Editorial for Special Issue
Beyond and besides language: Intercultural communication and creative practice
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Our starting point

The intercultural field has some history of drawing on the arts and creative practice to support the teaching, research and understanding of communication. However, there has been little theoretical engagement with the relationship between language and creative practice: most of this work has either not foregrounded language and communication as part of its agenda (e.g. Burnard et al. 2016) or has taken language for granted as a focus for communication (e.g. Crutchfield and Schewe 2017). In recent years an emerging body of intercultural work engaging with post-human and new materialist philosophy and arts-based methodology has problematised the role, representationality and materiality of language and its role in communicating, knowing and being (Bradley et al. 2018; Bradley and Harvey 2019; Frimberger 2016; Frimberger et al. 2018; Gonçalves Matos and Melo-Pfeifer 2020; Harvey and Bradley 2021; Harvey, McCormick, Vanden, Collins and Suarez 2019; Harvey, McCormick and Vanden 2019; Harvey, Cooke and BST 2021; Lytra et al. 2022; Moore et al. 2020; Phipps 2019; Porto and Houghton 2021; Ros i Solé et al. 2020). The philosophical excavation of the ontology of language, and its relationship with other modes of communication *beyond and besides language* (Thurlow 2016; see also Pennycook 2018), has enabled this research to engage productively and innovatively with ongoing and urgent questions in the field relating to de-essentialising (MacDonald and O'Regan 2013; Ferri 2018; MacDonald 2019; Harvey et al. 2019); decolonising (Phipps 2013, 2019); research methodology, relationships and ethics (Holliday and MacDonald 2020; Bradley et al. 2018) and artistic research and production processes as communication and interaction (Tordzro 2018a, 2018b, 2019). This special issue invited contributors to engage deeply with the role of language in relation to creative practice in intercultural settings to further engage with these concerns at the levels of ontology and epistemology, and to consider the implications for social justice and knowledge democracy.

Key questions

The focus for the special issue is work which engages with language and creative practice in intercultural settings (broadly defined), examines their roles and relationships in communication and learning, and orients towards social justice and knowledge democracy. Our specific aim was to consider how creative practice in intercultural settings can contribute to more complex understandings of the nature and role of language and other modes in communication, and how these can contribute in turn to social justice and knowledge democracy. This issue therefore asks: How does intercultural work engaging with language and creative practice

> a) account for communication and learning beyond and besides language
> theoretically, methodologically and analytically?

b) destabilise recognised boundaries, binaries, and modes of difference?

c) engage with questions of epistemology, ethics, justice and knowledge democracy?

These questions were designed to enable contributors to address the concerns outlined above: how to engage with new thinking around language and materiality in intercultural communication; how to de-essentialise and de-colonise research and practice in the field; and how to do so in methodologically responsive, responsible and ethical ways.

We invited contributions about research and practice working in intercultural settings with creative modes. The issue includes articles by scholars in intercultural communication, applied linguistics and applied arts disciplines whose work addresses the questions in different ways. We asked for contributions that were empirical, theoretical or methodological in focus, and the work included sits across these categories, showcasing the rich diversity of research at the intersections of language/s and creative practice.

Beyond and besides
In exploring the theoretical possibilities of research and practice which works with language/s and creative practice, we see a number of movements beyond and besides established boundaries which offer engagements with our key questions (see also Lytra et al. 2022). Perhaps most immediately, the projects presented in this collection unsettle disciplinary boundaries, and the concomitant roles and identities: for researchers, for creative practitioners and – of course – for those participating in, and collaborating with, the research (see Pahl and Pool 2021). It is worth noting that among the contributors to this special issue are academics who bring their own amateur or professional arts practice to their work, artist-academics whose arts practice and academic work is intertwined, and academic-artist collaborations. Related to this, the projects also engage the concept of practice as research and the legacies it engenders: legacies of learning, teaching, understanding, looking at the old in new ways, bringing forth new connections and meanings, and the acquisition of skills which shape the way people see themselves in relation to their communities, which contributes in turn to the development and enrichment of those communities. In these projects, we repeatedly encounter the power of the collective, and the mutual constitution of the individual and the collective in entanglements among persons, places, spaces, things, in ways which not only complexify understandings of difference and the relationship between self and other beyond 'thirdness' (see MacDonald 2019; Thurlow 2019), but which fundamentally destabilise global Western/Northern conceptions of the bounded individual. We see art in these contributions as simultaneously a movement across, through and beyond communicative boundaries *and also* an expression of radical otherness - art is emphatically *not* a 'universal language' - which opens up possibilities for radical solidarity not merely with others in whom we recognise sameness, but for solidarity with the very *difference* of others.

A particularly strong thread running through the contributions is the engagement of less-heard voices and knowledges in intercultural research (see Phipps

2019), and the power of first-person narratives of minoritised and marginalised communities, and people who cannot otherwise speak and be heard. The articles demonstrate the affordances of creative practice for the relation and expression, and the hearing, of narratives from beyond and besides the centre. While in some of the projects these narratives are expressed in language and then translated into creative modes alongside or after language, in others narrative is the creative practice itself, part of the creative process and the creative product. Several articles draw on a *trans-* lens (see Jones 2016: Hawkins and Mori 2018), engaging for example the now-familiar concept of *translanguaging*, but also the less-familiar concepts of *transcreation* and *transmusicality*. This analysis of movement across, through and beyond, whether or not explicitly engaging *trans-*ness, provincialises language (see Thurlow 2016; Lytra et al. 2022) as one of many materials in complex semiotic and communicative encounters, and sheds a wider pool of light on the complexities of expression, communication and knowing which might be characterised more broadly as *voice* (see Harvey et al. 2021). We therefore see the possibilities of creative practice to both enable spoken narratives and at the same time offer space for the communication of the 'otherwise incommunicable' (see Rowe and Reason 2017) – the narration of things people do not know how to talk about, do not have language for, or are prevented from speaking about. The implications for enhanced relationships, wellbeing, and justice across communities, publics and professional sectors are amply demonstrated in the projects presented here.

Finally, these projects exemplify contextualised, emergent, ethically-orientated and collaborative approaches to intercultural research. The contributions are linked by enactment of an immanent intercultural ethics (following MacDonald and O'Regan 2013) based on face-to-face engagement with an *other* understood to be part of a complex ecology, rather than a transcendent ethics based on assumptions of sameness or difference (see Frimberger 2016; Ferri 2018). In the empirical reports we see developing understandings of the setting as the research progresses, engaging with the complexities, people and spaces and things, to allow methods and approaches to emerge and evolve responsively (see Holliday and MacDonald 2020). The creative practices described are not only creative in terms of engagement with art and the aesthetic – our special issue is assuredly not a commodification of creative methods, or an exercise in creative 'methodolatry' (following Janesick 2000) - but also in terms of their responsiveness to the ecologies in which they operate, and the welcoming of difference, contradiction, complexity, and disjunction which more traditional research approaches may attempt to explain or resolve. It is in these interstices where new knowledge is generated, intersubjectively constituted as part of being-in-the-world (see Barad 2014), through ongoing relationships among human and non-human actors, spaces and communities, and the authoritative discourses (following Bakhtin 1981) which shape their sociopolitical conditions; relationships which move and shift in time and space, but which always function relationally across, through and beyond borders and boundaries. This new knowledge may be conceptual, but also affective, experiential, aesthetic embodied, collective; it may also be an awareness of non-knowing and non-understanding, inarticulable yet powerfully felt. The contributions to this special issue thus demonstrate the existence and importance of multiple ways and forms of knowing, and the power of these knowledges as tools for social action, advocacy and justice; and

thereby offer important steps towards knowledge democracy (following Hall and Tandon 2017).

Introducing the contributions

The special issue opens with Andrea Ciribuco's account of a project for asylum seekers' creative expression beyond and besides the environment of linguistic inhospitality in which they find themselves in Italy. Using the mode of dance, and the participants' use of their bodies as a creative resource, Ciribuco examines how dance workshops both worked beyond and besides language/learning and also stimulated language by acknowledging and accepting the participants' first-person narratives and varied semiotic repertoires. In a powerful account, he draws attention to both the complex negotiations of meaning required in making dance, and to the participants' engagements with, and subversion of, its colonising elements to create their own new expressions. Ciribuco's analysis demonstrates how dance offered an opportunity for participants to engage with personal and potentially traumatic stories outside of the inhospitable demands of the asylum system (in which the told story, and the acquisition of the dominant language, are central to the gaining of hospitality), and a way to represent and perform their engagements with local space, showing the participants becoming (as) part of their new Italian landscape.

In an academic-practitioner collaboration, Anna Wojtyńska, Lara Wilhelmie Hoffman, Dögg Sigmarsdóttir and Ewa Marcinek describe their engagement of creative practice to challenge dominant public discourses of linguistic 'purity' and assimilation in Iceland. In the event they relate, creative activities at the Reykjavik City Library led by foreign-born artists engaged with the sensual and aesthetic dimensions of the Icelandic language, taking an open and playful approach which enabled space for new understandings of language as intimate, embodied, material, and often existentially and ontologically destabilising. The creative activities offered a space for intercultural engagement through the sharing of common experience of immigration to and language learning in Iceland, for communication through the poetic and aesthetic, and showcased the public library an inclusive, hospitable space for collective resistance to linguistic discrimination and hostility, where the role of the 'host' society can be held to account. Wojtyńska et al.'s lucid analysis highlights the powerful juxtaposition of the aesthetic and the linguistic for producing new insights and connections, through first-person narratives within minority communities and the solidarity of individuals recognising a collective experience.

Samuel Tsang and Lam Chi Ying present a Theatre for Early Years (TEY) project with young ethnic minority pupils in Hong Kong, offering intermediality, or the transformation/combination of different media, as an onto-epistemological standpoint for examining the crossing of artistic and communicative boundaries. The authors analyse TEY and intermediality as engaging experiential and relational modes of learning which expand cognitivist and linguistically-based approaches in formal learning contexts, part of a fluid and flexible approach to interculturality and pedagogy which includes the somatic and the sensational. Their approach invites 'learning as a form of non-compliance' and the deployment of a wide range of meaning-making resources, so that intercultural learning takes place through young learners' explorations of and engagements with their own voices, bodies, spaces and

surroundings. Tsang and Lam's lens of intermediality offers an exciting theoretical reframing of communication and learning which provides a flexible and rigorous framework for engaging with the open, non-deterministic, unfinalisable and destabilising nature of intercultural learning, and which accounts for the new-ness and unpredictability of meaningful learning outcomes.

Elena Ioannidou, Ellada Evangelou and Valentina Christodolou analyse the process of translating ethnographic narratives of Romeika speakers in Cyprus into a participatory performance. In their project, first-person narratives are transformed through a collaborative process and the engagement of different narrative mechanisms, so that in the performance the stories are retold through engagement with embodiment, space, and a range of semiotic resources including the audience themselves, alongside linguistic narration. Drawing on concepts of performance, ethnography and narrative, and engaging Bakhtin's dialogicality and the chronotope, they demonstrate how the process of recontextualising academic work for performance, and the performance itself, offers routes to alternative ways of knowing and towards epistemological pluralism which can challenge dominant discourses of binarity relating to identity, space and border. This theoretically rich and contextually complex project works at the (often painful) intersections of art and language, and the buffer zones of the academy and the local community, to complexify otherness, destabilise binary understandings, and engage collective making towards the aim of social change and the creation of new futures.

Moving to a more methodological focus, Zhuo Min Huang's article outlines her use of 'blind' portrait, a method developed by Huang from her own practice as an amateur artist. Drawing on her own disadvantaged epistemic status as a multilingual person with a strong artistic sensibility restricted in her work by the parameters of academic English, Huang's method aims to make the familiar strange, to destabilise comfort zones, to bring the subconscious to consciousness, and to provide new viewpoints on participants' subjective realities. Huang takes the position that linguistic expression excludes other, ineffable forms of knowing and orientates her work towards epistemic justice, specifically in the decentring of language in knowledge production, the embracing of uncertainty and ambiguity, and the flattening of hierarchies between researchers, participants and artists. In her analysis, Huang describes the complex processes of transcreation, or creative translation, taking place between the visible, the invisible, and the ineffable. In doing so, she offers a method for de-essentialising intercultural research by moving away from a focus on language and its normalised relationship with knowability.

In a practitioner contribution, Sheila Macdonald and Jodi Watson offer an engaging account of their cross-sector work in the challenging field of ESOL on the rural south-east coast of England, at the literal cliff-face of hostile migrant and racialised discourses in England. Based on an explicit desire to overcome barriers to learning by reducing cognitive load and levelling hierarchical relationships, their work uses voice beyond and besides (and before) language - as a site of physicality, expression, joy, play, welcome, wellbeing, connection and community – to support (language) learning by enabling learners to feel a sense of belonging to the learning environment, in contrast with mainstream grading assessments and restrictive institutional requirements. Starting with the body and the pre-linguistic, Macdonald and Watson's work harnesses

the power of the voice (in an approach redolent of Adriana Cavarero's devocalisation of Logos) to bring together disparate groups of people who may lack connections in their local spaces. Their paper reflects powerfully on the voice as a vehicle for the emotional, embodied, symbolic, and transformational aspects of learning, and on how communication without words contributes to the formation of a supportive, inclusive collective where even those with first-language and local forms of English must adapt in order to support the communication of the group. In doing so, roles and hierarchies, including the concept of the 'language learner', are flattened and disrupted in the creation of a new collective.

Continuing the theme of sound without language, Richard Fay, Daniel Mawson and Caroline Bithell present a klezmer performance module for music students at a UK university which aims to provide 'a sonic experience of Otherness'. Reflecting on a pedagogical framework which combines musicology, ethnomusicology, interculturality and social engagement, Fay and colleagues analyse their innovative pedagogical initiative as a space of social and sonic experience based on respect for origins and traditions, but/and also by a situated, performative engagement with those traditions and their changing meaning over time and space, expressing and rearticulating them in new ways. Learning is experiential, based on cognitive, behavioural and affective aspects, moving towards increased interculturality and *transmusicality*, or 'music-foregrounded interculturality'. The authors draw attention to the dialogue between the individualised performance of shared musical and cultural resources, and de-essentialised 'musicking' as an activity, with a focus on process and interaction. Here, again, learning takes place as/through a collective as well as individually, pointing to the potential for creative practice to move across, through and beyond perhaps our most fundamental border in Eurocentric/global North and West educational paradigms.

In a change of creative mode, Judith Rifeser and Cristina Ros i Solé explore the intercultural encounter through film-making and autoethnography, using the examples of three short films by Rifeser to move discussion of film beyond an ocularcentric focus and towards understanding it as an embodied methodology which engages the sensorium spaces of knowing and memory-making. Using creative film-making to explore 'the *doing* of the intimate and personal aspects of the intercultural encounter', Rifeser and Ros i Solé point to the imbrication of doing and thinking and the multidimensional nature of the intercultural encounter, where participants are always becoming, in constant motion, unfinalised. The exploration of 'haptic visuality', where the eyes act as organs of touch, presents the film as 'body' with the ability to touch and caress within spaces beyond and besides language, moving beyond the representational to engage with the perceptual and sensory dimensions – the lived 'texture' – of the intercultural encounter, and drawing attention to embodied, tangible and complex semiotic chains. This engaging article immerses us in the complexity and multiplicity and movement of intercultural engagement, demonstrating the potential of creative practice to bring the new – change, growth, and the unexpected - into being.

Our final paper, by Lara Martin Lengel, Meriem Mechehoud and Victoria Newsom, outlines how creative practice is used in the Maghreb as an embodied activist tool for advocacy and change. Drawing on research with a wide range of art forms, Lengel et al. present creative practice as 'mutable forms of embodied or identity-based activism' which create disruptive potential and transgressive resistance and enable

exploration of the spaces in between reductionist dichotomies. This important article exemplifies creative practice as research practice with a clear agenda and effective approaches to community development, expanding on understandings of agency as key to the reconstruction of cultural identity, peaceful political resistance, and decolonisation, and demonstrating the legacies of agency and advocacy which creative practice leaves for and with the researched community. In a concluding note for the special issue, the authors call for a re-centring of creative practice in intercultural communication studies in order to create and extend a 'cartography of solidarity' which connects histories of oppression and marginalisation, and which continues the ongoing work of decolonising the discipline.

Conclusion: Towards the new-new

In their discussion of post-qualitative research, Patti Lather and Elizabeth St Pierre (2013), citing Gayatri Spivak (1999), refer to a distinction between the 'old new' of reorientating familiar perspectives on research, and the bringing into being of the 'new new'. In the contributions to this special issue we see the 'new new' emerging through a range of approaches and methods which allow space for the unexpected to emerge. In highlighting the porosity and entanglements of activities, people, places and things, the articles use a variety of theoretical lenses to research across, through and beyond boundaries in ways which acknowledge the role and necessity of those boundaries, and which recognise contingency, partialness, smallness, hesitation, the fluid and the fleeting. It is in this contradiction – of being always on and beyond the boundary – that the new-new emerges, in the tensions among and the spaces between, the *trans-*, the *and/but*, the *both/and*, the dashes and the slashes. This special issue demonstrates the power of creative practice for exploring these in-betweens, our strangeness to each other and the strangeness within ourselves. It urges us to account for our 'relationships of incommensurable interdependency' (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012: 46) with all our different *others*, for our responsibilities within those relationships, and for the role of creativity and communication in the possibility of more just futures. We hope it speaks to you, and we look forward to the ongoing creative dialogue.

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