Issues, Controversies and Difficult Questions: Languages and intercultural communication, twenty years on

It has been just over twenty years since the inaugural conference of the *International Association of Languages and Intercultural Communication* (IALIC) was held in Leeds in November 2000. The following March, the first carefully crafted, glossy issue of *Language and Intercultural Communication* (LAIC 1.1) with its distinctive, turquoise spiral logo landed in the mailboxes of association members. In this commemorative issue of LAIC, we therefore present a collection of papers which both celebrates the anniversary of the two decades that have passed since IALIC was constituted, and the publication of the first issue of LAIC in March 2001.

By the time preliminary drafts of five of the papers in the current collection were presented at IALIC's twentieth anniversary meeting, held online in November 2020, we had reached the fourth great crisis which had impacted upon the thought and practice of contributors and readers of this journal over the intervening two decades. No sooner had the second issue of LAIC been collated in September 2001 than two Boeing 767s slammed into those potent symbols of global capitalism, the Twin Towers. These collisions would echo through IALIC's first decade, being a precursor to the invasion of Iraq, the bombings of the Madrid and London transport systems, the intractability of the Second Chechen War, and closing with civil disturbances in the Xinjian region of China. These historical events impacted upon the contemporary education policies, immigration policies and strategies of multiculturalism worldwide, the implications of which have been analysed, discussed and contested in our association meetings and in these pages. Next, the policies of austerity and financial contraction embarked upon by governments worldwide in the wake of the 2007-2008 economic crisis only served to exacerbate the hardship and displacement of large swathes of populations who were forced to leave their homelands either by financial necessity or by conflict. In our second decade, we then witnessed the displacement of 5.6 million Syrian nationals to neighbouring regions and Europe, and the consequent rise of nationalist sentiments across Europe, America, India, Russia and China. In March 2020, COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, and continues to boomerang around the world two years later. Far from constituting a unifying force for the populations of nation states in the face of a common enemy, the virus has once again fuelled the divisions between different nationalities, and led to manifestations of prejudice and discrimination between ethnic and racial groups within nation states. Some of the issues, controversies and difficult questions arising from these events were addressed at IALIC's 2020 meeting, and will doubtless be a recurrent refrain through

association meetings and subsequent issues of this journal into our third decade. In the two years it has taken for the presenters writers to polish their papers and for other writers to add their papers to this present collection, yet another crisis has complemented the global pandemic in the form of the 2022 invasion of Ukraine by the armies of the Russian Federation. This surely constitutes the nadir of intercultural communication in Europe in the 21st century. So if we ever hoped in 2000 that intercultural communication would be able to radically transform the world then, so far, we have clearly been wrong. However, it is equally apparent that the theory and praxis of an ethically informed and potentially transformative form of interculturality is required at the present time with a greater urgency than ever.

This collection is, however, more than just a commemorative issue. It also presents challenges, some of them radical and far-reaching, to the very foundations of our shared endeavour. It thus marks a representation and a constitution of the ideas of IALIC members and LAIC readers as they advance in tandem through the third decade of the 21st century. In keeping with the long-established tradition of IALIC, it brings together ten significant papers written by both prominent and lesser known scholars. Colleagues often struggled to write these papers to tight deadlines through the spring and summer of 2021, some of them continuing valiantly despite their continued exposure to COVID-19 in pursuit of their academic duties. The papers are in part a record of the association's twentieth anniversary conference held in November 2020, and in part a response to a call put out to members of the association for a special commemorative issue of this journal. In keeping with the ethos which has prevailed in IALIC since early days, the call, which was headed baldly *Issues, Controversies and Difficult Questions*, reflected no predetermined agenda and was not intended to elicit a comprehensive review of key topics in the field, a task already ably addressed by other colleagues (e.g. Busch, 2023; Jackson, 2020). The call was intended as much as to take look to the future as it was to be a celebration of the past, exploring new applications of theories, perspectives and approaches in order to fuel the association into its third decade. If the association first emerged from a position which explicitly challenged and attempted to dispel the cultural essentialism and neo-racism of some of the dominant ideas and practices prevailing in intercultural communication towards the end of the twentieth century, the direction of travel that has emerged from association meetings and their subsequent publications is to pursue the organic generation of ideas which have characterised IALIC thus far, not least to generate an *ethos* (rather than a manifesto) which speaks to social justice, democratic citizenship, intercultural responsibility, critical pedagogy and creative arts, and has advocated (and in certain cases acted on behalf of) the rights of the migrant and the dispossessed. While some voices have accused

this ethos as being a reflection of the 'western' hegemonic order, most recently its values have veered towards the conceptualisation of 'decolonisation', advocated by scholars such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014, 2018) and explored in relation to our field by some long-standing IALIC members (e.g. Guilherme & de Souza, 2019; Phipps, 2019).

Knowledge, culture and community

From its inception, I have always believed that IALIC was conceived to challenge the more 'solid' views of culture and intercultural communication informed by ideas of methodological nationalism, principally derived from socio-cognitive theory (e.g. Hofstede, 1980) or cognitively inclined anthropology (e.g. Hall, 1959); and that its function as an academic association remains to create and maintain powerful bonds between its members through the practice of interhuman friendship, collegiality and the hospitality which is offered to participants at its annual meetings, and contributors to this journal. However, over the twenty-plus years now since the seeds for the association were initially sown, these solid views of culture have perpetuated in their justification of the interests of increasingly virulent manifestations of neoliberalism - in the 'workplace', in post-colonial international relations and in academia (Gray, O'Regan & Wallace, 2018; Holliday and MacDonald, 2020).

However, if the discourse of the premonitory conferences in 'cross-cultural capability' held in Leeds (UK) between 1997 and 1999 were distinguished by their opposition to something, we are now long past the time when there can be any doubt that the modality of intercultural communication established by IALIC, and relayed to an ever-expanding worldwide readership through these pages has become firmly established in its own right. This modality was initially distinguished by its emphasis upon a critical approach to theory, often influenced – if sometimes implicitly – by neo-Marxist and post-structuralist thought, and its advocacy of interpretive approaches to data (e.g. Holliday, 2016). For the most part it eschewed the large scale surveys and the number-crunching quantitative analysis which had been the stock-in-trade of first generation intercultural communication researchers, in favour of smaller scale studies and close textual analyses, which are more sensitive to context and localised meanings.

Over the intervening two decades this trajectory can therefore be regarded as something of an accomplishment for IALIC and LAIC alike. If the former is marked by the increasingly international scope of its annual meetings, the latter is signified by the concomitant indicators of 'esteem' such as its 'impact factor' and the number of 'downloads' of its papers. These in

turn accord our members and contributors a certain authority, legitimacy and heft within the social sciences – not least with European funding agencies at a national and continental level. Along with the burgeoning numbers of pedagogic textbooks, readers, handbooks (e.g. Busch 2023; Jackson 2020) and encyclopaedias (e.g. Kim, 2018) which are published to give overviews of the field, intercultural communication has by now accumulated many of the indicators of being a discipline in its own right. While many of the delegates at our prototype conferences in cross-cultural capability held at the end of the 1990s were language teachers and researchers, over these two past decades the emergent field has transcended the disciplinary boundaries of language education. Indeed, intercultural communication has developed into a hybrid field of study that draws on almost the entire gamut of disciplines within the social and human sciences. These include 'modern languages', religious studies, sociology, anthropology, politics, psychology, applied linguistics, literature, cultural studies, education, business studies, media studies, drama and the visual arts. Thus in 2000 the very founding of IALIC, with its annual conferences and accompanying journal, has itself been instrumental in propelling intercultural communication towards consolidating its authority as a discipline in its own right within the academic sphere.

In this, the individual papers, and conference themes and commissioned special issues presented under the aegis of IALIC and LAIC have remained progressive and even radical in their content. In particular, the special issues which have been presented in LAIC 20 & 21 have continued to reflect the boundary breaking ambition of early delegates to the early conferences, focusing on the relationship between language, intercultural communication and *social action* (Ladegaard and Phipps, 2020); and the implications for intercultural communication of the highly contemporary philosophical approach of *post-humanism* (Ros i Solé, Fenoulhet and Qist, 2020). LAIC has also maintained its celebration of the intercultural potential of the *creative arts* in all its manifestations – literature, music and the visual arts – as core to intercultural learning and experience (c.f. Matos and Meilo-Pfeiffer, 2020; Harvey, Todzro and Bradley, 2022).

However, the very idea of intercultural communication itself has been going in and out of style over the past two decades, being in its turn necessarily subjected to problematisation and contestation. At the turn of the century, the idea of communication which was '*inter*-cultural' appeared to be a radical enough alternative for the more bounded *cross*-cultural which implied cultural groupings which were solid and not porous. However, with a certain inevitability, the last ten years have seen terms emerge which quite reasonably challenge the core conceptualisation of our field. The notion of *interculturality*, while having lingered for

some time *soto voce* as a footnote in the margins of language education (see e.g. Kramsch, 1993, p. 13), has become popularised as being able to more precisely capture the phenomenology of the intercultural experience (after Dervin, 2016). In keeping with the '*trans'*-turn in language research and education, the notion of *transculturation* has also been proposed by Baker (2015, and in this issue) as a way of transcending the bounded entities which are arguably still implied by the term *intercultural.* And of course there are also terms which, despite their relatively lengthy progeny are presenting fresh challenges to our field. Perhaps the most recent of these is the notion of *interculturalidad*, which with its historical and semantic connotations in Spanish arguably captures more forcibly the transformative, and even revolutionary, potential of critical conceptualisations of interculturality (Aman, 2019). Nevertheless, simultaneous to its breadth of provenance, the idea of intercultural communication that once seemed so thrilling seems at times to have become distinctly 'establishment'.

It is in this spirit of self-reflection and critique, that we open our anniversary collection with a paper by Flavia Monceri which challenges the very consolidation of intercultural communication as a 'discipline', and its incorporation with all the machina and concomitant truth claims with which it professes to being a 'modern science'. Monceri considers how the condition of disciplinarity was formed over the eighteenth and nineteenth century and came to be the principal system of differentiation between the fields of study which characterize the idea of 'modernity' as a 'Western' construct. In this, Western modern science happily maintained its central paradox: at once not shying away from embracing its origins in specifically European traditions of intellectual reason, while simultaneously claiming to be the source of universal truths about human behaviour, which is the object of our study. Thus we cannot fail but to acknowledge that the annual meetings of our association are one of the mechanisms whereby noviciate researchers become acculturated to the panoply of methods and ways of thinking of our discipline, and through membership of our association come to achieve their identities as 'intercultural researchers'. Intriguingly, the long-forgotten reviews which Monceri then disinters from different historical moments in the field identify a few years around the late 1970s/early 1980s when some researchers came to identify the idea of culture with that of the nation state; and a little later, researchers who doubtless subscribed to a more Marxian view of the world started to 'engage issues of power, context and ideology' within the field (Halualani, Mendoza, Drzewiecka, 2009). Monceri concludes with the observation that however much we tussle with the rights and wrongs of the ideology of intercultural communication and however long we promote the cause of interdisciplinarity, as long as

researchers who have been schooled in other systems of thought are excluded from the debate, the discipline of intercultural communication will continually fail to live up to its name. However her article ends more optimistically by noting that a shift towards a more 'intercultural attitude' remains possible even for those researchers brought up and schooled in Western academia. Not least, she reminds us that we should restrain ourselves from all-embracing definitions of culture, but rather focus on the ways in which interculturally salient interactions take place in specific communicative situations.

Just such bounded and crisply delineated conceptualizations of culture are also problematized by Will Baker in the second paper in our collection. He draws on theories of transculturality, critical intercultural communication studies, and 'trans' theories in applied linguistics to suggest that the term 'intercultural communication' with which we dub the object of our field of study might better be superseded by the term 'transcultural communication'. In so doing, he partially responds to Monceri's challenge to focus upon the interactions that take place between participants in their multiplicity of contexts. Over the years, the particular focus of research carried out by Baker and his colleagues has been upon the range of semiotic resources – not only linguistic, but also multimodal - which are used in specific social contexts and how participants draw on different languages to create meanings which are irreducible either to one culture or to another. The analysis of multilingual interactions has been a particular *bête noir* in papers submitted to this journal, and over the last decade we have become increasingly reluctant to publish papers which derive cultural categorisations of participants from *a priori* theorisations of culture posited deductively upon the data. Instead, we have been more inclined to support research which, if it does argue for some form of cultural identification, does this inductively on the basis of emergent themes arising from the data. In this respect, Baker has built his argument over the years upon his and his colleagues' empirical analyses of interactions in specific multilingual contexts, some of which have been published in these pages (e.g. Baker and Sangiamchit, 2019). After a comprehensive review of the aetiology and variety of theories of transculturality, Baker goes on to even-handedly critique the ways in which critical interculturalists have conceived of culture, and these have largely characterised the thrust of LAIC since its inception. Crucially, he rejects the idea of hybridity, which has been imported from postcolonial theory in favour of the simultaneous presence of 'multiple spatial–temporal scales' within analyses of multilingual interactions. Baker concludes by proposing that *a priori* characterisation of the languages that are used in these interactions and the sets of meanings that are produced through them, be rejected. Rather, the '*trans* metaphor' should replace the '*inter* metaphor' to characterise the interactions that take

place between participants in multilingual contexts since, crucially, it is through the very 'processes of transgressing and transcending boundaries' that 'those very boundaries themselves are transformed'.

The considerations of the disciplinarity of intercultural communication and of the nature of 'culture' postulated by our field - whilst being critical and even transgressive thus far - have still trodden fairly recognisable paths, whose foundations have been laid down by the epistemological traditions of 'Western' philosophical reason. While we note Monceri's call, echoing the more strident voice of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014, 2018) for the inclusion of 'other forms of knowledge' for our field to be 'truly intercultural', we all too often are still only able to catch glimpses of such knowledges in our annual meetings and in these pages. However, Buddhist thinking and practice have been prominent out of the range of religious and therapeutic traditions originating in Asian countries, in the 'other forms of knowledge' to feature in the IALIC canon over the past twenty years. As the world's fourth-largest religion which has been around for 2,500 years and is practised by somewhere in the region of around 500 million people worldwide, Buddhism, can hardly be regarded as an 'excluded' or 'minority' form of thought and practice. Different forms of Buddhist practice have also provided sanctuary from the staider conventions of the Christian Church for successive generations of radical European thinkers seeking a less theistic form of religious belief and practice. A collection of studies into contemporary forms of cultural practice which have been transplanted from the East and practised in 'the West' was assembled in 2012 by a long-standing IALIC member, Shanta Nair-Venugopal, in her prescient collection entitled *The Gaze of the West and Framings of the East* (2012). Over the past ten years another prominent IALIC member, Zhou Min Huang, has shared a number of presentations and papers focusing specifically upon the ethics and practices of Chinese Buddhism (e.g. Huang, 2020; Huang, Fay and White, 2017). Nevertheless as our third author points out, the number of studies in our field which actually engage with Buddhist frameworks within intercultural studies still remain 'scarce and scattered'.

To round off our opening section on epistemology, Vivien Xiaowei Zhou offers a purview from beyond the western canon which builds on her own personal engagement with Buddhist practice in order to illuminate the intercultural position critical of essentialism by drawing on the Mahāyāna of Buddhist traditions. In so doing, it seems to me that she goes some considerable way to responding to Santos's call for 'intercultural translation' to be carried out within our field (2018). To convey Buddhist concepts to our international readers, Zhou necessarily employs a 'blended vocabulary', which draws on terminology familiar to readers

with a background in Western social sciences. Her direction of travel in this paper builds on the observation that there have been lines of convergence between the Buddhist system of Enlightment and the lines of argument set out by postmodern thinkers which have been incorporated into intercultural studies (Holliday and MacDonald, 2020). She develops three main lines of argument which support this. First, similar to certain aspects of the postmodern paradigm in intercultural studies, she posits that in Buddhist thinking culture and cultural identity do not have a 'fundamental essence' but are rather volatile and contingent. Second, she recommends that, rather than dwell upon the direct and antagonistic opposition between 'essentialism' and 'anti-essentialism', intercultural studies should occupy a position of 'non-essentialism'. This would equate to the Mahāyāna position of 'positionlessness', referred to also as the 'Middle Way' in some Buddhist thinking. Third, many Buddhist thinkers consider that what is referred to as the *satya* of suffering is an emotionally grounded way of discovering reality. From this, Zhou concludes that, like Buddhism, intercultural studies should take the affective dimension of experience more into account; this could arguably be achieved through techniques which resemble those of reflective practice in intercultural education.

Crisis, theory and social justice

One of the practical ways in which members of our academic community are able to fulfil their common purpose is through meeting with like-minded colleagues, with the aim of convening some form of intra-national or inter-national grouping with which to apply for funding for a research project in intercultural communication. Over the past twenty years, successful applications for funded projects led by and participated in by prominent IALIC members have opened up avenues whereby the collective knowledge and theory developed by colleagues in their individual university departments, then shared at annual association meetings, and often published in LAIC, have been brought to bear upon both pedagogical contexts and everyday life. While the situated insights and local interventions that such projects can bring are considerable, these are also a way in which IALIC has been able to influence national and international policy on matters such as education and migration policy. As things have stood thus far, research funding for applications has been typically granted to members' university departments. But IALIC has helped in the past by providing a forum whereby members within with ideas for projects can recognise each other, build enduring relationships and create networks for international applications by consortia. Prominent projects led by IALIC members have included: *Intercultural Competence for Professional Mobility* (ICOPROMO),

coordinated by Evelyn Glaser and Manuela Guilherme (2003-2005); *Researching Multilingually*, co-ordinated by Prue Holmes (2011); *Intercultural Education Resources for Erasmus Students and Their Teachers* (IEREST), co-ordinated by Ana Beaven and Claudia Borghetti (2012-2015; see 2016); *Researching Multilingually at the Borders of the Body, Language, Law and the State*, co-ordinated by Alison Phipps (2014-2017); and most recently *Resources for Interculturality in Chinese Higher Education* (RICH-Ed), co-ordinated by Jan van Maele (2017-2021; see van Maele & Jin, 2022). Since 2018, a annual Research Forum has been co-ordinated by Claudia Borghetti as a staple in the IALIC programme 'to create a dedicated space where conference participants can exchange ideas on their current research interests and explore possibilities for future collaborations' (http://ialic.international/forums-at-ialic-conferences/). Most recently, the association committee took the decision to incorporate IALIC into a limited company. This will enable groups of members to be potentially eligible to hold research funding under the aegis of the association itself, and for IALIC to pursue opportunities for research collaborations with other organisations.

Our contributors in the next section of the special issue address four fulcra for intercultural theory and practice which have emerged from the global crises of the past decade: the social and cultural ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic (Zhu Hua, Jones & Jaworska); the continuing 'migration crisis' which confronts citizens fleeing the war in Syria to seek refuge in Europe (Polymenakou & Fay); the intractability of internecine conflicts in other theatres around the world, with special reference to Columbia (Holmes & Dix); and the widening 'digital divide' which has been opening up between those with and without access to technological resources, and between different social and cultural groups who exchange conflicting views with decreasing inclination to listen to each other, and with increasing levels of vitriol (Dooly & Darvin). The four papers which I have grouped together in the second section of our anniversary issue therefore investigate aspects of the most pressing and controversial crises of the times in which we live, while simultaneously supporting their research participants in working through the stressful and even life-threatening situations in which they live. Each of these writers has taken the opportunity of this anniversary issue to expand on some of the ideas that have informed their respective projects; and which they have been able to develop in order to understand how a just form of interculturality can better emerge from these international contexts of privation, dislocation and discord.

By November 2020 when members online for the of the association's twentieth anniversary meeting, the COVID-19 pandemic had already spread around most of the world, and still afflicts us at the time of writing. This has presented as much of a crisis for intercultural

communication in different international contexts as it has for medicine, politics and economics. Not only did it quickly become apparent that most countries in Asia implemented very different polices to contain the virus than did most countries in Europe and the 'Anglosphere', but also that the attitudes and social practices of individuals who travelled from one region and sojourned in another could differ in certain very visible ways from those of their hosts, leading on occasion to hostility and even aggression. Nowhere was this more apparent than with students in universities with international recruitment. For example early on in the pandemic, in the UK the tendency of long-term residents from certain ethnic groups and international students from Asian countries to wear face masks in public, despite their being eschewed by the local populace, became something of a *cause celebre* in the British tabloid press and other international media outlets. In the first of our papers which develop some compelling aspects of intercultural theory within the context of these contemporary crises, a multi-perspectival team - Zhu Hua, Rodney Jones, and Sylvia Jaworska – expand on the application of Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of 'distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984), and 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) to their understanding of the intercultural differences which emerged between Chinese students and their British counterparts during the early months of the COVID-19 outbreak in UK universities. The authors follow on from the previous section by reviewing the epistemological shifts which have taken place over the past five decades regarding 'cultural differences', taking into account the concepts of 'interculturality' and 'transculturality' discussed earlier. Then they draw on Bourdieu's thinking to explore how the wearing of a face mask in a critical context came to be a powerfully symbolic act which could be amenable to 'misrecognition' through a range of discursively constructed appeals to different forms of legitimisation. Inter alia, the authors usefully conclude that Bourdieu's notion of 'distinction' can help us to understand that 'cultural differences' do not arise so much from the inherent attributes of social actors, but rather are constituted through a panoply of 'acts of distinction' which are manifested across a range of different social situations and realised through the language and discourse of institutions and everyday life.

The mass exodus of millions of citizens from Syria and its neighbouring countries that has taken place since 2011 is the second major crisis with which our contributors have engaged for this anniversary issue. Not least, the nature of the 'identity' of those civilians and their families, once they have left their homeland and have settled for an often indeterminate period of time in another country is a pressing issue, not least for those displaced by the crisis, but also for those educators and policy makers who are trying to support them as best they can. One country at the forefront of this mass moment of peoples has been Greece, with its coastline

and islands running along the Northern shores of the Mediterranean. Our next paper, by Eva Polymenakou and Richard Fay, builds on the words of two educators from Πυξίδα (Pyxida), the Intercultural Centre of the NGO Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) in Athens, to challenge conventional notions of migrant identity. All too often in the intercultural literature, in intercultural pedagogy and in political policy, the relationship between these newcomers and the societies into which they are unexpectedly cast is seen as a relationship which is established between compliant 'refugees' and the static, homogeneous culture to whose norms they must comply. At its most oppressive, this approach to migrant identity has been termed 'assimilation', a term which in my view has only been replaced by the more congenial-seeming term 'integration'. Further amelioration, then, takes place by regarding the relationship between the migrant and his/her new society as a process of 'inclusion'. However this still places the onus upon the newcomer to adhere to the norms of the country in which s/he resides. In their paper, Polymenakou and Fay argue that the development of the relationship between a migrant and his/her society should be much more of a two-way street: where members of the receiving country take it upon themselves to engage with the language and culture of the newcomers themselves, as well as the other way round. At the core of this contribution, the authors draw on the voices of one of their participants who dubs this συνέντaξη [synentaxe], or 'co-inclusion', which they argue better captures the two-way dynamic which should take place between long-term inhabitants of the host country and the new arrivals compelled to dwell amongst them.

If most of the refugees and migrants who are sojourning in Greece have been forced to relocate due to some form of internecine conflict or violence, participants in IALIC meetings have over the years been exploring different forms of intercultural pedagogy which purport to at least ameliorate, if not resolve, conflict - principally by fostering mutual understanding and respect between the opposing parties. Perhaps most long-standing of these approaches has been critical pedagogy, the principles of which were first expounded by Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and kept aflame by Henry Giroux (e.g. 1983, 1988), not least writing in an early issue of LAIC (2003). The relationship between critical pedagogy and intercultural communication has been promulgated by Manuela Guilherme through many years of IALIC presentations and publications (e.g. 2002, 2006; Guilherme & Phipps, 2003; Corbett & Guilherme, 2021). If critical pedagogy offers a well-established axiological pillar for conflict resolution (after Guilherme, 2017), a rather more recent ontological pillar is suggested by the precepts of 'new materialism' (after Barad, 2007), which has gained considerable currency within IALIC over the last decade, not least though the presentations and publications of our

new Chair, Cristina Ros i Solé (e.g. Ros i Solé and Fenoulhet, 2006; Ros i Solé, Fenoulhet & Quist, 2020). By according greater agency to human actors as they engage with the material conditions of their environment - both situational and social – the principles of new materialism offer a foil to both the more deterministic precepts of the Marxist foundations of critical theory and the more relativistic precepts of postmodern thinking. In their anniversary paper, Holmes and Dix expand upon the ways in which new materialism and critical pedagogy mesh together to inform the case study implemented by the Dix in Bogotá under the aegis of the wider ranging research project *Building an Intercultural Pedagogy for Higher Education in Conditions of Conflict and Protracted Crises* (BIPHEC). Bogotá has for some time experienced long-standing internecine conflict fuelled by a drug cartels, social deprivation, restricted political participation, and the expropriation of land ownership rights. In their case study, the authors describe how the principles of critical pedagogy were augmented by the praxis of dramatic engagement as set out by Augusto Boal in his *Theatre of the oppressed* (1979) in implementing a project with pre-service English language teacher trainees. They used short drama games and plays to enact authentic situations that gave rise to reflection on the conditions underlying their lived experiences of conflict and inequality. One cornerstone of the Bogotá project was the positioning of the twenty participants as co-researchers and co-creators of the 'drama-capsules' with which they engaged (after Ladegaard & Phipps 2020; Smith, 2012; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This enabled them to adopt an activist role in relation to the cultural and social conditions which were re-imagined in the dramatic vignettes which they created together. The hope and promise of this collaborative enterprise must surely be that it will subsequently enable these young people to become mobilized in the transformation of the cultural, social and economic conditions of the broader, multicultural society in which they live.

If asymmetry in resource distribution in the material world has been one of the hallmarks of the recent mass displacements of populations and the global pandemic, the same can be said for the digital world. Within the field of education it has been well documented that one of the principal factors that divided those pupils and students who thrived in their education during extensive periods of lockdown from those who were left behind, was their capacity to access resources for digital communication. Likewise, one of the biggest challenges to the programmes of COVID vaccination in developed countries was the alleged dissemination of vaccine 'misinformation' by social actors who were either ill-informed or malevolent; although one person's heartfelt truth can be another person's lie. Correspondingly, the selective algorithms used by social media platforms can serve to insulate sub-sections of populations

from each other, while stoking ever less penetrable and virulent opinions until some form of conflict erupts, often signified by acts of verbal aggression or online abuse. By IALIC's twentieth year, online communication had certainly come of age as an ever more potent mode of intercultural communication, demanding the call which Melinda Dooly and Ron Darvin make in our next paper to engage critically with the role of the technologies and to consider how they help shape these more recent practices of intercultural communication. On their argument, this necessitates the nurturing of a novel form of literacy on the part of young people, which will not only enhance their awareness of machine-driven origins of much of the information to which they are exposed online but also enable them to evaluate the extent to which their views and opinions might be being influenced in order to create or reinforce discord and division between social and cultural groups with differing views and allegiances. Dooly and Darvin argue for the urgency of infusing inquiry-based learning with the principles of critical pedagogy in order to establish what they call 'inquiry-based critical digital pedagogy'. The strengths of this would be twofold. First, *inquiry-based* learning enables learners to exercise a certain degree of personal autonomy in researching controversial topics and issues in order to increase their individual knowledge and raise their awareness of those which warrant intervention. This form of *critical* online learning can then lead, secondly, to forms of collective digital activism which can range from advocacy, political commentary and further targeted research to direct action, participation in political moment and even civil disobedience (after Özkula, 2021). Inter alia, Dooly and Darvin set out the principles for a tangible and actionable form of online pedagogy through which educators can harness digital resources to implement the tenets of critical intercultural communication that been developed within our association over the past twenty years.

Reflection, arts and creative practice

Since its inception, IALIC members and associates have carried out a range of forward-thinking and ethically-informed projects in order to investigate different aspects of intercultural communication. However for the most part, the very reporting of these projects has entailed some form of objectification of the experience of the research participants: some by the tried and tested methods of interview and questionnaire, others by less conventional techniques such as creative writing and visualisation. Often this is in order that their experience can be translated into what counts as research according to the criteria of 'Western modern science' critiqued by Monceri at the start of this issue. Meanwhile, alternative strands of thinking and practice have been developed by IALIC members and associates which engage more directly with the

subjective experience of either the researcher/writer or the researched/interlocutor, or the intersubjective relation between them: in an attempt at least to step to one side of, if not to altogether supersede, the tried-and-tested paradigm of 'Western modern science' (c.f. Matos & Silvia Melo-Pfeifer, 2020; Harvey, Tordzro & Bradley, 2022). In this vein, I round off our commemorative issue with three papers which in their very different ways combine reflection, arts and creative practice.

This final change of gear begins with one long-standing contributor to this journal looking back over his lengthy career as a language educator in order to reflect upon how he came to personally reject an essentialist 'large-culture' view of the world, and in his most recent thinking to develop what he calls a 'third space methodology'. Once again invoking 'other knowledges' into this issue, Adrian Holliday takes as his starting point the reference by the Persian mystic, Shams-e Tabrizi, to the ancient 'three scripts', each of which could only be understood from a different points of view. This Holliday takes to underscore the role of intersubjective understanding as the basis for interculturality. Starting his career as a youthful language educator in Iran, exposed to conventional 'large-culture' views of the world around him and 'deficit' views of the students who he went on to teach, Holliday traces how by remaining open to his own personal engagement with a range of people with whom he interacted in all walks of life, he was finally able to break through his initial, rather naïve 'solid' views of other cultures in order to arrive at a finer-grained and more immanent view derived from the continual ebb and flow of personal interactions which he encountered (c.f. Holliday, 2019). In so doing, he arrived at a perspective which not only echoes something of Monceri's call for an 'intercultural attitude', but also ties in with the calls of Baker and Zhu Hua et al. above for our understanding of the intercultural to be based on the micro-analysis of linguistic interaction. However, Holliday himself has never personally approached the intercultural through language; and he goes on to describe how his analytical approach of choice is rather throu

gh ethnographic engagement, opting for the longue durée of close observation and interpretation of day-to-day interaction and the 'thick description' of local networks of symbolic acts as the 'material' for his research (after Geertz, 1993). Holliday goes on to describe how he first envisaged his image of the 'threads' which humans can weave together to break through large-culture 'blocks'. For me the conceptualisation of 'third-space methodology' which he presents diagrammatically in his paper resides not so much in the deduction of some hypostasised overlap between a totalising 'first' and 'second' cultures, but rather in a synthetic process of interweaving the threads to form a tapestry of shared experience

between people who may speak different languages and hold different sets of individually held beliefs, but do share some commonality of human experience. Holliday concludes by honestly referencing the struggles which he underwent in his quest to unpack the all-too cosy assumptions of his youth, whilst graciously acknowledging the role played latterly by IALIC in this process.

To open our next paper, which combines critical personal reflection with literary exegesis, Guiliana Ferri addresses the 'double bind' which many critical interculturalists, such as those who attend IALIC conferences, are in. They find themselves at once railing against cultural essentialism while simultaneously working in universities that exploit 'diversity as a marketing strategy to promote internationalisation' (c.f. Rolfe, 2013; Collins, 2018). After briefly reflecting on the role of recent work that has challenged regressive views of diversity and interculturality from the perspective of decolonisation and social justice, Ferri grounds her paper in her own subjective location as a 'subaltern' within Anglophone academia: 'at the intersection of a number of positions as a woman, second language speaker (or 'non-native' speaker) and economic migrant from Southern Europe'. However for Ferri, it is neither the inequalities of her positioning within UK-HE nor the neoliberal appropriation of discourses of diversity that contravene the ethics of equity and social justice. Rather it is the reduction of the concepts of 'intersectionality', 'interculturality' 'and diversity' to a 'nonperformative series of identity markers' that conceal the inequalities that remain operational within the very institutions which produce and transmit these of neo-liberal discourses. In order to contest these discourses, she introduces us to a novel approach that has so far gone unexplored in this journal: that of 'minor literature' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986). For Ferri, this approach acts as a corrective to the more reductionist and non-performative discourses critiqued at the head of her paper. Minority literature often reflects the experiences of the deracinated, the deterritorialized and the dispossessed, and engages wholeheartedly with the subjectivity of the author in their performance of very personal narratives which often describe the journeying and sojourning of the author in question. In so doing, Ferri offers us as examples her short readings of two exilic novels: Agota Kristof's *The Illiterate* and Xiaolu Guo's *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*. Of particular resonance for many readers of this journal, these narratives describe the ways in which both writers respectively wrestle with inhabiting the 'alien' languages of French and English which they find themselves inhabiting.

To round off our special issue, Alison Phipps and Tawona Sitholé present an innovative 'performance' that extends the boundaries of the genre of academic presentation, to which IALIC has always offered hospitality. Opening with a retrospective commentary from Phipps's

purview as the founding Chair of IALIC (2000-2005), this paper also serves as something of an epilogue for this anniversary issue as a whole. As suggested by its title, their paper presents a reflective account of the inaugural keynote lecture which Phipps gave in her role as UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts. However, given her long-standing background in intercultural theatre studies, and particularly German political theatre (c.f. Phipps, 1999), this address turned out to be much more than a conventional research monologue. Rather, it was staged as a transgressive act of political theatre in collaboration with Tawona Sitholé, long-serving poet-in-residence for the Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNET) and Honorary Research Fellow with the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. The *politics* of this paper arise from its enactment of Santos's (2018) call for the supercession of post-Marxian critical thinking as the principal vehicle for social transformation. In this, arts and 'intercultural translators' can also play a political role, in what Phipps and Sitholé go on to dub 'a poetics and aesthetics for cultural justice'. Phipps and Sitholé's performance can therefore be read in part as a response, not only to Monceri's critique of intercultural communication as it has come of age as a 'discipline' within the canon of 'Western modern sciences', but also to Ferri's rejection of conventional critiques of intercultural communication as ways of transforming the field (after Lorde, 2007). Its *transgressiveness* derives from the Epic theatre of Bertolt Brecht (Benjamin, 1998; Brecht, 1957). As a Marxist, Brecht used the device of 'Verfremdung' or 'distanciation' in his plays, whereby characters step out from their roles in order to explain their actions to their bourgeois audience in the theatre. Not only does this clarify the often subversive nature of their actions, but it also serves to shatter any empathy on the part of the audiences, which was associated with the bourgeois theatrical form as manifest in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe. In their dramatic adaptation of this technique, Sitholé rises up from the audience in his role as 'the Indigenous Poet from the Global South' in order to interrupt, with segments of his poetry, Phipps's address in her role as the 'White Global North Professor'. The performative nature of the paper is conveyed through its typography: italic script realises the 'internal monologue' of both the Keynote and the Poet; indented script in smaller font realises the interjections uttered by the Poet in order to disrupt and disconcert the Keynote and the Audience alike.

Fin

This collection was neither planned as a carefully controlled curation of papers on thematically predicated topics nor as a state-of-the art review of the field. Instead, it evolved from an initial

open call for contributions to IALIC's twentieth anniversary online meeting, backed up by a further call to IALIC members for additional written contributions to round out the issue. In this way, the hope was to incorporate organically the experiences, reflections and hopes of members and associates of IALIC, both well-established and emerging, who were working in the field at that particular moment. As the papers came together, an argument emerged has unfolded through the three sections above. The first stage incorporated critiques of the field built as it is on the presuppositions of 'Western modern science' (Monceri in this issue) and the non-porous idea of culture implied by the very term 'intercultural' (Baker in this issue) which are largely, still, challenged by some 'critical' commentators (e.g. Santos, 2018; Ferri in this issue). The second section articulated theoretical and practical perspectives which emerged from such projects led by members and associates of IALIC in their responses to four areas of intercultural crisis which were taking place around 2020: the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Zhu Hua, Jones and Jaworska); the migration of large populations from the Middle East and Africa across the Mediterranean to European countries on its Northern coastline, particularly Greece (Polymenakou and Fay); conflicts around the world (Holmes and Dix); and the pedagogical challenge of 'post-truth' flows of information on the internet (Darvin and Dooly). The third section comprised papers which switched the focus of intercultural practice from the still necessary and noble enterprises of critique and interpretive analysis to reflection and the creative arts and, which brought into focus performance, aesthetics and the subjectification of knowledge and experience. In this, I believe we have succeeded in capturing both the 'spirit of IALIC', even as it was first generated by the small group of, already international, scholars assembled at Leeds Metropolitan University in 1997: not only through some of the thought which has been developed over its now twenty-five year trajectory, but also in catching some glimpses of 'other worlds which are possible' (after Santos, 2007) as we advance through the 2020s.

Out of the twenty years of LAIC, I have been privileged to have been editor of this journal for ten of them: first with John O'Regan, and now with Hans Ladegaard. This year, Prue Holmes has made way as Association Chair for her successor Cristina Ros i Solé; and this marks a certain 'changing of the guard' in the third decade. It is likely that within the remaining seven years, there will have been at least one other defining shift in the theory and methodology which we bring to the object of our study. However, it remains core to our shared endeavour that both the association and the journal retain its innovative stance, and remains open to 'critical' (in the broadest sense of the word), creative and even transgressive ways of thinking

about, and novel modes of presenting, what we constitute as research into what - for now at least - we continue to call 'intercultural communication'.

I would like to conclude by expressing my sincere gratitude to all the authors who have contributed to this issue. Every one of my colleagues and friends has maintained a stoical and gracious engagement with the project as they went though the often bruising process of review and revision, usually to demanding deadlines. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work collaboratively with you all on polishing this issue for our readers. I hope not only that you enjoy our work but that you are also encouraged to propel our shared project of critical and transformative intercultural communication on through the decade.

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