Editorial Preface

Special Issue on Interculturality and Discourse Analysis in Education

Heidi Layne, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Recent developments around the world are seriously changing the way in which people view their future. Climate change and COVID-19, and their impact on the local and global economy, are some instances. While there's hope, as part of the world was in the mist of getting vaccinated against the virus at the time of writing, the uneven access and distribution of vaccines is revealing another system of injustices. Another development is represented by political challenges such as the death of George Floyd which is raising concerns over the safety and well-being of minorities in the United States and beyond. While one could rejoice at the fact that the police officer who attacked George Floyd may have to bear the consequences for the first time in history, at the same time, similar events and discrimination continue around the world.

What all these crises also demonstrate is that something is going wrong with education in the world, even with high performing countries like Finland and Singapore. For example, Singapore, a country that has been able to keep the COVID-19 cases low, and life as normal as possible within the past year, has recently experienced a spike in COVID-19 cases. On 2nd of May 2021 CNA (Channelnewsasia.com) reported how the increase in the number of cases, resulted in increment in xenophobic sentiments. First the Chinese were the target and now it was the turn of Indians. If we look into history, it seems that part of human nature is to keep repeating the same mistakes. The constant reporting about racism and right-wing politics, in places like Europe, bears witness to this truism. In their study, Machado et al. (2020) point out how crucial it is for the voices of young people to be heard through dialogues on their life-stories, beliefs, and critical values, as well as how they deal with differences and conflicts. In addition, schools need to give space to intercultural learning so it is systematically integrated into formal education. Much responsibility has been placed on education and young people to create a better future, but their voices on citizenship may often get dismissed.

But what is the role of intercultural education in all this? The inclusion of a more critical stance on interculturality into the school curriculum has been discussed as one solution to improve sustainable education in increasingly divided societies. Take Finnish education as an example. School education is based on the values of *humanity, equality* and *inclusion*. However, recently, the Report of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman of Finland on Racism and Discrimination – *everyday experiences for People of African descent in Finland* – indicated that racism exists at all levels of education, starting from early childhood education (https://syrjinta.fi/en/-/report-of-the-non-discrimination-ombudsman-racism-and-discrimination-everyday-experiences-for-people-of-african-descent-in-finland). Many researchers and practitioners have been aware of the fact that the way in which we promote interculturality has failed – especially to tackle inequalities. Shi-xu (2009) reminds us that, within intercultural education, cultures are not negotiated on an egalitarian and democratic basis but

need to be understood in specific historical and political contexts. Besides, how we construct cultures and cultural differences discursively is not innocent. As such many people may get discriminated against and excluded from what is believed and constructed as mainstream in terms of 'culture' (Shi-xu 2009, 2016; Dervin 2011). I also personally welcome scholars working on interculturality to critique the inhuman process of racialization used to construct the figure of *a human*. Race is not endemic to humans but a product of a problematic system of racialization reproduced and maintained through education (Braidotti & Hlavajova, 2018).

We already have some solutions. For example, the concept of *safe space* is increasingly used in (intercultural) educational settings to stress the importance of classrooms and learning environments, where students can feel safe and respected. The idea of safe space is widely used as a method to decrease systemic marginalization within education contexts, and to create feelings of safety, for example, for students who identify themselves as minorities. The concept was originally used to name physical meeting places where like-minded people could share their experiences and to protect marginalized groups (Flesher & Von der Lippe, 2019). However, in their work, Fleshner & Von der Lippe (2019) wonder *against what safe space is meant to protect people*. Equity and equality policies are put in place, yet the students, teachers and public are not necessarily brought into critical discussions on whose rights are addressed and from whose perspective(s). Too much emphasis is still being placed on the ideas of cultural diversity and difference…

The International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education continues to welcome contributions addressing these critical issues in education. With the COVID-19 crisis of the past year, many other topics come to mind. For example, with the shift from face-to-face to online learning, interculturality in digital learning environments should receive more (critical and reflexive) attention from educators, parents and scholars alike. Intercultural encounters beyond human subjects towards more sustainable and just interactions between living objects and non-living objects should also be of interest.

In this special issue, Nathalie Auger (University of Montpellier, France) and Fred Dervin (University of Helsinki) invite us to ponder over and explore the role of different forms of discourse analysis in intercultural communication education. Placing criticality at the centre of their papers, the authors show with rigor how the combination of discourse analysis and interculturality can help us become aware of some of the aforementioned 'evils' and, hopefully, propose sustainable solutions. The special issue is a real *tour de force* for the field of interculturality!

REFERENCES

Dervin, F. 2011. Cultural identity, representation and othering. In The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication, ed. Jane Jackson, 181-194. London & NY: Routledge.

Flensner, K.K. & Von der Lippe, M. (2019). Being safe from what and safe for whom? A critical discussion of the conceptual metaphor of 'safe space', Intercultural Education, 30:3, 275-288, DOI: 10.1080/14675986.2019.1540102

Machado. E.B, I. P. Freire, A.P. Caetano, S. Vassalo and L. Bicho (2020). The voice of young people contribution for their involvement in the school, Intercultural Education, 31:3, 300-313, DOI: 10.1080/14675986.2020.1717291

Shi-xu, 2009. Reconstructing eastern paradigms of discourse studies. Journal of Multicultural Discourses 4(1), 29-48.

Shi-xu, 2016. Cultural discourse studies through the Journal of Multicultural Discourses: 10 years on. Journal of Multicultural Discourses 11(1), 1-8.

https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/covid-19-racist-remarks-racially-charged-xenophobia-14718848

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

A Discourse Toolbox for Working on interculturality in Education

Nathalie Auger and Fred Dervin

This special issue is intended for readers who wish to find out about different ways of using discourse analysis in relation to interculturality in education. It can serve as a 'toolbox' to explore and get inspiration from.

The world is dominated by specific narratives on the 'intercultural', emerging mostly from certain parts of the so-called 'West'. In research, however, the notion of interculturality is currently being revised, renewed while new and multiple meanings are being applied to it (Dervin & Simpson, 2021; Aman, 2018; R'boul, 2020; Dervin & Auger, 2019). The ideologies hidden behind discourses of interculturality in research, practice and everyday life, are also increasingly being unearthed and criticised (Holliday, 2010; Dervin & Jacobsson, 2021).

This should have a strong influence on how intercultural encounters are conceptualised and analysed in education.

There is in fact much more going on when people meet interculturally than simply the transfer of information about their 'culture' - or a mere exchange of 'their culture'. As researchers, we both agree that working on interculturality requires focusing on what is happening when people meet, not so much in terms of 'culture', difference and/or similarities, or other reified elements, but in terms of how those involved use categories, stereotypes, social representations but also ideology, to determine what is happening between them in a specific context (Auger, 2007). This can help, educationally speaking, deconstruct misunderstandings, stereotypes, snap judgements – see cases of racism and strong ethnocentrism. This can also urge us to open up to other (underexplored) ways of conceptualising the notion of interculturality (see e.g. Dervin & Yuan, 2021).

It is this complexity that interests the authors of the articles in this special issue.

Discourse analysis appears to be a fruitful and promising tool to examine this renewed way of thinking about interculturality. Yet discourse analysis is a complex 'galaxy' of perspectives, approaches and methods. In some cases, scholars use it to observe 'cultural differences' in the way people negotiate *being together* and remain on the verge of culturalism and essentialism. In other cases, the use of discourse analysis is minimal or unproblematised, although the authors claim to be doing it.

Like interculturality, discourse analysis is a broad and diverse field that relies on many and varied approaches, in different parts of the world. It is used in many fields such as cultural studies, education, communication, postcolonial studies, linguistics and can be conducted in different ways. *Conversation analysis, the ethnography of communication, Critical discourse analysis (CDA), rhetorical political analysis, discursive psychology, Interactional sociolinguistics, Enunciation* and *Dialogism* all represent different forms of discourse analysis.

The editors and the authors of the articles believe that discourse analysis offers fascinating and rewarding ways of working on interculturality in education. In some discourse analysis perspectives the starting point is that one needs to look beyond the sentence boundary to explore the use of language in terms of construction, function and social action. Discourse analysis can thus help us examine the political meanings of texts, the importance of contexts and the production process of what people say, and the influence of power on what goes on when people meet. Important for research on interculturality today is the argument that discourses *cannot but be* unstable, variable and sometimes incoherent. Digging out some of these elements can help researchers and educators point at the inherent complexities and contradictions of intercultural encounters.

Different forms of discourse analysis can also help us move beyond (illusionary) pre-determined sets of axiologies in people's discourses. Through discourse analysis complexities can be identified such as cognitive shifts (e.g. binaries, *simplexities* from the simple to the complex and vice versa) and dialogisms (e.g. un/identifiable voices inserted in a discourse to justify an argument). Finally, discourse analysis can also allow self-reflection, reflection on others, categories and emotional aspects that go with them.

This special issue does not claim to show a comprehensive picture of how to use discourse analysis for interculturality in education. What it does instead is to offer snapshots of how scholars from different parts of the world analyse interculturality by means of some form of discourse analysis. The authors of the different articles cover the following elements in order to allow readers to follow and contrast their multiple perspectives both in terms of discourse analysis and interculturality:

- They discuss how interculturality is conceptualized in their article;
- Introduce their assumptions and traditions related to discourse analysis;
- Present the data used for analysis (if any);
- Describe and discuss the dimensions of analysis;
- Consider the pros and cons of the kind of discourse analysis used, especially in relation to researchers' reflexivity.

Six papers are included in this special issue and are based on research done in various geopolitical contexts (France, Germany, Japan, Singapore, US).

The first paper, written by Dominic Busch, proposes a dispositive analysis of the field of intercultural communication research. Relying on Foucault's concept of *the dispositive,* the paper shows how one can use this very specific type of discourse analysis to problematize the links between discourse, power and knowledge in such a complex field of research and practice. Busch offers a very useful tool to reflect on interculturality from a macro-perspective in research.

In her paper, Phyllis Bo-yuen Ngai examines the connection between discourse analysis and interculturality in intercultural communication education, focusing on the development of intercultural competence. Cultural discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis and ethnography of speaking are explored.

The third paper, written by Véronique Lemoine and Dominique Macaire, is based on a project whereby teacher trainers' conceptions of language and interculturality in early childhood education were stimulated and examined. The authors make use of theories of enunciation and dialogism to analyse the focus groups they collected (see Dervin, 2016).

In a similar vein, Paola Rivieccio focuses on the discursive forms in *Autobiographies for Intercultural Encounters* developed by a European supranational institution. The focus is on young learners' engagement with intercultural encounters when working with this learning document.

In *The incongruence of internationalisation policy in Japanese higher education* Robert Higgins proposes to use critical discourse analysis to examine how policy makers construct policy texts. In so doing the author offers a critique of the support and/or hindrance of higher educational approaches to interculturality.

Finally, Lee Tuck Leong uses various approaches to discourse analysis from ethnomethodology and cognitive linguistics, to examine interculturality in interfaith dialogue. The author shows how interculturality plays out at the intersection of language and discourse.

We hope that the articles will help broaden readers' understanding of the complexities of interculturality in education while providing them with new ways of analyzing them through discourse analysis.

Originally this special issue was to be co-edited by the late Dr. Regis Machart[1] and ourselves, based on our discussions around the links between interculturality and discourse analysis. Regis was an active, innovative and generous scholar who inspired us in our un-re-thinking interculturality. His joyful and rigorous spirit was with us while putting this special issue together. It is meaningful that the issue is published in the *IJBIDE* since Regis was its founding editor with Fred.

We dedicate this special issue to his memory.

REFERENCES

Aman, R. (2018). *Decolonising intercultural education: Colonial differences, the geopolitics of knowledge, and inter-epistemic dialogue*. Routledge. London

Auger, N. (2007). *Constructions de l'interculturel dans les manuels de langue*. EME. Paris

Dervin, F. (2016). *Interculturality in education*. Palgrave MacMillan. London. doi:10.1057/978-1-137-54544-2

Dervin, F., & Auger, N. (Eds.). (2019). Les nouvelles voix/voies de l'interculturel. Le langage et l'homme: revue de didactique du français, 541.

Dervin, F., & Simpson, A. (2021). Interculturality and the political within education. London: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780429471155

Dervin, F., & Jacobsson, A. (2021). *Teacher education for critical and reflexive interculturality*. Palgrave Macmillan. London. doi:10.1007/978-3-030-66337-7

Dervin, F., & Yuan, M. (2021). *Revitalizing interculturality*. Routledge.

Holliday, A. (2010). *Intercultural communication and ideology*. Sage. London

R'boul, H. (2020). Postcolonial interventions in intercultural communication knowledge: Meta-intercultural ontologies, decolonial knowledges and epistemological polylogue. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 1–19. doi:10.1080/17513057.2020.1829676

ENDNOTE

[1]   Please visit the website dedicated to the memory of Dr Machart here: http://regismachart.net