International Association for Languages and Intercultural Communication

IALIC Roundtable talk

Enacting Critical Hope:
Language, Interculturality and Academic Lives

Friday 18 December 2026 | 11.00–13.00, UK time | TEAMS Online

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In this IALIC event, we turn to the idea of **critical hope** and invite you to participate in a dialogue about how to navigate and enact hope while pursuing academic research and career in language and intercultural communication.

As language and intercultural researchers, educators and practitioners, we work in an increasingly turbulent and fractious world; At the same time, many of us have to cope with increasing employment precarity and funding pressures. It can be challenging to find and maintain positivity in our academic practices. Moreover very often, we discuss those challenges separately. However, contracts, grants, publication expectations and institutional priorities influence the research questions we can ask, the courses we can open, the collaborations we can build and the changes we can pursue.

This event proposes that the idea of critical hope offers a practical way to recognise such constraints while asking what action remains possible. By critical hope (e.g. Webb, 2025) we mean a hope that is grounded in humanity and that recognises constraints, whilst pushing us ‘to do something other than merely persevere and stand firm’ (Webb, 2007, pg. 72). Critical hope has emerged from Freireian pedagogy as a future-oriented hope that underpins and accompanies actions to improve current social conditions of inequality and injustice (Corbett and Guilherme, 2021). It is necessary for transformational work to succeed in driving forward social change, yet it is realistic about the constraints surrounding this endeavour (Zembylas, 2022). It stands in opposition to naïve hope, a hope that is doomed to failure because it fails to recognise the constraints of the systems of inequality that surround us. Thus, critical hope is both ‘active and embodied’ (Walsh & Sutherland, 2025, pg. 74). Much of intercultural communication’s transformative agenda is underpinned by hope, or, in Walsh and Sutherland’s words, ‘not merely imagining, but attaching the activities to the real-world activist endeavours needed to make change’ (pg. 75).

Therefore, this event explores the value of critical hope in helping us move forward through challenges and despair. We will reflect on not only what hope means to ourselves and academic work, but how hope might be mobilised in and through personal, institutional and research practices in times of despair. It also takes a reflexive and ecological stance to critical hope by connecting research practice and career development and situating scholarly pursuits within our own academic lifeworlds, as we navigate career challenges, institutional conditions and social structures

Programme

- Three invited contributions
- Chaired panelist conversations
- Audience discussion and Q&A
- Publication, IALIC 2027 conference

To register

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