

Foreword

In editing this fifth edition of English Scholarship Beyond Borders, I feel privileged to be able to present what I believe is a landmark issue for our journal. When I look back on the many issues I have edited for several journals, I cannot remember editing so many papers in one issue that not only claim to be breaking new ground. They actually do so, and each one in a very different way. These are not papers by authors playing the publish or perish game. They all contribute ideas, research and practices that can inspire beneficial change.

In our first paper, Adamson et al. adopt an approach that is both novel and insightful; “a collaborative autoethnography” that examines the publication experiences of a varied group of Japan-based scholars. I believe this approach could be translated easily to other contexts, but each author already has a different profile and unique, relatable and shareable experience. The study is ground-breaking in that it creates a collaborative and supportive environment that allows the co-authors to reveal real experience in a systematic and productive way. At the same time, by focusing on lived-experience, it presents real insights into publication practices that we can all both learn from and empathize with. This study reflects a long-term collaboration in a very diverse group of scholars.

A different type of long-term collaboration is reported in Unger and Olifer. When a linguist and a mathematician work so closely together, previous views of both language and learning are challenged. They point out that mathematics is also a ‘language’ and that maths, visual representation and word-based languages all contribute to our understanding of meaning creation. Unger and Olifer make excellent use of a theory that arguably has not received the recognition it deserves, Tomasello’s usage-based theory of language acquisition. They also take us across theoretical borders in that they provide a kind of interpretive comparison between usage-based theory and other alternative theories. It may be the norm to stay within one school of thought. However, I have believed for some time that a holistic approach to research would require us to cross beyond one narrow theoretical area into another, based on the assumption that valid theories of acquisition can be expected to reach comparable conclusions through different means. Unger and Olifer help us move between and across theories. This paper is both detailed in its analysis of data and original in its approach to interpreting the data, data which is made available to the researcher interested in counter analysis.

Tanju Deveci, a specialist in both ESL and lifelong learning, considers literacy development from the angle of students’ perceptions in our third contribution. Using his specialized knowledge of lifelong learning, he is able to present a persuasive argument in favour of home learning. As former students, fellow sufferers, do we not all tend to lend a negative connotation to ‘homework’? When we became teachers, what did we do about this? On the other hand, ‘home learning’ is self-motivated and we can understand how the students in this sample view home learning as something positive. The key appears to be that it stands more chance of meeting real learning needs of students. Homework is a punishment for the innocent, home learning is life enhancing. A simple message perhaps, but potentially so powerful that it can transform the way we help students learn.

Msukisi Howard Kepe takes us across the border into yet another world in his study on translanguaging in a South African school. This study shows us again that any concept must take on a new shades of meaning whenever it is reapplied to a new context. English is characterized as an additional language, not as a foreign language, in this context. Kepe’s study

shows us how translanguaging is a reality that cannot be ignored. It should be exploited as a benefit rather than as a deficit. While this study has a very specific geographical location, the kind of impasse in language policy it describes is by no means unique in a world that is still having difficulty throwing off its colonial heritage. Kepe is an enthusiastic and energetic presenter and teacher and his proposed solutions to this impasse often refer to a passion for teaching in contexts that could easily demotivate. Overall a fascinating glimpse into the real world of South Africa. We can only admire the courage of the teacher-researchers who engage in the search for solutions to inherited problems.

I hope by now you will have agreed that I did not exaggerate when claiming this was a very special journal issue for an organization that aims or even claims to cross borders of all types without losing track of specific local issues. We have not quite finished yet in this argument. In a final paper, Ahmet Acar, in the Turkish context, takes a critical look at the Common European Framework both in itself and in the way it is being applied in the Turkish education system. He proposes an action-oriented, project-based approach, contrasting this with a task-based or communicative approach. He adopts Puren's theories from a Francophone perspective in contrast to dominant Anglophone communicative paradigms. In this way, as the host of our next 2020 conference, Acar takes us into a literature many of us never access. He announces a new gateway to research in his own context and paves the way for interesting cross border discussions, debates and challenges between and beyond anglophone and non-anglophone worlds.

All of these papers deserve a careful reading given the time and effort that went into their creation of truly new knowledge. The non-blind review I personally observed between three of the researchers, Adamson, Kepe and Deveci, generated many hundreds of exchanges on google-docs, regularly announced in my own inbox throughout the non-blind review process. As a long term end of career editor, I doubt if there has even been a more creative, thorough interactive review process. The interactive data between three researchers from very different worlds embodies what ESBB attempts to achieve. It is available for a follow up to ESBB study into non-blind review. Could it be not only more transparent and interactive but also more demanding and rigorous than blind review? A question for future investigation.