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## **Editorial**

For some time, empirical evidence in sociolinguistics and applied linguistics has demonstrated that the two concepts which are central to our field of study, ‘language’ and ‘culture’, have become increasingly tendentious. Few of those who contribute to this journal or participate in our association conferences would subscribe to the notion that either language or culture are intractably fixed or bounded entities, and critiques of a homology between the idea of ‘culture’ and the nation state are well known to our readers. For many, this has led to the increasingly widespread use of the term ‘interculturality’ to indicate a way of being which supersedes the idea of boundedness implied by combining the prefix ‘inter’ with the adjectival form of ‘culture’. Yet the phrase ‘intercultural communication’ remains hard to avoid when one is actually talking about language, communication and some, albeit permeable, affiliation of social relations, beliefs and practices, which we can now only loosely refer to as ‘culture’. As we shall see later in this issue, the assuredness with which we use the terms ‘language’ and ‘culture’ has been further challenged by the recent thesis that as humans, we not only interact with each other by employing whatever modes of communication we have to hand, but are also inextricably engaged in an ongoing dialectical relationship with the very material substance of the world which we inhabit, and the universe which engulfs us (Barad, 2007).

Against this background, the nature of transcultural experience and intercultural learning in late modernity is impacting on our understanding of language, our understanding of the relationship between language and other semiotic systems, and indeed our understanding of ‘culture’ itself. Thus, the past decade has seen the continued expansion of the field of intercultural studies by its engagement with, or attempted incorporation by, emerging sub-fields within applied linguistics, such as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Translanguaging. The latter has recently benefitted from work carried out by research teams which have been supported by large scale research awards from the Arts and Humanities

Research Council (AHRC) in the UK, one of the voluminous outputs from which is reported in this issue. Within this, there has been a considerable tussle over claims for the homogeneity and/or heterogeneity of language and indeed the relationship between languages themselves. ELF, which began in the 1990s as a narrower investigation into the phonology of the varieties of English spoken by those for whom English is not their first language, has over the past decade increasingly laid claims to the mantle, first of all, to intercultural communication, and most recently also to part of the burgeoning 'trans-' movement in applied linguistics (Baker, 2015). In this, despite some claims to the contrary, the homogeneity and bounded nature of 'culture(s)' have been contested consistently and widely by progressive and critical interculturalists who I would characterise as the principal readers of this journal (see, e.g. Dasli and Diaz, 2017; Jackson, 2020, forthcoming).

This final themed open issue in this series issue of 2019 falls into two parts. The first group of papers consider the topic of transculturation and translanguaging from the perspective of intercultural communication; and the second addresses ways in which different types of interculturality can be developed within different educational contexts. We start with four papers which each adopt rather different conceptualisations of 'language' and 'culture' with which to explore the communication which takes place between people, and between groups of people. First, Trang Thi Thuy Nguyen conceives of the 'languaging' experiences of Vietnamese postgraduates studying in Taiwan through the prism of 'contact zone' (after Pratt, 1991). Secondly, Baker and Sangiamchit argue that the superdiversity of 'languages' and 'cultures' in social networking sites can be construed through the prism of 'English as a multilingual franca' (after Baker, 2015; Jenkins, 2015). Next, Zhu Hua, Li Wei and Daria Jankowicz-Pytel draw on a translanguaging perspective to consider the intercultural mediation which takes place in filling out forms in a migrant advice centre. Then Harvey, McCormick and Vanden explore the intercultural communication that takes place between international

students as an embodied experience in two drama workshops. The second group of papers address ways in which different types of interculturality have been developed within different educational contexts. First, Melina Porto sets out a framework to describe the quality of education which undergraduate students in Argentina and the UK experience while drawing on the combined resources of autobiography and audio-visual communication in a project on the 1982 Malvinas War. Then Collins and Armenta Delgado challenge some of our preconceptions about critical incidents and cultural essentialism in their analysis of the intercultural dialogue that takes place between two undergraduates working on an international email exchange project. We round off this volume with a welcome report from Jocelyn Howard and colleagues on the way in which teachers and their students grapple with the introduction of intercultural communication into language teaching in primary schools in New Zealand.

*Transculturation, translanguaging and the 'new materialism'*

Over the years, LAIC has reported extensively on the use of language by students in higher education around the world, within the context of the global drive towards university internationalisation. Unsurprisingly, the language in question is often English, which is used both outside the university seminar and lecture hall within the predominantly Anglophone countries that have been investigated. It is therefore refreshing that in our first paper Trang Thi Thuy Nguyen engages with a context where two different languages are used by students: English for their academic pursuits and Mandarin Chinese for socialisation. Both of these are foreign languages for the international students who participate in the study, having travelled from Vietnam to undertake postgraduate degree programmes in various universities around Taipei. Trang uses the well-established but productive notion of 'contact zone' (after Pratt, 1991) to conceptualise a social space where diverse languages 'co-exist, clash and grapple with each other'. Intriguingly, she also suggests it is possible for both monolingual speakers and bilingual speakers to combine and 'integrate their diverse language and cultural

experiences' (after Li, 2015) to develop an 'interlingual' means of communication for their intercultural interactions' (after Howell-Richardson & Ganobcsik-Williams, 2016). In this, the students involved appear to mobilise their language resources 'flexibly' in order to configure their social imaginary of what it meant to communicate with both local Taiwanese people and people from other countries.

The second paper in this issue draws on the framework of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Here, Baker and Sangiamchit argue that a 'transcultural' approach not only extends intercultural communication research, but also goes beyond what they contend is a 'somewhat narrow' characterisation of ELF by intercultural communication researchers. Digital communication and social networking (SNS) have been seen for some time as a paradigmatically superdiverse social space, where a plethora of languages, modes and 'cultures' not only co-exist, but also intermingle in elemental ways. In this, the authors tussle explicitly with the seemingly oxymoronic conceptualisation of how one discrete language, 'English' functions as a 'multilingual franca' (after Jenkins, 2015) within an avowedly 'trans-' perspective. This, they illustrate in their paper which draws on from a sample of SNS discourse. They combine techniques of ethnography and conversation analysis to track exchanges that took place between five Thai undergraduate students and their friends on Facebook over a number of months on selected topics which offer the communicative space and resources for translanguaging, transmodality and transculturation to take place. In what they concede remains an exploratory study, the authors argue from these examples for a confluence of 'cultures' within a paradigm of transculturation, wherein English remains 'predominant', presumably as a discrete language within a translanguaging paradigm. While readers might discern the latent tensions within this position, we feel that it is reasonable that, from time to time, both the synergies and the contradictions between ELF and intercultural

communication merit exploration in these pages (see also Holmes and Dervin, 2016), even though the two are not in our view entirely coterminous.

If an ELF perspective still posits the predominance of English within many multilingual acts of communication, then translanguaging approaches unreservedly grasp the potential of language and other communicative modes for intermingling and hybridity. Translanguaging, as a strand of applied linguistics research, has generated voluminous empirical evidence of the emergent, fluid and complex nature of multilingual, intercultural relations. Between 2014 and 2018, the AHRC-funded *Translation and Translanguaging* project (TLANG) investigated ‘linguistic and cultural transformations in superdiverse wards in four UK cities’. These four - Birmingham, Cardiff, Leeds, London - are places where over the centuries large influxes of migrants have made their homes in the UK, and continue to do so. As with many large cosmopolitan centres worldwide, these social conditions have given rise to a radical intermingling of languages and cultures. Our third paper in this issue, brought to us by Zhu Hua, Li Wei and Daria Jankowicz-Pytel examines the way in which the discourse of the legal system operates in the East European Advice Centre (EEAC) in Hammersmith, West London. As the title of the paper would suggest, it explores the way in which one case worker - herself an émigré ‘translanguager’, and seasoned negotiator of the legal system - attempts to mediate the arcane and labyrinthine codifications of UK law to her clients. In zooming in on this one participant within a larger case study, the researchers set out to capture the discrete ‘intercultural moments’ during which the UK legal system is discursively negotiated, and arguably ‘humanised’, through language and communication. However, their study also implicitly reveals the ethical commitment with which this single intercultural mediator approaches her disempowered clients to help them chart a path through the legal labyrinth in which they find themselves enmired, and find their feet in a foreign country.

The use of drama for intercultural communication has already been reported from time to time in these pages (e.g. Phipps and Kay, 2014); and Frimberger (2016) has previously reported on the use of a Brechtian theatre pedagogy for intercultural education with international students. Dramatic Enquiry (DE) is an initiative developed and pioneered by Lou Harvey, Brad McCormick and Katy Vanden working together respectively as an intercultural researcher, artistic director and producer within a small theatre company in the North of England. DE is a ‘participatory, reflective approach to education’ which aims not only to investigate ‘students’ perceptions and experiences of internationalisation and intercultural communication’, but also to enhance their intercultural learning and development. In so doing, Harvey extends her own previous work on the dialogic relations between self and other (e.g. 2016) by drawing on the work of new materialist philosophers (e.g. Barad, 2014) in order to challenge the central role of language in communication, rather than positioning it as just one element in an ‘assemblage’ of bodies, objects and other forms of sign which all play a role in the synthesis of communication. From this perspective, Harvey and her colleagues address how language functions as just one among many material elements which are entailed in ‘one’s learning to be in the world’ through exploring the engagement of international students in two drama workshops, where they performed a series of participant reflections, poems and body sculptures.

### *Intercultural communication and interculturality in different contexts*

In the second half of this issue, our focus switches to the theme of intercultural communication and interculturality in different educational contexts. First, Melina Porto proposes a homology between Martha Nussbaum’s (2006) proposals for ‘quality education’ and Michael Byram’s (2008) conceptualisation of intercultural citizenship. She bases her thesis on empirical evidence gleaned from a project designed to explore Argentinian and British undergraduates’

exploration of the Malvinas War, a controversial conflict fought in 1982 between Argentina (under the military *junta* led by General Leopoldo Galtieri), and the United Kingdom (under the Conservative administration led by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher). In the project, the students encounter each other through the use of audio-visual media (after the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters through Visual Media) and engage reflectively with themselves through writing their own autobiographies of their intercultural experience (after the Council of Europe's Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters). Porto's interpretation of student data from the project suggests that the three capacities that Nussbaum sets out for quality education are similarly realised through the range of competences which are set out within the framework of intercultural citizenship. *Critical thinking* relates to students' competence in analysing and reflecting on their thoughts and actions in relation to another's perspective. *Imaginative understanding* relates to students' competence in fulfilling the role of an intercultural speaker or mediator. And Nussbaum's capacity of *world citizenship* can be compared with students' competence in engaging in civic or social action as part of their language learning experience. Porto's analysis of rich qualitative data suggests that such an intercultural project does indeed enable students to develop the competences required to demonstrate a form of intercultural citizenship which is broadly aligned with Nussbaum's conceptualisation of the capacities of quality education.

If Porto, for perfectly good reasons, selects a controversial historical context for the interrogation of cultural difference by her Argentinian and UK students, our next study allows participants to find their own grounds for the exploration of cultural difference. Collins and Armenta Delgado also report on an intercultural exchange project which takes places between two groups of undergraduates, but this time by just using email. However, eschewing any *a priori* ascription of nationality to their participants, and by refusing to label their participants as 'home' or 'international', they rather let issues of nationality and identification emerge as

they are ‘made relevant’ in the email chat between the student dyads. For some time, along with many other members of our association, I have tended to view the idea of ‘cultural essentialism’ as being a monolithic concept; and mainstream notions of the ‘critical incident’ in intercultural communication as not only presupposing culturalist assumptions, but often also being constructed monologically. However, in this close interpretation of the ongoing dialogue about their intercultural experiences which takes place in two undergraduates’ email exchanges, Collins and Armenta Delgado demonstrate not only that talk of critical incidents can appear to arise dialogically in their participants’ rationalisations of their experience, but also that discourse which might be more crudely ascribed to cultural essentialism in fact can give rise to a more nuanced progression on the part of their students towards a position of critical cosmopolitanism.

Over the past ten years, these pages have featured extensive reports of the implementation of approaches to intercultural learning in higher education and advanced language learning; however studies which are carried out into intercultural pedagogy amongst younger learners have been considerably thinner on the ground. For some time now, the Ministry of Education has included the dimension of intercultural capability alongside language proficiency within the language curriculum in New Zealand schools. However, this can present challenges for generalist teachers who work in primary and intermediate schools and quite reasonably might not have an extensive background in language and intercultural communication. Howard, Tolosa, Biebricher and East conclude this issue with a particularly welcome study conducted in primary and intermediate classrooms in schools in New Zealand, where generalist teachers have just started to address interculturality in their teaching of an additional language. In particular, the researchers set out not only to talk to classroom teachers, but also to engage with focus groups of pupils, in order to report on and affirm the voices of younger language learners. While some younger learners did report a greater inclination and

increased openness to ‘engage with cultural others’, other younger learners still displayed ‘stereotypical notions and negative reactions to cultural differences’ in line with current thinking about the psychology and neurobiological development of the early adolescents in question. Clearly there is a need for wider research into this area of pedagogy, not just to inform and extend social psychological theory and intercultural research, but also to help other teachers to plan their own intercultural programmes for younger learners.

### *Reviews and appreciation*

We thank Tara Mc Guinness and Cheng Chen & Le Cheng for sharing with us their views on their reading this issue; and indeed we thank all our book reviewers who have contributed through 2019 to this volume. We are always on the look-out for readers and association members to write reports of a book they have read, or would like to read. If you want to write a book review, just get in touch with our new Reviews and Criticism Editor, Vivien Zhou: [v.zhou@napier.ac.uk](mailto:v.zhou@napier.ac.uk).

At the conclusion of this volume, I would like again like to thank: Lucy Sheach, who saw us through most of the year as outgoing Managing Editor; Matt Atkins for overseeing production systems; and Mrudula Ganesh for carrying out the hands-on-work of getting our issues to press through to the end of the volume. Over the year, our editorial assistant Jean-Claude Larracas has unfailingly shepherded papers to reviewers, and the reviews back to the Editor’s desk. We also extend our gratitude to all our peer reviewers who vetted the papers for this volume. Their unpaid and necessarily unacknowledged work is indispensable for the success of any journal. And we look forward to working with Kate Morse, who has just taken over as Managing Editor, through 2020 and hopefully for many years to come. In our next volume, we will be bringing you rather more commissioned special issues, starting with our long anticipated special issue from the 2018 IALIC conference in Helsinki, which addresses the theme of *The ‘good’ interculturalist yesterday, today and tomorrow*. We are always open

to your proposals for a special issue. If you do want to submit a proposal, you can find the guidelines and specifications on the journal website at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rmli20/current>.

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