Special Issue Introduction: Ways of leading in non-Anglophone contexts: Representing, expressing and enacting authority beyond the English-speaking world

The English language has for some time dominated academia worldwide (Steyaert and Janssens, 2013) and become accepted and institutionally embedded as the international language of academia. This is illustrated within the field of leadership studies where, since its beginnings in the early part of the Twentieth Century, research into leadership has largely been pursued by scholars in the USA and the UK working in the English language. Consequently, the sub-discipline of 'leadership studies' has been developed and theorised within Western traditions of research, which have produced predominantly Anglo-centric linguistic interpretations of the concept (Jepson, 2010). This dominance of a culturally and linguistically 'naturalised' Anglo-centric view of leadership has heavily informed the development of leadership and management knowledge and practice. Such ethnocentricity, furthermore, has resulted in tacit assumptions regarding the general applicability and transferability of knowledge beyond English language speaking contexts. As a consequence, other culturally situated notions of leadership, leading and managing have been comparatively marginalised (Schedlitzki et al., 2016).

There is, however, a growing literature that is critical of the limitations of this Anglo-centric view (Guthey and Jackson, 2011; Jepson, 2009); critique based largely on empirical research into leadership in non-Western countries (Turnbull et al., 2011) and within different language settings (Jepson, 2009, 2010). The latter focus taken by Jepson's (2010) research approaches language as the basis for understanding a linguistically constituted nature of

leadership and looks particularly into the importance of national language as expressing a cultural voice (Jepson, 2010; Tayeb, 2001). Others have also problematised the seemingly individualistic, masculine and heroic focus of the dominant Anglo-centric paradigm of leadership studies (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012; Ford, 2010; Knights and McCabe, 2015) and asked for a stronger focus on multiplicity, diversity, simultaneity and difference (Collinson, 2011).

In this Special Issue we further the critique of Anglo-centricity within the field of leadership studies and examine the effects of non-English languages on leadership practices. This may help to 'de-naturalise' the individualistic, masculine and heroic focus of the dominant Anglo-centric paradigm of leadership. We seek to challenge the idea that this linguistically loaded conceptualisation is universally applicable in analytical and practical organisational terms. This Special Issue thus offers contributions that explore conceptions, expressions and enactments of authority in non-Anglophone contexts: ways of leading, guiding, governing, conducting and directing organisations as these are understood and enacted through languages, discourses and 'forms of life' other than English. This involves examining the political, historical and cultural roots of 'leadership' within other languages as well as critically examining the English language as a business and scholarly lingua franca. We acknowledge that by publishing this Special Issue in English, we are perhaps in danger of 'becoming parodies of ourselves' in reproducing the very practices of which we are critical (Clarke and Knights, 2015). In the current climate of academia, this is unavoidable and all we can do is offer contributions that are sensitive to linguistic nuances and tensions in the theory and practice of leadership.

This Special Issue also aims to rethink the future of leadership discipline and particularly the way that practices of leadership are represented and understood. It entails a selection of articles that help to further contextualise the meaning and importance of leadership and

leadership development as well as give voice to community-based and historically and culturally informed understandings of leadership in organisations and societies.

One of the justifications for the present special issue, then, is to compensate for the relative dearth of empirical studies and accounts of leadership from the perspective of non-English speaking communities. The article by Joseph Eyong addresses this lack by offering a rare insight into local constructions of leadership mediated by regional non-Indo European languages in sub-Saharan Africa. Eyong himself hails from the village of *Besongabang* in Cameroon, so has an intimate knowledge of the languages and cultures of people's populating the Cross River basin of Western Cameroon and Eastern Nigeria. His article reports on empirical research conducted in this region alongside studies of community leadership in the Mambila highlands of central Nigeria and North Western Cameroon. Eyong is instrumental in using his own reflexive understanding of indigeneity in combination with his ethnographic empirical evidence to challenge Anglo-centric views of leadership. Beginning with a critical interrogation of accounts of early Western explorers of the region, Eyong points to the puzzlement of white men who were incapable of reconciling their own ethnocentric views of leadership with the cultural realities of community-based leadership they encountered in their travels. This refusal to 'see' on the part of pre-colonial European explorers and colonial rulers provides a perfect foil for Eyong to demonstrate empirically how the indigenous perspectives of the communities he studied vary radically from, and thus seriously challenge, the tenets of Anglo-Saxon writing on leadership. Eyong reveals three key features of indigenous framings of leadership that differentiate them from Western constructions. Firstly, the community dynamics permit a non-linear rotation of leadership roles and power; a quality that Eyong refers to as 'substitutive'. Secondly, leadership is mediated by mythological elements that are often embodied symbolically

and materially in non-human agents, such as, trees and the animals. Finally, leadership admits of metaphysical intervention, again by non-human entities such as animistic spirits. Reading Eyong's fascinating accounts, one is transported into a cosmology of leadership that contrasts markedly with that of the West.

Whilst Karsten and Hendriks bring us back firmly to Europe, like Eyong, they nonetheless demonstrate how language – in this case Dutch – can radically challenge Anglo-centric conceptions and practices of leadership. Karsten and Hendriks begin their article with a rich and comprehensive contextual discussion of how constructions of leadership in Dutch language and culture differ from those of other parts of Europe and the English-speaking world in particular. Whilst undoubtedly retaining a notion of 'leadership' for pragmatic purposes, the Dutch tend to eschew associations that the term has with 'strong', 'heroic' and 'decisive' individuals, preferring to emphasize the more consensual and democratic contours of leadership. The Dutch mayoral system, Karsten and Hendriks contend, is perhaps an ideal exemplar of the form of collective leadership practiced in the Netherlands. It is this aspect of Dutch democratic governance that they elect to focus on, reporting on an extensive mixed-methods study of the mayoral office. Karsten and Hendriks characterize the form of leadership typified in this office as that of 'bridging-and-bonding', arguing that this reflects a wider societal preference for collegiate and relational forms of leadership. The kind of 'democratic guardianship' represented in the mayoral system is illustrative of the way leadership in the Netherlands diverges from that of the Anglo-Saxon world. For the Dutch, the very word 'leadership' can carry adverse and unwanted connotations – rather like the word *Führer* does in Germany, but for different reasons. In their empirical study, for example, Karsten and Hendriks report on the way in which Dutch mayors frequently find 'softer' substitutes for the word *leiderschap*. Such terms include, inter

alia: *begeleiderschap* which translates as 'guiding leadership'; *burgervader* (first citizen); *oliemannetje* (catalyst); and *procesbegeleider* (process manager). The linguistic antipathy is also paralleled by a cultural aversion to 'strong' or 'directive' leadership which the Dutch have sought to counteract through the adoption of laws and institutional forms that mitigate against concentrations of power. Karsten and Hendriks conclude their article by calling for a 'recalibration' of the Anglo-centric 'decide and accomplish' conception of the leadership concept so as to give due regard and expression to 'bridging-and-bonding' and 'process-oriented' forms of leadership that their studies reveal.

Moving beyond the European Continent again, Case, Connell and Jones introduce us to the fascinating and complex socio-historical, political and linguistic context of the single-party run country Laos. Their research adds to a much needed focus in leadership research on language as socially constitutive and offers insights into leadership in the under-researched setting of developing, agrarian communities. Drawing on their extensive work on international development projects in Laos, the authors navigate carefully between the intricacies of emic and etic research to provide us with unique insights into the layers of leadership language use in Laos. They preface their empirical analysis with a detailed introduction to the socio-historical and political context of Laos, including its geographical setting and governance structures. Focussing on their experience in international development project meetings, the authors analyse ethnographic 'observant-participant' and interview data to explore and unpack the existence of tripartite sources of leadership language use. In particular, Case et al. discuss 'traditional' community language used by local farmers, the Party-directed language use introduced and enforced by Lao Government officials, and the influence of terminologies used by international development agencies. The rich empirical material allows the authors to explore the importance

and cultural embeddedness of hierarchy and social positioning in Lao language and highlight the powerful central system of hierarchical relationships of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and its influence on traditional language-in-use. Case et al. further explore within this interplay of languages the Lao vocabulary of leadership. They highlight the difficulty of native Lao people to find the words to describe leadership and to identify individuals as leaders outside the officially – Party sanctioned – understanding of leadership within a system of hierarchical relationships. This demonstrates leadership and authority as coextensive within the particular socio-political system of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, limiting what can and cannot be described as leadership. Case et al. conclude their article by widening the call for future studies of leadership language that adopt a broader scope of qualitative research to explore instances of leadership in villages, urban life and non-governmental workplaces in Laos to deepen our insights into linguistic practices. They posit that these alternative places may bring to the fore the dominance of traditional leadership language uses.

Finally, Gaggiotti draws on empirical research conducted in an Italian/ Latin American multinational corporation to illustrate the various tensions surrounding the colonization of different languages by English especially around the subject matter of leadership. This is a highly original and unique contribution to how in a multilingual, multinational corporation the different languages are utilized to engage with leadership. It challenges existing research to take account of the rhetoric and discourse not just of leaders but those whom they lead and thereby to advance understanding the part that different languages play in the formation and development of leadership in multinational corporations. The paper provides us with an extensive literature review of the field concluding that in research on multi-lingualism there is a concentration on local/non-local and cultural differences, resulting in the semantics being neglected and this

highlights a major problematic to which the author addresses his concerns. The central argument of the article is that despite having virtually disappeared from vernacular vocabularies in Italy and Spanish speaking countries, terms like *duce* and *caudillo* continue to permeate the meaning of the term leader that has ostensibly replaced them. Through extensive ethnographic research, Gaggiotti reveals how the meaning of these terms is invoked continually in practice even though the English term leadership remains as the formal language. His analysis offers a fascinating and highly illuminating way of exposing the subtleties of different languages-in-use. The paper provides a valuable conceptual history of the way different languages are used in everyday contexts of leadership in a multinational corporation and, furthermore, provides detailed empirical evidence to support the conceptual claims. It shows clearly how different words, or at least their distinctive meanings, are mobilized from diverse languages in varied contexts to accomplish something we call leadership and to induce effects on others. Overall, this paper makes a significant contribution to this Special Issue and to the field of leadership studies within multilingual and multinational corporations. Not only does it facilitate understanding of the subtleties and ambiguities of language in these complex circumstances, it also reminds us of how we should never take words and semantics for granted.

We trust that you, the reader, find this varied collection of semantic explorations of leadership in non-Anglophone settings as enjoyable and informative as we, the guest editors, have. We were taken by the cornucopia of insights offered by the contributors to this special issue and hope that you will be similarly engaged.

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