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EDITORIAL

Editorial

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In this issue of *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, Theres Bellander and Zoe Nikolaidou examine the online health literacy practices of parents whose child or unborn foetus has been diagnosed with a heart defect, and Julie Choi and Ulrike Najar report on their study of the authors' English language teaching of immigrant and refugee women in Australia.

Literacy and Numeracy Studies has published several articles over the years on the issue of health literacy (e.g. Green, Lo Bianco and Wyn 2007, Papen 2008, Hunter and Franken 2012, Black, Ndaba, Kerr and Doyle 2012, Jacobson, Hund and Soto Mas 2016, Nutbeam 1999). Bellander and Nikoaidou, like many of those who write for this Journal, bring a social practice perspective on literacy, and in their article in this issue, they show how this perspective enables them to uncover the multimodal, political and affective dimensions of health literacy. The participants of the study (parents of a child/ unborn foetus with a heart disease) engage in health literacy practices to search and try to make-meaning of information about the illness that their child or foetus has; they go to online information sites, the medical staff in the hospitals and online communities of parents of children with heart defects. The authors analyse the reasons for and methods used by the participants in their information searches, and examine the affordances and restrictions of online blogs, forums and social media in fulfilling their information needs. These needs, however, interact with the kinds of information provided by the medical staff, and the opportunity parents have (or not) to discuss and make sense of this information with the medial staff. The diverse sources of information, none of them fully satisfying what the parents want to know, demand judgment about whose knowledge is trustworthy and reliable, and parents exercise this judgement in the face of a situation that is deeply emotional and troubling for them. The authors show that in the process of becoming 'experts' on their child's heart disease, parents also become 'experts' in *doing* digital health literacy.

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Choi and Najer contribute a study of their own English language class of immigrant and refugee women in Melbourne, Australia. Rather than focus on narrowly defined notions of language learning needs and outcomes that position language learners within a deficit frame, the authors focus on the emergent plurilingualism that they argue can be an important learning resource for their participants. The article provides thick descriptions from their audio recorded data and field notes of the ways in which the learners use diverse semiotic resources to communicate with each other and the teachers in class. These include the use of their own language in exchanges with learners who share the same language, writing down responses in their own language and script and using a digital translator, but also gestures and different tones of laughter students use to negotiate different situations such as greetings, confusion, resistance and understanding. Writing from the position as both teachers and researchers the selection of the classroom data and the authors' insights illustrate critical praxis in a powerful and profound way.

Both contributions to this issue challenge the simplistic notions of literacy as cognitive skills that do not help us to understand the multi-dimensional goals of literacy learners, not to mention the multimodal and multi-semiotic resources that they bring to their literacy development. The authors instead view language and literacy learning as dynamic, multimodal and socio-cultural practices, thereby bringing to light the much deeper significance of literacy development for the participants in their lives than what a narrower skills-based view of literacy might have. The approaches taken by the authors in their research reflect the view of literacy as a social practice advanced over more than three decades by Brian Street, starting with his book *Literacy in Theory and Practice* (1984), and which has influenced so many literacy researchers around the world. This Journal, in particular, has featured many authors whose work has been touched directly and indirectly by Brian Street's work. Brian Street deserves a much greater acknowledgement for his contributions to literacy research and pedagogy and to this Journal than this editorial can do justice to, however, it is difficult to conclude this editorial without expressing the feeling of a deep loss to the field as a result of his death in June this year.

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