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Jean Searle and Rosie Wickert (Editors)

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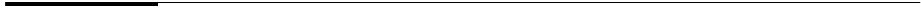
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EDITORIAL

KEIKO YASUKAWA

The value of pluralist views of literacy and numeracy afforded by New Literacy Studies (NLS) for researching and understanding literacy and numeracy is now well-established with the wealth of published studies, including articles in previous issues of *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*. NLS offers an alternative lens through which we can observe literacy and numeracy practices in places and in ways not possible through the more 'official' and dominant lens of regulatory authorities. In this issue, too, four of the authors are writing with an NLS approach and they present studies that alert us to aspects of literacy and numeracy practices that extend possibilities for further conceptual development in NLS.

The first article by Karin Tusting and Uta Papen shifts our attention from the different ways in which people read and negotiate texts to the creativity that is exercised in the making of texts. They argue that creativity has been a neglected area of study in NLS, perhaps because of the traditional association of creativity with notions of the gifted and talented, and elite notions of aesthetics and artfulness. The authors use a typology of forms of creativity suggested by Banaji and Burn (2007) that distinguishes between the creativity associated with: the 'Creative Genius' that is attributed to a special talent and giftedness; 'democratic creativity' that recognises the kinds of artfulness that are expressed by the Creative Geniuses, but recognises and affirms their manifestation in popular culture and its artefacts; and 'ubiquitous and popular creativity' that is evident in everyday, common occurrences of creating new meaning-making situations. Using ethnographic methods, the authors present close observations of the production processes of a parish bulletin in a Catholic parish in England, and advertising texts in Namibia.

The importance of highlighting the creative dimensions in the way NLS pursue the study of literacy practices is borne out of the observation that Karin Tusting and Uta Papen make that while literacy practices are socially and culturally contingent, they are not socially determined. The participants in the literacy practices bring new influences in the forms of purpose, interests, values and sense of aesthetics to also 'shape' the product and its meaning. Expressing the part that the participants play in literacy practices as 'creativity' resonates with the debate that has been taking place in the social studies of technology about what it means to talk about technology as being 'social'. One of the key projects for the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), has been to theorise the relationship

between science and technology and the social world. Starting from an earlier thesis of technological determinism (that technology is an autonomous force that controls social development), the field has contemplated the idea of social determinism (that social interests determine the direction of technological development), and are now increasingly contemplating a messier, more blurred relationship between the technological and the social that involves a mutual shaping of technology and society (see for example, Bijker and Law 1992, MacKenzie and Wajcman 1999, Latour 2005). If we were to think of texts as technological artefacts, then the attention that Tusting and Papen have drawn to the study of creativity in literacy practices could well find some resonance with some of the conceptual work being undertaken in STS.

The second article by Angela Brzeski is also about the production of text, in this case portfolio building in a vocational education course in a further education college in the UK. The author contemplates the challenges brought about when individuals have to make sense of the different literacy practices expected of them in different social situations. There have been several studies examining the challenges for children's school learning when their home literacy and numeracy practices are divergent from the literacy and numeracy practices that are valued in school (see for example, Hannon 1995, Cairney 2000). Brzeski examines the same question for adult learners who are learning to build a portfolio as part of their vocational education course, and asks how teachers can build on the learners' home literacy practices in their efforts to learn the literacies demanded of them in the further education course. Using the metaphors of resonance and dissonance, the author looks at the aspects of the literacies such as genre, audience, purpose and media, experienced in the home and in the college to see whether there is resonance or dissonance across each of these 'wavelengths'. Where she has found dissonance, she suggests teaching and learning strategies for helping to create resonance, but also signals that in some cases the curricula for the vocational courses need to be re-designed to avoid learners being ranked on a 'literacy ladder' that achieves nothing more than labelling some learners as having literacy deficits.

Although the pluralist views of literacy and numeracy, and the resistance to privileging any single form of literacy or numeracy, are features of the social practices approach to literacy and numeracy studies, Helen Oughton's article about her adult numeracy learners in community education centres in the UK reminds us that we cannot ignore the values the learners place on some forms of numeracies over others. The author uses mindmapping as a research tool to examine what the learners who were studying a curriculum based on an autonomous model of mathematics wanted to see in their numeracy curriculum. The kind of numeracy that dominated the mindmaps from learners in three out of four groups of

learners was one based on learning autonomous skills, similar to what was in the curriculum, while the curriculum sought by several of the students in the fourth group reflected an understanding of numeracy as a socially situated critical tool. Acknowledging that this is a preliminary study, and using Bernstein's theory that curriculum shapes learners' motivation, the author explains why the learners in three of the groups expressed a desire to acquire autonomous mathematics. However, she postulates that the level of 'conscientisation' that the learners in the fourth group had developed through working in areas that engaged them in social justice and policy issues may have moderated their acceptance of the autonomous numeracy curriculum.

The pluralism of the NLS enables recognition of academic numeracy practices as one of many legitimate numeracy practices. The fourth article by Robert Prince and Arlene Archer theorises academic numeracy as social practice and illustrates how NLS and the concept of multi-modality can be helpful in theorising the kinds of meaning-making practices that are involved in academic numeracy. The article marries the work in NLS involving literacy practices with the work that has been evolving in developing a theorisation of mathematics as a critical social tool, drawing on literature from critical mathematics education (see for example, Skovsmose 1994, Gutstein 2006) and ethnomathematics (see for example, D'Ambrosio 1985, Knijnik 1997). The example that the authors provide to examine the ways in which students make meaning out of 'BMI charts' reveals some similarities with critical literacy practices, for example the questioning of the authority of the text. However, it also illustrates how academic numeracy requires more than being able to ask the critical questions; it requires the 'reader' to also engage with the questions in mathematical ways, and this reinforces the view that while literacy and numeracy are inseparable in many instances, numeracy practices are more than special examples of literacy practices.

The final contribution in this issue is by Helen de Silva Joyce, Susan Hood and David Rose. These authors describe a pedagogy of 'intensive reading'. The pedagogy they describe is an explicit and deliberate methodology for teaching reading. The authors argue that this fills a gap in adult literacy teaching where there are well-developed approaches for supporting students writing, but there has been much less attention given to supporting students' reading. Their article outlines in detail the systematic implementation of the intensive reading pedagogy in several adult literacy classrooms, including their collaboration with the teachers who are now implementing the pedagogy. The article provides a helpful and comprehensive set of reflections on the impact and implications of more broadly adopting this pedagogy that takes into account the complex environment in which teachers are currently working, for example, a

casualised adult language and literacy teaching workforce, highly uneven levels of resourcing of different providers, and the disparate language backgrounds of the students. Although the authors do not set out in this article to illustrate or extend our conceptual understanding of NLS as do the other articles in this issue, their analysis of the contexts and practices within which their pedagogy can work reminds us that not only the literacy practices of the learners, but their teachers' pedagogical practices too are shaped by, and themselves shape the broader social, cultural and political contexts in which the teaching practices are located.

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