

Preface

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The editors of *Intercultural Communication Studies* are happy and honored that this second issue of Volume XXXI celebrates the online 27th conference of IAICS, organized by the University of Toledo, Ohio, United States. This successful conference included a total of 120 papers in parallel sessions, as well as stimulating keynote presentations by Melissa Chimera, Dany Doueri, Lixian Jin, James W. Neuliep, and Christopher Witulski, and a presidential address the text of which is included in this issue. The participants represented academic institutions from 27 countries and territories: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Macao, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies expresses heartfelt thanks to the conference conveners, Gaby Semaan and Kasumi Yamazaki; and also Linda Rouillard, the Chair of the Department of World Languages and Cultures; the leadership of the University of Toledo, including the President, Gregory Postal, and the Dean of the College of Arts and Letters, Melissa Gregory. Special thanks go also to Charlene Gary for administrative support, Youmna Karim for logistics support, Raj Nagisetty for technical support, as well as the faculty, staff and students, and all other persons involved in the organization of this historic 27th conference. The overall theme of the conference was “Life and Communication Interrupted: Challenges and Opportunities for Intercultural Communication beyond Pandemic”. Many of the papers therefore contained discussion of the impact of the pandemic of COVID-19, which has swept the world ever since the beginning of 2020. Due to the large number of high quality presentations, the first issue of Volume XXXII in 2023 will continue to include papers from the 27th conference.

The papers in this current issue fall into five thematic areas: Education, Gender Studies, Media Studies, Pragmatics, and Translation Studies. The largest of these areas is Education, as understandably, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a great impact on the teaching and learning experience, with the rapid shift to online teaching, and the emergency restrictions on international travel affecting traditional face-to-face approaches.

In the Education section, Josh BRUNOTTE and Jiro TAKAI investigate imaginal and virtual reality-based public speaking practice for communicating with intercultural audiences. Japanese students were given a combination of classroom instruction and either imaginal or virtual-reality homework aimed at reducing speaking anxiety. The authors find that both homework methods were successful, and they also give useful information about the relevant virtual reality technology. The section continues with a study by Martin PARSONS and Mikel GARANT, who report on an international virtual exchange as a catalyst for improving intercultural communication and English language skills, which was conducted among students in China and Japan. Through a collaborative project producing a video together in a transnational group, the students were able to improve their intercultural communication skills and practice English in an international context. Also, as the topics of the videos related to the United Nations

sustainability goals, the goals of the collaborative exchange program were contextualized within the broader goals of education, not only English language skills.

The third paper in this section, by Nadya IZZAAMIOUINE, takes Germany and Morocco as a case comparison for the development of intercultural communication competence in higher education. The study is conducted among B.A. and M.A. students, the latter of whom were given a course in intercultural communication as part of their degree program. The research elicited the participants' self-report of their intercultural competence through a questionnaire and a discourse completion test. The questionnaire administered to the Moroccan M.A. students included a pre-test/ post-test design, and surprisingly found a loss of confidence in the students' self-assessment of their intercultural competence, which can probably be attributed, paradoxically, to the increase in their awareness of intercultural variables after having taken the IC course. Therefore, the author argues that the development of cultural and intercultural competence should be an integral part of language learning.

The fourth paper, by Elizabeth ROOT, is a qualitative study of descriptions of perceived agency within the hegemony of English. The study collected data of L2 speakers' of English perceptions of their self-identity vis-à-vis English, through focus group interviews conducted by an American researcher among students (both Korean and international) in South Korea. The author reports that two themes emerged through content analysis, "English as my knight" and "English as my first love". Verbatim quotations from the participants are presented in support of the analysis which refers to the concept of "perceived agency", or the extent to which L2 speakers feel empowered by their use of English in a globalized world. "These perceptions of limited agency support a neoliberal sense of self with regard to English; this sense of self considers people as owners of language who hold individual responsibility to possess language skills, knowledge, and capabilities as a way to enact self-advancement."

The next paper, by Judy YONEOKA, reports on the organization and implementation of a virtual summer study abroad program for Japanese students during the COVID-19 pandemic. A pre-existing study abroad program was extensively modified and implemented virtually online rather than physically face-to-face. This can "be considered an instance of Emergency Remote Teaching" in response to the pandemic. The paper has a practical orientation, as the implementation process of "finding partner universities, securing accreditation, student recruitment, and orientation through a spring semester preparation class" is outlined in detail, which will be of benefit to other educators trying to design such a program. The author finds that despite the overall positive trend of the students' feedback, it is revealed that students would prefer to participate in a face-to-face study abroad program than in a virtual program, which poses a challenge for future program design post-pandemic.

In the final paper in the Education section, Barry KAVANAGH assesses AI-based summarizing and paraphrasing tools for a CLIL (content and language integrated learning) intercultural communication academic writing class. The study examines how the AI-based summarizing and paraphrasing tools 'Quillbot' and 'SpinBot' are perceived by students in Japan. The paper is pedagogically oriented and provides a detailed description of what the students did in class and the instructions they were given. The students were required, in two different class sessions, to summarize the same article, first without, then with AI support, the latter with each of the above-mentioned AI tools. The results found that 1) "Quillbot [...] improved students' grammar scores significantly when compared to the no AI support and Spinbot

summary groupings”. 2) However, “both sets of AI support made the style scores worse and did not have a positive impact on the style of the summaries”. 3) “[T]he question of whether or not AI paraphrasing software can help prevent plagiarism was inconclusive”. The paper will be beneficial to educators contemplating introducing AI to their own students.

The remaining thematic sections of this issue contain one paper each. In the first of these sections, Gender Studies, Hongyan LAN conducts a qualitative study of a Japanese woman’s life journey through narration. The author analyzes the gender gap in Japan through the prism of a case study of a working woman in her 60s and her life history. The life history approach, generated through an interview with a subject the author knows well, yields valuable in-depth insight. The study finds that Japanese women are still impeded by a social gender gap in their professional lives.

The next section, Media Studies, contains a comparative study of Chinese and English social media humor during the COVID-19 lockdown, by Yan WANG and Zhijun WANG. The authors compare 150 Chinese and 150 Western (English-language) humor samples from social media and extract the dominant themes through content analysis. These themes give substantial insight into people’s social attitudes towards the pandemic, and the comparative perspective is valuable for intercultural communication studies. The top themes in Chinese humor are found to be: social management during lockdowns, stocking up food, social distancing, the perfect life during quarantine, and fashion shows while queuing for nucleic tests. The top themes in Western (English-language) humor are: wearing masks, social distancing, meta jokes on COVID-19 itself, parent-child relations during quarantine, and toilet rolls. The authors’ analysis of cultural differences contained in the humor samples is well-grounded in intercultural dimensions.

The section on Pragmatics includes the paper by Yoshinori NISHIJIMA titled “What is Expected of Clerks Wearing ‘In Training’ Tags? Analyzing the Tag Roles”. The author argues that linguistic landscape studies should include wearable signs affixed to people and vehicles, not just immobile signs in streets and on buildings. In particular, the author analyzes the pragmatics of in-training name tags worn by clerk trainees in Japanese stores. The study concludes that the wearing of such name tags “is one of the Japanese forms of communication that requires consideration from others”.

Finally, in the section on Translation Studies, Yan LI conducts an emotion analysis of two Chinese versions of Charles Dickens’ novel *David Copperfield*, using the Google-translator. “It examines to what extent and how emotions in the original can be transferred into the translations, combining the machine translation, by comparing two Chinese versions of *David Copperfield*, as well as the machine translation of the two Chinese versions with the original.” The comparison of emotions in different translation versions is significant for intercultural communication studies, especially for understanding the task of the translator in conveying emotions from the source language and culture to the target language and culture so that the readers can relate well to the emotions.

The eleven papers contained in this issue of *Intercultural Communication Studies* are written by authors representing academic institutions in China, Germany, Japan, Macao, Morocco, and the United States. The wide scope of authors and research topics represents the global reach and disciplinary diversity of the International Association for Intercultural Communication Studies.