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In April, 2011, the International Federation for the Teaching of English (IFTE), in collaboration with the host organisation, the New Zealand Association for the Teaching of English (NZATE), organised a conference in Auckland attended by delegates from around the world. The conference featured a number of keynote presenters, including Stuart McNaughton (NZ), Carol D. Lee (US), Pamela Grossman (US), Glenn Colquhoun (NZ), Debra Myhill (UK), Barbara Comber (Australia) and Hilary Janks (South Africa). Presenters were invited to address four themes:

- Literacies and literatures: Creative possibilities;
- Diversity and voice: Inclusion and representation;
- English teachers @ Work: Tensions, pressures, opportunities; and
- New technologies, new practices.

The conference was successful on a number of levels, one of which was a determination to “reignite” an international organisation that had become somewhat quiescent partly because of pressures faced by national organisations and partly because of the economic downturn and the costs involved in supporting international connectivity. This journal has aligned itself with this “reignition” agenda, in large part because its mission statement aligns with a commitment to strengthening the voices of English teachers, teacher educators and researchers worldwide, at a time when a range of policy pressures are posing a real threat to the professional identity of teachers and their ability to conduct their working lives in accord with their own ethical frameworks. This non-themed issue contains articles which have evolved from conference presentations (Comber and Cloonan, for example) or which have been developed by conference attendees (O’Mara and Dix, for example). Other articles vindicate the ETPC Board’s decision to make non-themed issues a regular occurrence, since they are a reminder of the fruitfulness of inviting our constituency to tell us about the thinking, practice and inquiry they have been engaging in.

Barbara Comber sets the scene for this issue with an article appropriately entitled, “Changing literacies, changing populations, changing places – English teachers’ work in an age of rampant standardisation”, which draws on her keynote address at the IFTE Conference. Comber contextualises her paper by referring to a situation in Australia (and other countries) where students and teachers are subject to the normative demands of high stakes standardised tests. Her article aims to explore some of the risks and possibilities for innovative and equitable pedagogy inherent in a context where classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse and where policy appears to be enforcing an outcomes-based, one-size-fits-all agenda. Comber has a long history as an advocate for critical literacy, and brings to this article a conceptual framework further influenced by New Literacies and multiliteracies thinking and more recently, what she terms, place-based pedagogies (Gruenewald, 2008). Using Janks’s (2010) synthesis model of critical literacy, Comber shares a number of observations

taken from a range of research projects that begin to show how different teachers work with students' diverse linguistic, cultural and semiotic resources as a means of accessing academic literacy and engaging in sophisticated design work, and make spaces for the contestation of dominant discourses.

In her article on "Creating multimodal metalanguage with teachers", Anne Cloonan builds on a body of research undertaken as a researcher in her own right, and in collaboration with Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope, on ways of developing a metalanguage suitable for helping (particularly young) students to respond in critically sophisticated ways to multimodal texts. She writes out of an Australian context, currently characterised by major curriculum reforms that demand of teachers that they have students respond to and produce texts in a range of modalities. At the same time, teachers are habitually operating out of metalinguistic frames geared largely to verbal language in print. In her article, she reports on the use of a collaborative action research framework to invite teachers into a reflective process of implementation and review of a "dimensions of multimodal meaning framework" originally developed by Kalantzis and Cope (see Cloonan, 2010). The research is a good example of teachers being invited into the process of critiquing and refining the metalinguistic tools on offer for textual analysis in their own classrooms.

In "Living in the iWorld: Two literacy researchers reflect on the changing texts and literacy practices of childhood", two literacy educators from two hemispheres and continents, Joanne O'Mara from Australia and Linda Laidlaw from Canada, share their reflections in a narrative which details their observations of their own young children's use of technology in their "out-of-school" worlds. Such reflections are seen as shedding light on how children yet to enter primary/elementary classrooms are understanding and engaging in a range of particularly digital textual practices, and issuing a challenge to *how* teaching and learning occurs in many early years literacy classrooms. In their narrative, they provide examples linking to media news stories in both countries, addressing the use of touch screen technologies in schooling and examine how these presentations are very different from the practices they have observed in their homes, where the children have relative freedom with their device usage. They show how their own children have begun to navigate digital devices and texts and to create new sorts of narratives that open possibilities for literacies in multiple ways, as "creators", "designers" and experts. They then tease out some of the implications of this "play" for the school classroom.

In her narrative, "From I-Search to iSearch 2", Tara Alvey (Austin Peay State University) and colleagues from Vanderbilt reconceptualise Macrorie's (1998) approach to develop a 21st-century model of academic research and writing in high-school settings. Drawing on their own experience of what students can achieve utilising the affordances of the Internet, in particular Web 2.0 (interactive) technologies, they propose a four-phase model for inquiry, text production and dissemination. These phases they describe as 1. messing about and trying on questions; 2. exploring and expanding the edge of knowledge; 3. publication; and 4. reflection and self-assessment. What emerges is a model that puts high value on student ownership of the research process, real-world relevance, experimentation and exploration, and the co-construction of knowledge as process in (sometimes dispersed) community settings.

The case study described by Stephanie Dix, “The influence of peer group response: Building a teacher and student expertise in the writing classroom”, follows the involvement of a primary-school teacher in a two-year New Zealand project on “Teachers as writers: Transforming professional identity and classroom practice”. The article describes the case-study teacher’s initial low sense of self-efficacy around her own identity as a writer, and details the part peer-group response had in transforming Jasmine’s self-efficacy as a writer and teacher of writing. In terms of her classroom practice, Jasmine found a way of modeling and then having her students practise a particular form of peer-group response, which brought about a positive, qualitative change in the way her students engaged with the writing process.

Writing out of the South African context, Fiona Jackson reports on a small, classroom-based study investigating the “Local appropriation of global communication forms”. The genre focus, in this case, is the infomercial, as she reports on the way in which the case-study teacher designed an end-of-unit task, which required students to “appropriate” and thus transform elements of the genre in their production of their own performance text. Of particular note in this article is Jackson’s utilisation of Fauconnier and Turner’s (2002) Conceptual Blending Theory (CBT) as a lens with which to analyse the appropriation process itself. In a way, she can be thought of as reflecting on the implications of a cognitive theory in respect of the way in which might complement a socio-cultural approach to literacy, such as critical literacy.

Ann Lopez’ case study examines the practice of one high-school teacher, Meriah, in a large, ethnically diverse, Canadian school. Her article is entitled, “Culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy in diverse English classrooms” and provides some insight into what happens when an English teacher brings together culturally responsive pedagogy and critical literacy in a unit on performance poetry. This study is framed as a collaborative, action research project, where Lopez and Meriah work as partners in a process of action and reflection, developing a praxis which addresses head on the tensions and problematics of introducing one form of emancipatory teaching into an existing English programme. One of these tensions is finding ways of reconciling such teaching with official curriculum and assessment demands. Another is addressing the vulnerabilities of students unaccustomed to the overt discussion of racial and other issues.

The case study described by Muhammad Kabilan, Wan Adlina and Mohamed Embi is on the topic of “Online collaboration of English language teachers for meaningful professional development experiences”. These three authors work in three different teacher education institutions in Malaysia, and the teachers involved in their online project were all EAL teachers, but at different stages of their education and enrolled in different courses in their own institutions. The project challenge was to develop an online learning environment, enshrining principles denoted by these researchers as Collaborative Learning in a Virtual Environment (CLVE). At the heart of intervention was the design of tasks that would be undertaken by participants on a collaborative basis. The data obtained from the teachers’ reflective reports indicated four main themes emerging in relation to meaningful professional development for participating teachers: envisioning professional development, gaining and enhancing skills, sharing and exchanging, and socialising.

Writing out of the Cypriot context, Maria Xanthou reports on a small, experimental study on “The impact of CLIL on L2 vocabulary development and content knowledge”. CLIL is, of course, an acronym for “Content and Language Integrated Learning”, and is an approach favoured by the Council of Europe, which asserts that students “might benefit from the experience of content and language integrated learning (CLIL)” (2005, p. 32). From an *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* perspective, CLIL offers a potential, not only for the learning of L2 in L1 settings, but for the maintenance of L1 in settings where an L2 is the dominant medium of instruction in schools. This is the situation faced by many migrant groups. In Xanthou’s study, there is evidence that children in the CLIL treatment groups, who received their Science instruction in an L2 (English), benefited in terms of L2 vocabulary acquisition, while also showing gains in science content knowledge. Qualitative data in this study further provided some suggestions on positive learning strategies for learners in CLIL situations.

While the study by Josh McNicoll and Jang Ho Lee, “Collaborative consciousness-raising tasks in EAL classrooms”, takes place in the Korean EAL context, they comment on the more general applicability of consciousness-raising (CR) tasks. In their study, located in a women’s university in South Korea, they compared the impact of two CR tasks, text reconstruction and text repair. Using a pre-test, post-test and delayed-test design, they found that participants made learning gains from text repair tasks, but not from text reconstruction, and offer possible reasons for these findings, which they apply to both EAL contexts and other kinds of learning where paired learning activities are set up.

We believe that the range of offerings in this edition of journal shows how fruitful it is to be in conversation with colleagues around the world involved in the endeavor of English teaching and learning. The different perspectives on offer help to denaturalise our own taken-for-granted views of the world and help us to think in new ways for our own contexts.

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