

## Editors' introduction

The ten articles that comprise this issue of *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* demonstrates the range of articles, methodologies, topics and perspectives that makes this journal unique. Research articles and essays in this issue analyze literacy learning in South Africa, Ireland, Taiwan, New Zealand and the USA. Although all the articles maintain the critical perspective that is at the heart of the mission of *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, they provide insight into aspects of English teaching that are often at the margins of our field, such as queer youths' multimodal storytelling, disability-related curriculum, multilingual educational contexts, summer blogging and incarcerated youth.

In the first article of this issue, "Critical literacy and the social justice project of education", Janks problematizes the notions of social justice and shared morality that undergird critical literacy pedagogy. In her analysis of two cases from South Africa and current political issues in other countries, she argues that in plural societies such as South Africa, it is not always clear whose interests "social justice" and education serve. Janks contends that critical literacy education must engage with material conditions as well as with texts and discourses to support pluralistic democracies.

Wargo's "Designing more just social futures or remixing the radical present? Queer rhetorics, multimodal (counter)storytelling, and the politics of LGBTQ youth activism" investigates the queer rhetoric that three LGBTQ youth in the USA used to create multimodal identities for themselves and to question heteronormative assumptions through social media and other multimodal means, both digital and corporal. Wargo demonstrates how the youths' multimodal compositions conveyed counter-stories of gender, sexuality and race to their intended audiences in ways that not only served the purpose of changing future "master narratives" but also represented revisions of such narratives in the embodied present.

Bialka and Mancini's study, "Unpacking disability-related curriculum in the language arts classroom", is a qualitative, multi-case study of how three teachers designed and taught disability-related curriculum in the USA. Noting that ability/disability is an aspect of diversity that is rarely included in literacy curriculum and rarely studied in literacy research, the authors demonstrate the successes and challenges the teachers faced in designing and enacting their curricula.

In "Conceptualising and enacting the critical imagination through a critical writing pedagogy", Mendelowitz argues that critical literacy research and pedagogy have ignored the promising role of imagination in developing empathy and multiple perspectives alongside critical literacy. Studying students' engagement in an activity in her teacher education class in South Africa that asked students to imagine, enact and write about contested gender issues, Mendelowitz shows how the students immersed themselves and gained insight into the multiple discourses surrounding gender issues and the complex relationships between language, gender, race, class and culture in a diverse society.

In another study on multimodality, this time as taught in a Taiwanese university, Huang's "Critical multimodal literacy with moving-image text" looks closely at how critical multimodal literacy can be taught to English language learners. Through teacher-inquiry, Huang demonstrates how complex theories of multimodality can be conveyed in straightforward and useful ways that guide English language learners' critical analyses and discussions of moving image texts, such as segments from news programs. Huang



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demonstrates that critical multimodal literacy does not need to be overly complex or limited to “advanced” language classes if the pedagogy is well-designed.

In their essay, “Making sense of events in literature and life through collaboration,” Beach, Falter and Whitley apply the concepts of languaging and eventfulness to collaborative literary sensemaking in English Language Arts classrooms. The authors provide concrete illustrations of productive pedagogical approaches to sensemaking through transcripts from actual classroom discussions in the USA.

Jesson and Williamson’s study, “Log on and blog: an exploratory study assessing the impact of holiday blogging on student literacy achievement”, explores the impact of participation in a summer blogging program on writing achievement for students from schools that serve low socioeconomic status communities in New Zealand. The authors found that the blogging program, with its emphasis on student choice and authentic audience, provided students with ongoing motivation for summer writing and served to reduce the effects of the “Summer Learning Effect” for students from low socioeconomic status schools.

In “Student English teachers: participatory learning and developing identities-in-practice”, Hinchion studied the pre-service teachers in her class at an Irish university as they participated as learners in literacy activities and developed identities as teachers. Using Rogoff’s theories of practice-based learning and identities-in-practice as analytical frameworks through which to understand students’ learning journals, Hinchion demonstrates how her students continually re-formed their identities as teachers in dialogue with course materials, each other and herself.

Brownell’s study, “Mandated curricula as figured world: a case-study of identity, power, and writing in elementary English language arts”, uses the conceptual lens of figured worlds to explore how one 10-year-old American child positions her identity and participates in systems of power through her engagement in writing. Brownell finds that this student’s writing reflected both an adherence to and a rejection of figured worlds associated with mandated curricula, schooling and social hierarchies. The author offers implications for a form of assessment grounded in figured worlds that values not just an observance to standards but also children as people.

Finally, Styslinger, Bemiss and Doyle’s study “Learning from students behind the fence: a critical book club with incarcerated youth”, investigates what can be learned about the literacy practices of the US youth who are incarcerated through their participation in a book club. The authors found that the youth in their study shared cultural insights and knowledge as they discussed characters and situations found in texts. Additionally, book club discussions were an important space for students to challenge the status quo, school-based literacies and to share their own experiences with reading and writing in a variety of forms. The authors offer lessons learned from their experiences in this project, offering recommendations for others who work with incarcerated youth.

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