

# „Not really worried“–Students’ interactional management of controversial topics on climate challenges

## Keywords

CA-SLA, Virtual Exchange, Education for Sustainable Development, Critical Thinking

## Biographical Note

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## Abstract (500 words)

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In recent years, the number of Virtual Exchange (VE) and other technology-mediated initiatives has seen a stunning increase. Even though some studies have shown the potential impact VE can have on the development of intercultural skills (O’Dowd 2021) or on global learning (Krengel 2022), very few have analysed how conversations on issues and challenges related to climate change are interactionally managed and how identities (like being a climate activist) are negotiated.

This study has the intention to address this gap. Drawing from a VE project within the ENLIGHT network ([enlight-eu.org](http://enlight-eu.org)) with Spanish as lingua franca, we recorded students from seven different universities talking about current and controversial (Ludwig and Summer 2023) topics. The conversations took place between October and November 2021 and the topics were related to digitalisation, health and equity. The methods used for the analysis of the data are Multimodal Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorisation Analysis. The main results show how young people negotiate their social and also national identities while speaking about the different challenges facing European societies and how they define themselves and describe others. The data shows also how the groups manage the interaction when they talk about controversial topics that might be less accepted and which resources, they use to distance themselves from opinions they do not share. The analysis of the conversations shows also how they speak about topics that concern them (or not) and how the interaction develops when they try to find a common or individual solution to the challenges.

The results show that if the goal is to raise students' awareness of climate challenges, maybe it is not enough to make them "talk" about the problems, but they need to be involved in hands-on solutions.

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