

# Negotiating instances of failed humour in a transient transnational community

**Mareike Oesterle**

Pädagogische Hochschule Ludwigsburg, Germany  
[mareike.oesterle@ph-ludwigsburg.de](mailto:mareike.oesterle@ph-ludwigsburg.de)

**Götz Schwab**

Pädagogische Hochschule Ludwigsburg, Germany  
[goetz.schwab@ph-ludwigsburg.de](mailto:goetz.schwab@ph-ludwigsburg.de)

## Abstract

*This study explores how a transient transnational community of teacher educators responds to and negotiates instances of failed humour, addressing a specific research gap in how teacher educators collaborate and interact internationally. Based on a cumulative PhD study within an Erasmus Plus Project (proPIC, 2017-2020), this paper examines instances of failed humour occurring in project meetings between 15 teacher educators from different sociocultural backgrounds. Using the concept of transient transnational communities (Oesterle et al. 2020) and Bell's (2015) typology of failed humour, this longitudinal and qualitative case study adopts Interactional Sociolinguistics to analyse face-to-face encounters. The analysis of six instances of failed humour from four transnational meetings provides insights into the negotiation processes and highlights significant themes, concluding with a sequencing framework for managing failed humour. The findings indicate the dynamic and fluid nature of these interactions, showing that norms are not static but are continuously negotiated and reshaped based on the community's constellation and context. The study highlights the significant impact of gender and status, demonstrating how these factors influence the management of failed humour and the interactional strategies that emerge.*

*Keywords: failed humour, transient transnational community, teacher educators, interactional sociolinguistics, multilingual creativity*

## 1. Introduction

While the significance of humour in interaction is widely recognised (Attardo, 2017b; Holmes, 2000; Norrick & Chiaro, 2009; Vine, 2020), there is a notable lack of literature on failed humour (Attardo, 2008, 2014; Bell, 2017; Bell & Attardo, 2010; Hale, 2018), which Bell (2015) defines

as “utterances that were intended to amuse, but which did not succeed in doing so” (Bell 2015, p. 4). Even fewer studies target participants' responses to failed humour and the subsequent negotiation of these situations (Bell, 2013; Bogdan, 2014), leading to an incomplete picture of humorous interactions (Bell, 2015, 2017). Recent works by Bell (2009, 2013, 2015), Priego-Valverde (2009, 2021) and a small number of other scholars (Bogdan, 2014; Hale, 2018) have begun to address this gap. This article seeks to contribute to filling it and explores responses to failed humour and its negotiation in a transient transnational community of teacher educators. Teacher educators - the group of individuals who teach future teachers - are like many other professionals, increasingly called upon to engage in international collaboration and to cooperate in social configurations being more and more characterised by a certain level of transience. Their workplace is shifting from traditional stability to a dynamic environment (Czerniawski 2018; Galvin et al., 2024). In European teacher education, cross-border initiatives are extensively promoted through numerous measures for the mobility of students and staff, as well as through diverse partnership programs (Angouri, 2023; Rigney et al., 2021).

Focusing on *transience* as a major characteristic of modern communities, current research in the field of Sociolinguistics and Linguistic Anthropology has begun to challenge the widely held assumption that interactions within a community are fundamentally based on a certain set of shared linguistic forms and social norms (Gumperz, 1968; Hymes, 1972; Labov, 1972). Several studies show that such communities present a new field of investigation to better understand and possibly improve social settings in which linguistic practices are not based on any norms that are shared a priori (Lønsmann, Hazel & Haberland, 2017; Mortensen & Kraft, 2022; Pitzl, 2022). Such transient communities, as Mortensen (2013, 2017) calls them, have increased in a large diversity of formats and purposes. In his later work, Mortensen, together with Kraft, describes them as an empirical phenomenon and a window, which provides an opportunity for sociolinguists to reconsider the way they account for interactions in which there is no pre-existing basis of shared semiotic resources (Mortensen & Kraft, 2022, p. 46). This helps them investigate norms and practices that are emergent and reproduced in the duration of certain activities between their group members.

Bell (2006) notes that misunderstandings in humour are often caused by differences in cultural knowledge and linguistic practices, particularly in cross-cultural settings where failed humour is more likely to occur (Bell, 2006, p. 4). For instance, a joke that relies on specific cultural references may fall flat if the audience lacks the necessary background information. In transient transnational communities, such interactional difficulties increase. Participants must establish common practices and norms, navigate linguistic misunderstandings and if necessary engage in the negotiation to repair miscommunications, without being able to rely on a shared cultural or linguistic repertoire. Yet, instances of failed humour may be used to creatively establish, reconfigure or break norms to improve conversation and further construct new ways to communicate with each other. According to Pitzl (2022), transient social configurations represent contexts where linguistic creativity becomes particularly evident, notably in instances of miscommunication, such as humour failures (Bell, 2015).

A typology introduced by Bell (2015), identifies various “triggers” for failed humour interactions between speakers and hearers, including poorly encoded utterances, linguistic errors, ambiguity, issues with pragmatic force, incongruity in jokes, and failures to appreciate the humour or meta-messages (Bell, 2015, p. 55). These factors often lead to misalignment between the intended message and its reception. Bell's (2015) work highlights the complexity of humour as a communicative act and the various ways it can fail, necessitating a careful examination of both the speaker's intentions and the audience's responses. Moreover, she emphasises the difference between miscommunication taking place within humorous discourse and seriously framed miscommunication, noting that “the social factors involved in humour will require different practices for negotiating failure” (Bell, 2015, p. 59).

The primary purpose of this study is to explore how a transient transnational community of teacher educators responds to and negotiates instances of failed humour. Considering the lack of research on how teacher educators collaborate and interact on an international level (Swennen & White, 2020), particularly regarding their detailed interactive practices, this study is highly necessary. The findings presented in this paper derive from a cumulative PhD study conducted in the context of an Erasmus Plus Project (proPIC, 2017-2020). In a previous study, based on the work of Mortensen (2013), the notion of *transient transnational communities* (Oesterle et al., 2020) was introduced to describe a group of people which consists of individuals and/or collectives from different nation states and with diverse sociocultural backgrounds, who temporarily collaborate (either physically or virtually) around a joint activity to achieve agreed-upon outcomes. By adopting *transience* as a conceptual lens and drawing on Bell's (2015) typology of failed humour, this paper reports on a longitudinal and qualitative case study of a transient transnational community, namely a project consortium of 15 teacher educators. Methodologically, this paper is guided by the principles of Interactional Sociolinguistics, taking an interactional perspective. Using spoken workplace data, the present study explores authentic face-to-face encounters and delves into the discursive and pragmatic aspects of the negotiation of failed humour within a temporary social configuration, where the development and outcome of interactions could not be predicted or planned based on pre-existing linguistic practices or social norms. Furthermore, it uses Pitzl's (2022) notion on *multilingual creativity* to explore the extent to which linguistic strategies emerged to manage failed humour within these communities. This paper is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do participants respond to instances of failed humour?

RQ2: How do participants negotiate instances of failed humour after their first response?

The article consists of three parts: Beginning with a brief overview of the literature both on the notion of *transience* in teacher education, as well as on humour studies, the adopted methodology will be explained. The third part analyses six instances of failed humour selected from four transnational project meetings. The paper concludes with a sequencing framework on how instances of failed humour are managed, as well as significant themes that emerged through the analysis.

## 2. Data and methods

The present study is based on a case study of a project community of an Erasmus+ project, proPIC (*Promoting professionalism, innovation and transnational collaboration in foreign and second language learning and teaching – integrating research-orientation and mobile technologies in teacher education*, see Schwab, Oesterle & Whelan, 2022) that was carried out as a transnational endeavour from 2017 to 2020. Within this project, a substantial corpus of qualitative data was collected over the entire three-year duration. There were 15 teacher educators from four different European countries involved in the study, representing five different teacher education institutions. Based on the demographic data of the participants, it can be said that the consortium presented a relatively balanced distribution in terms of age, length of employment at a teacher education institution, and gender. However, it was noticeable that predominantly women held lower positions and were employed on a temporary basis at the university. English was chosen as the work language for all project-related interactions, as well as resources.

The auto-ethnographic fieldwork for this study comprised the direct involvement of the authors within the community in question, both having been part of the coordinating team.

Although this approach holds limitations, for instance a potential bias, lack of generalisability, and challenges in maintaining objectivity (Ellis et al., 2011), it offered a unique opportunity for the authors to provide insights that were inaccessible through more traditional methods. In line with Ellis et al. (2011), the authors did not just recount their experiences but used theoretical and methodological tools to frame them analytically. This involved comparing their observations with existing research, conducting interviews with other teacher educators, and examining relevant documents, like project outcomes and minutes. Using an auto-ethnographic approach allowed them to capture the lived realities and dynamics of the transient community under study.

The data consists of audio- and video-recordings that were produced of both the physical, as well as the virtual project meetings. For this, multiple recording devices were used, such as iPads, professional cameras and the Swivl robot. In total, the corpus consisted of approx. 51 hours of audio- or video-recorded physical project meetings, plus field notes that were taken throughout the meetings. The process of data preparation and analysis involved four steps, each contributing to the overall understanding and interpretation of the dataset. In a first step, all events and participants were described in detail, making use of the descriptive question matrix developed by Spradley (2016). All recordings were then, in a second step, verbally transcribed using Transana. Initial coding took place parallel to transcribing the data, using MAXQDA. The analysis revealed a number of code patterns, such as *the use of humour*, *interruptive talk* or *linguistic scaffolding*. To better manage the amount of data, the initial coding was used in a third step to focus on the instances that seemed to be most promising and dominant. As there was a substantial number of interesting instances where the participants used humour in their interactions, the primary focus shifted towards such situations. In a fourth step, those sequences were analysed in detail. Overall, the described process highlights an emergent and inductive approach, focusing on how participants experience and interact within the dataset, which is characteristic of phenomenological research.

The inclusion criterion for this study's corpus was any instance where a speaker intended to be humorous but failed. The analytical problem with failed humour is that it is difficult to identify. Looking at the speaker, Bell (2015) notes that the difficulty starts with identifying whether an utterance is intended to be humorous or not. According to her, although there are a number of contextualisation cues, as well as background knowledge that the analyst can rely on, there is “no fool-proof method” (Bell, 2015, 33) for detecting all humorous utterances. Moreover, humour does not always elicit laughter or smiling (Attardo, 2017a). Having located instances of humour, one must then examine the responses of hearer and speaker to identify failed humour. To determine the speaker's intention and the audience's reaction, which had a significant impact on how the situation unfolded, we considered background knowledge, tone of voice, audience response, and verbal clues. Consequently, this paper focuses not on utterance of failed humour, but on the audience's reactions and the strategies employed within transient communities to negotiate, manage, and cope with these situations. Without detailing each instance, the paper used Bell's (2015) typology to identify them, further focusing its analysis on how such failures were dealt with over time and which norms were established and negotiated.

Adopting a sequential, interpretive, and data-centred approach, the methodology of this study was primarily guided by the discourse analytical principles of Interactional Sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982). This choice stems from the multifaceted and dynamic nature of a transient transnational community and the inclusive characteristics of this discourse analytical approach. As Koffhoff and Spencer-Oatey (2007) emphasise, Interactional Sociolinguistics is concerned with understanding communication in the context of culturally specific situated inferences “in which participants have very different repertoires” (Kotthoff & Spencer-Oatey, 2007, p. 9). This makes it ideal for investigating intercultural encounters. Gumperz is known for his contributions on multilingual contexts and has, alone and together

with colleagues, conducted a number of studies which focus on intercultural encounters (Gumperz, 2008; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1978; Gumperz & Roberts, 1991). The approach recognises the complexity of the community as it goes beyond studying language in isolation. Instead, it contextualises it to gain a deeper understanding of how language reflects and shapes society, seeking to bridge interactive and societal issues (Gumperz, 2008). A transient transnational community represents a linguistically and culturally diverse workplace that is shaped by a variety of different backgrounds that the community members bring along. Shared background knowledge is thereby limited and also existing presuppositions, which there are some in this distinctive project setting, are not fixed. According to Gumperz (2008) it is this context-specific background knowledge that interactants rely on to engage in interpretive procedures throughout a conversation.

### 3. Findings

In the case under scrutiny, instances of failed humour have been recognised as a significant phenomenon. To identify them, the authors applied Bell's (2015) categorisation framework. They analysed the direct responses after the humour failed, as well as the way the situations developed and which strategies were employed by the consortium to manage them. The longitudinal perspective allowed the authors to draw conclusions regarding the emergence, acceptance, and dismissal of interactional practices and strategies in this transient community.

#### 3.1. Strategies reflecting social dynamics and hierarchies

The first extract shows a piece of interaction from the initial meeting, during which the consortium officially kicked off the project. Each of the five participating institutions sent two representatives to this meeting. The example is taken from a session right at the beginning of the first day, in which all participants introduce each other in order to get to know the project consortium.

##### Example 1

```
34      Mario:      sorry
                after giving a lot of advice
35      Maria:      ((laughs))
36      Emma:      no [it's good]
37      Mario:      [no      ]
38      Emma:      no
39      Mario:      because
40      Chris:      hm
41      Mario:      because I've seen some pages in European projects and they
42                  look HORRIBLE
43      Emma:      I know yeah
44      Maria:      ((laughs))
45      Mario:      sorry about that
46      Emma:      our [last]
47      Chris:      [she ] is always grateful for someone who assists
48                  some:      ((laughs))
49      Chris:      so you just
50      Mario:      no I like it that sort of thing
51      Emma:      no it's good
52      Chris:      it's good just participate
53      Mario:      just you know it should be short and sweet
54                  many:      ((laughs))
55      Emma:      yeah no it's good
```

After giving a lot of advice, this extract starts with Mario saying *sorry*, which is met by a short laugh from Maria and an immediate response from Emma at which the advice was directed. Emma responds in a way affirmatively, but with a contradiction, saying *no, it's good* (line 36). However, Mario does not seem satisfied with that yet, as he seems to be wanting to continue,

starting another explanation (line 37). The scene continues between Mario and Emma, with Mario repeatedly trying to elaborate on his viewpoint, and Emma attempting to convey her agreement through responses like *no* (line 38) or *I know yeah* (line 41). Their dialogue is interrupted twice: In line 40, Chris expresses himself with a brief *hm*, and in line 44, we can hear a short laugh from Maria. In line 45, Mario apologises once again. However, due to the contradiction of having apologised earlier and then persistently reiterating his point of view, this apology may not be taken seriously. Emma seems to think so, as in line 46, she begins with providing an example from one of her last projects, aiming to assure Mario that she sees things the way he does. The scene shifts when Chris interrupts Emma with an ironic, possibly even sarcastic comment, suggesting that Emma can always use assistance: *she is always grateful for someone who assists* (line 47). He uses a dry tone and choice of words that hint at irony. His attempt partially fails. His remark seems to have been open to multiple interpretations, due to his further persisting remarks in line 49 and 52, which seem to be a serious request. This ambiguity allows it to be seen as both a serious suggestion and a humorous one. Other members of the group choose to recognise it as humorous and support it with laughter (line 48). However, the irony does not meet its mark as Mario, the intended target, does not appreciate it. His straightforward and serious response, *no I like that sort of thing*, demonstrates his power to dismiss the irony and only respond to the serious message behind Chris' comment.

Bell (2015, p. 162) describes the power of humour as being more effective when top-down. This dynamic seems to be similar when it comes to deliberate humour failures: Mario's position, although only coming from him being older in this case, allows him a certain level of authority to disregard or even downplay the irony coming from Chris. He can afford to ignore or even dismiss Chris' irony. This deliberate failure can be seen as a subtle and deliberate assertion of his authority. The transient nature of their collaboration likely influences how they manage this failure: While Chris continues with a more serious tone persisting on Marion supporting Emma in her task, Emma and Mario seem to manage and conclude this failure together in line 50, 51, 53 and 55. Mario's silence after his last comment (line 50) goes on for nearly five minutes and suggests withdrawal on his part, highlighting caution, possibly even discomfort. Meanwhile, the discussion about the website continues among other partners, indicating their effort to continue despite the failure in humour. With relationships still forming during the first meeting, there's an emphasis on testing boundaries, navigating social hierarchies and establishing mutual understanding.

### **3.2. Negative responses and multiple repair strategies**

The excerpt below presents a scene from when the first project meeting is half over and the coordinating team, Chris and Emma, inform the partners that one last issue will be talked about some other time. As the information is shared, the reactions from the team members are first similarly relieved, up to that point when Chris makes an ironic suggestion and his attempt at humour fails.

Example 2

1 Chris: [okay; ]  
 2 Emma: [and the] third study week we will decide in Newcastle;  
 3 Oskar yeah; good;  
 4 Linda: <<laughing> h°>  
 5 Pascal: okay=  
 6 Robert: thank <<sighing slightly> you>  
 7 Oskar: <<laughing> we can't take [that now >]  
 8 Rachel: [((laughs))]  
 9 Mario: the third,  
 10 Chris: **although we could=**  
 11 Maria: why not now;  
 12 David: ( )  
 seems to be to someone else  
 13 Emma: [((laughs)) ]  
 14 Mario: [why not now ]  
 15 (--)  
 16 David: [( )]  
 17 Oskar: because we [have to]  
 18 Robert: [we have] other things that ( )  
 19 Oskar: and we have to carry=on i mean=  
 20 Linda: =yeah  
 21 Oskar: we have been [talking about this]  
 22 Rachel: [( )]  
 23 Oskar: [now ]  
 24 Emma: [ya=ya=ya]  
 25 Chris: ye[ah ]  
 26 Oskar: [all] morning  
 27 Pascal: ((laughs))  
 28 Chris: yeah  
 29 Oskar: and we had alway[s= ]  
 30 Emma: [okay]  
 31 Oskar: said that is  
 32 Maria: okay  
 33 Oskar: a lot of other things [to discuss (inaudible) more]  
 34 Chris: [those who don't want to drink be]er  
 35 Emma: [yeah ]  
 36 Chris: they can [stay behind]  
 37 Rachel: [( )]  
 38 Chris: n=sort out the last [study week]  
 39 Emma: [so ] the for the project  
 40 schedule we will set up deadlines when you put in all the  
 41 dates from your institution for the courses and we will  
 42 also try or we will edit it and [fill it ]  
 43 Oskar: [(<<sighing> yeah)]  
 44 Emma: and then we will send it around, yeah °hhh=okay (2.4) so

After the coordinating team, Chris and Emma, conclude the previous discussion (line 1-2), Emma postpones making a last decision. This seems to be approved by the others, given that Oskar supports her suggestion right away, uttering *yeah good*. He uses neither a pitch down nor up at the end of his utterance, keeping it even and giving the interlocutors a small prosodic clue implying an instance of humour. Linda's abrupt and hushed laughter (line 4), more a mixture between a giggle and a laugh, can either be interpreted as a mere sign of politeness, laughing at Oskar's direct and maybe playfully meant comment or as her way of coping with the rather direct comment of Oskar, revealing a certain level of uncertainty. Pascal's utterance (line 5) can then be taken as evidence that not all the participants agree with Oskar or at least reveal their discontent openly, as he utters a brief but supportive *okay*, using a low falling intonation. In line 6, Robert joins in, saying *thank you*, not quite revealing whether this is meant in a more amusing or serious way. However, a short, but audible sigh on the utterance *you* indicates that he is seriously grateful that the discussion is finished. Oskar then continues with his comment, now explicitly, but still jokingly saying *we can't take that now* (line 7). By using the personal pronoun *we*, Oskar presents a problematic issue as a collective issue, not targeting a specific person or subgroup, which seems to be the established tone of politeness. He could have directed his complaint explicitly at the coordinators, as they are responsible for leading the community through the originally planned agenda. However, he chooses to use a strategy of politeness to address a critical issue, further softening his criticism by using laughter (Holmes, 2000). His

utterances clearly indicate that he is not all too happy, but still okay with the situation as long as they now continue with the next topic. Then, a person, possibly Rachel, seems to support Oskars' indication of poor time management, and joins in with a brief laugh. Looking at the data, this strategy seems to have been established as an interactional norm in this transient community already during the first day of the first project meeting. In line with the findings of Kramer (2015), laughter and humour are often used not only to create solidarity, but to solve interpersonal tensions or in this case reduce project-specific concerns that emerge. In some of the collected data, humour further functions to, in a way, suppress problematic issues or critical topics that are more general in nature (e.g. critical working conditions of some of the project partners). In many other cases, such speech events would now have come to an end, and Emma or Linda would start to introduce the next topic. However, unlike other examples, in this conversation there is a turning point between line 9 and 15 which makes the dynamics of the whole conversation shift, resulting in a collaboratively emerging conflict between eight participants. David and Rachel seem to discuss something else in the background, which is not audible (line 12, 16, 22, 37). The turning point starts in line 9 when Mario, using a rising pitch at the end of his utterance, seems to send a signal to the other partners that this topic is not finished for him yet, checking whether he understood Emma's suggestion correctly. Possibly taking Mario's question as an opening, maybe even to ease the tension that arose earlier, Chris starts with a different suggestion in line 10, which is the humour that fails in this example.

This failure of the humour is possibly due to mismatched speaking styles, which Bodgan (2014) highlights as one reason for why humour can fail. The interaction shows Chris employ a norm-following strategy, namely norms that adhere to existing systems (Pitzl, 2022). Chris, although being aware of the usually applied formal communication styles in meetings, as we can observe in the data, uses a slightly humorous tone in line 10. He stresses *although* in his utterance and we can assume that his choice of tone and stress function as an indicator that his suggestion is meant as an antiphrasis. Maria, however, does not seem to recognise this, as she sounds rather serious when asking *why not now* ↑ in line 11, using a rising intonation at the end and stressing the last word. Emma then starts to laugh (line 13), maybe to signal the others that she did understand Chris' use of humour and still intends to end this discussion. In line 14, Mario, too, seems to have recognised this cue, as he uses the exact lexical content that Maria used (line 11), though with a certain tone of irony at the end. The pause in line 15 marks a brief moment of hesitation between all the interlocutors. After this turn, Oskar and Robert use quite an emotional tone and start to explain with short interruptions why the partners should proceed with the next topic from line 17 to 33. In between, Lisa makes an attempt to assure the other two that she shares their perspective (line 20), which Robert seems to acknowledge, as he does not continue. Oskar, however, seems to be very annoyed and frustrated at this point, which he expresses through his choice of words and tone of voice. Both indicate that he is not only discontent with the time management, but also frustrated that some of the other partners do not feel the same way and share his perspective. The latter is signalled by his utterances in line 17, 19, 21, 23, 26, 29, 31 and 33. Throughout his contributions, Oskar seems to want to make the others see that it has been way too much time already that they spend on the previous topic. Further, he explicitly demands that the consortium moves on and discusses other things that he believes are important. In line 29, he reminds the partners of the pre-existing agenda and possibly implicitly of Emma's and Lisa's previous assurances that the content of the project will be discussed this very day. Chris' interactional move from line 34 to 38 reveals that he does not yet change his communicative strategy to use humour as a means to solve a conflict, despite the fact that his humorous utterance before was not successful. He does however choose a stronger social cue as he jokingly refers to a topic that usually connects most of the participants; having one or two drinks together after the meeting is over. Although Oskar does not continue with his argument after this, the tension still does not seem to be eased. His utterance in line 39 hints that



for him, the management of time is still not okay and further indicates his frustration that all of the other partners do not support him more or do at least agree with him.

In this interaction, multiple strategies are employed by different members of the consortium to manage and respond to failed humour. Maria's serious response in line 11 indicates a lack of recognition of the humour. Emma's laughter in line 13 signals understanding of Chris's humour. Mario echoes Maria's words with irony in line 14, also indicating recognition. However, the pause in line 15 shows uncertainty among the partners, a critical moment in humour management. Oskar and Robert respond emotionally and frustrated. Despite his previous failure, Chris continues using humour to ease tension, referencing a shared activity from line 34 to 38. This does not fully resolve the tension. Throughout this interaction, the community navigates the failed humour through responses that range from serious questioning to ironic repetition and frustration, highlighting ongoing disagreement and the challenge of managing interpersonal conflicts within the group in this first kick-off meeting.

### 3.3. Coping with unrecognised laughter

In this excerpt from the second project meeting, occurring approximately six months into the project, nine members of the consortium are present. Following a longer input from Linda on a different topic, she, in this scene, addresses the issue of a task that was expected to be completed, but remains unfinished.

#### Example 3

```
1      Linda: so: uhm (.) I think one part there at the e-portfolio °h=uhm what
2      we need to work on is on our e-portfolios to (.) °h=yeah (.) find a
3      way to: ((laughs)) work more on them=and °hh=uhm but=yeah (.) we
4      will discuss it on wednesday and=uhm for us (.) I guess for us also
5      for us to find (.) kind of tasks for you to: work on the
6      pe=portfolios (.) and the last °h intellectual output is actually
7      something which I would say is far ahead
      Linda continues in her usual professional tone describing the
      activities including in creating the last intellectual output
```

Linda addresses the incomplete task related to e-portfolios, beginning hesitantly with interjections like *so* and *uhm* (line 1). Her use of *I think* (line 1) signals her personal perspective, slightly downtoning her critique of the unfinished task, possibly revealing a certain degree of uncertainty on her part. Linda uses a somewhat ironic euphemism in line 3, followed by a short laughter from herself and a clear struggle on her part after this humorous attempt fails. After receiving an unresponsive reaction from the whole consortium, Linda seems to stumble, using three interjections after another, taking a long inbreath and then using *but* shortly after, starting to soften her critique even further by postponing this discussion. After still not receiving any response from someone, she seems to take back the responsibility for this task, which she said in line 2 was *our*, as in the whole consortium's, but then in line 4 starts with *us* again, referring to the coordinators who will have to provide the partners with clearer tasks and instructions to work on the e-portfolios.

Although this incident does not seem to have a major effect on the relationship between Linda and the other partners, as their meeting afterwards continues without any obvious social consequences, this scene still provides a relevant example for how failed humour is managed when only one person is actively involved and has to manage the situation on her own. The response to this failed humour, looking at the hearers which are in this case also the audience, is a total lack of response which is unusual based on previous interactions. After about four minutes, Emma is the first to say something again, concerning a new topic on the topic Linda continues on in line 6. Linda's strategies to manage this failure are varied and adapt quickly within a short span of time. We can observe clear hesitation in line 3, followed by reframing her

critique from before as a personal perspective for which she uses *but* (line 3) and *I guess* (line 4). This marks a strategy of how she manages this situation: Adjusting her use of personal pronouns, she shifts from a collective responsibility to a more specific group, the coordinators. Here, Linda aims to move forward constructively, addressing the issue of the incomplete task without further going on about her failed humour attempt. This move highlights her effort to find her role within the group while navigating the lack of response from her colleagues. However, this shift also marks her uncertainty of her own role within the consortium, as she attempts to delineate responsibilities more clearly. In the end, after still no response, she postpones the whole discussion and ultimately shifts the focus to another topic. Moreover, Linda's failed humour attempt and subsequent strategies highlight norm-transcending creativity, "prompt[ing] modifications in the normative system" (Pitzl, 2022, p. 127) of the community. Faced with an unresponsive audience, Linda adjusts her language choice as in her use of the pronouns (line 2, 4, 5), which marks a shift from collective responsibility to a more specific group, the coordinators, in an effort to manage the situation. This linguistic adjustment reflects a break from the established norm of collective responsibility, demonstrating Linda's creative approach to navigating the lack of response. This extract is significant as it reveals not only several strategies how failed humour can be managed but also that even if applied, in this situation there remains a clear lack of support and professional integration from the consortium. Although Linda struggles and makes several attempts for the partners to join in, she does not receive any support. They are met with silence, indicating a lack of engagement or solidarity from the consortium. Linda is the youngest member of the consortium and, despite being part of the coordinating team, does not seem to have fully established her professional role within the group.

### **3.4. No repair and social consequences**

This extract shows a situation that occurs during the third partner meeting after more than two years after the start of the project. In this excerpt, we observe a scene between the entire project consortium, except the coordinator, who was not present at the time.

Example 4

203 Emma: so:: the other one (.) Ralph do you want to-  
 204 Ralph: **oh I expected Chris to:**  
*Ralph turns around to Emma*  
 205 Ralph: **take over the <<laughing> job so> I °h=yeah what do you::**  
*Ralph turns towards the screen again, Robert is  
 constraining himself in the background to start laughing,  
 discreetly holding his hand in front of his mouth, but  
 seeking eye contact with his local colleague*  
 206 Ralph: I mean we we chose  
*Robert is visibly, but quietly laughing behind Ralph,  
 turning around towards Mario who is also quietly laughing,  
 a hand before his mouth*  
 207 Ralph: two (.)  
*Mario and Robert are both laughing, Robert towards the  
 screen still quietly laughing*  
 208 Ralph: [concrete products]  
*while talking, Ralph turns around again towards Robert,  
 both are now looking at each other, Robert still looking  
 amused*  
 209 Emma: |hm|  
*Ralph turns away again from Robert*  
 210 Ralph: °hh=ehm (.) the website made with Kahoot by one group and  
 211 the video production °h during the first study week in City  
 212 A  
*eh as the other product °h and we reflected on the*  
*Ralph turns around again*  
 213 Ralph: assessment criteria because on the on the (0.3) o=on: the  
 214 im h°=°how do I say this° (0.3) the function this product  
 215 had during the teaching process eh:m in in that special  
 216 case

In line 203, Emma initiates the next group's presentation by directly addressing Ralph. She uses a question as a polite invitation for him to proceed with his part. Emma does not expect Ralph to decline this request, as she poses the question matter-of-factly and without hesitation. Ralph responds that he expected someone else, Chris, who is currently absent, to present (line 204-205). Ralph's remark can be interpreted as partly ironic, as he uses laughter in line 205, but also originally as a serious intention of not wanting to present, as he starts off with a more serious tone in line 204. Ralph's ironic tone and laughter in line 205 is intended to lighten the mood after receiving no clear response from Emma or the partners. However, the irony falls flat and fails as the other members do not engage with it. This dual intention, humour mixed with a genuine reluctance, reflects Ralph's possible attempt to navigate a difficult situation by using humour to mask his discomfort. After Ralph's comment, Robert is visibly but quietly laughing behind Ralph, turning around towards Mario who is also quietly laughing, a hand before his mouth. Both Mario and Robert continue to laugh quietly, with Robert facing the screen but still laughing. While talking, Ralph turns around again towards Robert, both now looking at each other, with Robert still looking amused. After this, Emma utters a short *hm* (line 209) and Ralph continues, stumbling slightly, starting again with an interjection *ehm* and a number of inbreaths and pauses as he proceeds (line 210).

This situation underscores several aspects regarding the community's management and failed management of failed humour. Ralph uses a mix of irony and serious tone in line 204 and 205 to distract from the immediate pressure of presenting. This dual intention shows his attempt to navigate the situation by using humour to mask his discomfort. Ralph's ironic tone and laughter are meant to lighten the mood, but the irony falls flat as the other members do not engage with it. Unlike in other instances where failed humour might be met with empathetic laughter or supportive comments to repair the interaction, Ralph is left to manage the situation alone. Robert's laughter does not seem to be supportive and it becomes clear that he is laughing about Ralph rather than with him when observing his behaviour. It indicates that Robert finds Ralph's situation amusing, particularly Ralph's attempt to avoid the presentation task through humour, rather than finding the ironic comment itself funny. Mario, who is also laughing quietly, supports Robert's mockery, making the situation worse for Ralph. The unresponsive reaction

from the other members with Ralph's humour but most importantly Robert's and Mario's responses, is severe for Ralph, as it leaves him to manage the situation alone. This silence indicates a lack of support and possibly a norm of exclusion rather than inclusion. It illustrates that not everyone receives support when humour fails, and that if and which repair strategies are employed are based on individuals' integration within the group and their social standing. The lack of support can be interpreted as a reflection of his lower social position within the group. Bell (2015) notes that humour often depends on shared understandings and mutual support, and when these are absent, it highlights the individual's outsider status. Emma's short *hm* (line 209) seems to be an attempt to support Ralph, although it is not enough to change the overall dynamic. Her minimal support indicates a possible recognition of Ralph's struggle but is not enough to effectively reduce the tension. Bell (2015) highlights how failing at humour can have significant social repercussions, which aligns with the findings of this study as this situation, observable in subsequent attendance lists, may have contributed to Ralph's withdrawal from social events.

### 3.5. Collaboratively managing failed humour

In this scene from the third partner meeting, several partners are discussing a joke about Swedes told by Mario.

#### Example

5

104 Mario: and **there's eh=an expression that is (.) to to eh to do the**  
 105 **Swe=to do the Swedish (.) it's an expression: when you want**  
 106 **o avoid (.) this is what Viktor did**  
*he starts off with an audibly cautious voice, sometimes glancing at Oskar who is not looking at him, then he is turning towards Robert who sits next to him, nudging him, as Robert looks down at his computer*

107 Robert: hm  
*nodding absently, looking at his screen*

108 Mario: did the Swedish so  
 109 Emma: hm ((laughs))  
*Maria starts smiling, along with Chris, Oskar looking reserved*

110 Mario: when they're you know you know whooo and went  
*Mario starts gesturing wildly with his hands, focusing his gaze on Robert*

111 Maria: disappear  
 112 Mario: yeah ya (.) so [that's]  
*it's seems as if Mario wants to drop the subject and continue*

113 Emma: [why is] [that ]  
 114 Mario: [I don't know] I don't know  
 115 Emma: [**<<laughing> Oskar is like>**]  
 116 Mario: [we have the ] [we have the]  
 117 Emma: [**((laughs))** ]

118 Robert: it's not very  
 119 Mario: it's not  
 120 Robert: it's not the Swedish model  
 121 Mario: it's not the politically very correct  
 122 Emma: ((laughs))  
 123 Mario: well well we have it to to (.) to do the Swedish  
*Oskar is smiling now, Robert is engaged as well and laughing quietly, Maria is also laughing quietly, Chris is asking Oskar a question and both start laughing*

In this interaction, we can observe Mario initiating a conversation about the ironic expression of *doing the Swedish*<sup>1</sup> (line 104). This irony fails partially. After coming up with the expression, he glanced at Oskar, who is Swedish and who seems to not be paying any attention. He then turns towards Robert, who usually joins in when someone uses humour. Robert, however, seems

<sup>1</sup> Mario's remark possibly refers to a stereotype or a cultural reference about Swedish people. It seems to be known by at least some group members and might play on common perceptions or stereotypes about Swedish behaviour, attitudes, or customs.

to be distracted and only responds with a non-committal *hm* (line 107), looking absently at his screen. Mario continues talking about the expression, repeating *doing the Swedish*, to which Emma responds with a *hm* and laughter (line 8-9). Maria starts to smile, while Chris and Oskar appear absent. Mario continues making sense of the saying (line 108), gesturing at Robert. Maria interjects repeating the word *disappear*, which adds a somewhat humorous tone (line 111). In line 112, Mario responds using some interjections, hinting at uncertainty of how to proceed. His stumbling is followed by a pause, also indicating hesitation. It seems that Mario wants to move on from the topic and continues the conversation (line 112) using *so* which is sometimes used to wrap up a topic and change to a new one. Emma, however, has either missed this utterance from Mario or wants to clarify what the expression means, as she asks: *why is that*. It leads to a brief exchange between her and Mario, followed by laughter from Emma. Significant here is that in line 115 and 117 directly addresses Oskar with another attempt at humour, which also fails. This is followed by some partners, starting with Robert, coming to the conclusion that this expression may not be politically correct. Mario agrees in line 121 and Emma laughs again (line 122), possibly indicating relief. In line 123, Mario seems to be wrapping up the whole discussion, repeating the expression again. After this, Oskar starts to smile and Robert becomes more engaged, laughing quietly. Maria also laughs quietly, and Chris asks Oskar a question, leading to both of them laughing together.

This excerpt illustrates how the community manages failed humour collaboratively. Each participant plays a crucial role that contributes to the dynamics and outcomes of the conversation. Understanding these roles helps explain the strategies that were employed to manage failed humour in this example: In this interaction, Emma seems to support the miscommunication, aiming at maintaining a positive atmosphere through laughter, questioning, explaining and humour. Mario tries more direct humour, but adapts to the reactions of the others, and aligns with the group norms as the interaction proceeds. Robert's reaction and response regarding the expression's appropriateness, eventually joining in the laughter, lets him be more of a mediator in this situation. Maria scaffolds the failed humour with supportive, but cautious laughter and humour. Chris, initially not involved, becomes more engaged as the conversation progresses. Oskar, the person that was affected most by the expression Mario used, is initially passive. His eventual engagement, especially his shared laughter towards the end suggest a gradual acceptance of the failed humour.

The varied reactions among the group members, including Robert's distracted response (line 107) and Oskar's unresponsive reaction, suggest differing levels of comfort with Mario's remark. According to Bell (2015), laughter and smiling are common contextualisation cues used to mark humour, as well as respond or repair to failed humour, which Emma employs in line 109. Emma's engagement reflects a norm of providing supportive feedback when humour fails to reduce potential tensions. Maria's supportive repetition of the word *disappear* adds another layer of humour to the interaction. Another important strategy we can observe is acknowledgment. When Robert comments on the topic not being appropriate, Mario agrees and adjusts his approach. He acknowledges and agrees with the critique or observation made by Robert. Emma's question about the expression (line 113) and Mario's response further indicate a norm of collective linguistic exploration through asking questions as a way to deal with failed humour (line 114, 115, 119, 121). In line 115 and 117, Emma directly addresses Oskar, signalling that she is aware that the irony used by Mario might have been targeted at or at even hurt Oskar. She does so, however, with a somewhat laughing tone, which is the second humorous attempt that fails. Nevertheless we can observe that humorous or ironic remarks are accepted forms of managing failed humour within the group. Despite the initial failures, Emma, Maria, Robert and, we can assume also Chris, scaffold Mario's failed humour. The shared laughter between Chris, Oskar, and Robert towards the end of the interaction seems to resolve the tension. The example demonstrates that the varied reactions, which showed a collective

effort to maintain harmony and support within the group, were successful. The example aligns with what Harder (2022) points out: “Negotiation is a necessary component at the stage of explicit agreement, but it is never enough – it has to be accompanied by mutual adjustment-in-action” (Harder, 2022, p. 38). Aiming at achieving agreement and a mutual understanding, it is clear from this example that the negotiation would not be successful without the adjustments each of them makes in regard to their interactive practices as the interaction proceeds. The varied reactions highlight the importance of collective engagement and awareness in managing failed humour, which is also emphasised by Bell (2007) who notes: “while there are rules of use relating to humour, this is an area in which speakers are more likely to be aware of the possibilities for individual interpretation and negotiation than they are concerning other areas of language” (Bell, 2007, p. 43). The group’s adaptability, their ability to navigate miscommunication, and also to be aware of and jointly acknowledge the potential political incorrectness of the expression let them find ways to re-engage positively and successfully manage humour failures.

### 3.6. Easing the tension

In this final excerpt, Emma makes a concluding remark to end a somewhat heated discussion among the partners. During the exchange, Mario voiced strong objections to a theoretical framework developed by two of the partners. However, Emma interrupted Mario, bringing the conversation to a close.

#### Example 6

17 Emma: then we meet in City A (.)ehm probably we will exchange what  
 18 we have done after the third cohort BEFORE City A because  
 19 to prepare eh=that as well so there will be time for this  
 20 but (.) and then we will present or well finalise another  
 21 version a last version in City A eh=in Germany before the  
 22 (.) multiplier event (.) is this is this is this for  
 23 everybody;  
 24 Pascal: yea  
 25 Mario: <<sighing>hm  
 26 Emma: are you  
 27 Chris: happy! (.) or shall we  
 28 Emma: **or not happy but (.) okay-**  
 29 *speaking the last word, Emma is pointedly looking at Mario*  
 30 many: [(laughs)]  
 31 Mario: [no ] I’m I (.) COME **on** [I’m not saying you know]  
 32 many [(laughing)] [ ]  
 33 Emma: [I know I know but ]  
 34 Emma: no but just if it’s now something that you say oh no I  
 35 really can't live with that then just you know but [if it’s  
 36 not]  
 37 Mario: [the funny  
 38 thing is that I think what=what you were describing all  
 39 these sort of things there are things that there are not  
 40 there like the connections like what Jill was saying Jill  
 41 was saying a lot of different things to make that  
 42 distinction said a lot of different things and that they’re  
 43 not THERE  
 44 *Mario is pointing at the screen*  
 45 David: hm  
 46 Emma: hm  
 47 Mario: you know and that’s what you know if it’s rewarded I know  
 48 entirely what you’re saying but you know  
 49 Emma: yeah  
 50 Mario: but they’re not THERE  
 51 David: so we can add them to the actual column  
 52 Jill: yeah  
 53 David: that we’ve got there so making connections [...]

Here, Emma tries to wrap up a long discussion during which the partners were not able to decide on a joint theoretical framework. Emma is, although being one of the younger researchers, part

of the coordinating team and responsible for following through with the agenda. She picks up Chris's remark about *being happy* (line 26-28), pronouncing the last word *okay* (line 28) rather flatly, stretching it slightly, and using a level intonation. Her utterance seems to be directed at Mario as Emma is specifically looking at him while saying it. Many partners then laugh a little more than usual. Looking at the data, the reason could be, because in many cases it is Mario who uses irony and humour. This situation is different, however, because Emma's attempt at irony in line 28 fails. His *come on* (line 31) is strongly emphasised. Mario does not appreciate it and his tone is quite severe.

Emma's ironic remark, which did not land as intended, is met with several management strategies: First, Emma attempts to balance her failed humour by explaining her intent. This reflects the community's established norm of addressing misunderstandings promptly, but cautiously, possibly to reduce the tension and prevent further conflicts. Second, Mario himself seems to try and ease the tension by elaborating on what he meant. His diplomatic approach, using a phrase like *I know entirely what you're saying* (line 47-48) marks another strategy around navigating sensitive interactions. It shows that shifting perspectives as Mario does in line 47, seems to have been established as an interactional norm that the consortium can rely on, as well as explicit explanations and reassurances used here in this example. Third, no one uses humour or irony again, which hints at the seriousness of it, and that everyone acknowledges how important this conversation is for Mario. This strategy, which has shifted crucially compared to the first two meetings, reflects an increased awareness among the group members of the need to adjust their interactional styles to more serious tones when addressing certain topics. Fourth, David's remark (lines 51, 53) expresses his higher status. David is one of the older professors and he does not often contribute to discussions, but when he does, it is to round up a discussion, making a final remark or giving advice that is then followed by the group. Kappa (2019) highlights how epistemic status and authority impact interactional practices, with more knowledgeable or higher-status individuals often guiding the flow of dialogue within transient communities. David's intervention serves to assert his status and marks his stance, bringing closure to the discussion, which aligns with his established role within the group. Older, more experienced members, like David, play a pivotal role in guiding and managing instances of failed humour. This reflects the broader patterns observed by Kappa (2019), where experienced members use their status to influence the group's decision-making processes. Knowledge asymmetries, which Kappa (2019) notes are rooted in epistemic status, "are interactionally occasioned" (Kappa, 2019, p. 94), leading to situational roles that emerge through conversation or are even claimed by a community member. David already possesses a higher status at his home institution and, in this example, uses the instance of failed humour to claim or confirm the role as an authority within the consortium. In this instance, the management of failed humour unfolds within the context of the community approaching the end of their project. Over the course of their three-year collaboration, the consortium has developed an understanding of each other's communication styles, as well as a transient normative framework. Kraft and Mortensen (2022) emphasise that norm development is a dynamic process, where participants continuously negotiate and adapt their communication practices to align with the group's evolving needs and contexts. The failed humour instance, instead of disrupting the conversation, serves as a catalyst for deeper engagement. As members become more familiar with one another over time, they navigate through instances of failed humour with more resilience, awareness and intentions.

## 4. Discussion

Studying instances of failed humour in a transient transnational community allowed for understanding how participants responded to and negotiated these occurrences without relying on pre-existing norms and interactive practices. Before shifting the focus on relevant themes critical for understanding the dynamics of negotiating instances of failed humour within this community, Figure 1 provides an overview of how participants responded to such instances and the subsequent negotiations that occurred.



**Figure 1.** Negotiating failed humour

Humour often relies on shared cultural and linguistic norms, and deviations from these norms can lead to misunderstandings and failed humour (Bell, 2007). The normative framework used or established plays a crucial role in shaping how participants respond to and manage instances of failed humour. Throughout the duration of their partnership, the community under study established a dynamic set of interactional norms. Initially, humour attempts were exploratory, aiming to establish rapport. These early attempts led to failed humour due to cultural misunderstandings, unfamiliar interactional styles or linguistic challenges. Following the failed attempt, the targeted hearer(s) typically responded with silence, withdrawal, or a cautious request for clarification. Meanwhile, other members may have laughed or continued the conversation, showing varying levels of support. In the middle of the partnership, particularly during the second meeting, interactive practices were refined and established norms provided a foundation for more effectively handling instances of failed humour. Although humour was frequent, instances of failed humour were less common and generally lighter. Participants managed failed humour by employing further humour or shifting the topic, as illustrated in Example 2. At the end of the partnership, discussions become more in-depth, with



members engaging directly with humorous content and addressing misunderstandings through direct question, offering clarifications or supporting failed humour with additional humour. We can, however, also detect miscommunications that are not solved smoothly. Especially the third meeting, see Example 4, revealed a more severe instance of failed humour, leading to significant social consequences.

Cultural misunderstandings were evident in the interactions within the consortium, as highlighted in the analyses. The consortium consisted of teacher educators from institutions in Spain, Germany (with two universities represented), the UK, and Sweden. Each of the partners had distinct institutional systems, hierarchical structures, and cultural norms, which has a major impact in shaping the interactions and dynamics within the group. Some institutions followed strict hierarchies, which often meant that younger teacher educators had limited authority. However, it is important to note that in this transient setting, an individual's high status at their home institution did not necessarily result in the same standing within the consortium. New roles and dynamics emerged, which in one instance, resulted in the social exclusion of a high-status male professor. While national stereotypes were not significant in the data, there were many instances they led to humour, and a few that led to humour that failed. The analyses have shown that deploying stereotypes served as a resource that produced othering but at the same time - in most cases - led to enjoyment and in-group solidarity "as long as the participants share[d] normative frameworks that allowed them to evaluate such behaviour positively" (Kraft & Mortensen, 2022, p. 121). This was not the case in example 6, where the partners had to employ several other strategies to solve the miscommunication.

There are good grounds in the data to suggest that status and gender both affected the negotiation of failed humour. It is reflected in how failed humour is managed: We could see that men are more likely to use failed humour more strategically as a means of expressing their authority, for instance to shift the discussions. Like Humour, as described by Holmes (2000) and Vine (2020), failed humour can be a means of managing unequal work relationships. Conversely, women, who in this community all held a lower position, typically responded to failed humour by using affiliative utterances, such as laughter, shifting the topic, or offering cautious explanations, thereby maintaining harmony. This is also the case for Emma, who in regard to the project roles, held a higher status than the other partners. Vine's (2020) research supports this observation: "both women and men, tend to draw on a repertoire of linguistic strategies stereotypically coded feminine and masculine" (Vine, 2020, p. 208) rather than speaking through their professional role. The findings of this study reflect and confirm what many other studies (Holmes, 2009; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Vine, 2020) have shown: affirmative or relationally oriented interactional styles are more commonly used by women. This pattern is evident in the examples presented in this study.

The analyses further illustrate that individuals with higher status receive more support from the other participants, even in case of failed humour, as seen in Example 1. The data shows that participants expressed appreciation or showed recognition of humour more when there is a disparity in status, particularly from lower to higher status, whereas when it came to humour between individuals of equal status, there was the option for them to not acknowledge or appreciate it. Data indicates that while participants carry their existing hierarchies into this new transient environment, community-specific statuses often emerge that differ from the original ones. This reshaped social dynamics, like in Example 4, where there was no repair possible.

The presented data shows how norm-following and norm-transcending creativity manifest within the transient transnational community. These two types of multilingual creativity, as described by Pitzl (2022), provide a framework for understanding the communicative strategies used by participants to navigate instances of failed humour. Participants primarily rely on norm-following creativity, using established linguistic and social norms to manage interactions and navigate instances of failed humour. This approach seems to align with the community's

expectations, as seen in Example 1 and 2. However, instances of norm-transcending creativity, such as those in Example 3 and 4, reveal the potential for innovation in transient settings. While norm-transcending creativity can lead to new interactional practices, it also requires a supportive environment where participants feel empowered to experiment and adapt. Overall we can observe that instances of failed humour in transient settings can prompt individuals to experiment with language, develop creative strategies to repair communication to enhance their communication.

By understanding how failed humour functions and is negotiated within such contexts, we can better support mutual understanding and effective collaboration in diverse professional settings. Humour competence, the ability to navigate and engage in humorous interactions, is crucial for teacher educators in transient communities. Developing this competence requires experience and adaptation, as individuals learn to manage cultural and linguistic differences. In contrast to Bodgan's (2014, p. 3) emphasis on Grice's principle, which asserts that unsuccessful humorous communication often results from violations of pragmatic principles - specifically Grice's cooperative principle, which demands that communication be truthful, relevant, unambiguous, and clear - the authors of this paper observed that instances of failed humour, particularly when caused by misunderstandings, can instead present opportunities for cooperation, mutual understanding, and even creative norm development within a transient, transnational community. Rather than simply viewing failed humour as a communication breakdown, these instances can act as catalysts for deeper engagement and intercultural learning, prompting participants to navigate cultural and linguistic differences more creatively and collaboratively.

## **5. Conclusion**

The authors of this paper argue that such communities offer a unique site for research into existing and emergent linguistic norms and interactional practices among teacher educators. While there are many studies looking into power relations through humour (Holmes, 2000; Söderlund, 2023), there is nothing on how failed humour impacts these dynamics. Additionally, the findings of this paper highlight the importance of exploring how gender influences such interactions, specifically looking at how failed humour is managed in a community with women holding a higher status. Although all online meetings were recorded as part of this investigation, they were only used for data triangulation. Thus, it is relevant to also study the dynamics of online meetings in regard to failed humour. Although many emphasise the importance of collaboration in networks for curriculum innovation or practice-oriented research, highlighting that such international networks offer valuable informal professional learning environments (Angouri, 2023; European Commission, 2013), little to no systematic research has been conducted on the actual interactive practices of teacher educators within such often transient settings. Using failed humour as an exemplary phenomenon, the longitudinal nature of the project provided insights of how transient transnational communities navigate interactional practices. This long-term perspective was crucial for understanding the processes of norm emergence and the role of multilingual creativity in fostering effective communication in diverse, transient settings. The data revealed that interactional practices, especially humour and the management of failed humour, are highly dependent on the specific constellation of the community. The absence of even a single individual can lead to entirely different interactional dynamics and outcomes. This variability shows why it's important to study failed humour, as it highlights the need for flexibility and adaptability in transient transnational settings. Despite the unpredictability, examining failed humour is valuable because it reveals how communities develop and negotiate norms. Understanding these processes helps foster stronger and more

cohesive interactions in multicultural and multilingual contexts, which is crucial for the success of international collaborations.

## Transcription conventions

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<b>In bold</b>	instances of failed humour
[]	overlapping talk
=	no detectable pause between utterances
()	unintelligible utterances
(.)	micro pause, shorter than 2 seconds
(0.4)	marking pauses by their length in seconds
words	word with increased emphasis
WORD	word with an audibly louder voice quality
:	word lengthening
::	about 0.5-0.8 sec, about 0.8-1.0 sec, about 0.2-0.5 sec
:::	
((laughs))	laughter without speech
<<laughing> word>	laughter particles accompanying speech
<<sighing> word>	audible sighing accompanying speech
↑ ↓ ↑↑ ↓↓	pitch: small up, small down, large up, smaller down
? , - ; .	final pitch movements of intonation phrases: high rising, rising, level, falling , low falling
°h, °hh, °hhh	short, long, longer inbreaths
h°, hh°, hhh°	short, long, longer outbreath
<i>text</i>	comments made by the researcher

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