledge of cultural meanings of places and people, thus giving value to the children's epistemic authority. Children's agency is displayed through their authority in telling stories about themselves and their experiences, rather than in proposing views and opinions on cultural diversity. Children are invited to assess what they know about themselves, rather than what they know (or think they know) about other people. This approach does not encourage or facilitate the construction of us-them distinctions and we-identities. Facilitation enhances children's agency in that it enhances the telling of their personal experiences and knowledge. It enhances their choices of telling their personal stories, by inviting children to propose narratives of the self, which Somers (1994) defines as ontological narratives,

rather than narratives of other people. Against this background, children can certainly express, but also ignore, underscore, or reject narratives of their own cultural diversity through their personal experience and knowledge. In particular, children can reject their categorization as members of cultural groups and the narrative of their cultural identity. Facilitation can achieve this result as it enhances the social construction of personal experience of cultural meanings (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006). Thus, facilitation can enhance the production of small cultures (Holliday, 1999; 2011) as encapsulated in pupils' personal experiences and depending on these experiences.

Analysis of extracts 3-5 shows a form of facilitation which construct "multicultural" classrooms as social constructions of personal stories of cultural meanings, rather than the sum of individuals with different cultural identities. On the one hand, this analysis shows that facilitation can enhance this social construction of personal stories, on the other it shows that the facilitated interactional construction of narratives can enhance both hybrid and personal identities and that there is not a clear separation or contradiction between these two forms of identity. This form of facilitation is based on co-construction of narratives, through the balanced interactional achievement of all participants' epistemic authority.

The difference between extract 2, on the one hand, and extracts 3–5 on the other, is particularly interesting to understand how different forms of facilitation become structures of classroom interactions. In extract 2, the children's personal experience and knowledge is used to facilitate dialogue on cultural diversity. In extracts 3–5, facilitation focuses exclusively on personal experiences and knowledge, giving voice to each child as a person in her/his full rights of constructing knowledge and showing sensitivity to the children's perspectives. Facilitation promotes the children's telling of personal experiences and knowledge, and respect for each child's display of epistemic authority. Thus, the facilitator's authority in formulating cultural diversity can be taken by the children as hypotheses on which they have the last say. Facilitation leads to the *deconstruction* of narratives of cultural diversity through negotiation in the interaction, rather than to the individual construction of these narratives.

This analysis shows that agency is an interactional construction, rather than a quality of individual action (or actor). It is based on the detailed description and explanation of classroom interactions, their structural presuppositions and their narrative contents. It highlights that a sociological analysis can provide four important results relating to intercultural education, regarding in particular the enhancement of children's participation in classroom interactions. First, facilitation of children's participation can enhance both essentialist narratives and non-essentialist narratives of cultural diversity. These narratives can shape cultural diversity as either diver-

sity concerning cultural identity or diversity concerning personal stories, depending on the form of facilitation. Second, personal stories show that hybrid identity and personal identity may be linked and mixed, rather than contradicting each other or separated. Third, cultural meanings of diversity are always produced as small cultures in specific classroom contexts. While they do not say anything of the "cultural membership" of the involved children, they show the ways in which these children participate and show (or not show) their epistemic authority and identity. Four, classrooms may be "multicultural" in different ways, depending on the ways of orienting the production of narratives of cultural diversity. This also implies that teachers and facilitators need to develop sensitivity to the possible ways of orienting these narratives, rather than some intercultural communicative competence.

These results cannot lead to a catalog of forms of facilitation as social structures of classroom interactions and types of narratives of cultural diversity produced in these interactions. The analyzed cases only concern specific social contexts and types of classroom interaction. The results obtained should therefore be tested in other social contexts and for other types of interaction, to enhance knowledge of the difference between ways of constructing and deconstructing cultural diversity in classroom interaction.

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