Fred Dervin · Mei Yuan

Reflecting on and with the 'More-than-Human' in Education
Things for Interculturality

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About This Book

This one of a kind book introduces, strengthens and advocates taking into account the more-than-human ('things') in the broad field of intercultural communication education and is relevant for scholars and students in (teacher) education, linguistics, business studies, health (amongst others). Often absent from analyses and educational initiatives related to interculturality, the authors urge interculturalists to give back to the omnipresent more-than-human, arguing that it can provide unparalleled insights into intercultural communication. In the book, the more-than-human refers to elements other than people, the institutions and structures that they have created and includes, e.g. artefacts, objects, technologies, flora and fauna, animals. The authors use a selection of 'Chinese' things to problematize and illustrate the necessary inclusion of the more-than-human for interculturality in education. Concrete and useful guidelines are provided to enhance the readers' reflexive and critical engagement with 'things' for interculturality.

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About the Authors

Fred Dervin is Professor of Multicultural Education at the University of Helsinki (Finland). He specializes in intercultural communication education, the sociology of multiculturalism and international mobilities in education and has widely published in different languages on identity, interculturality and mobility/migration. Exploring the politics of interculturality within and beyond the 'canon' of intercultural communication education research has been one of Dervin's idée fixes in his works over the past 20 years. His latest publications include: *Intercultural Fragments: A Reflexive Approach*; *The Paradoxes of Interculturality: A Toolbox of Out-Of-The-Box Ideas for Intercultural Communication Education*; *Through the Looking-Glass of Interculturality: Autocritiques* (with. R'boul) and *Supercriticality and Intercultural Dialogue* (with Tan).

Mei Yuan is Associate Professor at the School of Education, Minzu University of China. Yuan has led many research projects on Minzu and intercultural education and is recipient of many awards for her contributions to 'minority' education in China.

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Chapter 1
Giving Back to the More-than-Human

Fred Dervin ⬤

Abstract This chapter serves as the introduction to the book. Fred Dervin starts by explaining why a book on the more-than-human is needed in the broad field of intercultural communication education. He also reminds the reader that things are omnipresent and do influence constantly the way we interact with others interculturally. Dervin shows that things have been completely ignored in intercultural scholarship and education while other fields of research have already focused on the more-than-human for some decades. The aim of the book is then presented: to give a 'voice' to things in discussions of interculturality. The introduction ends with a presentation of the chapters composing the book.

Keywords Omnipresence · Interaction · Intercultural scholarship · Voice · Giving back

1.1 Prelude

The idea for this book was inspired by one experience from the COVID-19 pandemic time. As I was quarantined for 10 days, I realized that I had all these 'non-beings' around me as my only partners and interactants for the duration of the quarantine. Some of them were familiar to me, others somewhat 'strange' (e.g. the shower tap in the bathroom; the intercom). Although I did see and interacted with human beings via technology constantly, I did not engage with them *physically*. A meal was brought to my door by a 'robot' three times a day. Only the more-than-human, the things around me, could 'communicate' directly with me (and me back to them)—sending out messages, providing some comfort and help, adding to my frustration, pleasing my eyes and taste, etc. *We were intimate and exclusive partners for many days.* I had brought a few things with me: *my Kindle, my two computers, my favourite pens, my notebooks, my blue silk sleeping bag, a comb, a bottle of Avene water, coffee, a plastic coffee filter, three backpacks, my sleeping eye mask (and some COVID masks), my vitamins,* etc. Some of the things 'belonged' to the quarantine room: *a bed, a side table, a thermometer, a chair, a desk, a remote control, a TV screen, a kettle, an electric plug extension cord, three daily meals, an empty cupboard, a bucket, tissue, a wifi router,* etc. For the duration of my quarantine, I used some of

them almost all the time and ignored others, to find myself making use of them and abandoning others at a later stage. I also used some of them in special and different ways (e.g. the bucket served as an extra computer stand when I gave a lecture). I also (re-)organized their positions in the room, mixing 'my' things and the things from the room. I showed some of these things to friends online, taking pictures of them and even funny selfies with them. For my quarantine time, they were there; they supported me; they were part of me; they facilitated and took part in my interactions with others. Without (some of) these things, my experience and interactions with the room and my contacts outside this room (sometimes thousands of kilometers away from me), would have been very different.

I asked myself these questions during the quarantine time: How different would my experience be with other things? How could people survive without these things in such a (grueling) situation? Should I be grateful for their presence? Why did it take this quarantine to realise that the more-than-human is somewhat precious in our lives and that, although these were very special circumstances, things are always there for, with and between us? Should I consider what we 'had' together to be some kind of intercultural interactions? As someone who has worked on interculturality for over 20 years I realized that this important part of who we are as individuals and as members of different communities had been lacking in my research.

Interculturalists must give back to the more-than-human.

This book aims to introduce and/or strengthen the position of the more-than-human in the broad field of intercultural communication education with subbranches in linguistics, education, business studies, nursing, amongst others. The more-than-human refers here to elements other than people and the institutions and structures that they have created and includes e.g. artefacts, objects, technologies, flora and fauna, animals. In the book we use the word 'things', in a non-pejorative manner, to refer to the non-human.

Let me start with three vignettes to introduce the topic of 'things for interculturality'.

[1]

After another visit to the British Museum in London in 1906, painter André Derain (1880–1954) wrote to Henri Matisse:

> I have blackened four sheets of paper which I refuse to send you. It's such a mess of ideas, it's such a chaos of sensations, of reasoning, that you really would think I had gone mad. […] I was for the fifth time at the British Museum. There are piled up pell-mell, so to speak, so to speak, the Chinese, the Negroes (sic), the Egyptians, the Etruscans, Phidias, the Romans, the Indies. I had to leave the museum because I had such confused ideas about all this. […] I have insinuated myself into environments, into lives foreign to mine. So, I expanded my consciousness by something other than words. Sensations alone, defined with and by shapes, colors. […] It is no longer an idea but an absolute idea, the consciousness of being. (quoted by Savoy, 2017: 13).

Although (intercultural) things are not mentioned directly by Derain, his (positive) confusion after seeing the 'environments' and 'lives' of different peoples derived

directly from his engagement with the more-than-human at the museum. *Other people's things.*
Interculturality through things is here admired.

[2]

In a letter to Captain Butler in 1861, after the looting and destruction of the Old Summer Palace in Beijing, French writer Victor Hugo (1802–1885) wrote:

> (…) Imagine some inexpressible construction, something like a lunar building, and you will have the Summer Palace. Build a dream with marble, jade, bronze and porcelain, frame it with cedar wood, cover it with precious stones, drape it with silk, make it here a sanctuary, there a harem, elsewhere a citadel, put gods there, and monsters, varnish it, enamel it, gild it, paint it, have architects who are poets build the thousand and one dreams of the thousand and one nights, add gardens, basins, gushing water and foam, swans, ibis, peacocks, suppose in a word a sort of dazzling cavern of human fantasy with the face of a temple and palace, such was this building.
>
> (…) This wonder has disappeared.
>
> (…) All the treasures of all our cathedrals put together could not equal this formidable and splendid museum of the Orient. It contained not only masterpieces of art, but masses of jewelry. What a great exploit, what a windfall!
>
> (…) We Europeans are the civilized ones, and for us the Chinese are the barbarians. This is what civilization has done to barbarism.
>
> I hope that a day will come when France, delivered and cleansed, will return this booty to despoiled China. Meanwhile, there is a theft and two thieves. I take note. (cited in Peyreffite, 1993: 530)

This second vignette is directly linked to things and interculturality—things that were looted by two European forces in China. For Hugo, the looting and destruction of these things (jade, bronze, silk) made him question the dubious dichotomy established by the 'West' since the eighteenth century: *the barbarian versus the civilized.*
Interculturality through things is here violated.

[3]

In 2018 the Italian fashion brand Dolce and Gabbana released a short video on Chinese social media that created a lot of (enduring) tensions between the luxury house and Chinese customers. In order to promote their Shanghai fashion show, Dolce and Gabbana created a video showing an Asian woman (wearing one of their pieces) attempting to eat pizza. Using chopsticks to do so, the woman is made to look ridiculous in her failed attempt. Chinese netizens reacted strongly to what they considered to be a stereotypical and racist depiction of 'China'. They also commented extensively on the way chopsticks were ridiculed in the video, constructing them as 'sacred' Chinese-invented tools not to be laughed at. As a consequence, the brand was boycotted by Chinese customers, although it apologised and removed the video. The combination of an Asian-looking woman together with the misuse of chopsticks was too much for the Chinese market. *Interculturality of things led to anger.*

When one starts considering the way we 'do' interculturality together, one notices, like in the three vignettes, that things always influence the way we communicate and

are with others interculturally. And since most communication is now mediated by technology, the presence of a phone or a computer is becoming a common inclusion of the more-than-human in interculturality. Anecdoctically (or is it?), the fact that we have been wearing surgical masks for more than two years during the COVID-19 pandemic has also an impact on intercultural communication.

1.2　The Absent-Present

In a radio programme from 1968 about the future of objects in daily life, one audience member puts the following question to sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007): "Will there still be things in the future?" (Baudrillard, 1968). For intercultural communication education, I would be tempted to ask ironically: *has there ever been things?*

The more-than-human—things—is a ghost in research and education for interculturality, which is dominated by human exclusivism. Or to be more precise: *they are present-absent*—they are here but we don't see them, we don't notice them. They act and perform with us but we do not pay attention to them. They are mostly absent from the concepts, theories, methodologies, analyses, but also ideologies and 'orders' given to interculturalists as to how the notion should be understood and 'done'. As such, how often do you hear calls for praising, respecting, being tolerant of, non-essentialising the more-than-human?

[*Only the human matters.*]

The literature on intercultural communication education is mostly silent about the more-than-human in English. Most of the 'big' names seem to ignore them to focus on just the 'human'. To paraphrase Bruno Latour about his cosmopolitics (2004): we only witness *just humans talking to humans about humans.*

One of the rare publications on the topic of this book is a paper published by Roth (2001). The paper is entitled 'Material culture and intercultural communication' and was published in the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*. The author argues (2001: 563) that "Artifacts, i.e., the material side of culture, and their relevance for intercultural interactions rarely caught the attention of interculturalists". He adds that 'material culture' has an influence on both the macro- and micro-levels of intercultural interactions (Roth, 2001: 564). In the paper, Roth (2001) claims that artefacts intertwine with intercultural communication in seven different ways—which will be explored in this book:

- Things as themes
- Things as contexts of interactions
- Things support interactions e.g. technologically
- Things support international transmission
- The use and meanings of things can differ interculturally
- Things can be turned into signs
- It is necessary to decode the messages built into things.

Taking into account things in interculturality is saying no to Eurocentric anthropocentrism—placing the human (and only the human!) at the centre of the notion. Many indigenous peoples and e.g. Asian societies do not necessarily divide the human and the non-human (e.g. Descola, 2013). For TallBear (2015) the ideology of separating the human and more-than-human (e.g. nature) has to with a mentality of 'settler colonial binary'—humans feel they *must dominate* the more-than-human.

Of course, intercultural communication education is not the only field to ignore things. But reading through the literature again to prepare for this book, and noticing the presence-absence of this 'ghost', I kept wondering why all this objectophobia? Does the omnipresence of the 'quiet' and 'mysterious' character of culture (which is never defined, circumscribed, clarified) hint at the absence-presence of things? I also wondered if current discussions of e.g. essentialism and reification, the potential solidification of people and groups through stereotypes and the like, had anything to do with objectophobia? [The same fear of crystallising as we imagine things to be static in their durability and inscrutability]. A thing appears to be 'cold', 'inanimate', 'feeling-less', etc.—although it lives with and through us and provides us with energy, identity, a potential sense of belonging, etc. *They are things and should remain as such.*

1.3 Giving Things the Voice They Deserve

Looking into the etymologies of the word *thing* in three languages (English, French and Chinese), one gets a sense of the complexities of a word that one brushes aside too easily as 'useless'. In English the word comes from Old English *þing* for *meeting, assembly, council* and *discussion* but also *a subject of deliberation* in an assembly. A similar word, sharing the same origin is still in use in German today to refer to a thing, while in Icelandic the *Alþingi* corresponds to the country's Parliament. The meaning of *meeting* and *assembly* was dropped in English in the thirteenth century to start referring to *personal possessions*. In French, *une chose* comes from Latin *causa* for *judicial process, lawsuit, case* but also *cause, reason*. The verb *choser* (which is not in existence anymore today) used to signify *to scold, rumble*. What the etymologies of a thing in these two 'European' languages seem to hint at is that the word used to gather, assemble people to do something *together*, to make decisions or to judge someone. It was about *bonds, relations, interactions* and *groups*. In Chinese (a language to which we will make ample references in the book), the equivalent to the word thing is 东西 (dōngxi), which translates literally as *a thing/an object* (concrete and abstract people, things and objects), but also as *east and west, from east to west* and even *near* and *beside*. As such, each character of the word refers to opposite (but interrelated) directions: 东 (East) and 西 (West). There are many explanations as to why the two directions are used to refer to things, one of them being that the sun, the moon and stars, which influence all things, rise in the East and go down in the West. Directions in Chinese can also refer to the five elements of *metal, wood, water, fire* and *earth*. The word *thing* could then also have to do with a

discussion between Confucian Zhu Xi and Sheng Wenru around buying things from a street, with Wenru asking why Xi was not buying 'north' (water) and/or 'south' (fire). Xi responded that only East (metal) and West (wood) (东西, dōngxi, thing) could be placed in his basket. The story behind this Chinese character also adds an interesting element to what is discussed in this book: a thing can be multidirectional; it is torn apart between directions; it is not static and it relates to the cosmos, to the same universe as human beings, becoming thus itself a being in its own right.

In European philosophy and sociology, things are omnipresent: Heidegger (1889–1976), Simondon (1924–1989), Baudrillard (1929–2007) (amongst others) have all discussed them in their work. Baudrillard (2020) has even created a semiological system of objects. Roland Barthes (1915–1980) has also discussed things extensively in his work, reminding us that things are not only meant to be useful but they also have specific meanings and create e.g. collective beliefs, they have aesthetic qualities and have an influence on our own identities (Barthes, 1993). Things can say something about us un-/intentionally.

In literature things have also been at the centre of creativity. For Balzac (1799–1850) things correspond to "the material representation that humans give to their thought" (my translation of "la représentation matérielle que les humains donnent à leur pensée", Balzac, 1842: 12). The poet Francis Ponge (1899–1989) tells us that "Things do not accept being seen but not heard" (my translation of "Les choses n'acceptent pas de rester sages comme des images", cited in Collot, 1991: 131). And more recently in a book about grieving for her parents Lydia Flem explains that when she cleaned and emptied her parents' home, "every object spoke of their absence" (my translation of "chaque object parlait de leur absence", Flem, 2005: 10). [See Caraion's (2020) book entitled *Comment la littérature pense les objets*—trans. how literature thinks of objects].

Many plays have also given importance to things. In *The Object Conference (La Conférence des Objets)* (2019), for example, Christine Montalbetti wishes to illustrate what she calls "the exciting materiality of the world" (my translation of "l'enthousiasmante matérialité du monde"; Montalbetti, 2019: 42). In the play she explores how we relate to things and urges the audience to look at things around them in a different way, arguing that objects are "evidence of moments of our existence" (my translation of "des preuves de moments de notre existence"; Montalbetti, 2019: 25). Written for five actors, the play introduces for example an apple peeler who tells the audience: "We are objects and tonight a few of us are going to break out of our silence. We have some things to tell you" (Comédie Française, 2019). One also finds a sewing box, an umbrella, an amulet and a lamp amongst the cast. In their monologues or dialogues the objects share their desire for revolt, their dissat-isfactions, the violence they have experienced, etc. (Montalbetti, 2019: 25). In the play synopsis, we are told that "[the] challenge, a various serious one at that, is to renew our perception of what surrounds us, to re-enchant our relationship with the material world" (Comédie Française, 2019). This, again, is what this book aims to do for intercultural communication education.

Finally, let me make a reference to the arts. Artist Myriam Mihindou (2021), whose heritage is from Gambia, makes an important remark about visiting the Musée du

Quai Branly in Paris, a museum that conserves and documents works from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas:

> When I go to the Quai Branly museum and see these mute instruments at the entrance, it chills my bones. I would like to hear them, I would like them to tell me. Seems like obvious nonsense to me (my translation of "Quand je vais au musée du quai Branly et que je vois ces instruments muets à l'entrée, ça me glace les os. J'aimerais les entendre, j'aimerais qu'ils me racontent. Ça me semble être un non-sens manifeste", Mihindou, 2021: n.p.).

She also comments on the masks that are exhibited at the museum, which she finds 'depressing'. When she lived in Gabon, she explains, the only masks that she saw being used were 'alive', they were 'dancing', they were always found to be in active positions—not like these museum pieces. She maintains that she would like to give these things 'a voice' so that they can teach us new ideas. For Mihindou (2021), this would also be a democratic move. In order to make things present, beyond absence, in intercultural research and education we should also consider these principles.

Another artist, Tatiana Trouvé (2018) argues that things are like recorders and explains that for every exhibition that she organizes, she keeps the bar of soap that her team and herself use in the bathroom for the entire duration of the show and makes a mould out of it to record what they *constructed* together.

All these examples, from outside research and education, inspire us to include the more-than-human for interculturality. We must learn to see the more-than-human in the human, to train our eyes, ears and other senses to do so. And more importantly, we must overcome the (ideological) tensions between subject-object.

1.4 How to Work With the Book

This book has benefited from cooperation with Mei Yuan from Minzu University of China. While I have provided the conceptual, theoretical and pedagogical aspects of this book (Chaps. 2 and 3), Mei has fed in knowledge about the things that are used to reflect on the links between the more-than-human and interculturality in Chap. 4.

Through its post-anthropocentric outlook, the book argues that things can act like mirrors to reflect on self and other interculturally and on the way we think, rethink and unthink the notion. The book trains our eyes to experience *pareidolia*—perceiving images in a random or ambiguous visual pattern. *I must see shapes and pictures out of the invisibility of things in interculturality*. The book teaches us 'thing lessons' (Datson, 2007): to listen to arguments made about the world around us through things, as sites of meaning animated by their materiality; to listen to what they tell us about what there is and help us interpret and explain what there is. These lessons should be embedded in the personal, the individual, the biographical, the ideological, the political, the economic—*like interculturality*.

This book deals with today's central and yet often misunderstood and miscon-strued notion of interculturality. As a highly complex and ideologically flavoured notion globally, interculturality deserves to be deconstructed and reconstructed ad

infinitum, especially when the world is confronted with multiple crises as has been the case since early 2020—crises that had, obviously, started well before that. For us, the prefix *inter-* and the suffix *-ality*, both suggesting perpetual change and reciprocity, are the analytical foci of 'doing' interculturality (see Dervin, 2008, 2012, 2016, 2022; Holliday, 2010, 2021; Piller, 2010; Dervin & Jacobsson, 2022; R'boul, 2021, 2022). Most importantly, the presence of others is the central key in both making sense and 'doing' interculturality. It is in this constant and overlapping interstice, approximating to and converging, that interculturality *becomes.*

This originality of this book is in its specific focus on one aspect of intercultural awareness that, to my knowledge, has been ignored in research and education: the presence and influence of *things* on the way we experience, do and reflect on interculturality. Using the word *things* in English may not appear to be positive—especially in a book title. For example, when one learns to write in English (and many other Indo-European languages) one is told not to use the word since it is deemed too informal, too vague and too unsophisticated. As a potentially imprecise and polysemic term, it may cause readers to interpret it in different ways. However, we insist on using this 'crude' word here, following in the footsteps of materiality research (e.g. Latour, 2005).

Beside this first introductory chapter, the book is composed of four other chapters. Chap. 2 introduces the polysemous notion of interculturality and argues that, as a 'Western-centric' notion, it needs to be constantly unthought and rethought to allow research and education discourses to evolve constantly, including e.g. more marginalised voices in the process. A fluid, adaptable and renegotiable approach to the notion is suggested and illustrated by the authors' own take on the notion at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 3 focuses directly on the more-than-human and provides useful reviews of research on the more-than-human in the human and social sciences as well as reviews of research on interculturality that has considered things. We take this opportunity to summarize what things *are/not, can/not* 'do' to us and with us and discuss how they could go hand in hand with interculturality. The more 'concrete' part of the book, five 'Chinese' things for interculturality, is presented at the end of the chapter.

In Chap. 4, we go deeper into our exploration of the more-than-human and interculturality by presenting and reviewing five 'Chinese' things for interculturality: calligraphy, chopsticks, jade, mahjong, Resident Identity Card. We wrote this chapter as support for reader reflexivity about the topic and e.g. questions are asked to reflect further on what the more-than-human can teach us about the ways we engage with interculturality as both as a phenomenon and a subject of research and education. We conclude this central chapter with a useful framework for examing things for interculturality.

The final chapter which serves as a conclusion argues that the more-than-human can definitely offer unparalleled insights into interculturality. Summarizing the main observations made throughout the book and especially in the previous chapter, the multiple positions that things can offer for intercultural work are reviewed. What things can 'do' for us in terms of research and education is also problematized and

proposed as guidelines for future work on the more-than-human in intercultural communication education.

I hope that you will enjoy reading this book, which will be different from many books that you have read on intercultural issues. I do encourage you, dear reader, to be as critical and reflexive as possible while engaging with our ideas, arguments and examples in what follows. The topic of the book is unique and, as a first entry into it, we all need to keep our eyes and ears open. Interculturality is often mistreated in research and education and by being vigilant about what we read, we cannot but enrich it. May the more-than-human now become part of (y)our future engagements with interculturality!

[Quid pro quo[1]]
Before you start reading the next chapter, take some time to reflect on these questions:

- Where do you situate yourself in current intercultural scholarship and education? How do you understand the notion of interculturality? Why are you interested in the notion? What are your scholarly and educational ambitions in relation to interculturality?
- How much thought have you given to the place of the more-than-human in relation to intercultural communication education? What do you expect to discover in this book?
- We use 'Chinese' things in the book as examples. Try to picture for yourself some 'Chinese' things that you have come across. What do they look like? How did they feel like when you held them in your hands? What is 'special' about them from your own perspectives? Have you ever learnt anything 'intercultural' from 'Chinese' things?
- Finally, take some time to look at the things around you as you are reading this book and consider the following questions: *Why are they here next to you? What is their (real) purpose? What do these things 'do' to you? Do they relate to your identity? Are they replaceable and/or disposable? What memories are attached to them? Apart from you, who 'benefits' from these things? How much do these things remind you of the world/other places?*

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[1] Latin for *something for something,* indicating here that we wish to open up reciprocal dialogues with our readers in this book.

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Chapter 2
Making Sense of Interculturality

Abstract This chapter problematises the polysemous notion of interculturality, which is at the centre of the book. As a 'Western-centric' notion, the authors argue that it needs to be unthought and rethought to allow research and education discourses to evolve constantly, including e.g. more marginalised voices in the process. The notion is decomposed in the chapter and the authors argue that a fluid, adaptable and renegotiable approach is necessary. At the end of the chapter, the authors position their own take on interculturality in the book, reminding the readers that it is meant to be considered critically and reflexively as they engage with the book.

Keywords Western · Fluidity · Critiques · Renegotiate · Interculturality

2.1 Interculturality as a Kaleidophone

> The text shows clearly that you have reflected (sic) the concept of interculturality very thoroughly and for a long time. Perhaps you are even suffering from this notion and its complexities?

This recent comment from a book project reviewer, received by Fred, summarizes well what working on interculturality as a subject of research and education is about.

In this chapter we wish to discuss the central notion of interculturality. We use the metaphor of the kaleidophone to do so. Most of us will know that a kaleidoscope is an optical instrument that contains bits of colored glass between two flat plates that reflect them in an endless variety of patterns [Eidos in Grek means *shapes*]. A kaleidophone follows the same principle but with sounds. We argue here that interculturality is a polysemous and diverse notion around the world. Although we might think that it is an easy and obvious construct, interculturality can mean and entail many different things in different languages (if it exists in a given language, NB: some languages do not have any equivalent for the notion), economic-political contexts, educational systems, entertainment and artistic realms. Its sound 'shapes' are thus plural and should always be considered as such. Working on interculturality in research and education thus requires constantly interrogating the term and making as many of its different voices visible/audible.

The kaleidophone metaphor also warns us against considering interculturality in research and education as a somewhat commonsensical 'thing' about which everybody would agree. Following Gramsci (1972: 423), "Common sense is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space." He adds (1972: 419): "Its most fundamental character is that it is a conception which, even in the brain of one individual, is fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential". We could easily say the same about the way interculturality is seen around the world.

Our first message is thus: if you are confused about what interculturality is, this is absolutely normal. We could go as far as saying that if we take any two people on the planet and ask them what it means and entails, we would probably not get the same answers, although there might be some ideological similarities such as the common use across languages and contexts of terms like *tolerance* or *respect* to determine what it is (about).

What makes it even more confusing is the existence of many other terms in the literature, political discourses and educational curricula. These include *multicultural, transcultural, crosscultural, culturally responsive, global* (amongst others). All these, alongside intercultural, might mean the same or something different. They might have to do with e.g. similar and different pedagogical objectives and interpretations. What they mean is controversial and polysemous too. The reasons for people choosing to focus on one term or the other are also multiple and can intersect: personal preferences (with or without a clear justification), influences from contexts, linguistic habits and borrowings, political beliefs, representations of who they are and others and how they classify their relations… The role of other key terms used in research, education and policy-making in different macro-contexts such as *race, ethnicity, religion*, *language, culture*, always puts pressure on how one tackles interculturality. What we read also has a massive influence on the way we engage with the notion. For Althusser and Balibar (1979: 14): "There is no such thing as an innocent reading, we must ask what reading we are guilty of."

Considering the terminological, economic-political, scientific and ideological complexity of looking into notions like interculturality, it is not surprising that all these terms can be used interchangeably, without their users being explicit about why they are used and what this entails for what they say, do and ask others to do with them.

In this complex kaleidophone, it is thus important to be as transparent and inquisitive as possible, to 'critique oneself' in the use of words to talk about interculturality so that we can interact with others around what we wish to do with the notion. Following hooks (1989: 169), it is important to be mindful of how our reflexivity and thus communication around (unstable) uses of the terms, "are borne out in the way that I live and the way that I talk and present myself". We need to be clear about the terms that we use, especially in (re-)(un-)defining them for and with others so that we can make sure that we aim to reach for similar things. Through such discussions of our own kaleidophones, we open up our views and conceptions of a subject of research and education that is plural and deserves to be treated beyond homogeneity and centrisms (e.g. Eurocentrism, humancentrism, adultcentrism…). It is not so much

about reaching a joint definition that would solve all problems associated with inter-culturality (we argue that this is impossible or a mere temporary illusion) but about unthinking and rethinking together with others how we perceive, problematize and understand interculturality at moment X. To summarize, the notion must be treated organically, taking the time to understand each other rather than rushing into a single definition containing ideological 'orders' that may not fit into our own discourses, endeavours and contexts. This also forces us to rethink the 'underground' idea that interculturality is some form of privilege. However, we argue that every single person on this planet experiences interculturality almost all the time and that they thus have a lot to say and think about the notion. [Interculturality is never optional for anyone]. Listening to as many voices as possible about interculturality should help us move away from the idea that only powerful voices, who 'know it all' (with often much fewer experiences of interculturality than many 'silent'/'silenced' person), can speak about and conceptualise it, determining e.g. 'good' and 'bad' practices.

2.2   The Triple Tautology

We defend ourselves with descriptions and tame the world by generalizing. Iris Murdoch

The word interculturality contains three pieces of information in the parts that constitute it linguistically: the prefix *inter-, culture-* and the suffix *-ality.* Although *inter-* and *-ality* are not too polysemic in the English language (inter- = in-between, among; -ality = a condition of something, a process), they don't always have trans-parent equivalents in other languages and might necessitate using other prefixes and/or suffixes to transmit the messages they contain. When these are 'retranslated' into English, they could lead to confusion: e.g. *cross-, trans-* and even *multi-; -ality* might become *-ism* (as in *interculturalism*). All these elements will influence the ideological connotations of the term and thus how people might treat each other, think of each other and interact with each other.

The 'culture' part of the notion has been the attention of many scholars since the field of intercultural communication appeared. Like many other social and human sciences, different phases of engaging with the concept of culture have been noted from 'pure' culturalism whereby culture was said to determine everything to 'culture as a ghost'—culture is still there in name but it is absent in the way people problema-tize the notion. In English, the word culture is a chameleon. Imagine what happens when we add other linguistic, multilingual layers to it and people use English as a lingua franca to discuss it. So, when we are faced with the very term *interculturality*, we need to examine first what people do about 'culture': do they take it into account, include it in their discussions of encounters and interactions. In brief: what do they do with it? If culture is 'deconstructed' (e.g. 'non-culturalism', 'anti-culturalism', 'small cultures'), what ideologies are introduced in discussions of interculturality? If culture is 'ignored' by researchers or educators, what term replaces it? Is interculturality then about (the intersection of) race, ethnicity, language, religion, or other elements? In

our own work, we have moved away from the concept of culture, arguing that it is a mere unconvincing broad term, a remnant of other times (eighteenth century European modernity) and that it has been used and abused in so many occasions for not so glorious actions that we prefer to put it aside, or, at least, we suggest that instead of being used broadly, as a potential substitute for things we cannot name, we unearth what is hiding behind it—if possible at all. We especially 'run away' from culture as "encyclopedia knowledge", following Gramsci (1972: 10):

> We need to free ourselves from the habit of seeing culture as encyclopedia knowledge, and men as mere receptacles to be stuffed full of empirical data and a mass of unconnected raw facts, which have to be filed in the brain as in the columns of a dictionary, enabling their owner to respond to the various stimuli from the outside world. This form of culture really is harmful, particularly for the proletariat. It serves only to create maladjusted people, people who believe they are superior to the rest of humanity because they have memorized a certain number of facts and dates and who rattle them off at every opportunity, so turning them almost into a barrier between themselves and others.

Knowledge is always contextualized, politicised and evident of power relations. Think of a given 'national culture': who determines what it includes and excludes, what it symbolizes or not, and what it means to people? Answering these questions about knowledge will lead to observing the instabilities and incoherence of using the concept of culture.

[We refrain from defining culture here, just arguing that for us it is a mere 'ghost'. It is there in the label that we use, but we consider it as a mere synonym for *persons, individuals* and *groups.* Interculturality is not about 'cultures' but about concrete living organisms coming together, negotiating together what they do and say to and with each other. Note however that we do not ask anyone to reject the concept or to refrain from using it. It is up to you to decide. We only recommend having a clear idea of what you do with it, what ideologies it transmits for you and others and how to clarify them.]

In the title of this subsection we use the phrase *triple tautology* to refer to each of the components of inter-cultur-ality. A tautology can be defined as the combination of two terms that repeats the same idea—making one of them redundant. When one observes inter-cultur-ality, one might have the impression of the triple tautology. As such each component conveys the idea of constant change, movement, transformation. Inter- always requires backs and forths between two individuals *a minima*; -ality connotes the never-ending, the processual and culture, from its etymology, something that one does following endless movements (agriculture). Therefore, the very notion itself is a good reminder of the necessity to treat interculturality in a fluid manner. Some of the components are 'extra', superfluous somehow, however we stick to the notion (instead of e.g. crossculturality) because of the clarity of its prefix: when we meet we *inter-,* we are always in-between 'us' being together, thus in limbo, in the interstice—sometimes closer to the 'I', other times nearer to 'you', and at times balancing in the middle of 'I' and 'you'. For Diop (2020: 21), "Each thing carries its opposite within". For interculturality this principle must be central in the way we see the notion and conceptualise it, accepting the fact that the 'same' and the 'opposite' inside of it are constantly changing—and must be changing!

Dealing with the tautology of interculturality thus requires to listen to the many and varied sounds of its kaleisdophone. It is about listening to how we speak about it in the different corners of the world and online, opening up to these other ways, renegotiating them, *changing*. We also need some form of demophilia (the love of people) when doing so, meaning being eager to listen to anyone who has anything to say about interculturality, appreciating their voices, even when we disagree with them and feel that our views are not reconcilable. A conversation at a supermarket, a political slogan, a piece of music, cannot but inspire us to unthink and rethink the notion ad infinitum.

Nietzsche (2007: 150) reminds us that "Convictions are prisons". We must liberate ourselves and others from the convictions we might have about interculturality, its tautological components and renegotiate them constantly with self and others as we engage with new ideas, new knowledge, new experiences, new ideologies.

2.3   How We Speak About Interculturality

One important aspect of reflecting on interculturality is to consider the different (and at times similar) ways of speaking about the notion. Language thus plays a central part in this matter. We start from the argument that language could never reflect the complexities of interculturality as a phenomenon and as a subject of research and education. Since it is always in the in-betweenness of encounters, it cannot be grabbed and grasped. Although language is sophisticated and can indicate nuances, words could never be complex enough to convey these aspects of interculturality. Within one language, and between different languages, one can never be sure that we are talking about the same thing in the way we define interculturality, the ways we describe how it occurs between people and how we expect people to behave within its framework. Paying attention to the way we framed interculturality linguistically is one of the most important aspects of researching and educating for it—not learning about culture, 'adopting' another culture and the such. The idea is not to 'censor' ourselves or to put aside politically correct ways of speaking about interculturality but to genuinely listen to how we 'do' interculturality 'with words' alone and with others, how words influence us and the ideological orders that they contain, when discoursing and doing it.

Let's try to consider for a moment the different contexts and thus ways of engaging with language about/constructing interculturality that we might cross on a daily basis:

- Science (defining, analyzing, delimiting its actions…)
- Education (teaching and learning about it, preparing people to 'do' it)
- Daily interactions around interculturality (discussing international news, online conflicts, casual encounters)
- Politics (discussing e.g. migration, diplomacy, cooperation, legal matters)

- Business (advertising with and for the other, making a profit with and/or from the other)
- Volunteering (NGOs).

In all these contexts, when we open our mouths to discuss interculturality our utterances might e.g. present what we expect people to do about it; how we expect people to treat each other; how education should deal with it; how different social media construct the notion; how politicians should make decisions concerning it.

Uttering something about interculturality can never guarantee co-understanding, i.e. I can never be sure that my interlocutor(s) understand(s) what I mean. Words denote (explicit meanings e.g. tolerance, respect, democracy) but also connote (implicit meanings), and although they do not always denote the same across languages, in terms of connotations, we are faced with complexities. All words are polysemous in different languages and can lead to misunderstandings, see non-understandings if they are not clarified and negotiated. Borges (1984: 51) reminds us rightly that "The dictionary is based on the hypothesis—obviously an unproven one—that languages are made up of equivalent synonyms". Hence the need to run away from trendy words, popular concepts without deconstructing them, digging into the ideologies they contain, the people who proposed them and the way they are (mis-)translated in different languages. *Words can reveal worlds* if they are examined under critical and reflexive lenses. We cannot continue to speak about interculturality as if the words we use to do so are transparent and universal. Working on interculturality requires from us to have these conversations about language—what do we do with words when we speak of interculturality as a subject of research and education?

2.4 Identity at the Centre, Interrogating Who We Are

> I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then. Carroll (1992: 40–41)

Before we go a bit deeper into how we envisage interculturality in this book, we wish to complement the previous discussions with remarks about the concept of identity, which has been central in intercultural research over the past two decades (Dervin & Risager, 2017). Identity here refers to what people do all the time: reflect on themselves, others and the world while interacting with them, while de- and re-constructing these elements for themselves and with others, dis-agreeing/pretending to agree. John Steinbeck (2001: 15) maintains: "When two people meet, each one is changed by the other so you've got two new people". Doing identity is like multi-plying one's selves, allowing our inner complexities to emerge. In a lot of cases, these 'selves' remain censored or held inside.

Identity in English is somewhat of a treacherous word since it comes from Latin *idem et idem* for the same and same. However, identity is never the same, identity is something that needs to transform to be *identity*. As such very little of 'our'

identity remains the same throughout our lives. And when we start interacting with others, we both reshape elements of ourselves, discourses, the voices of others which we include in our utterances; we lie, we manipulate, we win/lose, argue, etc. In the process of these ups and downs, who we are together gets reshaped, almost constantly. This does not mean however that there is a winner and/or a loser in the sense that, depending on our power status and our closeness with others, we can co-construct identities of which we are proud owners, and identities that we reject and yet must endure.

Henri Michaux (1997: x) describes the kind of equilibrium game that this entails in the following quote:

> There is not one self. There are not ten selves. There is no self. ME is only a position in equilibrium. (One among a thousand others, continually possible and always at the ready.) An average of "me's," a movement in the crowd. In the name of many, I sign this book.

The equilibrium that Michaux uses here is useful to make sense of identity and interculturality. As we spend time together, we try constantly to balance who we are 'being' together, pulling and pushing from all sides, influencing each other, doing things together. At the same time, there is a lot of information to which we don't have access for the purpose of doing interculturality: things that we don't (dare to) share, things that we hide from each other—we'll call this the backstage of interculturality later.

This is where the way we have been made to think and to speak about interculturality also intervenes. It has in fact a huge influence on the equilibrium. As such what we have been 'ordered' to believe about interculturality (e.g. democracy, respect, tolerance) might be counterproductive here since, for certain people, we might also have been made to believe that they do not correspond to 'good' examples of these elements. For instance, one might hear a foreigner assert that "The French are not very tolerant of foreigners", "The Chinese know nothing about democracy", "The Japanese are very respectful of others". If, during intercultural communication education, the key terms were used to 'train' people to think and 'do' interculturality, these presuppositions about others might influence the way they treat the other in-/directly and their thoughts about them. In interculturality and identity work we must beware of all labels, be they for day-to-day interactions and for scientific purposes.

And a link back to language is necessary here. All the elements discussed above about identity have to do with the way we express things and construct realities with others. The contradictions and inconsistencies that our acts of identification might contain (e.g. uttering a stereotype about my people and concluding that I am not like 'them'), are linked to the dialogicality of what we say. In every utterance, the un-/identifiable voices of others are always there, having a dialogue within, on top and as a complement to the dialogue that we are having with a person. Paying attention to who and what one includes in determining identities in interculturality (e.g. a direct voice speaking as in "my mother said" or an indirect one contained in the use of pronouns like *one* as in "one might imagine that…") is essential in noticing the equilibrium of identity making.

How We See Interculturality in This Book

As you will now have realized, we are not going to define interculturality in a static way in what follows. Instead we would like to note some principles for working on interculturality in education and research.

1. Interculturality should be considered as *an activity* rather than *a doctrine.* As an activity in research and education, it urges us to ask questions but not necessarily answer them. It also asks us to learn with reservations, i.e. to revise our learning, our biases, our preconceived ideas, our certitudes. Interculturality as an activity accepts making mistakes, trying again, "failing better" (Beckett, 1983: 31) and seeing snapshots of success.

2. When we look into interculturality, we must suffer from *synesthesia* in which the stimulation of one sense causes the automatic experience of another sense. When we hear the sounds of words used to speak about interculturality, we must also enrich our thinking by taking into account the colours that we see. This way, we can identify new perspectives of interculturality, discovering new facets that might contradict or cancel out previous ones. We can follow Carroll's advice (1992: 78): "If I had a world of my own, everything would be nonsense. Nothing would be what it is, because everything would be what it isn't. And contrary wise, what is, it wouldn't be. And what it wouldn't be, it would. You see?". Seeing and hearing these inconsistencies in the way we unthink and rethink interculturality accompany the very unstable and incoherent characteristics of interculturality itself.

3. We argue that in order to tackle interculturality it is better to take it through the lenses of *evocation and imagination* rather than those of mere *description and knowledge.* The latter cannot but be limited to reflect the hypercomplexities of interculturality, while the others are more elastic, more accommodating. Evocation is about creating an impression or image of something, which does not mean or pretend to be complete and precise. Since interculturality requires going to and fro, trying out new things, changing together, evoking and imagining the notion seem fitting. The way we present interculturality in research and education has more to do with the problematic action of making others see it in specific ways, instead of asking them how they see it and what the ways they speak about it reveals about what they have been 'ordered' to think. As a good principle for this remark, let's bear in mind what Wilde (2000: 7) said about art: "Every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter". The way we construct interculturality as a subject of research and education could tell us more about ourselves (our beliefs, ideologies, agendas…) than about the ones we are trying to frame with the notion.

In the book, interculturality is about individuals from different places and contexts—but they can also have been located in the same place forever—who might speak different languages and often see each other as *different* first and foremost (see Dervin, 2008, 2016, 2022). Through interculturality they come together and negotiate their relations and identities. This process—a never-ending one (see *-ality*)—is not free-floating since it always depends on power relations between

people, how they represent themselves, others and the world as e.g. (more/less) *positive, negative, superior, inferior, civilised, uncivilised*. In that sense, interculturality is always a balancing act between people, an act of constant negotiations, which always leads to (unnoticed) change—'good' and/or 'bad' change. We argue that doing interculturality thus requires accepting perpetual *co*-changes, learning to observe change in self and other and balancing it. This requires practising introspection ('looking at oneself in the mirror') whereby one unthinks and rethinks what we do, say, think with others. By doing so one can learn to identify interconnections, to balance otherness with otherness, likes and dislikes, difference and similarity, opposites and complementarities and to discuss and navigate potential contradictions, incoherences in the way we interact with others. From an educational and research perspective, doing interculturality also urges us to acquire as much diverse knowledges as possible about other ways of seeing and conceptualising interculturality to avoid unfair clashes of ideologies (e.g. "my views on interculturality are more developed than yours"). This requires listening carefully to what one says and what others claim about the notion and refraining from imposing our own thoughts and ideologies without considering alternatives, similarities and differences in the ways we see interculturality. Considering the multiple dimensions of interculturality as a complex way of life, interdisciplinarity is required when working on the notion. We argue that bridging interculturality-work with 'more-than-humans' cannot but enrich these goals of doing interculturality and unthink and rethink how we have been made to think about it.

Figure 2.1 is a(n) (incomplete[1]) representation of what happens when individuals meet (face-to-face or online). Listening to and observing each other while interacting, they co-construct some identities and ideas in the central rectangle. What we see in this central stage is what they feel comfortable enough to include and reveal, stimulated (or not) by the encounter. This means that a lot of these could include e.g. imaginaries, (white) lies, hesitations, adaptations. This central rectangular stage is surrounded by two 'backstage' spaces with fingers indicating the importance of accessing these spaces to explore discourses of interculturality deeper. This backstage contains (our) 'truths' and elements that one does not wish to voice for the other (opinions, aspects of identity, affiliations, realities, economic-political aspects). We argue that trying to find some entry points into these backgrounds, beyond the mere performance on the central stage could help expand our takes on interculturality—not to learn how to communicate 'perfectly' with the other since this makes no sense but to dig deeper into its meanings, connotations, ideologies to feel more comfortable with the complexities, instabilities and incoherence of interculturality as a subject of education and research.

Doing interculturality then means trying to shift our listening to and observing towards the backstages, not in any aggressive way but in a soft and patient manner, asking questions and clarifications if one has doubts. Our assumption is that the closer we can get to the backstages the richer instances of interculturality we might be able

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[1] It is labelled as 'incomplete' because one can never determine all the elements that influence the ways we interact with each other.
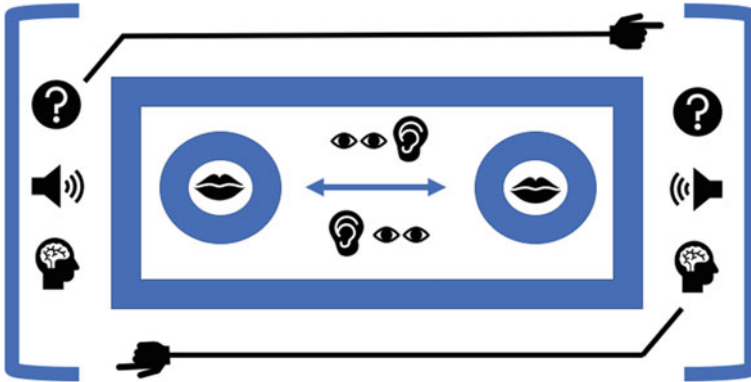
Fig. 2.1   (Incomplete) representation of what happens when individuals meet

to construct together with others. Things intervene both central stage and backstage. Central stage, they are directly there with us and influence how we interact with, consider and imagine each other. Backstage, things are also very much present in the influences that they have had in e.g. mediating ideologies and/or connotations of the words that we have been fed to think about and conceptualise interculturality.

In the rest of the book we argue that the more-than-human can support us in these processes, to think (multi-)lingually about interculturality, to ask questions, to evoke and imagine interculturality in more creative ways. One of our students reacted this way when we asked them to reflect on the links between interculturality and the more-than-human:

> *Should we take the more-than-human into account for interculturality?* Yes. First, because they are part of culture, we can learn history from them and discover the commonalities and differences of the cultures they contain. For example, from the ancient buildings in China, we can know the architectural characteristics of the time, the preferences of the times and even the climate characteristics. What's more, some non-living species have special representations in culture, and understanding these representations can lead to deeper exposure to culture, and better intercultural communication. For example, the moon has an image of miss or yearn in China. After understanding this intention, we can better understand why a poet will use the moon to refer to homesickness. In addition, there can be many interactions between living species and non-living species. For example cross-border trade can export emerging concepts through commodities, which can affect people in different regions.

Before moving on to the next chapter, let us share examples of how things have influenced our own experiences of interculturality on the 'central stage':

- In initial encounters, when we did not know the 'other' so well, things have allowed us to feel 'safe' and 'more comfortable' by e.g. holding them between us forming some sort of psychological wall (a buffer, e.g. scrolling on one's phone, observing a detail on a piece of fabric on a dinner table);
- Things have contributed to creating a more convivial atmosphere between us and the other (e.g. a lamp, a comfortable sofa);

- Things have allowed us to express ourselves when we could not speak (e.g. drawing, a translation app on a mobile phone);
- Things have helped us create bonds between us (e.g. use of sports equipment, Tiktok, a beautifying app, a funny doll, presents, sharing snacks);
- Things have helped up to entice the other (e.g. expensive clothes with specific brands, make-up, perfume/after shave);
- Things have also prevented us from 'doing' interculturality (e.g. loud music in a café, the COVID-mask);
- Renegotiating the naming of things in different languages has allowed us to start new conversations and to view the world differently (e.g. in Chinese the word 香—xiāng, which is often translated as 'fragrant', refers to food that has an intense, often meaty aroma, which makes one's mouth water).

[Quid pro quo]

- Were you confused about the notion of interculturality before you read this chapter? When you say the word, what other concept(s) come to mind? Why and do you know how to define them?
- What do you make of the remark that the very word interculturality is a triple tautology? Do you see it as a problem?
- 'Culture is a ghost' in research and education. Would you agree? Why (not)?
- Try to find more information about the kaleidophone so you can get an idea of what the instrument looks like. Can you also try to find other metaphors for interculturality that reflect its complexities?
- What do Eurocentrism, humancentrism, adultcentrism mean to you in relation to interculturality as a notion? What other -isms seem to limit the way we engage with the notion in research and education?
- What 'trendy' words seem to be used to discuss interculturality in research and education today? Which ones do you use or refuse and why?
- Look at Fig. 2.1 again and reflect on the role that things play in this representation of what happens when people interact with each other.
- To finish, if you could speak to us directly (you may send us an email, of course!), would you like to ask us a question about the three principles for working on interculturality that we present at the end of this chapter?

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Chapter 3
The More-than-Human and Interculturality

Abstract The more-than-human is discussed in this chapter. The authors provide two useful reviews of 1. Research on the more-than-human in the human and social sciences; 2. Previous studies of interculturality that have given space to things. Based on discussions of these studies, the authors summarize what things *are/not, can/not* 'do' to us and with us and problematise how they go hand in hand with interculturality. The chapter ends on the presentation of the more 'concrete' part of the book in the next chapter, where five 'Chinese' things are used to illustrate the interconnections and influences between the human and the more-than-human in interculturality.

Keywords Silent partners · Material turn · Latour · Ideologies · China

3.1 Silent Partners

An impressive exhibition presented in Dublin in 2022 was entitled *The Objects of Love* (e.g. family objects, photographs…). It told the story of one Jewish family before, during and after the Second World War—a 'recent' tragedy of painful interculturality. This is how one of these objects is described:

> These forged wartime identity papers show a passport sized photograph of my grandmother Kryszia with freshly dyed blond hair staring straight ahead. A new and necessary look to heighten her Aryan credentials, along with her acquired, nondescript Polish name and unlikely declared profession of 'typist'. How to measure the fear and desperation in those eyes, hiding from a regime programmed to turn you, your family and your culture into ash. (Extract from *The Objects of Love* by Oliver Sears, see Office of Public Works, 2022: n.p.)

As mentioned in the book introduction, very few publications have appeared on the more-than-human and interculturality. Some interculturalists do mention the 'posthuman' (e.g. Ferri, 2020) but it is not always clear how things are taken into account in theorizing, problematizing and analysing interculturality.

In a book coedited by Itkonen and Dervin (2018) the authors dealt with the under-researched role of what Fred had coined as 'Silent Partners' (SPs) in education. These include formal and informal places-spaces in schools (e.g. architecture, classroom facilities, libraries, corridors, playgrounds, canteens), objects (e.g. teaching aids,

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furniture, wall decorations and overall interior design), and interactive technologies (use of devices and applications). Although the book was labelled as *multicultural education*, it is relevant for all things 'intercultural'.

Roth (2001) is probably one of the rare scholars to have discussed these issues specifically for intercultural communication. The author starts by hypothesizing that one of the reasons why interculturalists have not paid full attention to the issue might have to do with scholarly traditions of "the language of things is universal" (Roth, 2001). As a consequence, foci have been mostly on *language, non-verbal expressions, behaviours, perceptions, attitudes* and *values*. Roth was writing about this in 2001 and it seems that nothing has changed in 2022.

Roth (2001: 564) also makes the following important remark: In the work of one of the first 'interculturalists', Hall (1976), the anthropologist does insist on the significance of the material for communication. Although his work has and is still influential for many interculturalists, this aspect is being totally ignored.

3.2 Towards a 'More-than-Human' Turn in Interculturality Research and Education

As the title of our book indicates our focus here is on the 'more-than-human'—see the 'more-than-other-than-human' (Hughes & Lury, 2013). As much as there is no interculturality without the co-presence of other people, we argue that interculturality cannot occur without the co-presence of the 'more-than-human'—*things,* as they will be referred to in the next chapter. All these cannot be separated and the book agrees that things could have a status equivalent to e.g. language in mediating human actions. Unfortunately, as Fred argued in the introduction, the place of things has been ignored in research on interculturality, with the human systematically placed at the centre. An uncountable number of opportunities to *undo* and *redo* interculturality with others have thus been missed.

In many fields of research (e.g. Haraway, 1991; Ingold, 2000), the so-called 'material turn' (e.g. Hicks, 2010) has led scholars to question the dualism of things and people, taking into account both the material and the social, and placing the emphasis on their relations and influences. In anthropology, for example, through ethnography, scholars have explored the ways things and people are co-constituted, treating them symmetrically and moving beyond their mere juxtaposition and opposition. Things are often unnoticed in everyday life and many thinkers have argued that we should focus on how they frame our everyday lives, actions and relations, how things are inseparable parts of any relationship to other people—be they intercultural or *something else.* We maintain that taking into account things more systematically in engaging with interculturality as both a concrete phenomenon of interaction and as a subject of research and education can allow us to complexify our analytical, reflexive and critical lenses.

Anthropologist Tim Ingold asks the question of 'what counts as a thing?' in a 2010 paper where he defines things as "gathering of the threads of life" (2010: 4): *do trees count as things or are things just man-made? Where does a thing start and a thing finish? Are things separated from each other and/or from us human beings? Is a thing necessarily something that we can get hold of, grab and touch? If one thinks of music on a CD for example, is music a thing when heard from speakers (*Woodward, 2020*)? What is its materiality?* These questions can open up new ways of thinking about things and especially the influence they have on us and others—and us *together*, beyond the usual passive perception of things. These questions urge us to consider things as part of our relations and identity-making. All these questions are thus relevant for interculturality since not two people might perceive and represent a 'thing' as a 'thing'. This urges us to enter into dialogues with the other *around, about* and *with* things. It is not about asking what things are but *how they are perceived to be, their entanglements* and most importantly *what they do to and with us*. This also helps us consider things through their changing and emergent characteristics. In our encounters with each other, and with things, we change. Things also take part in the way we resist, surprise, challenge and excite each other. *They are always there.*

Different perspectives in the human and social sciences have furthered our understanding of the inseparable connections between human beings and things (amongst others): *Actor Network Theory* (e.g. Blok et al., 2020; Latour, 2005); *New Materialism* (e.g. Fox & Alldred, 2015).

In what follows Actor Network Theory (ANT), probably the most popular and versatile approach to the 'more-than-human' globally, is discussed. Born out of the collective work of Bruno Latour, Michel Callon, Madeleine Akrich, Antoine Hennion, Vololona Rabeharisoa, John Law, Annemarie Mol, Vicky Singleton (amongst others), ANT has been used in many fields of research and applied to e.g. the contexts of entrepreneurship, environmental conflicts and healthcare practices. Although it includes the word *theory* in its name, ANT is neither a theory nor a method as such, but a changing conceptual framework, a 'family of sensibilities' and even a 'guide for living' (Zhang et al., 2018). ANT pushes forward the idea that non-humans (things included) have a vital role in the constitution of our collective existence and thus foregrounds relationality between things and us, and between things and things. Examining knots, nodes and networks of this co-existence, interaction and relationality, ANT thinkers like John Law (2004: 121) have argued that "*Contra* appearances, nature is always entangled with culture and society. To negotiate the structure of one is to negotiate the structure of the others". Moving beyond the modern western-centric divide between 'nature' and 'culture', the 'technical' and 'the social', ANT is meant to support researchers in describing, spotting, tracking and grappling with human and non-human actors together (Latour, 1993). What interculturality can learn from Actor Network Theory is based on the claim that, as a complex assembled, de-assembled and reassembled set of phenomena, the social occurs through relations, interactions and encounters between humans and non-humans, as well as through practices and the relations of things with other things. It considers all these elements as emergent, not static. It does not ask from the one who does ANT to e.g. identify the properties of a thing but to consider which

aspects of a thing matter and how they emerge through processes and relations with other things and humans, concurrently (Woodward, 2020). ANT has thus advanced the idea that things have agency too, in the sense that they have causal efficacy. Although things have no intention as agents, they do 'distribute' human intentions. For example, the way one designs a thing or decorates it, gives agency to it to create a specific feel for those who will see and interact with the thing, integrating it in the networks of sociality that they are involved with and embedded in. This makes dividing human and non-human agency impossible for ANT.

3.3   Things and Interculturality in Previous Research

Previous publications on the very topic of things for interculturality are limited, especially in education. Many studies have been identified within museum research such as Zhang et al. (2018) who examine how museums serve as memory institutions producing, representing and connecting things to e.g. collective national discourses, in both dynamic and contested ways. Like Hobsbawn and Ranger (1992) they note that carefully selected things can tell particular stories of a given nation. Zhang et al. (2018) also show how the exhibition of things in fragmentary discourses in museums leads to different realities being constructed by varied visitors through a variety of memories, feelings, and processes of subjectification. In a similar vein, in *The uses of objects: Reflexive learning in the epistemic museum*, Froggett (2020: 167) argues that we can project "self-states and aspects of our habitual relations to people and things" when we see things in museums. Focusing on object-based learning or learning from objects in museums Schultz (2019) claims that such learning can provide a deeper learning than simple physical illustration, as such, she argues that things ground abstract notions in concrete experience, their physicality can trigger curiosity and desire to learn more. Finally, things can urge students to speak to each other, to ask questions, and to unlearn misconceptions, see addressing their cultural biases (Schultz, 2019). All in all, things can be transformative as forms of informal education. Following Bruchac (2015), Schultz (2019) also pushes for a working method with things that consists in observing and deep reflecting first and consulting the existing scholarship second. Giving space to the expression of emotions related to things, by e.g. exploring the power of our five senses, is also promoted by Schultz (2019). Roth (2001) also explains that objects can be loaded with emotions linked to the individual and/or the collective and shape collective identities, ideologies and myths.

Research on representations of things has also been done in e.g. children's literature in the U.S. In 2021 Zhang and Wang published a paper where they examine what they refer to as the 'cultural authenticity of Chinese-themed children's books', starting from the argument that 'authenticity' can stimulate multicultural awareness and intercultural understanding. The authors define authenticity as based on "cultural insiders' judgment" (Zhang & Wang, 2021: 3) and demonstrate through their analysis that most textbooks portray things authentically while a certain number have

incorrect, stereotyped and outdated information. This analysis was based on "the extent to which a book portrays cultural products, practices, perspectives, persons, as well as geographical and temporal features of the communities in texts and illustrations judged by cultural insiders as authentic and free of biases and stereotypes" (Zhang & Wang, 2021: 4). As such, e.g. Confucian values (e.g. filial piety) and traditional Chinese festivals (with comments on the colour red, a colour of good luck and celebration), were identified in the literature.

Further in education, the use of art—*making things together*—has also been promoted to reinforce e.g. feelings of belonging. This is the case of Korjonen-Kuusipuro et al. (2018) who worked with unaccompanied refugee minors in Finland. Drawing on collaborative ethnographic fieldwork, an art project was used to promote intercultural communication and interaction, and to support mutual understanding and solidarity among refugee minors and Finnish pupils. Using traditional Mexican mask making, a thing which is neither Finnish nor from the migrant youth's home countries, they show how materiality (e.g. the choosing of colours revealing memories of home and longing for own country) is connected to a sense of belonging. In another similar paper, Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Kuusisto (2019) discuss how socio-material belonging and relations occur in the intercultural lives of unaccompanied refugee minors in Finland. They problematise belonging as a "dynamic and relational process of emotional attachment that is constantly co-becoming" (Korjonen-Kuusipuro & Kuusisto, 2019: 365), and based on and entangled with both embodied practices and material encounters. The authors agree that there is a need to take into account the active participation and co-dependance of human and non-human forces in what we do, say and experience. About their art workshop with both refugee children and local kids, Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Kuusisto note (2019: 371):

> Young people started to wander around, talk to each other and play with things, such as ready-made masks, scarves, hats, glue, papers, and paints. Objects initiated human movement and simultaneously invited young people to become part of the sensory and kinaesthetic relations with other people and matter. In addition to these playful encounters with the material, we noticed pupils from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds starting to make attempts at social contacts through laughter, funny facial expressions and short speech acts. Also, young people's memories of the past started to surface in the present moment in and through these playful socio-material encounters.

In a different kind of study but still related to belonging, identity and migration, Pechurina (2020) looks into Russia migrants' diasporic objects in their homes in Britain (e.g. souvenirs from home, furniture, items of décor and food). The observation of homemaking practices reveals complex meaning-making around the place of things. Ambivalence is noted in terms of migrants' relationships with their past and present homes, marking both connection and detachment. At the same time, the analysis of migrants' home-making through observing things can offer insights into how identities are creatively built, reinforced and reshaped.

Only one publication seems to promote a pedagogy based on what the authors refer to as *material culture* to stimulate intercultural competence (Lynn & Strair, 2022). Starting from the argument that intercultural education cannot do away without materiality, the authors propose a curriculum intervention for a German course based on an

object inquiry around what they describe as the untranslatable concept of *Heimat*. For the authors, things are "inherent carriers of meaning negotiated through language" (Lynn & Strair, 2022: 95), and their complex role in communication and symbolic analysis should be taken into account when analysing interculturality. Lynn and Strair (2022) review several perspectives on things, with two of them having retained our attention: *artifactual literacy* (based on Pahl & Rowsell, 2020) and *object biography* (Kopytoff, 1986). Artifactual literacy consists in developing one's ability to work in relation to communication processes and things while paying attention to power, context and history influencing our perception and treatment of things. Similarly, the practice of object biography consists in interrogating the different dimensions of a thing historically, how it is talked about, displayed, used, and e.g. relates to people's identities. In the exercises completed by the authors' students at a German museum the object biographies were based on the object's appearance, the material it is made from, how it is produced, if there seems to be any symbolic value to it, and how it has been used and where one might encounter it.

All these studies show how scholars have attempted to break down, in their different ways, a dualist approach and the boundaries between *thinghood* and *subjecthood*, between *human* and *non-human*. In the book, we use Chinese things to 'practise' relating these elements. We note that, in Chinese worlds, things and human beings have long been considered as conjoined. In a Confucian classic, *The Classic of Rites* (礼记, 1885) for instance, 比德, i.e. *virtue comparison* in English, whereby certain things (plants and animals) were used to describe desirable human characteristics, was commonly referred to.

What the previous sections show is the vitalities of things for humans. In what follows, without claiming to be exhaustive, we summarize what things *are/not, can/not* 'do' to us and with us:

- Things are **everywhere** and always **embedded in networks of interactions.**
- Things are **ontologically multiple** but they can also be **meaningless**.
- Things create **atmospheres and/**or **be invisible**.
- Things are located at **the nexus of languages**; *we talk about things, we often talk to things and things can also talk to us* (indirectly or directly).
- Things have met many humans and other non-humans and are thus always embedded in a **complex network of relations**.
- Things can have **financial, emotional, intellectual** and **symbolic values**.
- Things can trigger **aesthetic pleasure** in us.
- Things can **influence our identities**.
- Things can indicate (a lack of) **power**.
- Things can tell us **(imagined) stories** about the world, ourselves, others.
- Things can be **the basis for telling stories**.
- Things can have and can suggest **histories** (Grand narratives, interpersonal histories).
- Things can be loaded with **affect**.
- Things can have the capacity to **resonate with, provoke, excite,** and **affect** us.
- Things can **protect and threaten us**.

- Things can **carry (malleable) memories**.
- Things can be **silent** and/or **noisy.**
- Things can have **specific meanings** and **imaginations** but can be **reinvested** with new meaning and imagination.
- Things can make us **change, reflect on change** and **serve as technologies of the self** to do so (Foucault, 1982).
- Things can be used to represent **our experiences of the world**.
- Things can **mark territories and borders.**
- Things can **cross borders**. Things can be glocal (local + global).
- Things can **enable and encourage connections** and **dialogue** between people.
- Things can help us **unthink and rethink our world** and how we see ourselves and others.
- Things can remind us of **our shared humanity and 'more-than-humanity'.**
- Things can be **transformed through relations between people** while transforming and (re-)shaping us.

Considering these complex *(not) be and can(not)*, benefiting from reflecting on and with things for interculturality appears to be an interesting and important area of knowledge to explore. This book provides the readers with opportunities to engage with interculturality by reflecting on how our lives are full of things and entangled with them. By doing so it helps move away from merely thinking *about* the world to thinking *with* the world (Barad, 2007). As such we propose a form of *thing inquiry for interculturality*—an inquiry about self, other and the world by experimenting with and through things—that provides a conceptual repertoire to think, unthink and rethink the important and yet contested notion of interculturality.

3.4 Including the 'More-than-Human' in Intercultural Communication Education: Five 'Chinese' Things for Interculturality

We now wish to spark curiosity about interculturality in different ways. The inquiry bridging the gap between the human and more-than-human for interculturality occurs through five 'Chinese' things, which we have selected together very carefully. *Why Chinese things?* The choice is based on several arguments. First, China is often seen as the 'other' in most parts of the world *par excellence* (Cheng, 2013); she is othered and essentialised, and often, misunderstood and stereotyped. At the same time, by her increasing influence throughout the world, China is globally visible in the media, education, business… So, one could argue that China is one of the most *unknown omnipresent figures of interculturality* today. We also note that the fact that millions of Chinese immigrants have settled worldwide over the decades means that Chinese culture is all around us and that some of the things that are included in the book already represent familiarity (e.g. chopsticks).

It is important to note that we do not aim to teach about Chinese culture here but to use the five things, which might be (slightly) familiar to you, as platforms to think about interculturality for ourselves and with others—and the more-than-human! The inclusion of the Chinese things should not be treated like 'exhibits in a museum', 'fetishes' or 'signs/proofs of authentic Chineseness'. And we use Chinese between inverted commas here to indicate that we do not mean to generalise or tell anyone that this is what China, Chinese culture or the Chinese are. As argued before: things are polysemic to different people, of multiple (historical) uses; things can bring back different (and similar) memories. Things are relational and thus plural in themselves. Finally, although the five things look separate on paper ('a list of 'Chinese' things'), one should constantly bear in mind that they are not separated from each other and unavoidably linked (e.g. in terms of language or intertextuality). It is also important to remember that the five things are embedded in the authors' own world(s) and that they always indirectly relate to thousands of encounters that have taken place between strangers of whom neither the authors nor the readers will be aware. Things always contain the invisible memory of others, from the one who first conceptualised them to our next-door neighbour who used them a few days ago but of whom we might be unaware. Although we do not have access to these presence-absences, they will have to be borne in mind. If we go back to the etymologies of a thing in different languages, we are reminded of the connectedness, togetherness and multi-directions that things bring in us.

The five Chinese things can empower us to reflect on how we see and conceptualise interculturality, what the notion could entail and how we could 'do' it with others. By deepening our engagement with and understanding of things as bridges to others we argue that interculturality could become a more meaningful, complex and original way of relating to our world and to others. We also wish for the reader to address one very important issue: the notion of interculturality deserves to be treated itself *interculturally* (Dervin, 2022), confronting specific perspectives about the notion with other ways of thinking about it. The place of language is central in 'redoing' interculturality since words in different languages often reveal different 'flavours'. Take for example the word *tolerance*, which is omnipresent in discourses of interculturality around the world. Compare the polysemy of the word in English, its own polysemy in this global language, and the different ways it might be interpreted and understood in other languages (and within languages). One then discovers a very diverse semantic chain for this 'simple' and yet highly complex idea. In dealing with the five things in Chap. 4, references to Chinese, English but also other languages will be made.

After reading the book, the reader should be able to 'decode' and 'feel' the myriad possibilities of what we do with things and what role things have in stimulating intercultural encounters, observing the 'gathering of the treads of life' (Ingold, 2010) that things lead to. At the same time, the reader is made to interrogate e.g. the feelings, imaginaries and ideologies that more-than-humans trigger in rethinking interculturality, by exploring the (changing) multi-sensory, the embodied but also the visual and material. This also means having the opportunity to develop a sense

of criticality, reflecting on one's own assumptions and beliefs about interculturality while shifting our focus from the all human, to the *'human'* ↔ *'more-than-human'*.

In recent years several popular books have been published about things. Our book shares some similarities with these books, although the focus is exclusively on helping the reader think about interculturality. In 2010, the Director of the British Museum presented *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, first as a radio programme and then as a book translated in different languages. Froggett (2020: 168) describes how the author deals with one object:

> For example, a Victorian stoneware tea set, dating from the 1840s and partially overlaid with silver work, is understood not only through its materiality and its aesthetic, but through the layers of signification that expose the intricate mesh of social relations, military forces, geo-political administrative and legal powers, along with a household gender order and rituals of decorum, conviviality and probity enacted in the 19th century bourgeois parlour. Nor is this to forget the promotion of tea in the service of temperance to divert the labouring classes from their habitual alcoholic beverages, thereby enhancing the discipline of industrial capitalism's burgeoning workforce.

In *Le Magasin Du Monde* (2020, trans. *The World Store*) Singaravélou and Venayre (2020) review and problematise how globalisation has taken place since the eighteenth century until today through a list of objects such as *chewing-gum, the postcard* or *the Panama hat*. These previous publications have also inspired us when preparing this book.

As asserted in Chap. 2, the focus on interculturality in this book requires positioning in terms of what the notion means and what to expect when one 'does' it. Considering the polysemy of the word interculturality in English and other languages, and in different geo-economic-political contexts, it is important for us to reaffirm here how we understand it in this book. The reader should bear in mind when engaging with our ideas that these represent just one entry into the important topic of interculturality and that awareness and interaction with other perspectives is essential to enrich one's take on the notion. As asserted in Chap. 2, our focus is on both the prefix and the suffix of the notion. What to do with the concept of *culture* in the middle of *interculturality* is contested since it tends to be 'catch-all', imprecise and too general. This is why, in Chap. 4, we refrain from making direct references to the concept, preferring to be more precise in the descriptions of e.g. the attributes and identifications of things (see Wikan, 2002; Dervin, 2016). As such, instead of referring to e.g. Chinese culture in what follows, we will refer to e.g. food from Shanghai or B.C.E.-fifth century artefacts. This does not solve the problem of generalisation or imprecision (some food elements might be from Shanghai but very popular but slightly different in Beijing and vice versa). At least, what refraining from using the 'big word' of culture does is that it allows being somewhat more precise and less essentialising. At the same time, the authors admit and accept that one can never move away from representing realities in limited and (even subconsciously) biased ways. They believe, however, that working from 'more-than-humans' can help become more aware of this issue and find temporary and adaptable/changeable solutions.

Chapter 4 is obviously *not* meant to be an exhaustive introduction to 'Chinese' things. We could have chosen all kinds of things from and related to China instead

of the five ones we introduce: ('classics') *dumplings, tea, Hanfu costumes,* or famous Chinese brands (*Lining, Huawei*). We could have also included 'global' but omnipresent things in China such as *Coca Cola, Louis Vuitton bags.* The five Chinese things were identified with the help of e.g. Zhong's (2018) paper on the top 100 Chinese loanwords in English today, for which the document *A report on the awareness of Chinese discourse overseas* (中国话语海外认知度调研报告) was used. Starting from loanwords from Chinese in English was a good way of 'peeping into' and confirming cognates, i.e. what the world might already know about Chinese things. Choosing five things from China was challenging and we could discuss endlessly our choices. Our point here is not to be exhaustive—again: this book is neither about Chinese culture nor the history of Chinese things. They are Chinese things but at the same time, they are shared by the world. Some of the things are used in many parts of the world too. Others are used marginally or substituted by things that serve similar purposes in other contexts. We do encourage readers and colleagues to pick more Chinese things in the future (and things from other contexts) to do the same as what we are doing in this book, and especially to stimulate further thinking on interculturality.

[Quid pro quo]

- Why is it that the more-than-human is absent from intercultural research and education? What could be the reasons in your opinion?
- After reading the first three chapters of this book, are you convinced that "the language of things is not universal" (Roth, 2001)?
- Check the etymology of the word for *things* in the language(s) that you know.
- Do you think that the more-than-human could help support people meet interculturally? How and why?
- What is a 'thing' for you? What counts as one? Explain why.
- Try to find more information about some of these perspectives: *Actor Network Theory* (e.g. Blok et al., 2020; Latour, 2005); *New Materialism* (e.g. Fox & Alldred, 2015). Can you identify studies that could enrich the way we deal with interculturality in research and education?
- *Actor Network Theory* starts from the principle that things have agency. What does this mean to you? Reflecting on your own interactions with things, what do you make of this argument?
- Ask your colleagues, scholars, students and/or educators about their potential inclusion of things in their work on interculturality. What conclusions can you draw from what they say? Are you able to identify someone who 'cares' about things?
- Go back to our summary of what things *are/not, can/not* 'do' to us and with us and add anything that you feel would complement the list.
- What do you think about the choice of the five 'Chinese' things? Would you have chosen other things? Why (not)?

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Chapter 4
Chinese Things for Interculturality

Abstract This chapter represents the focal point of the book. Five 'Chinese' things (calligraphy, chopsticks, jade, mahjong, Resident Identity Card) are introduced one by one and problematised with and for interculturality. The chapter is meant to serve as support for reader reflexivity and is written as such. Questions are proposed to reflect further on what the more-than-human can teach us about the ways we engage with interculturality as both as phenomenon and a subject of research and education. A useful framework for examing things for interculturality is also proposed.

Keywords Chinese things · Framework · Interculturality · Language · Guidelines · Reflection

4.1   Guidelines for Reflecting on the More-than-Human

The following five things were decided upon amongst us (in alphabetical order):

1. Calligraphy
2. Chopsticks
3. Jade
4. Mahjong
5. Resident Identity Card (居民身份证)

These five things allow us to cover what could be considered as some of the most essential aspects of daily life: *be/become, identify, think, eat, communicate, play, name,* and *enjoy*. These all represent acts and processes that we all have to deal with globally.

How to analyse a thing? How to use it to reflect on interculturality? Scholars like Baudrillard (2020: 46) have proposed to focus on the following aspects of things and especially "the processes whereby people relate to them and with the systems of human behaviour and relationships that result there from":

> the size of the object; its degree of functionality (i.e. the object's relationship to its own objective function); the gestures associated with it (are they rich or impoverished? traditional or not?); its form; its duration; the time of day at which it appears (more or less intermittent

presence, and how conscious one is of it); the material that it transforms (obvious in the case of a coffee grinder, less so in those of a mirror, a radio, or a car—though every object transforms something); the degree of exclusiveness or sociability attendant upon its use (is it for private, family, public or general use?); and so on. (Baudrillard, 2020: 33).

In the following chapters, we start from four aspects for each thing: (1) Biography, (2) Its relation to other agents, (3) Its symbolic and imaginary values, (4) How it fares with and for interculturality. We propose the following (open) questions as guidelines:

1. **Thing biography**
- What is the thing about? What is it meant to do? What does it look like and what is it made of? Is it used for different purposes by different people?
- What does the Chinese character referring to the thing mean? What is its etymology? How does the word compare to the word for the same thing in other languages?
- Are there Chinese sayings or idioms from the past and today that relate to the thing? What do they tell us?
- When was the thing invented, why and how? How has it changed over the century?
- Does the thing relate to specific Chinese 'philosophical' concepts and ideas? What aspects of life do they reveal?
2. **The thing in relation to other agents (humans and other non-humans)**
- How does the thing influence people today, for example, what does it do to people's identity (for those who use it, how would people perceive them)? How does it relate to relations between people? Where does it fit in these categories (and/or other categories): *be/become, think, identify, eat, communicate, play*, and *enjoy*?
- Does the thing trigger specific emotions in people, alone and together with other people?
- Is the thing related to other *things* in China and other countries? Which ones and what is their connections?
3. **The symbolic and imaginary values of the thing**
- What would the thing symbolise to different people in China? What does the thing tell us about 'Chineseness' and the place of China in the world?
- Does the thing make people associate their user with specific stereotypes (about e.g. nationality, gender, age, etc.)?
- What is the expected future of this thing in China and in the world?
4. **The thing and interculturality**
- Does the thing reveal aspects of interculturality in itself, in the way it was created, its 'philosophy', in the changes that it has experienced?
- Does the thing have equivalents in other parts of the world?
- How well-known/popular is the thing outside China? How has it adapted transnationally?
- How could the reader use this Chinese thing to reflect on how they 'do' and think about interculturality?

Each discussion of the things is preceded by general questions about topics related to the thing and short personal narratives that Fred has written about them in relation

to his experiences of China [the latter should be taken for what they are: short reflexive pieces that do not aim to generalize about China, the Chinese and the rest]. Following each discussion of the things, more questions are asked to the reader for them to reflect further on. These questions concern interculturality both as a phenomenon and as a subject of research and education.

4.2 Chinese Thing for Interculturality I: Calligraphy[1]

Reflect on the following questions before you start reading about calligraphy:

- How often do you handwrite? What things do you use to do it? Do you enjoy handwriting, why (not)?
- Do you have a favourite thing for writing? What is it and why? What is special about it? In a similar vein, what is it that you don't like to write with and why (mention material, colour, etc.)?
- Have you ever used any of the four 'basic' components of Chinese calligraphy: a brush, an ink stick, an ink stone and paper for Chinese calligraphy (made of a combination of e.g. paper mulberry and rice)? If you have had them in your hands or on your desk, how did they feel/smell/sound like? How reminiscent were they of other such items that you have used before? How do they compare in terms of aesthetics, function and influence on your writing?
- What do you think of your own handwriting? Is it always the same? How much do things influence how you write (in terms of aesthetics but also content, e.g. a pencil versus a stylus)? Have you changed handwritings in your lifetime, when, how and why?
- How was the writing of your language(s) invented? Are there any legends about how the language(s) you know were created? How has the use of things to write evolved in your context(s)?
- Do you know different types of writing available around the world and how they are 'done'? How many different kinds of writing do you know (read and write)? Which ones do you find interesting and why?
- How often have you seen some form of writing exhibited at e.g. an art museum? What kind of writing was it and how had it been 'inscribed'?
- How important is 'good' handwriting in your context? What representations/stereotypes are associated with it? What does someone's handwriting usually tell you about different aspects of their identity?
- Are you aware of any idiom or saying that has to do with ways of writing (e.g. in English 'to have handwriting like chicken scratch')? What do they imply?
- Is calligraphy 'big' in your context? Who does it and why? What do they do with it after completing a piece?

[1] Note that calligraphy is also practiced in some East Asian countries, with many having used or still using Chinese characters: e.g. Japan, Korea and Vietnam.

[**Personal narrative:**

Writing is part of my life. For the past twenty years I have written nearly on a daily basis. I tend to navigate between handwriting, my computer and my phone. I love beautiful pens that feel comfortable in my hand. A great pen and a beautiful notebook are my essential accessories as a scholar and a writer; they make me feel joyful and somewhat 'safe'. Although my handwriting is appaling, I do believe that certain things should be handwritten first rather than typed on a computer.

I don't remember the first time I saw a piece of calligraphy. However, I remember my first reactions when I saw Chinese calligraphy at an art museum in China. I was somewhat surprised, looked at some the pieces and left the section to go to what I considered at the time as 'real' art (painting, sculpture…). I had also noticed earlier on that some calligraphic text appeared on some art scrolls but I did not really pay attention to them. It took a very long time for me to get an interest in calligraphy. A trip to the Fujian province, in the Southwest of China, where someone took me to an art exhibition where there were all kinds of Chinese calligraphies, changed my perceptions. I was speechless. So many beautiful pieces, with some looking like art by Paul Klee. I was particularly impressed by a piece, which was a patchwork of headlines from newspapers in different calligraphic forms. The person who accompanied me happened to know the calligrapher, told him how much I admired his piece—and the next day he gifted it to me. This was the first piece of calligraphy that I put on my wall at home in Finland. A few years later, I saw an exhibition of Xu Bing's work (see below), which also impressed me, especially his 'invented' calligraphic art. Today, the boundary between 'art' (as I had been taught to see it) and Chinese calligraphy has disappeared from my mind and I do spend as much time admiring pieces of calligraphy in art museums as I would do for paintings. I am somehow envious, as an artist myself, that I cannot really include some writing in my pieces since I find it hard to appreciate the 'beauty' of handwriting with the Roman alphabet. However, in some of my pieces I do include my Chinese stamp as my own signature.]

Let us begin with two quotes:

> The worst is that they possess neither letters nor an alphabet. They express everything by means of symbols or pictograms, which at times have two or three different meanings or even make up entire parts of a sentence.… To acquire the terms and phrases paramount for the propagation of faith, and the most commonly used ones, necessary for everyday conversation, a knowledge of merely 9,000 symbols should suffice. (Höllmann, 2017: 10).

> Had I been born Chinese, I would have been a calligrapher, not a painter. (Picasso quoted in Barrass, 2002: 54).

> 一字值千金 (yī zì zhí qiānjīn) (A single written character is worth a thousand pieces of gold), proverb.

The first quote shows how German Jesuit missionary Johannes Grueber (1623–1665) described Chinese calligraphy, the stylized artistic writing of Chinese with centuries of diverse practice: No letters, no alphabet, use of polysemous symbols or pictograms, knowledge of 9000 symbols necessary to be able to communicate on a daily basis—and, in his case, to spread his faith to the Chinese… The second quote

from Pablo Picasso introduces one of the topics that the thing called calligraphy will urge us to discuss: the (potential)(artificial) boundaries between art and writing.

Over the centuries different languages have co-existed in China, and although we focus here on just one of them called generically *Chinese*—which represents in fact an array of different 'dialects' sharing the same script (with many incomprehensible for speakers of other dialects)—we need to bear in mind that many Chinese Minzu 'ethnic' groups also speak languages such as Kazakh, Korean, Uyghur, Mongolian or Tibetan (Dervin & Yuan, 2021; Höllmann, 2017). The 'inventor' of Chinese calligraphy, Cangjie (仓颉), a 'mythical' four-eyed historian of the Yellow Emperor (黄帝, Huangdi), is said to have created characters based on his observations of animal footprints and bird claw marks (amongst others). This was meant to keep records and to spread information throughout the kingdom.

In general, Chinese calligraphy connects nicely different aspects of Chineseness: aesthetics, history, language, and philosophy. Figure 4.1 presents an example of Chinese calligraphy that says *love country* (to be read from top down).

Today more than 50,000 Chinese characters are available. A 'well-educated' person is usually familiar with about 5000 characters. Each character is polysemous and can represent silmutaneously different kinds of grammar categories (e.g. verbs, adverbs, nouns) and sounds—meaning that one given character can be pronounced differently depending on the semantic context. Although in traditional Chinese texts words were read vertically from right to left (NB: no punctuation), today Chinese is read horizontally from left to right.

These characters are seen everywhere in the Chinese-speaking worlds in print, calligraphy and other forms. Calligraphy of famous persons are very valuable in China and are used at times as official logos for e.g. universities, restaurants, hotels… Höllmann (2017: 217) notes for example that the calligraphies of Mao Zedong (1893–1976) are still visible today in e.g. the logo of the newspaper *The People's Daily* (人民日报, Renmin ribao). Calligraphy is also used in e.g. ancestral worship tablets and brush-written couplets with good fortune/blessings (福, fú) and longevity (壽 shòu) inscribed on them and placed on e.g. housedoors.

Before exploring Chinese calligraphy further, let us look into etymologies. In English calligraphy comes from Greek *kalligraphia* (*kallos* = beauty; *graphein* = to write, the idea of drawing is implied in the Greek word). Defined as the ability to write neatly, or the activity of learning to do this (usually following predetermined patterns), calligraphy used to be taught in schools in Europe and beyond in the past and is now more or less phased out. Penmanship can be used as a synonym in English. In Chinese 书法 (shū fǎ) translates as *calligraphy, handwriting, penmanship* or *'way of writing'*. 书 stands for *book, letter, document* and has an ideographic of a mark made by a pen. 法 can be translated as *law, method, way*, and *to emulate* (amongst others). Its ideographic is the course followed by a stream (hinting at water flowing in the idea of calligraphy in Chinese).

We have collected some stimulating expressions and sayings in Chinese to share with our readers before we look at calligraphy in more depth:

Fig. 4.1 An example of a calligraphy in Chinese: Love country (爱国)

- 琴棋书画 (qín qí shū huà) refers to the 'four arts': *zither* (a musical instrument), *Go, calligraphy* and *painting.* The phrase also describes the accomplishments of a well-educated person;
- 书画 (shū huà) can translate as both painting *and* calligraphy;
- 字画 (zì huà) is the process of inscribing a poem on e.g. a painting, fan or ceramic bowl as a work of calligraphy;
- One can find different terms to refer to styles and appreciation of calligraphy: 飘洒 (piāo sǎ), *graceful, fluent and elegant*; 隽拔 (juàn bá), *graceful, handsome* (of people); 出水芙蓉 (chū shuǐ fú róng) (idiom) *as a lotus flower breaking the surface* or *surpassingly beautiful* (of a young lady's face or an old gentleman's calligraphy); 怒猊渴骥 (nù ní kě jì), *forceful and vigorous*; 一笔不苟 (yī bǐ bù gǒu), (idiom) *not even one stroke is negligent*, *to write characters in which every stroke is placed perfectly*; 涂鸦 (tú yā), *graffiti, poor calligraphy, to scribble.*

Through etymologies one finds that the ideas of *beauty* and *pleasure* seem to apply to both English and Chinese calligraphies. In Chinese there often seems to be a link between beautiful writing and grace, elegance, referring both to calligraphy as (physical) style as well as writing expression. The three aspects of line, rhythm and structure are central in Chinese calligraphy. The arts and calligraphy are in fact interrelated in China since they share the same instruments (brush, ink), and it is common to see calligraphic works in art museums and to be sold at art auctions in the Middle Kingdom. In their edited volume entitled *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting* Murck and Fong (2013) remind us that Chinese poetry, calligraphy and painting are known as the 'three perfections' (see Fig. 4.2). They also quote Su Shi (苏轼, 1037–1101), who asserted about the poet Wang Wei (王維, 701–761) that his work represented "poetry in painting and painting in poetry" (诗中有画, 画中有诗, shī zhōng yǒu huà, huà zhōng yǒu shī). Often Chinese artists inscribe poems onto their paintings, creating in the process what has been referred to as 'visual thinking' (Murck & Fong, 2013).

Now let us discuss the basics of Chinese calligraphy. We note first that each character builds up in a 'square' and should reflect a living movement in the way their strokes are represented with the brush. Written characters emerged over five thousand years ago in China and have been discovered among Neolithic societies such as the Shantung Lung-Shan, on e.g. bones and shells (so-called oracle-bone characters). Five or six different scripts of calligraphy have been identified (see below) and they all seem to follow these principles: *characters with a visual form to sounds and characters that borrowed sounds*. The strokes of Chinese calligraphy are said to

Fig. 4.2 A street sign showing the 'Four Treasures of the Study' (文房四宝)

suggest the form of natural objects and are 'fluid', including moments of impetus, momentum, momentary self-control and forming a balanced whole. The expression of emotions while doing Chinese calligraphy is common and the coordination of body and mind represents an important aspect of it. All in all, Chinese calligraphy renders characters dynamic, inspired by the dynamism of nature and the energies of the human body and, unlike 'Western' calligraphy, it aims to express the calligrapher's emotions, level of education, self-discipline and character rather than e.g. creating uniformity as is the case with 'Western' calligraphy where one tends to 'copy' certain designs and patterns. What is more, ink stains or dry brush strokes are not considered as 'errors' should they occur, but as part of the process of creating calligraphy.

The following tools are used for Chinese calligraphy: *a brush* (with a handle made of e.g. hardwood, porcelain, bamboo and bristles from wools, horsehair…), *an ink stick* (a block of dried ink dye), *an ink stone or slab* made from stone or pottery, and *paper*. These are often referred to as the 'Four Treasures of the Study' (文房四宝, wenfang sibao). Many of these elements have also turned into their own forms of art (e.g. seal carvings, see Fig. 4.3.).

Fig. 4.3 One of the authors' seal carved with his name (文德, Wén dé)

Usually a piece of calligraphy is not signed in hand but contains the calligrapher's seal representing his name. Several seals can be applied to one piece of calligraphy.

We note that calligraphies can be framed or installed on e.g. a hanging scroll or a banner. Höllmann (2017: 15) also notes (see Fig. 4.4.):

> You'll see them in parks in the big cities: small groups of men and women carrying buckets of water, into which they dip giant brushes—in a pinch, mops—with which they proceed to write characters on the pavement, large enough so that they can be read even from a distance. This is often followed by passionate discussions about the calligraphies' aesthetic qualities. But the discussions never last long, for neither do their subjects; the water dries quickly, and from the moment of its creation, every piece carries within it the seed of impermanence. In other contexts too, script is a popular topic of conversation in China.

The brush differs immensely from a mere pen or a stylus. Flexible, it can create different kinds of wide or narrow strokes, by applying its tip or sides to paper. Speed and pressure always influence the effects on paper. Finally, these effects can be two- or three-dimensional. For the connoisseur, just looking at brush strokes, they might be able to determine e.g. the elegance, restraint, spontaneity and even non-conformativity of the calligrapher. Chinese calligraphy—like so many aspects

Fig. 4.4 'Water' calligraphy: 心平只为折磨多 气傲皆因经验少 (Trans.: *Peace of mind is only for torment, pride is due to a lack of experience*)

of Chineseness—requires creating a balance and experiencing with stability and vitality, i.e. there are rules to follow but one may break away from some of them to express and show individuality.

It was during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) that more individual styles of writing Chinese characters were developed. Some of the most famous calligraphers of the time include e.g. Zhang Ruitu (張瑞圖, 1570–1641) and Zhu Yunming (祝允明, 1460–1527). As a skill that any educated person needed to have in China, calligraphy used to be included in important administrative examinations such as the imperial civil service examinations until the early twentieth century.

A few words about the different categories of Chinese calligraphy are needed here. The oldest script is known as 专属 (zhuan shu) and is called in English seal script. Meant to be engraved, 专属 contains ancient characters, with some still readable today. Clerical script (隶属, li shu), established during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.– 220 C.E.), represents a simplification of brushstrokes and is still comprehensible today. Said to be the easiest script to read, the so-called 'regular script' (楷书, kai shu) appeared at the end of the same dynasty and supported yet another simplification of writing. Running/semi-cursive script (行书, xing shu) is also popular for calligraphy today. In this script, the strokes are connected and simplified to ensure that writing is faster. Finally, in the cursive script (草书, cao shu, cao means *grass, straw* as in the word for *grassland*), the strokes are shortened and linked together and all the characters run into each other. What's interesting about this last script is that it appeared as a counter-reaction to the strict rules established by the authorities concerning writing.

What all these different kinds of scripts have in common is that every single character should serve both as a model of morality and symbolize the energy of the human and of nature itself. For Höllmann (2017: 214):

> Art in China was not least a medium of distinction, be it for the self-assertion of the educated elite, who fought to preserve their cultural legacy, or to articulate dissatisfaction, as in the case of critical intellectuals who saw tradition as a burden. Hence, calligraphy was used not only as a medium of creative self-fulfillment but equally as an instrument to position oneself and one's views—in some cases even to demonstrate power.

Today calligraphy is also practiced by contemporary Chinese artists. For example, Wang Dongling (王冬龄) produces experimental ink movements, which he calls 'calligraphic paintings' (see examples at the Art Institute of Chicago: https://www.artic.edu/artists/77969/wang-dongling). Xu Bing is another fascinating artist who has come back again and again to Chinese characters, mixing strokes from Chinese with the Roman alphabet to reproduce English words, which he calls 'Square Script Calligraphy' (see xubing.com). Höllmann (2017: 206) describes some of his art as follows:

> Xu Bing writes not only on paper but also on rather unusual materials, including pigs, among other things. One performance held in Beijing in 1994, for which he had a pigpen erected and filled with straw and books, was especially provocative. He positioned a sow made from papier-mâché and covered in pseudo-Chinese characters in the pen, then had a live boar, whose body was decorated with real and supposed English words, mount it.

Finally, it is important to remind our readers that the Chinese use Pinyin (拼音, the dominant romanization system of Chinese characters) to e.g. type in characters on their phones or computers in order to access Chinese characters. Pinyin is used to represent the sounds of Chinese. This means that those who know Chinese can navigate at least two writing systems.

[Quid pro quo]

The first thing considered here was calligraphy and we have discussed the elements associated with it such as the brush and ink. Chinese calligraphy is the same for all kinds of different Chinese dialects and topolects (related to places). If one speaks any kind of Chinese, one should be able to read any calligraphy. Chinese calligraphy is thus a symbol of togetherness, some sort of a written lingua franca for billions of people. At school calligraphy is studied in art class but students learn to handwrite Chinese everyday (with a pencil or pen). Calligraphy has more layers to itself than mere 'writing'… it is about people expressing their emotions, showing their character but also demonstrating that they can balance between order and dynamism, rules and individuality somehow. Doing calligraphy should be pleasurable, aesthetically and semantically meaningful and rewarding. Writing characters with a brush is about movement, fluidity, being in harmony with nature and oneself. Usually, someone who is 'good' at calligraphy might be considered as (stereotypically) knowledgeable, educated, unique, with plenty of time to practise but also wealthy and from a 'good' family. In other words, an individual with a personality of their own.

Now reflect on this new set of questions before moving on to the next thing:

- After reading this chapter about Chinese calligraphy, do you now see more *fluidity* in the act of writing?
- What do you make of the aesthetic pleasure of writing? How much does it matter to you? On what occasions? Have you been taught to appreciate this aspect of writing?
- Think back about how people judge others' handwriting in your context(s), what does it say about them—rather than about the one being judged?
- Do you see more connections between writing and art (painting) after reading this section?
- How tolerant are you of (what appears to be) blots or stains on a piece of art or writing? Why is that?
- We have seen that calligraphies are not usually signed in China but a seal is applied to them. What do you think of this practice? Would you buy a work of art that is 'stamped' instead of signed? Do you yourself use seals, for what purposes?
- Have you ever seen your own name written in another writing system? How did it feel? Look at the following Chinese versions of famous 'Western' people and brands and reflect on your feelings while reading them (the pinyin between brackets gives you an indication of how they are pronounced):

    – Einstein 爱因斯坦 (Ài yīn sītǎn)
    – Macdonald's 麦当劳 (Màidānglảo)

  – Marilyn Monroe 玛丽莲梦露 (Mǎlì lián mèng lù)
  – Prada 普拉达 (Pǔlādá)

- Check Xu Bing's works of art (xubing.com), especially in relation to the use of characters. What do you think the artist wanted to say by e.g. removing the boundaries between Chinese and English writing or by reinventing Chinese writing? What could be the messages for interculturality?
- Observe this piece of calligraphy (Fig. 4.5). Follow each stroke of the characters (from left to right for the big letters and top to down for the smaller ones) and write down how you feel while following these movements. Although you may not be able to understand what these words mean, why do you think that there are different kinds of characters and what the different shapes might be doing to the one observing the calligraphy?

Finally, let's reflect on interculturality as a subject of research and education, based on what was discussed about this first thing.

- What is it from what you have read about calligraphy here that could inspire us to think about interculturality under a different lens (think for example of the character for *water flowing* being included in the character for calligraphy in Chinese)? Do you see connections between aspects of Chinese calligraphy and what we claim people do when they experience interculturality?
- How *intercultural* is Chinese calligraphy and Chinese writing in general? Remember that intercultural here does not necessarily refer to the 'international'.
- How could reflecting on our relations to writing and e.g. the links between the arts and writing enrich our thoughts on interculturality as a notion?
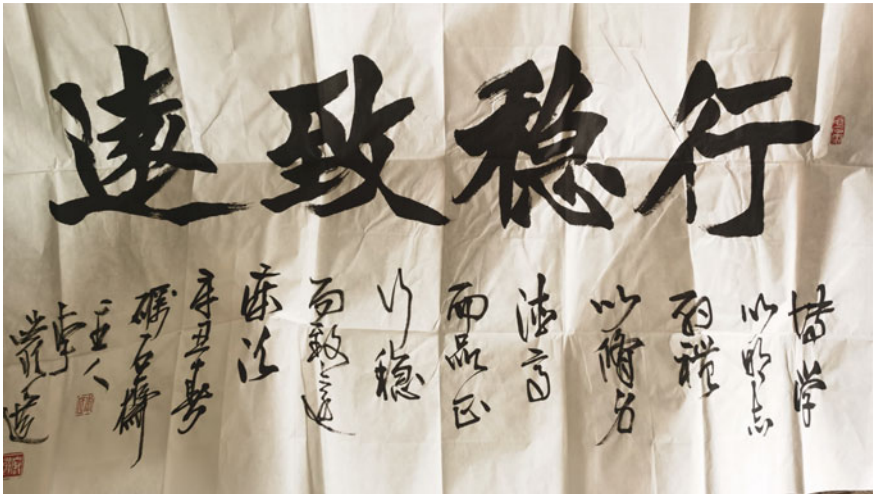

Fig. 4.5 Calligraphy (遠致稳行, trans. steady for far-reaching)

- How could the idea of 'visual thinking' related to applying a brush to paper to create calligraphy inspire us to think further about the idea of interculturality?

4.3   Chinese Thing for Interculturality II: Chopsticks

Let us start with general questions around chopsticks:

- What utensils have you used to eat food in your own context(s) and elsewhere? What is your favourite thing for eating? The one(s) you don't like using? Do you ever use your hands for eating?
- Do you have a very special item of cutlery that you have been using for years? Why do you consider it to be 'unique'?
- When did you learn to use cutleries? How and who taught you?
- Would you eat/drink after someone, for example, share the same spoon, fork or chopsticks? Do you often serve others? Who, how and when? Have you ever felt uncomfortable being served?
- Think of chopsticks: what kinds of activities one can use them for when eating?
- Try to recall your first experience of eating with chopsticks. How was it?
- What do you consider as 'un-/civilised' when eating in public, with family and friends? How much do things play a role in this?
- Do people give cutlery as presents in your context(s)? What, when and why?
- Share some beliefs/taboos/superstitions related to the use of cutlery.

[**Personal narrative:**

For me food has never really mattered. I am a vegetarian and I tend to be very picky. So, I eat because my body asks for food but I am not a 'foodie'. At home in Finland I own many plates and cups and all kinds of cutlery but I rarely use them. I also own many pairs of chopsticks that I have bought in different parts of the world—but I don't dare to use them for fear of breaking them. I like bamboo chopsticks for the way they feel in my right hand.

I don't remember the first time I used chopsticks but I do remember the first time I used disposable ones. That was in Hong Kong when I was probably 16 or 17. I had gone to a restaurant and was given what looked like a 'lump' of wood with two 'bits' of 'sticks' slightly separated from the rest of the piece of wood. I tried to place my index between the two halves of the chopstick pair but it was impossible to eat with that. I then tried to shuffle food from the plate with the 'lump' of wood until someone came to me, grabbed the chopsticks and snapped them apart—accompanied by the laughters of other guests. I had never used this kind of disposable chopsticks before, having only used two separate chopsticks.

I don't know if I really know how to use chopsticks. Many Chinese people I have met always compliment me on my use of the instrument but I often feel that they are just being polite. Using chopsticks for me is often like typing on a computer, I can do it (quickly) but my typist skills are somewhat 'funny'. However, I do like using them

for the precision that they offer and the way they feel in my hands. I often use them at home, even for food that is not always chopstick-friendly.

When we decided on the Chinese things to include in this book, I insisted on chopsticks. I have so many questions about them: Why do they always look the same—I mean each chopstick of a pair? How come there does not seem to be a trend for chopsticks that look different? For example, in China, there are clear signs that people wish to individualise by wearing clothes that they know others won't own, by using very special accessories… Why is it that I have not identified this wish to 'individualise' chopsticks too? Finally, as a metaphor—and as we shall see in what follows—chopsticks can be very inspiring to unthink and rething interculturality.]

We first listen to a Chinese-born American Nobel Prize Laureate and to the *Book of Rites* compiled by Dai Sheng (戴圣) in the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.–24 C.E.), about food etiquette and the use of chopsticks:

> Tsung-dao Lee, a Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics, made an interesting comparison between chopsticks and fingers: "As early as the Warring States period Chinese invented chopsticks. Although simple, the two sticks perfectly use the physics of leverage. Chopsticks are an extension of human fingers. Whatever fingers can do, chopsticks can do, too. Moreover, their great talent is not even affected by high temperatures or freezing cold". (Wang, 2015: 16)

> 曲礼上: 毋抟饭,毋放饭,毋流歠,毋吒食,毋啮骨,毋反鱼肉,毋投与狗骨。毋固获,毋扬饭。饭黍毋以箸。毋嚃羹, 毋絮羹, 毋刺齿, 毋歠醢。客絮羹, 主人辞不能亨。客歠醢, 主人辞以窭。濡肉齿决, 乾肉不齿决。毋嘬炙。卒食, 客自前跪, 彻饭齐以授相者, 主人兴辞于客, 然后客坐

> (Trans.: Qu Li: Do not roll the rice into a ball; do not bolt down the various dishes; do not swill down (the soup). Do not make a noise in eating; do not crunch the bones with the teeth; do not put back fish you have been eating; do not throw the bones to the dogs; do not snatch (at what you want). Do not spread out the rice (to cool); do not use chopsticks in eating millet. (*Liji, The* Classic of Rites, 1885, https://ctext.org/liji)

Knives and forks were discovered by archeologists from neolithic China (10000 B.C.E. to 2000 B.C.E.), however, fewer were found in periods closer to us. Research has showed that Chinese people started to use chopsticks as a preferred dining custom from the fourth century B.C.E. (Wang, 2015). Most of the readers will have seen or used chopsticks which have dominated Chinese cultural landscapes for centuries—these two identical 'sticks', square on top and round at the bottom (to reflect *squared earth* and *round heaven*), with an average of 25 cm and 30 g in China, made of wood and/or other materials (e.g. bones, ebony, deer antlers, wood, bamboo, metal, rhinoceros horn, jade,[2] plastic…), that one holds between the tip of the fourth finger and the hollow gap between the thumb and index finger[3] to eat (on the impact of the ergonomy of chopsticks on eating habits; see Chen, 1998). Chopstiks are polyvalent: they can be used to *load, convey, transport, clasp, carry, pinch, separate, remove…* (on manipulation of chopsticks, see Chen et al., 2009)—but not dig for or spear food (see Fig. 4.6). In his book on Japan, Barthes explains (1982: 16):

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[2] Jade chopsticks are very fragile and are often compared to a woman's tears. This is why they are not used on a daily basis but serve mostly decorative purposes.

[3] NB: The Index finger is refered to as the food finger in Chinese. 食指 (shízhǐ); 食 means food.

Fig. 4.6 Different types of chopsticks sold in a store

> Another function of the two chopsticks together, that of pinching the fragment of food; to pinch, moreover, is too strong a word, too aggressive; for the foodstuff never undergoes a pressure greater than is precisely necessary to raise and carry it; in the gesture of chopsticks, further softened by their substance—wood or lacquer—there is something maternal, the same precisely measured care taken in moving a child: a force no longer a pulsion; here we have a whole demeanor with regard to food … the instrument never pierces, cuts, or slits, never wounds but only selects, turns, shifts.

Also used in many parts of Asia (Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Tibet, etc.), e.g. August 4th marks chopsticks festival in Japan when people might throw chopsticks into fire at shrines to pray to the Gods for health.

Originally the word for chopsticks was similar to that of bamboo and/or wood in Chinese. Today the word is 筷子 (Kuàizi), literally *fast ones, quick little boys, nimble boys.* 筷 (kuài) is composed of the characters for bamboo/flute and speedy/rapid/quick. 子 refers to a little one.[4] As a homophone (meaning a word that has the same sound as another) the word for chopstick appears to be auspicious with (hidden) meanings of (amongst others) happiness, prosperity and the quick birth of a precious child.

The root of the English word for chopstick comes from pidgin English *chop* from Cantonese (a dialect of Chinese) *kap* for *urgent*. [In English we note that the word chopsticks also refers to a two-fingered piano exercise]. There are variations in other languages in the equivalents to 筷子. Some languages have opted for 'eating sticks' (German: *Eßstäbchen*, Finnish: *syömäpuikot*), 'sticks for food' (Russian: *палочками*, Italian: *bacchette per il cibo*). 'Hashi' is Portuguese for chopsticks, a word borrowed from Japanese.

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[4] In Japanese, the word for chopsticks is a homophone for *a bridge.*

Disposable wooden chopsticks are popular in China (and around the world!) and are called 日本竹筷 (with the first characters referring to Japan/ese (Rìběn) since they were invented and used in Japan first) or 卫生筷 (weisheng kuai), 'sanitary chopsticks'. Although they are very useful and sanitarily effective, they represent an environmental problem contributing to e.g. deforestation.

Chopsticks seem to have already been used during the Shang Dynasty (1760/1520 B.C.E. to 1122/1030 B.C.E.) for both cooking and eating. The Sui (581–618 C.E.), Tang (618–907 C.E.) and Five Dynasties (907–960 C.E.) marked a huge increase in the use of chopsticks through the development of banquets. Today chopsticks are used for eating most foods. Children learn to use them around the age of 3. Forks and knives can often be seen in certain types of ('Western') restaurants in China but they are rarely used in other contexts. Chopsticks can be accompanied with a spoon for eating e.g. soup and desserts. The 'Chinese' spoon has a flat bottom with a pointed front end and a short handle and is used to e.g. sip liquid and assist chopsticks with noodles (Fig. 4.7). Chinese people might use hands to eat e.g. snacks (peanuts might be eaten with chopsticks), fruit (if not cut up), meat with bones, bread, pizza, burgers… Chopsticks are usually placed vertically on the table in China.

Chopsticks are often associated with communal eating. Due to the 2020-…Covid-19 pandemic, a 'dinner table revolution' took place in China. With the pandemic, the

Fig. 4.7 The Chinese spoon being used for eating yogurt

Fig. 4.8 Street sign encouraging people to adopt communal serving chopsticks

use of communal serving chopsticks and spoons (公筷公勺, Gōng kuài gōng sháo, see Fig. 4.8) is highly recommended instead of using one's own cutlery to serve others and oneself in order to avoid spreading infectious diseases—with serving chopsticks usually longer than personal ones and of different colours. The tradition of serving others with one's chopsticks (e.g. by placing food on their plates) has been considered as a sign of warmth and friendliness in China.

Some of the benefits of chopstick use have been put forward such as strengthening hands and motor skills, promoting hand–eye coordination, serving as a pre-handwriting task. The use of chopsticks could also promote independence in eating (Wang, 2015). Foodwise, Barber (2009) argues that chopsticks slow down eating and the amount of food one ingurgitates.

For centuries different etiquettes, beliefs and folk customs have developed around chopsticks. They symbolize, amongst others, someone with a straight, moral character; the diligent selfless worker; a hard-working and unselfish government worker. Beyond the mere act of eating, chopsticks have been part of behaviors and habits related to family and sociality (mutual care, inseparableness, age hierarchy, festivals…). Several taboos have also spread traditionally: *hitting the tableware with chopsticks; putting them in one's mouth; crossing them on the table; placing them on the table carelessly; 'planting' them in a bowl of rice* (which looks like incense-burning to 'feed' the dead); *using them to pick food from the plates over and over again.* They go with the ideas of cherishing food, respecting others, politeness and traditional values. Chinese writers have also used chopsticks as a metaphor for describing their feelings of angst, shock, and sorrow (amongst others).

Finally, chopsticks can also stand for good omens for festivals. Chopsticks are in fact symbols of inseparateness and lasting love. Many customs across the different regions and provinces of China and Chinese Minzu groups exist:

- In Shanxi (North China), at a wedding reception, chopsticks given to the couple by the bride's family are first used by a male member of the bride's family, after giving the dowry to the groom's family.
- In parts of Nortwest China, the bride tosses chopsticks on the floor of her parents' home before moving into her new home.
- The Yao people (Southern China) have a wedding tradition whereby the host feeds the newlyweds with pairs of chopsticks in both hands.
- The Zhuang people (second largest Minzu 'ethnic' group in China) give a one-year-old child chopsticks on their birthday. They are used to feed them with noodles—a symbol of longetivity and thus good fortune.

Often, in these examples, chopsticks symbolize cooperation, togetherness and harmony.

[Quid pro quo]
As 'simple' things, chopsticks show complexity, adaptability and long-term engagement with humans. What chopsticks 'do' to people, as individuals and groups, as well as the symbols that they stand for are multifaceted. The following topics—which also relate to interculturality—have emerged in our discussions: representations, social conventions (politeness), emotions, beliefs and superstitions, togetherness, historical development.

Consider the following questions:

- What surprised you about the history of chopsticks, their use and what they can represent and symbolize? How 'intercultural' are chopsticks after all?
- Summarize the symbolic and ideological aspects of chopsticks.
- Compare the use of chopsticks and the Chinese spoon to the fork, knife and spoon. What similarities and differences? What do you use each of them for yourself?
- In the Chinese language, many characters and spoken words might differ in meanings and connotations although they might sound the same, often adding a positive identity to a given character. These are called homophones. We provide two examples in what follows:

  – 团圆 (tuányuán) translates as *reunion* in English and refers to a sweet dumpling eaten on the last day of the Chinese New year celebrations. Shaped spherically, they are usually served in round bowls, symbolizing unity and the reunion of family members.
  – 福到了 (fú dàole) means *fortune has arrived*. The character 福 (blessing) is usually placed on doors and walls upside down during Chinese New Year since *arrive* is a homophone of 到 (dào) for 'turned upside down'.
     Most languages have homophones. Can you think of such words in the language(s) that you know? Do some pairs of homophones create 'auspicious' and/or positive connotations and are thus used together?

- We have seen that chopsticks seem to have anthropomorphic characteristics for many Chinese people (e.g. they represent a hardworking, professional government worker). What 'human' representations of cutlery are you aware of, from e.g. fiction?

    Now let's open up our discussions to reflect further on interculturality:
- Start by picturing chopsticks and knives and forks that are of different colours, shapes and textures. How would you feel eating with them? Try to understand why and the kind of intellectual work you would need to do to go beyond your potential (mis-)representations of these 'odd' things.
- Beyond the concrete thing called *chopsticks*, what did this section teach you about interculturality as a subject of research and education? What new insights did you get?
- Do you find chopsticks to be somehow good metaphors for what interculturality is about? Why (not)? Take chopsticks, a knife, a fork and a spoon in your hands and try to imagine what they could be telling us about the notion, about what people do when they meet interculturally.

4.4 Chinese Thing for Interculturality III: Jade

A few questions for you to read through and answer first about jade (you can come back to them after reading the section):

- What comes to your mind when you hear the word *jade* in English and the other languages that you know? How is jade considered in your context(s)?
- What (gem-)stones and/or precious metals (gold, silver) do you (not) like and why? What (gem-)stones and/or precious metals do you own or would wish to own? When do you use/wear them and for what purposes?
- What importance do people attach to them? What are they used for? What do they denote about people (e.g. in terms of personality)?
- What colours are preferred for such things in your context(s)? What is the meaning of these colours?
- List the kinds of superstitions and beliefs that are linked to different (gem-)stones and precious metals in your context(s).

    [**Personal narrative:**
    In the process of writing this book I found out that jade has a somewhat 'bizarre' etymology in the English language. When I hear the word jade*, I think of green, something translucent, tombs and… China. I also think of someone called Jade. When I lived in Hong Kong in my youth, I was always admirative of ladies' jade bracelets and was often shocked at how expensive some were. I find Chinese people's passion for jade fascinating because I don't think that in my corner of the world people are so fond of the mineral. I am also puzzled by how expensive it can be and by how it is used in art and jewelry-making in China. Like calligraphy, it took a long time for me to learn to look at jade items and to see 'beauty' in them—my eyes having*

been trained to see beauty in e.g. silver or bronze in Finland, two metals that are not necessarily liked in China. I own a couple of jade items which I wear from time to time but they look so precious and fragile that I am too careful when they are on me. I do like touching them and feeling their 'oiliness'.

Having learnt more about the beliefs, meanings and connotations of jade in China over the past few years, I find it to be a stimulating element to reflect on interculturality. How jade relates to Chinese history and philosophy also deserves exploring since I do believe that the latter can add up to our reflections on interculturality.]

Like the other things discussed in previous sections, let's consider two introductory fragments:

君子無故,玉不去身,君子於玉比德焉 (Jūnzǐ wúgù, yù bù qù shēn, jūnzǐ yú yù bǐ dé yān)— trans. "A man of rank was never without this pendant, excepting for some sufficient reason; he regarded the pieces of jade as emblematic of the virtues (which he should cultivate)" (Confucius in *Liji, The Classic of Rites*, Yu Zao, 1885, https://ctext.org/dictionary.pl?if=en& id=60235)

A saying: 玉不琢不成器 人不学不知道 (Yù bù zuó bùchéngqì rén bù xué bù zhīdào)— Trans. *If you don't cut jade, you can't make a weapon. If you don't learn it, you don't know.*

A metamorphic rock, jade can be green, red, yellow, or white—with green jade being the most popular kind in China. Like the previous things, jade is enmeshed in and reminiscent of the long and rich history of China. In the important 说文解 字 (Shuō wén jiě zì, known as *The Shuowen*), the oldest character dictionaries of Chinese compiled during the Later Han Period (25–220 C.E.), jade is defined as follows: "A stone that is beautiful, it has five virtues. There is warmth in its lustre and brilliance; this is its quality of kindness; its soft interior may be viewed from the outside revealing [the goodness] within; this is its quality of rectitude; its tone is tranquil and high and carries far and wide; this is its quality of wisdom; it may be broken but cannot be twisted; this is its quality of bravery; its sharp edges are not intended for violence; this is its quality of purity" (Cited in Sullivan, 1999: 31).

Jade is 玉 (yù) in Chinese, with an ideographic of a necklace, adorned with three pieces of jade (NB: the same character is also found in the word for e.g. corn/maize, 玉米, yù mǐ).[5] As the aforementioned definition from *The Shuowen* shows, jade has many different layers of connotations for the Chinese and we have collected phrases and idioms here to give a taste of some of these layers:

- 珷 (wǔ): inferior gem, a kind of jade
- 珺 (jùn): beautiful jade
- 白玉 (bái yù): white jade but also a word used to refer to tofu
- 葬玉埋香 (zàng yù mái xiāng): (lit.) burying jade and interring incense, refers to a funeral for a beautiful person
- 琢磨 (zhuó mó): to carve and polish jade; also: to polish and refine a literary work
- 玉骨冰肌 (yù gǔ bīng jī): elegant demeanor and lofty personality
- 如花似玉 (rú huā sì yù): delicate as a flower, refined as a precious jade, (of a woman) exquisite

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[5] The Chinese word can also be used as a firstname.

- 金玉 (jīn yù): gold and jade, precious
- 金玉满堂 (jīn yù mǎn tang): (lit.) gold and jade fill the hall, i.e. abundant wealth but also abundance of knowledge
- 他山之石可以攻玉 (tā shān zhī shí kě yǐ gong yù): (lit.) the other mountain's stone can polish jade, i.e. to borrow talent from abroad to develop the nation effectively.

One notices many references to other elements and characteristics in this selection of terms, phrases and idioms: positive adjectives such as *precious, beautiful, elegant*; references to *wealth, knowledge, personality, (fine) literary work*; comparison/companion to *gold* and *tofu*.[6] As a whole, jade as a thing is considered in an extremely positive light. Yang (2011: 83) also notes that:

> The concept of jade has vastly appeared in various contexts of Chinese poetry and idioms, referring to luxury (象箸玉杯), beauty (香温玉軟), talent (握瑜懷玉), virtue (懷瑾握瑜), fortune (瑞雪兆豐年), peace (化干戈為玉帛), uniqueness (瑰意 琦行), etc.

We note that many of these elements are still used indirectly in e.g. politicians' language today in China.

In the English language, the apparent connotation of jade differs from Chinese. The word itself comes from Latin *ileus* for *severe colic*, an intestinal condition which jade was thought to cure (a turning/squeezing sensation in the belly). We note that in New Zealand English, jade is referred to as *greenstone*. Jade is not necessarily a popular gem in the 'West', or at least, it does not compare to gold or diamonds as seems to be the case in China. There is a saying in Chinese that, while gold has a price, jade is invaluable. And, unlike gold, the (high) price of jade is not set but negotiated between sellers and customers. Its value resides in its size, texture ('oily feel'), shape, colour, place of origin, resonance and lack of cracks.

Some of the first examples of jade being used for ceremonial functions include the perforated bi disk (璧) to celebrate the Sun and Heaven, bringing happy life and health to their owners, and the hollowed jade tube called cong (琮)—whose function is unknown today. Jade bracelets, necklaces, and pendants are common today.

In the 聘义 (Pin Yi, 'The meaning of the interchange of missions between different courts') section of the 礼记 (Liji, *the Classic of Rites*) (Warring States, 475 B.C.E.–221 B.C.E.) (1885, https://ctext.org/liji), a conversation with the philosopher Confucius (c. 551–c. 479 B.C.E.) reveals the following virtues of jade:

> 子贡问于孔子曰:"敢问君子贵玉而贱玟者何也?为玉之寡而玟之多与" 孔子曰:"非为玟之多故贱之也、玉之寡故贵之也。夫昔者君子比德于玉焉:温润而泽,仁也;缜密以栗,知也;廉而不刿,义也;垂之如队,礼也;叩之其声清越以   长,其终诎然,乐也;瑕不掩瑜、瑜不掩瑕,忠也;孚尹旁达,信也;气如白   虹,天也;精神见于山川,地也;圭璋特达,德也.天下莫不贵者,道也".
>
> (Trans.) Zi-gong asked Confucius, saying, 'Allow me to ask the reason why the superior man sets a high value on jade, and but little on soapstone? Is it because jade is rare, and the soapstone plentiful?' Confucius replied, 'It is not because the soapstone is plentiful that

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[6] In the previous section on chopsticks, we noted that jade chopsticks are often compared to the tears of a 'beautiful lady'.

he thinks but little of it, and because jade is rare that he sets a high value on it. Anciently superior men found the likeness of all excellent qualities in jade. Soft, smooth, and glossy, it appeared to them like benevolence; fine, compact, and strong—like intelligence; angular, but not sharp and cutting—like righteousness; hanging down (in beads) as if it would fall to the ground—like (the humility of) propriety; when struck, yielding a note, clear and prolonged, yet terminating abruptly—like music; its flaws not concealing its beauty, nor its beauty concealing its flaws—like loyalty; with an internal radiance issuing from it on every side—like good faith; bright as a brilliant rainbow—like heaven; exquisite and mysterious, appearing in the hills and streams—like the earth; standing out conspicuous in the symbols of rank—like virtue; esteemed by all under the sky,—like the path of truth and duty. (1885, https://ctext.org/liji)

These virtues include: *benevolence, credibility, earth, heaven, intelligence, justice, propriety, loyalty, morality, music* and *truth.*

One of the values of jade is also *indestructibility*—and thus *eternity*. As such it has been found amongst objects in tombs to protect the dead, been used for creating ritual objects (e.g. sacrificial vessels and many others the function of which is unknown today) and as jewelry to protect its wearer. In the past it was also used as material for making music instruments such as chimes. Figure 4.9 shows a burial suit made of 1200 triangular and rectangular pieces of jade linked up by threads of gold, found in Hebei Province (North China Plain). It was made for King Liu Xiu (刘胜, also known as Wenshu, 5 B.C.E.–57 C.E.) and measures 182 cm (49 cm at shoulders). It is in the permanent collection of the National Museum of China in Beijing.

Many beliefs concerning the power and energy of jade for afterlife were also common in Ancient China. Jade occupied an important place in funeral rites. For example, small pieces of jade were placed inside the mouths of the dead to ensure rebirth and to slow down the process of decomposition; pieces of jade were also placed on different parts of the body. In general, the use of jade in ancient China had to do with the cosmology of traditional Chinese philosophical thoughts such as *the unity between Man and Nature, unity in diversity* and *yin yang*. Even today, jade relates somehow to health. The belief that jade changes colours and shades with the health of its wearer is widespread.

Jade also had political and religious meanings. For instance, jade pendants worn by monarchs and ministers indicated their status. Jade was also believed to be the medium to convey messages from the gods.

For individuals, jade can have aesthetic, monetary, solid and 'protection' (auspicious) values today. Jade can be considered as an investment and a strong symbol of friendship and love—*it connects people*. For example, one of us remembers a friend giving them a beautiful piece of jade jewelry, having returned another piece from Tiffany's instead, which she had found to be not special or valuable enough to express her friendship. A piece of jade jewelry can also be given as a birthday present to a child who turns the important age of 12 in China. A jade wedding pillow

Fig. 4.9 Burial suit of King
Liu Xiu

or jade mandarin ducks and flowers can be gifted to newlyweds. As a decorative
home element, jade is said to contribute to Fengshui by creating positive energy.

[Quid pro quo]
Jade as a thing is connoted richly within the Chinese context. It has monetary value
and represents many desirable virtues. As a fragile mineral (carving or cutting it
requires drilling or sawing with an abrasive paste and rotational machinery), it has
always been a treasured commodity in the Middle Kingdom. Jade is about purity,
elegance, beauty, wealth and hardness.

Here are another two sets of questions to help us reflect more on jade and its
potential links to interculturality:

- Was there anything surprising in the section? Had you ever considered jade as an
  interesting thing for reflecting on certain aspects interculturality?
- Here is a short list of (gem-)stones and precious metals. Which ones do you know?
  What meanings and connotations do they have for you? What qualities do they
  have? Are there any legends or stories around these stones and metals in your
  context(s)? If you don't know what they look like, try to find some pictures or go
  to a store and touch some of them to see how they feel. Would you consider any of

these (gem-)stones or precious metals to be good metaphors for interculturality? Explain why.

– Amber
– Copper
– Coral
– Gold
– Lapis Lazuli
– Pearl
– Platinum
– Rose quartz
– Silver
– Topaz
– Turquoise.

- Is the use of (gem-)stones and precious metals 'gendered' in your context(s)? For example, is it considered suitable for a man to wear an amber pendant?
- How would you feel losing/breaking your favourite piece of (gem-)stone or precious metal? Why?
    About interculturality per se:
- Read through the section again and reflect on what the different pieces of information about jade could suggest for thinking further about interculturality as a subject of research and education.
- What do you make of this saying? Do you know any similar idiom in other languages (with a reference to a gem, mineral or any other thing)? 他山之石可以攻玉 (tā shān zhī shí kě yǐ gong yù): (lit.) the other mountain's stone can polish jade, i.e. to borrow talent from abroad to develop the nation effectively. What could the idiom say about openness to others and interculturality in general?
- How many of the 'virtues' identified by Confucius about jade do you find relevant to unthink and rethink interculturality? *Benevolence, credibility, earth, heaven, intelligence, justice, propriety, loyalty, morality, music* and *truth*. Try to evaluate the meanings and connotations of these terms in English while reviewing them for interculturality.
- In a similar vein, find more information about these elements of Chinese philosophy related to jade: *the unity between Man and Nature, unity in diversity* and *yin yang*. What new ideas could these inspire us to reflect on interculturality?

4.5 Chinese Thing for Interculturality IV: Mahjong

- What does the word *play* mean to you? When do you use it and who does it apply to (e.g. children versus adults)? Are there specific stereotypes about 'playing' when one is an adult in your context(s)?
- Which (board) games are currently popular in your context(s)? What is their appeal? What do they 'do' to people?

- What values seem to apply to some of these games (e.g. togetherness)?
- Think about some of the games you have played as a child or as an adult: why did you get interested in them? How did you learn to play them? What memories do they bring to mind (about who)? What senses (touch, smell…) are brought to the front when you recall some of your experiences of playing games?
- What do you know about mahjong? Have you ever seen mahjong tiles?
- What do you expect to learn about interculturality from a game like mahjong?

[**Personal narrative:**

When I try to dig out my first memories of mahjong from my mind, I can see (stereotypical) scenes from films: people playing in a dark place, wearing felt hats, with a smoky background, shouting at each other in Cantonese or Mandarin.

I probably came across mahjong for the first time in Hong Kong. I never really had an interest in 'games' since they were forbidden when I was a child. 'Playing' was considered a waste of time. I have tried boardgames a few times in Finland, France and the UK but I lose interest very quickly. My strategic skills and patience are too limited. I have played mahjong only a few times and the last time was some years ago at the time of Chinese New Year in Beijing. The friends who were playing with me spent some time at the beginning to renegotiate the rules since they were arguing that their views on the rules were quite different—they did renegotiate them again halfway through the game. The game was exciting. The challenges that I faced was reading the tiles—especially the ones in Chinese since I did not know some of the characters, but after a few turns I got used to them. I did sense some competitive spirit amongst my friends but it was 'friendly'. Many people comment on the chunkiness of the tiles and on the pleasure of manipulating them and hearing them 'click'. I must admit that this appealed to me too. The feeling is very different from e.g. cards which are too light to make any noise—some readers will probably disagree with me.

In recent years I noticed that luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton have designed mahjong sets with e.g. the LV logo on some of the tiles that cost over 3000e.]

Heinz (2021: x) allows us to introduce mahjong, and especially its core interculturality, when she writes: "All over the world, there are different ways of playing mahjong, some of which have branched quite far from the original form".

Chinese Mahjong is a tile-based game of strategy with global popularity. The game is often said to be very popular in e.g. the U.S.A. In 2021, an American company which produces (expensive) customized mahjong sets was accused of cultural appropriation ('stealing' cultural elements from another 'culture') for 'redesigning' the rectangular tiles of the game (with rounded edges)—removing the Chinese characters, circles, lines, numbers, flowers…

Like the previous Chinese things, mahjong has specific and complex meanings and connotations in China. Known across (and at times beyond) social classes, 'tradition', 'family' and 'closeness' often appear to be the basic values attached to the game.

A note on the idea of *play* in Chinese before we get into details about this thing. The verb *to play* is 玩 (wán) in Chinese and can also mean *to enjoy, to have fun, to amuse, to take things lightly* and even *to joke*. It is often used to refer to any activity beyond work or study (e.g. going to a museum, a shopping centre, doing a Karaoke,

Fig. 4.10 Play together

eating together, etc.). When speaking English, some Chinese might use the word
play in the same way as they use it in Chinese as in: "Do you want to play with
me at the mall this weekend?" (i.e. go shopping). Figure 4.10. shows a poster found
in a shopping centre with the words *play together* in English accompanied by the
Chinese 让生活更有趣 (ràng shēnghuó gèng yǒuqù) for *make life more interesting*.

Mahjong translates as 麻将 (Májiàng) and, interestingly, we have identified
different phrases for saying 'to play mahjong' in Chinese:

- 摸八圈 (mō bā quān): word-for-word *to touch eight laps*
- 搓麻将 (cuō má jiàng): 搓 means *to twist, to rub with the hands*
- 搬砖 (bān zhuān) also means *to do hard physical labor* (as a job); word-for-word:
  moving bricks, 砖 is a brick
- 玩牌 (wán pái) stands for *playing cards*; 牌 is the character for cards and mahjong
  tiles—NB: 1. 和牌 (hú pái) means *to win in mahjong* and includes the same
  character; 2. *To play a tile*, 出牌 (chūpái), means word-for-word *a tile/card out*
  (出 = out).

The character 和 (hé)—which is also found in the characters for e.g. *peace* and
harmony—can mean *to win a game of mahjong*.

Mahjong dates back to the latter half of the nineteenth century (Qing Dynasty,
1644–1911—the last dynasty of China[7]). A previous game entitled 马吊 (mǎdiào; lit.
horse tune, melody) from the Tang Dynasty (618–907 C.E.) shared some similarities
with mahjong (Heinz, 2021).

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[7] Interestingly, Heinz (2021) notes that mahjong was advertised in the US as dating back to
Confucius.

Fig. 4.11 Shuffling the tiles

Mahjong is played on a square table by four people, who might have to start the game by renegotiating the rules since some people might not follow the same ones, considering the diverse local practices around China. The tiles are placed face down in the centre of the table. The duration of the game, which requires 'strategy' and 'luck', averages 4 h and aims to create winning hands by discarding and drawing the 'thick' mahjong tiles—which makes what Heinz (2021: 24) refers to as 'a satisfying noise' when manipulated. The game is played e.g. at home, in parks or in game parlours. The basic principle of mahjong is equality: anyone can talk, there is no hierarchy, no one has any 'superior' authority while playing the game (see Fig. 4.11). In some mahjong games, people might be required to change seats for every turn, reflecting the fact that someone becomes a 'temporary leader' and that no one occupies a seat that could be considered as e.g. 'lucky' during the entire game.

The tiles amount to 144, comprising four copies of each main tile and eight flower tiles (see Fig. 4.12). The symbols appear on one side of the tiles while the other side is usually green. The tiles can be made of acrylic, bamboo, ivory or plastic, with symbols engraved or recessed into them (Heinz, 2021). Actions with these rectangular tiles include shuffling and piling up, separating into three different suits, lining up and rearranging, drawing, snatching up and discarding. Every player starts with 13 tiles, drawing a new one and removing one for each turn. The tiles include: [suits, which all represent money from Ancient China:] 條 (tiáo) *bamboo*; 筒 (tǒng) *circle/dot*; 万萬 (wàn) *characters/numbers* (10,000); [honours tiles:] 东风 (dōngfēng) *east wind*; 南风 (nánfēng) *south wind*; 西风 (xīfēng) *west wind*; 北风 (běifēng) *north wind* (北 is found in the Chinese word for *Beijing* too); 紅中 (hóngzhōng) *red 'dragon'/centre* (中 means *centre* and is found in the Chinese name for China—i.e. the Middle/Centre Kingdom); 發財 (fācái) *green 'dragon'* (meaning: wealth); 白板 (báibǎn) *white 'dragon'*; [bonus tiles to award points after the hand:] 花牌 (huā pái) *flower tiles* (four representing the four seasons and four different types of flowers/plants). Any player can complete the followings: *pèng* (碰), set of three tiles; *gāng* (杠), set of four; chī (吃), sequence of three, and *hé* (和 win).

Fig. 4.12 Mahjong tiles used as wall decoration at a restaurant

Interestingly Mahjong has had an international appeal since the early twentieth century. Heinz (2021: 5) asserts that "The game itself allows for adaptability that meant a wide range of people could use the game both for entertainment, and for cultural purposes". In the U.S.A. it has had to do with Chinese American heritage but also e.g. Jewish American women's culture. This is how Heinz (2021: 4) describes how mahjong was 'exoticised' in the country:

> During the 1920s mahjong fad, for example, white women in elaborate Chinese costumes experimented with exotic personae and newly accessible forms of sexuality, Chinese American mahjong instructors capitalized on the fad as an economic and cultural opportunity, and critics of the game recoiled from the social mobility of both white women and Chinese Americans.

Mahjong also has many followers playing online with games such as Mahjong Classic, Dragon Mahjong, Mahjong Solitaire, or Goldfish Mahjong being popular. Finally, many films have had mahjong included as a central component of their plots:

Mahjong (1996), *House of Mahjong* (2007), *King of Mahjong* (2015), *The Mahjong Box* (2017). Netflix released a series called *Mahjong Heroes* in 2018.

Critiques of mahjong have included digs at its combativeness and lack of encouragement for teamwork (Greene, 2015). However, as a whole, the game could be seen as 'Dionysian playing' too (in reference to Dionysus, the Greek god of fruitfulness and vegetation, wine and ecstasy), by promoting shared social experiences (Greene, 2015). Some people might play mahjong for money.

[Quid pro quo]

Mahjong represents another fascinating thing to unthink and rethink interculturality. In itself it is a very diverse object that has been used throughout Chinese worlds and beyond, creating emotions, memories and bonds between millions of people. Although mahjong might appear 'different', 'exotic', 'special' to many of our readers, through reading about how it is played and what it 'does' to people, you will have noticed similarities with other (board-)games that you might be familiar with.

Questions to reflect on:

- One of the expressions for *winning a game of mahjong* contains a character that is found in other Chinese words such as peace and harmony. Do you see any connections between these?
- The clinking of tiles when one plays mahjong is somewhat special and can trigger e.g. feelings of nostalgia. Think about the games that you have played in the past and about the sounds that are associated with them. What feelings do they trigger in you?
- Each mahjong tile has a specific symbol. Try to find pictures of each tile and reflect on their meanings. For example, some of the honours tiles contain references to the wind or dragons. What do these symbols mean to you? In a similar vein, review the symbols used on cards, tiles, dice, playing pieces, boards, tokens, etc. in other (board-)games. What do these bring to mind?
- Here is a short list of (board-)games. Try to find more information about their origins, how they are and the values they might add to people's lives, encounters and identities. Try also to find some information about their potential interculturality.

    – Azul
    – Chess
    – Clue
    – Draughts
    – Dungeons and Dragons
    – Go
    – Hive
    – Monopoly
    – Ouija
    – Santorini
    – Scrabble
    – Shobu

    – Tak.

- If you have played (board-)games with others, how often have you had to renegotiate the rules before starting? What did this negotiation tell you about others?
- We have presented some drawbacks and advantages of playing mahjong, which seem to oscillate between weighing individualism and collectivism. What are your views on these critiques?
- Take your favourite (board-)game and try to identify different ways of playing it in different parts of your context(s) and in other parts of the world. Do you notice anything interesting?
- After re-reading the section a couple of times, what could playing mahjong teach us about interculturality? What aspects of the game seem to be beneficial for making us unthink and rethink the notion?

4.6 Chinese Thing for Interculturality V: Resident Identity Card (居民身份证)

This last section on a thing for interculturality focuses on an intriguing and yet rich element: the ID card. Before exploring what we want to share with you about this thing, have a look at these questions:

- Do you own an ID card and/or a passport? What pieces of information are found on these documents? In what language(s) are they provided?
- How often are you required to present an ID document and for what reasons? What do (local) laws say about this?
- We are going to discuss names and naming in this section. Take some time to reflect on these questions:

  – Who gave you your names and how were they chosen?
  – Do the different components of your full names (e.g. firstname) mean anything or have special connotations?
  – Are there any special beliefs or superstitions about naming someone in your context(s)?
  – Do you have a nickname (or several nickames)? Who gave them to you and why?
  – Do you have a 'foreign' name that was given to you when you e.g. started learning another language? How do you feel about using it?
  – Has anyone ever made a mistake with your name 'interculturally' and made you feel embarrassed (e.g. call you by your family name solely)? How did you deal with this situation?

- What do you know about the Chinese Lunar Calendar? Are you familiar with other types of calendars? Are you able to navigate between different calendars without much trouble?

- What things do you usually associate with dates and calendars?
- How many 'rites of passage' have you experienced since childhood, i.e. important moments of change and transition that matter for your communities?

[Personal narrative:

In Finland I never carry any ID with me since one is rarely required to 'prove' who one is. It has happened, however, that I have not been able to buy something in a store or to get a particular service because I could not prove who I was. When I travel, holding my passport(s) in my hands when crossing borders reassures me—I have always found that there is something 'scary' about that moment of transit. In China identity is checked from time to time when e.g. checking in a hotel, entering a museum and taking the train. Since my passport(s) are important to me, I always worry when it is taken away for a while or if someone takes pictures of it with their phones. I remember once being asked to share a picture of my passport(s) on a group on Wechat, refusing to do so, sending it to a coordinator personally instead. My ID documents are probably the most precious things I own.

At the beginning of my cooperation with Chinese colleagues and friends, I struggled with their names. Although I knew that their firstname was 'second' and that the first character of their names was their family name, sometimes I was confused by the fact that some of them used these 'pieces' of identity the 'Western way', changing the order of names. I still catch myself call Mei, Mei Yuan*, although* Yuan Mei *would be more appropriate. I believe that many Chinese colleagues and friends also face the same issues with my name. Often, they refer to me as Prof. Fred, Dervin Fred or Dervin—while I tend to say Prof. Dervin, Fred* or *Fred Dervin. Using wrong formulations or names can create 'useless' tensions that can be easily solved by being explicit.*

I have always found the Chinese calendar to be fascinating by the confusion it often creates in me. It is about change and constant movement. Time changes. One must accept instability. My birthday is always in October in Finland but in China it could also be in September. I think that subconsciously before my 'encounters' with China, I had imagined that time is time—'Eurocentric' time!

I have seen the Chinese Resident ID card on many occasions and I have always found it intriguing that it can be used for so many different activities. All in one document. I think that this is the case in many different countries but because I don't have any ID card so I have never had the pleasure of holding one to e.g. have access to a train—ticketless!].

This section concerns a thing that is not specifically so Chinese: An identity card—or to be more specific a Resident Identity Card. 居民 is resident in Chinese and contains the characters for *home + civil*. The word *resident* in English is from Latin *residentem* for *sitting down* and *settling*. What is special about this card is that it gives us information about how identity is 'done' on official papers in the Middle Kingdom. This card is provided to all Chinese citizens who reside in a particular place in the country—a hometown, a residence of 'internal' migration (e.g. from one Chinese city to another). It is a 'vital' document that is requested at all times for obtaining all kinds of services, for security checks and e.g. having access to trains.

If there is a thing that is important for Chinese, this small piece of plastic is—like millions of people in other countries.

We shall focus on names and dates in this section. About the other aspects we can say that *gender* is indicated as either *female* or *male*; the *Minzu category* has to do with a person's Chinese Minzu 'ethnic' group (56 groups, e.g. Han, Hui, Kazakh, Mongolian, Uyghur, see Dervin & Yuan, 2021). The identification number is composed of the code for hometown (the village, town or city of origins), the date of birth as well as a personal number attributed randomly.

As can be seen on Figs. 4.13 and 4.14 (which is a copy of one of the authors' ID card) the card is double-sided. One side shows the Great Wall of China in the background with the words 居民身份证 (jūmín shēnfèn zhèng), *People's Republic of China Resident Identity Card* and an indication that this resident card is from someone who lives in the capital Beijing.

The other side contains the following pieces of information (Fig. 4.14):

- 姓名 (Name)
- 性别 (Gender)
- 民族 (Minzu)
- 出生 (Date of birth) (year month day)
- 住址 (Address)
- 公民身份号码 (Identification number).

To start with let us spend a bit of time observing and reflecting on names in China. According to Xu and Nicolson (1992: 499):

> Westerners have thousands of different family names but only a few hundred common given names. Thus, in a western personal name, the family name is discriminative and abbreviating the undiscriminative given name(s) makes sense. Chinese have only a few hundred common family names but thousands of given names.

Fig. 4.13 Chinese resident ID card

Fig. 4.14 Basic information on a Chinese resident ID card

Names usually follow this order on the ID card: *family name + firstname.* This is the usual way in Chinese to use one's name. We repeat: *Family name first and firstname second!* This can cause confusion for people from outside China and in academia for example when citing a Chinese scholar. Let's take Mei's name as an example. She is Yuan (family name) Mei (firstname). In the 'West' she is often referred to as Mei Yuan (following the 'Western' convention of firstname + family name). When her work is included in an international paper, most likely, she will find herself as Mei, Y. if she follows the Chinese trend of *family name + firstname*—which would equal to Fred's references being under Fred, D. And it can get even more complicated. Some Chinese of certain Minzu groups don't have firstnames—or even family names—but use just one name. The 'Western' conventions require somewhat both a family name and a firstname. But what to do when one only has one 'piece' of name?

Names can consist of two to four characters in Chinese. The rule is that a child takes on the father's family name but some people combine this name with their mother's or even (in some cases) follow the mother's family name—with sometimes different family names for children from the same household, which means that two brothers may not have the same family name. When people get married, they do not usually take the husband's or wife's family name but retain their own. One can change one's name in China but the process is complicated. We note that many people in China will have a nickname (e.g. their firstname is doubled as in Meimei for Mei, Pangpang, with, sometimes, *Xiao, little*, added before) and an English name, given to them by e.g. their English teachers or borrowed from their favourite foreign artists. A nickname in Chinese is 外号 (wài hào), containing 外 for *outside, foreign*, or *in addition* (ideographic: night-time divinations; the supernatural)—the word for foreigner in Chinese contains the same character: 外国. Let us share an example of an interesting tradition for 'nicknaming' babies: in some parts of the Chinese countryside babies are given a so-called 'ugly' nickname as an auspicious move to

counterbalance a potentially too positive nickname that could bring *back luck*. An auspicious baby's name might also be suggested by a 大师 (dàshī)—a grandmaster—or a name consulting company such as 起名通 (Qimingtong, see https://www.qimingtong.com/). Fortune telling can be used to make predictions and to learn how to 'avoid bad luck' based on personal information. It often relies on the 5000-year-old 易经 (Yì jīng), *the Book of Changes,* which was about determining the place of the human in the universe. [By e.g. analyzing the date and hour a person was born, fortune-tellers might help with telling someone's future, making decisions, career, finance, wellbeing, future relationships, name changes.]

Firstnames are often chosen to express parents' aspirations for their children (e.g. fame, intellectual qualities, longevity…)—Mei (美) means *beautiful*; Fred's Chinese name for instance contains the character 德 (dé) for *morality, virtue*; a friend's name is 玉 (Yù), *jade,* which has to do with money and wealth. Popular firstnames include 依诺 (Yī nuò), *according to/follow promise*; 梦瑶 (Mèng yáo), *dream jade*; 佳丽 (jiā lì), *good and beautiful* ('Belle'); 晴怡 (qíng yí), *sunny happy*; 明哲 (Míngzhé), *bright philosophy*. Some names are also gender-neutral in Chinese. Xu and Nicolson (1992: 501) explain that "Unlike western parents, Chinese do not name their children after relatives or acquaintances".

In a paper by Bin and Millward (1987: 10–11) the origins of Chinese names are categorized into: locality (e.g. city), relationships, professions, nicknames, and phonetic transliterations of non-Chinese names. The authors also list the most common surnames in 1987: *Zhang, Zhao, Li, Wang, Zhu, Lin, Ma [horse], Kong [Confucius's surname], Hu, Jin [gold], Chen, Shi [stone]…* Most of these names find their origins in royal families, Emperors' names, favours, states. Bin and Millward (1987: 20) argue that "Chinese names normally convey more genealogical information than do Western names". Today the five most common surnames include: 李 (Lǐ), 王 (Wáng), 张 (Zhāng), 刘 (Liú) and 陈 (Chén). Finally, we note that some foreign names have been given equivalents in Chinese (e.g. the Italian Jesuit missionary to China Matteo Ricci is 利玛窦 (Lìmǎdòu); Obama 欧巴马 (Ōubāmǎ)). Famous 'Western' stars have also been given nicknames in Chinese, e.g. Kim Kardashian, 金大妈 (jīn dàmā): *Aunty Gold*.

To finish about names, let us remind our readers that in Chinese it is common to use words such as *sister, brother, uncle* and *auntie* to refer to family members—even when they are not 'real' brothers or uncles—and friends, but also to strangers on the streets (as a kind way of 'naming' the other). On university campuses all staff members (from full professors to administrative staff) are referred to and addressed as 'teachers' (老师, lǎoshī).

Let's now discuss aspects of the ID card that relate to time and dates. First, we note that the date appears in this order in China: *Year + month + day* [Starts with the 'largest' element down to the 'smallest', like addresses in China]. Interestingly a date of birth indicated on an ID card in China may correspond to different 'realities'. Since many Chinese still follow the Lunar Calendar (we shall come back to this in a moment), the 'official' date on an ID document might correspond to either a date from the Lunar Calendar (often referred to as the 'Chinese' calendar) or to a 'translation' of that date into the international Gregorian calendar—that the Chinese

adopted only a century ago. Let's take an example. Fred's official date of birth is October 8th 1974. His Lunar date of birth corresponds to the 8th Lunar month, 23rd Lunar Day, 1974. Had he been Chinese, it could have been that his parents would have registered his date of birth as October 8th 1974 or (maybe) 23rd August 1974. This means that for some Chinese a date of birth may not correspond to a date from the international calendar. Furthermore, if one follows the Chinese calendar, one's birthday never falls on the same day of the year (Fred's birthday would be September 13th in 2022 according to the Lunar calendar). Festivals such as 七夕 (qīxì; 'Chinese Valentine's Day') never fall on the same day of the year either.

Another interesting aspect of dates is the fact that, in some Chinese regions, people seem to count their age in a way that gives them one or two years older than their actual birth. This is referred to as 虚岁 (xūsuì)—'nominal age'. This derives from the belief that when a person comes to life, they are already one year old. There are generation variations in this phenomenon too, with a tendency for younger people not to follow such trends and/or the Lunar calendar.

The word 曆 (lì) in Chinese translates basically as *calendar* in English but encompasses other meanings such as astronomical procedures. It is calculated by the Chinese Academy of Sciences (see http://english.pmo.cas.cn/). The calendar was developed some hundred centuries before our Common Era. Although the Gregorian calendar dominates in China, the Lunar calendar determines most holidays and festivals such as 'Chinese' New year, which never falls on the same day in the Gregorian calendar (see Fig. 4.15.). The calendar is lunisolar—it follows the movements of the moon and the sun, and observes the relationship between the moon, the sun and the earth to determine changes to facilitate production, living, agriculture, etc.—and is about a month later than the international calendar (one month = the time from a new moon to the next). The movement of the sun is reflected by 24 solar terms, distributed in 12 months, which include e.g. *Start of Spring, Grain Ear, Light Snow, Great Cold*.

Most readers will be aware of another dimension related to the Lunar calendar, which is that of the 'Chinese Zodiac year'. The Zodiac year starts on the first day of a lunar year (from e.g. 1st February 2022 to 21st January 2023 in the Gregorian calendar). The 12-year cycle of the Chinese Zodiac is represented by animals: *Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake*… This same 12-year cycle is also important as one grows up. Age 12 is considered as an important turning point in the life of a child in China and is often celebrated with elaborate parties (see Fig. 4.16).

[Quid pro quo]
A simple thing such as a Chinese resident ID card can open up so many different kinds of conversations about multiple topics central for interculturality—and for interculturality as a subject of research and education itself! We noted interesting differences and similarities between Chinese 'elements' and what some of you might be used to. Our discussions have also revealed specific beliefs and potential superstitions that are worth exploring further. The topic of date is very much of interest here for the necessity of unthinking and rethinking how we see it interculturally speaking. This is somewhat destabilizing but it represents an important 'brain shift' to us all.

Fig. 4.15 Couplets celebrating the arrival of the New Lunar Year placed outside someone's home

This is the final set of questions for us to go further before we move on to the conclusions.

- Names might have special meanings, connotations and origins. We have seen that Mei's name refers to beauty in English. But what about Fred? Fred's full first-name is Frederic. Here is what we found about its origins and meanings (etymon-line.com): "from Proto-Germanic *frithu-rik, literally "peace-rule," from *rik-"rule" (from PIE root "reg- "move in a straight line," with derivatives meaning "to direct in a straight line," thus "to lead, rule") + *frithu- "peace" (source also of Old English friðu "peace, truce"), from suffixed form of PIE root *pri- "to be friendly, to love." While reading this, Fred cannot but think about the Swedish word for *peace* which is in fact *fred*… Do you know anything about the origins of your names? Were the ones who give you these names aware of these elements?

Fig. 4.16 Picture from a 12-year old birthday party in the North of China. This is considered as an important rite of passage in the life of a child

- In the language(s) that you know, what happens to foreign names when they are used? Are they pronounced as they are in the original language or modified to fit the other language(s)? Why and what happens if one does otherwise (e.g. pronounce the name of Brad Pitt in a more 'American' way)?
- How easy and accepted/acceptable is it to change names (officially) in your context(s)? Is this a complicated process? Why do people change names?
- How 'gendered' are names in your context(s)? Are there many gender-neutral names? Do you think that people from outside your context(s) can guess people's gender by seeing e.g. their firstnames?
- We have spoken about the Chinese rite of passage related to the 12-year cycle. In Mexico, quinceañera, the 15th birthday is also an important moment for young people. Try to find out more about this tradition in Mexico: why 15? What are its meanings and traditions?
- How much do seasons matter for you? Do you usually look forward to certain seasons or festivals, celebrations/holidays? Why (not)?
- How tolerant would you say you are of superstitious practices in general? Explain why.
    About interculturality as a topic:
- What could the resident ID card teach us about interculturality as a subject of research and education?

- What element(s) from the discussions about the resident ID card could serve as e.g. metaphors for problematizing interculturality?

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Chapter 5
Unparalleled Insights into Interculturality

Fred Dervin

Abstract This chapter closes the book, suggesting that the more-than-human can offer unparalleled insights into interculturality. Summarizing the main observations made throughout the book and especially in Chap. 4 (Chinese things for interculturality), Fred Dervin reveals the multiple positions that things offer us for interculturality. What things can 'do' for us in terms of research and education is also problematized and proposed as guidelines for future work on the more-than-human in intercultural communication education.

Keywords Multiple positions · Ghosts · Mirrors · Multiple voices · Interculturalizing interculturality

We are surrounded by things. *Many things.* And the economics of consumerism urges us to acquire even more of these things every day. Where does interculturality stand in this surplus to requirements?

The different 'Chinese' things (with different forms, sizes, colours, materialities) that were introduced in this book to illustrate the necessity to take the more-than-human into account—and to start from them when dealing with interculturality—have allowed us to identify a multitude of functions and positions held by things.

As such, the more-than-human is with us all the time, alone and/or with others… The more-than-human does *so much* for and with us, without us (always) realizing… The more-than-human tells stories about us… The more-than-human outlives us and keeps traces of our memories…

The more-than-human talks to us in their own ways… The more-than-human communicates with and via us… The more-than-human can take on layers of meanings and connotations… The more-than-human configurates, expresses but also hides in-/directly our life experiences, our identities, our memories, our feelings, our relations, our thoughts…

The more-than-human reveals and reflects what we (un-)think, (un-)do, the way we identify… The more-than-human also makes us dream and hope…

The more-than-human is a story-teller, a revelation, a teacher, a guide, a mediator, a partner, a protector, a challenger, a reminder, a spokesperson… some kind of a shaman… (see Fig. 5.1).

Fig. 5.1 The multiple positions of the more-than-human

This book has argued that the more-than-human can provide us with unparalleled insights into interculturality. We must accept that things *always* shape and structure the ways we 'do' interculturality. The current exclusive focus on the human (and their intentions) is saturating the field of intercultural communication education, with most of us fighting an illusionary witch hunt against essentialism (which is very anthropocentric!) and spelling out all kinds of (problematic) competences for people to interact 'successfully' with others (see Dervin & R'boul, 2022). This often gives the impression that we are going around in circles.

Things are always there but they tend to be treated like ghosts. Most intercultural issues relate to things one way or another. When we talk about things, we talk about us. Now it is time to talk about things where it has been *just* about us.

The book was based on five (apparently) 'simple' things that most of us will have heard of, seen and used. A simple thing such as chopsticks (about 25 cm, 30 g) has allowed us to open so many stimulating doors for rethinking about interculturality as a phenomenon and a subject of research and education. All these things are in fact good examples of simplexity (Dervin, 2016): they are simple and complex at the same time—like interculturality!

The Chinese things have allowed us to 'dig' into the following topics:

- *Calligraphy*: writing, communicating, art, aesthetics, legends and myths, language, personalities;
- *Chopsticks*: eating, gifting, superstitions and beliefs, hygiene, family, language;
- *Jade*: aesthetics, history, human characteristics, virtues, Man and Nature, money;
- *Mahjong*: playing, globalization, worldviews, togetherness, senses, negotiations;
- *Resident ID card*: locality, naming, dates, seasons, beliefs and superstitions, language, origins.

You will have identified most likely many other 'underground' topics and I encourage you to read through the sections as often as you can to build up a habit of unearthing discussions for interculturality.

As far as interculturality as a subject of research and education is concerned, I wish to share some final thoughts:

- Working on the more-than-human represents an important way to include the other 'seriously' in epistemological discussions of interculturality. And in a sense, what the five Chinese things allow us to do here is to fight again *sinologism* (Gu, 2012) and to strengthen our confidence to engage with ideas beyond the 'West'. I argue that taking the more-than-human into account in research and education can help us combat what Gu (2012: 1) describes here: "Why, since China was forced to enter the modern world after the Opium War (1839–1842), have Chinese intellectuals oscillated between exaggerated eulogies and masochistic condemnation of their own culture on the one hand, and between unhealthy fetishization and irrational dismissal of Western theories, paradigms, and approaches to scholarship and knowledge on the other?". In order to deal with these contradictions and inconsistencies, moving to and fro between things from different parts of the world, theories, concepts, languages, ideologies, while keeping an eye open on interconnections, cannot but enrich our work on interculturality. Although many might argue that things have 'anecdotal' values in such discussions, I urge colleagues and students to start thinking 'otherwise' by getting inspiration from things. Interculturality can only be treated interculturally when 1. We shift away from an entire Westerncentric perspective and 2. The more-than-human from 'here and there' is given its due space in our conversations (amongst others). As a reminder, in Chinese a thing is 东西 (dōngxi), which translates as *a thing/an object* (concrete and abstract people, things and objects), but also as *east and west, from east to west* and even *near* and *beside*. The very word urges us to look in all directions and to not be satisfied just with e.g. 'our' 'Western' thoughts.
- As we have argued in the book, interculturality as a notion tends to be 'mummified', enveloped in static ideologies ('orders' and 'windscreens'), concepts and notions, and beliefs, with 'Western' ideologists and gurus dominating global scholarship and educational decision-making in-/directly. Working on interculturality requires a constant process of 'evolution', shifting between stability and change, bearing in mind the importance of past, present and future exchanges ('globalizations'). We cannot continue to deal with the notion in research and

education without placing change at its centre. Through their complexities and what they reveal of the changes that we have experienced in the past, today and in how we interact with others, things tell us to accept change. Research and education must treat the influences of the human and the more-than-human on interculturality beyond solidity and false criticality-reflexivity. This also requires change in the ways one problematizes, conceptualizes, researches, and educates.

- One very important aspect of working with the more-than-human is that things can serve as mirrors to look into ourselves—not so much to learn about the other because this other is always much more complex than what things indicate. For Canetti (1989: 69): "To be another, another, another. As another, you could see yourself again". Confronting things for interculturality, we start 'unmasking' ourselves, revealing (changing) aspects of who we are, what we think (or been made to think), what we do, what we silence (or are not allowed to talk about), how we treat others (and get treated by them), how powerful/powerless we are, etc.
- Finally, the proposed focus on things asks us to pay attention to the way we talk about interculturality, the ways we engage and discourse around it with self and others. Things require examining what language says about them but also about us, others and the world. And we have seen many examples of polysemy, much needed renegotiations of meanings and connotations, inconsistencies in language use, in our discussions of Chinese things. The more-than-human also reminds us that language can be treacherous to talk about what we do with and through things. In Chap. 2 the idea of interculturality as a *kaleidophone* was introduced— a machine that allows us to be sensitive to the sounds and the *real* polysemy of language(s). The kaleidophone comes as a warning against taking words for granted and centring our engagement with the world and others only through what we think our language(s) say(s).

The book is just the beginning of what we hope will be more systematic and long-term engagement with 'more-than-humans' for interculturality. We also hope that the book will convince teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of the necessity to open their eyes to the richness that this world *out there*, with which we can reflect, has to offer for intercultural communication education. Taking the time to observe, interact around and problematise the more-than-human in interculturality cannot but open new vistas for a complex field that begs for renewal…

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