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Editorial

People travel; people travel abroad for education. And they do this for all sorts of reasons and at all sorts of levels: to learn another culture, to learn another language, to increase their cultural capital, to increase their job prospects, as well as simply to have a good time. They might pursue short courses, primary or secondary schooling, undergraduate or postgraduate degrees. Following on with our series of ‘themed’ open issues for 2019, in this fourth collection I have been able to pull together a number of papers which feature language learners who have who have either travelled abroad to study, or who have just returned from studying abroad. Dippold, Bridges, Eccles and Mullen explore the accounts of young people who have travelled from other countries around the world to study their undergraduate degrees in the UK; Yu Kyoung Shin and Eun Sung Park consider four students at different stages of their educational careers who have left the social and economic constraints of North Korea to pursue their education in the South, and in some cases gone on to the USA. Mohammad Naseh Nasrollahi Shahri explores the stories of one language learner who has returned to study in an Iranian university after periods of time spent abroad studying English; and finally, Curtis, Robertson and Mahony report on a small group of Australian teachers who travel to Lombok to learn something of the Indonesian language and culture.

Universities worldwide are keenly aware of the value – intellectual, cultural, and monetary – of attracting international students to their institutions: not only to enhance the diversity of their own student body, but also to boost their income. Increasingly this movement is not just from East to West, but also – with the continuing rise in investment in national education systems in Asia and their relative inexpensiveness compared with some of the well-established ‘destination universities’ in Europe and North America - from West to East. However, as of yet this reversal has perhaps been rather slower from the Global North to the Global South. Yet over the past few years increasingly critical voices have emerged from these pages in relation to the internationalisation of higher education. For this has more often than not gone hand in hand with the increased marketisation of courses, which reflects the commodification of education within the ethos of our current neoliberal phase of capitalism. Previously Castro, Woodin, Lundgren and Byram (2016) have reported on the way in which student mobility is constituted with the discourses of internationalisation, and Collins (2018) criticised the appropriation of the term ‘intercultural’ by the dominant discourses of the neoliberal university system; various manifestations of ‘Neoliberalism in Higher Education’ from around the world were also presented in Gray, O’Regan and Wallace’s recent eponymous special issue (2018). These papers for the most part addressed internationalisation from the

standpoint of policy critique. The actual intercultural *experience* of voices of those at the sharp end of internationalisation – staff and students - have perhaps been reported less regularly in these pages, although Ladegaard and Ho (2014) have investigated the ways in which overseas exchange students constructed each ‘other’ in international classes in a Hong Kong University.

As a corrective to this trend, the first paper in this issue lets us hear the students’ angle on internationalisation. Dippold, Bridges, Eccles and Mullen investigate the extent to which aspects of university mission statements are actually reflected in students’ lived experience in the seminar and lecture hall. In order to accomplish this, they draw on the metaphors of ‘block’ and ‘thread’ (after Holliday, 2016; Amasadi and Holliday, 2017, 2018) to analyse the narrative accounts of first year international undergraduates as they describe their experience of studying across a range of different disciplines in four UK universities. Despite the widespread critique of policy, Dippold and colleagues conclude there is scope for optimism, in as much as many examples appear not least to oscillate between ‘block’ narratives that ‘reinforce the notion of uncrossable cultural boundaries’, and ‘thread’ narratives that ‘enable the sharing of cultural experience, the crossing of cultural boundaries and the potential for engaging creatively and critically with new cultural domains’ (Holliday, 2016, p. 316); and indeed some appear to be moving towards more flourishing ‘threads’. Nevertheless, their paper concludes that the categorisation of students for the purposes of administrative and student support does contribute towards the maintenance of essentialist categories of ethnicity and culture, and fails to contribute towards the very practices of ‘integration’ which UK universities publicly purport to espouse. The authors conclude constructively by suggesting a range of mechanisms which university administrators could take to help break down the barriers between essentialising student categories, not least by being focusing on stronger disciplinary identity irrespective of the origins of the students and by building ‘on the cultural diversity of their own students and staff’. Not least, every colleague within the international seminar group is a potential ‘resource’ who has the capability to bringing a fresh perspective to any discipline within the ‘small culture’ of the university seminar (Holliday, 1990).

However, the reasons why a student might travel abroad to pursue their education are manifold and complex. On the Korean Peninsula, an increasing number of school and university students living in the Democratic Republic of Korea (hereafter ‘North Korea’) travel south to leave the social, economic and political constraints which, arguably, exist north of the Demarcation Line and emigrate – or ‘defect’ – to the Republic of Korea (hereafter ‘South Korea’); and in some cases they even move on to other countries, such as the USA, which

appear to be of an even more liberal-democratic hue. In South Korea, they encounter the intensive drive towards learning English which is being promoted by the upwardly mobile middle classes, often referred to ‘English fever’. Drawing on Jan Blommaert’s (2005, 2007; Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck, 2005) theorization of the relationship between social space, culture and language practices, Shin and Park’s small-scale exploratory study considers some of the reorientation, or ‘(re-)scaling’, of linguistic practices which takes place when four English language learners at different stages in their educational trajectories who have emigrated from North Korea to South Korea are faced with the challenge of reorienting themselves from Kim Il Sung’s radical, Marxist-Leninist ‘Juche’ ideology, through whose prism the English language is viewed as a source of decadence and bourgeois depravity, to a social space, ideology, or ‘culture’ which views the English language as the route towards increased cosmopolitanism and the economic self-advancement. What is notable about Shin and Park’s findings is the marked difference in orientation that they find across this small cohort. While two of the participants seemed to hang on to some vestiges of their language education in the North; the other two appeared to move much more assuredly to adopt the English accentuation prevalent in South Korea, even when they moved to the USA. While the size of this study means it is only exploratory, engaging with these language learners as individuals suggests that North Korean émigrés are far from being a homogenous group, as suggested by previous studies. Taken individually, these students can reveal radically different spatial and cultural (re)orientations, as well as diverse approaches to the learning of foreign language(s), not least English. We look forward to the authors reporting on a larger cohort of these intriguing sojourners in due course of time.

Many of those who travel abroad for their education also return home – often with their language proficiency enhanced, and with radically different views of the world. In our third paper, Mohammad Naseh Nasrollahi Shahri digs deep into the ‘small stories’ told by one particular ‘mobile’ English language learner studying in an Iranian university. Selecting Arash’s account from a larger cohort, Shahri draws on a combination of narrative considerations (after e.g., Amadasi and Holliday, 2017, 2018; Bamberg, 1997, 2004), through which the story-teller is able to construct their own sense of themselves and their sense of agency, as well as imbue a sense of situatedness in relation both to their social space and to their interactions with other people in it. Within this process, other dominant discourses also play a role (Holliday, 2013). One such discourse which still impacts upon the learning of English is the discourse of the ‘native speaker’, despite our best attempts to dispel it (Byram

1997; Kramersch 1997). With all of this in mind, Shahri examines how, after various visits abroad to study English, one student studying in an Iranian university made sense of his intercultural experiences in terms of: his positioning in relation to himself; his positioning in relation to other dominant discourses, such as that of native-speakerism; and his positioning vis-à-vis other speakers – not only those similar English-as-a-second-language speakers, as in other studies but also ‘native speakers’. Shahri’s research aims to bolster language learning pedagogy inasmuch as it illustrates how the telling of stories featuring intercultural contact between language learners may help liberate them from some of the more oppressive, hegemonic narratives which they inevitably rub up against.

Part of Australia’s education policy is a recognition of the need for citizens to become more literate about other countries, cultures and languages – particularly those in Asia. This includes the development of ‘intercultural capability’ as part of Australia’s ‘Asia literacy’ programme. Our concluding paper in this themed open issue reports on a small group of language learners who travelled away from home in order to experience another culture and learn another language. And it is refreshing that this is a language which this has so far not been reported in these pages: Indonesian. Curtis, Robertson and Mahony report on the ‘Indonesian for Teachers Initiative’ (InTI), which was carried out between 2014 and 2015 in order to address the scarcity of Indonesian language education in the ‘Sunshine Coast’ – an area in Queensland, on the East Coast of Australia - by enabling a small cohort of Australian teachers to study the Indonesian language and culture. This included a short but intensive trip to Lombok, an Indonesian island getting on for 3,000 miles west of the Sunshine Coast. The authors describe not only how the curriculum of the programme was designed around the principles of a community of practice (after Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger, 1998), but also how they draw on this both as a theoretical framework in their analysis of the teachers’ pedagogical experience, and as an evaluative measure of its success. In this, the authors deploy a mixture of questionnaires and focus group discussions to consider what elements of the programme facilitated the development of the teachers’ Indonesian language proficiency and intercultural capabilities, and how these helped the participants develop in their professional roles as teachers. The authors conclude that, while the Indonesian for Teachers Initiative certainly enabled the teachers to develop their proficiency in the Indonesian language, it also offered much more, in providing ‘space for its participants to broaden their world views and develop as intercultural individuals in their personal and professional lives’.

Our first book review, by Yi'an Wang, keys in nicely with this month's theme of travelling education: Nigel Harwood and Bojana Petrić's collection of case studies exploring the experiences of international Masters students and their supervisors at UK universities. Then Inci Ozum Sayrak reviews Giuliana Ferri's engagement with a radical approach to intercultural communication drawing on Levinasian ethics. As ever, we thank our book reviewers for keeping us up to speed with recent publications in the field. While the call for papers has now closed for IALIC's annual meeting in Valencia (20-22 November, 2019), you can still register or view the programme, when it comes out at <http://ialic2019.uv.es/>.

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