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# Affect, cognition and ideology in language pedagogy. Introduction to the special issue *Studies in Language Education 1*

This first special issue of *Crossroads. A Journal of English Studies* dedicated to English language education is intended as the beginning of a series of volumes that will be devoted to various aspects of language teaching and second language acquisition. The special issues aim to create a platform that welcomes both experienced scholars and aspiring researchers, including MA and PhD students. In this way, we strive to form an egalitarian community where all members are able to share their research findings and receive recognition that may contribute to their further advancement in the field.

The studies presented in this special issue demonstrate a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods, such as semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and aptitude tests. The volume comprises articles that focus on learner individual differences, specifically motivation and language aptitude, as well as English teachers' resilience and critical perspectives in higher English education.

Motivation has been firmly established as one of the most robust indicators of success in learning foreign languages (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2021; Dörnyei & Schmidt 2001). However, the challenge of initiating and maintaining motivation remains a significant matter that warrants attention in both research and classroom practice.

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In recent years, research has concentrated on the dynamic nature of motivation and methods to apprehend a range of elements that are at play in sustaining motivation (Dörnyei & Ryan 2015). Consequently, new constructs of directed motivational currents (DMCs) and sustained flow (SF) have been introduced. A DMC is defined as a “unique period of heightened motivation that is set into motion by the combination of a number of factors in the pursuit of a specific goal or vision” (Dörnyei, Ibrahim & Muir 2015: 97). DMS and SF are interrelated terms, which may lead to ambiguity regarding the difference between them. In general, sustained flow also encompasses a sense of complete absorption, which involves the pursuit of a goal in an organized fashion, and the subsequent feeling of contentment (Ibrahim & Al-Hoorie 2019).

In motivation research, in addition to learner-induced motivation surges, significant emphasis is placed on motivational interventions carried out by language educators. The purpose of these interventions, referred to as motivational strategies, is “to consciously generate and enhance student motivation, as well as maintain ongoing motivated behaviour and protect it from distracting and/or competing action tendencies” (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2021: 103).

Aptitude, which is a cognitive learner variable found within major classifications of individual differences (Ellis 2008), constitutes another factor that strongly predicts future success in language learning. The relevant research concentrates on the relationship between language aptitude and both general language ability and specific elements of linguistic performance. While most studies reveal that aptitude is a strong predictor of general language proficiency, the levels of its predictive validity vary for particular language skills and elements (Li 2016).

Teacher resilience is another theme addressed within the volume. The conceptualisations of resilience are diverse; however, in simple terms, it may be apprehended as “what sustains teachers and enables them to thrive rather than just survive in the profession” (Beltman et al. 2011: 11). Different viewpoints on teacher resilience have spurred research on both theoretical and practical levels. These include perspectives that centre on individuals, processes, systems, and contexts (Beltman 2021). The last framework is of particular importance as, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the field of teaching underwent heightened complexity, which involved, first of all, the challenges of the transfer of classroom learning into virtual environments.

The final issue discussed in the volume revolves around critical approaches to English Philology studies. According to McGroarty (2017: 230), three trends can be identified as pervading language education at various levels: employing language as a recruitment instrument to increase student numbers, implementing restructuring and privatization in language instruction as a means to attain enhanced institutional flexibility, and perceiving “language learning as self-realization, often directed toward professional or occupational ends, but admitting selected other goals in some circumstances”. As with

other domains of public and higher education, language learning embraces a “corporate-based ideology” that involves standardizing programmes, hierarchical management structures, and a focus on job-related training (Giroux 2020: 9). Within this neoliberal framework, the higher educational environment “at its worst abhors academic exploration and intellectual self-development as ends in themselves” (Di Leo 2020: 10). To counter these tendencies, the implementation of critical pedagogy-based methodology is often viewed as an effective means of promoting critical thinking and raising self-awareness among university students.

The volume opens with **Arkadiusz Pietluch’s** investigation into negative emotions experienced by language learners undergoing sustained flow. Since the flow is usually associated with positive affect, the study seeks to contribute to scarce data showing negative emotions within the phenomenon. Following semi-structured interviews, the author employs thematic analysis to categorize the nature of emotions experienced by adult language learners. The following three sources of adverse emotions are identified: preoccupation surpassing SF requirements, inner pressure to engage in SF routines, and a prolonged sense of loss. Although the study shows that negative affect is not common, negative emotionality experienced in the SF phenomenon may lead to premature cessation of certain experiences, and its negative consequences may extend beyond the timeframe of SF. The author suggests that caution should be recommended with respect to inducing SF in the classroom context due to the unpredictable short- and long-term consequences of the phenomenon.

The second paper in the volume, by **Agnieszka Dudzik** and **Agnieszka Dzieciol-Pedich**, presents the results of a quantitative study of English teachers’ resilience in the era of remote learning. The authors examine difficulties faced by language educators in online learning environments and the strategies that teachers use to alleviate stress. They also investigate students’ adjustment to the conditions of remote learning and its impact on teaching practice. The paper concludes with implications for teacher education and learner training, including a demand to provide sufficient preparation for online learning and teaching, and highlighting the need to reconceptualise learner autonomy in virtual classrooms.

The *Work in Progress* section commences with an article by **Urszula Sawicka**, in which the author examines the findings of an observational study on teacher motivational behaviour within the English classroom setting. A modified observational sheet adapted from Dörnyei and Guilloteaux (2008) is used to record both teachers’ motivational strategies and students’ motivated behaviour. The outcomes reveal the limited use of motivating strategies and the lack of impact of teacher motivating practices on learners’ engagement in the lesson.

The purpose of **Grażyna Gorbacz-Dailida’s** preliminary study is to investigate a potential link between language aptitude and overall phonetic ability among students of English

philology. The study utilizes the Polish adaptation of the Modern Language Aptitude Test (Rysiewicz 2008) and a test of phonetic skills developed by the author on the basis of the programme of BA studies and the syllabi of phonetics courses at the University of Białystok. Although no significant correlation has been found between the students' level of aptitude and their general phonetic ability, the author enumerates a number of factors that may have contributed to the lack of correlation in the study.

The special issue concludes with an article by **Marcelina Kalinowska** concerning English philology students' perceptions of the incorporation of contentious subjects in literature courses. The study, grounded in critical pedagogy, employs qualitative methods to collect and analyse data. The results indicate students' readiness to engage in discussion of sensitive issues as long as the classroom environment ensures impartiality and inclusiveness, and there is an effort to raise awareness of cultural differences between the home and target communities.

It is our sincere hope that the diverse issues covered in the present volume will attract the attention of scholars representing different fields within the realm of language education. We would like to express our thanks to the authors for their contributions and the reviewers for their effort to increase the quality of submitted papers. We are particularly grateful to Daniel Karczewski, the *Crossroads* editor in charge of linguistic articles, for his invaluable assistance and support.

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