

Foreword

I am delighted to be able to introduce this first issue of English Scholarship Beyond Borders, the annual journal of English Scholars Beyond Borders, a circle of international scholars. ‘Academic circle’ has traditional connotations, reminiscent of groups of scholars in the German tradition, which tended to be both thematically and geographically very focused. Members of ESBB are scattered around the globe. We attempt to meet physically once a year at our conference, which reflects our value of multi-centricity in that it is held in a different location each year. At the same time, much of our communication is online and has no central geographical base. However, each journal issue is jointly published both by ESBB and the host of the annual meeting. In this respect, we owe a great debt of gratitude to our host and joint publisher, Dr. Ahmet Acar, Department of English Language Teaching, Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir, Turkey.

One area of interest, addressed in my own and in Sivasubramaniam’s paper in this issue is the meaning of community in international contexts. The journal itself is published on our website. Interestingly, to obtain an ISSN number, geographical location is still a required field even for online journals, so a circle-like academic community such as ours that is not geographically located in one particular place appears to be homeless, unwittingly ‘located’ beyond current academic borders.

ESBB aims to cross borders. Members do have common areas of interest, but we also attempt to embrace diversity. We are fortunate to have so many members who have served on academic journals as senior editors and who have published papers on the review process itself. The papers appearing in this first issue were all initially conceived as conference papers for our first conference in Izmir in March 2014. In this first published issue we have experimented with non-blind review, which is something we intend to develop and research into through future issues. The first four papers were reviewed within a circle of five members, each providing detailed feedback on each other’s paper and each supervised by a different member. We also encouraged an interactive process of review. A conference presentation and a written publication are very different in nature and this issue reflects this difference in that most of the papers have been radically modified during a lengthy redrafting and review process. They are not ‘conference proceedings’ in the traditional sense of the term and have been through a very full journal review process. As a result of the review one paper more than doubled in length. Another (my own) integrated review comments into the paper itself by naming the non-blind reviewers in order to acknowledge their contribution.

Inevitably many of our studies have an international flavor, all attempting to cross borders in some way, but they are often rooted in local practice. This first ESBB issue starts with a study which is detailed, ambitious and innovative: *Language Competency as Semiotic Design: Attempting to Cross Academic Borders with Digital Video Cameras*. John Unger, Rong Liu and Vicki Scullion present a descriptive action-research study which breaks new ground in the description and assessment of the process of developing academic competence. Their paper is theoretically grounded in an original model of “an idealized Joint Attentional Frame”. Their holistic project strikes right at the heart of academic competence and has ambitions to be “the

beginning of a common assessment framework that can reach across the borders of academic disciplines for prompting students to use academic English and procedures to evaluate the relationships between evidence and propositions.”

In my own paper, I attempt to outline some of the aims of ESBB as a circle of scholars that promotes diversity. In this multi-theme, holistic paper, I also raise the issue of generic structure in online papers. While so many journals are primarily non-print journals in 2015, few of them have attempted to exploit some of the powerful features of web publishing such as hyperlinking. I illustrate the way online encyclopedias are in advance in this respect and propose a non-linear generic pattern by using hyperlinks built around a central concept international and communicative competence. As this volume represents my (and our) first experience of non-blind peer review, to illustrate how I have benefited from non-blind review, I also integrate review comments into this ‘final’ draft to illustrate the intersubjective nature of individual paper drafting.

In *Maximizing EIL Competence through Students’ Agency, Voice and Inter- subjectivity* Sivakumar Sivasubramaniam shares his extensive experience and erudition, but also writes, as he speaks, with a passion normally associated with youth. In reading this paper, we come to realize that it would be wrong to consider it as an expression of an alternative voice or to consider such voices as periphery just because it crosses generic borders and expresses a strong personal voice. The essence of the multi-centricity of English competence is both addressed in the paper and deeply embedded in it. Siva encourages his students to develop their own voice and in this paper he expresses his own unique but very persuasive conception of EIL competence. A powerfully expressed first-person voice embedded in the inter-subjectivity of shared erudition, and we hope enhanced by non-blind peer review, challenges and develops some of our own beliefs: “The views that I, then, wish to examine in this paper should be interpreted as intuitive beliefs and values that support my intuitions and belief systems underlying pedagogies of experience and response.”

In *“I was in their shoes”: Shifting Perceptions of Editorial Roles and Responsibilities*, as the title suggests, John Adamson and Naoki Fujimoto-Adamson seek further insights into the review process itself drawing on their current and previous research and their own extensive experience in Asian Journals as reviewers and senior editors who supervise reviews. Senior editors of journals are automatically in a powerful, gatekeeping position, yet their own behaviour and perceptions of their role have rarely been critically examined. Adamson and Fujimoto Adamson are definitely crossing borders in their research by lifting the lid, allowing us to look inside what is often a closed box. Authors are often severely reviewed, but who critically examines the review process? Publishing is too critical to the future development of so many academics for this to remain such an opaque process. By adopting an ethnographic stance (one author is currently an Associate Editor in the team under investigation in this study, and the other a Senior Editor) we are made aware of the issues involved in reviewing and particularly in supervising reviews.

Zumbarlal Patil (*Culture, Language and Literature: Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence through International Literature*) addresses several themes which are central to ESBB's interests. His paper illustrates the 'unity in diversity', or diversity in unity that ESBB hopes to promote. In addressing intercultural communication, ZN emphasizes the role that literature can play in limiting the negative effects of homogenization of English.

In the final paper of this first issue, Vijay Singh Thakur & Rahma Al-Mahrooqi offer us further variety in their practical paper *Teaching Grammar Beyond the Borders of Sentence: An Integrated Approach to Grammar in Context*. They remind us that there are other types of borders to cross in designing materials for local contexts even in areas which we assume are now well established such as teaching grammar for communicative purposes in context.

On re-reading these papers, I am optimistic that ESBB will enjoy a long existence as a circle which reaches out beyond borders. Each paper has its own unique voice which may be seen as partly personal, partly cultural given the very diverse backgrounds of the authors. All of the papers, in their original spoken form stimulated debate. There was further more extensive debate during our non-blind review process for this journal issue. However, the effort of reviewing, redrafting and interacting across time zones (from Japan to the United States to South Africa) and beyond borders appears to have borne fruit in that I can at least personally affirm that I have found stimulation in all of them and all have impacted on my future study. ESBB was in Turkey in 2014, is in Thailand this year, will be in Taiwan next year, Oman in 2017, Japan in 2018. Each cycle has its own unique character and each will add further energy to empower its members to keep crossing borders.