Castledown

Introduction: The Idea of a Special Issue on Student Research

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This special issue of *Intercultural Communication Education* is devoted to the idea of "student research." In setting the tone for the issue, I would like to explain the thoughts and motivations behind the notion of a special issue on this topic. It is most typical for journal special issues to be organised around an issue or theme that has particular significance for the field at a particular time. Articles within such a special issue, then, will typically serve the purpose of providing diverse perspectives on the theme through empirical studies and "think pieces" that push authors and readers to engage with new levels of theoretical complexity, convergence, and contradiction in relation to current understandings.

The notion of a "special issue" adopted in this issue diverges from this conventional understanding in that the issue is organised around a particular demographic—"students"—rather than a particular theme. In this issue, the notion of "student" simply denotes the fact that authors are currently enrolled in an official programme of study, and it does not imply a strict dichotomy between "academics" and "students," nor an inferior positioning of the latter. In fact, as I will explain below, this special issue aimed to engage students as partners in the production of academic knowledge with the support of the editorial team and cooperating academics.

This special issue adopts an ethical position as its point of departure insofar as the fundamental motivation for the issue was to encourage students to develop their pedagogical ideas or empirical projects into publishable papers, thereby bringing visibility to their work and developing their confidence as emerging academics. Mindful of the fact that journals—especially editors—can be sometimes seen as simply (sometimes arbitrarily) "filtering" out the "deserving" work from the rest, I wanted to bring a particular developmental angle to the editorial process for this issue.

That process involved an international call for submissions from students who are carrying out work relevant to the journal, from undergraduate students to PhD students. The journal received a good number of enquiries and actual submissions in the lead up to the submission deadline of September 30, 2019. In line with normal editorial policy, submissions that fell outside the aims and scope of the

journal were rejected based on editor screening, sometimes after email exchanges with authors to clarify that the work had been correctly understood. When it was felt that articles showed enough potential, authors were offered advice from the editor, selected members of the editorial board, or cooperating academic colleagues prior to formal peer review. This typically involved email exchanges to discuss ways authors could polish their argumentation and reflect on organisational issues. Authors who were confident with the development of their papers then resubmitted articles for formal peer review.

As per normal procedures, all papers were then peer reviewed on a double-blind basis. Following peer review, some authors felt that they would be unable to revise their papers to a sufficient degree within the required timeframe. Other authors decided to produce a revised version of the article, which then went through another round of peer review or editor review. During the post-review phase, authors were again supported by the editor and colleagues through the provision of advice as appropriate.

Although this was a somewhat labour-intensive process both for authors and the journal team, it turned out to be quite a fruitful process that led to the acceptance of three papers. Below, each of the authors of accepted papers explains their academic interests and how their paper in this issue expresses these interests and larger research agenda.

Article 1: Zeena Faulk

My Doctoral research focuses primarily on how contemporary satirical discourse in Iraq might be translated for English-language audiences. In the wake of the grim and seemingly endless conflict in Iraq after the 2003 invasion, political satire has emerged as a prominent form of criticism of political and religious leaders. What once was the domain of the domestic sphere, a hidden discourse that dared not share beyond the family and close friends, has become popular in high comic style. Iraq's current political satire is prominent in both print and online media. Specifically, my current research focuses on narrative blogs that emerged immediately after the 2003 invasion. Through various methods and theories of literary translation, I am examining ways that the Western reader might better engage with this satire.

My paper in this issue deals with the relationship between language ideologies and linguistic landscape, which is an issue that I became passionate about after attending the Multilingualism and Diversity (MultiDiv) Sprinter School held at University of Warwick in 2019. I realized how intersemiotic translation plays a role in how we all navigate public spaces and claim membership into specific cultural and linguistic groups. In the future, I plan to extend my work by studying the Linguistic Landscape of Middle Eastern cities, in particular Baghdad, where the community languages of Kurdish, Turkoman, Neo-Aramaic Assyrian are now formally recognized.

Article 2: Kate A. Efron

As an M.S.Ed student (in literacy, culture, and language education), my research has focused on education for learners who have been displaced, and on incorporating intercultural and multicultural perspectives in global ESL and EFL contexts. Currently, I work as an EFL teacher in an elementary school in Japan and, on weekends, volunteer as an online English teacher for adult learners who are refugees from Syria. These two very different contexts within the field of TESOL/TEFL require different approaches and considerations instructionally, but they also confirm the need for culturally responsive teaching/learning across the lifespan, as well as the need to critically examine the power structures underlying them. This present paper in Intercultural Communication Education was begot by my experiences working at elementary school in Japan, and speaks to the larger body of my research in

multicultural perspectives in ELT. Specifically, I wanted to look at these textbooks through a critical discourse-inspired lens that would allow me to explore the various political and cultural ideologies that inform and are informed by the textbooks. I hoped that in doing so, I would uncover more effective ways of situating learning in multicultural education, as it is my ultimate goal to facilitate ethical language education and culturally responsive teaching for learners of all ages.

Article 3: Margherita Berti

As a Doctoral student in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching and Educational Technology, I research how virtual reality can be integrated into beginner and intermediate foreign language courses to foster critical thinking and intercultural competence. In today's globalized world, I think intercultural competence is an essential skill that needs to be fostered in the instructional setting. It is likely that our students will meet people from different backgrounds and cultures, and being able to interact appropriately is important to avoid misunderstandings. Taking advantage of technological tools seems the most logical step to expose students to diverse individuals. In both my teaching and research, I strive to use resources and technologies that are engaging, relevant to students, and improve learning outcomes.

My paper in this special issue focuses on the use of ethnographic techniques and technology tools for teaching and learning foreign languages. I would like to see a stronger inquiry-based approach in language courses where teachers are not just "telling" students information, but instead learning becomes a co-constructed and collaborative process. This way, we can create learning opportunities that are meaningful and relevant to students' interests. I believe that the leverage of mobile devices, the Internet, and social networking sites can help teachers improve language courses as well as help students better prepare for intercultural encounters.

As you can see, the authors that have contributed to this issue are working in rather different contexts and pursuing different issues of importance within their respective academic programmes and beyond. Nevertheless, what unites these authors is a desire to contribute to understanding of the ways in which language functions as tool for enacting, reproducing and challenging understandings of the social world that surface in material, virtual, and concrete communicative spaces. Language is a key element in broader social practices and semiotic ecologies and, as such, is always under the potential influence of ideologies that attempt to define "us" and "them" and to delineate "the centre" from "the periphery." The reader can consider the different ways that articles in this issue speak to these broader issues of power.

My hope is that readers appreciate the contribution of each author in the special issue and that this initiative provokes reflection on the potential role that academic publishing can play in contributing to the development of student research and helping individuals achieve greater visibility for their work and larger research agenda.

Although it is necessary to ensure anonymity here, I would like to thank the members of the editorial board, peer reviewers, and other academic colleagues that generously provided authors with constructive feedback and suggestions on their work. This contribution is much appreciated by authors and myself.

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April 2020