INTRODUCTION
Research and social activism

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Like most humanities and social science disciplines, language and intercultural communication (ICC) research has generally made little attempt to integrate its research agenda with current social and political issues. Reflecting on his role as a language scholar and social activist, Rickford (1999) claims that a 'Not-in-my-backyard' attitude has been typical for the way many applied linguists have approached the great language debates of our time and their applicability to social and political issues. This attitude, he argues, may have been motivated by fear that socio-political issues may 'distract us from the theoretical and descriptive research we consider our bread and butter (if not our fame and fortune), that they will devour our time and dilute our expertise, or that they will lead us into unchartered waters for which our training and expertise provide little preparation' (Rickford, 1999, p. 267). Some disciplines (like anthropology) have even warned scholars against getting involved in social advocacy work arguing that it would not only distract the researcher, but potentially jeopardise the research agenda (Harvey, 1992).

We come to write this introduction at a point in time when protest movements are rising worldwide and there is renewed interest in different forms of activism, both in scholarship and in practice. Hong Kong has experienced massive, and increasingly violent, protests[1] in recent months eventually leading to the occupation of universities; and the results of the U.K. General Election returned a far right Government and threaten the break up of the U.K., and certainly the break up of Europe through Brexit. Anti-Brexit protests have become a regular and frequent aspect of both digital and civic life in the U.K, with the threat of violence having been carried out in the murder of an elected politician, Jo Cox M.P., and a climate of threatening xenophobia, increasingly directed towards those who use languages other than English in public. As recent protests have exemplified, young people, and those seeking refuge or living in poverty, or with disability, and those who speak languages which may not be the language of the dominant political group, have been most affected by oppressive conditions. And through these times, it is clear that language has played a key role in shaping protest and in forming the falsehoods through which power has been taken and consolidated. This is maybe fertile ground for the writing of articles and consideration of how language works in the mouths of the most powerful, but also how it works contextually in protest.

Lennon Walls with short messages supporting the democracy movement (such as 'We love HK'; 'Never give up', 'We are One', and 'Free HK') have appeared in train stations, restaurants and other public places in Hong Kong during the 2019 protests. 'Get Brexit done' and 'Go back to where you came from' have been the propogandist

slogans let lose and writ large through acts of xenophobia and verbal racial and linguaphobic abuse throughout the Brexit debates and the 2019 General Election Campaign. It is clear that such discursive productions and their effects require scholarly attention. The question we are pursing in this Special Issue is to what extent such contexts need applied linguists, anthropologists, and political discourse analysts to make their work and teaching more widely available, and to engage in non-violent protest and policy-making.

There might be good reasons for scholars to avoid an open commitment to social and/or political activism, but some justifications appear to be convenient excuses more than anything. Mühlhäusler (1993, p. 123) argues that the expertise linguists possess is 'really quite limited and much too shaky to be the foundation for solid expert opinion in most areas of linguistic application.' This is blatantly untrue, as testified by numerous language scholars whose expert testimonies and opinions have impacted the way language is taught and used in classrooms, courtrooms and hospital wards around the world (Burland, 2015; Costa, 2012; Eades, 2005; Good, 2009). Not everybody has the resources to be involved in social activism, but, irrespective of the degree of our public engagement, one overriding principle could be applied to all language and ICC research: if scientific knowledge is worth having, it is worth sharing, also beyond the community of scholars (Cameron et al., 1992).

Rickford (1993, p. 130) aptly accounts for the dilemma many scholars find themselves in when they consider their research agenda and the social implications it might have vis-à-vis their other commitments as academics:

> Most of us fall short of paying our debts to the communities whose data have helped to build and advance our careers. Our grants typically include more money for paying data processors than data providers, and our intentions to pay back to the community in service often get lost in less escapable commitments and busyness of teaching, committee service and more research. It is not a picture, when we step back and view it, with which we can be proud.

What this points to as a phenomenon is the way in which the material conditions of life clash with the material conditions which enable scholarship to occur. Feminism has long pointed to the normative ways in which research tracks assumptions that shaped themselves through patriarchy, and which, whilst now being re-shaped in some parts of the world, nonetheless assume certain material conditions might support the production of research. For decades these included reliance on, for instance, a wife at home who undertook tasks such as childcare. It would be fair to say that the activism of the academic household in the last three decades has been engaged with the messy and difficult business of deconstructing and reconstructing such roles and assumptions, and the material conditions which sustain their normativity. At this present time, for example, Alison is engaged in industrial action in Higher Education in the U.K. focusing on pay and conditions, not least the precarious conditions of early career researchers, and on the notorious gender pay gap. What these conditions point to, as demonstrated by Bourdieu in *Pascalian Mediations*, is the extent to which the 'freeing' or reshaping of academic time and resource, which have traditionally

focused on a detachment in scholarship, need to be re-ordered in order to produce material conditions from which socially engaged scholarship might flow, and change conditions in society for the better.

Notable attempts (particularly in sociolinguistics) to take research findings back to communities in the attempt to empower the people who generated the findings and to address specific social issues have been lauded in the literature (Fasold, 1999). Examples include Cameron et al. (1992), where a key assumption is that applied language research should be done not just *on* participants but, more importantly, *for* and *with* them. The same idea is prominent in Rickford's (1999) attempts to use his research on African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) to influence educational policies in the USA, and in Watson and Smitherman (1996), who take their research on AAVE one step further by developing an educational programme that addresses the needs of underprivileged African-American youth in inner-city Detroit.

These attempts, however, are few and far between and in recent years, not many language and/or ICC scholars have tried to bridge the gap between research and theory development on the one hand, and the potential for social and political action that could ensue from this research on the other (see, however, Byram et al., 2016; Ladegaard, 2017; Phipps & Kay, 2014; Phipps, 2019). This is regrettable because, as Barrett (2016) argues, the world today is in desperate need of people who are interculturally and democratically competent and committed to a social justice agenda, which practices 'respect for the inherent dignity and rights of all human beings, [and] respect for others as equals irrespective of their specific cultural affiliations' (p. i).

With this Special Issue, we wish to focus on translational research in language and ICC. We aim to bring together scholars who discuss how we might be able to move from *talking about* ICC and social injustice, to *doing* ICC and promoting a social justice agenda. We think this is timely for several reasons. First, there seems to be a move in academia worldwide away from 'research for research's sake', and a one-sided focus on a positivist empirical approach, to an appreciation of social impact, i.e. how research can benefit and empower people outside academia, and a consideration of participatory approaches. Evidence of this move can be seen in the various research assessment exercises that more and more countries adopt in which social impact is assessed and rewarded. Second, and far more importantly, we argue that the role of the public/transformative intellectual, as outlined and discussed by prominent scholars like Edward Said, Noam Chomsky and Henry Giroux, has been largely ignored for too long. Academia has become a neoliberal endeavour with a one-sided focus on increasing student numbers and an insatiable demand for more publications, grant income and citations.

With this Special Issue, we want to reignite a debate about our role as critical ICC scholars and public intellectuals. Lastly, we argue that the ever-increasing disparity in wealth and opportunity between the global North and the global South[2], as evidenced by massive flows of refugees and forced migrant workers on the move, calls for scholars to recommit to a social justice agenda. This means bringing to the forefront the skewed narrative that has characterised much language and ICC research, a

renewed commitment to our role as critical scholars and public intellectuals, and a discussion of social justice as it relates to concepts like ethics, advocacy and responsibility (or, as Gadamer [1975] puts it, research as *praxis*). We will make an attempt at this endeavour before we introduce the individual papers that have been included in this Special Issue.

A skewed narrative

Language and ICC research has relied heavily on evidence from elite groups travelling for business, education or tourism (MacDonald & O'Regan, 2012). The experiences of these elite travellers have produced universalised narratives of the increased opportunities for social advancements brought about by globalisation and increased mobility, and, as a positive spinoff, the acquisition of intercultural competence and citizenship and a more global mindset (Byram, 2008; Jackson, 2017). Whilst elite travellers are far from a homogeneous group, and displaced or forced migratory groups may well include those with means, so far, disenfranchised groups like unskilled migrant workers, those seeking refuge or humanitarian assistance, sex workers and other victims of human trafficking have not featured strongly in intercultural narratives. And when language scholars do engage with marginalised vulnerable groups such as domestic migrant workers (e.g., Lorente 2018), they rarely attempt to translate their research findings into some form of social action. With this Special Issue, we argue that, in order for us to enable more inclusive thinking about ICC and globalisation, and the effect it has on people's lives, we need to sharpen the lens on the experiences of marginalised disempowered groups and let their voices be heard and their sacrifices recognised (Ladegaard, 2018; 2019).

There are now an estimated 232 million migrants in the world, more than during any previous time in human history, and the number is expected to rise further because of the increasing economic disparities between the global North and the global South, and because of violent conflicts in many parts of the world (United Nations, 2013). The significant increase in contact between people from different countries is also caused by international trade, which has nearly doubled from US$13 trillion in 2005 to nearly US$24 trillion in 2014 (United Nations, 2015)[3]. However, as Barrett (2016) points out, other statistics reveal that globalisation with its increased levels of contact between countries and people has not led to greater intercultural understanding, nor an increased sense of social justice. For example, data collected in Europe reveal increasing levels of prejudice, discrimination and hate crimes against ethnic and religious minorities, and a 2014-survey found that almost half of the respondents in seven European countries (France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain and the U.K.) admitted to having anti-Muslim views (Barrett, 2016, p. ii). Thus, hundreds of thousands of refugees from war-torn, impoverished Middle-Eastern and African countries, who have fled their home countries in recent years to seek a better future in Europe, have only experienced further rejection and alienation upon their arrival.

Similar scenarios are visible throughout Asia where developing countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Myanmar experience mass exodus of

migrant workers who flee poverty and social deprivation in their home countries to seek better opportunities and a chance to provide for their families in more affluent countries. Every year, around 400,000 new migrant workers leave Indonesia to work overseas as this appears to be the only way they can provide for their family's financial needs. Around 80% of them are women and they work as domestic helpers in the Middle East, or in more affluent societies in Asia such as Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and Hong Kong. However, many of them experience exploitation and abuse, working under slave-like conditions in countries, which, in many cases, have no migrant labour laws to protect them (Ladegaard, 2019).

The growing sense of nationalism and protectionism that has characterised the political debate in recent years has further enhanced discourses of elitism and social and cultural dominance. It has become legitimate for political leaders to refer to people from other cultural and religious groups as undesirable aliens, and thus, it has become legitimate to exploit them further, or to bar them from entering your country. Racism has come out of the closet; it no longer needs to be hedged, mitigated or excused. The elite intercultural language studies of the 1990s and 2000s offer neither frameworks for effective social justice in action, nor adequate theorising in the face of rising racism. Therefore, perhaps more than ever before, there is a need for

> much greater respect for the inherent dignity, needs and rights of all human beings; a willingness to engage with those who are perceived to have other cultural affiliations; a willingness to speak out against expressions of prejudice and intolerance; a willingness to defend those who are disempowered and disadvantaged; and a willingness to take civic or political action for the greater good if this is required. In short, active intercultural democratic citizenship is required (Barrett 2016, p. iii).

Thus, recent social and political events, such as the refugee crisis in Europe, the increase in human trafficking on a global scale, as well as the shocking number of abuse cases against foreign domestic workers, call for researchers to engage not only in language and ICC research *on* and *about* disenfranchised groups, but also *for* and *with* them. This requires critical and indigenous methods, creative approaches and a framing of the collection and analysis of data from within a wider ethical frame than hitherto present within intercultural methods. There is always a risk of dichotomous thinking or critiques in discussions of language and intercultural communication and this Special Issue presents work which both acknowledges this, works within the confines and stark data on inequalities, but also actively pursues lines of enquiry relating to transformational research which is taking the field into new areas. This, we argue, calls for a renewed commitment to our joint role as ICC scholars and public, transformative intellectuals.

ICC scholars and public intellectuals

In his renowned essay, The Responsibility of Intellectuals, published in *The New York Review of Books* in 1967, Noam Chomsky argues that because of the unique privileges intellectuals enjoy, they also have a responsibility to speak up: to expose

the lies of governments and to analyse the causes, motives and hidden intentions behind political decisions. They are in a position to do that, he continues, because of the facilities they enjoy and the training they have received which will help them expose 'the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology and class interest, through which the events of current history are presented to us' (Chomsky, 1987, p. 60). Chomsky further argues that the main concern of intellectuals should be their role in the creation and analysis of ideology. He quotes Daniel Bell (1960) who refers to ideology as 'the conversion of ideas into social levers', and 'a set of ideas, infused with passion, … [which] … seeks to transform the whole way of life' (Bell, 1960, quoted in Chomsky, 1987, p. 72). Bell argues that intellectuals in the West have lost interest in converting ideas into social levers. The creation of a pluralistic society and the welfare state has made us think that there is no longer any need for a radical transformation of society. Thus, Chomsky concludes, intellectuals are content with tinkering their way of life here and there and see no need to try to bring about radical change – and with this consensus, 'ideology is dead' (Chomsky, 1987, p. 52).

Another strong proponent of the intellectual's role as a critical public voice is Edward Said (1994). He argues that 'there is no such thing as a private intellectual' (p. 12): the minute we put words on paper and publish them, we have entered the public sphere and are responsible for honouring what he calls our calling as intellectuals. Our primary role as public intellectuals, according to Said (1974, p. 11) is

> publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug.

Thus, Said (1974) argues, public advocacy is our responsibility as intellectuals. We do what we do because of universal principles: 'that all human beings are entitled to expect decent standards of behavior concerning freedom and justice from worldly powers or nations, and that deliberate or inadvertent violations of these standards need to be testified and fought against courageously' (pp. 11-12). We have a 'vocation for the art of representing' (p. 13), whether we speak in public, teach, write, or appear on TV.

Said (1974, p. 94) is not blind to the immensely challenging nature of this responsibility. The problem is that while everyone 'professes to a liberal language of equality and harmony for all', the challenge is that the intellectual needs to 'bring these notions to bear on actual situations' (and people) where the gap between the alleged equality and justice on the one hand, and 'the less edifying reality on the other' is significant. This schism is at the core of this Special Issue: it exemplifies, through case studies from around the world, how certain groups (and peoples) are excluded from notions of equality and harmony. It is the untold, or neglected, stories of these disenfranchised groups of people that need to be brought to the forefront of

language and ICC research in order for us to move forward in our thinking about globalisation and ICC (Ladegaard, 2018). And if we as scholars have access to these stories, we have an obligation to tell them. As argued by another outspoken public intellectual, Henry Giroux (2009), it should be every intellectual's moral obligation to speak up for the weak and undefended, and also to make them aware of their own power as individual and social agents.

Another important mission for the public intellectual, according to Said, Chomsky and Giroux, is to 'speak truth to power'. This involves exposing hidden agendas and abuse of power and publicly criticising unjust immigration laws and inhumane refugee policies, for example. It often requires willingness for us 'to be embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant', and it involves 'both commitment and risk, boldness and vulnerability' (Said, 1994, p. 12-13). This is not an easy task, and for some academics, it involves considerable risk. In the current climate in Hong Kong, for example, where pro-democracy activists (including many students) are fighting against what they see as anti-democratic laws restricting people's freedom of expression and assembly, and where demonstrators clash with police in the streets generating mutual accusations of excessive use of force/violence, some mainland academics working in Hong Kong have had their Home Return Permit revoked for publicly supporting the pro-democracy demonstrations. Thus, we need to acknowledge that speaking up comes with considerably greater risk for some than for others.

The celebrated notion of speaking truth to power has also been criticised for turning the problem on its head. Arundhati Roy (2004, p. 68) argues

> Isn't there a flaw in the logic of that phrase – speak truth to power? It assumes that power doesn't know the truth. But power knows the truth as well, if not better, than the powerless know the truth. Enron[4] knows what it's doing. We don't have to tell it what it's doing. We have to tell other people what Enron is doing.

For the purpose of this Special Issue, there are at least two implications of Roy's comment. First, that public truth-telling is important and, as Herman (1998) argues, should be part of all social action. Shuman (2005, p. 162) argues along the same lines and reminds us that narratives of suffering 'insist, sometimes even more explicitly than the scientific rationale [behind the study], on knowledge as redemption and on the possibility that telling untold stories might make a better world.' Second, Roy's comment also implies that we share our knowledge with 'the powerless'. This could mean taking the research back to the communities that gave us access to their stories. By sharing our research with them, we might help them see how their lives have been shaped by unfair discriminatory laws and by other people's prejudice (see Burford-Rice, Augoustinos & Clemence, this issue). This might help them (re)discover their own resources, which may have been damaged by other people's demeaning discourses about them (cf. 'the undoing of self', Brison, 1999) and show them their own power as individuals and social actors (Giroux, 2009). These issues call for

renewed attention to, and critical reconsideration of, our dual roles as researchers and social activists.

Ethics, advocacy and empowerment

The positivist empirical approach is still dominant in much humanities and social science research. This approach tends to consider research participants as 'subjects' who get selected for their ability to provide the researcher with certain types of knowledge. Thus, researchers do research *on* their subjects, rather than *for* and *with* them, and this, as Cameron at al. (1992, p. 15) point out, is problematic because 'Human subjects deserve special ethical considerations, but they do no more set the researcher's agenda than a bottle of sulphuric acid sets the chemist's agenda.' There might be several reasons for this, in our opinion, misperception. First, research councils to which academics submit their research proposals often require testable hypotheses to be stated and clear unequivocal answers to these hypotheses to be delivered. This means there is no room for an inductive approach where no hypotheses or preconceived ideas about the data are stated, and where researcher(s) and participants co-construct the research agenda and the data. Second, the positivist empirical approach has favoured the idea that there should be a distance between the researcher and his/her 'subjects' in order to avoid any interference with the research agenda, or any bias on the part of the researcher.

The papers in this Special Issue take a different approach. They assume that knowledge is shared and co-constructed between researchers and participants. In a social constructivist framework, participants and researchers discursively construct reality together. This also means a rejection of the sharp distinction between 'the researcher' and 'the researched' because it reinforces the misguided perception of a knowledgeable researcher who works on, and later empowers, powerless subjects by giving them access to information about themselves they did not have (Ladegaard, 2017). We argue against this simplistic understanding of advocacy and empowerment. We have both worked with disenfranchised groups who might be seen as powerless: people seeking refuge and humanitarian assistance in the U.K. (Alison), and domestic migrant workers in Hong Kong, the Philippines and Indonesia (Hans), but we argue that these people are not powerless per se. Some of them have been silenced, or even traumatised, by inhumane treatment and other people's prejudice, which may lead to powerlessness and vulnerability. But others are resourceful and strong and capable of fighting for their rights. Many Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong, for example, are able to use their educational background, their Christian faith, and their superior English language skills to their advantage (Ladegaard, 2020a).

So while we are sceptical of the need for research participants to be empowered, we argue that what often leads to powerlessness and vulnerability for migrant workers and refugees is the fact that they do not have a voice in the societies in which they live. Their refugee status makes them perpetually vulnerable and reminds them of their status as guests who rely on the hospitality of their hosts (Derrida, 2000; Vigouroux, 2019); and domestic migrant workers are denied the rights that apply to other immigrants. They do not qualify for permanent residency, they have to live with

their employer, minimum-wage laws do not apply to them, and if they get pregnant or sick, they often lose their job and consequently their access to healthcare. Thus, there are severe structural constraints that work against disenfranchised groups, and this is where research can make a difference by giving voice to their stories. This, we argue, is the potential of advocacy work. 'Powerful' and 'powerless' are relative concepts, and to suggest that the researcher is always in a position to empower his/her participants would be wrong. Power is complex and contextual and we should therefore not try to identify a fixed static group of powerless people but rather 'be attentive to the complexities of power in situations into which we might be researching' (Cameron et al., 1992, p. 21).

Labov (1982) argues that there are two overriding principles for researchers' advocacy work: 'error correction' and 'debt incurred'. The first principle refers to the misinformation that often spreads in society about disenfranchised groups. This happens through the media (Jenks & Bhatia, this issue), or through the negative stereotypes about outgroup members that exist in any society (Ladegaard, 2020b), and, as Labov (1982) points out, scholars who have studied these communities often have the knowledge to correct these erroneous beliefs. The second principle refers to the debt that any researcher has to the people who provided him/her with stories about their lives (or other types of data). We should use this knowledge to benefit the community and speak on their behalf when they need it. Thus, scholars can 'empower' marginalised groups by giving them arguments they can use to counter prevailing wisdom, publicly or in their own minds (Cameron et al. 1993, p. 143).

However, it is of paramount importance that what we bring to the table is *their* stories and *their* reality, not *our* attempts to retell their stories. As Sorrells (2013, p. 234) argues

> Too often, people in positions of greater social, economic, and political power develop visions and actions with the intent of 'helping' disenfranchised groups. Yet if the voices, needs, and experiences of marginalized groups are not at the table, the process and outcome of the effort repeat and reinforce rather than rectify injustices.

The life stories of many migrant workers and refugees are unsettling and they often violate listeners' expectations. People do not want to hear unsettling stories of human-inflicted trauma, and, as Harvey et al. (2000, p. 294) argue, 'if they cannot avoid listening, they prefer coherent stories, ones that make sense by following a culturally-preferred plot from a state of suffering and pain to one of wholeness and recovery.' But these are not the stories told by refugees and migrant workers, and if we want to help them towards recovery and recognition, it is important that we learn to hear what our participants have to say.

A dialectics of language, ICC and social action: Gadamer's praxis revisited

We do not aim to give a full account of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics (see Lawn, 2006 for a comprehensive review), but to propose what we think might be a useful way forward for language and ICC scholars working with disenfranchised

groups. We need an approach that combines research commitments with an ethically responsible social activism agenda, which encourages intervention at the socio-cultural and political levels whenever possible. One reason we think Gadamer's work is useful for language and ICC research is the key role attached to dialogue. It argues that we live in and through linguistics practices (Roy & Oludaja, 2009) and thus, it shares common ground with social constructionism, which sees narrative meaning, identity, and other social categories as discursive constructions. Gadamer (1975) claims that genuine dialogue has the potential to be transformative and should embrace qualities such as respect, trust, openness and freedom of expression. He argues that transformative dialogue begins with recognition of our own prejudices and willingness to confront them; this recognition opens up the possibility for understanding, and understanding ultimately results in *praxis* (action) (Roy & Oludaja, 2009, pp. 259-260).

Another reason that Gadamer's notion of *praxis* is applicable to the work presented in this Special Issue is its moral dimension. It involves a genuine concern for the wellbeing of other human beings and therefore underlines the need for moral judgement as an integral part of our research agenda. A Gadamian approach to humanities and social science research would embrace non-positivistic participatory frameworks and advocate intervention and social activism. Thus, it is an approach to scholarship that considers more than just the appropriateness, validity and reliability of methods. It involves the 'making of responsible political and practical decisions about happiness, health, peace, freedom, and other stable factors of human-being-in-nature' (Gadamer, 1975, p. 313). This of course also means a rejection of research participants as subjects/objects. Gadamer argues against the dehumanising nature of positivist research, which he sees as objectifying people. Researchers, he argues, should not be limited to reporting on people but should engage with them in participatory research, which ultimately seeks to liberate them from oppression.

Much language and ICC research could be subjected to similar criticism. It reports on people's languages and (inter)cultural experiences as global citizens in a particular part of the world but it rarely engages with wider socio-political issues. It lacks what Gadamer (1975) calls sympathetic understanding, or what we would call 'the empathy that leads to action' (Ladegaard, 2017, p. 180). *Praxis* moves beyond reporting, and it moves beyond descriptions of language, culture and identity and their intersections as we have seen in hundreds of studies in ICC research. It advocates research *for* and *with* disenfranchised groups and it recognises that this type of research requires a strong ethical component committed to building solidarity and to fight against oppression and injustice. This means research becomes a situated practice, and it means our role as researchers is never limited to just reporting on people, their language and their cultures but must include morally grounded action aimed at fairness and justice.

A final point Gadamer (1975) makes about our role as morally responsible researchers is that genuine understanding of the cultural Other happens only through dialogue, and this dialogue includes a willingness to redefine our position. This call seems perhaps more pertinent today than ever before in the last 50 years of language

and ICC research. With growing nationalism, xenophobia and anti-immigration discourses spreading and taking root in countries across the world, the call for ICC scholars to engage in genuine transformative dialogue and promote *praxis* is of the utmost importance. Too much language and ICC research never leaves the confines of university offices and classrooms, and never gets beyond publication in academic journals. As socially responsible, *praxis*-oriented and critical ICC scholars, we must continuously seek to form stronger links between the theories we want to develop and practice/change in the communities we study. We hope that this Special Issue will reopen this important debate and encourage more transformative ICC scholarship and *praxis*.

Overview of themes

The Special Issue opens with Christopher Jenks and Aditi Bhatia's paper, 'Infesting our country: Discursive illusions in anti-immigration talk.' It introduces the presenting issue par excellence for the present expressions of xenophobia and anti-intercultural discourse, namely the discursive frameworks which underpin the illusions in anti-immigration talk. From 'I'm not racist but…' refrains through a range of presentations, Jenks and Bhatia demonstrate the groundlessness of the talk, the chimera of the faux presentation, the false narrative which underpins such discourse and the structures holding it in place. They build on the Discourse of Illusion framework developed by Bhatia and apply this to print media, especially online and print newspapers. This is a bold move as it is a field redolent with critique in both scholarship and also in the discourses of the critique especially broadly on the liberal and left political wings. What is being presented is well known, empirically from data, discursively from critical discourse analysis and 'on the street'. What is new in the framing here for our purposes is the focus on social action. The paper 'contributes to an understanding of social action in intercultural communication by reminding readers that the study of anti-immigration discourses and ideologies is much more than an academic exercise in that the ability of individuals and communities to live meaningful lives is shaped by news-reporting institutions.' In short, the authors claim critical thought as action, and its operations as a vital ongoing task with a strong geneaology of scholarship moving through generations of critical discourse analysts. This is not the scholarship of social action which finds itself in the midst of protests, though it may do through its inventiveness, but rather the careful, forensic revealing of how negative political discourse is constructed and mobilised against those living precarious lives in cross-border contexts.

Moving from the genre specific discussion of anti-immigration discourse in mainstream print and online newspapers, Rose Burford-Rice, Martha Augoustinos and Clemence Due's paper, '"That's what they say in our language: one onion, all smell": The impact of racism on resettlement experiences of South Sudanese women in Australia', focuses empirically on the felt and lived experiences of women who suffer both the media discourse and also other forms of racism. In a piece which complements that of Jenks and Bhatia, this study unfolds from the promise of the title 'one onion, all smell' to the difficult and nuanced ways in which racism pervades the

lives of refugee-background South-Sudanese women and their experiences of life in Australia. In a study which sought to examine help-seeking practices, this research found the participants leading them back to mental distress suffered because of racism. What was written in the anti-immigrant press, landed to distress the affect of this group of women. The authors work to explore the difficulties such research and findings provoke for socially engaged researchers and their ethical dimensions. They begin to trace ways in which gaps between academic research and activism might be bridged and call for media reflexivity and political action, joining their own research to a wealth of findings which demonstrate how profoundly damaging anti-immigrant and racist discourses are to those who have settled as refugees.

The paper by Emily Greenbank and Meredith Marra, 'Addressing societal discourses: Negotiating an employable identity as a former refugee', sets out with a socially engaged research design to consider what might be required for refugees to have more positive experiences of seeking employment as part of their settlement in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. In particular, they focus on the use of narratives of former refugees and identify a range of barriers to employment within policy and praxis relating to language learning and language use. Through a focus on four refugee background employees, they show the way the Discourses (Gee's capitalisation) of Refugeehood may have been held previously, such as Narratives of Flight, and how the experiences of refugeehood then change the subjects' own identity construction in narrative, and their narrated sense of agency. Importantly, the authors subject their own interrogatives to critical analysis and show how their research participants repeatedly resist various framing attempts of their experiences. Social engagement emerges from this research with a focus on bi-directional narrative change and a critical lens on the Discourses of Refugeehood which act as barriers. As such this paper represents a strong intervention in public policy from within a socially engaged practice of intercultural language study.

The next paper, 'From surviving to thriving: "Success stories" of highly skilled refugees in the UK' by Sara Ganassin and Tony Young, reports on the so-called 'refugee crisis' in Europe. However, as this paper shows, if refugees are allowed to use the skills they have, their experiences might become stories of successful reintegration into the labour market. The research also shows that the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence, as well as appropriate language competencies, are important for refugees' and migrant workers' ability to reintegrate. The paper reports on highly skilled refugees, a group which is both elite (because of their background) and marginalised (because of their displacement), but still a comparatively resourceful group capable of drawing on their past experiences and educational background to succeed in the host country. The majority of refugees are less privileged, and the authors therefore conclude that unless legislation and public discourses about refugees change, the success stories reported in this paper will remain exceptions.

Postcolonial discourse analysis is the focus of Caterina Scarabicchi's paper, 'Migrant manifestos in the 2010s: Performing border dissent between social action

and Utopia.' The author subjects some of the numerous charters and manifestos for action in migration contexts to critical analysis as part of a postcolonial 'canon'. The paper examines how dissent is performed in specific speech acts produced in context at borders and how the political statements these encapsulate represent a contact zone between social action and utopianism. This is an innovative approach to socially engaged scholarship in the field, drawing methodologically and critically from the field of postcolonial studies, but ensuring that a critical lens is focused on the speech acts themselves, and their limitations. It is easy for scholars to believe that a socially engaged scholarship in LAIC will mean speaking up and speaking out, presenting research findings to policy makers, the press or the public, but in this paper it is activist communities who stand to learn from the analysis of the work and utterances of researchers.

In the next paper, 'Lessons in response-ability: Supporting social encounters by *doing* language', Lavinia Hirsu also takes a performative and critical intercultural dialogic approach to her evaluation of the 'Sharing lives, Sharing Languages' project. This develops the focus on social action in a new direction where academic research is brought to bear on a programme undertaken by NGO and Government agencies as an experience in social action itself, namely to locate language learning practices surrounding integration of refugees and hosts in communities. Hirsu describes and adds theoretical lines of development to the work of innovation in social action. The contribution of academic activism here is the action of theorising and clarifying more widely what the ethical and rhetorical effects are of a change in both policy and practice. For those academics engaged in policy making, this is indeed a service enabling the analysis and evaluation to widen in perspective, and in responsive actions.

Research on social justice in migration contexts has largely focused on European migrations, or migration into Anglophone or Francophone contexts in the Global North. In the next paper, 'Measuring the effectiveness of theory in action: Grass-roots initiatives and social justice for Japan's Kurdish migrants, Anne Schluter takes undocumented migrants in Japan as the focus of her research into grassroots initiatives. Schluter's aim to understand how effective the application of theory-in-action might be. The work takes existing frameworks in the field for measuring and modelling social action in intercultural communicative situations, and examines their effectiveness for work with undocumented populations. The results are clear and show that when working with undocumented populations, the models developed with regularised migrant populations will be problematic and perhaps not applicable. Here the work opens out new vistas for research and for the development of new models for understanding and researching undocumented migrants.

In the next paper, 'The role of stories in the design of an online course: Ethical considerations on a cross-border collaboration between the U.K. and the Gaza Strip', Giovanna Fassetta, Maria Emperiale, Esa Aldegheri and Nazmi Al-Masri present research from the fraught context of the Gaza Strip, where intercultural research, pedagogy and experience are severely limited by the ongoing siege. Many models of intercultural interaction, also of social engagement in cross-border settings, rely on

physical context, on meeting, greeting and eating together and on unravelling the complexities of intercultural communicative interactions face to face. The LAIC literature has also focused on online collaborations, though largely with populations where this is chosen for expediency, not a requirement of circumstance of aggression and war. In the Gaza context, where face-to-face contact with international collaborators is impossible, the authors explore the development of narratives in the design of an online course, and ethical questions emerging from this, as they seek to ready more tactile, humanising dimensions to online learning which can enable intercultural dialogue and learning for people under siege

Mark Nartey's paper, 'Voice, agency and identity: A positive discourse analysis of 'resistance' in the rhetoric of Kwame Nkrumah', deals with political discourse analysis and moves the work to the African continent and an analysis of the discourse of resistance in the speeches of Ghana's founder and first President, Kwame Nkrumah. The social action her stems from outset in the choice of research subject and design, as this represents one of the first attempts at political discourse of African leaders, outside of South Africa, during the early postcolonial period. The disproportion of scholarship focusing on leaders in the Global North is thus given immediate redress, and the reader is required to engage with work which is beyond the standard European and North American canonical fare in the field. In addition, the research design is examining precisely the field of social action and engagement, but unlike other papers in this volume where the focus is on grassroots action, here the focus is on those with elected power and radicalising agendas.

Finally, we include a commentary and critical view from two scholars at different stages in their work, and writing from different standpoints in the field. Zhu Hua's work in Intercultural language study has focused greatly on social action, not least through her own advocacy for migrant rights and the rights of children to their mother language. Hyab Yohannes is a scholar from Eritrea who has worked in legal refugee determination cases and for advocacy organisations and is now studying carceral environments for Eritrean refugees in their full discursive and often torturous power. Both scholars bring views which hold to the rich seams of critical scholarship in the Western tradition, with its logocentricities, but also open the volume up into new vistas of research and demonstrate the need for a wider view of the world than that which dominates our own field.

As intercultural scholarship, all of the papers in this volume consider the border zones, contact zones and interstices of spaces created in ways, which are real or illusionary between groups who have been marked out as distinct from one another. Whilst some of these markers are between refugees and non-refugees, others between, for example, Kurds and Japanese, between those under siege and those living in relative freedom, one theme of reflexivity characterises the work which was submitted for this Special Issue: the intercultural space between those paid to undertake academic work and those who are participants in it. This emerges as both a fruitful seam and one fraught with ethical dilemmas which test the limits of both institutional ethical frameworks and also methodological and theoretical assumptions.

This confirms our original purpose in proposing this issue, that here is work, in and through and with language, to be done.

Notes

1) A proposed extradition bill, which would allow the Hong Kong government to send offenders to Mainland China for prosecution, led to some of the biggest protests in Hong Kong's history. On 9 June 2019 an estimated one million people took to the streets to protest against the extradition bill, and because the bill was not revoked, an estimated 2 million engaged in peaceful protests the following week. Three months later, the bill was eventually withdrawn, but protesters had new demands, including an independent inquiry into alleged police brutality, retracting the classification of protesters as 'rioters', amnesty for arrested protesters, and negotiations on democratic reforms (universal suffrage). At the time of writing, only one of the protesters' demands has been met (the withdrawal of the bill), and the protests, which have become increasingly violent, are now entering their fifth month. It is widely believed that the Chinese government is behind Chief Executive Carrie Lam's hard-line response to the protesters' demands.
2) The intention in using the terms 'North' and 'South' is metaphorical, as a shorthand for the accepted representation of those areas privileged by world trade and world scholarship, and those most often overlooked.
3) It is important, for the purposes of the Special Issue, that progress is not equated with either alignment with policies of globalisation understood as unfettered economic growth, and that such ideas of progress come with substantial risk and damage to many (Spivak, 2012).
4) Enron was an American energy corporation whose executives used accounting loopholes, special purpose entities and poor financial reporting to hide billions of dollars in debt from failed deals and projects from its Board of Directors, auditors and shareholders. The malpractice eventually led to the largest bankruptcy reorganisation in American history at the time (2001).

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