

# Editorial Preface

## ‘DE-MUFFLING’ VOICES IN EDUCATION

Fred Dervin, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland

Heidi Layne, Nanyang Technological University/ National Institute of Education, Singapore

Ashley Simpson, Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, Shanghai, China

*It is not easy to keep silent when silence is a lie.*

*Victor Hugo*

*There’s really no such thing as the ‘voiceless.’ There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.*

*Arundhati Roy*

We are entering the fourth year since the creation of the *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversity in Education*. I am delighted to be joined by a new team of co-editors: Dr. Ashley Simpson from Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (China) and Dr. Heidi Layne from Nanyang Technological University/ National Institute of Education (Singapore). Both have been cooperating with the journal for years and specialize in diversity in education. We are looking forward to continuing publishing international, fresh and stimulating research.

This new issue of IJBIDE contains articles that deal with silenced/silent, muffled voices in education – or maybe as Roy puts it in the quote above, ‘unheard’ voices. The important issues of race/ethnicity (Black women in academia, Roma education) and language are the foci (internationalization and plurilingualism, English as a Medium of Instruction).

The issue of race/identity is problematized through two different but somewhat similar cases: Black women in American academia and Roma education in Europe. Their voices are often muffled in our societies and academic research – to paraphrase Hugo: “the silence around them is very often a lie.” Furthermore, should their voices be heard in academia, they can turn out to be othered in e.g. many and varied theoretical and ideological streams of educational research. There is thus a need to both make their voices heard and ‘de-muffled’ and to avoid, mitigate and resist othering of these voices in academia and elsewhere.

The second issue, language in education, does not necessarily face the same problems as race/ethnicity in terms of bias – although they can easily overlap. There is actually a lot of research on language use, multi-/plurilingualism and trendier topics such as translanguaging in education. However, in the reality of educational institutions, the theme of language is not often taken into account. Sometimes it is just tokenized (lists of words in different languages on walls).

Let’s take for example the context of higher education, which is often depicted as international globally. International research takes place and is published in English – that is an undeniable reality. However, scholars and students often speak many languages that tend to be ignored and even, indirectly, muffled. In spring 2019 I tried to organize a seminar entitled *Languages and internationalization in higher education: Ghosts or the (nearly) visible?* at my home university. With one of my doctoral students (Deborah Clarke), we had noticed clear signs of language hierarchies and discrimination in international students’ narratives about their experiences of internationalization. The event was described as follows:

“Internationalization of higher education is here to stay. With this global phenomenon, come different people who speak a multitude of languages and dialects (beyond English, official languages and so-called ‘big’ languages).

What do institutions and people do with these languages in our universities? Where are these languages? Who uses them and for what purposes? How could we stimulate more discussions around the important issue of languages and internationalization? What strategies could be developed for all to benefit from varied language use at university?

The objectives of this open forum are:

- to place discussions of language at the centre of internationalization
- to identify ‘good’ practices of language use and empowerment in higher education
- to discuss the potential gaps between individual, institutional and societal/global needs, requirements and realities
- to problematize the future of language use in our global universities.”

Maybe without much surprise, very few colleagues showed an interest in the event. We had invited people from the university leadership to take part in a panel discussion but none of them replied to our invitation. Although the university has a language policy that seems to take multilingualism into account, this clear lack of interest, within the context of internationalization, may be revealing of the current zeitgeist. Only what matters symbolically (number of international students and staff; association with prestigious universities around the world), economically (number of publications and projects; number of programmes in English that can attract students who can pay for a huge fee) seem to matter. The inclusion, promotion and/or use of languages other than English are not taken into account for ranking and funding.

The consequence of this lack of interest, coupled with race, class, gender, leads to inequality and bias in higher education. Language thus appears secondary, especially when it is not prestigious and dealing with individuals who are at the bottom of the social ladder. Interestingly, Finland (amongst others) has been investing in educational robots to teach Finnish as a second language to migrants. In a documentary from March 2019, white teachers observed a Black adult student use of a teaching robot, smiling, looking contented. One of the white teachers explained that “it is a very strong learning device... it helps the students learn about the cleaning devices, about the whole cleaning process like cleaning the toilets”. Learning-teaching of a foreign language is here relegated to the mere interaction between a robot and a migrant learner, who is made to ‘parrot’ words – the migrant not even deserving the dedication of a human being anymore. One can easily see the intersection between the mistreatment of language and class, race/ethnicity, amongst others.

From the beginning, IJBIDE has advocated describing, problematizing, questioning, denouncing, and resisting such phenomena – ‘de-muffling’ in the process many voices. As Said (1996: 23) wrote about the intellectual, as researchers on diversity in education, “[our] whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do. Not just passively unwillingly, but actively to say so in public.” It is not about us telling our readers and colleagues what and how they should think and do but to provide them with tools to think and act otherwise and for themselves (Noiriel, 2007, p. 23). We believe that this is what research should be about, and we hope that our journal will continue providing such tools in the future.

This issue contains five articles from different international contexts.

In the first article Xeturah M Woodley discusses the personal and professional experiences of Black women faculty at an American university. Using Black Womanist and Critical Race Theories, her study shows that her participants experience, on the one hand, micro-aggressions, discrimination, and racial battle fatigue, and on the other, intellectual, campus, and community isolation.

Markéta Levínská and David Doubek problematize the idea of integration in “*Struggle*” for Trust – *Unintended Consequences of an “Integration Project”*. Based on the specific case of Roma education in the Czech Republic, the authors try to understand why a project on social exclusion failed in a specific part of the country. They examine this failure through the lenses of racism and terminology (naming).

The third paper relates to a European language about teachers’ attitudes, knowledge and skills towards the so-called Language Awareness Approach. The authors, Petra Daryai-Hansen, Samúel Lefever and Inta Rimšāne, use teacher cognition as a theoretical and methodological framework to examine these important aspects of education for diversity.

The fourth article shifts the focus to language in higher education. Based in Denmark, the two authors, Petra Daryai-Hansen and Marta Kirilova, analyse two plurilingual language strategies used in Danish higher education. They also present a model that can help us identify plurilingual countermeasures in the same context.

The last article is entitled “Most of the teaching is in Arabic anyway”, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Saudi Arabia, between De Facto and Official Language Policy and was co-written by Ismael Louber and Salah Troudi. This article adds to the discussions from the previous articles by exploring the use of EMI in an undergraduate programme in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The article highlights a gap between EMI as an official language policy and Arabic as *de facto* medium of instruction.

*Fred Dervin*

*Heidi Layne*

*Ashley Simpson*

*Editor-in-Chief*

*IJBIDE*

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