

Working in the Space Between

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Questions arising from the negotiation of difference are increasingly relevant in all spheres of contemporary life.¹ The processes of globalisation are implicated in the circulation of finance, capital, commodities, knowledge, information, and cultural representations, and there are complex circuits for the movement of people associated with these phenomena. As mobility increases, so encounters with differences of language, culture, deportment and habitus become more common (Mackie & Stevens, in press). There are various modes of mobility: permanent migration; temporary sojourns; tourism; documented and undocumented labour migration; marriage migration; asylum seeking; and overseas study. In Australia, issues of the negotiation of difference have often focused on relationships between the descendants of Anglophone settlers/invasers and newer immigrant communities, or on relationships with indigenous Australians. Less attention has been paid to the university as a prime site for the negotiation of difference.

A striking feature of contemporary Australian society, culture and political economy is the provision of international education, a major driver of the economy and a major source of foreign exchange. There has been a shift from the scholarship regime of the Colombo plan (Oakman 2004) to the neo-liberal 'user-pays' regime of international

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education in the twenty-first century. Currently well over 100,000 international students are studying in Australian universities, from undergraduate to postgraduate levels.² In 2007 James Jupp commented that around 110,000 student visas are issued annually in Australia, more than the total number for permanent settlement (2007: 204). Thus, for the current cohort of young Australians and their international student peers (not to mention academics), universities have the potential to become significant sites for learning the practices of dealing with difference.³

Several contributors to this special issue focus on the language-learning classroom as the site for the negotiation of difference in Australia.⁴ It must be admitted that the English language still has hegemonic status in language education in Australia, for the medium of instruction is English (at least at elementary level) and most language textbooks provide glosses and explanations in English. Nevertheless, the language classroom potentially enables the relative advantages and disadvantages of students from English-speaking backgrounds and non-English-speaking backgrounds to be flattened, or at least their contours may be changed.⁵ Thus, if the language classroom does provide a setting for the reflection on, and negotiation of, difference, this is not simply a matter of learning how to express gratitude in Japanese, or how to refer to a female professor in French. Rather, and more importantly, the language classroom provides a space in which the learners' own assumptions about linguistic and cultural practices may be de-naturalised. For many learners, the language class is a site for learning about the multiple dimensions of difference: gender, class and ethnicity, as well as different varieties of language and its multivalent quotidian uses.

² In 2003, the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (now called Universities Australia) reported that there were 120,522 international students in undergraduate courses, and the total number of international students in Australian university bachelor, postgraduate coursework, higher degree by research and non-award courses was 210,307 students. See Universities Australia (2009).

³ The 2009 demonstrations by groups of Indian students about threats to their safety and security in Australian suburbs have highlighted the responsibilities of host societies that invite large numbers of international visitors into their midst. See Universities Australia (2009) for responses to this situation.

⁴ In current terminology, language educators prefer to refer to 'additional' languages rather than 'second languages' or 'foreign languages.' In Australia, the term 'Languages other than English' (LOTE) is also encountered, but this assumes that most learners have English as a first language. It is even more difficult to find appropriate terminology in university language classrooms where classes include international students who may come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, may be proficient in more than one language, and may have English as an additional language.

⁵ In the School of Languages and Intercultural Education at Curtin University of Technology, there was an attempt to capitalise on this diversity by bringing together students in English as a Second Language programs and students in Asian Language programs for peer mentoring. Each group of students acted as a resource for their 'buddies' in the other program. See Dunworth (2002: 222–28).

In many parts of the world, encounters across linguistic and cultural barriers occur every day and are taken for granted. In some places there are attempts to codify the terms of such interaction through explicit policies on language usage. Multiethnic societies such as Malaysia, Singapore and India have detailed policies to deal with ethnic difference and diversity. The European Union (EU) has developed as a supra-national organisation that must operate in many languages; as of 2009, this 'translates' into the bureaucratic convention that the most significant EU documents are made available in each of the EU's 23 official languages (Europa 2008). The United Nations also has well-developed facilities for simultaneous interpreting across the languages of member states.

In the Anglophone settler societies, however, an assumption of English-language hegemony has papered over the very real linguistic and cultural diversity within the boundaries of nation-states such as Australia or the USA.⁶ Australia presents a conundrum in this respect. Australia is home to a diverse population and has made pioneering efforts with multilingual broadcasting and such services as the telephone interpreter service. However, Australian students have been relatively reluctant to pursue foreign language study.⁷

There are linguistic and cultural resources in the community that have not been fully utilised. As Besemeres and Wierzbicka have commented:

Australia is a country rich in languages and rich in bilingual experience. To date, however, this experience has not been widely shared and a monolingual perspective on the world dominates the country's public discourse as well as the private thinking of most Anglo Australians. Bilingual experience is a resource that until now has hardly been tapped in Australia. (2007: xiv)

The 2006 Census data (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009) reported that 44 percent of Australians were either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas. Of those born overseas, around a third came from predominantly English-language zones (23.5 percent came from the UK, 8.8 percent from New Zealand and 2.4 percent from South

⁶ At one of our workshops, Paul Allatson discussed the 2006 controversy in the USA over a recording of the US national anthem, the Star Spangled Banner, being translated and sung in Spanish with the title 'Nuestro Himno,' or Our Hymn/Anthem (Various Artists 2006). The CD release of the song ignited calls for English to be formally declared the USA's national language. However, as Allatson noted, while many US states can, and have, enshrined English as the official idiom, calls to make English the national language face numerous legislative obstacles, including the need for a constitutional amendment.

⁷ Several recent reports have focused on this issue. For example, a 2008 report to the Australian Academy of the Humanities confirmed that fewer than 10 percent of Australian university students undertake any study of Languages Other Than English, and that numbers enrolled in language are stagnant despite an overall increase in numbers of tertiary students (Beginners' LOTE, 2008: 2). See also the report on Asian Languages and Studies produced by the Asian Studies Association of Australia (2002).

Africa), suggesting that the majority of the overseas-born come with skills in other languages. However, 83 percent of Australians say that they speak English at home. Nevertheless, in Australia there are constant concerns about a language skills shortfall, and soul-searching about the reluctance of young Australians to study additional languages.⁸ The Australian national television channel, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), has served non-English interest groups with news, dramas and feature films for almost three decades (Ang et al 2008). And, as Andrew Jakubowicz's web resource 'Making Multicultural Australia for the 21st Century' carefully records, Australia continues to be a country of change, movement, arrival and return from all over the world (Making Multicultural Australia 2009). This makes it both surprising and inevitable that the use of language is hard-won and easily lost in a dominantly English environment.

All of the contributors to this special issue have reflected on the stakes involved in negotiating differences in language and culture. In their research and professional practice they inhabit the 'space between': the space between languages, the space between cultures, and the space between academic disciplines. While many of our contributors are located in the Australian university system, we also have contributors from outside that system, as well as contributors who are theorising disparate sites for the negotiation of difference. The most exciting aspect of the papers presented here is the ability to move between the spheres of cultural theory and the everyday. Analytical techniques originally developed for literary and cultural analysis are brought to bear on the texts and practices of everyday life.

The loci for these investigations include the classroom, the police station, the streets, local government and the university itself. The practices examined include translating and interpreting, language teaching, academic writing, literary production and critique, language planning and small business and shadow economies. The academic disciplines drawn on include theoretical and applied linguistics, discourse analysis, language teaching pedagogy, policy studies, cultural studies, literary studies, political science, gender studies and postcolonial theory.

⁸ At the time of writing, the most recent contribution to an ongoing media debate about language teaching and learning in Australia was Sussex (2009).

A major theoretical reference point in this special issue is Homi Bhabha's notion of the third space, where a dynamic process of identity formation is possible (1994: 37). As Bhabha puts it, the third space is an in-between place, an 'interstitial passage between fixed identifications [which] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (1994: 4). Under Bhabha's theorisation, the third space 'displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom' (1990: 211). Bhabha's theories were originally developed for the analysis of colonial situations, but are increasingly being applied to contemporary situations of cultural contact under conditions of inequality. As we shall see below, linguists and language teachers have also found the notion of a third space to be a productive one.

Other contributors draw on Mary Louise Pratt's use of the concept of 'transculturation.' Pratt adapted the concept from the writings of the Cuban cultural ethnographer Fernando Ortiz (1940), who developed the neologism *transculturation* to describe the complex cultural interactions between the Spanish- and African-origin communities in Cuba (Pratt 1991: 523). Pratt also uses the idea of the 'contact zone—which the contribution in this issue by Jun Ohashi finds particularly useful—'to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect' (Pratt 1992: 7).

Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality is important to several authors here. Kristeva characterises textuality as 'a mosaic of quotations' (1986: 37), and argues that 'the final meaning of (textual) content will be neither original source nor any one of the possible meanings taken on in the text, but will be, rather, a continuous movement back and forth in the space between the origin and all the possible connotative meanings' (1996: 190-91). This also resonates with Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism, whereby speakers, listeners and writers and readers are engaged in a process of negotiation over the making of meaning. As Celia Thompson explains—in her contribution to this issue—in reference to Bakhtin's seminal essay, 'The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology and the Human Sciences' (1986), Bakhtin's theories are 'sociohistorically grounded in the spaces where the boundaries delineating individual ownership of words and ideas are blurred.'

Some authors use the methodologies of discourse analysis. While Foucault's (1972) view of discourse analysis has also been influential in cultural analysis, it is not always immediately compatible with the kind of analysis undertaken by linguists. As Poynton and Lee explain, '[a] discourse in Foucault's sense is a body of knowledge, not so much a matter of language as a discipline ... [f]or much of linguistics, on the other hand, discourse is roughly synonymous with text' (2000: 6). Fairclough's view of critical discourse analysis can provide a bridge between textual analysis, the placing of texts in their sociocultural context, and Foucauldian discourse analysis. For Fairclough, 'linguistic phenomena are social phenomena, in that language use is determined by sociocultural conventions that are underpinned by the power relations underlying the same conventions. At the same time, language plays a role in constructing, maintaining and changing sociocultural conventions' (2001: 19).

Naoki Sakai's theories of translation provide another important reference point for our authors. Sakai has referred to the 'necessity' and 'impossibility' of translation, and cautions against a naïve view of the possibility of adequate and transparent translation between languages, preferring to describe the relationship of translations between two languages as 'co-figuration' (2001: x). As he argues:

while social encounter and commodity exchange respectively give rise to demands for transparency in communication and equivalence in value, they inevitably evoke the incommensurable in our sociality, and the excessive in equation. Yet the incommensurable and the excessive cannot be comprehended outside the contexts of contact. (Sakai 2001: ix)

Sakai is alive to the power relationships between languages and even suggests that the process of translation is one of the very conditions for modernity itself:

Modernity is inconceivable unless there are occasions where many regions, people, industries, and polities are in contact with one another *despite* [emphasis in original] geographic, cultural, and social distances. *Modernity, therefore, cannot be considered unless in reference to translation* [emphasis added]. (2001: ix)

With these power relationships in mind, Sakai and colleagues embarked on the ambitious project of issuing a journal, *Traces*, that would appear simultaneously in English, Japanese, Chinese, Korean and German editions, the journal's remit thus having the following consequences for potential authors:

to write for *Traces* is always to address oneself to readers in different languages. When one writes in one of the languages of the journal, one is simultaneously read in Korean, English, German, Japanese, one of the languages of China, and still others. Every contributor to this journal is expected to be fully aware that she or he is writing for and addressing a multilingual audience: just

like a local intellectual under a colonial regime, every contributor is, in a manner of speaking, expected to speak in a forked tongue. (2001: ix-x)

Sakai's theories of literary translation and co-figuration shed light on the struggles over signage in Ashfield, a western suburb of Sydney with a significant Chinese population. Brett Neilson takes two case studies, from Liverpool Road in Ashfield and Via Sarpi in Milan, where bilingual signage has been a source of friction.

Behind these controversies is the political economy of mobility in the contemporary world. It is necessary to understand global processes in order to follow the trajectories of Chinese migration to Australia and Italy. As Brett Neilson reminds us in his essay in this special issue, although his investigation is very localised and specific, 'the issues regarding dual language signage must thus be analysed with a global regard.' While apparently encouraging a recognition of diversity and difference, in these sites the practices of translation also, however, reinforce the hegemony of two world languages: Mandarin Chinese and English. The shops and market stalls where encounters between different peoples take place are, according to Neilson, 'apart from being a place of commodity exchange and profit generation, [also] a site of linguistic transactions and affective relations.' Neilson links these debates about language to debates about citizenship, pointing out the paradox of contemporary citizenship: that as citizens we claim rights which are 'conceived as universal but also as imposed in a particular, territorially homogeneous and neutrally bordered, political space.' Furthermore, 'debates about citizenship ... are focused on universalistic issues such as democracy, political rights and responsibilities, but now shift to include concerns about culture, which were formerly confined to the particular.'

Kristeva's theories of intertextuality and Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic imagination help to make sense of neophyte students' negotiations with academic language and citation practices. Celia Thompson's thoughtful essay helps to defuse some of the anxiety found in prevailing discussions of student plagiarism. The students in Thompson's study are working between disciplines, between languages and between genres. Students taking an Arts degree at an Australian university exist in a 'transdisciplinary contact zone' where they must simultaneously learn the practices and conventions of several different academic disciplines. Following Holton (2000),

Thompson advocates a ‘hybridising rather than homogenising approach to pedagogy.’ She argues that,

it is precisely by learning how to speak through the voices of others that we can begin to articulate an authoritative position of our own. By engaging with, rather than fearing, intertextual connections, we can create a dialogic pedagogy for academic writing that enables staff and students to transcend the notion of plagiarism as simply a lack of ‘academic honesty,’ and advance our understanding of the politics of text, knowledge and identity formation that characterises the complexities of the learning and teaching unfolding in today’s university classrooms.

Following Bhabha’s work on the third space and Pratt’s work on transculturation, Jun Ohashi sees the language classroom as a meeting place. Ohashi traces a shift in the emphasis of language teaching, whereby the goals ‘have shifted from “communicative competence,” which aimed at native-level competence, to “intercultural competence,” which develops a cultural position in order to mediate the learners’ cultures and the cultures of the target languages.’ Ohashi finds the concept of the ‘contact zone’ to be ‘particularly relevant in Australia, a multicultural society where migration and diaspora are significant features of the national cultural landscape.’ It is, he argues, ‘a useful concept for understanding any society where people with different ancestral roots are living together, and thus negotiating and co-constructing their multicultural identities.’ The contact zone is the place, where, for example, ‘conversationalists negotiate and develop hybrid cultural forms and identities.’

Ohashi traces the adaptation of Bhabha’s concept of the ‘third space’ by language educators, such as Pegrum (2008: 137–38), Kramersch (1993) and Crozet, Liddicoat and Bianco (1993: 13). These authors see the language classroom as a symbolic meeting place for the exploration of interculturality. Drawing on Liddicoat et al (1999: 181), Ohashi explains that the ‘notion of the third place where transculturation takes place helps us move away from the assumption that one language has one culture, and, by extension, homogeneous and static patterns of behaviour and values. It also challenges the assumption that where two cultures meet, often in the context of native and non native speakers’ conversations, the inevitable result will be dissonance, misfit, miscommunication and conflict.’ Those who have been exposed to contextual understanding of other cultural ways of communication and world-views, he argues, have the potential to evolve into interculturally competent communicators who can embrace differences in cultural orientations and manage interactions with people outside

their cultural boundaries. Ohashi provides pedagogical strategies for achieving these aims in the classroom as ‘meeting place.’

Emi Otsuji and Chihiro Kinoshita Thomson also see the language classroom as the site for the negotiation of identities. They ask what it means to promote student identity construction in another language, and aim for the nurturing of ‘active transcultural learners.’ Their study necessarily focuses on three aspects of language learning: the textbook, the teacher and the learner. They are particularly interested in the construction of gendered identities, and argue that it is not enough simply to analyse textbooks. Rather, it is necessary to consider how textbooks are used by specific teachers in specific classroom situations, and how they are received and used by specific students. They demonstrate that, for students from diverse backgrounds in the Australian university classroom, learning a language also involves the negotiation of cross-cutting identities and subject positions with reference to gender, class, ethnicity and language variety.

Judy Wakabayashi, however, suggests that there are limits to the applicability of the notion of the ‘third space.’ In her discussion of *hon'yaku-chô* (a variety of the Japanese language used for translations) she refers to this variety as ‘the transformative strangeness within.’ Commenting on the receptivity of the Japanese language, she posits that ‘This openness toward foreign writing belies the oft-heard criticisms of Japanese insularity and suggests that at least in linguistic matters the Japanese are receptive to heterogeneity, even if these imported elements are eventually assimilated and transformed.’ Wakabayashi argues that *hon'yakuchô* ‘constitutes a (sub)norm whose transgressive thrust is not so much to violate Japanese norms as to transform them.’ Translational Japanese, then, ‘is not a space between, but a space within.’ It is a ‘porous entity whose seepage affects the larger system within which it is located.’

Ikuko Nakane’s research demonstrates the stakes involved in working between languages. She discusses the role of the interpreter in police interrogations. While interpreters may in theory be seen as invisible, neutral mediators, in practice this stance may be difficult to maintain, as is revealed in those cases where communication does not run smoothly. This has real material effects for suspects in criminal cases. In the so-

called ‘Melbourne case’ for example,⁹ questions were raised about the role of interpreting and translating practices in the interrogation and trial of these suspects. In a profession like translating and interpreting, clear ethical protocols have been developed. In most spheres of everyday life, however, we are adrift without clear ethical guidelines for dealing with difference.

The question of ethics also leads us back to questions of citizenship and co-existence and debates on universalism and particularity. Angela Giovanangeli considers the question of universalism versus particularity in the French language classroom, pointing out the gap between official language policy and the classroom, and reminding us that the French language has disparate varieties from the Metropole to Quebec and New Caledonia. Like several other authors, Giovanangeli wishes to see the language classroom as a place in which differences can be negotiated: ‘Teachers may either contribute to the preservation of normative positions in regard to dominating social practices, or they may challenge them. In the case of the latter, teachers need to promote a class environment that encourages a critical and self-reflective discourse for both students and teachers.’

Cultural production is another important space for the negotiation of difference, and for finding ways of theorising the space between. H el ene Jacomard considers a novel by Didier Coste, called *Days in Sydney* (2005). This novel is a diglossic text, switching between two languages, French and English, and without parallel translation. The potential readers of this novel are a relatively privileged group—those with linguistic and cultural competence in *both* English and French. Jacomard is interested in the aesthetics of this novel, and its reception in this surprising transcultural contact zone—bilingual and bicultural individuals in contemporary Sydney. For Jacomard, this text ‘is a way of exploring the space between aesthetic creation and language, literary production and reception.’

Such code-switching within one text is relatively unusual in the Australian context, at least as far as novels are concerned, although there are some examples with parallel

⁹ The Melbourne case involved some Japanese tourists who were accused and convicted of smuggling drugs into Australia. Supporters of those convicted allege that there were problems in the interpreting provided in the case. See Nakamura (2007).

texts in two languages.¹⁰ Code-switching between English and Spanish is, however, a prominent feature of Latina/o cultural production in the USA.¹¹ In this edition of *Portal*, we are pleased to include cultural texts, solicited by *Portal*'s editor-in-chief Paul Allatson, which feature a complex relationship to linguistic diversity and which exemplify the theme of 'working in the space between.' 'Diary Inside/Color Local Crónica' is an excerpt from Susana Chávez-Silverman's second book of code-switching chronicles, *Scenes from la cuenca del LA y otros natural disasters*, to be published in 2010 by the University of Wisconsin Press. Alejandra Morena and Roberto Milanes' 'Knowing the Place for the First Time: A Cuban Exile's Story,' is an experimental, personal ethnography that recounts the visits back to Cuba made by a 'New Zealand'-resident Cuban, a member of the exiled generation that left the island after the 1959 Revolution. We also have Gabriela Coronado's 'Entre Ausencias,' a letter in Spanish to the author's mother about what it has meant to be a Mexican in Australia, relating her memories, nostalgia and experiences in a new, alien and often incomprehensible linguistic and cultural environment, one that requires constant translation and generates constant mistranslations on her part, and on the part of her interlocutors.

The editors and authors of this special issue are also interested in what it means to inhabit the space between disciplines. The theme of the 'Space Between' developed from a series of roundtable discussions held under the auspices of the Cultural Literacies Node of the Australian Research Council Cultural Research Network. The concerns of the Cultural Literacies Node have been described as follows:

This involves understanding the processes through which people make sense of culture through the specific means and media available to them. It is now a commonplace to argue that we need more than the traditional forms of literacy: reading and writing. We now need visual literacy and computer literacy, and the competence to deal with the increasing number of systems which deliver cultural content to us everyday: the internet, computer games, mobile telephones and so on. The understanding of these processes is a multidisciplinary project that will involve all the disciplines involved in the Network.

Mark Gibson, convener of the Cultural Literacies Node of the Network, proposed an initial discussion on multilingual literacies and cultural studies. A total of three events were held, two at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) and one at the University of Melbourne, convened by Stephanie Hemelryk Donald and Vera Mackie,

¹⁰ See, however, the inclusion of words from other languages in Ania Walwicz's poetry (1989: 83), and Sneja Gunew's discussion of Walwicz's poetry (1994: 90-92).

¹¹ On the political economy of literary translation in the USA, see Lennon (2008). On code-switching in Latina/o cultural production, see Allatson (2007: 73).

all supported by the Cultural Literacies Node of the Cultural Research Network. The initial discussion focused on the following themes:

This forum brings together cultural researchers and those involved in teaching culture through language, to debate the role of language in literacy as an attribute of international competency. Presenters will address the role of language in their research, their teaching and more generally in their engagement with everyday life as Australian academics who support an ethos of internationalization. The seminar seeks to identify research directions in literacy and cultural research that speak to the need to identify language-learning and cultural research as complementary projects.

We were also concerned to examine the Anglocentrism of much research conducted under the banner of ‘cultural studies’ (see, for example, Sakai 2001: i–x; Chen and Chua 2000: 9). We wished to take up and develop the initiatives of the Cultural Research Network, building on the work of a growing number of individual researchers and students whose careers have been centred on the ‘region.’ In December 2007, a Roundtable on ‘The Cultural Politics of Translation’ was held at UTS. In February 2008 a Workshop on ‘The Space Between: Languages, Cultures, Translation’ took place at the University of Melbourne. After the final workshop, an open call for papers was issued, and we were able to add several more papers to the original group for this special issue.

We are particularly pleased to have these papers published in *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*. *PORTAL* has a policy of publishing articles from diverse disciplines alongside creative writings and artistic works. *Portal* is also one of the few international journals that provide a space in which articles and creative products in English and other languages can, and do, sit side by side.¹² This is, therefore, a very suitable site for reflecting on the spaces between languages, between cultures and between disciplines.

¹² This contrasts, for example, with *Traces*, for while it publishes editions in several languages, each translated edition is generally monoglossic.

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