



## FROM THE SPECIAL ISSUE EDITOR

It is my pleasure to introduce this special issue of LLT on electronic literacy. The contributing authors take on the large and challenging questions that new forms of electronic communication provoke, as they examine how electronic texts are affecting second language learning and teaching. The four studies treat an array of non print-based ways of reading and knowing the world that contemporary learners bring to their language learning and tackle the important question of what this then means to contemporary language instruction, narrowly, and the nature of electronic literacy more broadly. Each of the four pieces takes a unique perspective and establishes important research terrain in electronic literacy and language education; at the same time, the authors' perspectives blend around the concern for what new forms of communication imply for generating and understanding meaning in a highly media-oriented, networked world.

In her investigation of cross-cultural relational power structures and their shaping of second language email message construction, [Chi-Fen Chen](#) presents a detailed case study of Taiwanese graduate student Ling, the development of her L2 pragmatic understanding, and, consequently, her ESL email literacy. Chen tracks the trajectory and influences of Ling's experiential learning about appropriate forms of address for U.S. professors when communicating by email; something that she and many students like her are rarely taught as part of their English language curriculum. The author underscores the need to evaluate the linguistic and literacy demands of contemporary cross-cultural electronic communications and a culture's "hidden rules" to instructionally accommodate the needs of language learners regarding electronic literacy.

[Mark Evan Nelson](#) presents the cases of four English language learners and their processes of crafting self-presentations using multimedia resources. In an adjunct activity to their college composition courses, these four young women undertook and reflected on assembling multimodal resources to express their sense of multicultural identity. Evans frames his analyses of these processes using a multimodal literacy framework which directs our attention specifically to the interstices of meaning/identity representation that occur between images, text and images, audience and multimedia writers.

In *Playing the Text*, [Paul Gruba](#) sets out to determine the actions learners of Japanese take when playing authentic, target-language video. Using a talk aloud protocol, Gruba queries learners as they watch recorded Japanese news broadcasts. He employs the lens of media 'play' in his categorization and analysis of students' viewing activity, emphasizing the need for, and utility of, taking a media literacy approach in language teaching and learning.

[Jin Sook Lee](#) presents a thorough and fascinating look at the dynamic, evolving language of bilingual adolescents online. Korean heritage learners in the US, like many adolescent groups around the world, are generating their own hybrid language complete with conventions understood by in-group readers and writers. Lee probes the many social, ideological, and identity-forming impetuses behind the e-practices of two Korean heritage speakers and assesses the impact of these practices on their heritage and English language development. While explicating the complex, bilingual e-text genre knowledge these young women have both mastered and participate in developing, and the



contribution of this activity to the maintenance and development of their languages, Lee also underscores the need for heritage learners to be instructed in the differences between standard and non-standard language forms.

While taking a sociocultural approach, each study focuses on meaning-making from a slightly adjacent angle - [Chen](#), the contextual; [Nelson](#), the representational; [Gruba](#), the activity; and [Lee](#), the form. Each empirically examines the generation of meaning via electronic media and lays out the implications of this generation for language education. Each additionally underscores the need for these socially evolving literacy practices to not only be examined but problematized against the backdrop of formal discourse traditions and practices. As a whole, these studies open up new and exciting directions in the study of second language electronic literacy.

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