

# Foreword

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Welcome to Issue 4 of the *Journal of Languages, Texts, and Society*, an interdisciplinary postgraduate-run journal dedicated to exploring the interrelations between languages, texts, and societies. This year, our team has expanded further, and we now include satellite editors from Leeds, Cardiff, and London. We have also changed our production process so that authors can now be published online in the lead up to the Issue, providing early access to some of the fantastic work being done across continents and academic disciplines. We would like to thank all of our editing team, peer reviewers and contributors for their hard work in creating our fourth issue. We are very proud of all that we have achieved, especially during a period as tumultuous as 2020, and very much look forward to the exciting developments for Issue 5, with our even larger and more diverse LTS team, and the new addition of our Podcast Team, who we hope will bring the discussions this journal was established to make to an even broader audience.

The breadth of research focuses and approaches across this issue is impressive. Although we continue to showcase local research as a Nottingham-based journal, our contributors this year are from institutions across four continents: Europe, Asia, Australasia and North America. Their insights span a range of fields, and we hope that arranging them together here promotes a broader, interdisciplinary dialogue that encourages readers to seek valuable connections between traditionally disparate fields. What is particularly striking across these articles, translation and book reviews is the issue of critically examining and translating languages, identities and concepts across time and place. This issue highlights the insights that can be gained from focused, often multimodal analyses, and advocates shifting our understandings from discrete categorisations towards a more nuanced, multifaceted approach to the world.

On the topic of translation, we are proud to present Deborah K. Symons Roldán's translation of her own short story, originally authored in Spanish ("La enfermedad"), into English ("The Illness"). The story developed in the author's imagination during a particularly tedious meeting, giving birth to the character of Armando, who wonders whether he belongs at all or whether there is something "wrong" with him. As it is rare for an author translate their own work, this contribution provides a unique opportunity for readers to experience how an author might translate their own story into another language.

Further highlighting the value of attending to the interactions of different languages, two of our articles take a multilingual approach to provide fascinating commentaries on cross-cultural dialogues, past and present. Joanna Gore applies a feminist, intersectional lens to a discourse analysis of British and Catalan/Spanish perspectives of *Vale*, a short advertising film for Estrella Damm. Challenging the crude divisions that are imposed in Intercultural Communication through categorising people according to over-simplistic concepts such as nationality, Gore highlights the importance of taking an intersectional perspective. To achieve a nuanced analysis of the interactions of gender with economic

inequalities, Gore highlights the value of conducting interviews in interviewees' preferred language (Catalan, Spanish or English), as this facilitates sensitivity to local contexts, reduces power imbalances and uses "the language most appropriate to enabling and appreciating contextual nuance" (17). Ai Shu takes a concept-historical approach to examine how the decisions made during the translation of a concept interact with its social reception and meaning, in the context of nineteenth century China. Ai Shu focuses on how the "Kingdom of Heaven," one of the core concepts in the Bible to advocate good conduct, interacted with "Tian Guo" during its translation and how this new concept was subsequently turned into a political slogan for the Taiping Rebellion Movement. Establishing a deeper understanding of concepts and how they "travel," Ai Shu demonstrates how attending to translations within concept history can shed further light on important events.

Taking a broader, more conceptual view of "translation", many of our other contributors are also concerned with translating concepts and experiences. Notably, Christine Muir, Jessica Florent and David Leach report on their classroom-based study, which investigates the feasibility of designing and implementing a group project in order to purposefully facilitate a period of intensely motivated behaviour (a "group-directed motivational current"). They reflect on their experiences of completing multiple iterations of the same group project, taught by the second and third authors with language learning classes. The authors highlight key issues for the design and management of motivational group projects, aiming for others to translate their findings on group motivation to other educational contexts.

Many of our other contributors are, like Jo Gore, concerned with translations of gender, a prominent and timely theme in this issue. Christina Matsuo Post examines how gender identities are translated onto the pages of children's fiction. The article asks: to what extent do contemporary American children's books transgress gender stereotypes and support the continued progress towards a multiplicity of gendered

identities? Focusing on the 2017-2019 Caldecott Medal and Honor books, which are largely aimed at preschool and early years, Matsuo Post uses content analysis to explore their thematic, linguistic, and visual gender representations, reflecting on the broader implications that such representations have for raising children. Meanwhile, Morrigan Auxland explores the possibility of translating gender neutrality into languages such as Portuguese, which traditionally have only masculine and feminine grammatical genders. The article considers the addition of a third, grammatically neutral gender to Portuguese. Auxland contemplates the ways in which these changes would function, and the resulting public and academic responses to each. Earlier in the Issue, Edward O'Rourke takes a more historical approach, using literary analysis to help translate for readers the experiences of Maeve Brennan, a young Irish staff writer at the *New Yorker* magazine. Through Brennan's work, O'Rourke interrogates the impact of large-scale urban regeneration on the lives of women in twentieth century New York, particularly focusing on poorer single women, and the expressions of dissent with which they responded to their changing cityscape.

The issue ends with two book reviews, which both highlight the innovativeness of their respective authors. The first review comes from Edward Clay, who discusses Laura Mori's timely edited volume: *Observing Eurolects: Corpus analysis of linguistic variation in EU law*. Although the book does not commit to a stance on whether the linguistic changes that occur through language contact in this specific EU context are positive or negative, Clay finds it to be a novel addition to legal linguistics and language variation and evolution. Clay praises the choice to standardise the corpus-based methodology across the eleven studied languages, which enables more comprehensive conclusions to be reached. Ruby Hawley-Sibbett provides our second book review, noting that although the close approach of Chris Yelland's monograph, *Jane Austen: A Style in History* risks limiting readers' appreciation of Austen's overall noteworthiness, it offers a valuable contribution for its innovative

combination of stylistics and historiography, benefitting not only Austen studies but wider methodological literary discussions.

Innovation is the third standout feature of the collection in this issue. Throughout, each of our contributors offer new and insightful ways to revisit histories, explore social phenomena, and expand the nuance of our representations in the visual and verbal language systems that we use, employing a wide range of methodologies and focuses to do so. As a postgraduate-led journal that prides itself on being accessible, interdisciplinary, and forward-thinking, we are delighted to provide a platform for postgraduate scholars and early career researchers to play an active role in shaping the direction of critical debate in and across their fields.

Looking forward to Issue 5, we hope to continue to grow in our scope and contributions, and to welcome your responses in the form of future journal articles and papers at our annual conference. We would like to express our gratitude to all who have contributed pieces to this issue, as well as to our fellow postgraduate team and academic advisory board who have worked hard to make this issue happen. Finally, we would like to thank you as our readers, we very much hope you find the contents of this issue enjoyable, novel and stimulating. Please do get in touch with us about any thoughts, questions, or ideas you may have, and feel free to contact [pg-lts@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:pg-lts@nottingham.ac.uk) to become involved in any aspect of our future issues.