Editorial

While bringing together this first LAIC issue of 2026 and working for the first time as part of the editorial team, Jessica and Sara were struck by the diverse array of what we might consider *disciplinary* approaches to Intercultural Communication that are going to feature in what follows. As has become customary now with our open issues, the topics our authors have focussed on are broad and wide-ranging. This editorial essay therefore establishes a thematic review according to three broad categories, each containing four papers: language, identity and society; language education and intercultural communication; and, perhaps unsurprisingly for the current era, media and intercultural communication. Rereading and reviewing these papers therefore leads us to consider disciplinarity in the area of intercultural communication, a topic that has been considered in different ways over the past twenty-five years of LAIC (see, for example, Monceri, 2022). We are compiling this issue a few short weeks after Jess and Sara participated in the annual IALIC conference, which took place in November in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, in a highly ambitious and successful hybrid form. Papers presented at the conference also reflected the diversity of approaches to *Intercultural Communication* at this current moment, as well as to *Language*.

We might, therefore, ask ourselves two questions in relation to this issue. Our first question relates to Flavia Monceri's critical and thought-provoking discussion of disciplinarity and the 'pros and cons' of *being* a discipline. Where are we - as interculturalists - positioned vis a vis the need to be *disciplinary*, in particular in terms of what is often considered 'storying' of an academic career? Researchers, in particular those in the early stages of their careers, are advised to ensure their focus and specialisms are clear, translatable and coherent, even at a time when the fragmentation of academia makes clarity, translation and coherence seemingly impossible. Meanwhile, we see and experience the rapid changes brought about by technology, and in particular by AI, which threaten unprecedented change, not just in terms of research and teaching language and intercultural communication, but across all aspects of our lives (Bregman, 2025). The second question relates to language and the disciplinarity of doing research which engages with language or languages. As we write, the landscape in UK higher education, which is where we as editors currently live and work, for languages is also changing rapidly, although perhaps not in such an 'unprecedented way', as these changes have been in train for many years (Parrish, 2023; Pachler et al. 2025). Certainly within the UK this year, we have seen the closure of modern languages departments and courses, notably in the Midlands, with other places under threat and under question. The incumbent existential anxieties that

these changes bring are substantial, and as a community we express our empathy towards all those affected by the recent industrial disputes in UK universities. The consequences of these changes also ripple out, making it less and less possible to study for a 'modern languages' degree, as would have been quite 'normal and unremarkable' thirty years ago. In certain parts of the world, language becomes an appendage, tacked onto more 'marketable' programmes which speak to particular conceptualisations of employability and progression. Meanwhile, as we shall see in this issue, the studying of languages – in particular *that* language, the language wherein we write (ref. Ndhlovu, 2025, for a recent critique) – is held in very much more esteem and accorded many more resources elsewhere. In the past, LAIC has particularly evidenced the role of language education, and its intercultural dimension, taking place in other parts of the world, for example Korea (see Kim et al, 2014; Lee et al, 2010) and China (Wu, this issue). Our second question therefore relates to the role *language* plays in relation to these seismic shifts in disciplinary (re)alignment and global asymmetries in policy and resource distribution.

And so, what of *disciplinarity*? Since the 19th century, institutions have been the placeholders or boundary keepers of disciplines, and thus, as departments merge, programmes change and particular pathways even evaporate, our historical notions of disciplines shift once again. That is, even beyond how we as researchers might critique and debate the 'pros and cons' of disciplinarity, the structures move and we wait, somewhat anxiously, to see how things might settle - at least until the next shift. As an amuse-bouche for the particularly tasty metaphor from Adrian Holliday which runs through this issue (after Holliday, 2016), these institutional tremors might be understood in terms of 'blocks', as structures that feel impassable. In a different time, yet not-so-long-ago, towards the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, novelist Arundhati Roy (2020) wrote about the pandemic's impact on India and the devastation wrought. In her essay she also writes about the pandemic as a potential 'portal', suggesting that we might 'walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it'. Is this, therefore, a time to consider a-disciplinarity as a push-back to the institutionally-endorsed policed and astringently regulated, grand narratives of disciplinary blocks? In fact, what exactly is it that we - as interculturalists - in Roy's words, are 'fighting for'?

Language, identity and society

Something over a year ago, due to an unexpected family emergency, Adrian Holliday – long standing friend and *éminence grise* of LAIC - found himself spending a lengthy period of time in the waiting room of the Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department. Being an ethnographer who not only observes people and cultures, but also writes 'on the go' (after Amadasi & Holliday, 2018), Adrian had not been sitting there for long before he started to write a story about his experience in hospital, which helps him to cast new light upon his enduring 'blocks' and threads' metaphor (Holliday and Amadasi, 2020). This metaphor itself now constitutes one of the 'threads' which runs through our first issue of 2026 (see also, e.g., Carnaffan, in this issue). Starting, as in his revised (2019) *Grammar of Culture*, with an intriguing critique of the 'separated cultures' model now as a 'colonialist trope' (after Quijano, 2007), Adrian adapts his diagram of the grammar in order to posit the countervailing dynamics we all experience in our everyday lives: one confirms the grand narrative of nationhood and civilisation; and one which he designates as a 'forced deCentring', which features so much the monolithic national structures that separate us, but rather our shared commonalities of social and cultural experience. Doubtless inspired by the clinical environment in which he found himself, Adrian draws on the idea of 'varifocal' glasses in order to propose the term 'varicultural flows' to describe this dynamic. For him, the epithet 'varicultural' best 'explain[s] and reassess[es] the complexity and uncertainty of cultural diversity in how we all live, construct and research the intercultural'. The paper concludes with a proposal for further research questions that come to mind regarding the immediate context in which Adrian finds himself. But we would suggest that these would also work well as hermeneutic stimulants for our students, were they to find themselves in such a situation. As we shall see, the dominant approach in intercultural education and training has been for some time that of 'critical incidents' (after Brislin, 1986). However, it strikes us that to begin a pedagogical task by encouraging our students to recall and document the very 'blocks' (aka 'critical incidents') which come between them and their interlocutor(s) would seem to be self-defeating. We would argue, after Holliday, that it would be more constructive to devise tasks for our students where they start by reflecting upon and documenting those foci for 'deCentred individual action' that might actually be able to generate *commonalities* between themselves and the other speaker(s) in their intercultural encounter.

If Holliday has created a fictionalised account inspired by his time spent in a waiting room in a multilingual hospital environment to illustrate the dynamic of incidental, day-to-day encounters between professionals and patients, our next study places the issue of race front and centre to explore the experience of four foreign professionals in a range of urban workplace

settings in Jiangnan, China. The intersection of race, language and identity has been somewhat under-represented in LAIC over the years, and where it has featured, researchers have quite reasonably adopted a more discourse-oriented approach (e.g. Dasli, 2014; Glapka, 2024; Mutua and Kang, 2025; Van Sterkenburg and Walder, 2021). By contrast, in our next paper Xin Zhang, Samantha Tsang and Aya Lahlou undertake a case study whereby they carry out interviews with a purposive sample of two Chinese-Americans and two white Americans, four professionals working in different settings in Jiangnan, China. Although these professionals can use Mandarin competently, they remain racially marked as either 'Chinese Americans' or 'white Americans' in their respective places of work. To engage with this issue, Zhang et al. supersede the existing dichotomy between psychological and sociological approaches current in the second language acquisition literature to undertake a performative approach 'which highlights the negotiated and co-constructed nature of interactions among L2 speakers and [the] local interlocutors as they negotiate who they are in various emergent contexts'. Similar to Holliday, and Song to follow, the authors draw on the metaphor of 'Third-Space' (*sic*) as a metaphor for the type of 'personae' which a person adopts in their moment-by-moment and co-constructed negotiation of a hybrid, intercultural identity. Here (with more than a whiff of early Goffman, 1956), a distinction is drawn between the sort of person the professionals intend to present in their day-to-day interactions ('intended personae') and the sort of person their interlocutors expect them to be ('expected personae'). The authors posit that the ideal persona[e] of each professional is constituted in the overlap between these expected and intended 'personae'. If Holliday's illustrative narrative is inspired by his observations of the hospital environment in which he found himself, Zhang et al. undertake a 'narrative enquiry approach' (after Bell, 2002), in which they present systematically selected extracts from the stories in which their participants tell each the interviewer about themselves. Inter alia, the findings of this study shed fresh light onto the complex intertwining of social context and individual psychology as a divergence emerges between expectations of linguistic competence on the part of the Chinese Americans and that of the white Americans. Not least, this resulted in the generation of a racialised asymmetry of status which emerged between the two pairs of professionals in favour of the white Americans. This led in turn to each pair of professionals adopting strategies whereby they could optimally negotiate their 'Third-Space personae as multilingual professionals'. The study concludes with some useful observations on how CSL/CFL classes could help Chinese language learners 'develop strategies in preparation for the raciolinguistic expectations they are likely to encounter' in multilingual workplaces in the target culture.

According to the UNHCR (2025), by the end of June 2025, there were 42.5 million refugees worldwide. Displacement and movement of populations remains most widespread within national boundaries, 8.4 million refugees were also forced to seek asylum in other countries. Of these, almost 400,000 had sought asylum in EU+ countries by the middle of 2025 (EUAA, 2025). This inward migration has now become keenly contested in both political discourse and resource allocation across the countries of 'geographic' Europe (including the UK). When refugees and asylum seekers arrive in their destination countries, they unusually need to navigate complex bureaucratic procedures, often with limited command of the official language of their destination. Despite English being widely touted as a 'global language', the UK is no exception. In these cases, new arrivals require the services of an interpreter to mediate the needs of them and their families to an official of the local bureaucracies. This can place the interpreter in the emotionally demanding position of having to mediate between the needs of often traumatized asylum seekers, and officials subject to the constraints of resource hungry government agencies and charities. It is just this problem - of how far interpreters should be driven by their humanitarian instincts to become emotionally involved in these exchanges - that our next paper seeks to investigate. Here, a team of researchers working at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, report on the findings of an Erasmus+ funded research project that examined the experiences of interpreters who work with refugees and asylum seekers across the UK, Greece, Italy and Spain, four countries who were all members of the European Union at the time of approval. In so doing, Marta Moskal, Giovanna Fassetta, Maria Grazia Imperiale and Jamie Spurway address 'the complexity of the role of interpreter in humanitarian contexts and emotional tensions and ethical dilemmas that can lead some of them to challenge institutional and professional boundaries of their role'. Unlike many regulated professions, interpreters working in different countries do not possess any authoritative code of ethics to consult, which often leads to contradictions arising, even within a single country, and practitioners having to fall back on their own judgment in order to make decisions about ethical dilemmas that might arising from their work. Inter alia, although considerable variation is maintained between standards and practices across the four countries, two main sets of findings emerge from the qualitative data analysed for the study. First, the cultural mediator's role often overlaps with the support and mediation also provided by social, health and reception services interpreters. Furthermore, given both the ethical obligations and material necessities of their role, there remains considerable seepage in the boundaries between an interpreter's professional role and their private life. Secondly, and leading on from this, interpreters describe how they often find themselves taking a decision based on their sensitivity and judgment rather

than any established codes of ethics. The findings of the study therefore confirm that interpreters see themselves as 'humanitarian' workers who are susceptible as fellow human beings to their own feelings and emotions towards refugees and asylum seekers.

This section concludes with the first of two papers which continue our line of research on the distinctive forms of the intercultural communication which have arisen in the complex multilingual environment of the 'tiny city state' of Macau (see also Zhang, 2016; Zhang & Chan, 2017; Song, 2022). If Moskal and her team in Glasgow explored the ethical issues faced by interpreters as they navigate between the official languages used in the bureaucratic systems of Europe and the less commonly-spoken languages of their clients, here Ge Song extends the trajectory of his 2022 paper to home in on this section's language-society axis to once more consider the complex, postcolonial semiotics which have evolved in Macau out of successive waves of colonisation and migration. While his previous paper introduced the concept of 'cosmopolitan translation' to describe the trilingual synergy (Portuguese-Chinese-English) exhibited by the street signs of Macao, here he sets out to analyse and categorise with greater specificity the patterns and features of the way in which Macao's street names were translated from Portuguese into Chinese in the wake of colonial rule. To undertake this, Song has assembled another extensive corpus of photographs during frequent visits to Macao. He identifies four categories of Chinese translation from Portuguese, which he respectively designates: 'awkward', 'favorable', 'mismatched' and 'multiple'. This latter feature in particular constitutes a mechanism whereby the Chinese translations were able to disrupt the exercise of power which was brought about by the act recasting the territory's streets in the language of the colonizer. In nuanced contrast to Holliday and Xin Zhang et al.'s usage, Song goes on here to invoke the metaphor of 'third space' after Bhabha (1994) in order to convey the 'hybrid identity' which is generated out of this complex web of signification; and here it seems to us that here the term also manages to exemplify much of its intended disruptive and transgressive spirit (c.p. MacDonald, 2019, p. 106).

Language education and intercultural communication

Our focus in this issue now switches to four papers which explore the relationship between intercultural communication and language education. Emerging from the teaching of 'modern and foreign languages' in the UK in the late 1960s and 1970s, study abroad programmes featured as an early staple of IALIC, going right back to premonitory meetings held at Leeds Metropolitan University (UK) 1997-9. While these studies were by no means uncritical (see, e.g. de Nooy & Hanna, 2003; Greenholtz, 2003.), early expectations were, in the main, that study abroad offered students a positive experience. With the continued expansion of globalisation in the 21st century, study abroad has become much more of a two-way street, with increasing numbers of students travelling from countries in Asia to European universities for short courses, as well as vice-versa - all of which generally feature a cultural component. Many more contemporary studies explore the experience of students from Asian countries (classically, Jackson, 2010). With this dispersion of study abroad programmes, it began to dawn on researchers that the student experience is not always quite as upbeat as envisaged by 20th century pioneers.

The emerging critical appraisal of the study abroad experience is picked up in our first paper in this section. One emerging strand of critique is that study abroad programmes often veer towards essentialism in the assumptions they make about their students, their contexts of learning and their monolithic conceptualisations of local culture (after Humphreys and Baker, 2021). Jane Caraffan and Caroline Burns question this further here by reporting on a study abroad programme which took place at a university in the north of England with a fair-sized cohort of visiting Chinese undergraduates. In this, they analyse in detail how students conceptualise 'culture' after completing a short-term period of studying abroad, a feature which they maintain was lacking in previous studies. In order to fine tune their approach to the understanding of 'culture', the authors informed both their classroom materials and their interpretation of their findings by continuing our engagement with Holliday's metaphor of 'cultural blocks' and 'cultural threads' (2016) and, in order to challenge latent essentialist notions with his foundational concept of 'small cultures' (1999, p. 237). Their study goes on to thematically analyse the outcomes from a portfolio of reflective writing tasks carried out by their students, in order to identify the critical incidents which they had experienced (after Brislin, 1986). Their analysis suggests that in by far and away the majority of these encounters, students fall back on essentialist understandings which appeared not to advance their intercultural awareness. To counter this tendency on future courses of this type, the authors draw on their findings to inform a number of pedagogic recommendations for ways in which

'culture' could be explored differently on such short courses in the future. But perhaps the 'critical incident' approach should also itself be abandoned in the future, in as much as it presupposes relations of alterity in its very conceptualisation?

Not surprisingly, China has become a major actor in both the outward and inward mobility of students between China and countries in geographical Europe. This reflects a set of state policies and institutional frameworks that support Chinese students' study abroad, i.e., through short-term programmes and full-degree courses, as well as efforts to recruit international students to China, as part of a broader drive towards internationalisation consistent with prevailing 21st-century globalisation norms. Not unsurprisingly, China has become a major player in both the dispatch to and the reception of students to study abroad in and from countries in geographical Europe. China's policy of sending students to study abroad, on both short courses and full-time degree courses, and its effort to recruit students from other countries to study in China is part and parcel of its drive towards internationalisation, in keeping with the prevailing 21st century ideology of globalisation. Prior to studying at an overseas university, it is generally regarded as useful for Chinese students to become proficient in the language of that country and to possess some capacity for intercultural communication in order to relate to local peers and citizens in-country alike. Our next paper starts from Prue Holmes's (2008) premise that Chinese students who study abroad have difficulties communicating with local students. On this argument, this may well be down to deficiencies in the teaching of intercultural communication to Chinese students. To investigate this phenomenon further a team of researchers based in Chinese universities next explore how foreign language teachers of both Chinese (to international students) and English (to Chinese students) perceive intercultural education. Drawing predominantly on Michael Byram's model of intercultural communication (1997), Binwei Lu, Xin Shao, Linghan Ge, and Jiaqi Wu report on their transcription of interviews and classroom observations with three Chinese teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and three Chinese teachers of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CSL). Inter alia, four themes emerge from these findings. First, while each of the teachers had different views on what constituted 'culture' in intercultural education, they all veered towards identifying culture as being contained within the boundaries of the nation state, either as signified by the target language which they were teaching or by the 'Four F's' of Food, Fashion, Festivals and Folklore. Secondly, all six teachers brought some 'intercultural elements', or exemplars of a particular culture into their classrooms. However, in contradistinction to the approach described above, these tended to reinforce the differences

between different countries and cultural blocs (e.g. 'East' vs. 'West'). While student discussions tended to be more challenging of these essentialist accounts, for the most part the teachers did not appear to be well equipped to build on them. These unrealised opportunities for intercultural education were, thirdly, in all likelihood caused by three tendencies: a limited awareness of the potential of intercultural education on the part of the teachers; their avoidance of entering into any discussion which might lead to conflict or disagreement classes; and their unwillingness to engage with any issues relating to politics. The authors argue that the latter is antithetical to development of intercultural citizenship, as outlined by Bryam (2008) and Guilherme (2002). Finally, most of the teachers appeared to regard intercultural education as only relating to an experiential realm distinct from the teaching and learning of a foreign language, which most of the teachers still seemed to view as being restricted to inculcating a narrow conceptualisation of linguistic competence. Lu and her colleagues conclude that this deficiency in intercultural education in foreign language teaching could potentially be improved by informed teacher training; but also acknowledge that aspects of intercultural education can still seem 'somehow Eurocentric' to Chinese foreign language teachers. The authors conclude that this could be enhanced by introducing a 'Chinese dimension' to current frameworks such as that envisaged by the RICH-Ed project (2021).

It is some time now since the peak of research into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for interculturality, some of which were assembled as an ad hoc special issue in LAIC 24.3 (MacDonald and Ladegaard, 2024). Our next study arises from the author's personal experience of studying English as a foreign language in a secondary school in rural China. In this context, Yujuan Wu maintains, English is still very much taught as a monolithic linguistic code derived from the purported norms of a notional 'native speaker', who somehow maintains an idealised uniformity of speech throughout the 'Anglosphere' (United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). As readers will know, 'native-speakerism' has been widely challenged, most recently by theories of translanguaging (e.g. Li, 2018) and what the author dubs 'sociomaterial' theories (aka 'new materialism', after Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Braidotti, 2013 & 2020, in these pages). The marginalisation of young language learners was further intensified during the pandemic in rural areas in China (as it was worldwide), as language teaching moved online and learning took place through an assemblage of human/non-human 'intra-actions' (after Barad, 1997) - here between learner and teacher, workbook and red pen, education platform and mobile phone, as well as researcher. Wu draws on this two-pronged theoretical framework to challenge the prevalence of human agency which is usually attributed to translanguaging in keeping with the tradition of Western humanism. For her,

translanguaging is, instead, a process 'that unfolds as sociomaterial intra-actions rather than social interactions' (see also Bradley, 2018). To illustrate this, the author sets out two minutely detailed exemplars, or 'stories', drawn from her ethnographic fieldwork with a 13 year old Chinese schoolgirl in a small rural area of Northeast China (originally carried out as part of a larger study, Wu, 2022). The paper continues in an admirably radical vein, refusing to engage in the thematic coding and analysis of her data, but rather proceeding post-qualitatively to a dynamic synthesis of theory, data and meaning-making. It reveals how the vibrant translanguaging practices of Wu's young student are intertwined with the materiality of sample essays, multiple-choice questions and gap-filling exercises and the monolingual normativity of her teacher's red pen. The paper ends with a plea for initiatives to be taken to embed translanguaging pedagogies in EFL classrooms in rural classrooms in China, which we might add, could equally well be taken up in many classrooms worldwide. Wu's paper is certainly a bravura attempt to reconceptualise an under-researched and undervalued area of language learning pedagogy through the lens of two radical theories current in our association (e.g. Bradley, 2018; Ros i Sole, 2024).

Our final paper in this section shifts its geographic focus to report on a study carried out in government-funded schools in Wellington and also, by a happy coincidence, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. As was reflected powerfully in the ethos of our recent meeting in Auckland, nowadays Aotearoa acknowledges itself as increasingly culturally diverse. This is, importantly, in order to honour and respect the nation's indigenous Māori population, but also to engage more deeply with the wider Asia-Pacific region (after Peterson et al., 2018). In order to inculcate future citizens with a global perspective, the national curriculum of Aotearoa New Zealand has been imbued with initiatives in Global Education. These are concentrated in three Centres of Asia-Pacific Excellence (or CAPEs), in large part to contribute to the long-term economic growth and prosperity of the country. Our next paper reports on a CAPE Initiative dedicated to Latin America, in collaboration with Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Auckland. Diego Navarro, Constanza Tolosa and Ben Egerton report on their 'Cultures and Languages in the Classroom' project which focused on the development of intercultural competence in middle years learners. Taking an interpretive approach to discussion interviews carried out with a select number of school students between the ages of 11 and 14, they explore how this global citizen education initiative was able to foster intercultural competence (after Bennett, 2004; Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2011) through the introduction of Spanish in relation to its cultural context, in this case Latin America. Inter alia, thematic analysis of transcriptions from the student discussion sessions indicated that

participants indeed reported a range of positive outcomes that appeared to have been emerging from their exposure to different ways of 'being and doing things', all foundational indicators of the development of intercultural competence. The three most frequently occurring themes were: holding attitudes of openness to the difference between groups and group members; curiosity towards the new and unfamiliar; and developing respect by actively imagining the diverse worldviews that different people hold around the world. The authors conclude that, while the positive reports from their young participants were by no means unanimous, the overall outcomes from their preliminary study support the contention that there is nothing like the learning of languages and cultures within a global citizenship initiative for developing intercultural competence amongst young people.

Media and intercultural communication

To draw this issue to a close, we bring you a selection of papers which explore different ways in which people communicate interculturally through various aspects of the media:, here embracing broad topics of social media, linguistic landscapes and cinema. The four studies here exemplify the multi-disciplinarity we referenced at the start of this editorial, mapping out the complex mosaic of intercultural communication research at the current moment as well as the diverse methodological approaches held under the intercultural 'umbrella', deployed to media texts in the four papers here. These approaches draw from educational design, critical discourse analysis, multimodal analysis and systemic functional linguistics. The examples also prompt us to critically engage with the 'postdigital' (e.g. Rowsell, 2025; Lee and Li, 2025), or the layered enmeshing of digital, simultaneously, with everyday [non-digital] lives.

Keying in with the pedagogical focus of the previous clutch of papers, we begin with a report on an exploratory educational design study carried out under the aegis of the *Centro de Investigação em Didática e Tecnologia na Formação de Formadores é uma Unidade de Investigação* (CIDTFF) at the University of Aveiro, Portugal. The study has two central planks: both the outcomes of the design project and the educational design itself (after McKenney and Reeves, 2013). On the one hand, to all intents and purposes the study trials an educational design in order to evaluate a 'bridging activity' in linguistic and cultural diversity. Drawing on a multiliteracies framework (after Cope and Kalantzis, 2015) this activity is envisaged as combining the mediated activities which the students engage in inside and outside the classroom. In order to do this, Liudmila Shafirova and Maria Helena Araújo e Sá focus on the two principal components of the educational design: a multimodal scaffolding instrument for auto-ethnographic observation of media consumption, as well as the implementation of the

activity in the classroom. In so doing, the study explores the extent to which students developed different forms of awareness after participating in this activity: awareness of plurilingualism, awareness of their learning processes, and algorithmic awareness. In the event, three students from different Portuguese speaking countries agreed to complete an auto-ethnographic component of the project by documenting their media activity over a number of days and completing a short essay. The three students reported satisfaction with the bridging activity and enhancement of all three forms of awareness overall. However, it was felt that they would have benefitted from a group discussion once they had completed their essays, and it appeared that their development of algorithmic awareness was somewhat less than that relating to plurilingualism and learning. With a little fine-tuning and wider implementation, this promising small-scale study would seem in part to provide a response to LAIC's earlier call for learners to develop a 'critical digital literacy that contributes to a greater understanding of how power and ideologies operate online' (Dooly and Darvin, 2022, p. 354).

Just such a critical digital literacy could have been necessary when engaging with the responses to claims made by the Nigerian influencer Emdee Tiamiyu in a 2023 BBC interview. Tiamiyu claims that an increasing number of Nigerians, ostensibly travelling to the UK to pursue graduate studies, were in fact just using this as a pretext for inward migration and in fact had little interest in the pursuit of higher education. This generated a widespread and vitriolic backlash on social media, particularly 'X' (which the authors, sensibly, continue to refer to as Twitter – and hereafter). For some years now, it has struck us that discourse analysis, perhaps once regarded as the province of academics, is increasingly being carried out by journalists and youtubers - in print, on air and online. Our next paper which explores the implications of media for intercultural communication is a reassuring example of academics reoccupying this space. An initial report of the furore brought about by Tiamiyu's interview published in an online newspaper based in Lagos, Nigeria, caught the eye of a small team of academics working in Nigeria and the USA, who here carry a systematic critical analysis of a language used in a corpus of responses to Tiamiyu's interview on Twitter. It is well known that the construction of nation states in Africa was by and large the legacy of European colonialism, and that many citizens of countries in Africa identify just as strongly, or even more strongly, with their ethnicities – which are often more deep-rooted, have longer historical provenance and can exist both within and across national boundaries. Nigeria is no exception to this, comprising three major ethnic groups - Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo – which history would suggest have not always co-existed harmoniously(see also Adichie, 2006). Approaching Tiamiyu's interview as a case study, PraiseGod Aminu, Uduak-Abasi Uyah and Seun Ajoseh employ

techniques of Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse a corpus of tweets posted on Twitter in response to Tiamiyu's interview. In particular they aim to reveal the discursive strategies that are used to create and maintain 'ethnic attitudes and negative perceptions among certain ethnic groups' in Nigeria. In so doing the authors deploy the well-known Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), most often associated with Ruth Wodak (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009), in order to analyse the relationship between social media discourse, social relations and power through the production and maintenance of 'ethnification'. The paper proceeds deductively to set out how DHA's strategies are deployed to attribute negative characteristics to the Yoruba group and to differentiate Tiamiyu from the Yoruba. Additionally, they also analyse a riposte from a UK-trained medical doctor from Nigeria, which gives a positive impression of his ethnic group, the Igbo, and sets out the many worthwhile reasons why Nigerian professionals migrating to the UK also bring their families. Inter alia, this paper illustrates just those types of social media post to which Shafirova and Araújo E Sá hope to sensitise their students in our previous paper. The authors conclude with some broader policy recommendations for steps which could be taken to enhance 'intercultural competence' in the members of the different ethnic groups cohabiting both within Nigeria's borders and beyond.

Over the past ten years, the city of Macao has proved something of a treasure trove for our readers and researchers alike. This is due to the very visible multilingual heritage that has evolved out of the island state's successive administrations of Portugal and China, as well as its more contemporary engagement with the international pursuits of tourism and gambling. Its many facets have brought about the flourishing of a research methodology relatively fresh to these pages – that of 'linguistic landscapes'- (see also Bradley et al. in these pages, 2018). To these another team of researchers from Macau now add the analysis of a small corpus of travel vlogs, which they describe as 'a type of audiovisual videos (*sic*) disseminated on social media public platforms'. These 'vlogs' (after Wu, 2023) become means of exploring the cultural and historical heritage of cities visited by young Chinese travellers. In order to explore the multilingual, multimodal and multisemiotic resources used by Chinese vloggers during their 'Citywalks' to convey the intricacies of Macao's linguistic landscape, our next authors - Siqing Mu, Peiyu Ma and Lili Han – deploy translanguaging (here after Li, 2011). Conceiving of their analysis of a small corpus of vlogs selected from the popular Chinese entertainment platform, Bilibili, as a case study, they deploy descriptive and interpretive approaches to analyse episodes of translanguaging which relate to Citywalk in their chosen vlogs. In so doing, they uncover some of the ways in which vloggers were able to exploit multimodal resources to infuse their

narratives with highly inflected accounts of their personal impressions of the environments which they encounter. Furthermore, our authors tease out the specificities of how their vloggers are able to 'negotiate meaning across languages and modes of communication, such as speech, visuals, text, and … gestures'. It seems to us that this paper succeeds in expanding our understanding of the multi-faceted ways in which language and intercultural communication is constituted by citizen-actors in the age of digital media. Furthermore, to adapt Marshall McLuhan's now well-worn (1964) phrase, it would appear that this multimodality and multilingualism resides both in 'the message' - in the form of the visual cityscape of the state of Macau; and in 'the medium' - in the shape of the communicative potentialities of the travel vlog.

The festive season movie of choice for many readers will doubtless be the third instalment of James Cameron's ecological tetraology, *Avatar, Fire and Water* (2025). If Mu et al.'s paper explored the multimodal and multilingual resources that real world actors draw upon in their semiotic engagement with the material environment of an actual city state, the final paper in this issue extends the boundaries of semiosis by investigating the semiotic resources and affordances deployed to represent a fictional world in which virtuous and malevolent human agents compete for access to the resources of an imaginary, idealised universe whose inhabitants have thus far maintained a harmonious ecosystem of their planet. Here, Reham El Shazly is of course talking about James Cameron's preceding aquatic outing for the *Avatar* series: *Avatar 2: Way of the Water* (2022). The aim of El Shazly's paper, originally presented at our 2023 conference in Nicosia, is to examine the ways in which the language and imagery of the film creates and maintains a relationship between the characters and creatures on the planet in order to promote a post-anthropomorphic ethics and inspire a politics of resistance against the military-industrial complex which is threatening to destroy the ecology of the fictional planet of Pandora. El Shazly's analysis of the films draws on ecosemiotics (e.g. Lotman, 2009; Kull, 2020), and appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005): not only to explore the ways in which the linguistic choices which are made in the interactions between the characters in the film, and their relationship with the alien environment in which they find themselves; but also to inform the audience's understanding of the relationship between humans, between non-human species and between sentient beings and the world in which they find themselves. In order to conduct her analysis, El Shazly zooms in on three pivotal scenes in the movie and examines in considerable detail how the language and imagery of the film attribute values through mobilising the subsystem of ATTITUDE within Martin & White's (2005) appraisal system, derived from systemic functional grammar (Halliday and

Matthiessen, 2014). As El Shazly works through her selected three scenes, she systematically sets out the verbal, visual and auditory resources which are mobilised to create attitudinal effects in the viewer. In sum, the study establishes the ways in which the audience members are interpellated to develop a sympathetic response to the Na'vi as the indigenous species on the planet, and contrasting responses to the range of good and bad human characters in the movie. In so doing, the narrative drive of the film constructs a set of positive values around ecological and interspecies harmony (all very much in keeping with sentiments expressed at IALIC's recent Auckland meeting); while the values of exploitation, profiteering and xenophobia are portrayed as negative. It may be that some readers will find it difficult to accept the argument that something as resource-guzzling as a blockbuster, capitalist, Hollywood movie can really be presented to the public as being ecologically beneficial and ethically inspiring; nevertheless El Shazly illustrates how – for all its extravagance - Cameron has constructed his *Avatar* series as a modern-day parable to alert audiences worldwide to the risks of ecological degradation and the threat of adversarial relations between sentient beings.

Acknowledgments, valete, salvete: towards the next twenty five years

We round off this issue by bringing you the first reading to reboot our favourite topic for the New Year, whenever it may dawn for our readers. Anna Finzel reviews the Third Edition of Jane Jackson's updated and revised classic, Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication, published by Routledge. We are grateful to Anna for her labours in bringing us her views on this updated edition. We also thank Amina Kebabi for her ongoing work as reviews and criticism editor.

As we sit down in December by the proverbial log fire to compose our editorial, we would like to start by thanking the team at Taylor and Francis for another years' solid support - and their flexibility, where occasionally deadlines have had to be stretched. We thank our now long-standing Portfolio Manager, Kate Morse for her continued belief in the journal and in particular her work this year in ensuring that the Editorial team are adequately resourced. We would also like to thank Claire Summerfield for providing oversight from base camp on all matters relating to production. But we also acknowledge all the hard graft undertaken by Shymala Indu Devi, who unfailingly makes sure that issues come out as near the publication date as authors will permit, and for her cordial and empathic engagement with the editorial team throughout the year. And last but by no means least, Vaishnavi Sivakumar has for another year ensured that

papers are dispatched from authors to reviewers, and reviews back to authors in a timely fashion. Our deepest thanks to Shymala and Vaishnavi.

As we move into our second quarter-century, LAIC is undergoing a renewal of its Editorship and Editorial Board. At the end of September 2025, Hans Ladegaard stepped down after completing his term as Editor-in-Chief; we thank Hans for his four years of hard work at the helm of the journal. At the beginning of October, Jessica Bradley and Sara Ganassin moved from the Editorial Board to join Malcolm on the editorial team to refresh LAIC into 2026. With this changeover, long-time Board members Melinda Dooly, Prue Holmes and Alison Phipps have also stepped down after many years providing invaluable oversight and scrutiny of LAIC's affairs, for the most part going right back to the very establishment of IALIC in 2000. Their duties over the years have included regular attendance at LAIC Board meetings and IALIC conferences, strategic reviewing duties, providing ad hoc specialist advice to the Editors, as well as personally devising and editing one or two special issues over this period. Alison, Melinda and Prue's presence will be very much missed, as we reorientate to another New Year, and another twenty five years of LAIC.

Malcolm N. MacDonald, University of Warwick
Jessica Bradley, University of Sheffield
Sara Ganassin, Newcastle University

Notes on contributors

Malcolm N. MacDonald now lives in North-East Scotland. He remains affiliated to the University of Warwick, where he was previously Associate Professor. He holds a Masters in Education (Bristol, 1986) and a PhD in Arts Education (1994). His project on the discourse of security (with Duncan Hunter) was published as *Language, illiberalism and governmentality* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2019). As well as having working in literacy projects, vocational education and universities in Scotland and England, Malcolm previously taught in the Seychelles National Youth Service, the University of Kuwait, Nanyang Technological University (Singapore), and Universiti Teknologi MARA (Shah Alam, Malaysia). He has studied French, German, Latin, Old English, Modern Standard Arabic, and has also studied Seychellois Kreol.

Jessica Bradley lives in Yorkshire, UK. She is Senior Lecturer in Literacies and Language in the School of Education at the University of Sheffield and also holds the title of Docent in Creative Inquiry and Applied Linguistics in the Centre for Applied Language Studies at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. Her PhD (2018) explored communicative practices in multilingual street arts in the UK and Slovenia, taking an ethnographic approach and she holds an MA in applied translation studies. Prior to

doing her PhD, she worked for a decade in educational engagement at the University of Leeds, focusing on languages and arts projects with schools and colleges. She holds a degree in French and Spanish, speaks some Italian, studied Latin (and some ancient Greek) in high school, and is currently in her second year of formally learning Finnish through an evening class.

Sara Ganassin moved from Italy to the North of England 16 years ago. She is Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics and Communication in the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences at Newcastle University. Her PhD (2017) explored the phenomenon of Chinese community schooling in England, and informed her monograph *Language, Culture and Identity in Two Chinese Community Schools: More Than One Way of Being Chinese?* (Multilingual Matters, 2020). Prior to entering academia, she worked in the charity sector, managing projects with refugee women and young people. She holds a degree in Oriental Studies from Ca' Foscari University of Venice and has studied Mandarin, Spanish, French, Latin and Classical Greek.

References

Adichie, C. N. (2006). *Half of a yellow sun*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Amadasi, S., & Holliday, A.R. (2018). 'I already have a culture.' Negotiating competing grand and personal narratives in interview conversations with new study abroad arrivals. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *18*(2), 241–256. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2017.1357727

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press.

Bell, J. S. (2002). Narrative inquiry: More than just telling stories. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(2), 207–213. https://doi.org/10.2307/3588331

Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Duke University Press.

Bennett, M. J. (2004). Becoming interculturally competent. In J. S. Wurzel (Ed.), *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education* (pp. 62–77). Intercultural Resource Corporation.

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.

Bradley, J. (2018) Translation and Translanguaging in Production and Performance in Community Arts. University of Leeds, Unpublished thesis

Bradley, J., Moore, E., Simpson, J., & Atkinson, L. (2018). Translanguaging space and creative activity: theorising collaborative arts-based learning. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *18*(1), 54–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2017.1401120

Braidotti, R. (2013). *The posthuman*. Polity Press.

Braidotti, R. (2020). Preface. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *20*(5), 393–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2020.1806660

Bregman, R. (2025). Fighting for Humanity in the Age of the Machine. [Audio podcast episode]. In *The Reith Lectures*. London: BBC. Available at https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m002nhld

Brislin, R. W. (1986). A culture general assimilator: Preparation for various types of sojourns. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(2), 215–234. https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(86)90007-6.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence.* Multilingual Matters.

Byram, M. (2008). From foreign language education to education for intercultural citizenship: Essays and reflections (Vol. 17). Multilingual Matters.

Cameron, J. (Director). (2009). *Avatar*. [Film]. Twentieth Century Fox.

Cameron, J. (Director). (2022). *Avatar: The Way of Water*. [Film]. 20th Century Studios/ Walt Disney Studios.

Cameron, J. (Director). (2025). *Avatar: Fire and ash* [Film]. 20th Century Studios; Lightstorm Entertainment

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2015). The things you do to know: An introduction to the pedagogy of multiliteracies. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Learning by design* (pp. 1–36). Palgrave Macmillan.

Dasli, M. (2014). The discursive deployment of race talk. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *14*(4), 460–474. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2014.948879

de Nooy, J., & Hanna, B. E. (2003). Cultural Information Gathering by Australian Students in France. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *3*(1), 64–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708470308668090

Deardorff, D. K. (2011). Assessing intercultural competence. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 149(1), 65–79.https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.381

Dooly, M., & Darvin, R. (2022). Intercultural communicative competence in the digital age: critical digital literacy and inquiry-based pedagogy. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *22*(3), 354–366. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2022.2063304

Dooly, M., & Darvin, R. (2022). Intercultural communicative competence in the digital age: critical digital literacy and inquiry-based pedagogy. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *22*(3), 354–366. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2022.2063304

EUAA (2025) *Latest Asylum Trends: January - June 2025.* Available at: https://www.euaa.europa.eu/latest-asylum-trends-january-june-2025/overview

Glapka, E. (2024). The social semiotic of reclaiming an identity from racist discourse: investigating the subaltern identity of South African coloureds by means of intersectional discourse

analysis. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *24*(6), 572–588. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2023.2256306

Goffman, Erving (1956). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday.

Greenholtz, J. (2003). Socratic Teachers and Confucian Learners: Examining the Benefits and Pitfalls of a Year Abroad. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *3*(2), 122–130. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708470308668096

Guilherme, M. (2002). *Critical citizens for an intercultural world: Foreign language education as cultural politics*. Multilingual Matters.

Holliday, A. R. (1999). Small cultures. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(2), 237–264. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/20.2.237

Holliday, A. R. (2016). Difference and awareness in cultural travel: negotiating blocks and threads. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *16*(3), 318–331. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2016.1168046

Holliday, A. R. (2019). *Understanding intercultural communication: Negotiating a grammar of culture (2nd ed.)*. Routledge.

Holliday, A. R., & Amadasi, S. (2020). *Making sense of the intercultural: Finding deCentred threads*. Routledge.

Holmes, P. (2008). Foregrounding harmony: Chinese international student's voices in communication with their New Zealand peers. *China Media Research*, 4(4), 102–110

Humphreys, G., & Baker, W. (2021). Developing intercultural awareness from short-term study abroad. *Language and Intercultural Education*, 21(2), 260–275. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2020.1860997

Jackson, J. (2010). Intercultural Journeys: From Study to Residence Abroad. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kim, J., Tatar, B., & Choi, J. (2014). Emerging culture of English-medium instruction in Korea: experiences of Korean and international students. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *14*(4), 441–459. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2014.946038

Kull, K. (2020). Semiotic fitting and the nativeness of community. Biosemiotics, 13(1), 9–19. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12304-020-09375-y

Lee, J., Han, M. W., & McKerrow, R. E. (2010). English or perish: how contemporary South Korea received, accommodated, and internalized English and American modernity. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *10*(4), 337–357. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2010.497555

Li, W. (2011). Multilinguality, multimodality, and multicompetence: Code- and mode switching by minority ethnic children in complementary schools. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95(3), 370–384. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01209.x

Li, W. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 9–30. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx039

Lotman, J. (2009). Culture and explosion. (semiotics, communication and cognition). Mouton de Gruyter.

MacDonald, M. N. (2019) The discourse of 'thirdness' in intercultural studies, *Language and Intercultural Communication*,, 19:1, 93-109, DOI: 10.1080/14708477.2019.1544788

MacDonald, M. N., & Ladegaard, H. J. (2024). COVID-19 and interculturality. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *24*(3), 155–161. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2024.2355708.

Martin, J.R. & White, P.R. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Palgrave.

McKenney, S. E., & Reeves, T. C. (2013). Educational design research. In J. M. Spector, M. D. Merrill, J. Elan, & M. J. Bishop (Eds.), *The handbook of research on educational and communications technology* (pp. 131–140). Springer.

McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McGraw-Hill, Routledge & Kegan Paul. New York and London.

Mutua, E. M., & Kang, D. (2025). Constructing transcultural identities from global racial-justice events: a dialogue of Zulu, Kiswahili, and Chinese conceptions. Language and Intercultural Communication, 25(1), 185–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2024.2307598

Pachler, N., Hua, Z., Ayres-Bennett, W., & Forsdick, C. (2025). Rethinking language education in the school curriculum in England. The Language Learning Journal, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2025.2560689

Parrish, A. (2023). Feminisation, masculinisation and the other: re-evaluating the language learning decline in England. The Language Learning Journal, 51(1), 94–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2021.1989016

Peterson, A., Milligan, A., & Wood, B. E. (2018). Global citizenship education in Australasia. In I. Davies, L. C. Ho, D. Kiwan, C. L. Peck, A. Peterson, E. Sant, & Y. Waghid (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of global citizenship and education* (pp. 3–20). Palgrave Macmillan.

Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and modernity/rationality. *Cultural Studies*, *21*(2–3), 168–178. https://doi.org/10. 1080/09502380601164353

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2009). The discourse-historical approach (DHA). In R. Wodak, & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods for critical discourse analysis*, 23–61. London: Sage.

RICH-Ed. (2021). Resources for interculturality in Chinese higher education: Pedagogic framework. http://www.riched. com/index.php?s=/Show/index/cid/40/id/81.html

Ros i Solé, C. (2024). Material interculturality: Making sense with everyday objects. Routledge.

Roy, Arundhati. (2020 April 3). The pandemic is a portal. *The Financial Times.* *https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca*

Song, G. (2022). Cosmopolitan translation in multilingual cities: A Macao experience. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 22(1), 35–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2021.1990309

UNHCR (2025). *Figures at a glance.* Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance

Van Sterkenburg, J., & Walder, M. (2021). How do audiences of televised English football construct difference based on race/ethnicity? *Language and Intercultural Communication*, *21*(6), 765–780. https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2021.1979571

Wu, D. (2023). City walk in a gap day: Potential and opportunities for tourism and leisure. Tourism Review, 79(9),1576–1581. https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-09-2023-0614

Wu, Yujuan (2022), *Digital Literacies: A Study of English Language Learning in Rural China*. Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Simon Fraser University.

Zhang, Hong (2016) Plurilingual posters in a multilingual city: reader positioning and power negotiation. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 16:4, 588-609, DOI: 10.1080/14708477.2016.1192184

Zhang, Hong & Brian Hok-Shing Chan (2017) The shaping of a multilingual landscape by shop names: tradition versus modernity. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 17:1, 26-44, DOI: 10.1080/14708477.2017.1261674