

Plurilingualism and the Ethical Researcher: A politics of researching interculturally


Vers un curriculum plurilingue :
favoriser la communication pluriculturelle à l'ère numérique
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Professor Prue Holmes
Durham University
p.m.holmes@durham.ac.uk

Rationale:

Why plurilingualism
and the ethical
researcher!

Why a politics of
researching
interculturally!

- Fractured, turbulent contexts characterised by translanguaging and plurilingual intercultural encounters
 - Research contexts: power relations, hegemonic structures (Blommaert, 2010)
 - Researcher choices and decision making
 - Languages and their speakers may be marginalised
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Overview

- Foundations and questions: What is a politics of researching interculturally
- Concepts
- A definition
- Steps towards being an ethical researcher: The dimensions of a politics of researching interculturally
- Conclusion: A way forward

Foundation

Building an intercultural pedagogy for higher education in conditions of conflict and protracted crises: Language, identity, culture

<https://biphec.wordpress.com/>




Holmes, P., & Corbett, J. (Eds.) (2023). *Critical intercultural pedagogy for difficult times: Conflict, crisis, creativity*. Routledge.

Questions

- How can a politics of researching interculturality be conceptualized and what are its dimensions?
- What is a decentred approach to intercultural communication research, and in what ways does it necessitate a politics of researching interculturality?

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Concepts

- Researcher reflexivity (Consoli & Ganassin, 2023)
 - An intercultural attitude (Monceri, 2022)
 - Issues, controversies, and difficult questions (Macdonald, 2022)
 - Participatory, co-production approaches (e.g., feminist, communitarian, radical education research, etc.)
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Concepts (cont.)

- The fluid, porous nature of languages and ‘cultures’ (Holliday & Amadasi, 2020)
- A politics of representation – of competing discourses, identities, knowledges – acknowledging their intersections and interstices (Warriner & Bigelow, 2019)
- Decentring, decolonising (Aman, 2018, Freire, 1970)
- The multimodal nature of communication – translanguaging:
 - the ‘multiplicity, fluidity, mobility, locality, and globality of the resources deployed by individuals for engaging in complex meaning-making processes’ (Bradley et al., 2020, p. 2).

A definition:
A politics of
researching
interculturality

. . . a researcher awareness of and sensitivity to the complexities of intercultural communication, identities and languages in society, and the power relations they entail; and the political, historical, cultural and other conditions impacting the researcher's decision making throughout all stages of the research process (from conceptualisation to dissemination)




Steps towards being an ethical researcher

The dimensions of a politics of researching interculturally

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The dimensions of a politics of researching interculturality

1. Researcher positioning
 2. Intersubjectivity
 3. Reflexivity
 4. Ethical considerations
 5. The role of languages and other communicative resources
(researching multilingually)
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1. Researcher positioning

The 'what' of my research, and where I am placed in relation to this 'what' . . .

- How researchers understand the world and conceptions of reality (ontology), and the epistemological/theoretical and methodological choices they make in relation to the phenomenon being investigated

In our project:

- Translanguaging/languageing (Harvey et al., 2019; Phipps 2019)
- New materialism (Barad, 2007; Toohey, 2019)
- Dialogue '[critical] thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, . . . which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved' (Freire, 1970, p. 65).
- Participatory and creative arts methodologies

2. Intersubjectivity

My researcher identifications, and power relations vis-à-vis those with whom I am researching and with other stakeholders involved in the production and dissemination of the research . . .

- Researchers (and participants) ‘are *irreducibly* intertwined within the social world which they co-inhabit’ (MacDonald & Holliday, 2019, p. 629).
- Thick description [is important] in generating knowledge ‘to open up the ability to see the liquid nature of the intercultural that cuts across imagined solid culture boundaries’ (Holliday & MacDonald, 2019, p. 634)
- Conscientisation – ‘the deepening of the attitude of awareness’ to understand one’s own oppression and take action to overcome it (Freire, 1970).

3. Reflexivity

My (researcher) process of becoming (vis-à-vis my research) . . .

- How researchers reflect on and interrogate their own intersubjective relations with and dispositions towards the phenomenon being researched and the participants and stakeholders involved
- Recognising the humanness in undertaking research
- Understanding that research is an ongoing, multifaceted, dialogic process
- Being aware of a democratic, inclusive researcher praxis.

4. Ethical considerations

How I should act . . .

- Interdependence of self/other; complexity of intercultural encounters; sensitivity towards power relations; dialogue (Ferri, 2014)
- A researcher ethics of care and responsibility decisions regarding the focus, approach, and shaping of the research, and in managing research processes to ensure the ethical treatment, safety, and inclusion of all participants and stakeholders
- A social justice agenda – young people might realize for themselves what it means to practice respect for the dignity and rights of all people irrespective of their cultural affiliations (Barrett, 2016)

Participatory photography in Sakarya, Turkey, with local Turkish, and Iraqi and Syrian international refugee students





5. The role of languages and other communicative resources – ‘researching multilingually’

An awareness of my own linguistic resources, and those in circulation, and how I can mobilise them . . .

Researchers are invited to consider the following:

- decentre theories and methodologies that are blind and resistant to knowledge and social practice in the periphery
- resist normative understandings of languages that prioritize certain languages over others, and slippages into imperial forms (Phipps & Ladegaard, 2020)
- be open to translanguaging and other non-linguistic forms of intercultural communication
- ensure inclusivity of voices that matter through co-creation of the research
- be respectful and inclusive of cultural and linguistic practices of those involved in, and those who will benefit from, the research (Smith, 1999).

Conclusion

The politics of researching interculturality . . .

An ethical researcher praxis—thinking-reflection-action (Walsh & Mignolo, 2018)—in intercultural communication research that involves:

- decentring, decolonising theory
- prioritising methodologies underpinned by new materialism and the creative arts (in our project)
- recognising and responding to power relations and ideology
- speaking to linguistic and other social injustices
- understanding that research is dialogic, discursive, narrative, expressive, performative, humanist
- recognising the (glocally) situated, contextual, ethical aspects of intercultural encounters.

A way forward . . .

A politics of researching interculturally foregrounds . . .

- researcher decision making (around languages and communication)
- political implications of language and intercultural communication
- a social justice ethos
- is responsive to policy by generating narratives of lived experience (not statistics)

Next steps => further researcher investigation

Merci!
Thank you!

Prue Holmes

p.m.holmes@durham.ac.uk

Holmes, P. (2025). The politics of researching interculturality. In S. Liu, A. Komisarof, Zhu Hua, and L. Obijiofor (Eds.). *The SAGE handbook of intercultural communication* (pp. 18-33). Sage.