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Final reflections

Abstract This concluding chapter offers some final reflections regarding the four objectives of the research project ‘Inclusive epistemologies and practices of out-of-school English learning (IEP!)’¹, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, which ran from January 2019 until June 2021. These aims were: 1) to collaboratively research teenagers’ existing practices of using and learning English out of school time; 2) to implement new, inclusive, nonformal English language educational initiatives; 3) to evaluate the impact of the nonformal English language educational initiatives implemented; 4) to support the sustainability and transferability of the initiatives. Both the main outcomes and some enduring challenges are presented.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, out-of-school, youth, inclusion

This different chapters that make up this volume report on diverse aspects of the research project ‘Inclusive epistemologies and practices of out-of-school English learning (IEP!)’, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, which ran from January 2019 until June 2021. The aims of the project were:

- 1) To collaboratively research teenagers’ existing practices of using and learning English out of school time;
- 2) To implement new, inclusive, nonformal English language educational initiatives;
- 3) To evaluate the impact of the nonformal English language educational initiatives implemented;
- 4) To support the sustainability and transferability of the initiatives.

While each of the contributions to the volume has presented specific findings, in this brief concluding chapter we offer some final reflections in relation to these four project objectives, with a focus on the main outcomes and the enduring challenges faced.

In terms of the first objective, as was discussed in Moore (this volume), IEP! emerged from an intersectoral alliance involving our university’s outreach office (Fundació Autònoma Solidària), English teachers and head teachers from

1 Reference number: PRPPGC2018-099071-A-I00.

the two secondary schools in the town at the centre of our work, members of the local council, the Catalan Education Department and university researchers/teacher educators. Collaborative and creative approaches to educational research and practice were fundamental to the project's epistemology, in endeavouring towards inclusion not only in terms of the problem tackled – youths' (non)equitable opportunities for learning of English – but also in terms of 'knowing' and building new knowledge. The chapters show how different members of the educational community are legitimised as 'knowers', each offering different yet complementary perspectives on the phenomena under study.

The chapters offer fascinating insights into the multimodal communicative lives of young people in metropolitan Catalonia as we near the end of the first quarter of the 21st century. Zhang and Llompart (this volume), reveal how youth mobilise their emergent linguistic repertoires, the digital resource of Google Translate, as well as cultural discourses which circulate through global social networks of communication and information, in managing a plurilingual and intercultural encounter. Corona et al. (this volume) discuss young people's socialisation into English through their participation in imagined communities of YouTubers and Instagrammers, showing the traces of this membership in the practices and conventions displayed by the youth in their video productions. Pratinestós and Masats (this volume) examine how English learners agentively use Instagram chats to communicate and socialise translocally, offering an intriguing glance at the semiotic complexity of youths' interactions in which meaning is mediated by text, photographs, gifs, videos, audio clips, emoji, and other multimodal resources.

In terms of the second aim to implement new, inclusive, nonformal English language education initiatives, the different chapters describe our work in setting up a Global StoryBridges² site at the local youth centre (see Moore & Hawkins, this volume; Zhang & Llompart, this volume) and an English drama activity at one of the schools (see Moore, Deal et al., this volume). Pratinestós and Masats (this volume) also describe the connection between the informal translocal exchanges employing social media by Catalan and Greek youth and a project the authors helped set up in the students' school English classes. In the chapters by Moore (this volume) and Corona et al. (this volume), our aim of pursuing youth-led participatory action-research (YPAR) to collaboratively build new opportunities for the young people's learning of English is also discussed, as well as the difficulties experienced in accomplishing this aspect of the project.

2 See: <http://www.globalstorybridges.com/>

Our research confirms the potential of the collaborative and creative action and activist approaches followed in IEP! for promoting equitable access to non-formal education and for research, while YPAR remains an enduring challenge for future studies in this field.

As for the third objective, as well as offering an expanded understanding of how young people communicate, the chapters have offered expansive understandings of how language learning is enacted by youth in informal and nonformal contexts. Moore and Hawkins (this volume) offer an ecological perspective to account for the complexity of how young people's histories, linguistic repertoires, roles and identities, embodied modes beyond spoken language, material artefacts, and so on, emerge and are mobilised in interaction, as well as for considering the types of learning opportunities that are afforded by the emergent ecosystem. Moore, Deal et al. (this volume) place embodied action, aesthetics and emotion at the centre of their understanding of learning and show how seemingly inauthentic language input is transformed into a meaningful learning experience by youth. Pratginestós and Masats (this volume) offer an approach to studying young people's learning in the digital wild that captures the essence of their multimodal communication in social media. In short, IEP! has revealed that both communication and learning out of school – and arguably in school as well – are multimodal, aesthetic and emotional experiences for young people, which require expansive methodological and theoretical toolkits to be fully appreciated, including those proposed by the contributors to this volume.

The fourth and final objective of the project was to support the sustainability and transferability of the initiatives implemented for encouraging youths' learning of English. This raises questions as to whether the sustainability of our educational action and activism should be measured in terms of the longevity of the activities implemented, or the longevity of the relationships and collaborations established. If we were to opt for the first, we would need to conclude that this objective was not met in the IEP! project. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared approximately 14 months into this 30-month project, leading our country and much of the world into a hard lockdown and remote schooling, and to the suspension of the activities we had implemented thus far. On the other hand, if we consider the lasting relationships and collaborations established with different members of the educational community, we see great potential for the sustainability and transferability of our work in future joint projects.

We conclude this chapter and the volume with a reflection on the health, social and economic crises that we are currently facing. Moore, Vallejo et al. (this volume) predict the exacerbation of existing educational inequalities, including

those affecting access to extracurricular learning opportunities, as we recover from the global pandemic. Thus, collaborative and creative action and activist research, supporting inclusive practices of out-of-school (English) learning are as needed – or perhaps more needed – now as they were at the time we embarked on this project. In Moore (this volume), we argued that in order to deal with present-day issues, new *ways of knowing* are at stake, and we believe that IEP! has offered a model for this important epistemological challenge.

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