Message from the Guest Editor

The Language of a Pandemic:
COVID-19 discursive practice and social change

This thematic issue of *Language, Discourse & Society* seeked to investigate discourses related to the current pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID). As such, we have three articles that tackle how COVID-19's language is shaping society and how society constitutes the pandemic language, especially how it may transform social norms.

The pandemic of COVID-19 disrupted the social order with sudden changes, affecting the neoliberal system on multiple levels (OECD, 2020). From the disease outbreak news to the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic from the World Health Organization and the associated decisions such as borders' restrictions or confinement/quarantine, new challenges emerged bringing the dominant economic system's limitations out into the light (Nunes, 2020; Saad-Filho, 2020).

Leading to rapid changes in most areas of society, at the macro, meso, micro or individual levels, social functioning was revisited by the performance of a series of new governmental and institutional measures. In doing so, institutional discourse rapidly changed, investing the social realm with new claims, calling upon individuals' behavioral change. Distinguishing services as "essential" or "non-essential", re-ordering priorities, demonstrating violence to apply these priorities, the language shift inherently questioned the dominant ideology. For example, the weight put on healthcare systems and thereby healthcare workers and users has triggered governmental and social responses challenging social values, norms and ethics (e.g., Ortega & Orsini, 2020). Also, while new rituals emerged to thank healthcare workforce in some part of the world (e.g., showing gratefulness with images at the window, regular applause), some works seemed to be newly recognized. The notion of being or staying at 'home' took several dimensions whether people had a safe place to call 'home' (e.g., Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color, stateless persons, refugees, homeless persons), or people were in situation of vulnerability (e.g., in case of domestic violence, abuse, isolation).

COVID-19 reaffirmed the intersections between health and race, gender, and class-based inequalities. It thus highlighted existing social injustice, shedding light on systemic racism. These inequalities translate in several forms and raise how societal fissures along the lines of race, indigeneity, class, gender, immigration, and citizenship statuses are being revealed by the pandemic to be prevailing social determinants of health.

For this thematic issue, three articles explore the language of and on COVID-19 and intersecting events. The first manuscript entitled **"Military Framing of Health Threats: The COVID-19 Disease as a Case Study"**, is in English by **Sami Chatti** based in Tunisia. This case study looks at how military metaphors used during the pandemic are shaping the perception of the crisis and all that has been affected by it, touching on the role of methaporical framing in society and especially how it relates to morality. Following this article, the second manuscript **"Klétaj ak Pwofitasyon. Réflexion sur les agentivités discursives au temps du Covid en Guadeloupe postcoloniale"** written in French by **Stéphanie Melyon-Reinette** based in Guadeloupe offers an analysis of the influences of a neo-colonial relationship between identities reflected during the pandemic through discourse. In doing so, Meylon-Reinette elaborates on the construction of the perception of disease outbreaks and healthcare system in a (neo)colonial context. Finally

the third manuscript in English by **Arisa Koba** based in Japan, is entitled **"Discursive othering of Asian Americans: A preliminary reflection of a foreshadowing COVID-19' related hate"**. It covers the history of Asian Americans discriminations to deconstruct the discourses underlying hate against Asian Americans. In different selected discourses, Koba who performed discourse analysis explains how the language in use affected Asian Americans, looking at the notion of othering.

This thematic issue was possible because of the support of the editorial team and especially Editor in Chief: Professor Anna Odrowąż-Coates, Thematic Issue Editor: Dr. Cecilio Lapresta Rey, and RC25 President: Dr. Stéphanie Cassilde. A special thank you to the authors whose work is published in this issue and all the participants, all the people behind the research we are able to share. This is the second year of the pandemic, a crisis exacerbating the foundations of the systems on which societies are based. This issue provides insights on how and why it is affecting our social structures, and how methodologically, the study of Discourse can unravel the complexities and shed light on these phenomena. I am confident these productions will contribute to the intellectual conversation around the language of and on a pandemic, to better understand the discursive practice and thereby move forward social change.

Sincerely,

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*McGill University is situated on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehà:ka, a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations. I recognize and respect the Kanien'kehà:ka as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which I am writing this introductory letter.

References

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