

# Preface

The usual purpose of a preface is to locate the new text within current disciplinary standards and habits of thought. When the author is Alastair Pennycook, with an extensive and formidable body of field-leading and field-transforming publications, such conventions feel less relevant in that academic conformity and caution have never been his strong suits. Coming boldly on the international scene in 1989, Pennycook's Foucauldian take on Method as 'interested knowledge' in *TESOL Quarterly* broke paradigmatic ground in a profession steeped in ideological neutrality and the presumed universality of its favoured modes of practice. Over the years, Alastair has also been comfortable in assuming the role of the playful provocateur, taking pleasure in moving scholarly goal posts, bending rules, and at times poking fingers in the eyes of the established order. A most vivid example would be his unflattering avian metaphor for linguistic impartiality, 'liberal ostrichism'—whose public explanation at a 2001 TESOL conference was interrupted mid-sentence by the arrival of a tall, major figure in the field, known for his critiques of this political turn in applied linguistics, followed by Alastair's impromptu response: 'Well, speak of the Devil.' For some, the humour of the moment was in many ways carnivalesque, following Bakhtin, where public laughter serves to undermine received wisdom and authority. This spirit of inventive and transgressive play runs through many of Alastair's previously coined and conceived notions: for example in the promotion of *raplish* and *hip hop pedagogies* (2007), in proclaiming the *myth* of English as an international language—and as part of larger project in language *disinvention* (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007); or in the parodic acronym *TEML* (Teaching English as a Missionary Language; Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003); or on the cover of his book, *Critical Applied Linguistics* (2001), and the unusual insertion of a copywriter's caret in the subtitle (i.e. 'a *critical* introduction')—a visual cue for the 'restless problematizing of givens' (cf. Dean) underpinning Pennycook's reflexive notion of the critical. The list could be easily extended.